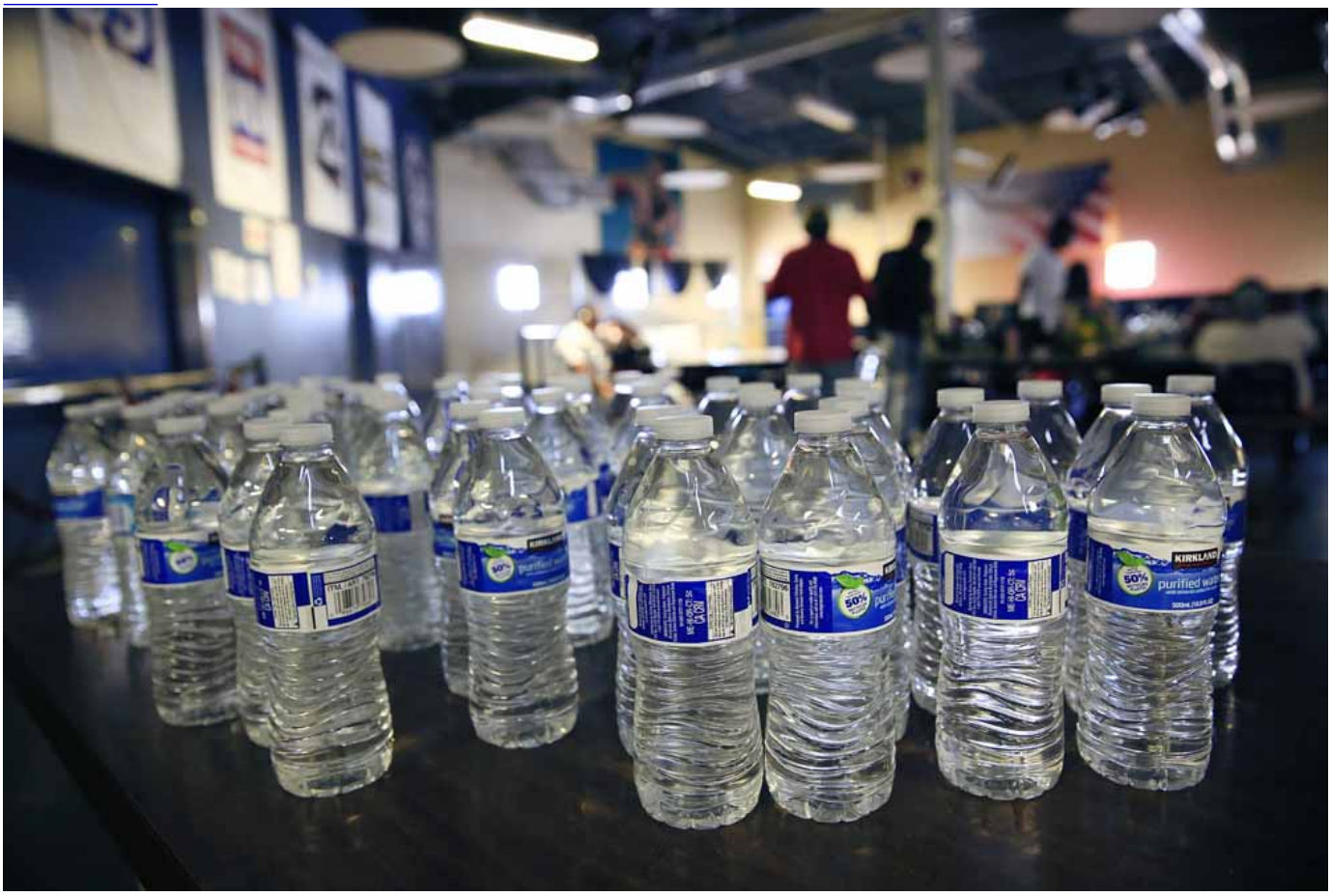
News
EarthBeat



Water bottles are set out for the taking at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul dining hall in downtown Phoenix June 4, 2016, when the temperature reached 115 degrees. (CNS/Nancy Wiechec)



by Bill Mitchell

View Author Profile

bmitchell@ncronline.org
Follow on Twitter at @bmitch

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In a week when Australia is facing devastating fires intensified by climate change, you might wonder why we chose to highlight a new Burning Question feature about what parishes can do to reduce plastic waste.

The answer goes to the multiple goals we have for EarthBeat reflected in the tagline at the top of the EarthBeat homepage: Stories of climate crisis, faith and action.

With both articles and links from our Interfaith Climate Tracker, we're doing our best to keep you up to date on what's happening with the Australian fires -- and what people of faith there are doing and saying about them.

Here at home, life as usual continues for the most part with frightening ordinariness when it comes to action not taken to address the climate crisis. Gas guzzlers jam the freeways; food waste spews methane gas into the atmosphere; plastics pollute the oceans, streams and rivers.

But more and more people -- and more and more churches -- are doing something about all that. And part of our mission at EarthBeat is to document that action. We need your help to do it right.

At this link you'll find a survey that will help us track what individual parishes are doing. It's aimed primarily at Catholic churches, but we welcome submissions from congregations of any and all faiths. Once we've gathered sufficient information, we'll find ways to distribute it that will help build a network for sharing best practices.

So please take a moment and give us an update on what action your parish is taking on behalf of the care of our common home.

Here's some of what's new on EarthBeat this week:

- Speaking of plastics, Boston architect Bob Wegener writes a Small Earth Story about how the documentary *Plastic Ocean* inspired a plastics-free trip to grocery store.

- From Mexico, NCR contributor Tracy L. Barnett sent us the story of a villager fighting against dam projects that would destroy communities and deliver questionable benefits.

- From Rome, Vatican correspondent Joshua J. McElwee reported on a strong message from Pope Francis criticizing the response of the world's governments to climate change.

- From Australia, Sr. Karan Varker offers a heartfelt reflection for Global Sisters Report on the fires devastating much of the country.

- Reporting on those fires, David Ryan and Jordan Grathan quote a statement from Bishop Shane Mackinlay calling on Australian political leaders to examine the "underlying causes" of the fires.

- In the wake of escalating tensions between the U.S. and Iran, Charles Geisler provides commentry on the twin inconvenient truths of nuclear weapons and climate change.

- And here's Staff Writer Jesse Remedios' answer to the Burning Question about what parishes are doing to address use of plastics at parish events.

Here's some climate-related coverage from other sources:

- In The Cut, Emily Raboteau recounts a year talking about climate change from one New Year's Eve to the next, with entries throughout the year from restaurants, Shabbat dinners, neighborhood gatherings and more.

- From the UK, Independent Catholic News reports on the first English dioceses to divest from fossil fuels.

- From Kentucky, WFPL Radio reports on the efforts of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth near Bardstown to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

- Philip Coorey, politics editor of the Australian Financial Review, likens climate-denying politicians in his country to what he terms "the Catholic lunatics who denounced Galileo for heresy."

- The Trump Administration proposed new rules that would undercut 50 year-old regulations aimed at protecting the environment and giving local communities some say in what's built in their backyards.

- This New York Times analysis of the linkage of paper usage to the roles of trees in absorbing carbon got me thinking about Dawn Araujo-Hawkins' Small Earth Story about her paperless kitchen.

Upcoming event:

A Faith That Does Justice, a multi-faith group based in Boston, will explore "the effect of the environmental crisis on the poor and the vulnerable" from 6:15 p.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday Jan. 15 at the Courtyard Marriott on Tremont Street in Boston. The event will also be streamed live without charge. You can register here. And view other upcoming climate-related events here on our Events Calendar.

Closing beat:

EarthBeat readers responded enthusiastically to both the Season of Creation Daily emails by Peter McLoughlin and the Advent Meditations with Laudato Si' by Arthur Jones. Please let us know what sort of features you'd like to see on EarthBeat exploring the spirituality of care for our common home.

Thanks for reading! (If you're not yet subscribed to EarthBeat Weekly or know of someone who might like to recieve it, here's the sign-up page.)

Bill Mitchell

NCR Climate Editor

bmitchell@ncronline.org

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