



# CHA Invites Catholic Health Care to be Pilgrims of Hope for Creation

Overview and Ministry Planning

August 13, 2025



God who walks with us:

As we lean into the work to which we've been called,  
keep our eyes on the horizon,  
that we might see beyond  
to the enduring hope,  
to the "and yet" that you promise us.

We make our way together:

steady our steps,  
awaken our awareness,  
give us the vision to see your goodness in the signs of  
hope around us.

Transform our hurts, O Tender One,  
that we might offer the light of hope to those in our care.

AMEN

CHA Jubilee Prayer – Pilgrims of Hope



# Today's Agenda



- ◆ Pilgrimage Overview – Who, Why, When, What, How
- ◆ Ministry Planning
  - Ascension
  - CommonSpirit Health™
  - Providence
- ◆ Brainstorming Pilgrimage Ideas
- ◆ Next Steps

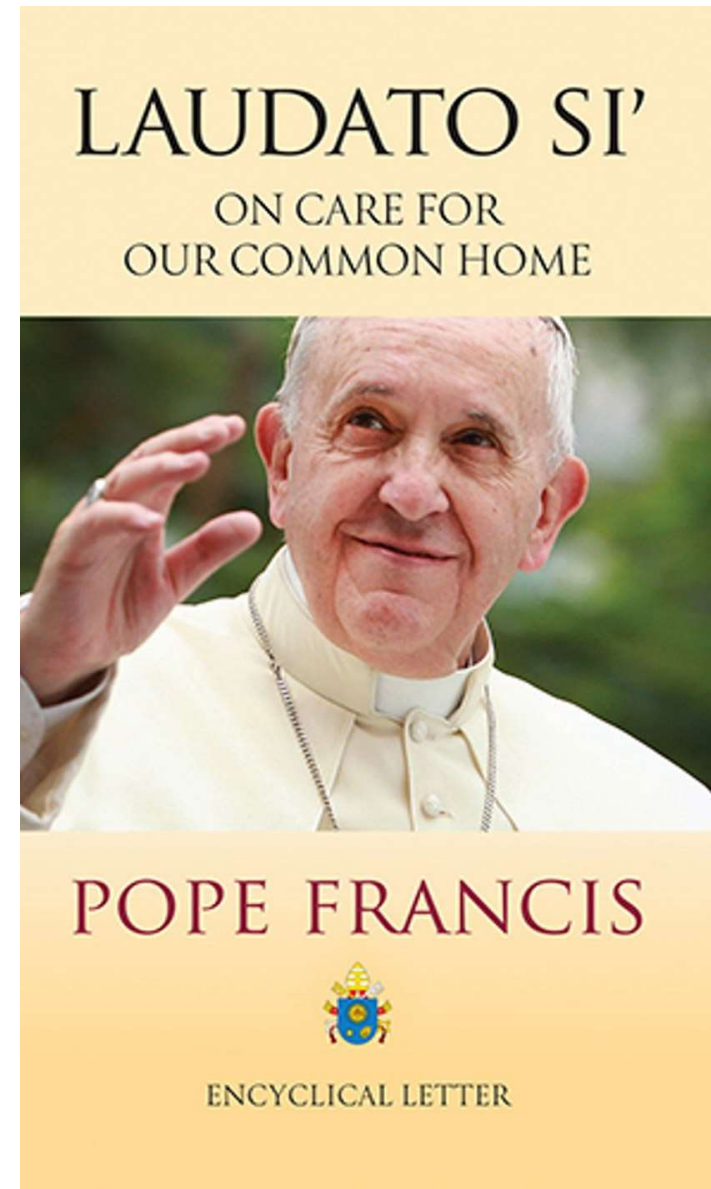
# Who – Collaborating Organizations



- ◆ Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU)
- ◆ Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA)
- ◆ Catholic Climate Covenant
- ◆ Catholic Health Association (CHA)
- ◆ Catholic Impact Investing Collaborative
- ◆ CRS
- ◆ Congregation of St. Joseph
- ◆ Francesco Collaborative
- ◆ Franciscan Action Network
- ◆ Franciscan Friars Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe
- ◆ Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center
- ◆ Ignatian Solidarity Network
- ◆ Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States
- ◆ Laudato Si Movement
- ◆ LCWR
- ◆ Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
- ◆ Modern Catholic Pilgrim
- ◆ National Association of Catholic Action and Mission
- ◆ Network – Network Advocates for Catholic Social Justice
- ◆ Saint Kateri Conservation Center
- ◆ Sisters of Mercy
- ◆ Stuart Center for Mission

# Why – We Face an Ecological Crisis

- ◆ Need to connect Catholics and Catholic institutions that care for creation to respond to the signs of the time
- ◆ Need to renew relationships with God, the Earth, and one another
- ◆ Need to foster ecological conversion

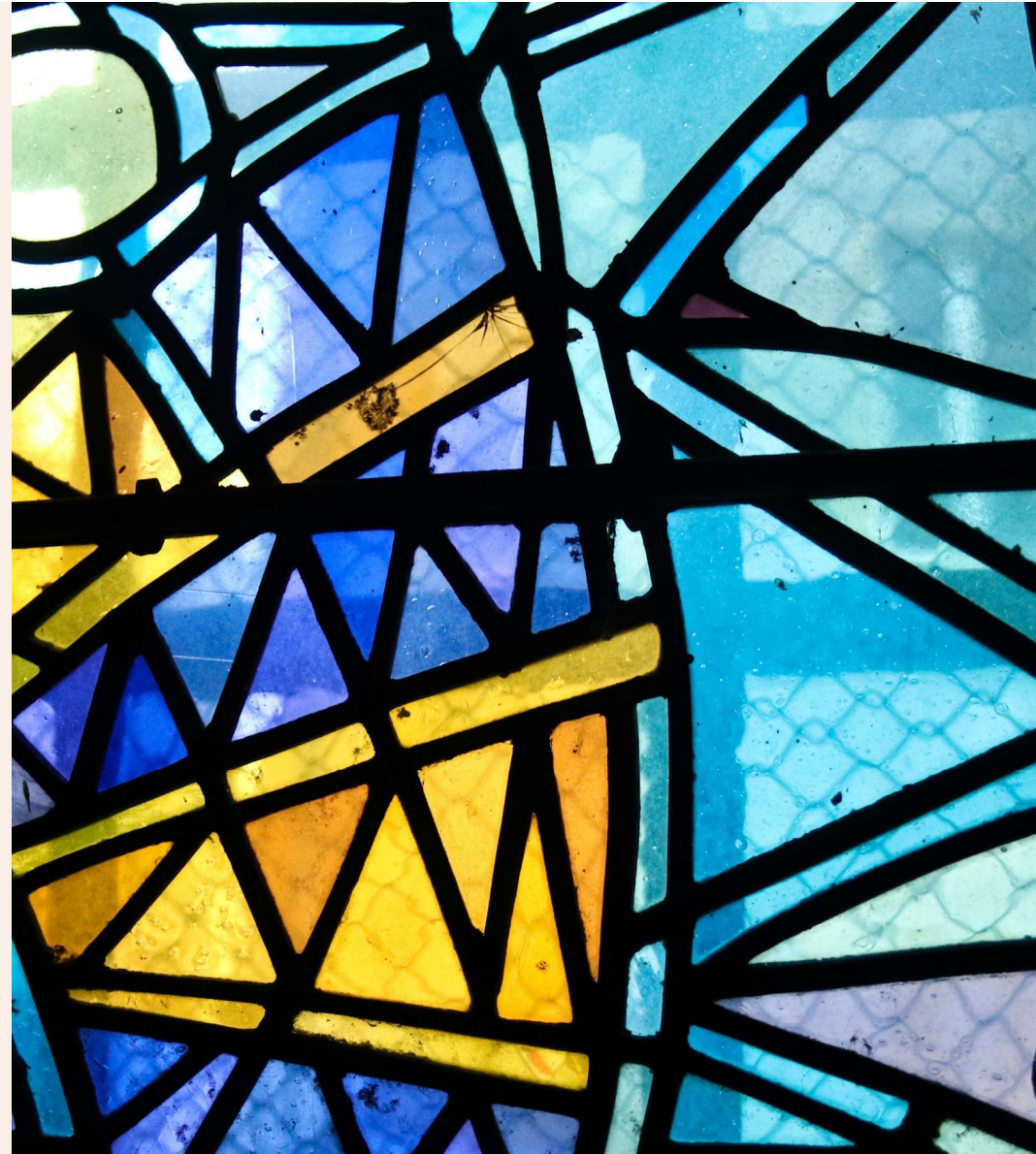






“I used to think that top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that thirty years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don’t know how to do that.”

**James Gustave Speth**- Founder and former president of the World Resources Institute and a co-founder of the Natural Resources Defense Council



# When – Season of Creation

- ◆ Season of Creation – September 1 – October 4
- ◆ Priority dates – Oct. 3 – 4, but anytime in October works



*Garden of Peace*  
Isaiah 32:14-18

**PEACE  
WITH CREATION**  
SEASON OF CREATION 2025

# What – Pilgrimage

“Simply put, a pilgrimage is a spiritual journey. It can be made anywhere, by anyone, for just about any spiritual purpose...The goal is always transformation. Anyone can travel to a location, but the pilgrim seeks to encounter something deeper. In that way, a pilgrimage is never truly finished, because hopefully you will come back changed, unable to return to old ways of living or thinking.”

– Verso Ministries





# What - Pilgrimage

- ◆ Unifying elements – Hold outdoors (if possible) and use Pilgrimage prayer
- ◆ Encounter, Connection, and Action



# How – Resources, Approaches




**STEP 1:**  
**PLAN A PILGRIMAGE**

**Let's make a plan.**

Pilgrimages may be as simple or complex as you wish! Whether it's a rosary walk through your parish grounds, a multi-day pilgrimage through a nearby mountain range, or a 12-mile journey to a local mission church—all bring us closer to God and creation.

While each pilgrimage will be unique to its community, there are two required elements:

- At least part of the pilgrimage should be outdoors in creation;
- The pilgrimage should incorporate the pilgrimage prayer or song during the experience (see [planning toolkit](#)).



**Catholic Pilgrimages of Hope for Creation Toolkit**

*The toolkit provides everything you need to plan your pilgrimage. From pilgrimage prayers and songs, to planning worksheets, to social media templates to increase your reach—we've got you covered!*

[View the Toolkit](#)



**100+**  
Pilgrimages Registered!  
Will You Join Them?

**20+**  
States/Provinces  
Hosting Pilgrimages

**22**  
Catholic Organizations  
Collaborating on This  
Unprecedented Movement

**GET ON THE MAP OR  
FIND A PILGRIMAGE**

Discover and join a growing movement of Catholic pilgrimages across the United States! Find a local pilgrimage to join near you—or register your own to get on the map! Whether you're planning a short parish walk or a multi-day trek through natural landscapes, every step taken is a witness to hope, healing, and the call to care for our common home.

[Register a Pilgrimage to Get on the Map](#)

[Find a Pilgrimage to Join Near You](#)



Visit <https://catholicpilgrimsofhope.org/>

# How – Resources, Approaches

- ◆ Pilgrimages can be with the community or within the organization, at any level
- ◆ Leverage existing events – connect to Jubilee Year or Feast of St. Francis celebrations
- ◆ Put in context of your organization/community
  - Emphasize the mission/spiritual aspects of this initiative to connect with those who might have different viewpoints on this issue
  - Consider sensitivities if your organization is in an area that has experienced environmental harm/natural disasters
- ◆ Offer follow up actions for participants – personal and professional



# Ministry Planning

**Lois Sechrist**, Manager Sustainability, Medxcel/Ascension

**Sr. Mary Ellen Leciejewski**, OP, System Vice President,  
Environmental Sustainability, CommonSpirit Health™

**Beth Schenk**, PhD, RN, FAAN, Executive Director,  
Environmental Stewardship, Providence

# Lois Sechrist Manager of Sustainability



**Ascension**

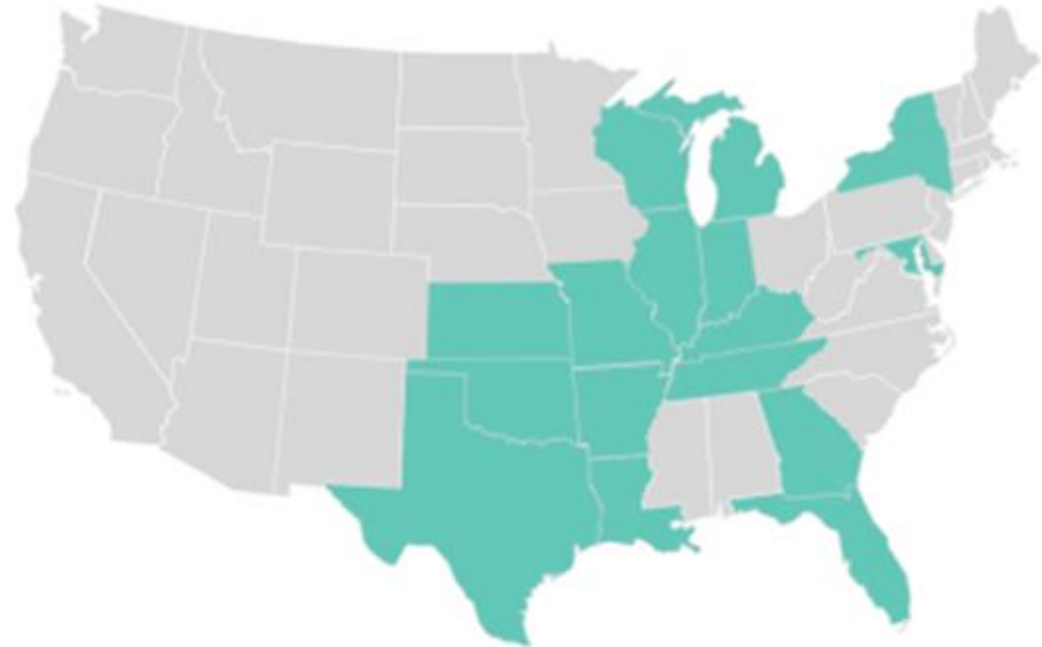
*Listening to you, caring for you.®*



# Ascension Overview

Sites of care in **16** states and Washington DC

- ▶ **94** wholly owned hospitals
- ▶ **30** senior living facilities



2024 At a glance



15.7M

PHYSICIAN OFFICES  
AND CLINIC VISITS



6.1M

UNIQUE LIVES  
SERVED

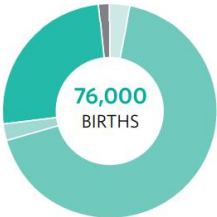


263K

OBSERVATION  
DAYS



3.1M EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS



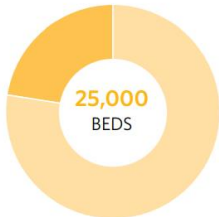
Encounters

- 725K Discharges
- 1.6M Equivalent discharges
- 595K Surgery visits
- .6M Virtual provider office visits
- 331K Urgent care visits



Clinicians and caregivers

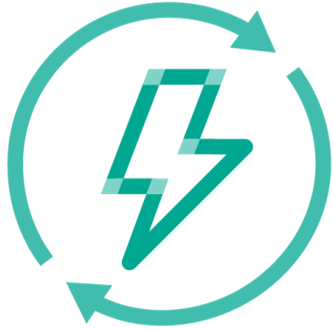
- 37K Affiliated providers
- 6,800 Employed providers
- 48K Nurses



Acute and post-acute care

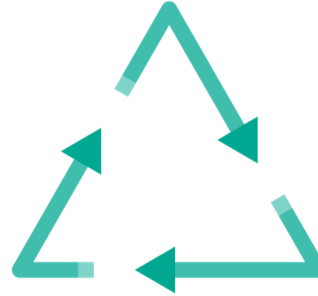
- 136 Hospitals
- 39 Post-acute facilities

# Ascension's Sustainability Goals



**2030**

Reduce carbon emissions by 50%.  
Divert 50% of nonhazardous waste from all Ascension-owned facilities.



**2040**

Achieve net zero carbon emissions and zero waste across all sites of care.

# Ascension Associate Engagement - Feast of St. Francis

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI



October 4, 2024

## BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI/OCTOBER 4



*And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures and let birds fly above the earth.....So God created every living creature that moves, ...And God saw that it was good.*

Genesis 1: 20-22

**If there ever was a saint who is an example of a profound love for all God's creation, it is St. Francis of Assisi.**

St. Francis had a deep connection with the earth and all life within it. To St. Francis, they were his brothers and sisters.

With the current environmental crisis, our animals are having their habitats, their homes, destroyed. If we lose our animals, the pollinators, all animals that enable our biodiversity; if we lose our beloved pets, who fill our lives with happiness, play and unconditional love, we lose a part of our soul.

To honor St. Francis and his love of all creation, let us now offer a blessing for all animals, especially our therapy animals and our pets.

## LET US PRAY:

*Holy Lord, Divine Creator of All,*

*We ask that You bless all animals.*

*Both wild and tame, familiar and hidden to us.*

*Animals who enable a regenerative biodiversity on earth.*

*Bless all our pets, our beloved companions and friends.*

*Their presence helps us get through the challenges we face in our lives.*

*May our pets be safe, healthy, happy and well cared for.*

*Give any pet who is suffering or challenged strength, comfort and healing grace.*

*We remember with affection any pet who has died. May any associate who is grieving the loss of their pet be comforted by Your compassionate love and support.*

*We ask You to bless our therapy animals and the people who volunteer their time with these special animals. May they be honored and blessed for their service.*

*Thank you, Creator God, for Your blessings.*

*Thank you, St. Francis of Assisi, for inspiring peace, healing and love.*

*Amen*

*Amen*

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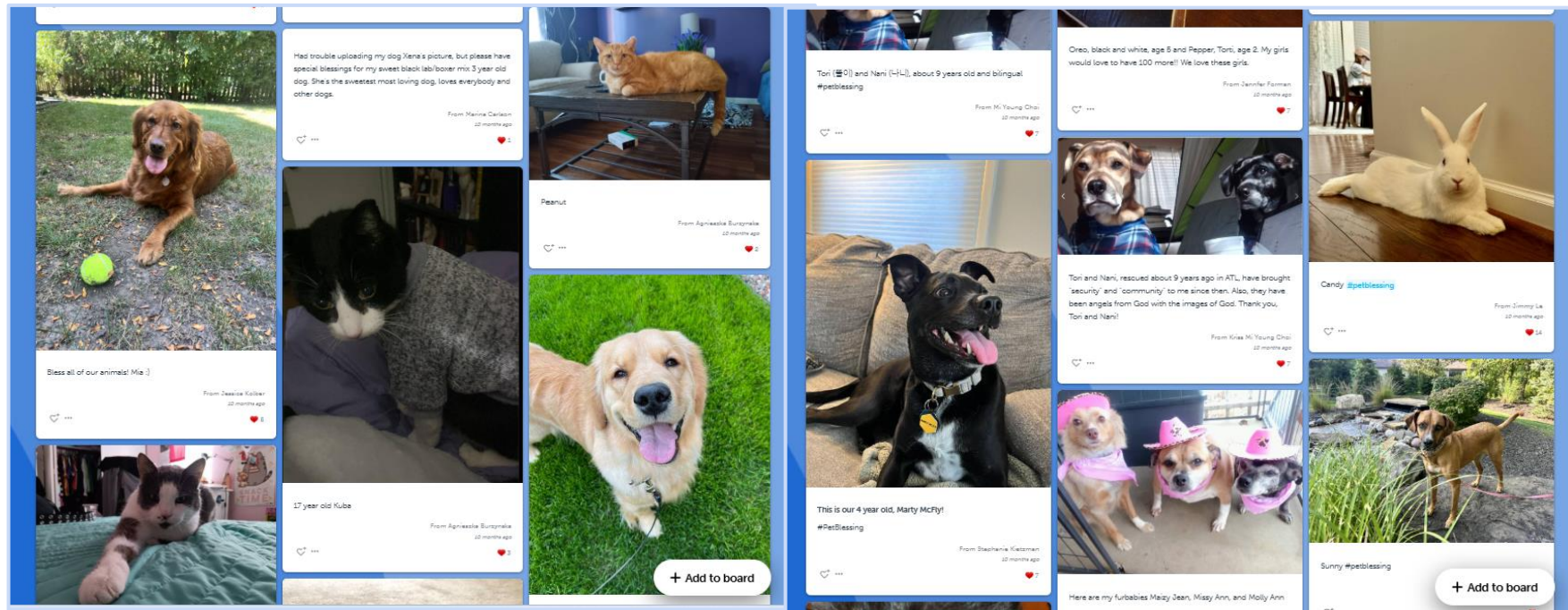
## BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI/OCTOBER 4



# Ascension Associate Engagement - 2024 Feast of St. Francis

## 700 #petblessing posts to the Ascension Kudoboard



# Ascension Associate Engagement - 2024 Feast of St. Francis



## Laudato Si' Action Platform goals

Response to the Cry of the Earth

Response to the Cry of the Poor

Ecological Economics

Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles

Ecological Education

Ecological Spirituality

Community Resilience and Empowerment

**How are you including sustainability in your daily work?**



# Ascension Associate Engagement - 5K Run/ Walk

## BLESSING OF THE WALKERS, RUNNERS AND PETS

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI/OCTOBER 4  
ASCENSION 5K/OCTOBER 4-6

*Holy One, Source of All,  
Open our eyes to behold Your presence  
In all of the glorious life that surrounds us.  
Open our hearts to feel our sacred connection  
To each other, to nature, to You.  
Open our ears to hear the cries of our earth  
In need of healing, sustainability and restoration.  
Bless our families, our friends, our animal companions  
and pets, with strength, good health and well being.  
Walking together, may we live in harmony and flow  
with all of creation.  
May we be inspired to be instruments of Your peace.  
Amen*



# Pilgrimages of Hope for Creation

Sr. Mary Ellen Leciejewski, OP  
System VP Environmental Sustainability  
CommonSpirit Health

August 13, 2025

# CommonSpirit By The Numbers



## What serving the common good looks like

<b>\$4.2 billion*</b> annually in charity care, community benefits, and unreimbursed government programs	<b>150,000</b> employees	<b>24</b> states and hundreds of communities served	<b>20+ million</b> total patient encounters	
<b>~25,000</b> physicians and APPs	<b>~2,300</b> care sites	<b>157</b> hospitals	<b>4</b> major academic partners	<b>~\$37 billion*</b> recorded revenue

\*Data as of November 18, 2024.



# Pilgrimages of Hope for Creation

- Highlight Laudato Si and Year of Jubilee 2025
- Inspire health and well-being
- Connect with co-workers about caring for creation
- Keep the legacy of our founding Sisters alive
- Inspire green teams



# VENUES





**LABYRINTH**

# ROOFTOP GARDEN







**GRASSY AREAS**



# COURTYARD







# **COURTYARD & COY POND**





# HOSPITAL PATH



# **GARDEN & STRAWBERRY BEDS**





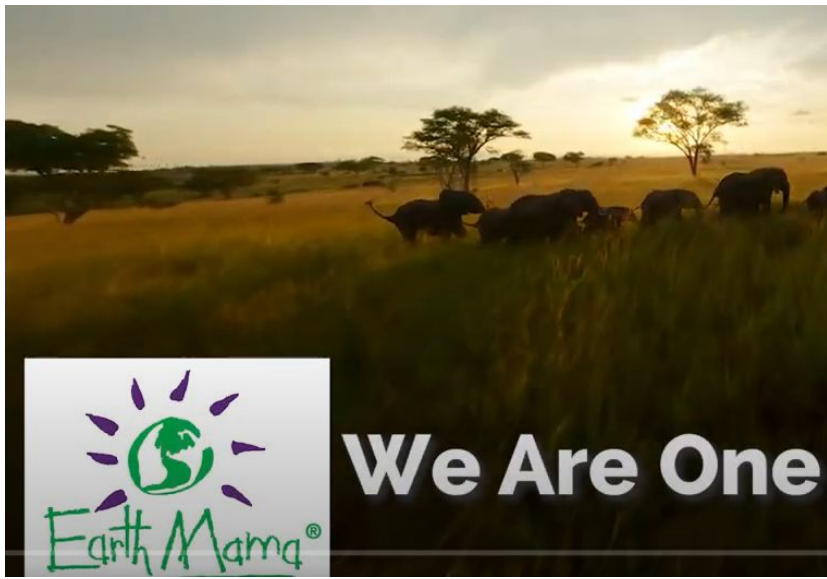


**CHAPEL**

**CONFERENCE ROOM**



# LOGISTICS



**WE ARE ONE BY EARTH MAMA**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GL8Nrp0haq4>



**CANTICLE OF THE SUN**





## MEANINGFUL GIVEAWAYS



# Earth Care

TAKE PICTURES!



## Sustainability

A healthy environment - fresh water to drink, clean air to breathe, fertile soil in which to grow our food - is vital to our health.

At CommonSpirit Health, we're making meaningful changes to address climate change and reduce our environmental footprint. While the task ahead can feel daunting, we are excited about the opportunities before us.

# PARTICIPANTS

- Co-workers
- Community Groups
- Business Partners
- Others?





## SAMPLE AGENDA

- Invite co-workers to a meaningful and significant space
- Facilitator reflects:
  - Why we're here
  - Make connections between human and planetary health
  - Slow down and pay attention to creation;
    - how are we nurturing it
    - how are we destroying it
  - Integral ecology - Laudato Si
- Invite participants to silently reflect while walking in the space:
  - "What does care for creation mean to you?"
- Invite sharing with a partner and then with the whole group - same question
- Invite a speaker to share the impact on the community of a hospital initiative (i.e. labyrinth, food redistribution, excess medical supply donation)
- Thank all for coming
- Conclusion: Song (i.e. We Are One by Earth Mama; Canticale of Creation; others)

*Total time: 30 min - 45 min*







**Webinar: A founding congregation  
cares for creation**

**Dominican Motherhouse  
Adrian, MI  
SOLAR ARRAYS**

# SEASON OF CREATION

# SEASON OF CREATION STORY



The environment is my spiritual sanctuary, connecting me to something greater than myself. Whether I'm strolling through the woods or getting my hands dirty in the yard, I feel a deep bond with nature. This connection inspired me from a young age, so now I plog daily (picking up trash while walking my dog), research political candidates' stances on climate change, buy sustainable alternatives to products, and compost at home. I also lead hands-on sustainability workshops, teaching people how to shop sustainably and repurpose materials.

Aaron and his daughter planting a pollinator garden.

# SEASON OF CREATION STORY



"I've been working to prepare our hospital and to mitigate the urban heat island that we sit in. I'm concerned about how extreme heat brought on by climate change affects the health and wellbeing of our staff, patients and community. In 2018, I conceived, helped create and conduct the first extreme heat drill on the West Coast, the second in the entire U.S. The goal: to make sure our doors stay open in an extreme heat emergency. I've also been working with a group of government, business and health care professionals to create a weekly poster campaign to raise awareness with an eye to keeping our community safe. To help mitigate heat here, I've organized an herb garden on our hospital grounds and secured a grant from our ministry to plant trees. I'm happy to say that we've added a lot of green space this year and we hope to do more!"

Kim Ray, pictured on Earth Day, is planting trees for a cooler Earth.





## REFLECTION

Throughout the months and years, the hopes and actions that lie ahead,

May the Renewing Spirit of God bring to fulfillment the integral ecological conversion beginning around the planet.

May God's Spirit of Wisdom provide us all the hope, wisdom, and courage we need to restore the household of God on Earth, making it once again a true Home for All.

May the prophetic Spirit of God bring about just and loving global solidarity in the human community so that together in that Spirit...

....we may give birth to a life-giving and profound Peace for all in the New Creation.

Amen





# Thank you

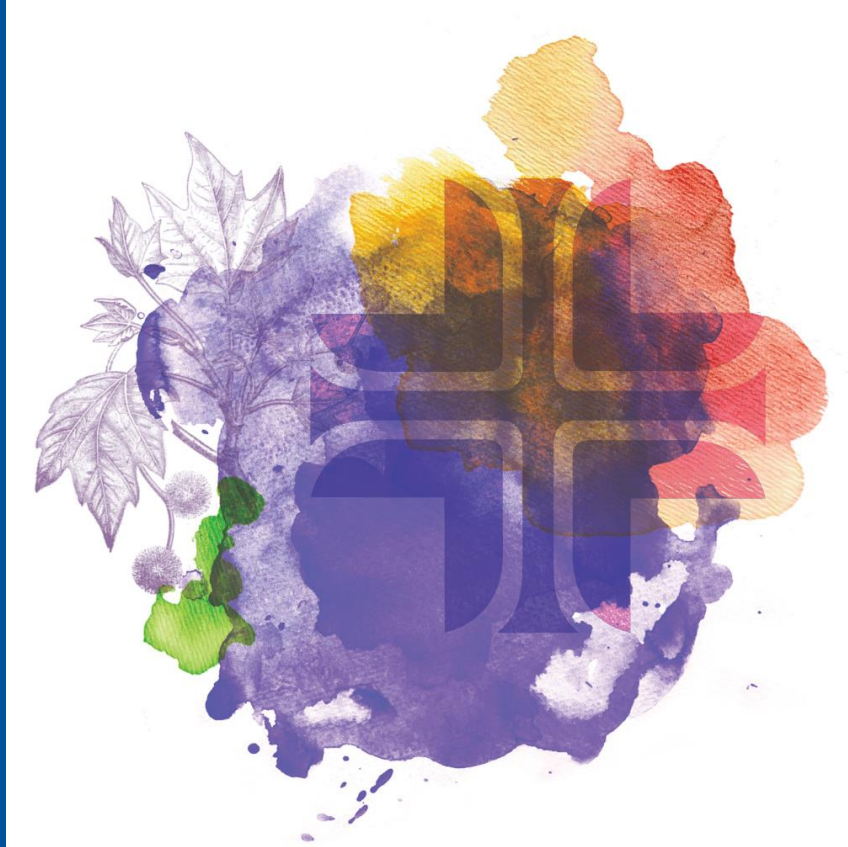
[maryellen.leciejewski@commonspirit.org](mailto:maryellen.leciejewski@commonspirit.org)



# Pilgrimages of Hope for Creation

Environmental Stewardship

# PROVIDENCE MISSION



*As expressions of God's healing love, witnessed through the ministry of Jesus, we are steadfast in serving all, especially those who are poor and vulnerable.*

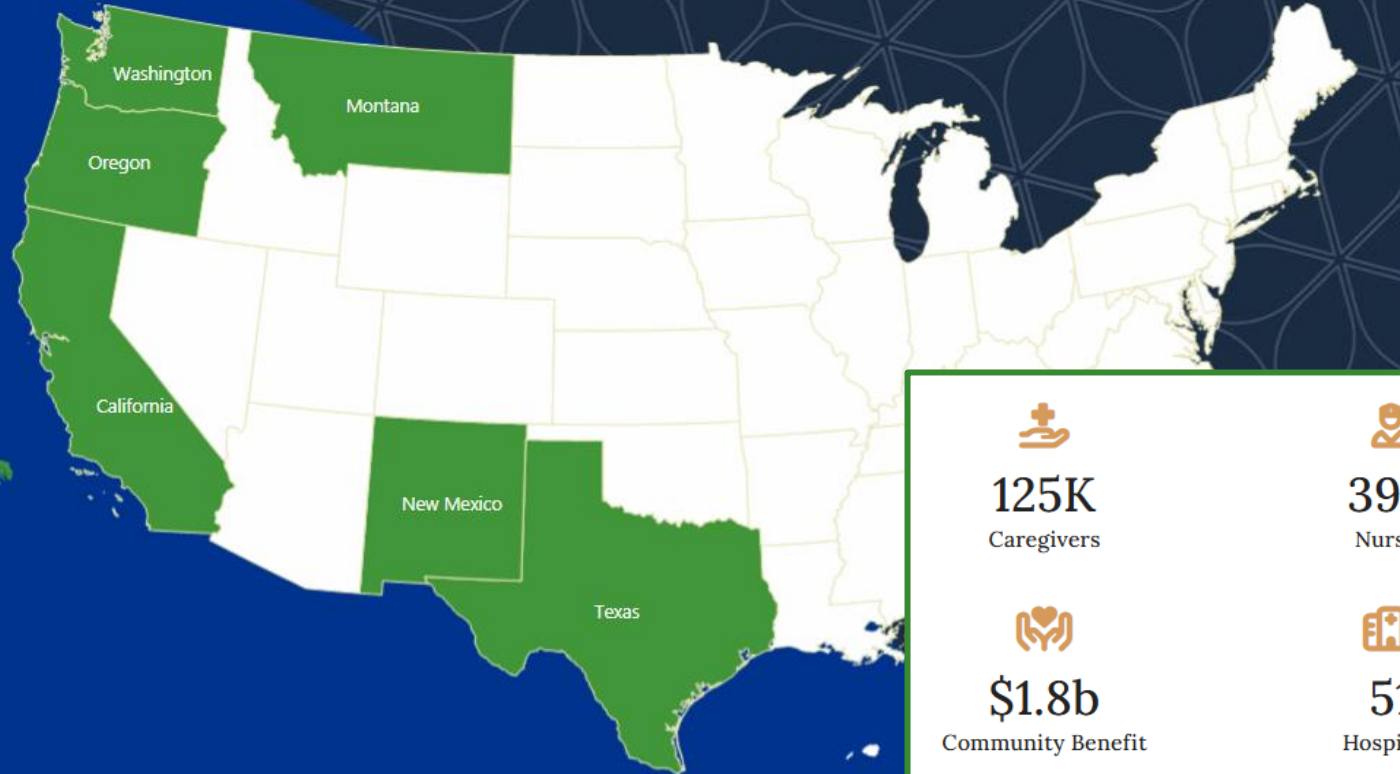
## **Core Value of Justice**

Act with justice, love with kindness and walk humbly with your God. –Micah 6:8

We foster a culture that promotes unity and reconciliation.

***We strive to care wisely for our people, our resources and our earth.***

We stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable, working to remove the causes of oppression and promoting justice for all.



Our presence  
in the western United States and India



125K  
Caregivers



39K  
Nurses



35K  
Physicians



\$1.8b  
Community Benefit



51  
Hospitals



1014  
Clinics



29m  
Total Patient Visits



1.9m  
Covered Lives



1  
Health Plan



18  
Supportive Housing  
Facilities



High School, Nursing  
Schools & University



# Pilgrimages of Hope for Creation

## Environmental Stewardship & Mission Leadership

September 1 – October 4

- At each ministry, we are inviting mission leaders and green team leaders to offer a local “Pilgrimage”
- We ask them to prepare to tell the story about their pilgrimage, with photos or videos
- The first week of October – system wide call for all interested to share Pilgrimage experiences across the system



# Ideas for Pilgrimages

## Reflection in the Garden

- Guided reflection in a healing garden or outdoor space (Consider *Laudato Si'* and the *Canticle of the Creatures*).

## Community Cleanup with Historical Reflection

- Organize a community cleanup and add a reflection on the area's ecological and cultural history.

## Blessing of the Animals

- Celebrate the Feast of St. Francis with a pet/animal blessing ceremony.

## Community Garden Pilgrimage

- Walk through a local garden, reflect on food justice, and share plant-based meals.

## DIY Pilgrimage

- Consider prayer cards, reflection questions, and nature journaling.

## Campus Chapel Walk

- Contemplative walk between chapels or sacred spaces on campus, with stops for prayer and reflection.

## Environmental Stewardship Storytelling Circle

- Caregivers share personal stories of caring for creation, inspired by Providence's mission and the legacy.

## Heartwiring Reflection Workshop

- Use the *Heartwiring Workbook* by Sr. Sara Tarango to guide spiritual reflection on creation and justice.





# Heartwiring

Environmental Stewardship from the Heart

*with Sister Sara Tarango*

**WE ACT**  
toward carbon negative by 2030





Health for a Better World



## Next Steps

- ◆ Start planning your pilgrimages – see <https://catholicpilgrimsofhope.org/> and CHA website at [www.chausa.org/environment](http://www.chausa.org/environment) for more information and resources
- ◆ Register your pilgrimage to the Pilgrims of Hope for Creation map to show solidarity with this national, Catholic movement
- ◆ Contact Indu Spugnardi at [ispugnardi@chausa.org](mailto:ispugnardi@chausa.org) with questions or help planning your organization's pilgrimage.