**LAUDATO SI ACTION PLATFORM**

**LINDA MORRIS 2022**

**REFLECTION**

**History**

I was fortunate to grow up in a family where the love of the environment was paramount. Much of my childhood and teenage days were spent outdoors, watching wildlife, collecting plants and learning about them. At university I studied geology, botany and zoology. Following my graduation, I became a professional geologist and geotechnical engineer specialising in the investigation and remediation of ground and water contamination and former mining activities. I was instrumental in the preparation of a report which investigated the pollution of the Danube Delta in Romania.

My husband shares my love of the natural environment and together we brought up our children and grand-children to have this same love and respect. We are active members of our local church and some thirty plus years ago, I was professed as a member of the Secular Franciscan Order. With my husband, we led the local cub scout pack through their World Wildlife Fund (WWF) badge, before becoming Scout Leaders. As part of the badge work, we planted over 3000 trees, mainly at a local nature reserve where we were volunteer wardens, made bird boxes and did experiments to monitor atmospheric pollution. I have supported various ‘conservation’ charities e.g. the WWF., the Wildfowl Trust (of which we are Life Members, we planted trees, helped develop one of the wildfowl sites and were volunteer wardens, protecting eggs from theft), Greenpeace, IFFAW (including collecting signatures against the seal cull), the Woodland Trust (where for some 10 years, I have volunteered as a recorder of seasonal changes) etc. along with ‘humanitarian’ charities such as Cafod, the Bhopal Appeal, Epiphany Trust, Pumpaid etc. In the 1990’s, with Epiphany Trust, we visited and took aid out to orphanages and schools in Romania. For eleven years, I have been a Foundation Governor at the local Primary School.

As an ‘over-spill from a bird hospital, we cared for wild birds of prey which had been so badly injured, they could not be returned to the wild. With these birds, we would give talks in schools etc. about them. We also led wildlife walks in the local area.

Having read ‘Laudato Si’ I became more aware of the climate crisis, the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. During the Covid 19 lockdown in 2021, I trained and graduated as a Laudato Si Animator. Looking to progress, I have embarked on the Laudato Si Action Platform programme. I aim to try, with God’s grace, to do my bit to preserve our beautiful world for my grand-children’s and others heritage.

**Laudato Si Goals, Baseline Assessment and Reflections**

To follow are summaries of my former and current activities which, I trust, reflect my values and their relationship to the Laudato Si goals. I reflect on my current status with regard to these goals. There are instances where I believe I could identify more fully with these goals i.e. improve my ecological conversion. I have reflected on how I can address this and I have decided on actions for the year 2022. These proposed actions are Identified in my Action Plan which follows as a separate document.

Laudato Si Goals:

1. **Response to the Cry of the Earth**

To protect our common home for the wellbeing of all by addressing the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and ecological sustainability.

I have conducted an energy audit at our home and established that our carbon footprint is relatively high. Our home is already insulated and has double glazing and it is not practical to install solar panels or a heat pump.

I have carried out similar audits for two local churches.

We currently drive a diesel fuelled car, though it is of the more modern, less polluting makes. I walk to and from venues whenever possible.

A few years ago, I obtained, free of charge, from the Woodland Trust, native trees and shrubs for building hedges at our allotment and at a local church. Allotment members and parishioners planted the trees/shrubs.

Bee and butterfly friendly plants are planted in our garden and allotment and the birds are fed daily.

Bird boxes and bird baths are used regularly.

As our children and grandchildren were growing up, they would plant seeds etc. in ours and their gardens and at our allotment. One year they collected resulting poppy seeds and scattered them in our local area and gave them to our neighbours and parishioners. Now that they are older, our grandchildren harvest herbs and vegetables and use them at home in their cooking.

We collect rain water to water the garden and allotment.

We compost waste both at home and at the allotment. Chemical fertilisers and pesticides are not used at home and are banned from the whole allotment.

I am currently in discussion with my local MP re local litter problems, fuel poverty, retrofitting and the UK governments progress with regard to the COP 26 commitments.

It has always been our family life-style to ‘make-do and mend’ and we were the first in our locality to instigate glass recycling in the 1970s/1980s.

To minimise on the amount of microplastics leaking into the water, recently during washing I place all non-cotton clothing in special bags to collect the microplastic beads.

Reflection

For many years I have led a life-style, which to some degree, has been based on consideration of ‘the Cry of the Earth’. I have tried to pass on these values to family, friends and the local community. However, I can do more – in particular with regard to energy, local ecology and community/family involvement and fuel poverty. My intentions will be outlined in my separate Action Plan.

1. **Response to the Cry of the Poor**

To promote eco-justice, called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on earth.

For many years I have been a supporter of Cafod, from taking part in sponsored runs to promoting and signing petitions etc. I have recently met with the head-teacher at the local Catholic Primary school where I have been a Foundation Governor for almost 12 years with the aim of promoting Cafod’s ‘Live Simply Award’.

Financially, I support humanitarian charities such as the Salvation Army, Pumpaid, the Bhopal Disaster Appeal and Epiphany Trust. With the latter, my husband and I took aid items to the orphanages in Romania on 3 occasions during the 1990s and provided a vacation home for ‘orphans’ on two occasions. I regularly donate clothes, games and household items to local charities caring for homeless people, refugees and people suffering from poverty.

For almost 20 years I have promoted and supported the Fairtrade Organisation, selling their produce at church and at work. Twice I have spoken at the local school about Fairtrade. That church has since been demolished.

I am a member of other charities which protect other forms of life such as the Worldwide Fund for Nature, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Wildfowl Trust, the National Trust, Chester Zoo and the Woodland Trust. As a phenologist with the latter, for the last 10 years, I have recorded seasonal changes in the behaviour of birds, trees, shrubs, flowers etc. My results are collated, along with others to identify climate changes.

I regularly sign petitions supporting the protection of unborn babies and against euthanasia. I also support petitions against the use of neonicotinoids and other toxic chemicals. All forms of chemical pesticides are banned at the allotment and we do not use them at home. I support petitions against the destruction of the rainforest, laying of pipe-lines / mining etc. which destroy the lands of indigenous peoples, against oil and gas exploration and extraction.

I have been a Secular Franciscan for 35 years. My Fraternity supports, financially, the Medaille Trust, a charity which supports trafficked women and children. We pray at each fraternity meeting for the perpetrators of trafficking and their victims.

Reflection

I have tried to live my life giving regard to people, both locally and worldwide, who are struggling in some way. In various ways I have tried to help – financially and practically. I try to assist ‘nature’ by providing evidence on which to base considerations of climate change and its effects on the environment. However, most of my involvement has been by myself; I intend to extend my activities to involve more people and communities. Details of my proposed activities are given in my Action Plan.

1. **Ecological Economics**

The acknowledgement that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which is itself embedded within the biosphere – our common home.

As parents and grandparents we are in regular contact with our family members. Whilst our family was growing up, we would regularly involve them in shopping activities whilst discussing with them matters such as local food supply, buying ‘wonky’ vegetables which previously would be thrown away by the supplier, growing our own vegetables, fashion branding etc. We continue to discuss these when they visit, but more in-depth e.g. carbon footprints, single-use plastics, recycling etc. For a number of years, they have helped with building the raised beds and growing vegetables at our allotment. Excess vegetables are given to family members, parishioners, neighbours etc.

As a family, we regularly buy food produce from our local farm shop. Every Christmas we buy our real Christmas tree from them - each Christmas they supply us, free of charge, their waste branches from these trees, with which we decorate our church for the Christmas celebration. They have recently expanded to include a restaurant which is frequented by my family and many of the parishioners.

Each year, pre-covid, there would be a parish Christmas fayre, a social event which also raised funds for the church. I would make Christmas floral crafts for selling at the fayre. During the summer holidays, my 4 grandchildren would decide which craft items they would make for selling on their stall at the fayre. They would make and sell their items, usually raising about £200 for the church at each fayre.

I have taught my children, grandchildren and a daughter-in-law basic sewing such as shortening clothes, sewing on buttons, making curtains, re-styling of clothes etc. Once family members have grown out of their clothes, they are passed down to younger, smaller family members. Alternatively good quality items such as their clothes, toys, books and games are given to a local charity, Compassion in Action, for distribution to families in need, or to a local hospice shop for selling to raise funds for the upkeep of the hospice. They understand the Gospel values of sharing and giving and now that they are young adults, it is second-nature for them and their families, to give. On a weekly basis, my husband and I donate food to our local food-bank which is run by my church.

With my family, I try to avoid buying products that are wrapped in single-use plastic. We all use reusable cups/flasks whenever we can. I have recently become aware of companies, such as the Worldwide Fund for Nature, which manufacture clothes from recycled materials and which can be returned for recycling when finished with.

Reflection

When I started this Reflection, I had no idea what the term ‘Ecological Economics’ meant. Now I do. It seems that I have lived my life with a degree of success with regard to this, but in a practical way, without understanding the ethical situation behind the manufacture and supply of some of my commodities. I need to do more with regard to this. Details of what I propose to do are given in my Action Plan.

1. **Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles**

To promote and adopt the concepts of sufficiency and promote sobriety in the use of energy and resources.

Approximately 40 years ago whilst collecting signatures for a petition against the seal cull (International Fund for Animal Welfare), I became aware of the value of animal life and attempted to become a vegetarian. Unfortunately I did not succeed but instead became a polopescitarian (eating poultry and fish). My husband is a confirmed carnivore, but mainly we eat poultry and fish.

As noted above, we avoid the use of single use plastics in the form of food packaging, however I still use disposable cleaning cloths and wipes.

Following COP26, the Department for Education has prepared a draft document ‘Sustainability in Education’ which has recommendations addressing matters such as culture, curriculum, campus and community. As a school governor, this is something with which I will be involved.

For a number of years it has been the Local Authority’s policy to collect recycled waste from households. Waste is segregated into glass, plastic, metal, paper, cardboard, ‘green’ waste and non-recyclable waste.

A local garden centre provides, free of charge, used coffee granules. We take these to mix with our home-made compost for use at our allotment or in the garden. This also assists the garden centre as they are not disposing ‘waste’ products but are recycling them.

Where possible, we have installed light-efficient light bulbs.

Our boiler is eco-friendly; however the central heating system is old, needs cleaning out and the thermostats replacing.

The toilet has a low-flow flush. Water is turned off during teeth cleaning when it is not needed. We have showers instead of baths. Cold water coming from the faucet whilst waiting for it to run hot, is collected and used to water the greenhouse and garden.

When we buy food, we record the ‘use-by’ date on a calendar to ensure that we use it within its allotted time, rather than having to throw it away. Unfortunately, we still buy too much and some food is either given to family members or is thrown away.

Reflection

I feel that I am only ‘scraping the surface’ in living a sustainable life-style – here is much more I can do. The last part about throwing food away, is unacceptable. Details of how I intend to improve my life-style with particular regard to food use, waste disposal and our heating system are given in my Action Plan.

1. **Ecological Education**

Re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology so as to foster ecological awareness and transformative action.

As a former professional geologist and geotechnical engineer and a current phenologist with the Woodland Trust, I am aware of the previous and current land-use in my locality….and find it to be fascinating.

As part of my Laudato Si Animator’s key-stone project, I prepared an Ecumenical and Ecological Prayer Service for the Season of Creation (2021). Approximately 35 people attended the service which included an Ignation Examen. Afterwards, people came to me expressing their concern as they had been unaware previously of the climate crisis and social and ecological injustice..

I have met with the head teacher at the primary school where I am a Governor about the school obtaining the Cafod ‘Live Simply Award’. This addresses subjects such as solidarity with the poor, the cry of the Earth, sustainability etc.The Head has received appropriate training from Cafod and together we will work on this project.

Whilst growing up, our grand children regularly helped at our allotment. We taught them about the various forms of life there and how to respect and look after them. In one instance, I had to dissuade my youngest grand daughter from bringing home the slug she was cuddling in her hands….I had to laugh when she remonstrated….’But grandma, I have given it a name’. I persuaded her that it would be happier staying at its home.

Reflection

This is something that I have only just started to work on. I have worked with my family and once with my church community. I need to expand my involvement with Ecological Education to include other communities. Details of what I propose to do with regard to local ecology, prayer services and local schools are given in my Action Plan.

1. **Ecological Spirituality**

Springing from a profound ecological conversion, we discover God in all things – in the beauty of creation and in the sighs of the sick and groans of the afflicted, aware that the life of the spirit is not dissociated from worldly realities.

Approximately 35 years ago, I was professed as a Member of the Secular Franciscan Order. As a Franciscan, I respect all life, human, animal and plant and their environments, as God’s creation. God’s Holy Spirit flows through all life and it is my privilege and duty to care for all forms of life in whatever circumstances. Whilst training as a Laudato Si Animator, for my keystone project I prepared and organised an Ecological and Ecumenical Prayer Service during the ‘Season of Creation’ 2021. The theme of the service was ‘Our Common Home – Sharing the Oikos of God’. The Service was led by my Parish Priest and members from local Catholic and Non-Catholic churches attended. Included in the service was an Ignatian Examen on the affect of mankind’s activities on our common home, the Earth and its peoples and life-forms.

One of the parish primary schools has a nature garden. I have had preliminary discussions with the head-teacher about using part of the garden for prayer.

Reflection

Until now, I had regarded Spirituality as something private. Now I understand that it is something to be shared with others. I propose to expand my experience of spirituality to enable others, particularly those of my local churches and school, to share in the joy of God’s creation. Details are given in my Action Plan.

1. **Community Resilience and Empowerment**

These envisage a synodal journey of community engagement and participatory action at various levels.

Together with members of local Catholic churches, I have met with our local Member of Parliament to discuss matters such as:

* The progression of the UK Government with commitments made during COP26.
* Local litter problems
* Fuel poverty

Prior to COP26, I promoted Pope Francis’s petition for presentation to world leaders at the conference, by collecting signatures at church (on line), at my local fitness class, at my dance classes and from family members and friends.

Reflection

I have done little with regard to Community Resilience and Empowerment, in particular ‘action’. To be honest, it is not something that I feel completely happy with – I’m not sure which way to go. However, I have given some proposals in my Action Plan.

Linda Morris 8th March 2022