

VOLUME 45 - SPRING 2024



Our 2024 State Conference



We are thrilled to announce our coming State Conference, ***All is Connected: The Sacred Journey of Caring for our Common Home***, to be held **April 20th** at **U of D Mercy** in **Detroit**. This year's keynote speaker will be **Lisa Sullivan**. Lisa is the Integral Ecology Senior Program Office for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. She is the epitome of a Spiritual Activist. To see all that she's accomplished and dedicated her life to, please read her full biography on our website, but suffice it to say that she brings both faith and action to the table.

As an additional highlight of the day, **State Representative Stephanie Chang** will help bring forward the current critical environmental issues that Michigan is facing, and what we can do to preserve our natural resources, especially our water.

And last, but FAR from least, we have two wonderful awardees to celebrate: First, lifelong peacemaker (and beekeeper), Joe Droste, who will receive the ***Annual Purple Ribbon for Peace*** award. And our ***Young Peace Activist*** award will go to ***Strangers No Longer - Youth in Action for Immigration***, facilitated by Amy Ketner. Wow! What a wonderful conference this promises to be!



REGISTER NOW! Just visit our website, or use the brochure enclosed.



Pax Christi Michigan's Statement on Environmental Stewardship and Justice



Global climate change has had adverse, observable effects on the environment that scientists say will worsen unless significant action is taken to reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses. These include: shrinking glaciers causing a rise in sea level; decreasing animal ranges; disappearing animal and plant species; declining coral reefs; devastating floods; intensifying hurricanes and typhoons; longer wildfire seasons; and extreme heat, with 2014 through 2023 being the ten hottest years on record. The National Atmospheric and Atmospheric Administration reports that sea level will rise between 2 and 7.2 feet in the contiguous United States by 2100, with the variance based upon how effectively greenhouse gas emissions are contained. Low lying coastal areas and islands are at risk of becoming submerged. In addition, droughts and heat waves will intensify, affecting water supplies, human health, agricultural yield, and more. Tragically, health data presented at the United Nations COP27 Climate Summit in 2022 projected that **unabated climate change will cause 3.4 million deaths per year by the end of the century**. Areas with weak health infrastructure, primarily in developing countries, will be the least able to cope without assistance to prepare and respond. The U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration points out that “Multiple studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals show that 97 percent or more of actively publishing climate scientists agree: climate-warming trends over the past century are extremely likely due to human activities. In addition, most of the leading scientific organizations worldwide have issued public statements endorsing this position.” Yet, some 34 percent of Americans say that global warming is either caused by natural patterns or not happening at all, and is not primarily due to the effects of human activities, according to a April 2023 Ipsos poll. One reason for lingering public skepticism was documented by the Union of Concerned Scientists which reported that ExxonMobil and other top carbon polluters have been fully aware of the reality of climate change for decades, and have spent tens of millions of dollars to deceive the public about climate science. In addition, since 1997, Koch Industries, an oil corporation and the second largest privately-held company in the U.S., has funneled more than \$145 million to climate-denial groups working to delay or nullify policies and regulations aimed at reducing global warming.

Trump administration Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt received at least \$215,000 in campaign contributions from the fossil-fuel industry while successfully running for Oklahoma Attorney General in 2010 and 2014, and sued the EPA 14 times in opposition to measures intended to protect the environment. In March 2017, President Trump signed an Executive Order to rollback Obama-era regulations aimed at fighting climate change, including the Clean Power Plan, which established federal limits on carbon emissions from coal-fired power plants. In June 2017, Trump decided to formally withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement. On his first day in office, President Biden signed to bring the U.S. back into the agreement.

The organized, well-funded effort to promote climate change denial, as well as the active anti-environmental stance of the previous U.S. administration, reveal the extent to which greed and selfishness threaten the very survival of humanity. Water, air, soil, plants, animal life and human life are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation.





Catholic Social Teaching maintains a God-centered and sacramental view of the universe, which grounds human accountability for the fate of the Earth. In his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* ("On Care for Our Common Home"), Pope Francis writes that the Earth "cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her." Furthermore, "A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor ... Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society."

Environmental **stewardship** is a profoundly spiritual concern. Humankind was "created in God's own image" (Genesis 1:27) and has an obligation "to care for and maintain God's garden," the Earth (Genesis 2:15). Environmental **justice**, in view of the merciless destruction of the natural world and the corresponding and potentially catastrophic ecological crisis, is an urgent responsibility for Christians who recognize that the web of existence is linked to the protection of and care for God's creation.

Accordingly, Pax Christi Michigan embraces the following Environmental Stewardship and Justice principles and strategies:

- The entire Cosmos, including the Earth, humankind, and all living beings were created and are sustained by God, and as such are intrinsically sacred.
- We understand "dominion" over the Earth not as an excuse for unbridled exploitation, but rather as a command to be faithful stewards of natural resources.
- With reverence and humility, we perceive God's presence in all living beings. Therefore, we accept responsibility for their care; of particular concern - the preservation of endangered species.
- All people and all living beings have a right to a clean and healthful environment, including water, air, land and plant life, as well as unimpeded access to clean drinking water and abundant sources of nourishment from Earth's bounty. We note with dismay the water shutoffs and contamination of drinking water here in Michigan, which have imperiled the health of the poor, particularly children.
- Our responsibility for God's creation extends to the Earth itself. We support: restoring areas that have been harmed including oceans and rainforests; preserving wilderness areas; conservation and sustainability of natural resources to maintain an ecological balance; upholding biodiversity, the variability of living organisms that forms the foundation of the vast array of ecosystem services that critically contribute to human well-being; reducing carbon emissions and stabilizing the levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere; and, halting pollution from hazardous waste, radioactive material, and chemical poisoning of land, air and water.
- We call for an immediate shift away from fossil fuels and simultaneously, widespread conversion to and application of renewable energy sources.
- The devastating and disproportionate impact of climate change on poor people and vulnerable nations amplifies the urgency of pursuing climate change solutions, in accord with the common good - the profound Catholic social teaching of care for the greatest good of all persons.



- Mindful of our interdependence, we support an ethic of solidarity promoting cooperation and a just structure of sharing within the world community, as well as international environmental agreements and regulatory norms that decisively address the climate change crisis.
- We respect and support scientific consensus on climate change, and correspondingly deplore: the commodification and depletion of natural resources; the dominance of corporate and economic interests over living beings and ecosystems in view of the calamitous effects of climate change; extreme consumerism; and, the misguided notion that a reliance on technology alone will alleviate the harmful effects of climate change.
- Education will play a crucial role in: countering climate denial; raising awareness of environmental challenges; shaping the attitudes and behaviors that can make a difference; and, preparing critical thinkers who can connect their daily decisions to long-term consequences for themselves and for society as a whole. Our schools and universities must play their part in helping us address this challenge.
- For a variety of reasons, we ardently oppose nuclear weapons, which pose the most significant threat to the Earth's environment. In addition to **tens of millions of deaths**, even a small-scale nuclear war would devastate the world's climate and ecosystems, depleting the ozone layer by 40% over much of the planet, and severely impacting agricultural output for many years. And, the U.S. military is the world's largest polluter, "producing more hazardous waste than the five largest U.S. chemical companies combined," according to EcoWatch. Consequently, we deepen our commitment to Gospel nonviolence, to opposing militarism in our nation and world, and to protecting God's creation: the Earth itself and all living things.

Revised: January 2024



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2024 YOUNG PEACE ACTIVIST AWARD WINNERS: *Strangers No Longer* *Youth in Action for Immigrants*

Formed in 2017, Strangers No Longer (SNL) is a network of volunteers from Catholic parishes, congregations, and immigrant communities that serve and accompany immigrant neighbors and advocate for a comprehensive and humane immigration policy. Named after a pastoral letter written by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops about immigration, SNL has developed dynamic Circles of Support, motivated by Jesus' call to welcome the stranger - a call that has been echoed by Pope Francis and Church leaders. Currently, there are over 20 of these Circles of Support in parishes across Southeastern Michigan, and



their reach continues to grow across the state. Today, we celebrate one exciting development within Strangers No Longer: Young people from 12 Detroit-area high schools and parish youth groups have formed their own Circles of Support and have come together as **Youth in Action for Immigration**.

Youth in Action for Immigration is taking their mission seriously: They have been deeply involved in advocating for the Drive SAFE bills that would restore drivers' licenses to all people in Michigan, regardless of status. Students have been part of a delegation that met with elected officials in Lansing in support of the bills and have been working hard to educate their communities about why restoring licenses is good for all the people of Michigan from the perspective of safety, the economy, and family life. At this year's *Youth in Action for Immigration* conference, students offered personal testimonies on how these bills would impact their families and communities in a positive way. Students then wrote letters to their elected representatives and then made butterflies with messages for their representatives that will be distributed when SNL returns to Lansing in April for Advocacy Day. This was Youth in Action's fourth annual conference, offering students from several schools the opportunity to pray, study, and act. Students meet regularly throughout the year to share ideas from across the schools, plan advocacy actions, and organize the conference.



Students are also preparing to travel to the border this summer to work with ARISE Adelante, a group of women on this side of the border who organize community empowerment projects and immigrant advocacy in five colonias near the U.S.-Mexico border. Students will be planning and offering day camp activities for the children in the colonia each day and will also be immersed in the realities of immigration policies at the border. Detroit Cristo Rey's Border to Border Service Trip will be heading to Texas in early June followed by a second delegation of *Youth in Action for Immigration* students a couple of weeks later. Last summer, YIA students and chaperones spent time in Northern Michigan where they met with migrant farmworkers, an immigrant women's Circle of support, an immigration attorney, and social service providers. They attended Spanish mass with host community, Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, toured a cherry processing plant, and spent time together in theological reflection.

Each Circle organizes autonomously, but students share their ideas with one another. From planning an immigration simulation to holding bake sales in support of a refugee family new to the neighborhood to organizing a walk for migrants, these students are deeply engaged.



Youth in Action Circles of Support include: Christ the Good Shepherd Parish (Lincoln Park), Detroit Cristo Rey High School (SW Detroit), Shrine High School (Royal Oak), Brother Rice (Birmingham), Mercy High School (Farmington Hills), Cabrini High School (Allen Park), Divine Child High School (Dearborn), Marian High School (Bloomfield Hills), Divine Child High School (Dearborn), Catholic Central High School and Notre Dame Prep High School (Pontiac). During last summer's immersion trip to Leelanau Peninsula, metro Detroit Circles were joined by students from St. Francis High School (Traverse City) and the Boyne Valley Catholic Community. These youth are working tirelessly to model compassion and ensure justice for immigrants.

For this, we are thrilled to welcome **Amy Ketner (SNL's Co-Director of Leadership Development)** and the **students of SNL's Youth in Action for Immigration** to our conference as we present them with the **Pax Christi Michigan 2024 Young Peace Activist award**, in recognition of their prophetic response to the call of Jesus in welcoming and accompanying our immigrant sisters and brothers, and for working for a world rooted in human dignity and radical welcome.



Heartfelt Congratulations to
PCM's 2024 Purple Ribbon for Peace
Award Recipient

Joe Droste!



Joe shares the following history with us:

"Throughout my life, I always followed the inclinations of my heart in whatever I did: I was always close to nature; the outdoors was my living room. (I listened to my heart when it spoke to me about) the well-being of others, the harmony in relationships, and being sympathetic to those who are disadvantaged. I loved to watch things grow, whether they were plants, animals (colonies of bees) or groups of people trying to make the

world a better place. For 30 years, I was involved with the Giving Tree Farm, working with people with developmental disabilities to raise garden produce that was given to the 'helping' agencies in the Lansing area. All the kidding and comradery that went on with this exceptional community of individuals while we worked together was overwhelmingly wonderful.

Additionally, I spent many years as a volunteer at Loaves and Fishes, a homeless shelter in Lansing. Initially, making breakfast for the guests (usually French toast and sausages) was fun for me and enjoyable for them. It was enlightening to sit down at the table with them and

listen to their experiences. Later, I moved from the overnight shift to the evening shift, helping to prepare dinner while we talked about all that the day had held. But my volunteerism didn't end there. I also chose to offer hospice care at Mother Teresa House...where I feel I gained as much as I gave. I was overwhelmed by the sharing of memories and graces from those who were ill and close to death.



Since the September 11th attack in 1991, I spent time nearly every Friday in front of the Michigan State Capital, witnessing for peace. Joined by many others, each of us held up our own placards and signs: I was the "bird man" with my prominent Peace Dove sign. Everywhere I went, it was important to me to confront violence of any kind: You'd see me at gun violence protests, Pride Day marches, in front of St. Mary's Cathedral to support women's ordination, and joining Meta Peace Team, wearing the bright yellow vest as part of the peaceful presence they represented at rallies and gatherings where violence was threatened. My Peace Dove sign made the front page of the Lansing State Journal, and the City Pulse interviewed me as a visible member of the peace community that demonstrated in Lansing.

Key to all this, however, was that my presence at all these activities was not to change things, per se, but rather to be faithful to the values and principles I believe in. Jesus gradually moved away from synagogue ministry and went to the hillsides and seashores. He walked in the fertile Jordan Valley as well as the dangerous, dusty roads between Judea and Galilee. I wanted to follow suit.

I preferred to do 'church things' outside the church itself; to be a part of the true Church that lies beneath the outward exterior. With this, I felt the change in me, and a change in society around me.

In October of last year, my fragile 85-year-old body was hit hard, calling out for the help of a cardiologist. Be that as it may, I will continue to follow the inclinations of my heart, which continues to prod me to do what I must do to bring about a more just and peace-filled world."



Joe Droste has been a faithful supporter of Pax Christi Michigan for many years. To the delight of its members, he offered his workshop as a meeting place for Pax Christi Lansing, where the hot water is always on for tea and the gingersnap cookies are plentiful. Joe's home is located in what has become a highly commercial business district. But stepping into his backyard is like discovering an oasis in the middle of a dry, barren wasteland. An expansive variety of flowers, shrubs, fruit trees, and a large vegetable garden greets visitors who enter this one-acre paradise. Joe's love of nature is growing everywhere! If you listen closely, you'll hear the constant hum of the honeybees that Joe tends and, if you're lucky, you may even get to sample some of his delicious organic honey. And lest we forget, Joe and his wife of 50 years, Pat, have 8 children and 19 grandchildren that they also take great joy in.

It is with love and gratitude for a life well-lived that Pax Christi Michigan honors Joe Droste with the 2024 Purple Ribbon for Peace Award.



Our 40th Annual Fall Retreat



Reflection and Renewal

...for the long haul

COMING Oct. 18-20, 2024

featuring Fr. Tom Lumpkin and Marianne Arbogast



Scenes from Last Year's Retreat:



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State Council:

- **State Coordinator and IT:** Mary L. Hanna (Laingsburg)
- **Chair:** Bob Podzikowski (Oak Park)
- **Secretary:** Marianne Bernard (Clarkston)
- **Treasurer & Assistant Coordinator:** Pat Valaer (Lansing)
- **Council Members:** MaryAnne Perrone, Ed Lorenz, Marilyn Lorenz, Jim Rauner, Kim Redigan, and Fred Thelen.

Pax Christi Michigan...

- Meets the 4th Saturday of January/April/July/October from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Any PCM member may attend as a non-voting participant. ©
- Working committees include: Finance, Membership, and Technology.
- If you are interested in attending a meeting or serving on the State Council, please let us know, or contact us if you have any other questions.

PCUSA/PCM Membership

JOIN or RENEW NOW!

I believe that "peace is possible" and want to join Pax Christi USA – also giving me regional membership in Pax Christi Michigan:

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____
 State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____

The regular membership fee for Pax Christi USA is \$40 per year—more if you are able—or whatever you can afford. We rely on the generosity of our members. Please consider enclosing a membership contribution to Pax Christi USA for:

___\$40 ___\$50 ___\$100 ___\$500 ___other
 At this time I can only contribute _____

Check any of the following:

- ___ I would like more information about joining or starting a local group in my area or school.
- ___ I would like more information about the Parish Sponsorship Program.

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