



The Cathedral
Church of **Saint John**
the **Divine**

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Winter 2011- 2012 at the Cathedral

Faith in Action: Catherine Skopic

The energetic and charming Catherine Skopic, whom Bishop Sisk recently appointed Chair of the Diocesan Environmental Committee, is an acolyte and Lay Eucharistic Minister at the Cathedral, the Chair of Environmental Task Force Committee of the Congregation of St. Saviour, a retired art teacher—and most of all a passionate advocate for the Earth. Her involvement in environmental issues goes back to the 80's, when she would incorporate environmental information and practice into her art classes. Now, environmental and church issues take most of her time.

Since its inception, the Environmental Task Force has had as its primary purpose, "To explore the question and its implications, 'What is our responsibility as Christians to care for God's Creation?'" This large question incorporates issues of justice; poverty; the reduction of our ecological footprint; increased education about the environment for the congregation and the public; and a desire to strengthen connections between the Cathedral and environmental activists and actions. The Task Force, which meets regularly, sponsors lectures, films, and presentations from people like Cathey Falvo, M.D., Physicians for Social Responsibility; and Sister Catherine Grace of the Community of the Holy Spirit, from the Bluestone Farm and Living Arts Center, a monastic community for women in the Episcopal Church.

Last March, the Environmental Task Force Committee organized "A Learning Event in Preparation for Lent—Caring for God's Creation: Ideas for Sustainable Living," with 14 exhibitors and a feast of organic food. Committee members have helped Cathedral Community Cares Health Screening Fair, supported Canon Patti Welch in her work for the Evensong and Ecology program, and much more.

There is a core group of people, past and present, who have been active in the Committee: Sylvia Bellusci, Christopher Caraballo, Anna Gustafson, Pam and Aaron Koch, David

McGee, Michael Nixon and Velma Jean Reeb, as well as Catherine Skopic. Usually 25 to 35 congregants show up for events. Skopic is looking forward to welcoming new participants. "More members of the congregation are getting involved," she said. "People want to learn."

In partnership with Green Faith and 350.org, the Committee has organized and participated in rallies in Washington, Albany, Philadelphia and New York City. On September 24, the Committee organized participation in the Moving Planet rally and clean energy demonstration at the United Nations General Assembly, one of 2,000 around the world on that date.

Skopic's focus this year is on hydrofracking, in particular trying to organize resistance to Governor Cuomo's new Energy Policy Document that would allow fracking in New York State everywhere except in the New York and Syracuse water sheds. The ETF has been trying to get the word out about the dangers of this process to the water, air, land, animals, plants, and health of New Yorkers. In May, Ms. Skopic drove to Albany to speak to the state legislature. The public is invited to comment on the new policy until December 12, though activists are working to extend that period. Asked if she feels optimistic or pessimistic about the environment, she says simply, "I pray a lot."

Skopic notes that the Diocese already has a lot in place, praising the dedication of Bishop Sisk, Bishop Roskam and Dean Kowalski. In addition to her appointment as Chair of the Diocesan Committee, Bishop Sisk has invited her to be part of a new committee – Food, Farming, Faith and our Future—and she is enthusiastic about this. She is also pleased that at the 2010 General Convention, two resolutions were passed: that each parish select a Parish Environmental Leader, and that environmental liturgy be composed, to be available in whatever circumstances might warrant it.

For more information on the work and upcoming events of the Environmental Task Force, contact missionandoutreach@saintsaviour.org

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Photo by Helena de Braganca



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In an effort to be more sustainable and streamline costs, we are in the process of redesigning the Cathedral newsletter.

Gifts from Cathedral friends and supporters allow the Cathedral to plan for the future. Please take the time to fill out the contribution envelope in the pages of the newsletter. Your generosity is needed and is always appreciated.

Winter 2011- Cathedral

Telling Tales



Laura Simms

The life of the Cathedral, like the lives of every institution and human being, is made up of stories. The story of how it began, the story of what happened next, the stories of all the people involved. Stories are how we make sense of things, and at the Cathedral we listen to a lot of stories. October saw a performance of Stephen Mitchell's new translation of *The Iliad*, and in November we inducted James Baldwin in the Poets' Corner. Just ahead of us is Christmas, a story we will tell many times this season, in liturgy, music and special events.

To honor the art of the story, we have invited two remarkable storytellers, both of whom participated in the Cathedral's rededication celebrations, to join us in the coming months. Details are still being worked out, but we expect Laura Simms to offer two evenings for adults: *Under the Surface*, folklore and fairytales about the realms under the waves; and *An Ocean of Story*, a sampling from the great store of prophetic and mythological stories about water. For kids (of all ages) she will offer two Saturday afternoons: *The Water of Life*, and *The Mud Sisters and Other Stories*.

Laura has been telling stories to enthralled listeners for 40 years. She has recorded her stories on numerous albums, CDs and DVDs, and created theater and dance pieces. She teaches storytelling workshops all over the world, as well as at the University of Milwaukee, New York University and Naropa University. Laura's projects include *A Key to the Heart and Other Afghan Tales*,

(Chocolate Sauce, 2003) benefiting children's education in Afghanistan; the Next Generation Environmental Program sponsored by the Murie Center for the Environment (with Terry Tempest Williams); and the Gaindeh Project, an international initiative to aid youth in crisis by teaching storytelling as a way of binding generations and communities together.

Simms will also join Kewulay Kamara for an evening called *Healing Waters*, where she will tell stories, and Kamara and a group of musicians and poets will perform a multimedia piece called *Je* (water). Kamara is a *finra*—a storyteller, in the West African language Mandeng—born in Sierra Leone. He came to this country when he was 18, earned an M.S. in economics from The New School, and taught for two decades at John Jay College of Criminal Justice while raising a family in New York City and telling stories. Kamara has performed at Cooper Union, The Kitchen, Alice Tully Hall, City Center, The American Museum of Natural History, the Museum of African Arts and Poets House.

Je is an epic story based on stories, rituals, and events from Dankwaile. It speaks to the importance of reciprocity and kinship between humans and all spirits including animals, plants, and places. As part of the event, the performers will lead the audience in pouring (giving) libation to water, life to life. Unlike traditional African libations where the offering is made to the ancestors, this libation will give water to water. Kamara said, "Through art we give back to the spirit of water."

In Memoriam

Boyd C. Johnson

December 29, 1931–
September 6, 2011
Cathedral Trustee 1995–2007

Ralph K. Smith, Jr.

November 6, 1925–
August 23, 2011
Cathedral Counsel for more
than 3 decades

Constantin Antonovici

The Cathedral celebrates the release of Antonovici, a catalogue raisonné on the work of Romanian sculptor Constantin Antonovici (1911–2002), who sculpted the figure of Bishop Manning on his tomb in the Cathedral, and many other pieces throughout the building, and who had a studio in the Crypt for 50 years. The handsome full color book was donated to the Cathedral by Antonovici's great friend and the catalogue publisher, Stephan Benedict.

Please Be In Touch

We welcome your suggestions and comments on the newsletter. Please write us at editor@stjohndivine.org.