

**Catholic Diocese of Lexington
Laudato Si' Action Plan
Listening Session Guide**

Introduction

Engaging the local community is an essential element of developing a plan. Participation from parishioners in the Listening Session enables each parish plan to reflect the voices, passions, and capacity of the community. The Listening Session format provided here includes reflection on the seven goals of Laudato Si' in light of the task of preparing the parish plan, as well as sharing on three key questions. The responses to these three prayerfully considered questions will aid the parish's Laudato Si' Action Team as they discern next steps in their parish's commitment to the care for creation. Parishioners, too, will hopefully feel their voices heard and so desire to engage further with any efforts or initiatives that eventually feature in the parish's Laudato Si' Action Plan.

A webinar on how to lead a listening session will also be held on Tuesday, June 11 at 10am and the recording will be posted on the diocesan website.

Flow of the Listening Session

- **Opening Prayer:** The Listening Session begins in prayer. The facilitator may choose a prayer provided below or lead their own.

- **Individual Reflection:** After prayer, participants should be given some quiet time to reflect individually on the Listening Session Handout. This document introduces the seven goals of Laudato Si' and invites parishioners to reflect on three questions as they contemplate the goals:
 - Why is caring for creation important to us as people of faith?
 - How does our parish already practice the goals of Laudato Si'?
 - How can our parish better practice these goals?

- **Setting Ground Rules:** Before the sharing begins, the facilitator lays out ground rules for the discussion. While listening to one another, the group is also listening to the Holy Spirit. Arguing or debating is not the purpose of this gathering and every effort should be made by the facilitator to foster an inclusive and safe environment for listening and sharing.
 - Listening Session Ground Rules
 - Show respect for one another (no criticism or judgment).
 - Be courteous; only one person may talk at a time.
 - No one is required to talk, but participation is encouraged.
 - Be brief in responses and allow ample time for everyone to share.

- The purpose of the Listening Session is not to debate, but rather to listen and surface concrete ideas for the plan. Be positive and constructive.
- **Listening and Sharing:** After a suitable time for individual reflection and an establishment of ground rules for the conversation, the facilitator will invite parishioners to share their thoughts on the three key questions mentioned above. Parish leadership and the Laudato Si' Action Team should be present and visible to listen to the concerns and ideas of parishioners. One team member will take notes which should be submitted to the Peace and Justice Office no later than September 1. The notes submitted should follow the format of the Listening Session Note Taking sheet provided in the Document Appendix.
- **Closing Prayer:** The facilitator should thank all participants for their reflection and sharing before drawing the session to a close with prayer. A closing prayer can be found below or the facilitator may provide their own.

Please note: The central elements of this listening session are prayer, reflecting on the Listening Session Handout, sharing, and note taking. Please plan a listening session that fits the reality of your parish.

Laudato Si' Listening Session Best Practices

Listen - Avoid Teaching and Preaching

The facilitator's role is to animate group reflection and sharing, not to share their opinion or sway the group toward any particular viewpoint. The facilitator helps the group maintain focus and keeps the session moving.

Begin and End on Time

Be respectful of participants' time. Plan ahead for how long the listening session will last and allot appropriate time for each part of the session.

Take Notes

One Parish Laudato Si' Action Team member will take notes which should be submitted to the Peace and Justice Office no later than September 1. The notes submitted should follow the format of the Listening Session Note Taking sheet.

Review the ground rules with session participants:

- Show respect for one another (no criticism or judgment).
- Be courteous; only one person may talk at a time.
- No one is required to talk, but participation is encouraged.
- Be brief in responses and allow ample time for everyone to share.
- The purpose of the Listening Session is not to debate, but rather to listen and surface concrete ideas for the plan. Be positive and constructive.

Quick Tips:

Set the scene:

Create a prayerful environment, perhaps by displaying a Bible, lighting a candle, using a plant as a centering point for the room, or including other physical objects that set the tone for the experience.

If someone dominates the discussion:

Learn the art of interruption: "*Excuse me, before you continue may I ask if anyone has a comment?*"

If the group strays off the topic:

"This is an important topic, but we don't have time to talk about it here."

If the discussion becomes too heated:

Remind participants that the purpose of the Listening Session is not to debate or to change others' perspectives but to listen and share concrete ideas that can aid the formation of the parish Laudato Si' Action Plan.

**Ground Rules and Tips adapted from the Diocese of Allentown Synod Listening Session Guide*

Optional Listening Session Opening and Closing Prayers

Prayer from Pope Francis in Laudato Si':

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,

help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,

that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts

of those who look only for gain

at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,

to be filled with awe and contemplation,

to recognize that we are profoundly united

with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle

for justice, love and peace. Amen.

Prayer in Video Format:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=LbBYMikCsi4>

Laudate Deum Prayer from the USCCB

We praise you, O God, Creator of all things,
whose mystery unfolds in “a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s
face.”

Jesus, your Son, taught us to wonder
as he made his way throughout the land, contemplating the beauty of creation.

We pray, O God, that you may stir in us
a reverent awareness of our invisible link with the entire created world.

We pray for humility—
to remember that we, too, are created and are not creation’s masters.

We pray for compassion—
for open eyes and hearts to welcome those forced to flee from their homes due to rising
sea levels and drought.

We pray for repentance—
so that our thirst for power and domination may be transformed into service.

We pray for simplicity—
and the will to turn from our greed which impacts vulnerable people everywhere.

We pray for cultural conversion—
that we may simplify our lifestyles, reduce pollution and waste, and exercise prudence
in our decision making.

We pray for policy changes—
that as a nation and world we may work together to reverse the course of climate
change.

Our hearts ache as we ponder:
“The world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it?”

We praise you, O God,
confident that you work in our hearts and through our actions, so that we may better
care for our common home.

Amen