



Missionary Society of St. Columban *Columban Creation Covenant*

And God saw that it was good.
Genesis 1

To know Creation is to know the Creator.
St. Columban

In a world divided by sin and injustice, we strive to live the values of the Kingdom.

For us this demands:

- **Respect for life in all its forms within the context of the integrity of creation.**
- **Simplicity in lifestyle that puts material goods in their Christian perspective and expresses solidarity with those who are marginalized.**

Columban Constitutions & Directory, C.108

Our commitment to communion and our solidarity with the poor and with the exploited Earth challenges us as individuals to personal lifestyle change. As a Society we are called upon to use the resources entrusted to us for the life of the world.

Called to Communion

Introduction:

We recognize the signs of the times: that there is an urgent imperative to listen to what the Earth is saying to us about what human behavior is doing to God's creation. We believe that our missionary vocation contains within it an ecological vocation to be in solidarity with the poor and with the natural world which impels us to continually review and renew our option for a simple lifestyle and make choices that bring us in to right relationship with all of Creation. We recognize that ecological conversion is an ongoing commitment that occurs both personally and communally.

We celebrate the witness that is already embodied by individuals and collectively as a Society to interdependence on the natural world with all life. The suggestions for action and contemplation included in this covenant are intended to spark ideas, recognizing that each cultural context where we work has its own unique response in how we as individuals and communities can bear witness to our love for the whole of Creation.

A number of possibilities for action that concerned men and women have embraced are listed below and may help us build on how we as individuals and communities might bear witness to our love for the whole of Creation.

Prayer & Spirituality

- In the spirit of St. Columban, make time regularly to interact with the natural world and revel with wonder and awe at Creation as the first revelation of God.



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- Incorporate reflection on personal and communal relationship with Creation through the use of scripture, Catholic Social Teaching, eco-theologians, teachings about Creation from other faith traditions.
- Participate in public witness events such as prayer vigils with Respect for Creation focus.
- Participate in retreats that incorporate Respect for Creation as a theme.
- Incorporate themes of environmental justice into homilies and sacramental ministry.

Formation & On-going Education

- Make time to read and study current science and theology about the Integrity of Creation.
- Initiate or participate in group discussions about pressing environmental concerns.
- Attend lectures, workshops, seminars that inform about the Integrity of Creation.
- Learn from other cultures, especially indigenous cultures and spirituality their teachings and practices about Creation.

Purchases: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

- Use a water purifier/filter and reusable drinking container and do not buy or use bottled water.
- Use reusable coffee filters. Avoid single-serve coffee makers.
- Use cloth linens instead of paper napkins and paper towels.
- Purchase in bulk when possible.
- Choose products with packaging that is reusable and/or recyclable.
- Refuse plastic where possible.
- Refill printer ink cartridges whenever possible.
- Repair and mend items before replacing with new purchases.
- Purchase products that are made and distributed in socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable ways.
- Rent, share, or borrow products and tools when possible.

Food and Water

- Use high-energy efficient appliances.
- Opt for hand washing dishes. Use dishwasher for full loads.
- Purchase locally grown foods (at my local grocer, from a local farmer, or from a community supported agriculture farm) as much as possible to decrease transportation “costs” on the environment.
- Grow fruits and vegetables on property if possible.
- Buy as many items as possible in bulk to decrease packaging and trips to the store.
- Purchase in-season and local fruit and vegetables.
- Compost kitchen scraps.



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- Limit eating in restaurants and opt for meals prepared at home.
- Limit intake of meat because of the environmental impact that meat production has on the world food supplies of grain and on the ecosystems where animals are raised in factory farms.
- Choose organic food whenever possible.
- Use reusable bags at the grocery store (and at other stores).
- Save and conserve water - never leave a tap running unnecessarily.
- Limit meat consumption due to its heavy virtual water value.

Travel

- Daily Transportation:
 - Walk and bike whenever possible.
 - Use public transportation and carpooling.
 - Limit auto travel.
 - Use fuel efficient cars.
 - Consolidate errands.
- Air Travel:
 - Limit domestic air travel.
 - Limit international travel.
 - Limit number of layovers when flying long distances as additional layovers increase carbon emissions.
 - Purchase Carbon Offsets when international travel is necessary¹

Technology

- Install and/or invest in eco-friendly technology for buildings such as solar, wind, wave, geo-thermal, especially when considering property renovations and purchases.
- Use technology for communications and meeting purposes to limit air travel when possible.
- Choose online, electronic subscriptions to journals, magazines, newspapers etc.
- Limit use of printer. Print on both sides of paper when possible.

Living and Office Space

- Choose and design living and work spaces that minimize energy use and maximize occupancy.
- Limit use of heating/cooling. Maintain central heating at 20C/68F degrees or lower during winter months.

¹ See 2014 Society Carbon Offset Policy



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- Limit use of central air conditioning. Maintain at 25.5C/78F degrees or higher when necessary.
- Install light sensors and turn off /unplug lights, the computer and other electrical items not in use.
- Install energy efficient windows and doors.
- Install a low-flow shower head in all bathrooms.
- Install compact fluorescent light bulbs throughout.
- Install solar or energy efficient water heater.
- Properly maintain insulation for walls and ceilings.
- Use simple cleaning products (vinegar, baking soda, dish liquid, etc.) and environmentally friendly products.
- Only wash full loads of clothes and use cold water.
- Air dry clothes whenever possible.

Personal Time

- Choose activities that require little or no electricity and/or travel.
- Participate in groups and campaigns that call for action and policy change on Climate Change and other Environmental Justice issues which are of particular importance for Columbans which include but are not limited to: Extractive Industries, Water, Genetically Modified Organisms/ Patenting, Nuclear energy.

Finances

- Choose investments that are environmentally and socially responsible and divest from investments in fossil fuel industries.²

Conclusion

In John's gospel we read that God invites us to the fullness of life (Jn 10:10). We believe that living in the fullness of life as God intended includes listening to, learning from and respecting all of Creation. We recognize that there is no complete witness, but dedicate ourselves to faithful discipleship in our journey towards fulfilling our call as stated in *Called to Communion*,

As missionary disciples of Jesus, we are called to heal, reconcile, build bridges, and create mutual understanding through dialogue. Our commitment to interculturality, interfaith dialogue, and solidarity with marginalized people and the exploited Earth are ways we participate in God's mission, calling us forward into communion with our triune God.

² See MPP 1006 – Society Socially and Environmentally Responsible Investment Policy



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We invite and encourage all members of the Columban family (ordained, lay missionaries, students, co-workers, friends, and supporters) to commit to this covenant of action and contemplation as part of our missionary witness.

Approved by the General Council

December 2014