

Ellen Kane, of Richmond, is Executive Director of development, communications and the Vermont Catholic Community Foundation. She earned a bachelor's degree from Loyola University in Chicago, a master's in education from Columbia College in Chicago and 15 credits masters level social work courses from Jane Addams School of Social Work, University of Illinois, in Chicago.

Why did you agree to serve on this committee?

The committee is comprised of people of various ages, faiths, backgrounds and expertise who care deeply about our common home and are passionate about educating others about how, together, we can make simple changes that will positively impact the future of the earth. Members are committed to using their various talents to educate others about how to make that difference in their daily lives to positively impact the future of our common home.

What specific concerns do you have about the wellbeing of the earth, "our common home?"

I believe pollution and the resulting climate change is a social justice issue. Access to clean air, water and food is a basic human right, not only a luxury of the rich. The poor are the ones that suffer the most from pollution. The poor are the ones often forced to live in the most undesirable communities with contaminated water, air and soil. They are the ones who often make their living off the Earth by farming, fishing and harvesting. Natural disasters caused by extreme weather, such as drought or floods, directly impact their ability to care for their families and survive.

What message do you want to convey about care of the earth?

The earth is our common home—would you dispose of poisonous chemicals in your own backyard or leave the car running with the garage door closed with your children inside? Of course not. Why is it OK then to do this to the less fortunate? Eventually, if we ignore the problem long enough, pollution will spread into everyone's backyard and then it may be too late.

How can Vermont Catholics participate in the care of the earth?

Vermont Catholics are generous and care for the most vulnerable in their communities by feeding the poor, caring for the sick, housing the homeless and welcoming the stranger. The earth is a gift from God given to us to sustain life. How we care for this gift directly impacts all life. We must care for the earth just as we are called to care for all life. Each of us can learn more about how to make small changes in our daily lives to lessen our impact on the earth. If we commit to small changes, together, our impact will be great. We can also advocate for our brothers and sisters who are forced to live in polluted communities due to their limited resources and ask for changes to mitigate the problems whether it be contaminated water, air or soil.

What do you say to people who do not understand/believe the seriousness of the situation of the earth?

I quote Pope Francis: "The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty."

What motivates you in your work to protect our earth?

My Catholic faith calls me to care for all life from conception to natural death. I believe the earth is a gift from God given to us to sustain all life, and if we don't care for this gift, the gift will no longer sustain us.