



# A STITCH IN TIME

Religious knitters focus on climate control with 'Tempestry'

Staff photo by Graham Cullen

From left, Marusia Zearfoss, knitter and member of Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration; Ann Payne, Multi-faith Alliance of Climate Stewards of Frederick County steering and founding member, and Barb Trader, MACS facilitator, hold a knitted piece called "The Tempestry." Each color represents a year and the color coordinates with the average yearly temperature.

By CRYSTAL SCHELLE  
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**A**s a way to show that people can come together for a common good, the Multi-faith Alliance of Climate Stewards of Frederick County brought together a group of knitters to produce a visual representation of climate change.

The piece called "The Tempestry" will debut Oct. 20 during the Floods, Droughts and Justice Conference at Hood College's Whitaker Hall. The discussion is sponsored by MACS, Hood College and Interfaith Power & Light.

"The Tempestry" is a knitted piece that is more than 7 feet in length and shows the progression of climate change since 1900. Ann Payne, MAC founding member and a member of the steering committee, said between 25 and 30 knitters worked on the piece. It started at Middletown Methodist Church in the early summer. Then it went from one religious group to the other — Unitarian Universalists, Catholics, Quakers, Islamic Society and more.

"It had a sort of this attraction, and I hope our conference will have the same pull," Payne said. "I think we all want to be helpful to each other and be cooperative and be a family. I think that's what we think our country as being: united and supportive of each other."

Knitters were provided with a graph and a specific color of yarn and then were each asked to adopt a decade.

"A year is four rows and a decade was 40 rows," Payne said.

There are 15 colors that represent 15 annual average temperatures, she added.

"The gray row represents 1900 and it progresses through all the way through that century, which is the present," she said.

Beginning in the year of 2019 and ending at 2036, "The Tempestry" splits into two tabs to show what might happen. The left-side panel shows what happens if "business as usual" continues and what the temperatures and climate might be. The right-side panel shows what might happen if we combat climate change and lessen emissions.

"This is a very visual, tactile way to look at what we are dealing with right now and what we may be dealing with in the future," Payne said.

## If You Go

■ **What:** Floods, Droughts & Justice: A Multi-faith Discussion on Stewardship and Resilience in a Changing Climate

■ **When:** Noon to 4:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 20

■ **Where:** Hood College, Whitaker Hall, 401 Rosemont Ave., Frederick

■ **Cost:** \$15, plus \$10 with a boxed

lunch

■ **Contact:** To register, go to [www.MACSFrederick.org](http://www.MACSFrederick.org), then go to the Projects Page

■ **More info:** Visit [www.MACSFrederick.org](http://www.MACSFrederick.org), join Multi-faith Alliance of Climate Stewards — Frederick County on Facebook. For more information on MACS, email Barb Trader at [btrader72@gmail.com](mailto:btrader72@gmail.com).

To make sure that the graph is as accurate as possible, Payne said she worked with two people from her Quaker meeting, David Kuntz, a retired systems engineer, whom she called "the brains of the operation" and his wife Julie, who is a knitter. They then reached out to Bernadette Roche from the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration, who happens to be a climate scientist. Payne said Kuntz collected all the data from the National Weather Service that would allow them to put together a graph that, with his wife's knitting knowledge, and the help of Roche, put together a graph that was easy for the knitters to follow, regardless of skill.

Marusia Zearfoss is a member of the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration where Roche attends. She also happens to be a knitter.

"She made an announcement and asked for volunteers," Zearfoss said. "I could not pass it by. It was something that I had to get into."

Zearfoss, who knitted the decade of 1999 to 2019, said she was excited to be involved in the project, which she estimates took 600 yards of yarn.

She said she liked "the concept of trying to do something to help make everyone more aware of the potential and possibilities of climate change. And secondly, doing it in something that I love, which is knitting. I thought the combination of the two was amazing."

Zearfoss said while she was working on her part of "The Tempestry" she had a visit from her grandson and his girlfriend.

"And I showed her what I was working on and explained it to her. And her eyes just lit up," Zearfoss said. "This is amazing. It really made an impact on her to see it and realize what it was. I thought that was tre-

mendous. That really cemented me in my desire to finish this, and knowing I was doing the right thing."

"The Tempestry" gives a way for people to understand climate change in a tactile way.

"Sometimes appealing to people through a visual representation like this or a musical representation, which we will also have at the conference, or at the same time show this or other forms of art, are a really good way to make what we're facing real for people," said Barb Trader, MACS facilitator.

## WHO IS MULTI-FAITH ALLIANCE OF CLIMATE STEWARDS OF FREDERICK COUNTY?

The MACS began in 2017, from a group of concerned Frederick County citizens who were worried about the climate. According to its website, local faith communities also were collaborating on climate issues by hosting movies and talks.

"We have probably had at least 10 different faith communities involved in our group, but we actually span more faith communities than that," Trader said.

The group has a steering committee of about 10 people with 120 people on the mailing list.

"When we do events, we reach out to the entire faith community to come to events," Trader said. "We've done tree plantings. We did a movie series last year that drew about 120 people. It's all about climate change. Our commitment is to help people understand climate change and to be aware of what is going to happen in Frederick County as possible and what it is that we can do as a community and what we can do as people of faith."

Trader suggests registering in ad-

vance because tickets are going fast. "The Tempestry" will debut at the event.

She said what she hopes seeing "The Tempestry" and attending the conference will do is to inspire people "to have a deeper awareness of how urgent action is" and "a much larger awareness of everything happening in the county."

The goal is to make sure attendees have the tools to make a difference for the climate in Frederick County. She said attendees will learn how to do practical things such as planting trees or how to compost for home, business or school.

"One of the things we find is that people feel really helpless because this seems like this is such an enormous problem," Trader said. "But the message we want to get across is that everything you do matters. Every time you do something that matters you can all step up your game. And we can do a better job to turn our planet over to our children in a better place."

## "THE TEMPESTRY" AND ITS IMPACT

As for what the women hope the reaction will be of "The Tempestry" when it's shown to the public, they all shared similar reactions.

"It's an understanding you get reading numbers and it talks to the heart and there's something about those paper graphs," Payne said. "This is like that tactile, physical, real way to get your head around what Frederick County is facing."

Zearfoss said she has already shown a few people "The Tempestry" and said "I like the gasping" when the piece is revealed.

Trader hopes it will touch people in the heart.

"I hope there is a deep visceral reaction in people and it might motivate them to act. Motivate them to pay close attention. I don't know if 'The Tempestry' will inspire people in the conversation afterward, but I do think 'The Tempestry' will get people to act and pay attention," she said. "And I hope we can bring it home to them that it doesn't matter what your skills set is, you have something to contribute to this and it's important."

Follow Crystal Schelle on Twitter: @crystalschelle.