A land ethic is a set of principles which announces our relationship to the land and our acknowledged responsibility to it. Land is a precious and sacred gift from a bounteous Creator. This includes water, soil, air, plants and animals. All creation, including ourselves, is a sacred expression of the community of life on Earth.

As Sisters of Mercy we nurture reverence for the wholeness and holiness of Earth, committing ourselves to global concerns. Therefore, we, the South Central Community of the Sisters of Mercy commit ourselves to live by the following principles upon which we base our connection to the sacred places which have been entrusted to our care. This commitment is rooted in the Gospel, our Constitutions, and our Critical Concerns.
Principle I
Earth is a sacred community.

“We believe that all Creation is God’s gift, and we strive to treat that gift with due reverence and responsible care.”
(Constitutions Article 26)

“Nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the divine.”
(Pope Francis, Laudato Si’)

Principle II
Reverent and responsible preservation of Earth is a necessity for survival of water, soil, air, plants and animals.

“We advocate for regulations that protect land, air, water.”
(Sisters of Mercy Critical Concerns)

“Living our vocation as protectors of God’s handiwork is essential for a life of virtue; it is not an option or secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”
(Pope Francis, Laudato Si’)

Principle III
God’s creation is diverse and interdependent. What happens to one part affects all other parts, calling us to live an ecologically sound life.

“God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment.”
(Apostolic Exhortation: Evangelii Gaudium – Nov. 24, 2013)

“We commit ourselves to act in harmony and interdependence with all creation.”
(Sisters of Mercy Direction Statement)

Principle IV
Dialogue and collaboration of life is more effective for systemic change than working by ourselves. Collaboration is most effective at the local level.

“We support movements and legislation that secure the fundamental right to water for everyone, and that address climate change. That leads us to examine our own behaviors and policies and to adopt more environmentally sustainable practices.”
(Sisters of Mercy Critical Concerns)

“We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to her own culture, experience, involvement and talents.”
(Pope Francis in Laudato Si’)

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(Sisters of Mercy Direction Statement)
Suggested Practices for Living Mindfully, Simply, Sustainably with all of Creation

Eco-Living Practices
- Develop eco-consciousness – in use of water, electricity, and care of buildings
- Distinguish between needs and wants
- Utilize car-pooling, public transportation, walking, biking; use technology for “long distance” meetings
- Buy second hand or durable products; avoid disposable, heavily packaged products, plastic bags, water bottles.
- Use environmentally safe cleaning products, such as baking soda, vinegar, borax
- Adopt eco-gift giving practices
- Reuse, reduce, refuse, recycle

Food & Health Choices
- Choose real food: organic, home-grown, grass-fed, free-range, less processed food
- Create food committees to voice these values to our food service employees
- Prepare and eat food mindfully and gratefully
- Purchase locally grown foods via CSA, farm markets and food co-ops
- Garden and learn how to preserve food
- Avoid unnecessary bottled water, factory farmed, GMO and irradiated foods
- Eat “lower on the food chain” – less meat, more fruits, veggies, grains
- Exercise regularly

Land Use
- Utilize edible landscaping – fruit trees, edible plants, shrubs, organic gardens/raised beds
- Develop natural aesthetic areas – prairie, woods, meadows, nature centers/paths
- Plant native and provide natural habitats for wildlife
- Provide gardening space and education for poor and landless people
- Limit lawn size and adopt/advocate non-toxic landscaping practices
- Incorporate eco-landscape practices – rain gardens, wetlands, and grey water recycle systems

Eco-Literacy
- Devote some Mercy community meetings to reflection and discussion of ecological spirituality and sustainable living
- Use public libraries and share books and periodicals
- Engage in book clubs, discussion, classes, workshops on environmental impact of our cultural lifestyles and consumer products
- Educate by modeling and teaching sustainable land and lifestyle practices
- Revisit and share the Earth Charter Principles
- Be present to nature – nature walks, birdwatching, houseplants

Action and Advocacy
- Collaborate with/support local sustainable endeavors – food labeling, antibiotics effectiveness
- Contact local, state, and national law makers to work for environmental priority legislation for all our natural resources
- Work with internet advocacy/action networks – National Wildlife, Sierra Club, Union of Concerned Scientists, Environmental Defense, Earth Justice