



PURSUING
THE COMMON GOOD
FOR OUR COMMON HOME



Dominican Sisters
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Emboldened by faith, serving with joy

Module 4: Grand Rapids Climate Coalition
by Cynthia Bailey, Dominican Associate

The [Grand Rapids Climate Coalition](#) started in the spring of 2019 around the goal of mobilizing the people of Grand Rapids and surrounding areas for action on climate change. The Coalition wanted to get an official commitment from the City Commission of Grand Rapids to achieve community wide carbon neutrality by 2030. The Coalition's goal: **The Grand Rapids City Commission to pass a resolution declaring a climate emergency and commit to a plan for achieving community wide carbon neutrality for Grand Rapids by 2030.**



The coalition is a growing alliance of community groups, neighborhood associations, nonprofits, faith groups, businesses, and educational institutions. It is now sixty-six (66) organizations members strong and hope to continue growing.

The coalition addresses environment, justice, health, economy, climate change that impacts all aspects of life, human health, water and air quality, food scarcity, job security, transportation and housing are issues that vulnerable populations experience. (cf: [Integral Ecology](#))

The aim of the Coalition is to be as inclusive as possible, to represent a broad range of voices from Grand Rapids. More work is needed to be done to include frontline communities—people of color and low-income residents whose communities are most negatively affected by environmental pollution, natural disasters, injustice in housing, transportation, food and water, and other areas that all have direct connections with the Climate Emergency. Frontline communities have been historically excluded when solutions are decided by others lacking the lived experience. This Coalition is committed to environmental justice.

The City of Ann Arbor had achieved their goal of committing to a resolution for carbon neutrality by 2030. The coalition decided to focus their efforts on a similar goal. GRCC knew the Resolution had to come from the community and invited groups to join.

July 2020, **Grand Rapids Dominican Associate Cynthia Bailey** had just completed the Climate Reality Leadership Corps Training Session. With certificate in hand, she needed to begin working for Climate Change. The Climate Reality Leadership Corp is a global network of messengers and activists trained to talk about the impacts of climate change and what they can do to support the shift to clean, renewable energy. Climate Reality Leaders give free and engaging presentations to audiences of all types, so people everywhere can join in working for solutions.

Cynthia attended many climate change and environmental groups before she found Grand Rapids Climate Coalition. The coalition was at the point of deciding on writing a resolution and was seeking people that could help write the resolution.

Cynthia has been involved with the GR Dominicans' Care of the Earth Committee. Covid had shut down in person activity on the committee although members developed educational programs around Earth Day and Seasons of Creation. She decided to invite GR Dominican Sister Brigid Clingman to attend a GRCC meeting to see firsthand what the coalition was about.

On December 16, 2020, Sr. Brigid attended her first meeting with the coalition. Sister decided to help write the Resolution for the City of Grand Rapids Commissioners to review for passing. With the help of her knowledge and expertise and a few revisions the Resolution, the writing group completed the Resolution in record time.

GRCC was not able to have the City of Grand Rapids accept or pass the resolution, but it did impress the city to write and pass their own Climate Emergency Resolution.

GRCC GOALS: GRCC continues to actively work with their ever-growing membership to remain committed working among the members and the City to collaborate with the community to develop a plan for achieving community wide carbon neutrality:

- Set a timeline that reflects the urgency of scientific data on the needs of the people being affected by climate change.
- Embedding bold climate goals (especially climate justice) into all aspects of Grand Rapids master planning process and City operations.
- Guidance from the City so that residents can advocate for the same statewide, legislative changes that the City has prioritized to make Michigan a state where carbon neutrality is an option.



THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

1. The Mayor and City Commission hereby **declare climate change a crisis in the city of Grand Rapids** and urge all residents, businesses, organizations, and public entities to adopt equity-informed policies and practices as soon as possible and no later than 2025 that address carbon reduction, climate adaptation and climate resilience and protect the health, safety, economic prosperity, and quality of life for all in our city;
2. The Mayor and City Commission affirm the City Manager's adopted municipal carbon emissions reduction goals of 85% by 2030 and 100% (carbon neutral) by 2040;

Adopted 9/28/21