Offsetting the carbon footprints caused by our travel to Congregational Chapter

We know that climate change is at a crisis level on our planet and that all of our travel contributes to the problem. We also know that climate change is basically climate injustice because as we take advantage of convenient ways of travel, we simultaneously contribute to the conditions of climate disruption that disproportionately affect women, children, people of color, and other vulnerable groups.

By offsetting those emissions, we are acting concretely from our 2013 Acts of Chapter which call us to consider, “How does this decision/action impact the Earth community?” It is possible for us to make a significant contribution towards making our gathering carbon-neutral and therefore less of an injustice to our dear neighbors.

The following describes the efforts and actions that the congregation will be taking to offset the carbon footprints caused by our travel.

**Carbon Offsets for a More Earth-Friendly Congregational Chapter**
Albany Province | by Lin Neil, CSJ

Our Congregational Chapter in St. Louis will necessitate a lot of travel for about 100 delegates, 22 from the Albany Province. Travel, especially by plane, creates a great deal of CO2. At this time when global warming is reaching critical levels, we need to take action to mitigate our impact on our Earth.
So what do you do when travel is imperative? Carbon offsets are part of the solution. According to Wikipedia, “Carbon offsets are measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent (CO2e). One tonne of carbon offset represents the reduction of one tonne of carbon dioxide or its equivalent in other greenhouse gases.

There are two markets for carbon offsets. In the larger, compliance market, companies, governments, or other entities buy carbon offsets in order to comply with caps on the total amount of carbon dioxide they are allowed to emit. (These are caps agreed on in the Kyoto Protocol, for example.)

In the much smaller, voluntary market, individuals, companies, or governments purchase carbon offsets to mitigate their own greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, electricity use, and other sources. For example, an individual might purchase carbon offsets to compensate for the greenhouse gas emissions caused by personal air travel. Carbon offset vendors offer direct purchase of carbon offsets, often also offering other services such as designating a carbon offset project to support or measuring a purchaser’s carbon footprint. In 2016, about $191.3 million of carbon offsets were purchased in the voluntary market, representing about 63.4 million metric tons of CO2e reductions” (Wikipedia, “Carbon Offsets”).

It is very exciting that voluntary carbon offsets are becoming so popular! After calculating our offsets, we learned that a round trip from Albany to St. Louis creates about 1,148 pounds of carbon dioxide and that our estimated offset cost for 22 delegates at $5.73 per trip would be about $127. (https://www.terrapass.com/calculate-carbon-offsets). This is an estimate because not everyone is flying from Albany and some trips necessitate two layovers, which create more carbon dioxide.

The really good news is that our Province Leadership Team has pledged $150 and the HomeLand Committee will give $200 toward offsets. This is more than double the actual cost of offsets!

It was decided that we would make this donation to Heifer International to plant trees in Heifer-sponsored projects. This really fulfills two goals: first, our offsets to mitigate greenhouse gases and second, our food focus since the trees will aid farmers in developing countries.

We are working to fulfill our call to action of the 2013 Chapter which challenges us “to ask in every deliberation, “How does this decision/action impact the Earth community.”


Los Angeles Province | by Donna Gibbs, CSJ

Each Congregational Chapter calls us to respond to the needs of the times. Within our provinces, we then “divide the city” and respond in diverse ways. This is exactly how a group of sisters, associates, and partners from
across the Congregation responded to the 2013 Call “…to ask in every deliberation, ‘How does this decision/action impact the Earth community?’"

We met through Zoom to discuss one of our primary concerns: Climate Justice. We acknowledged our role in the injustices caused by a lifestyle that is degrading Earth systems and displacing Earth’s human and other-than-human communities. It became clear that our congregation must offset the carbon impact of our Congregational Chapter. We strategized ways to act locally regarding our carbon footprint and then went to our prospective province leadership teams to request action.

Here in the Los Angeles Province, we used a reliable carbon calculator to determine the tonnes of carbon released into Earth’s atmosphere because of our travel to and from Province Chapter. We will be doing the same for our travel to the Congregational Chapter in July. We then contributed the calculated amount (in dollars) to Community Healing Gardens in Santa Monica. They give a monthly harvest to the St. Joseph Center’s Bread and Roses Café where they serve over 100 meals to those who are homeless or transitioning back into society through their program. In addition, the Healing Gardens offer an urban school garden program. Urban gardening, removes carbon from the atmosphere, reducing the climate injustice caused by our travel activity.

Albany, St. Louis and St. Paul provinces have also offset their carbon footprint in diverse ways, according to the local needs. May we continue to “think congregational and act provincial” as we celebrate our diversity in communion within the Congregation of the Great Love of God.

Take Action: Carbon Offset Credits
St. Louis Province | by Maureen Freeman, CSJ

What does CO2 have to do with our last Province Chapter?
One of the things we did at our last chapter was to count our carbon footprint in traveling back and forth to the meeting. We roughly put into the atmosphere 10 tons of CO2, which, believe it or not, was not as bad as we thought it was going to be. We did better because more people are carpooling, many people live in the St. Louis area, and we are purchasing hybrids and fuel-efficient cars.

But here’s a reality check: the average American releases between 16 and 20 metric tons of CO2 and in Peru the average household releases 1.8 metric tons of CO2.

So as you can see, we have a ways to go to be more sustainable. That is why we decided to purchase carbon offset credits.

What are carbon offset credits?
According to the Sierra Club, the term “offset” might imply that you are “neutralizing” the impact of your travel, and thus it has no impact. This is not the case. Once you have emitted carbon, it is released into the atmosphere, and you can’t “take it back.” What offsetting does is help reduce carbon emissions elsewhere.
The province has purchased carbon offsets from:

- **The Nature Conservancy** which protects our forests, plants trees, and purchases banned for conservation;
- **Cool Effect** which runs a program purchasing fuel-efficient stoves for people in Peru;
- **Native Energy** which is supporting a coffee grower’s clean water project in Honduras;
- **The Greenbelt Movement** which is planting trees in Kenya.

These donations do not make up for our carbon usage. It’s more of an investment in the future so that less carbon will be used in other parts of the world. It’s a way to remind each of us that how we live costs more to the environment than we realize.

*Why not give Mother Earth a gift?*

So why not give Mother Earth the gift of carbon offsets? It’s simple, inexpensive, easy, and it says “I care about Earth!”

Thank you for caring for Creation today and every day!

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**Offsetting Carbon Use by Planting Trees**

*St. Paul Province | by Jennifer Tacheny and Marty Roers*

St. Paul participates in the congregational action to mitigate our carbon footprint caused by travel to Congregational Chapter meetings in St. Louis. Fourteen delegates will travel by airplane and six will travel in three cars.

We will offset the carbon use by dedicating money to plant trees on our St. Paul campus woodland area. We will include a community ritual with an educational component at the time of planting.

**Supporting local projects to make an impact**

*Peru Vice Province | by Anne Davis, CSJ*

Our vice-province of Peru is going to donate $100 toward local environmental projects where we are serving as Sisters of St. Joseph. One project will take place in Las Brisas where the Sisters are working with the parish community to add a garden area at the parish church. The other project is in the Canto Chico neighborhood in Lima, where our sisters will be involving the children in a project to plant trees in the neighborhood park. The children will learn how to care for the plants and will be responsible for watering and protecting the plants.
Congregational Chapter Updates

The 2019 Congregational Chapter is fast approaching! Here are a few notes:

- Most of the Chapter will be live-streamed. The live schedule will be published closer to the dates and adjusted throughout the meeting, and we will keep you informed day-to-day.

- The preliminary agenda for the Chapter is now available. The agenda is subject to change as the Chapter progresses.

- All of the information regarding Chapter can be found on the 2019 Chapter webpage in the Members Only section of the congregational website. As a reminder: the login information is username Carondelet1836 and password Communion.

Kudos

On May 21, Lin Neil and Ann Christi Brink received the 2019 Katherine S. Rozendaal Award in recognition of their ministry at St. Joseph’s Place in Schenectady, New York. This award was established by the Human Services Planning Council (HSPC) in 1978 to honor a person(s) “whose volunteer leadership and activities have had a positive impact on Schenectady Community.” YWCA NorthEastern NY is the sponsor of this award.

Calls for Justice

The congregation signed on to a campaign from Newtown Action supporting Ethan’s Law, which would require safe gun storage and help keep unsecured guns out of the hands of children.

Upcoming Events and Meetings:

- **June 14-15:** Retreat for congregational leadership nominees
- **July 4-5:** Congregational Offices closed for Independence Day

A reflection from Miriam Ukeritis, CSJ

This year, the season of Pentecost has special meaning for us as Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. In a few short weeks, we will gather at our Congregational Chapter. Sister Margaret Collins once remarked that a chapter is to a congregation as a retreat is to an individual: a time to review the action of grace in our
congregational life, to reflect deeply on the call of the Spirit, and to move forward renewed in our awareness of who we are and our call.

We will gather as a discerning body, committed to dialogue and contemplation in our deliberations and decision making. Our hope and prayer is that the Chapter will be a Pentecost experience for our congregation so that like the first disciples we can take up the mission of Jesus as our own with new energy and boldness.

In the words of our Chapter prayer, we ask our loving God to “open our hearts to new boldness that moves us beyond our Love’s limits . . . [and to] dissolve resistance that keeps us from living the hope [God has] for our future.”

Rest In Peace

Mary Kessler, CSJ
April 16, 1926 - May 14, 2019

Grace McKigney, CSJ
January 24, 1927 - May 18, 2019

Juliet Berber, CSJ
June 30, 1937 - May 28, 2019

Marie DeMontfort Deker, CSJ
September 3, 1929 - June 4, 2019

Thomas Bernard MacConnell, CSJ
April 23, 1926 - June 11, 2019

Happy Birthday

June 12
Carmel Garcia
Brenda Lau

June 13
Maureen Evelyn Brown
Margaret Mary Schulz

June 14
Suzanne Giblin
Mary Margaret Kreuper
Eva Mesina

June 15
Maureen Kottenstette
Margaret Ellen McGraw

June 16
Ruth LaVar

June 17
Joan Marie Curley
Marcelina Felipe
Catherine Irene Findley
Anne Gertrude Fitzgerald
Michelle Humke
Marie Shaun Walter
Josephine Winkeler

June 18
Teresa Horn-Bostel
Carol Frances Crowe
Adele O'Sullivan
June 19
Rebecca Holley
Mary Pauline Oetgen
Carol Jean Peterson

June 20
Mary McKay

June 21
Elizabeth Ann Emery
Linda Nicholson
Eleanor O’Hearn
Barbara Anne Stowasser

June 22
Mary Catherine Barron
Lamese M Farhart
Mary Moeller
Diane Smith

June 23
Margaret Michael Vincent

June 24
Barbara Whitlow

June 25
Patricia Giljum
Marie Frances Martell
Sean Patrice Smythe

June 26
Carol Brong
Janet Kuciejczyk
Joyce Peck
Joan Pitlyk

June 27
Elaine Margaret Besand
Jean Albert Burns
Marie Grossman

June 28
Milda Avila
Augusta Ann Burgess
Jeanne Marie Lippincott
Lillian Waldera

June 29
Clare Bass
Clare Belisle
Agripina Morales
Susan Reschke
Marilyn Vassallo

June 30
Ann Chamblin
Colleen Harris
Kathleen Harris

July 1
Baya Clare
Maria Jude LaPointe
Noreen O’Connor
Audrey Olson
Carol Patron

July 2
Merlyn Jane Martin

July 3
Anna Mary Meyer

July 4
Joan Goulden
Clare Therese Pelkey
Joan Spalding

July 6
Mary Braun
Genoveva Herrera Perez