



**Sisters of Providence**  
**OF SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS**  
*Breaking boundaries, creating hope.®*

## **Who Are We?**

- St. Mother Theodore Guerin founded the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods in 1840. Gifted as a healer with knowledge of medicinal herbs and plants, Mother Theodore knew the value of caring for all of Creation. Growing in love for the Indiana wilderness, she wrote: “...nature unfolds in our forests and along our rivers in so grand and marvelous a manner that describing even with the greatest simplicity seems an exaggeration to those who, not having seen it, cannot form an idea of its splendor.”
- The legacy of St. Mother Theodore Guerin infuses the contemporary life of the Providence Community with deep trust in the Providence of God, inclusivity of the diversity of creation, and active response to God’s call to care for all creation.
- Providence Community has a strong commitment to love, mercy and justice. This is expressed in love for all of creation, deep trust in the mercy of God for the harm humans have done to Earth, and the social mission of Jesus the Christ who calls us to co-create and care for all of creation.

## **Significant Chapter Outcomes re Care for Creation:**

**1996 Chapter:** Established the White Violet Center. **White Violet Center Mission Statement:**

White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Providence, exists to foster a way of living that recognizes the interdependence of all Creation. Grounded in an understanding of Providence Spirituality as hope and healing, the Center offers leadership and education in the preservation, restoration and reverent use of all natural resources.

The Center provides opportunities for many persons to participate in creating systems that support justice and sustainability, locally and globally. Through organic agriculture, eco-justice education and social advocacy, White Violet Center strives to promote an awareness and way of living which supports all life.

<https://spsmw.org/about/justice/white-violet-center-for-eco-justice/>

**2011 Chapter:** Adopted Sisters of Providence Land Ethic

<https://spsmw.org/about/justice/laudato-si/land-ethic/>

### **Sisters of Providence Land Ethic**

As members of one sacred Earth community, we Sisters of Providence commit ourselves individually and communally to care for our resources and to make decisions regarding their

current and future use as we seek to balance our individual and SP communal economic needs with the sustainability needs of Earth community. The following commitments will guide our decisions regarding the care and use of our resources.

*“This land was no longer for me the land of exile; it was the portion of my inheritance, and in it I hope to dwell all the days of my life.”*

– From

*the Journals of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin*

Care and Use of Resources:

- We will conserve natural resources and preserve species unique to an area.
- We will make every effort to use non-toxic materials that will not poison Earth community in the present or in the future.
- We will promote conservation and reduction of consumption by recycling and purchasing recycled materials.
- We will practice conservation and restoration of land through food production, management of forests and wild spaces, and healing and re-habitation of diminished areas.
- We will be advocates for ethical principles in resource use at local, state, national and global levels.
- We will explore options and possibilities as we seek both environmental and financial sustainability.
- We will research options such as: land trusts, easements, deed restrictions and the transfer or selling of development rights, for the protection of our resources and will investigate their ramifications.
- We will provide educational opportunities and share our own lived experiences, both individually and communally, in our efforts to live in right relationship within Earth community.



- **Climate Change Task Force Mission Statement:** to effect systemic change to the underlying causes of climate injustice through education, advocacy, and responses to current issues, especially issues affecting those most severely impacted by climate injustice.
- At the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Providence Community, members committed to the Providence Climate Agreement:

#### **Providence Climate Agreement**

Mindful of the effects of climate injustice on the cosmos, Earth, and all creatures of Earth, particularly the most vulnerable, we commit to work against climate injustice. We pledge that by July 1, 2021 we will have collectively reduced carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions by 4 million pounds (in personal activities and in local or broader communities). We pledge, in addition, to advocate for strong environmental policy.

<https://spsmw.org/about/justice/providence-climate-agreement/#agreement>

#### **2021 Chapter:**

The General Council of the Sisters of Providence invited the Climate Change Task Force to engage the Providence Community's participation in the Laudato Si Action Platform.

In preparation for the 2021 Chapter, the Climate Change Task Force correlated the seven Laudato Si Goals with Providence Community Current and Past Actions:

#### **RESPONDING TO THE CRY OF EARTH**

**Current and Past Actions:** Our White Violet Center for Eco-Justice has been a 25-year commitment to maintaining our wetlands and forests and using organic farming. WVC has committed to land restoration through the growth of alpacas; our chickens provide cage-free eggs. Through the USDA, we have made a ten-year commitment to put large tracts of land into pollinator habitats. Our land ethic details our commitment to responding to the Cry of Earth. The Providence Climate Agreement/Manifesto was adopted by the Providence Community three years ago – it was a personal invitation and commitment of individuals within the community to reduce her/his carbon footprints.

#### **RESPONDING TO THE CRY OF THE POOR**

**Current and Past Actions:** Our connections and work with NETWORK since its inception and more recent engagement with NETWORK allow us to do advocacy at a national level. Many members of the Providence Community engage in direct services with the poor in our sponsored institutions and ministries, including Miracle Place, Miracle Home, Mother Maria Gratia Hostel for Girls, Providence Food Pantry, Connecting Link, Providence Cristo Rey High School. Many more work in impoverished neighborhoods of urban cities such as Chicago. For over 40 years, we provided staff for 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center for Justice, and numerous other persons are doing/have done extensive work in justice ministry. Our work with police in neighborhoods, our long-time commitment to abolishing the death penalty, our establishment of St. Mary's Senior Living and Miller Parrott Lofts, our Justice Promoter work, and our temporary housing of an asylum-seeking family and assistance with Afghan refugees are all responses to the cry of the poor.

## BUILDING ECOLOGICAL ECONOMIES

**Current and Past Actions:** Our commitment to do impact investing, not only in our alternative investments but also with some of our other investments is a real commitment to “put our money where our mouths are.” We have also made a commitment to purchase hybrid cars. We make the sale of Fair Trade items in Linden Leaf Gifts and farm store a priority.

## ADOPTING SIMPLE LIFESTYLES

**Current and Past Actions:** Many of us have committed to eating lower on the food chain, and some have committed to vegetarian and vegan diets. Our Motherhouse community currently has two meatless days per week, and individual sisters have committed to even more meatless days. The widespread adoption of the Providence Climate Agreement has kept us as individuals attentive to the ways that our living more simply can contribute to the good of the world through such actions as the use of less plastic, shorter showers, reusing or recycling as much as possible, using less electricity, etc.

## CREATING ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION

**Current and Past Actions:** Our White Violet Center programs provide formal and informal education. We have offered programs on climate awareness and impacts of eating lower on the food chain. Members of the Providence Community have given homilies in churches and done presentations at parish gatherings re integral ecology. Our Earth Day each year is a massive educational endeavor.

## ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY

**Current and Past Actions:** We continually offer eco-spirituality programs through Providence Center; create Earth/Creation-Centered prayers. Through the years we have engaged in rethinking Providence Spirituality and multiple speakers have connected Providence spirituality to ecology.

## PROMOTING COMMUNITY ACTION AND ADVOCACY

**Current and Past Actions:** Housing for refugee family; work with refugees and immigrants; walking with incarcerated; actions against death penalty; actions against negative immigration practices and laws; actions to change wealth gap and raise awareness of unjust/unfair tax laws; anti-human trafficking work in collaboration with others in Chicago area and elsewhere; Connecting Link; work with Citizens Climate Lobby to promote a carbon fee and dividend law; tracking the work of Biden/Kerry – all are ways that we in the Providence Community are engaged in community action and advocacy.



**Significant Outcome from 2021 Chapter:** Laudato Si Action Platform SP Commitment Statement

**Laudato Si Action Platform SP Commitment Statement (10/22/21):**

We, the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN and our wider Providence Community, publicly commit to join the worldwide Catholic community in responding to Pope Francis' appeal to participate in a seven-year journey toward sustainability and integral ecology by developing a Laudato Si Action Platform.

This commitment marks our willingness:

- To take up the “urgent appeal” of Laudato Si to listen and respond to the lurings of Providence to attend to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor by making it a Community priority;
- To further our ongoing ecological conversion by fostering greater understanding of our socio-ecological vocation within the spirit of our Providence charism;
- To integrate each of the seven Laudato Si goals into our lives and apostolates by developing a systematic process to transition to an integral ecology;
- To take bold concrete actions, both corporately and individually, in the spirit of Laudato Si, to address the multiple crises afflicting our common home – the planet and its people;
- To practice nonviolence, as we reconcile and heal the pain in creation and sow hope for peace.

This commitment is made in love, mercy, and justice, knowing that we are participating in God's providential work of transformation and trusting “in that Providence which so far has never failed us.”

**Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN LSAP Plan 2022-2023:**

Beginning in the Fall of 2022 and concluding in June of 2023, the Providence Community plans to engage in the following concrete actions to deepen and intensify our commitment to the seven Goals of the Laudato Si Action Platform:

**SP General Administration and Staff have made the following commitments to the Laudato Si Goals:**

**GOAL: Cry of the Earth** is a call to protect our common home for the well-being of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability. Actions could include the adoption of renewable energies and energy efficiency measures, achieving carbon neutrality protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainable agriculture, and guaranteeing access to clean water for all.

- Advancement Services staff will put two printers on silent mode.
- Advancement Services staff will bring back compost to the break room in Administration Building.
- Clinical Care staff will promote in Providence Health Care facility individual practices for well-being of both persons and Earth such as principles of Blue Zones.

- Environmental Services staff will limit the use of cleaning disinfectant products made in aerosol cans to only Lysol products.
- Environmental Services staff will limit exhaust emissions by working a 4-day shift with the promise, to each other, of not using vehicles on the 5<sup>th</sup> work day.
- Facilities staff will investigate potential energy efficiencies with water and electric demands.

**GOAL: Cry of the Poor** is a call to promote eco-justice as a basic human right, aware that we are called to defend and protect human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth. Actions could include projects to promote solidarity, with special attention given to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, refugees, migrants, and children at risk, analysis and improvement of social systems, and social service programs.

**GOAL: Ecological Economics** acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere – our common home. Actions could include sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels.

- Clinical Care staff will recycle/repurpose medical components and provide responsible disposal of medication.
- Clinical Care staff will accept donated medical equipment as appropriate and share extra equipment with those in need.
- Facilities staff will recycle cardboard, plastic and glass as well as scrap metal and miscellaneous types of metal (stainless) from campus projects.
- Facilities staff will gather information on a combination of solar/peaking to lower SOP electric usage.
- Information Technology staff will purchase new equipment only when it is needed and encourage the recycling of unused equipment.
- Justice Promoter will oversee the implementation of the Carbon Offset Program of CathCAP <https://www.cathcap.org/>.
- Liturgy Director will provide hymnals for cantors to replace use of single sheets of music.
- Liturgy Department musicians will receive, via email, scanned copies of music as well as schedules thus eliminating the need for paper copies.
- Liturgy Department staff will reduce paper usage by use of new scheduling software thus eliminating monthly paper calendars.
- Liturgy Department staff will introduce new efficiencies in the way they do business: proofreading electronic copies instead of hard copies, using shared files instead of printing certain documents, and avoiding duplication of effort to reduce the number of hours spent in the office (using lights, etc.).
- White Violet Center for Eco-Justice staff will compost their food scraps and other compostable items such as paper towels and toilet paper rolls. Also, they will work with Catholic Charities, St. Mary-of-the-Woods College and Providence Kitchen (Morrison Living) to compost their waste.
- White Violet Center for Eco-Justice staff will research new ways to package their produce more sustainably.

- The director of White Violet Center for Eco-Justice will ensure the re-education of staff on proper recycling procedures.

**GOAL: Sustainable Lifestyles** is grounded in the idea of sufficiency, and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy. Actions could include reducing waste and recycling, adopting sustainable dietary habits (opting for a more plant-based diet and reducing meat consumption), greater use of public transport, active mobility (walking, cycling), and avoiding single use items (e.g., plastic, etc.).

- Advancement Services staff will recycle Keurig cups.
- Advancement Services staff will avoid buying plastic trinkets.
- Advancement Services staff will become better at turning off lighting.
- Advancement Services staff will switch heat/fan to reduce energy during the day.
- Advancement Services staff will reduce the use of paper.
- Advancement Services staff will schedule one-trip rather than two for mid-day doctor/dentist appointments.
- Archives staff will scan and email responses to queries, recycle paper and cardboard, reuse folders and paper, and walk to department when possible rather than drive.
- Central Business Office staff will reduce fuel usage and paper waste by increasing the times they bring lunch to work.
- Clinical Care staff will participate in CathCAP when travel is involved for clinical care services.
- Clinical Care staff will coordinate trips off campus for appointments, medications, and carpooling.
- Information Technology staff will encourage users to turn computers off whenever they are not in use.
- Information Technology staff will encourage use of electronic documents rather than printed documents.
- Information Technology staff will discourage the use of inkjet printers.
- Co-directors of Providence Associates will ensure that, at their events, silverware rather than plastic ware and cloth napkins will be available for all. Large water jugs will be filled with water rather than use of water in plastic bottles.
- Providence Associates will utilize Zoom for February Advisory Board members to eliminate need for transportation.
- Co-directors of Providence Spirituality and Conference Center will ensure the following: computers are turned off at night, including the monitor; lights are turned off when leaving a room for more than 10 minutes; non-disposable plates, cups, silverware are used whenever possible; and the Compost bin in LLG is used regularly.
- The director of Volunteer Services will purchase eco-friendly plastic free thank you gifts for volunteers; provide no plastic utensils/materials at volunteer events; provide recycle bins in accessible areas during events; and direct that lights are turned off on Friday afternoons from noon to 4:00 p.m. to reduce use of electricity.
- White Violet Center for Eco-Justice staff will limit printing hard copies of documents whenever possible and scan documents that need to be saved.

- White Violet Center for Eco-Justice staff will turn off lights in the Center, walk-in refrigerator and garden office when not needed.

**GOAL: Ecological Education** is about re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action. Actions could include fostering *Laudato Si* themes within the community and encouraging ecological restoration activities.

- Clinical Care staff will include as possible Short Message Service Center (SMSC) in health promotion and disease prevention such as health education and Vaccination clinic.
- White Violet Center for Eco-Justice staff will prioritize the education of Interns, school groups and the general public on sustainability and caring for Creation

**GOAL: Ecological Spirituality** springs from a profound ecological conversion and helps us to “discover God in all things”, both in the beauty of creation and in the sighs of the sick and the groans of the afflicted, aware that the life of the spirit is not dissociated from worldly realities. Actions could include promoting creation-based liturgical celebrations, developing ecological catechesis, retreats and formation programs, etc.

- Climate Change Task Force will oversee the Season of Creation 2022

**GOAL: Community Resilience and Participation** is about encouraging the development of policies and practices that protect our common home and all peoples who share it. Actions could include promoting advocacy, developing people’s campaigns, and encouraging rootedness as well as a sense of belonging in local communities and neighborhood ecosystems.



**Sisters and Associates have made personal commitments to the following Laudato Si Goals:**

**GOAL: Cry of Earth and Community Resilience Empowerment**

- Collect and use rainwater to water plants in a garden.
- Engage in intentional fasting practice for a just cause.

**GOAL: Cry of the Poor**

- Advocate with and support others (e.g. thru parishes, schools, book discussion groups, etc.) to have cooling and warming centers provided during extreme temperatures and weather events.
- Do more carpooling (not just with SPs but also with others) and use public transportation when available.
- Identify food bank services locally and work to assist those in need of food.
- Educate others in making foods lower on the food chain.
- Choose to eat lower on food chain.

**GOAL: Sustainable Lifestyle**

- Use reusable bags for vegetables and fruits when shopping.
- Use cloth shopping bags for all groceries.
- Get rid of clutter.
- Share what I have with others.
- Write corporations about the use of plastic for containers of products – find other alternatives (e.g., clam shell packaging).
- Don't buy "stuff"; reduce impulse buying.
- Keep shower time to 5 minutes.
- Refrain from use of bottled water.
- Use ceiling fans rather than air conditioners.
- Limit receiving catalogs and magazines.
- Advocate with local restaurants and businesses to use biodegradable packaging and containers.
- Unplug what is not in use.
- Turn off lights when not needed.
- Making choices based on environment rather than on convenience.
- Do wash in cold water.
- Use "give away" supplies when possible.
- Use soft cloths vs. disposable wipes to clean glasses.

- Choose to drive cars that are as ecologically friendly as possible.

**GOAL: Ecological Spirituality**

- Use the resources of WATER (Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Rituals) and other creation resources for study, prayer rituals and celebrations.
- Go out into nature and appreciate it as God’s gift.
- Pray that our hearts be transformed as we respond to the cry of Earth and the cry of the poor who are disproportionately affected by climate change.

**GOAL: Ecological Economics**

- Buy locally/sustainably grown fruits and vegetables.
- Grow our own (w/soil carbon capture!) vegetables.
- Invest in energy-efficient appliances.
- Advocate for a carbon tax.
- Participate in the Providence Community CathCAP project ([www.cathcap.org](http://www.cathcap.org)).
- Advocate for local recycling, environmentally friendly trash disposal and composting.

**GOAL: Ecological Education**

- Start conversation with persons in my personal spaces to bring up certain ecological issues.

**Conclusion:**

The LSAP Team further commits to ensure that the Providence Community will annually engage the LSAP Planning Process of Reflection, Action, Review, Celebration, and Creation in order to achieve the seven LSAP Goals:

Fall 2022	Reflect:	Commit to concrete actions to achieve LSAP Goals
Fall 2022-September 2023	Act:	Implement the current SP/PA Commitments to LSAP Plan
September 2023	Review:	Evaluate Fall 2022 LSAP Plan commitments
September 2023	Celebrate:	Share and celebrate LSAP Plan achievements
Fall 2023	Create:	Create an LSAP Plan for September 2023-August 2024.

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