



A DEHONIAN CONFERENCE ON THE DUAL THREATS OF CLIMATE CHANGE & NUCLEAR WEAPONS

OCTOBER 7-10, 2024 • WHISPERING WOODS HOTEL CONFERENCE CENTER
7300 HACKS CROSS RD • OLIVE BRANCH, MISSISSIPPI • 662.895.2951

May 22, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings from Olive Branch, Mississippi! We, the Preparatory Committee for the Dehonian Conference on the dual threats of Climate Change and Nuclear Weapons, met on Monday to continue to plan our October gathering. It will be held at the Whispering Woods Hotel & Conference Center in Olive Branch, Mississippi beginning on Monday, October 7 at 4:00 pm and ending on Thursday, October 10 with lunch at noon. Our time together will be marked by prayer, substantial input and reflective dialogue enhanced by stories, videos, music and other creative expressions. We hope this experience will transform our hearts to care for our common home.

Enclosed you will find the Invitation to the Conference and its Registration Form. Please return the Registration Form by August 15 to Carole Johnson at cjohnson@shsm.org (email) or 662.342.3390 (fax).

The aim of the conference is, in the spirit of *Laudato Sí*, to deepen our understanding of these existential threats, promote a transformation of heart and mind, and develop a collaborative Dehonian response.

In his encyclical letters addressed to all the people of Earth, *Laudato Sí* (2015) and *Laudate Deum* (2023), Pope Francis encourages us to appreciate the gift of God's creation. He also identifies our failures to protect our common home, which have led to catastrophic consequences, e.g., severe droughts, floods and wildfires. Added to this is the ever-increasing possibility of the use of nuclear weapons as nations compete for basic human

needs, such as water, food, fuel and shelter. The destructive consequences of wars on people and Mother Earth cannot be understated.

Sister Kathleen Storms, SSND, our first speaker, comes to us with a wealth of experience as an educator, spiritual director, presenter and practitioner who links spirituality and science. She is a co-founder of the SSND Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry (now Living Earth Center) in Mankato, Minnesota. Care for our common home has been a passion of hers for over forty years. She welcomed *Laudato Sí* and has made it and *Laudate Deum* the focus of her ministry.

Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, our second speaker, is the author of the pastoral letter, *Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament*. His diocese is at the heart of the US Nuclear Weapons complex, the site of the first nuclear test explosion in July 1945, and today, is the largest repository of nuclear weapons in the United States. He has come to see nuclear weapons as a pro-Life issue and approaches this question from a perspective of faith. Last year, he, the Archbishops of Seattle and Nagasaki and the Bishop of Hiroshima formed the Partnership for a World Without Nuclear Weapons.

We are convinced that this conference will offer a valuable opportunity for us to come together, share our knowledge and experiences, and work towards finding ways that we, as Dehonians, can have impact on these pressing issues. We look forward to our conversations and work together.

In the Sacred Heart,

The Dehonian Conference Preparatory Committee

Jack Kurps, SCJ

Cathy Bertrand, SSND

Bob Bossie, SCJ

Paul Hoang, SCJ

Peter McKenna, SCJ

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