THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF LEXINGTON

LAUDATO SI' ACTION PLAN GUIDE

PENTECOST

MAY 19, 2024

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF LEXINGTON
THE CATHOLIC CENTER
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

How varied are your works, Lord! In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures. (Psalm 104:24)

To the Faithful of the Body of Christ in the Diocese of Lexington,

On this Pentecost Sunday, the fiftieth day of Easter and the day that we celebrate the birthday of the Church, we cry out with the universal Church and all of creation, "Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth." This prayer, coming from the Book of Psalms, is older than Christianity itself but takes on an enhanced meaning at this time in which we are so conscious of climate change and as we become increasingly aware of the need to commit ourselves to care for the earth and all its inhabitants. The coming of the Holy Spirit to the apostles and Mary, the event which we remember today, empowered the first disciples to step out of the comfort of their closed community and to begin the work of extending the mission of Jesus to the whole world. In this event, we see the cell of a community take on a global mission as evidenced by the variety of languages represented in the crowd in Jerusalem that day who heard Peter and the apostles speak. The Church is nurtured in community and created for mission.

On this Pentecost, let us remember that the Holy Spirit is often depicted as a dove, the very same animal sent by Noah to be certain that the flood waters had receded and to verify that the earth was beginning to regenerate with life. The dove's return with an olive branch indicated that life will continue, and the hope that all of nature could thrive once again. Both the olive branch and the dove are also used as symbols of peace. Today, we need to extend the olive branch of peace to the earth itself after long periods of exploiting her resources without concern for their replenishment. We also need to offer the olive branch of peace to those whose lives, health, and well-being have been affected by our exploitation of the earth – from the black lung disease so common in our part of the world, to the famine and hunger experienced in other places along with rising seas and melting glaciers, disappearing species and dried up water supplies, endangered coral and polluted skies. We need to begin to live and act as responsible stewards of this planet and in right-relationship with all our sisters and brothers in creation. And we need the help of the Holy Spirit to do so.

It was on another Pentecost Sunday, in 2019, that I released our Pastoral Plan for the Diocese. None of us at that time had any idea that in less than a year our lives would be dramatically affected by a virus. In that pre-pandemic time, the challenge of being a united Church was already evident. Our Pastoral Plan was inviting us to seek a deeper communion with our Triune God and with one another, which would be the source of our abiding unity. One of the five priorities identified in that plan was Stewardship, both of our natural world and of the resources entrusted to us as a local Church. On this Pentecost, and in direct continuity with our Pastoral Plan, I am calling the whole membership of the Diocese of Lexington to commit ourselves to a

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committed stewardship of what Pope Francis calls "our common home". I invite each of us to embrace the vision of Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Sí*, and the complementary spirituality in the People's Pastoral of Appalachia issued that same year. Both call us to hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth, and to be affected by what we hear.

Through the leadership of our Laudato Sí Commission in the Diocese and our Office of Peace and Justice, we have already begun to promote a deeper appreciation and reverence for the gift of creation, we have invited our young people who are so aware of and concerned about the ecological crisis to connect their positive efforts with the rich resources of our faith tradition, and we have seen that happen by planting trees and other environmentally positive activities.

The Dwelling Place Benedictine Monastery has provided opportunities for people across the diocese to experience an Appalachian Immersion and learn about the land and its people. Parishes like Saint Elizabeth in Ravenna and Holy Family in Booneville have installed solar panels; the Catholic Action Center in Lexington has done so as well. Other parishes have initiated or expanded recycling efforts, are performing energy audits, are cutting down on the use of disposable items, and educating themselves about the wonders of creation. Catholic Charities in Lexington has begun a garden on the grounds of the Catholic Center, both as a demonstration and to provide fresh and healthy food. And most recently, with the great assistance of our Net Zero committee of business, scientific, and community leaders, we have set ourselves on a path to make the diocesan properties carbon neutral by 2030.

Today, as we celebrate the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church, I am asking every parish and every entity, every family and every individual in our diocese to commit to a new relationship with creation. As we pray in our Responsorial Psalm today, when God sends forth his Spirit we live, and he renews the face of the earth. Come, Holy Spirit.

In the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, written during the pandemic, Pope Francis builds on the theme of caring for our common home and shares the larger dream of helping the whole human family to recognize that we are in fact brothers and sisters. This too was envisioned in our pastoral plan where we recognized the need to create a more inclusive Church and continue to strengthen the ecumenical ties that we have with other Christian communities, so that our profession of the Gospel would be more effective.

In the encyclical and in many of his homilies and writings, Pope Francis emphasizes how so many of the most important issues that we face in the world today are interconnected. For the Holy Father, these are all *"sanctity of life"* issues. A society that abuses creation and greedily consumes and disposes of material goods, only to make more disposable items with no concern sustainability nor effective management of waste, easily becomes capable of considering human life as a commodity that has become disposable – from the unborn to the aged or critically ill. The remedy, as affirmed by Scripture and Tradition, is to live in right relationship to God, to each other, and to all creation, and to affirm each human person as created in the image and likeness of God.

Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. We need to take up an ancient lesson, found in different religious traditions and also in the Bible. It is the conviction that 'less is more'. A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. To be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment. Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack. This implies avoiding the dynamic of dominion and the mere accumulation of pleasures. [Laudato Si, 222]

The plan that follows this letter is meant to help us make measurable progress in these very spiritual goals of reverence for life, reverence for creation, and the sustainable use of the goods that are created for the enjoyment of the whole human family. To offer the olive branch of peace to our planet will require the conversion of hearts, as well as societal policies to reduce our overall consumption of fossil fuels and to reduce the carbon output that is responsible for climate change.

Efforts by households to reduce pollution and waste and to be more modest in consumption, are beginning to create a new culture. The mere fact that personal, family and community habits are changing is contributing to greater concern about the unfulfilled responsibilities of the political sectors and indignation at the lack of interest shown by the powerful. Let us realize, then, that even though this does not immediately produce a notable effect from the quantitative standpoint, we are helping to bring about large processes of transformation rising from deep within society. [Laudate Deum, 71]

We might all do well to remember earlier generations of people on our land who were closer to the earth, who respected its cycles, seasons, and rhythms, and lived in harmony with them. Especially notable are our Native Americans whose spirituality is so identified with the cycles of nature. We would also do well to remember the creation story in our own Judeo-Christian tradition in which human beings, made in the image and likeness of God, are given dominion over creation – not to exploit, but to cultivate for the good of all.

Please read what follows here with an open mind and an open heart. May it become a key part of the lived expression of our faith, and help us to grow in faith while helping to keep our common home in condition to sustain future generations.

The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that

things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. Here I want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the home which we share. Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world's poorest. Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded. [Laudato Si, 13]

Come, Holy Spirit!

Catholic Diocese of Lexington
Laudato Si' Action Plan

Introduction

In his recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis calls on the Church to respond to the environmental crisis with urgent and decisive action. Climate change, he says, "is no longer a secondary or ideological question, but a drama that harms us all" (3) as "the world in which we live is collapsing" (2). This grave reality demands serious action on every level and a bold commitment from the Church. In response to this call from Pope Francis, the Catholic Diocese of Lexington commits to developing and implementing a new diocesan Laudato Si' Action Plan over the course of 2024-2025.

The process of the plan will follow three simple steps: *reflection*, *action*, and *evaluation*. The structure of the plan will take on synodal elements and will emphasize the practice of subsidiarity, relying on discernment and implementation at the local level. The diocesan plan will include a synthesis of the commitments discerned by parishes and participating ministries. Parish and ministry plans will be the fruit of listening and community engagement, and locations will receive support and accompaniment from the Office of Peace and Justice throughout the entire process. Along with responding to the urgent call from Pope Francis, this plan will reflect the vision of our own diocesan pastoral plan, *A Community of Missionary Disciples*, which prioritizes faithful stewardship in the care for creation and use of church resources.

The plan will also foster solidarity with the Universal Church. Each parish and participating ministry will enroll in and submit their plans through the Laudato Si' Action Platform. The Laudato Si' Action Platform has been promulgated by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. By participating in the Platform, the Catholic Diocese of Lexington will respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor in communion with the Body of Christ throughout the world.

Process and Timeline

Summary

On May 19, 2024, Pentecost, each parish and participating ministry receives a letter from Bishop John introducing the plan and the role of parishes and ministries within its development. This letter also includes the expectations for participation from all parishes/missions and the timeline for the plan's implementation.

All parishes and participating ministries are asked to enroll in the Laudato Si' Action Platform, assemble an Action Team, and conduct a listening session by the start of the Season of Creation (September 1, 2024). During the Season of Creation, teams develop and submit their parish Laudato Si' Action Plans (no later than October 4, 2024). A synthesis of the Laudato Si' Action Plans of individual locations will feature

within the Catholic Diocese of Lexington Laudato Si' Action Plan, which will be published on January 1, 2025.

May 19, 2024- August 31, 2024

Reflection

To get started, parishes enroll in the Laudato Si' Action Platform. While this platform offers many resources, parishes are only required to enroll in and submit their plan on the platform. *Any additional engagement with the platform is optional.* All materials needed for the plan process are provided by the diocese and can be found in the Document Appendix.

During this first planning stage, parishes and ministries assemble a Parish/Ministry Laudato Si' Action Team. The Parish/Ministry Laudato Si' Action Team will lead the parish/ministry in developing their location's Laudato Si' Action Plan. The size and shape of the team is determined at the local level and should seek to be as inclusive and empowering as possible. At a minimum, the Action Team should include the pastor/ parish life director and two parishioners. A new group could be formed or the team may be drawn from an existing group at the parish, like the pastoral council, care for creation team, peace and justice committee, respect life group, etc. (the Diocesan Laudato Si' Commission has already been working to build up Care for Creation Circles in many parishes).

The pastor/parish life director will appoint a Laudato Si' Coordinator for the team or serve in that role if needed. The coordinator will oversee the development and implementation of the plan, lead an annual evaluation, and serve as the point of contact for the diocese regarding this initiative.

Mission churches may either create their own team and plan or work with the parishes to which they are connected. When diocesan schools are connected to a parish, their plans should be developed as part of the parish plan; otherwise, school plans are done in coordination with the Secretariat for Catholic Schools.

Contact information for the team should be submitted to the Office of Peace and Justice as soon as the team is appointed and no later than June 10. The team roster may be updated along the way but at least a 3-person team should be in place by June 10.

After the team has been formed, it works to complete an initial assessment of the parish. The Assessment asks the team to reflect on how their parish is already living the goals of Laudato Si' and how the parish might grow in its care for creation. *Please note: All teams should use the Parish Assessment found in the Document Appendix. This Assessment has been designed specifically for our diocese.*

The Parish Laudato Si' Action Team also plans a Listening Session for the wider parish. The listening session asks parishioners to engage the seven goals of Laudato Si' and to

reflect on their parish's concrete commitment to care for creation. A guide for the Listening Session can be found in the Document Appendix. Notes from the Listening Session should be submitted to the Office of Peace and Justice no later than September 1.

The Peace and Justice Office will accompany parishes by offering a series of webinars to address concrete elements of discerning, developing, and implementing a Laudato Si' Action Plan. All webinars will be recorded and published on cdlex.org. These resources will be made available to parishes, but attendance is not required.

- Introduction and Enrolling in the Laudato Si' Action Platform
- Conducting a Listening Session
- Integrating Laudato Si' in Preaching and Liturgical Celebrations
- Greening our Parish Facilities
- Developing Parish Policy and Guidelines
- Encountering Affected Communities: The Global Reality of the Climate Crisis
- Making a Laudato Si' Action Plan

Season of Creation 2024 (September 1- October 4, 2024)

Action

The Parish/Ministry Laudato Si' Action Team will use the information garnered from the Parish Assessment and Listening Session to create a Parish/Ministry Laudato Si' Action Plan. This plan should be uploaded to the Laudato Si' Action Platform and submitted to the Peace and Justice Office as well as directly to Bishop John as soon as it is ready and no later than October 4, 2024. Once the plan has been developed and communicated within the parish/ministry, it may be implemented within the timeline determined by the location's leadership team.

Parishes and ministries across the diocese will mark the Season of Creation 2024 in special ways. Throughout the Season of Creation, the Diocesan Laudato Si' Commission will offer programs to help the faithful deepen their understanding and practice of caring for creation. Parishes may also consider planning their own gatherings or events to mark this special time of year.

January 1, 2025

On January 1, 2025, the Diocesan Laudato Si' Action Plan will be published. The diocesan plan will include a pastoral letter from Bishop John on Care for Creation, a synthesis of the commitments made by parishes and participating ministries across the diocese, and an articulation of commitments made by the Catholic Diocese of Lexington as a whole.

Following the release of the Diocesan Laudato Si' Action Plan, parishes, ministries and diocesan entities will begin or continue to enact their plans along the timelines they have developed.

Season of Creation 2025 Onward

Evaluation

Yearly evaluations will take place at both the diocesan and individual parish/ministry level. The first diocesan self-assessment will take place in October 2025 and a One Year Progress Report will be shared with the diocese by January 1, 2026. Each year during the Season of Creation, the Catholic Diocese of Lexington will offer resources to assist parishes in the process of evaluating and updating plans. The Laudato Si' Action Platform suggests that parishes perform annual evaluations and updates to their plan for a minimum of 7 years.

Timeline Summary

May 19- August 31, 2024

- ✓ **Pentecost Letter from Bishop John (May 19, 2024).** The letter introduces the Laudato Si' Action Plan process and outlines expectations for all parishes to participate.

- ✓ **Parishes enroll in the Laudato Si' Action Platform.** https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/register/

- ✓ **Parishes assemble Laudato Si' Action Teams:** This includes the pastor/parish life director and a minimum of two parishioners. It could be formed from an existing group in the parish or a new group could be formed for this initiative. Mission churches may either create their own team and plan or work with the parishes to which they are connected.

- ✓ **Team member information sent to Peace and Justice Office by June 10.** While members may be added along the way, a team of at least 3 people should be appointed by June 10, 2024.

- ✓ **Laudato Si' Action Team completes Parish Assessment**. The Assessment is provided by the diocese (see Document Appendix).

- ✓ **Parishes host a Listening Session.** Listening session materials are provided by the diocese (see Document Appendix). Notes from the Listening Session are to be emailed to the Peace and Justice Office by September 1, 2024.

- ✓ **The diocese will offer a series of webinars to assist parish leadership in the process.** (10 am on May 28, June 11, June 18, July 9, July 23, August 6, August 20).

- ✓ **Diocesan Laudato Si' Commission supports Laudato Si' Action Teams with virtual gatherings.**

Season of Creation 2024 (September 1- October 4, 2024)

- ✓ **Parish Laudato Si' Action Teams develop parish plan.** Plans are to be emailed by October 4 to Bishop John and the Peace and Justice Office and submitted on the Laudato Si' Action Platform dashboard.

- ✓ **Diocesan Laudato Si' Commission events celebrate the Season of Creation.** Parishes may also consider planning their own gatherings or events to mark this special time of year.

January 1, 2025

- ✓ **The Catholic Diocese of Lexington Laudato Si' Action Plan is published.** The diocesan plan will include a pastoral letter from Bishop John on Care for Creation, a synthesis of the commitments made by parishes and participating ministries across the diocese, and an articulation of commitments made by the Catholic Diocese of Lexington as a whole.

Season of Creation 2025 and Beyond

- ✓ **Parishes will complete an annual evaluation and update of their plan during the Season of Creation.**

Catholic Diocese of Lexington
Laudato Si' Action Plan
Document Appendix

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Catholic Diocese of Lexington
Laudato Si' Action Plan
Webinar Schedule

1) **Introduction and Enrolling in the Laudato Si' Action Platform**
   Date May 28, 2024
   Time: 10 am EST
   Presenter: Joshua van Cleef, Director, Peace and Justice Office

2) **Conducting a Listening Session**
   Date: June 11, 2024
   Time 10am EST
   Presenter: Kathy Mattone, Diocesan Synod Team

3) **Integrating Laudato Si' in Preaching and Liturgical Celebrations**
   Date: June 18, 2024
   Time: 10am EST
   Presenter: Fr. Dan Noll, Vicar General

4) **Greening our Parish Facilities**
   Date: July 9, 2024
   Time: 10am EST
   Presenter: Ed Davis, Director, Property and Plant

5) **Developing Parish Policy and Guidelines**
   Date: July 23, 2024
   Time: 10am EST
   Presenter: Doug Culp, Chancellor

6) **Encountering Affected Communities: The Global Reality of the Climate Crisis**
   Date: August 6, 2024
   Time: 10am EST
   Presenter: Anna Johnson, Senior Program Manager, Laudato Si' Movement

7) **Making a Laudato Si' Action Plan**
   Date: August 20th
   Time: 10am EST
   Presenter: Paz Artaza-Regan, Program Manager, Catholic Climate Covenant

Zoom Link for Webinars: Each meeting will use this same recurring link.

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84115656424?pwd=AejqunhqJq19aCf5xj7qctSyQB0EtF.1
Meeting ID: 841 1565 6424
Passcode: 318132

Parish Assessment

THE PARISH LAUDATO SI' ACTION TEAM
REFLECTS ON THE SEVEN GOALS OF LAUDATO SI'

GOAL 1: RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE EARTH

The Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability.

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Seal or caulk around windows and door frames
- Turn off light sources when not needed (use timers and motion detectors)
- Lower water consumption
- Replace all lightbulbs with LED bulbs
- Purchase power strips to turn off electronics when not in use
- Host or participate in litter removal days in the local community
- Eliminate the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides
- Plant pollinator plants, gardens, and conservation landscaping
- Begin a parish composting program
- Install solar panels on property
- Utilize EPA's ENERGY STAR ratings when replacing or buying new appliances
- Purchase a programmable thermostat to reduce heating or cooling when not in use
- Retrofit kitchens and bathrooms by installing low-flow sinks and toilets
- Conduct an energy audit

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 2: RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE POOR

The Response to the Cry of the Poor is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth.

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Strengthen outreach program to address the short-term needs of vulnerable populations in your community (example: food pantry)
- Support charity programs to help and assist vulnerable persons, such as Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Campaign for Human Development
- Develop or expand parish emergency funds to help individuals with energy, water, and other bills
- Send groups on the Appalachian Immersion Experience with the Laudato Si' Commission

- Explore local ecological educational opportunities in your community to learn about environmental justice
- Help with a local clean the waterways project or other environmental projects
- Promote Catholics at the Capitol with the Catholic Conference of Kentucky and other forms of political advocacy
- Promote Rice Bowl participation during Lent and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development Collection on World Day of the Poor

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 3: ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

Ecological Economics acknowledges that the economy plays an important role in protecting the well-being of our common home. Actions could include purchasing sustainably produced goods, ethical investments, and protecting the dignity of workers.

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Buy locally produced and prepared food whenever possible
- Buy fair trade coffee and other food/drink
- Support local businesses with ethical wages and commitment to sustainability
- Purchase "green products" including cleaning products, office supplies, and kitchen items
- Transition parish vehicles to hybrid or electric

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 4: ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

The Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles is grounded in the idea that in our personal lives and in parish life, we can make intentional choices regarding our use of resources and energy that can promote the well-being of the planet

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Eliminate single use plastics
- Use reusable coffee filters
- Reduce food waste (example: send all leftover foods to the homeless shelter or home with participants)
- Reduce the purchase of new consumer goods (buy used)
- Reduce meat consumption
- Eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags and styrofoam whenever possible
- Develop recycling program for the parish
- Recycle electronics
- Reduce paper use whenever possible
- Purchase office supplies made from natural or recyclable materials
- Install water fountains

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 5: ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Ecological Education prioritizes formation and educational opportunities that promote ecological awareness and transformative action.

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Watch “The Letter” and have a group discussion
- Host a speaker on Care for Creation themes
- Organize local environmental educational trips.
- Create or expand parish and school libraries to feature a variety of books that provide guidance and resources for this work and that embrace the vision of Laudato Si’
- Incorporate justice and care for our common home into faith formation programs (youth, adults, RCIA, etc.)
- Read and discuss Laudato Si' and Laudate Deum
- Include Care for Creation in parish school science and religion curriculum

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 6: ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY

Ecological Spirituality springs from a profound ecological conversion and helps us to "discover God in all things".

"God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness and beauty - this is the glory for which God created them" (CCC 319).

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Include Care for Creation intentions to the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass
- Offer prayer experiences outdoors
- Host Season of Creation events
- Host an animal blessing on the Feast of St. Francis (Oct. 4)
- Bless gardens or natural prayer spaces at the parish
- Regularly include homilies on Care for Creation themes
- Highlight Care for Creation in a variety of formats: bulletin announcements, parish social media pages, youth ministry, Religious Education classes, RCIA preparation, Adult Formation opportunities, coffee and donuts after Mass
- Create an outdoor prayer space (prayer garden, stations of the cross, etc.)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 7: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND EMPOWERMENT

Community resilience and empowerment promotes active and conscious involvement and participatory action to care for creation at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Start a peace and justice/ social action committee at the parish or on the parish pastoral council
- Collaborate with ecumenical and interfaith groups on Care for Creation initiatives
- Start a Care for Creation Team
- Participate in BUILD or other faith-based community action groups
- Organize ecological events for Earth Day
- Use parish and parish school communication channels to spread the message of Laudato Si'
- Utilize Flocknote, parish Facebook pages, and other social media to put Laudato Si' teaching/learning into action
- Connect with environmental justice issues in your local community and collaborate with groups working on these issues

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

Catholic Diocese of Lexington
Laudato Si' Action Plan
Listening Session Guide

Introduction

Engaging the local community is an essential element of developing a plan. Participation from parishioners in the Listening Session enables each parish plan to reflect the voices, passions, and capacity of the community. The Listening Session format provided here includes reflection on the seven goals of Laudato Si' in light of the task of preparing the parish plan, as well as sharing on three key questions. The responses to these three prayerfully considered questions will aid the parish's Laudato Si' Action Team as they discern next steps in their parish's commitment to the care for creation. Parishioners, too, will hopefully feel their voices heard and so desire to engage further with any efforts or initiatives that eventually feature in the parish's Laudato Si' Action Plan.

A webinar on how to lead a listening session will also be held on Tuesday, June 11 at 10am and the recording will be posted on the diocesan website.

Flow of the Listening Session

- **Opening Prayer:** The Listening Session begins in prayer. The facilitator may choose a prayer provided below or lead their own.

- **Individual Reflection:** After prayer, participants should be given some quiet time to reflect individually on the Listening Session Handout. This document introduces the seven goals of Laudato Si' and invites parishioners to reflect on three questions as they contemplate the goals:
    - Why is caring for creation important to us as people of faith?
    - How does our parish already practice the goals of Laudato Si'?
    - How can our parish better practice these goals?

- **Setting Ground Rules:** Before the sharing begins, the facilitator lays out ground rules for the discussion. While listening to one another, the group is also listening to the Holy Spirit. Arguing or debating is not the purpose of this gathering and every effort should be made by the facilitator to foster an inclusive and safe environment for listening and sharing.
    - Listening Session Ground Rules
        - Show respect for one another (no criticism or judgment).
        - Be courteous; only one person may talk at a time.
        - No one is required to talk, but participation is encouraged.
        - Be brief in responses and allow ample time for everyone to share.

    - The purpose of the Listening Session is not to debate, but rather to listen and surface concrete ideas for the plan. Be positive and constructive.

- **Listening and Sharing:** After a suitable time for individual reflection and an establishment of ground rules for the conversation, the facilitator will invite parishioners to share their thoughts on the three key questions mentioned above. Parish leadership and the Laudato Si' Action Team should be present and visible to listen to the concerns and ideas of parishioners. One team member will take notes which should be submitted to the Peace and Justice Office no later than September 1. The notes submitted should follow the format of the Listening Session Note Taking sheet provided in the Document Appendix.

- **Closing Prayer**: The facilitator should thank all participants for their reflection and sharing before drawing the session to a close with prayer. A closing prayer can be found below or the facilitator may provide their own.

Please note: The central elements of this listening session are prayer, reflecting on the Listening Session Handout, sharing, and note taking. Please plan a listening session that fits the reality of your parish.

Laudato Si' Listening Session Best Practices

Listen - Avoid Teaching and Preaching
The facilitator's role is to animate group reflection and sharing, not to share their opinion or sway the group toward any particular viewpoint. The facilitator helps the group maintain focus and keeps the session moving.

Begin and End on Time
Be respectful of participants' time. Plan ahead for how long the listening session will last and allot appropriate time for each part of the session.

Take Notes
One Parish Laudato Si' Action Team member will take notes which should be submitted to the Peace and Justice Office no later than September 1. The notes submitted should follow the format of the Listening Session Note Taking sheet.

Review the ground rules with session participants:
- Show respect for one another (no criticism or judgment).
- Be courteous; only one person may talk at a time.
- No one is required to talk, but participation is encouraged.
- Be brief in responses and allow ample time for everyone to share.
- The purpose of the Listening Session is not to debate, but rather to listen and surface concrete ideas for the plan. Be positive and constructive.

Quick Tips:

Set the scene:
Create a prayerful environment, perhaps by displaying a Bible, lighting a candle, using a plant as a centering point for the room, or including other physical objects that set the tone for the experience.

If someone dominates the discussion:
Learn the art of interruption: "*Excuse me, before you continue may I ask if anyone has a comment?"*

If the group strays off the topic:
"This is an important topic, but we don't have time to talk about it here."

If the discussion becomes too heated:
Remind participants that the purpose of the Listening Session is not to debate or to change others' perspectives but to listen and share concrete ideas that can aid the formation of the parish Laudato Si' Action Plan.

**Ground Rules and Tips adapted from the Diocese of Allentown Synod Listening Session Guide*

Optional Listening Session Opening and Closing Prayers

Prayer from Pope Francis in Laudato Si':

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle

for justice, love and peace. Amen.

Prayer in Video Format:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=LbBYMlkCsi4

Laudate Deum Prayer from the USCCB

We praise you, O God, Creator of all things,
whose mystery unfolds in “a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face.”
Jesus, your Son, taught us to wonder
as he made his way throughout the land, contemplating the beauty of creation.
We pray, O God, that you may stir in us
a reverent awareness of our invisible link with the entire created world.
We pray for humility—
to remember that we, too, are created and are not creation’s masters.
We pray for compassion—
for open eyes and hearts to welcome those forced to flee from their homes due to rising sea levels and drought.
We pray for repentance—
so that our thirst for power and domination may be transformed into service.
We pray for simplicity—
and the will to turn from our greed which impacts vulnerable people everywhere.
We pray for cultural conversion—
that we may simplify our lifestyles, reduce pollution and waste, and exercise prudence in our decision making.
We pray for policy changes—
that as a nation and world we may work together to reverse the course of climate change.
Our hearts ache as we ponder:
“The world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it?”
We praise you, O God,
confident that you work in our hearts and through our actions, so that we may better care for our common home.
Amen

Listening Session Handout

A TIME OF LISTENING AND SHARING ON PARISH LAUDATO SI' PRACTICES

GOAL 1: RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE EARTH

The Response to the Cry of the Earth is a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability.

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Seal or caulk around windows and door frames
- Turn off light sources when not needed (use timers and motion detectors)
- Lower water consumption
- Replace all lightbulbs with LED bulbs
- Purchase power strips to turn off electronics when not in use
- Host or participate in litter removal days in the local community
- Eliminate the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides

- Plant pollinator plants, gardens, and conservation landscaping
- Begin a parish composting program
- Install solar panels on property
- Utilize EPA's ENERGY STAR ratings when replacing or buying new appliances
- Purchase a programmable thermostat to reduce heating or cooling when not in use
- Retrofit kitchens and bathrooms by installing low-flow sinks and toilets
- Conduct an energy audit

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 2: RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE POOR

The Response to the Cry of the Poor is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth.

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Strengthen outreach program to address the short-term needs of vulnerable populations in your community (example: food pantry)
- Support charity programs to help and assist vulnerable persons, such as Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Campaign for Human Development
- Develop or expand parish emergency funds to help individuals with energy, water, and other bills
- Send groups on the Appalachian Immersion Experience with the Laudato Si' Commission

- Explore local ecological educational opportunities in your community to learn about environmental justice
- Help with a local clean the waterways project or other environmental projects
- Promote Catholics at the Capitol with the Catholic Conference of Kentucky and other forms of political advocacy
- Promote Rice Bowl participation during Lent and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development Collection on World Day of the Poor

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 3: ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

Ecological Economics acknowledges that the economy plays an important role in protecting the well-being of our common home. Actions could include purchasing sustainability produced goods, ethical investments, and protecting the dignity of workers.

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Buy locally produced and prepared food whenever possible
- Buy fair trade coffee and other food/drink
- Support local businesses with ethical wages and commitment to sustainability
- Purchase "green products" including cleaning products, office supplies, and kitchen items
- Transition parish vehicles to hybrid or electric

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 4: ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

The Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles is grounded in the idea that in our personal lives and in parish life, we can make intentional choices regarding our use of resources and energy that can promote the well-being of the planet

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Eliminate single use plastics
- Use reusable coffee filters
- Reduce food waste (example: send all leftover foods to the homeless shelter or home with participants)
- Reduce the purchase of new consumer goods (buy used)
- Reduce meat consumption
- Eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags and styrofoam whenever possible
- Develop recycling program for the parish
- Recycle electronics
- Reduce paper use whenever possible
- Purchase office supplies made from natural or recyclable materials
- Install water fountains

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 5: ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Ecological Education prioritizes formation and educational opportunities that promote ecological awareness and transformative action.

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Watch “The Letter” and have a group discussion
- Host a speaker on Care for Creation themes
- Organize local environmental educational trips.
- Create or expand parish and school libraries to feature a variety of books that provide guidance and resources for this work and that embrace the vision of Laudato Si’
- Incorporate justice and care for our common home into faith formation programs (youth, adults, RCIA, etc.)
- Read and discuss Laudato Si' and Laudate Deum
- Include Care for Creation in parish school science and religion curriculum

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 6: ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY

Ecological Spirituality springs from a profound ecological conversion and helps us to "discover God in all things".

"God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness and beauty - this is the glory for which God created them" (CCC 319).

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Include Care for Creation intentions to the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass
- Offer prayer experiences outdoors
- Host Season of Creation events
- Host an animal blessing on St. Francis Day
- Bless gardens or natural prayer spaces at the parish
- Regularly include homilies on Care for Creation themes
- Highlight Care for Creation in a variety of formats: bulletin announcements, parish social media pages, youth ministry, Religious Education classes, RCIA preparation, Adult Formation opportunities, coffee and donuts after Mass
- Create an outdoor prayer space (prayer garden, stations of the cross, etc.)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

GOAL 7: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND EMPOWERMENT

Community resilience and empowerment promotes active and conscious involvement and participatory action to care for creation at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

Some ways of practicing this goal are :

- Start a peace and justice/ social action committee at the parish or on the parish pastoral council
- Collaborate with ecumenical and interfaith groups on Care for Creation initiatives
- Start a Care for Creation Team
- Participate in BUILD or other faith-based community action groups
- Organize ecological events for Earth Day
- Use parish and parish school communication channels to spread the message of Laudato Si'
- Utilize Flocknote, parish Facebook pages, and other social media to put Laudato Si' teaching/learning into action
- Connect with environmental justice issues in your local community and collaborate with groups working on these issues

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does our parish already practice this goal?

2. How can our parish better practice this goal?

PROMPTS FOR GROUP REFLECTION

- Why is caring for creation important to us as a faith community?

- How does our parish already practice the goals of Laudato Si'? (Include specific examples)

- How can our parish better practice these goals? (Include specific examples)

Catholic Diocese of Lexington
Laudato Si' Action Plan
Listening Session Note Taking Sheet

Instructions: Please type up the Listening Session Notes from your parish and email them to the Peace and Justice Office (jvancleef@cdlex.org) no later than September 1, 2024. Use the following format for submissions:

Parish Name:
Date of Listening Session:
Listening Session Facilitator:
Listening Session Note Taker:

Notes from Group Sharing:

1) Why is caring for creation important to us as a faith community?

2) How does our parish already practice the goals of Laudato Si'? (Include specific examples)

3) How can our parish better practice these goals? (Include specific examples)

Catholic Diocese of Lexington
Parish Laudato Si' Action Plan
Plan Format

Plan Instruction

At this point, the Parish Laudato Si' Action Team discerns the concrete commitments to include in the location's plan. During the Parish Assessment and the Listening Session, ways that the parish already practices the goals of Laudato Si' were named and ideas for new initiatives surfaced. Both these existing parish practices and possible new initiatives may be included in the plan as parish *commitments*.

The plan should be structured according to the format found in this document and must be endorsed by the pastor/parish life director. The plan contains two main sections:

- *Parish Laudato Si' Statement:* This statement grounds the plan in the ministry of the parish, the diocese, and the Church. The fruit of listening and prayerful reflection, this statement articulates why caring for creation is important to this particular parish community.

- *Naming Parish Commitments:* This portion of the plan invites the team to articulate concrete initiatives to practice each of the seven goals of Laudato Si'. Some may be already existing practices and others will be new initiatives. All commitments in the parish plan should follow the acronym SMART. They should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant to the goals of Laudato Si', and **T**ime-bound. Having measurable goals with time-frames will help each parish evaluate their progress.

The plan should be submitted to Bishop John as well as the Office of Peace and Justice by October 4, 2024. Each parish plan should also be uploaded to the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

Once the plan is developed and submitted, it may be implemented within the timeline determined by the location's leadership team.

Please type your parish plan and format it according to the format found below. Following this format will allow for continuity in plans across the diocese. If you have any questions, please contact Joshua van Cleef at jvancleef@cdlex.org or (859) 253-1993 ext. 1040.

Laudato Si' Action Plan Format

Parish Name:
Address:
Diocese:
Date:
Laudato Si' Parish Coordinator Name and Contact Information:
Laudato Si' Action Team Members (Names):

Parish Laudato Si' Statement:

The Parish Laudato Si' Statement articulates why the care for creation is important to the parish and sets a vision for its commitments.

Goal 1: Response to the Cry of the Earth

We commit to the following efforts to embrace this goal as a parish:

For each commitment please include

- *Description of the action/ activity*
- *Timeframe for its implementation (or continuation, if it is an existing parish practice)*
- *Person or group responsible (if known)*

Goal 2: Response to the Cry of the Poor

We commit to the following efforts to embrace this goal as a parish:

For each commitment please include

- *Description of the action/ activity*
- *Timeframe for its implementation (or continuation, if it is an existing parish practice)*
- *Person or group responsible (if known)*

Goal 3: Ecological Economics

We commit to the following efforts to embrace this goal as a parish:

For each commitment please include

- *Description of the action/ activity*
- *Timeframe for its implementation (or continuation, if it is an existing parish practice)*
- *Person or group responsible (if known)*

Goal 4: Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles

We commit to the following efforts to embrace this goal as a parish:

For each commitment please include

- *Description of the action/ activity*
- *Timeframe for its implementation (or continuation, if it is an existing parish practice)*
- *Person or group responsible (if known)*

Goal 5: Ecological Education

We commit to the following efforts to embrace this goal as a parish:

For each commitment please include

- *Description of the action/ activity*
- *Timeframe for its implementation (or continuation, if it is an existing parish practice)*
- *Person or group responsible (if known)*

Goal 6: Ecological Spirituality

We commit to the following efforts to embrace this goal as a parish:

For each commitment please include

- *Description of the action/ activity*
- *Timeframe for its implementation (or continuation, if it is an existing parish practice)*
- *Person or group responsible (if known)*

Goal 7: Community Resilience and Empowerment

We commit to the following efforts to embrace this goal as a parish:

For each commitment please include

- *Description of the action/ activity*
- *Timeframe for its implementation (or continuation, if it is an existing parish practice)*
- *Person or group responsible (if known)*

Submitted on: (Date)

Pastor/Parish Life Director Endorsement: (Signature)

LAUDATO SI' ACTION PLAN CHECKLIST

- [ ] Enroll in the Laudato Si' Action Platform
- [ ] Assemble Parish Laudato Si' Action Team
- [ ] Submit Team info to the Peace and Justice Office (deadline: June 10, 2024)
- [ ] Team Completes Parish Assessment
- [ ] Conduct a Parish-wide Listening Session (deadline: August 31, 2024)
- [ ] Submit Listening Session Notes to the Peace and Justice Office (deadline: September 1, 2024)
- [ ] Submit Parish Laudato Si' Action Plan to Bishop John (deadline: October 4, 2024)
- [ ] Submit Parish Laudato Si' Action Plan to the Peace and Justice Office (deadline: October 4, 2024)
- [ ] Upload Plan to Laudato Si' Action Platform (deadline: October 4, 2024)

Questions ?
Contact Joshua van Cleef, Director, Office of Peace and Justice at jvancleef@cdlex.org or (859) 253-1993 Ext. 1040

Catholic Diocese of Lexington
Laudato Si' Action Plan
Website Links

1. **Laudato Si'**

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

2. **Laudate Deum**

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html

3. **A Community of Missionary Disciples: A Pastoral Plan for the Catholic Diocese of Lexington**

https://cdlex.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/cdlex-pastoral.pdf

4. **Laudato' Si Action Platform**

https://laudatosiactionplatform.org

5. **Laudato Si' Movement**

https://laudatosimovement.org

6. **Catholic Climate Covenant**

https://catholicclimatecovenant.org

7. **The Letter: A Message for Our Earth**

https://www.theletterfilm.org

8. **A Prayer for Our Earth by Pope Francis in Laudato Si'**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=LbBYMlkCsi4

Contact:
Peace and Justice Office, Catholic Diocese of Lexington
Joshua van Cleef, Director
(859) 253-1993 Ext. 1040
jvancleef@cdlex.org