

IHM^s IN ACTION



Sister Rose Therese (Richard Mary) Huelsman, IHM, describes herself as “outdoorsy,” so her volunteer ministry as an environmentalist is a fitting vocation.

What is a surprise, however, is how – and where – she champions the environment.

Determined to “save the world from climate change, one congregation at a time,” Sister Rose and her colleague, Carol Meyer, are engaging people from many faith traditions in and around Kansas City, Mo., in “greening” their churches, their homes and themselves.

Sister Rose, who also works part time as a hospital chaplain, and Carol belong to the Sustainable Sanctuary Coalition, which networks congregations concerned with sustainable living and ecological justice for all creation. Members are encouraged to form “green teams” and to help others connect faith and care of the Earth.

“People are surprised when they begin to see climate change as a moral issue,” Sister Rose notes. “Connecting faith and environmental stewardship gives people the depth they need for sustained efforts at personal, congregational and social change.

“Education is key,” she continues. “So many people don’t think what they do affects anyone else. But the way we use our resources has a profound impact on the Earth we share. We want to help people connect with the theological and biblical wisdom about partnership with creation that is part of their own tradition.”

Sister Rose, a theologian and educator, has facilitated morning retreats for ecumenical groups and provided shorter presentations for various churches. She is also working with the diocesan Human Rights Office to launch a diocesan green team.

“People are getting very creative with ways to protect the environment,” she comments. “For instance, there are ‘Cool Congregations’ where families meet in small groups to share ideas and support each other in reducing energy consumption.

“Everyone can have a positive impact on the environment,” Sister Rose continues. “Turning off your computer when you’re not using it, switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs and using cloth grocery sacks are easy ways to be more ‘green.’ Little things, if we all do them, add up.

“Sustainability is a justice issue, for the Earth, its current inhabitants and future generations. Since our founding, the IHM community has worked for justice. At no time do I feel more ‘IHM’ than when I’m working on sustainability.”

Sister Rose would love to network with others about congregational greening and Earth care. Contact her at roseihm@juno.com.