



EcoPhilly Tool Kit

Steps for Forming a Creation Care Team

Step 1: Gauge and Develop Interest

Ask around at your parish to see if anyone in the community seems to be interested. It may be helpful to see if your church has a social justice committee that you can partner with, and if you have a school associated with your church, then an “in” could be through the Principal. If support is limited at your parish or you are not sure where to start, contact us to see if there is anyone else in your area, or at a nearby parish, who may be able to mentor you or share resources. It will be good to have at least 2-3 people to join you; you will need that support.

At some point you may then want to go to your pastor or parish council for approval. Some churches ask for a proposal; others may be ok with you starting the group without being an “official” ministry.

We suggest scheduling a time to meet in person, over the phone or on Zoom. It may also work to discuss this in passing -- but we recommend that you ask first if he/she have a few minutes to talk with you, and spend a few minutes connecting, before sharing about the initiative.

A sample email could look like this:

Dear Fr. _____,

I hope you are well. [OR PERSONALIZED GREETING] I’m writing to see if we can meet to talk about Care of Creation in our parish. As you know, Pope Francis’s [encyclical](#) *Laudato Si’: On Care for our Common Home* inspires care for creation and the poor, who suffer the most from the impacts of environmental degradation. There is a very good short summary of the encyclical [here](#).

Since _____, I’ve been learning more about our Church’s commitment to caring for creation through [EcoPhilly](#), the new archdiocesan effort to establish creation care teams in every parish throughout the Archdiocese. Archbishop Pérez encouraged all parishioners to take part when EcoPhilly was launched, stating, “**Please engage with these efforts to care for God’s creation. We all share a personal and societal duty to heed the Holy Father’s call.**” He reiterated this call in the attached statement on Earth Day this year.

I would like to take action that is prayerful and sustains people’s health. I/ we have a few ideas about how to do this and would love your suggestions and input. We recognize that this should be a lay-led project and are excited to work on it, with your support.

Would it be possible to meet with you? [In addition to myself, X,Y, and Z will come- add this if you are doing a group project.] From my conversations with many parishioners, I believe this is a big interest of many people -- especially the young.

Thank you, [SIGNATURE]

Archbishop Nelson J. Perez offered the following statement April 22, recognized as Earth Day, the annual global event that began in 1970 to demonstrate support for environmental protection.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Today, we commemorate the 52nd anniversary of Earth Day. As Catholics, this moment on the calendar is an important reminder that as beneficiaries of God's creation, we have a duty to protect the environment and its impact on humanity, especially the poor and vulnerable who are sadly and frequently overlooked.

In 2015, Pope Francis issued his landmark encyclical *Laudato Si* ("Praise be to you, my Lord"). It remains a universal call for each of us to understand and embrace personal responsibility for the welfare of the natural world we inhabit. As the Holy Father tells us, "Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience."

The Earth is God's precious gift to all living creatures. It is essential for us to protect and preserve it, especially for future generations.

In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, many parishes, schools, and other institutions have begun to form creation care teams to put the Holy Father's words into action. Many are affiliated with [EcoPhilly](#), an initiative launched to establish a network of creation care teams throughout the five-county region that achieve measurable improvements in their local environment. I commend their work and call on all people of good will to follow their example.

May God bless our earthly habitat and lead us to our heavenly home!

Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, D.D.

Archbishop of Philadelphia

Editor's Note: As part of the Laudato Si' Movement, EcoPhilly's mission is to establish a network of creation care teams throughout the Archdiocese of Philadelphia that achieve measurable improvements in their local environment. For more information about EcoPhilly, visit [EcoPhilly.org](#). To join, email info@ecophilly.org.

Step 2: Form a Creation Care Team and Brainstorm Goals

Creation care teams are also known as green teams, Laudato Si' Circles, etc... you may call yours whatever you like!

Put an ad in the bulletin and on your parish bulletin board. Make announcements after all liturgies on a given weekend and invite people to an introductory meeting a week or two later. Before and at this meeting, it would be good to think about your vision for what you want to do in your parish.

Some good discussion questions may include:

What is the climate within your parish?

What are its strengths?

How about your surrounding community: are there any local environmental issues you'd like to work on?

What would success look like?

Contact EcoPhilly at info@ecophilly.org to register and network with others and keep your pastor and parish council updated. They can be busy and hard to get a hold of, but if you can share your passion for bringing Laudato Si' to life, they can be speakers at events, which validates things for other people and grows your potential.

Learn about outreach opportunities. (For example, perhaps there is an upcoming ministry fair, or you could stand at a booth and talk to people after Mass.) Coordinate with other church ministries: if you can get them interested in sustainability (e.g., eliminating single-use plastics from their meetings), you are already well on your way to spreading the message.

Sample announcement for a bulletin or after Mass:

On *[date]* at *[time]* here at *[location]*, members of our parish will host a special gathering to pray, learn and act for creation. This event is [part of Laudato Si Week/ Season of Creation, a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment.] We will join together in prayer for our common home, take time to learn about the ecological and climate crises, and join in a small but powerful activity to challenge world leaders to take bold action for our earth.

We hope you will join us there!

Step 3: Identify Goals

These possibilities are adapted from the [Laudato Si' Movement](#), as is much of the language on the previous two pages -- we are grateful for their support!

You may start with one or two goals and branch out from there. Consider which goals can be annual or recurrent (e.g., following the liturgical calendar) and ensure that those are well advertised and executed before moving on to others.

Ecological Conversion

- Hold/organize an outdoor mass for creation
- Hold a prayer service outdoors
- Hold an ecological and ecumenical prayer service for the Season of Creation
- Organize a Creation Walk or Pilgrimage
- Integrate creation into Sunday liturgies
- Organize a bible Study (in person or online)
- Organize prayer and conversation about Laudato Si' (in person or online)
- Hold an information session after Mass in your parish

Footprint Reduction

- Tree planting/tree growing
- Local clean up
- Start a parish garden (flowers or vegetables)
- Plant swap
- Clean energy in the parish
- Hold a sustainability event
- Encourage sustainable living
- Green your parish/institution (replace the use of disposables, etc.)

Raise a Prophetic Voice

- Organize or participate in a climate strike
- Organize a signature drive for fossil fuel divestment
- Organize a signature drive to have a creation team in your parish/diocese
- Organize a signature drive for a local ecological issue in your country
- Participate or organize campaigns that call for restoration

Step 4: Follow up

Continue to develop support! Advertise events regularly in your bulletin or after liturgy. Be sure to have regular meetings, too. It's good always to have a project going, but in seasons when you don't, you can use time together for personal spiritual enrichment.

Be mindful of annual creation-themed events (Earth Day on April 22; Laudato Si' week in May; the World Day of Prayer for Creation on September 1; the Feast of St. Francis on October 4) and plan on using those to raise awareness.

Stay connected with EcoPhilly! We can advertise your events in our newsletter and you can sign up for a parish-based Google Group so that you can email freely with others in our network.

And when you feel you have a thriving ministry going... please consider your call to be missionary disciples. Find other parishes in your area and, if they don't have a climate ministry, contact their pastor to see if you can encourage them and find individuals there to mentor. At the very least, maybe you can collaborate on some of your programming.

REMEMBER....

In seeking climate leaders in each of our participating institutions, our basic wish is that you "carry the torch."

The work of creation care is a marathon, not a sprint, so we know that it involves a certain level of commitment. We are here to support you in running as far as you can with your community's torch. If you ever need to take a break and get some air, that's fine. All we ask is that you *do not drop the torch*, because then a flame would be extinguished.

So please communicate with us. We love hearing from you, even with small updates like, "nothing new here, but we are still alive!" And if you feel that you as an individual cannot run any longer, we understand -- all we ask is that you communicate that with us, too, and commit to working with us to find someone else in your community who can run with the torch for a while.

This way, the flame of our loving care and action will stay burning at all times.

Other Resources

PARISH BULLETINS: The Social Justice Committee at Holy Cross Parish in Mt. Airy puts out a wonderful full-page column in their weekly bulletin entitled “**Stewards of Our Earth.**” You can check out the archive of recent columns at <https://holycrossphl.org/holy-cross-parish-organization-ministries/social-justice-committee/stewards-of-the-earth/>. If you would like to run these weekly columns for free in your own parish bulletin, please contact info@ecophilly.org.

POSTERS on sustainability, recycling, fast fashion, etc. for creation care-themed informational session or festival at your parish - contact info@ecophilly.org to be put in touch with the team at St. John Chrysostom, who have some really wonderful resources.

CONSULTATION on greening your parish footprint - contact info@ecophilly.org to be put in touch with the team at Old St. Joseph's, who can help.

CONSULTATION on developing a parish garden - contact info@ecophilly.org.

We will collectively update this resource list as we continue to work together; for now, please don't forget the wonderful trove of resources that exist already through our friends at the **Catholic Climate Covenant** and the **Laudato Si' Movement**.

For instance, the CCC has a new series on diocesan Laudato Si' efforts -- check out this webinar from the remarkable archdioceses of Chicago and Atlanta here: <https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/resource/be-inspired-spotlight-diocesan-laudato-si-efforts-part-1>

And the LSM has a compilation of monthly resources that they will likely update each month: <https://laudatosimovement.org/news/laudato-si-contemplation-monthly-resource-june-2022/>