



Sisters of Charity
of Australia

Religious Sisters of Charity of Australia

Care of our Common Home

The Congregation and Laudato Si'

As a result of dialogue and submissions from Sisters at the Congregation's 28th General Chapter in March 2021, the Congregational Leader and Council initiated the Care of our Common Home Committee.

Members of the Committee are appointed for three years as from September 1st 2021.

WHAT DOES THE LAUDATO SI' ENCYCLICAL, 2015, CALL US TO AS SISTERS OF CHARITY?

Quite simply, we are asked to move from environmental consciousness to ecological conversion in order to save and revive our Planet, Earth.

With the revised Norm of our Fourth Vow of Service of the Poor as our backdrop and our focus on our Chapter Direction Statement and the Laudato Si' Goals we move forward to our Commitment to the Cosmic Christ.



OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR COMMON HOME

We hear the cry of creation in living our fourth Vow.

In the face of climate emergency, we embrace a moral imperative, and claim our responsibility to be informed, to educate, to advocate and to act.

In a spirit of deep listening and learning we commit to a more just future.

OUR CONSTITUTIONS *Revised and updated 22 July 2020*

...Impelled by the love of Christ, and in the spirit of Mary Aikenhead, we commit ourselves by a fourth vow to respond creatively to the current and emerging needs of the poor.

We recognise the essential link between the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth.

We fulfil this vow by works of charity and mercy. Inasmuch as our resources allow, we respond to the needs both of human beings and the earth - our common home. **Norm 25.**

WORDS FROM OUR FOUNDRESS, VENERABLE MARY AIKENHEAD



"Let us value the great gift of creation and do our best to conserve it."

Letter to Mother Mary Baptist Griffin, 25th May 1854.

"See," she would say as she lovingly touched a little flower or leaf, "See the impress of His fingers." Everything that God's hand had touched appealed to her heart.

Breakfast Reading, St Vincent's Convent, Potts Point 1938. August 5th entry.

CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME COMMITTEE

Srs Elizabeth Dodds, Kathleen Dooan, Margaret Guy, Anne Taylor, Margaret Valentine, Karan Varker

THE COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

With listening hearts, we will respond to the cry of creation and its poor.

We will collaborate with our sisters and partners.

We will strive to become more environmentally conscious and impelled towards ecological conversion.

THE LAUDATO SI' GOALS AND OUR ACTION PLAN

THE ACTION PLAN aims to address the seven goals that are embedded in the Laudato Si' encyclical:



Care of our Common Home Committee 2021 —>

Response to
the Cry of the
Earth

1. Response to the Cry of the Earth

Addressing climate change, biodiversity loss and ecological sustainability.

Actions suggested:

- i. Pray for all people, especially those in decision making positions, to realise the fragility of our world.
- ii. Participate in petitions to preserve our flora and fauna, oceans and rivers, the Great Barrier Reef, integrity of the land which belongs to our First Peoples. Petition against fracking, coal mines. Send letters of congratulations to those companies who have engaged in activities to help regenerate or care for our environment.
- iii. Grow in understanding and reflect on our 4th vow: the interconnection of cry of the poor and the cry of earth.

Response to
the Cry of the
Poor

2. Response to the Cry of the Poor

Eliminating poverty with special attention to vulnerable groups and the defence of all forms of life on Earth.

Actions suggested:

- i. Always treat others with dignity, affording them their rights, being non-exclusive or exploitative and encouraging all people to do likewise.
- ii. Connect with First Nation peoples/organisations to learn about their strengths and challenges as they identify them, and ways we, as RSC, can support them, understanding their spirituality and connectedness to land.
- iii. Advocate and lobby for indigenous groups, refugees, migrants, children at risk and those who are trafficked. Support these in whatever ways we can e.g., spending time with them, forming relationships and partnerships and networking where necessary.
- iv. Contribute food to local foodbanks and/or contribute funding to local/international financial appeals e.g., flood, bushfire, homelessness.

Ecological
Economics

3. Ecological Economics

Developing an economy that benefits all of creation.

Actions suggested:

- i. Commit to reduce energy consumption, e.g., by finding ways to reduce petrol consumption/air travel; switching all appliances off at the wall at the end of the day; reduce air conditioning/heaters by 1 degree.
- ii. Purchase more consciously: – fair trade, ethically sourced and slavery free goods including food. For supplies and clothing use the 2021 Ethical Fashion Guide: <http://baptistworldaid.org.au/resources/ethical-fashion-guide>
- iii. Find ways to ensure that as a Congregation we are committed to renewable energy companies and other organisations which support care of the environment.
- iv. Change utility bills to a renewable energy company.

Adoption of
Sustainable
Lifestyles

4. Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles

Encouraging people to live simply so that there is enough for all.

Actions suggested:

- i. Examine our lifestyle for excess. How can we as RSC leave a smaller footprint on earth? Examine our usage in such areas as energy, water, food, transport, air travel, paper usage etc.
- ii. Buy more thoughtfully; look for goods that have less packaging e.g., fruit/ vegetables. Buy body wash bars, shampoo and conditioner bars – these older practices eliminate plastic bottles. Buy refillable coffee capsules, bamboo toothbrushes, reusable coffee cups. Buy less clothing but better quality or recycled.

4. Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles *(continued)*

- iii. Think of the five Rs of Zero Waste – Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose and Recycle. How can we as RSC implement Zero Waste into our lives and into the Congregational offices and spaces we use as our homes or for other purposes?
- iv. Build a collection of environmentally friendly household items e.g., shopping bags made from recycled fabrics rather than plastic; use smaller bags for fruit/vegetables; use glass containers, stainless steel pegs, wool drying balls for clothes dryer.
- v. Commit to using locally sourced produce and supplies from local growers' markets. Collect and share recipes which can use local plant-based products rather than meat.

Ecological Education

5. Ecological Education

Educating people about the interconnectedness of creation and about the links between social injustice and environmental exploitation.

Actions suggested:

- i. Have a section in our Congregational News fortnightly or monthly with some environmental information / tips etc., such as reducing plastic, going to zero waste, food waste and spotlight organisations e.g., Oz Harvest; explain the difference between biodegradable/compostable etc.
- ii. Network. Also support movements which encourage the care of earth and its people, e.g., growing our own food, recycling.
- iii. Develop an awareness and understanding of needs of earth regarding renewable energy, carbon neutrality, sustainable agriculture and the protection of biodiversity.
- iv. Become involved in ecological restoration activities e.g., land regeneration working with people from our networks and partnerships.
- v. Report on progress on our Action Plan frequently so we as RSC can see that our behaviour makes a difference or needs to change.

Ecological Spirituality

6. Ecological Spirituality

Encouraging greater contact and connections with the natural world in the spirit of wonder, praise, joy, happiness and gratitude.

Actions suggested:

- i. Develop a greater understanding of the Cosmic Christ (found in Colossians, Ephesians, and the prologue to John's Gospel). What is Christ's concern for creation? Become familiar with the work of Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, Ilia Delio, Denis Edwards, Karen Armstrong and similar authors. Read and reflect on relevant poetry e.g., Mary Oliver, Elizabeth Jennings, Wendell Berry etc.
- ii. Spend more time in nature really allowing nature to touch us. Pray amid nature and allow God's creation to speak. Take your shoes off sometimes as you walk on earth. Listen deeply to the universe. Gaze at the stars.
- iii. Encourage an attitude of gratitude. Pray an ecological examen.
- iv. Use a model of conversion to kinship rather than dominion over earth.

Community Resilience and Empowerment

7. Community Resilience and Empowerment

Changing law, policy and culture to achieve social and environmental justice.

Actions suggested:

- i. Provide information, networking and advocacy opportunities on justice related issues, e.g., climate change, refugees, local and global poverty, people displacement, First Nation Peoples.
- ii. Identify, learn from and work with local environmental groups, e.g., Landcare Australia, Australian Conservation Foundation, Uniting Church.
- iii. Engage Congregationally and through our networks in Earth Day, World Bee Day, Laudato Si' Week, the Season of Creation etc.
- iv. Try to empower others to see their own gifts and to act with ecological justice.

"A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal. " LSi' 202