Brian Reardon ([00:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=1s6kjoYwrJM5Xgf39hGmKFycXV6SyFV3N7qvr99ZkbUOPbMepjNVtx1Xmogq_TWeSJ9S7RhGvfoSzYua9FM1hqt6BuI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=8.04)):

Greetings, and welcome to Catholic Health USA, the podcast of the Catholic Health Association. I'm Brian Reardon and joining me from Clayton Studios, just outside St. Louis, is my co-host, Mary Ann Steiner. Hi Mary Ann.

Mary Ann Steiner ([00:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=8ik2m6prepmQPX116pD5xVAJCVXeyhEZWMn8fIuNMnEuNpeN4kIvre_yqUbp0iKtDDIXExr5NKp7mzBXlRbD_RfkPZM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=18.87)):

Hi, Brian. You look great through the plexi.

Brian Reardon ([00:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=RFrR49KgE4tubz1LHDu3epK6gdjGXhblJ1e0aaBT-ISvNmsXYsC3jjMpkNho9wPQJsbZPAfEcBIuzC98313MKZ_AWLw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=21.89)):

Same for you. Good to see your face.

Mary Ann Steiner ([00:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gCruZ32x-LpVUay2KRtjyksSCfknzx6cwDH5wD9G-49YqnKSdj3158dzq0I7nkqNQBmQnqKrM95XXkQ1pLDhZakfR5I&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=23.81)):

Thank you.

Brian Reardon ([00:24](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Ph2B_WBCfYDlJ2NC1yAfSEo63S4UpKmMM3Ccn6wKxxQTZ4ZlThqWPR_DqMMBSczx7p7jkJo7PlpP4znC6odG7s9ZdFQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=24.08)):

Good to be in person. So, for this episode, we're going to talk about the environment. Always at the forefront, a major issue for everyone on this planet. It's gotten a lot of attention during the pandemic, and we thought for this episode, we talk to a couple of our members who are very in involved with this issue. So we have with us in studio here, Lois Sechrist, she is the Environmental Stewardship Manager at Ascension Health here in St. Louis. Hi Lois.

Lois Sechrist ([00:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gsD4zI6GRUwfYaCYeOZdDg6YZjvk29hVhZWNljPosqEqnuudD5X01bhQYZNT6G40kQslrZmmhXUMS1_XHkd73dgPvV8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=52.12)):

Good morning. It's a beautiful day in St. Louis.

Brian Reardon ([00:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=DgSRFpM9A9HGMfwfO97irfbvSXX4lx0mUIBs07_ZPFGzMbvvulF8MXE0IhqggxpBm5H5yfayyS2apKMAqAT0dK0O5uA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=53.88)):

It really is. And on the phone with us, we have Rachelle Wenger. She is System Vice President of Public Policy and Advocacy Engagement for CommonSpirit Health. Hi, Rachelle.

Rachelle Wenger ([01:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=41xZIJBwbryEysqp_U9G4AY8PeEXPZ9aXBA7Z7iebK7vCrUUj19iUn1duwsw3GYlC1Q7M8ujBoDNnAxBfRifJKB2f9Y&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=65.02)):

Good morning. How are you?

Brian Reardon ([01:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SUcWh7x4Crq6GGMNCgyLKftLC_YmhIM0AtSY--LvKnI_6jxECTGeAJ01FwKKTWWV77o3ckg5pLWPkCk70zTePDtDVVw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=66.64)):

Great. Thanks for being with us.

Rachelle Wenger ([01:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=rrcCJdtHVrjvXYYw6LekKFn0SfDGu9DIkOvifikvBYtbg5PnQWBE29PvfHSwlTiNp9gKNnTKiDRs7At57zs39kPMwqg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=68.01)):

Happy to be here.

Brian Reardon ([01:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=B7nBHKQau_O06IA44ASCPwUfxOFnCmeQQzEgQE65g_hYOOMqsoEB-XfNflCCSN8JvNW-ha7tCK4dJdSUk9vbjE7k7nY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=68.87)):

So Mary Ann, do you want to kick this conversation off? Obviously, this is a topic we have covered quite a bit over the years in Health Progress. I think there are a lot of issues, particularly pertaining to Catholic healthcare and our role, a positive and negative, with the environment.

Mary Ann Steiner ([01:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=-PUZ6UYZv95yjMFPXonpIXrOmz1qHn1IaQoQFN_c0NhwdyaX7huWf1be2oRvQJwLhOA8twgdgnucJGRBU93vUX2DRWU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=83.87)):

True enough. And I have to say that I first met Rachelle and Lois when we published an issue on the environment in 2016, in response to Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si. First of all, they were both great contributions, but secondly, I have been following what they've been doing and given what's been going on with the environment, with the weather disasters, with the Paris Accord, with all kinds of things, the environment has been front and center and politicized, and then really challenged by what's happened through the pandemic in the last year.

Mary Ann Steiner ([02:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=EGIl0huQByJoI0QQLcyZ-7kSUdLZV8pK6XUdfIe5NZjhNhkzrA3sbbjsKl2XrPRTeLAv9dDaVaT-W-36W1JRUzBB93s&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=127.14)):

Some people think that the pandemic has helped and that there have been less airplanes and less car travel, but really we know that the pandemic has caused a lot of healthcares problems with the environment, as we have had to use so much PPE and other equipment. So I'm wondering, Rachelle and Lois, if you think the leaders in Catholic healthcare are aware of the negative contribution they make towards the environment, and whether they're doing enough to mitigate the harm.

Rachelle Wenger ([02:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=hWlCXc5jyv963kJbugdnxXbUX3f4ZIPpOJ1VE3-aCy6SVfr_qhjkkMG4SdyHFnp7rXQdyDutTo0upo6TdMQ2brV6pUs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=159.95)):

This is Rachelle. I'll start first. Wow. That's a really loaded question, Mary Ann. By framing my answer, I'll start where you started with Pope Francis. He starts his encyclical with a phrase from Saint Francis of Assisi' Cantical of the Sun, from this place of Laudato Si phrase. And he's reminded in prayer and poetry that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.

Rachelle Wenger ([03:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=f2xNm9an2bEbAXW2_0crqVDWa4XbRM-wN4ZAqrrD-SH00CvhZu-t-bz2PZXwvTR7VBd2BSPKB6gMzL_fH1asTmQrNMI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=192.92)):

And I think these are really such powerful images of relationship and connection, abundance, and acceptance. And these are the things that motivate my answer to you. The Pope really did bless us with such an important encyclical at a time when nations were preparing to advance the most ambitious climate agreement it could. I remember 2015 well. Laudato Si was released in June, we were working really hard to beat the drum and support of an ambitious Paris Climate Agreement.

Rachelle Wenger ([03:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=3rVNgfCg4l2D48g5FVTKBqxUAOs66t5SV4tC9R4zL4LJ0hGX11vRJ67A6M6KhhENsKa5KIhHne4M0Txkss9eFa62iZw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=224.37)):

And in fact, I was there in late November, early December in Le Bourget, a city right outside of Paris, in the blue zone, talking about how healthcare is leaning in, standing in solidarity with those around the world who were calling for bold climate leadership to set and achieve the two degrees, 1.5 degrees Celsius goal we need to avoid catastrophic global warming. And yes, we've endured a lot these past five years, and that's putting it mildly, so much coming all at once.

Rachelle Wenger ([04:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=8jpu71h2XslI75jOVkF-JWX4h4O_HYBWo5J2zeTXG-q5DZ3-ZmWKpRtSzGIW1ZmCqZI4JeYfABp37uVp9YZUebyizJs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=257.99)):

The pandemic and the unearthing, if you will, of systemic and structural racism, divisiveness, fear, isolation, and by the way, we've got a climate crisis in our hands. And so when you ask if Catholic Healthcare is aware and if it is doing enough to mitigate harm, I'm going to channel Pope Francis and St. Francis of Assisi here, because I hear the question this way. I hear, how's your sister doing? Have you talked with her lately, gone out together? When was the last time you visited your mom, shared a big loving hug?

Rachelle Wenger ([04:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=za1-Yl4-5HA5Di4UbTLfqMLQXE9_dUj8kp-7708uWk31IrNvhI3fsYavaXnYt02dgiW_EMemi2OETv2L20_j2q-0PKo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=294.68)):

Given Catholic health care's healing mission, we recognize this profound connection, this unbreakable bond between human health and the environment. And to us, climate action is first and foremost about that relationship. When earth hurts, we hurt. When we're hurting, earth is hurting. And many of us aren't under any illusion that life during a pandemic has been hard, frustrating, and really downward painful for many of us, including Catholic Healthcare.

Rachelle Wenger ([05:25](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=HAXe516nGMtS8uU_7BZ4TJd_S8Y01KJcHWULvEw939ei7sBfQGGUIaaWvs-U2fOGsV4o2mhIpiBPVJ8clQihwU2RTHA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=325.89)):

And there have been days when we hope we can get through the hour, just one day more for our patients, for the communities we serve, wishing we could do more, be more. And there's also no denying that this time, that the pandemic really has brought out the best in us, in Catholic healthcare. We've dug in deep and our values are carrying us forward, faithful to our mission and adapting to new sets of realities.

Rachelle Wenger ([05:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ZHAwm8dgXBuTaZ3w4DasRs1HgNODBG7uPZfprpKegzkQS4ZubST6qgsMod3_5yfPOneXkvedciAD7Js2wk0vk9nWPnY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=355.89)):

And so as we continue to deal head-on with this pandemic, we're asking ourselves, "How do we continue to move forward with greater intention, with greater resilience from this place of abundance and acceptance, equity and inclusion? And how do we build our environmental sustainability commitments using our voice more boldly to tell our story, to inspire and influence change?"

Rachelle Wenger ([06:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=fp7pkO5LYckrm-6QCy_kxJQULw2dvfl7qAPSQkRlgAEj6fYiMK2Ti7Trywz2eAHbkG_i4c7364t9fuMmSsWBWhawFOY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=382.65)):

So, that's a lot to say. And my answer is really simple it's, yes, yes, yes, yes. We are aware and that yes follows an and. And we can do more, be more to exemplify this integral ecology that Pope Francis teaches.

Mary Ann Steiner ([06:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=sq9iKM0aeCHbd3qZ4XlRmsfnIqv56F-1ehShuY0YiwlzVXuKLUMQm0ZH-6XUSE3z7Xr5kwIw4yrpJ4mLS2TUrrbFArc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=404.07)):

Thanks, Rachelle. That was an incredibly beautiful and positive answer to what could have been a really negative question. So, that was so very thoughtful. Thanks.

Brian Reardon ([06:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=EqgSkoYGO4njHk9jYk90P2FfyC0aE4-kIxu1VePj5XpSI-TQUhPJd-bLoM4TIkl2OmmFmzZErxYvizXXZxvHTvyxCfs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=415.78)):

Lois, your thoughts on that question?

Lois Sechrist ([06:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=PzgAMxLM9aG31WexQ0Ejgk2XO6D8IzZsIOFzPZAmXPI-M9VHzCJ_11ehK_yWhwej5-f8yACTeGSoMJi-8Z0i8QFppEY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=417.9)):

So Rachelle's work and my work, we compliment each other so well because she does a fabulous job with expressing our voice and advocacy. We tend to be very practical at Ascension. So our current leadership is becoming very engaged in sustainability, and we look at the interconnecting issues of the need to reduce our carbon footprint, to understand the social determinants of health, such as jobs, good access to food, a safe place to live, and then also supporting the beneficial impacts that we have in using our purchasing power to green our supply chain. So those tend to be the same things that we focus on at Ascension.

Lois Sechrist ([07:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=u1q5IegREJPEYBlDc7xbLRodHJ30R-dISEUEwBSxp1ti16Z8SImGHoGtLd9v9VCVL68vBLBvhzvuOQy_YNhSIcJIkd8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=464.18)):

Our connection of our environmental stewardship work to our mission is compelling. And it makes it very easy to understand for our associates as we blend this in to the work that we do every day. I'll give you an example, one of our major achievements to date is our success in the Department of Energy's Better Buildings Challenge. Way, way back in 2011, we set a goal to reduce our energy use across our acute care hospital portfolio 20% by 2020.

Lois Sechrist ([08:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=cQwwQUw_JyT_qu6mZZDz8e-_JytT209Y2P0bFkoOfZOM0tTrrdC9TBLixxWks9SnXCgu8-LOma_CYMhlpKlxKe3CgrE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=496.33)):

We met the goal three years early. We achieved 25% energy reduction by last year, 2020, and also by doing so, we saved upwards of $90 million that we could then use to provide healthcare to the poor and vulnerable. So as a foil and a compliment to all of the wonderful things that Rachelle just described, we also take a very pragmatic lens to the work that we do to reduce our impact on the environment and provide more positive outcomes for our patients and our associates.

Brian Reardon ([08:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=n-wtYYe0_YZ0v6iOtsAXe2stGdrl9YG0dW5X2pyorIO8_cmyVz_4lRZgKNWxmamyThpv47A1vf-LxZjdcOd4hRW1rSo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=533.29)):

And you're an architect by training, I think you mentioned. Have you seen a trend over the years of really putting more of an emphasis on building sustainable? I think, in the past, that may have been viewed as an extra expense and you just mentioned some of the cost savings, and I'm just curious if that is kind of maybe fit into the equation. Let's use solar panels for example.

Brian Reardon ([09:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=thz84a4mwLPgSfMKshI369gEgC22u1puxBvOttVMwwUj3lGGUmj23KguR8w0VPQ3teVyizHm6P95Ccv4_QB1JdmxiPU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=555.25)):

I think those tended to be more cost prohibitive. I think the technology is now to the point where, there's probably an equation there, like, "Wait a second, if we install solar panels on our facilities, there may be some cost savings." So how have things shifted in sort of the built environment or the architectural decision making process that goes as new facilities are coming online?

Lois Sechrist ([09:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=TH3Etot3xNzK62AOS0E45FgXv5UICZgNCWwKBD02j6VZbOghbYKUGJxXbTIVRByauhDPdmJ2hMA5CHTJ9oWHzuS_jiI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=575.27)):

So, right. We are looking at issues, like total cost of ownership. So as opposed to just looking at the first capital cost of our projects, we're also looking at cost of ownership and the life cycle. So, that is where we were able to identify that we can have lower operating costs over time. And that helps us balance that equation of the first cost. We're also looking at a number of issues related to green buildings. So, as many of our projects as possible, we use the leadership and energy and environmental design, the lead certification program for our new buildings.

Lois Sechrist ([10:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Avq7sk5UJF2uAnX8RoIDEQQhez67Z9QAe9RgAsmVb7NMYyWydExjQy4Zu0AuTGIeFe8CI4FdZ-LMk0NPgPwps5aWcH8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=623.44)):

And we are looking at other related issues, such as construction waste management to reduce the amount of materials that we send to the landfill. We've learned that concrete and asphalt can be ground up and reused. So we're rolling out a program for that. So there's a number of different items related to energy use, energy efficiency, reducing our carbon footprint. So we're finally making forays into renewable energy. We've done as much as we can. Although we continue to do the work of reducing our energy use, we also need to reduce our carbon footprint. So, that means clean energy sources.

Mary Ann Steiner ([11:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=e-Wb8T_Ez40NcOuDLLi3EWuXMp7TFSZ8ggGxIks5S7fvYzSKGZfiJW10aaaiVM6vHEed0_lvKBPXD81QaoCjNJoWStY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=665.7)):

So speaking in that practical vain, Lois and Rachelle, would you talk a little bit, I know you two know each other well, and I think that's a wonderful thing that this is crossing systems. Will you talk a little bit about what kinds of partnerships are particularly helpful right now, as we tackle these issues with the environment and look towards this common home and common goal?

Lois Sechrist ([11:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=1G2xjJqsXJu_icdRaMqe5CRYx2Y1kSJ9_R0dMTf9K3WgT3CQ1gxK2DtAchmU60LIPdbZgoVv4Hu4nr1OLUiQGD1FdEA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=690.44)):

Right. So Rachelle, I'm going to talk about our work with Practice Green Health.

Rachelle Wenger ([11:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=opi7Rt0dINfnpxs1Ch5eIwf1B5mt4z5FmdEfOcsEVGXotHplkZC524csxyy0eIYRGt8YZGzninFn5gs7amxLfH4gx3g&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=694.17)):

Fantastic.

Lois Sechrist ([11:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=sr4hcXW5CYTzYhZI6ZAhJY-6fZe3Q1WpYjflmuC8YqdUDMe4SEcnlRrzUwJ-sRjPgS-zKZo0ZYsdIKcdqVTyyxzI7uc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=694.82)):

Both of us, our systems have been involved for several years in a project called The Market Transformation Group. And that's an initiative to use our purchasing power and our voice to bring products to market that we would like to be able to buy through our health systems. So the very first project we worked on was to purchase poultry raised without antibiotics to contribute to our antibiotic stewardship work. So we are now able to purchase primarily chicken, also turkey products, widely available at an affordable cost for our hospitals. And this is completely due to our collaboration with other health systems and using our size.

Brian Reardon ([12:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6BugtdVZiKA-ARIhF_rVGJpS-XD1liKgNl8PoTX464iMRnyQmdMkNfji15CsLnmC2xomrBfaO3rVrMKT-ucY6EjQQOY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=740.2)):

Rachelle?

Rachelle Wenger ([12:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Sh4KGYLfs14E1JlCVVg6C8zBOC0BI_MATKMkOmeT_heds87CLaGLjJz7vqE_Qhswi_UruvQyeRNJ3n2SNff86tEs3Yg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=740.92)):

Yeah. When I think about collaborations and meaningful partnerships, I can't underscore enough that the work that we do at CommonSpirit Health can't be done alone. We really rely so much on these partnerships and allyships that we forge with others because this work is just too important and too big for any one of us to tackle. It really requires all of us doing our part.

Rachelle Wenger ([12:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=V0-AV3gBydUoPhE8x3NS0XMk5M0rdMMvGcZgio9dmuupff97nDoO_54P3RP53MnKnRIHPaRGUyyOi3UG_XszVE8gyuQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=774.25)):

And in terms of specific relationships and partnerships we've forged over the years, Lois certainly has mentioned our deep connection with Practice Green Health and also, of course, Healthcare Without Harm, a counterpart of Practice Green Health. We've been able to bring together through the US Healthcare Climate Council a dozen or so leading healthcare systems from across the country, who are really learning from each other and encouraging one another, seeing how we can make a difference together.

Rachelle Wenger ([13:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=riq5OdSkRe-FJ5pzkdV66wy-qDKYAYG1_i_V-sT8g6OMO1x40Cz_v8FVYJ27EnbZhga0Z2Yv9_xaLUtWoywVkhm7jAc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=809.49)):

All the things that we do individually, it may seem like sometimes it's not enough to counter this global climate crisis that we're facing, but all of these little things, they add up. I know for a fact that as we're using our buying power to change the marketplace to a greener, healthier, more sustainable economy, we're making a difference even in just changing one product that we use and it could inspire others to do the same.

Rachelle Wenger ([14:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=EEIWyl3bV1qf17lN8eQLF_2ZsAcPKmb1FZhWxYf6WOQ41d9ZEFaaS-UacHapQb5RpLx0h3fwuC5WCGsHYtzRNEcRsmQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=852.37)):

If you add all of those things up, it truly does make a difference. And I know that in terms of other partnerships that we've had, speaking of the marketplace, businesses are an important partner to us and sub-national organizations. As you know, the US pulled out of the Paris Accord, and it was more important than ever to remain steadfast and go even higher in our goal setting. We became part of We Are Still In, and now that the US is back in The Accord, now America is all in. This most expansive coalition of leaders ever assembled in support of climate action in the United States.

Rachelle Wenger ([14:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=hDZgYySp-CZcnnXxqVLTvI9quPhlZ7JBaVP09jPZbcMHLubP_YjCL9YgYh7eoyyYoWSWlYq17sN3QzU2i1kQhr1SpmI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=897.83)):

And together, these leaders, governors, mayors, tribal leaders, businesses, and other NGOs, they represent over half the U.S population, two thirds of its economy, and half of all of US green house gas emissions. So, if you gather all those individuals doing the same thing, that really does amount to a lot. And so, it's these small little actions that, I think, ripple and inspire others and influence greater and bold climate action.

Brian Reardon ([15:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=lgUIX82UoKI_IHWb3KOZPgT803qlvt22ReIwcaFJ6V-eyQ8dd2iDizxQu6d9Ck4dsxRXCUh8YCnDIQ3h1efJX9av4mw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=929.55)):

Yeah. I remember several years ago when CommonSpirit, and I think this is a neat story, a young lady wrote a letter to Lloyd Dean and said, "Hey, I noticed you had plastic straws. You know what those do to marine life," for example. And he made the decision, I think pretty quickly, to go to paper straws. So that's sort of one example, which may seem like something simple.

Brian Reardon ([15:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=4nixMsSQhoZOGQ4LpQSchuaUhD-gmg5DkPKJOjmipYbMVelw_8ZoFLdcVW3aIT_Qd8KXMNLmVZbox8XOFqjS4GIMLv0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=954.01)):

But can you also speak to maybe larger, for example, are systems like Ascension and CommonSpirit being more deliberate in how they invest money so that the investments they make long term for capital projects, and what have you, are actually going organization that are pro environment, for lack of a better word?

Rachelle Wenger ([16:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=0h4vRA5A-jWqkTdR-mtPN352R_Ys6MArL7ubEpCJusV21A1-1Om9AgfjIVtBLdNXTYvkZUtZF4YCix0PatXv8VFA8iw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=976.06)):

Oh, absolutely.

Lois Sechrist ([16:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=eEBP2iaq8miVxWgPunVh_pJSMYtRBId_Y0REo_OJFMcOj2C4458TbKsh9mmMeG2MZH9ZaR-CwPeQwAGp2KP-A36UHg8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=977.44)):

That is a great question. Rachelle, do you want to respond to that first? And then I have a couple of things I'd like to chime in as well.

Rachelle Wenger ([16:24](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=1Q2-oXl6iCWLck0_6jKNXqYcrZYP3PBlvfVFXIFCe9c1KZj3yhRiW_pM4RPwsfHIuAyBDIYfEDjMynGFLs6Ipc3ufpw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=984.4)):

Oh, please, please go ahead, Lois.

Lois Sechrist ([16:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ouS11-m7k1o1qPFo1ZebyWzGGOSSZycyGJPtnOfjObhbG1nwMOKeMWM_d36MIjkzoo8b__axFpjokVTXXxRznG2gG3U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=986.69)):

All right. So, Ascension has been doing this work for several years. We apply Environmental Impact Screens for our investment portfolio. And this is really exciting, we're starting to see ESG questions, which is Environmental Social Governance questions related to sustainability from our investors. We have not seen that in the past. And so we thought that was a huge step forward.

Lois Sechrist ([16:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=JRZuyY05GNHWQ5_8ScJ4HyxZ0sEQ5q4gZW9a_yEqQ4FT1UBBEhGkWnczgZbUtfbjy3no5dISi6Gptmo_vp53grPkpCE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1014.07)):

And then the other issue that you talked on, the straws, moving away from plastic straws. We've created a bigger effort around communicating, reducing the use of all kinds of single use plastics. Avoiding those items in our hospitals and moving to reusable products and items that are not disposable. So, that may seem like a simple thing, may not have a big impact. But we encourage those visible signals of sustainability to the public that show our commitment to the work that we're doing.

Lois Sechrist ([17:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_AlpjDPuUsChHfiitDbLkhom9Tt1t14iohrbDaMJVg1hs_ZkRf-I4L36DW62S6DIyii88ne09JtuYB8KaNk9HCAklSQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1053.62)):

Because a lot of those other things like the investment screens and our energy work and other things may not be as visible to the public. So we do encourage communication. We're going to be rebranding all of our waste receptacles so that people understand that we do have a commitment to waste management and recycling, even though a lot of it happens at the loading dock and you're not going to see it. We need to back that up with the real change of reducing our carbon footprint. But we think that both aspects are very important.

Brian Reardon ([18:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=mo6Svows0w5hD2_FGaPlDhVxZYF406ismMsXpbJWZGIiaH1foOdfoHDhe4-Fn6K03SRPC40dRtruRvch3rdObOiSHzM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1086.61)):

So, it's a spectrum really? It's being visible with some of the simple things, and then again, putting your money where your mouth is.

Lois Sechrist ([18:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=xRK972lpaNaq6ya8vmfA5XKbeXa0UmPA2TX-HY6S7WwTQKSg4DIrbnH9mcjlohuelXWvNLa6iWI3--upIrWvTBdkDM8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1093.8)):

Absolutely.

Brian Reardon ([18:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=DtU0NdRPlXGUoiZRRtYGmBMMWLnX10YPteySaLMAm5x0EFpeIHts2wl7xOEhntKqfNxx8s117VwBOVksxxzTPJVvK1w&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1094.65)):

Rachelle, do you-

Rachelle Wenger ([18:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=e8cC70961DzUmW8Tpuj9xcjehN_ed9JaCwtcPX344HNEgi4LBesUjY-p-K1-weVo6TIf_L_Es-IOzzRNc8wqjuqgELs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1095.12)):

Yes. I think that's so true. And I think the point that needs to be made here is that, addressing climate change or trying to advance climate smart healthcare is just not a nice thing to do or a moral thing to do for us, but it really makes economic business sense to really advance these greener sustainable efforts. It really is enabling us to sustain our healing mission. It is part of the equation of the bottom line that we seek.

Rachelle Wenger ([18:50](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=-8oqdjJ5LRYrY2a0L9ou1_6DYEu4kKDySoza1o31--8J55iUe0W_Uj5m5b-KcR7-8FUxDO9IAlLojB67GkjlNWXLuiU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1130.66)):

So, being a leader in corporate responsibility and responsible investing and incorporating shareholder advocacy and things that we do, those are so important in making sure that our healing mission continues. Without it, we'll be limping along and we won't be prepared for the future. And so, this is truly something very important to us. And again, to the point about the plastic straws. If banning plastic straws or putting solar panel on roofs or purchasing an electric car or speaking to one legislator is the only thing we do, it probably would be inconsequential and would address only a tiny fraction of the climate problem.

Rachelle Wenger ([19:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=p0NNvIn9dMBqQsBYWb5orFvTCJ0CnBKX55bmSfG4Z3MOdjlCOL_yp4kBhkY84HZEN9LvJD-xzIxZdYPHDxOLdKTmBnk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1177.62)):

But again, I think, all of us banning together is really about what we're trying to endeavor here. And yes, we need to go for the low hanging fruits, but those kinds of actions lead to bigger things. And together, I believe we're really making a difference in this area.

Mary Ann Steiner ([20:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=WdNsOydZ8CvILcLD3ORVeC83tUf_7lvWrYrSlVnSjRWKlziDeVA9zFeec3uJGZT2AmCPYPN-wLk1G0383nu-xSOm5kY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1201.81)):

Given the year we've just lived through, I'm surprised that I feel so hopeful about these kinds of things. And I think it's because the pandemic thrust in our faces the fact that we can't delay on some things much longer. It's gotten to such a point. And I think that climate change, for many people, seemed like more of a luxury for a while.

Mary Ann Steiner ([20:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zTKoHKy-MZnCekH8DvSqOILlrzH-RXJQqQ9xDf3ReH3xbu7gDzSytZs0TlLUQWl96ZiR7YkWzri9ynxWEm-ChPWasyo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1228.4)):

And now, given what's happened this year, we know that climate change has been affecting people who are poor more than people of privilege and people on the fringes and people who are homeless and more susceptible to health problems than other people. So I'm very hopeful about the fact that advocacy for health equity is being tied with environmental justice. Where do you see that going?

Rachelle Wenger ([20:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=wKVa00bNYl_i58s0ZogE8ZLAsMAuCGV3Cp8rohDZPzUZMtENMgCck0QGRgQzP3jY4jqokXuc7xg4QOskaKqvZQdxAvA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1259.61)):

Well, Mary Ann, first, let me start by saying that CommonSpirit Healths' vision of health equity is very much tied to our common vision for a healthier planet. And Pope Francis tells us that climate is a common good and that it belongs to all and is meant for all. And when he means all, he means all, not just for the well-to-do or those who can get by. The effects of the deterioration of the environment are suffered by the poorest, as you have just underscored. And this is unacceptable.

Rachelle Wenger ([21:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=aqlBJWRC7lwWK-kZFTIg2zeRAahmKpvVQXRU6lsmmVelFs43d9WJWclqadTqx9XYUHbWRqA2KmGqhukPxd0zZJH-TYs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1297.28)):

We are a human family and Catholic healthcare has always been about the preferential option to serve the poor, the most vulnerable, those at the margins. And so for us, climate healthcare really is ... climate-like healthcare I should say, is a justice issue. And those living in the most polluted areas are those who are least able to afford to move to better places, that droughts and severe weather conditions are spurring forced migrations, because people can no longer make a living, sustain a productive life in those areas.

Rachelle Wenger ([22:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zK-jv-7wtmHYsqJQF2p0aUG_LTbXq_tYuEWliUwGFqYSmrVTPxX-QYevxeYwNYKnZIZkJjHTVAQZ_PHCBQrbkgg5JOY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1335.15)):

There are physical, mental, social, and spiritual health consequences. And as healthcare providers, we see those conditions firsthand. And so who but us can vividly say something about this and do something? So, to us really, this connection with health equity and environmental justice, it's exactly what our healing mission is about.

Lois Sechrist ([22:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=8GK_n8b47WQE2M-DPInFDez5BidYsTlBP2H9NShMnFQ8HxT90BAxCfnVIwW6jWWB7av9rE0dh4leaxQ4-X0_1gpyJn8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1361.05)):

Yeah and I would add to that, Ascension, we're just beginning our work here. So for those of you listening to this podcast who haven't ventured into this area, don't feel bad. We are just getting started. We have just joined the Healthcare Anchor Network. Our facilities need to be operational 24/7. So again, this speaks to our pragmatic nature that we want our facilities to be resilient and operational, no matter what the weather conditions, the weather outcomes.

Lois Sechrist ([23:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YZaOrnP2FTnEkGtxluGQFdLdrRZFOglGUKuP1_55FW69Y1uXaBx9MLkyEpC6ieg7F1HYgcr1T0GkXmQV_L4r1NbH4hU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1393.95)):

We're also looking, I mentioned earlier, the social determinants of health that definitely affect the poor and the vulnerable. So housing, jobs, access to healthy food, education, transportation, and those health impacts of climate change. It's important for us to be aware of those and by being-

Brian Reardon ([23:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=RxSUWmMdyjIamMgcC_JVqdBL_LgIDmVAUtZPkueurF2KrlpPNlwGJo8SGYoxrhsd-W9gYwu-gNYLhNYDyKOHyyR1EMc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1416.22)):

And on a practical level with the social determinants of health, what are some examples of ways that a health system or a hospital in a local community can both affect positive change for the environment and address social determinants? A simple thing to me would be, going to a city council meeting and saying, "Hey, we need more sidewalks in this neighborhood so people can actually walk, be outdoors."

Brian Reardon ([24:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Qje_dQxUZQ7qoWBphtdmPzIsLB9hEFtfPKRa2mCuscvQxU4pHIxNhEL_9lbizUcSHDcf27mRjUi7IlQCgC_A-B0_AYI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1440.73)):

Are there other examples like that that you think if you would give advice to peers out listening about their roles at their local hospital, at their health system, what are things we can do from an advocacy standpoint? I guess I'd ask both of you that question, because I am intrigued by the connection between our work around addressing social determinants of health, which has been at the forefront. We've talked a lot about that in Health Progress, but there is an environmental connection there as well. It's a win-win or you can get a two for one on that.

Lois Sechrist ([24:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=QE-sx9pjfF2eZWqO3k87OPLyIv69TGDYxlOlGjoyuO9uEfDX3-GPTfYF-43POVsmwf6I6f2tYOGuk6zMS3Ak6s0YSio&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1469.67)):

Right. I think you make a really important point there and are asking the right questions. Because as we see this climate crisis and environmental issues, it really does cut across all of the social determinants of the health issues. Take any one of them, housing, immigration, economic, poverty issues, you can find climate in all of that. And so really, as we invest in community benefit programming and the like, it's really about connecting the dots to see how housing homelessness, we've talked about it already, in a way that the most vulnerable, the homeless are impacted by the elements of what's going on weather-wise.

Lois Sechrist ([25:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=TXvSw1NO37pTjCd96Ld8zxUeHPh6-NuVTROTc66Gj0mGe03FkDf36dASpXvOOZCw4fToChuZpspTFgosIu0TqVMI4Y4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1520.23)):

How can people heal when they don't have a home to be able to recover in or to shelter themselves from the elements. And so, we're really looking about, how do we invest as anchor institutions in the communities we serve in these areas of social determinants? And we're doing that already, and we're doing it by really putting our money where our mouth is. But the trick here now is really understanding the connection between those social determinants and how climate is intensifying the gravity of those social determinants and the need to address them.

Mary Ann Steiner ([26:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SoW5GE8UoYfU0gB-BNf1KdMKmKyd-uytKDIVO2GJkHMWAUggBSRK41vsTpYpHI0guwXX0D_WE2y1fv177FJ839Dfk2c&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1563.62)):

You've both been in the trenches with this for a long time and have seen what's possible, and what could have been, and what you wish for. Here's a confession, I'm listening on tape to the Harry Potter series with my grandkids, because it's some common ground and I'm thinking of wands. If you had a magic wand in your hand today, what's the one thing you would change about the way we're going at this that would just remove some obstacles or add some resources or whatever?

Lois Sechrist ([26:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SHd--8xG1U14ykDVsFsau0_RWqiADmvaKnPZ6dAbeaPMl6eecc2HgFDNdi-DNZAu6Tcac0YI-rYM1N5MMFKR9g3uZXQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1596.4)):

I would say that we would like to infuse sustainability into the culture of our health systems and make it part of the work that we do every day. We don't want it to be added on it. We just want it to be the way that we think and the way that we look at the world and care for the earth is a very easy concept to understand. And we'd like that to be part of the way that we approach our work every single day.

Mary Ann Steiner ([27:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=D8YFsfmr1KhSonsyJVdtxRbti3q08ih8JGj29TckV7eS6Ksx2Dxd8rKKw3PJAFcu20iyfMTiF5iGJGBjOM493CM9EPo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1624.11)):

Thanks. I Like that.

Rachelle Wenger ([27:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_kujU_rLFre1jM2CMD825O6LvBpqWgZw4CXxdbbClhIRSTBE284bZZBicAr94-KMJVrvVo4CtG3xXzBuF2rE4YiiOrw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1626.01)):

And for me, I like to think that each and every one of us has a magic wand within us. And it's really about, again, just coming back to the encyclical and the beautiful words of Pope Francis and the really clear and straight talk that he also provides in his encyclical. We need to do the right thing. We need to lean in and lead. We need to come together to determine the solutions that's needed at various levels and to create these systemic changes.

Rachelle Wenger ([27:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=5n4GZfuglGftZ24wrx8iZv583EVxGbSIT6dMqjsAaL-OIARm4j_IBRKrITyINUB_bfKd_84M2cVdBT2svSN43NBwpAQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1661.8)):

And we need to be feisty and bold and act. This climate crisis really means something more than just straws or electricity or all the small and great ways that we are trying to tackle this issue. It's something really much bigger and something deeply personal. And that's about the core of our humanity and really there's no time to waste.

Rachelle Wenger ([28:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=j2ROAsJ82C5jUd_YIoGUn8t4XM-9fhnyLzrDtj6ylun2HUtoqdiN7IbZI503-rtvBwJ-juYrD00QRs80Fjle9C4bdG0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1694.7)):

And if we can stop and think about how it is that we can personally contribute to this issue, I think we can really make a big difference when we come together to do those things together. And I'm hopeful because there's Ascension who is doing all the great things that need to get done for their system. There's CommonSpirit Health that's doing this, and we know we're not alone in saying that there's hope and that there are things to do and that we are doing them and we can do more.

Brian Reardon ([28:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=DJ2x5TpUxKDwNv0Ag1Z-voaiQv7qPT24u1_4m-MDJ7VDU0M054r3-JMoqKNf4Rrz-ii3MW1B26VAms77q2r9tssVV60&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1734.06)):

And I think hope is a great word to summarize this conversation. Rachelle, Lois, you both give some really great examples of work both of your systems are doing, a lot of work still yet to be done, but it does as we head into earth day this month, give me hope. I don't know about you Mary Ann, but it seems like we are doing a lot as a Catholic healthcare ministry to address this. I love the examples you both provided. So thank you for your time today and your insights. And Maryanne, any final thoughts?

Mary Ann Steiner ([29:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=v9eqpphioPsLyXI2UNubISBLZUXyT_t_zchqb_FP58aT8MeL8m_AOmFNa4H_KdcYQ5jjdmRtwfaTv7_YoQcpmRYvjOk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1761.92)):

I'm so glad you both said yes. I think that you speak for systems that are taking this seriously. You speak for systems that have the resources, both financial and brain power and commitment to make a difference. And it's wonderful to hear, what you're doing.

Brian Reardon ([29:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=s1s8Blgue0FB6XnfLWYsZ4hu8f7KMWUJpv9wxYLeVQAdHKyOxJCFJPRinUPaRdGcOuGcazUsTeRDS-pxBRVZV8C2Mrs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1782.05)):

Again, we thank Lois Sechrist, she's the Environmental Stewardship Manager at Ascension here in St. Louis, and Rachelle Wenger she's assistant vice president of Public Policy and Engagement for CommonSpirit Health. Thank you again both of you for being with us today. Great conversation. And we appreciate your time.

Rachelle Wenger ([29:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=OjHyKVxWh5mXOEOX8oO4_FCcfnAnG_wkYie5NaiQo7yE2gsOo9aa1Mc_yGdviKufz2ly2zCMZngXXEdgf1MpTIfCKUk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1798.84)):

Thanks so much for having us.

Lois Sechrist ([30:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=A0-xljYLDKDk7XRa6I4vSCEYitmKqjYXRvHAJX24Yzcm0IY4A4pwEiWHpii2xEKKggzOy9dSbaIyEgFYzDf-AKsrl14&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1800.02)):

Take care and thank you so much.

Brian Reardon ([30:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=j-aFOdPIHElkjltidlFuwGnW3G_kByeRgOFVxB2qfCCPRq0pXgJdDQKWHr2Y1JQ3wbOesQQESEgsNIhyOKMa0up3AZA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1801.25)):

And this has been another episode of Catholic Health USA, the podcast of the Catholic Health Association for Mary Ann Steiner, I'm Brian Reardon. And until next time, we'll talk to you.