

Climate Brewing | Lorrie Long: Lamoni Green Team Action

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SPEAKERS

Susan Oxley, Lorrie Long

Susan Oxley 00:02

Hello! Welcome to the Community of Christ podcast, Faith Unfiltered. My name is Susan Oxley and I'm your host today for this episode of Climate Brewing, the series that focuses on the climate change and the kind of solutions that can help mitigate the climate emergency we face.

I'm recording from Seattle, Washington, with my friend Lorrie Long from Lamoni, Iowa. Lorrie and I are members of the Climate Support Group that meets twice a month. Lorrie grew up on a ranch in Wyoming with a wood-burning stove, and has been passionate about nature and the earth ever since. I recently found out that she has joined an organization, the Lamoni Area Green Team, that is spreading the word about climate issues and making a difference in her local area. So I've invited Lorrie to share with me today about the kind of work they are doing and how she is helping.

Lorrie, welcome to Climate Brewing!

Lorrie Long 01:08

Thank you, Susan. I appreciate you asking me to share with you in this way.

I definitely--you're right!--I am passionate about what we can do to love the Earth, our home. I grew up in northeastern Wyoming, lived there I guess, the most important part of my life, as far as I'm concerned, on a ranch, kind of down in a valley in northeastern Wyoming, which is a pretty rugged country. And my mom and my dad and my three

siblings, two older brothers and one younger sister, and myself, were living in a little cabin there--wood-burning stove-- and this was back in the 1940s, 1950s.

And, just to give you a little bit of background as to why I'm so interested in climate change and the issues that have to do with our Earth. When I would sit up on the rim rocks above our little cabin where we lived, and look out over the country, I felt God's Spirit there. And so, it nurtured me. But I think because of that, too, my love of nature has just always been there. But over time it's gotten stronger, especially when I see what's happening to our Earth and understand the relationship that we have.

I always had high respect for the beauty of nature and the nature itself, but didn't realize how important our stewardship was of it. So, as I've gotten older now--I'm 82 years of age--I've become increasingly convinced that we have a responsibility. It's God's created earth, but it's, it's our home, and we are given the responsibility to take care of it, if we want to have a good place to grow and live. And so that's why I get involved in things like climate change, the Green Team here in Lamoni. But, you know, the Climate Change North American group, you know, all that I've learned from that. And, and become increasingly concerned: how do we help others understand, you know, our responsibility there?

And so, I'm I'm pretty busy. I'm involved in a lot of community activities in Lamoni, so...

Susan Oxley 03:33

So tell me about, tell me about the organization that, that you are now a part of, and how you got involved in it.

Lorrie Long 03:40

Yep. So, the organization is the Lamoni Area Green Team, and that's Lamoni, Iowa.

It began because one person in Lamoni, Steve Smith, was interested in doing something that would focus on climate change and how we can do a better job of taking care of the Earth, our home, the Earth. So, he spread the word that he was going to get the group started. He offered us the opportunity to join, and we ended up having about 10 people. We have now about 10 people in the group, and just last week, we had a new one, my neighbor, who joined in with us.

So, a good group to get started. We've only--we're new--we've only had 3 of the major meetings so far. And when I say major meetings, I mean the entire group.

So, one of the first things that Steve wanted to do was to have us focus on different areas of climate change. And so we ended up with 3 different areas. He had us collaborate with him to decide what those would be. So, the three areas are the Lamoni Municipal Utilities Action Group, the Ecological Practices/Conservation Action Group, and the Community Education Action Group. And I happen to be a member of

the Community Education Action Group. There are four of us that are part of that committee. We call this a committee.

And so, I can share with you a little bit about what each one of those are focused on.

Susan Oxley 05:22

That would be lovely, yes, please do.

Lorrie Long 05:25

Yeah, so, you know, the goal is to educate and take action to improve the Earth's environment of all three of our groups, but we each have a different focus. So the Lamoni Municipal Utilities, which we abbreviate as LMU, is working with our utility organization here in Lamoni. Some members that are in that group also have relatives who are part of different... like, the Lamoni City Council. One member has her mother, who's on the Lamoni City Council. Another one is a member of the Lamoni Planning and Zoning Committee, so already invested in the community themselves. So, some of the things that they're exploring...

Now, my group has met two times, and I suspect that's probably true of the other small groups as well. So, like I say, we're new. We're generating ideas right now, kind of doing some brainstorming.

So, what they're looking at, for one: Revising Lamoni's regressive rate schedules, electricity and gas, to promote conservation practices. So currently, the electric rate schedule uses a total reduction of 49% less per kilowatt hour. Another one of their focuses is the adoption of net metering policies to encourage homeowners to use solar panels. The Lamoni Municipal Utilities isn't so eager to do that, because they want the money to come to them, so this is a challenge for this group, to be able to talk with the LMU.

Susan Oxley 07:09

In Lamoni, are there any restrictions on putting up solar panels? It sounds like there might be, from what you just said.

Lorrie Long 07:19

You know, there's not so much restriction, I think, as it is that we have, for example, one member, David DeBarthe, who has solar panels on his house. He's one of the first people in Lamoni to put them up. But the city doesn't encourage it, because they want, you know, the income to come to them, rather than through those solar panels. So, he can sell his extra energy to the Lamoni Municipal Utilities, but they only pay him a minute amount of money for that. But if he needs to purchase back from them, he's charged quite a bit more. So, you know, they're discouraging the solar panels, the renewable energy. But we're hoping that, you know, this team, this committee can find

ways to talk with them, or find, you know, options of how they can maybe make some changes there.¹

A third one is to create a solar garden for Lamoni, and we do have some example solar gardens that we're going to be looking at, you know, in order to, you know, implement that.

And then the last one that they've identified so far, in conjunction with the Community Education group, which is what I'm part of, they want to develop an energy auditing program for Lamoni homeowners. So, in the church, we've talked about doing the audit as well in the church. So that's kind of where that focus, that group is focused.

Yeah. Okay, so the second committee is the Ecological Practices/Conservation group. Some things that they're looking at, and again, I've got 4 listed here, just to give you some sense of where they're headed. Plastics: So, you know, what can we do to use less plastics? How can we recycle better using the city's recycling program? We do have one. How can we reuse bags for shopping? How can we utilize the Optimist Club Bottle Redemption Program? So, we have an Optimist Club in Lamoni, if you know about them. (Yes, I do.) And they do have a Club, they have a big trailer where people, anyone from the community, can toss in their plastic bottles, you know, and then they recycle them. And the money that comes back into the community is used for the youth of the community.

Susan Oxley 09:57

Oh, well done!

Lorrie Long 09:58

Mmmm hm. Those are just some areas that they're looking at--one area that they're looking at. Also looking at lighting. Just, you know, sharing, taking out those fluorescent lights and using LED lights instead, so... So that's an area that, you know, those may not be big things, but if nothing else, they're going to educate people of the community of the importance of looking at things of that sort.

A third one, they are investigating the use of the geothermal heat pumps, you know. I have one myself, so I've had some experience with it, and we've got another member of our team who just currently put one in. It's a water heating, thermal furnace that he's using, and for his hot water heater. So, there's some experience in the use of that, but, you know, how can we, you know, encourage others as well?

¹ I've learned more since this podcast. What I say here is not accurate. People with solar panels work directly with the organization from whom LMU buys their electricity, rather than with LMU. For that reason, LMU really isn't trying to dissuade residents to refrain from using solar panels. -- Lorrie Long

Susan Oxley 10:56

How does that work? What is a geothermal heating unit?

Lorrie Long 11:00

Yeah, so the geothermal that I have is that they have dug down into the earth in my backyard, and they've placed these pipes down underneath. And so the Earth temperature is more consistent down there. So when it gets very cold out, or very hot in the summer, then you get more of a, you know, a common heat that comes through there, and it reduces the extra energy that you need from the utility company. So, I don't know as much about the water heating in-line water heating system, which is what the member of our team is using now, just recently put in. But I'm understanding it just uses the hot water to create that heat instead of the earth, you know, so what I've got is the earth. But, yeah. So, it's-- it's just a way to conserve and provide heat without using fossil fuels or, you know, the electricity, that kind of thing, so...

Susan Oxley 12:05

Sounds good... Sounds ideal and very simple.

Lorrie Long 12:09

Mmmm hm. No, it's not bad. It costs a little money up front, but you, you know, kind of regain that as you pay your utility bills at a reduced rate as it comes in.

So the last point that this team is currently working on is reaching out to Graceland University students regarding the liquid salt generating system. I don't know that much about it myself, but there was a member of that team who understands thorium. And so he's very committed to believing that that's a resource that we ought to be exploring. And so there is an organization at Graceland where students do some exploration on things like that, so they're hoping, you know, they can get some interest out there, for that purpose, which would be great. So, are there any questions about that one?

Susan Oxley 13:08

Sounds fantastic, I'm impressed.

Lorrie Long 13:10

Okay, so the Community Education Action Group that I'm a part of, like I said, we've met two times now. And at our last meeting, we brought in a new member who's enthusiastic and young, so we were delighted to have Charis join us.

So, we're focused on what can we do to help our community population love the Earth. I mean, honestly, if you're going to do anything, if you have the heart to make changes, you've got to love the Earth.

So, you know, some things that we've considered for educating our community is to have, like, a movie night. And, you know, just kind of some way to introduce to community members why we need to pay attention to climate change and taking care of our Earth, and that's one way to do it. We find that a lot of the members in Lamoni, a lot of the population of Lamoni, don't even think much about climate change. You know, they just don't talk about it, don't think about it.

In mid-United States, you know, we here are kind of protected. We don't have the fires like California has. We don't have the big floods, and you know, humongous hurricanes, that kind of thing. And so I think, for that reason, there's less concern about it. So we're wanting to generate, you know, some concern there, some understanding.

Susan Oxley 14:42

Sure, because you talk about the things that you care about.

Lorrie Long 14:47

Yep. Yeah, and so one of the other activities that we are, we're beginning to get put into place: So we have a small little restaurant in Lamoni, we call it the Linden Street Coffee Shop, and we find that there's groups that will come in there and sit together and chat and eat their food, whatever they order. We've got a, you know, a women's knitting group, you know, we've got another women's group, not sure what they're involved in. We've got a men's group that come in there. So, what we are doing, and have already initiated it. We're creating some discussion topics that will focus them on caring for the Earth. And so we have little tent tops that sit on the table, and we're looking at putting those questions inside that tent top--because it's open--so that people can reach in and pull out, and there'll be options. They can look at several of those topics and decide maybe one of them they want to talk about. Our hope is it'll just help them become more aware as they talk together.

So, it sounds relatively simple, but it's interesting. There's always challenges when you try to get something started, so... But our new member, Charis, my neighbor, she is, she's very good at technology, and so she has created the QR code on a little card that will allow people, if they find some interest, they can, you know, take that picture of that little QR code and go to our website--we do have a website, a Green Team website--so they can learn more and have more resources available to them about, to learn about the issues that are surrounding, you know, care of the earth.

So that's another thing. We-- Another one-- We want to help our youth focus on eco practices, such as, you know, not littering, picking up trash, turning the water off when you're brushing your teeth, using EcoEd books as rewards. So we know there's a lot of

children's books out there that are beautifully illustrated, and that would be a great way to help our students, you know, our children to become educated about caring for the Earth.

So that's, you know, that's another area, just thinking about children, and... So we're... I'm not so much involved with that one in particular, but those who are, are looking at talking to teachers at the school, too, as well, you know, to see if they can get some support from them with working with the youth that way.

Lorrie 17:33

We have Earth Day activities coming up here. April 22nd is Earth Day, so we intend to do something that's going to be allowing people to come in and volunteer to help care for the Earth on Earth Day.

We have some nice trails in Lamoni that used to be a railroad track. And so they're paved now, and we would like to see some, some trash containers at the end of the trails. So, when we walk those trails--and I am a walker, so I walk them often--if we find trash along the trail, we'll pick it up. But if you don't have a place to put that trash, you have a tendency just to let it lie. So, we want to encourage the city to put those trash containers up, too, so people will know they're there and pick up that trash, you know, when it falls out of somebody's backpack.

Susan Oxley 18:28

It's a great idea!

Lorrie Long 18: 30

Yeah, can't believe anybody would ever toss it out, (laughter) but we want to find a way to keep the earth clean, you know, to promote that.

So, another one that we've explored--and we haven't really progressed a whole lot on this, but we definitely have given it some thought--is to do a clothing deposit bin, where people who have clothing that's worn out, or maybe has stains on it, they don't wear it anymore. It's ready to go to the trash, but instead of going to the trash, we want to encourage them to come to our thrift center and drop it in a bin.

And then we will take it to a place that can repurpose that old clothing. And often, they will tear it into strips and make it available to do whatever you do with pieces of clothing like that, so that it's repurposed rather than just burned, rather than just trashed out.

Susan Oxley 19:40

So, for instance, you might take those strips of clothing and turn it into a rag rug or weave it into a purse, or something of that nature? (Yep.) And there are places that do that? Would that be for just individuals to come and collect those, or...

Lorrie Long 19:58

We would probably take it to places that actually do that. Lamoni is about a little over an hour from Des Moines, which is as you know, is a city, or Kansas City, It's a little further to Kansas City, but there are places like that in the bigger cities available, so that's what our intent is, just to locate those places. And maybe there might be someone who could even come down and pick it up, you know, once our bin is, you know, enough filled.

We do already have a thrift center where people bring clothing that--not just clothing, but furniture, all kinds of cookware, all kinds of things--for repurposing, and so I work there at the thrift center as well. I'm the washerwoman, so I've got a big sink. We don't wash clothes, but we will wash, you know, pots and pans, we wash all kinds of things. Toys, children's toys, and little high chairs, and just a number of different items that come through there. So we're hopeful. I mean, that's kind of the gist of what we've done so far, and we're new.

Susan Oxley 21:03

So, you personally, Lorrie, are on this education committee (yeah) and certainly are involved in the planning and visioning for all of those projects. Which ones are you personally most attached to and giving time to?

Lorrie 21:22

One of my number one major projects was getting those questions put together, identifying what they would be, the discussion topics, and contacting the Linden Street Coffee House about putting them there, you know, on the tabletop, you know, is what we initially thought. Well, that wasn't quite gonna work because they already had tents there, so now we're looking at an alternative way of getting those questions inside the tents that are already there, in order to allow people to draw them out and talk about them. And we're, you know, we'll be exploring more about the best way to do that.

We may find out that we shift, and there's other-- there's a pizza shack in Lamoni, which is a hometown pizza place, and there are people gathered there, so we may put some of those cards--there'll be little cards--there as well, so there's other locations. More than anything, we just want to help people start talking about the Earth care, care of the Earth, and what we can do, and be aware of it. So, that's where my current focus is located.

I'm very much an idea person, too, so when we sit down and talk, I'll come up with ideas of brainstorming ideas that we just toss off to each other and listen, you know, to each other about what we can do to make a difference.

So, I really appreciate the team members that I'm working with. My neighbor, my backyard neighbor, Charis, she's young. They have a little boy that's 4 years old, she and her husband. She is passionate about living the gospel way, not just going to church and sitting and listening to a sermon. I invited her to be part of the Education Community Committee, and she came. I mean, she was eager to come, so I think she will be a great contributor to us.

So it's those kind of things, you know, trying to get the word out and build some enthusiasm for what we're wanting to do, you know, with helping make our little piece of the earth a better place for everyone.

Susan Oxley 23:36

Oh, I should say, is there anything else you want to say before we close?

Lorrie Long 23:42

I guess, I guess I'll just reiterate how important I think it is for us to recognize that we are responsible for what the Earth is, what is happening on the Earth, and that we should not find fault with others because we think they're not doing enough. It's easy to point fingers and say they're the cause of it all, but I think we need to take responsibility and find ways to build bridges instead of create barriers. It's so easy to create those barriers, but we've got to do a better job of building those bridges. So, yeah.

Susan Oxley 24:23

Excellent. Thank you so much for being a bridge builder.

Lorrie Long 24:23

{Laughter} We try. {Laughter}

Susan Oxley 24:26

All right. {Okay.} It's been a joy talking with you. {Thank you, Susan.} Bye for now.