

Stewardship of Creation

A Five-Session Adult Christian Education Curriculum Leader's Guide

Prepared by
The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama
Task Force for the Stewardship of Creation

To accompany
The Province IV Bishops' Pastoral Letter:
Care of Creation



This leader's guide is designed to be used in conjunction with a downloaded print copy of the Bishops' Pastoral Letter from the CD-Rom and the CD-Rom self-running presentation. Each of the five sessions is forty-five minutes long, but could be expanded by allowing more discussion and presenting more resources.

What You Will Need

- ❖ You will need only one copy of this guide for each leader.* You may wish to provide a copy of the last page of this guide and a copy of the Bishops' Pastoral Letter to each participant.
- ❖ You will need a computer with CD-Rom drive and the CD-Rom. The size of your group will be determined by the size of the screen on which the presentation will be displayed. (A dozen people can gather around an ordinary computer screen for the 7 ½ minutes of the self-running presentation.)
- ❖ Have a Bible and Book of Common Prayer available for each session. **Each participant will need the BCP for Session IV.**
- ❖ You will need an easel with newsprint, markers, and tape.

**If you need more than one copy of this "Leader's Guide" please copy on both sides of the paper. If your copier does not have that feature built-in, ask the church secretary, look in the manual, or contact the manufacturer for directions to do it manually. Let's set a good example of stewardship of natural resources.*

Stewardship of Creation-Session I Care for Creation

Reflection (15 minutes)

- ❖ Invite someone to read aloud Genesis 1:1-2:3.
 - *Ask everyone to remain silent for one minute of reflection after watching the CD-Rom presentation.*
- ❖ Dim the lights and play the CD-Rom presentation.

Education (25 minutes)

- ❖ Ask someone to read aloud the first two paragraphs of the Bishops' Pastoral Letter.
- ❖ Then discuss the following questions, writing the group's answers on the newsprint.

Question 1

- ❖ Genesis 1 tells us several times that "God saw that it was good." Without looking at the text, write on the newsprint as many creations as you can remember from the account that tells us, "God saw that it was good."
- ❖ Reread Genesis 1.

Question 2

- ❖ Genesis 2:1-3 tells us that the completion of creation is not the human, but the Sabbath. Read this again.
- ❖ *Read Leviticus 25:1-7*
- ❖ "How can we understand and fulfill the teaching of 'giving the earth its Sabbaths' " in our modern world?"

Action (5 minutes)

- ❖ Ask the group to pray daily for all creation using The Book of Common Prayer (BCP) #40 on page 827 and/or the prayer quoted from *A New Zealand Prayer Book* printed in the handout.
- ❖ Request that each person bring back to the group next Session an idea for a specific way to be better stewards of creation.
- ❖ Close with the prayers above and the Lord's Prayer.

Resources for this Session

On Scripture Theologies of God's Creation:

Genesis 9:9-17	A covenant is made which includes all life, not just humanity.
Job 12:7-8	"If you would learn more, ask the cattle, seek information from the birds of the air. The creeping things of earth will give you lessons and the fishes of the sea will tell you."
2 Corinthians 5:17	Christ is the new creation.
Jesus teaches in parables drawn from nature, and his ministry includes nature miracles.	

On Modern Day Sabbath for the Earth:

"A Different Use for the Book of Leviticus" by The Rt. Rev. Mark H. Andrus
<http://thewitness.org/agw/andrus031804.html>

Stewardship of Creation-Session II Relationship with Other-than-humans

Reflection (10 minutes)

- ❖ Invite someone to read aloud Romans 8:19-23.
Ask everyone to imagine that they are present in each of the scenes as the CD-Rom presentation plays and then to remain silent for one minute of reflection once it has ended.
- ❖ Dim the lights and play the CD-Rom.

Education (12 minutes)

- ❖ Ask someone to read aloud paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of the Bishop's Pastoral Letter.
- ❖ Invite members of the group to share a story of how they personally felt connected to some other-than-human part of creation. Share one of the stories from the resources below and/or invite the group to share some specific ways that "our fate, our life, is caught up with all the other lives with which we share the creation."

Action (23 minutes)

- ❖ Invite members of the group to share the specific ideas for being better stewards of creation that they had in response to last week's session. Write the ideas on the newsprint.
- ❖ Brainstorm with the group how these ideas are expanded by or reflected in the theology that "all creation [is] bound together in our commonality of coming from the hand of the same Creator ... [and] we are assured that this same God maintains an ongoing relationship of care and sustenance with the creation." Encourage each person to continue pondering the ideas generated here throughout the week.
- ❖ Encourage the group to continue praying using BCP p. 827 #38 and/or the prayer from the New Zealand Prayer Book as printed in the handout.
- ❖ Close with these prayers and the Lord's Prayer.

Resources for this Session

For Stories of Animals Helping Humans:

www.handinpaw.org then click on "Articles." This is a wonderful collection of heartwarming stories of actual animals and the particular people they are helping.

For Organizations Dedicated to Animal Assisted Help for Humans:

www.pawswithapurpose.org then click on "About PWAP" & "Benefits of Pet Therapy." PWAP offers animal assisted activities and animal assisted therapy services to individuals of all ages with physical, social, emotional and cognitive needs in healthcare facilities and educational programs.

www.narha.org North American Riding for the Handicapped Association. NARHA is a national non-profit organization that promotes the benefit of the horse for individuals with physical, emotional and learning disabilities. Equine-assisted activities have been shown to improve muscle tone, balance, posture, coordination, motor development and emotional well-being. And it's fun!

Stewardship of Creation-Session III Human Challenge to God's Creation

Reflection (10 minutes)

- ❖ Invite someone to read Psalm 25: 4-5
Ask everyone to imagine as they watch the CD-Rom presentation that each of the scenes of natural beauty no longer exists and then to remain silent for one minute of reflection when it has ended.
- ❖ Dim the lights and play the CD-Rom.

Education (15 minutes)

- ❖ Ask someone to read out loud paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Bishops' Pastoral Letter.
- ❖ Invite the group to give examples of the "unprecedented challenge to the health of God's creation [that] is upon us." Write these ideas on the newsprint.
- ❖ Invite the group to share ways that "the daily satisfaction of our wants and desires" threatens the health of God's creation. Write these on the newsprint.

Action (20 minutes)

- ❖ Along side this newsprint, put up for all to see, the newsprint from last week with the action and brainstorming ideas.
- ❖ Ask the group to agree on two or three main themes that could lead to specific action on the part of the members of the group and their Parish.
- ❖ Encourage the members to continue to pray using BCP p.827 #41 and/or the prayer from the New Zealand Prayer Book as printed in the handout.
- ❖ Request that each person bring back to the group next Session an idea for a specific way to be better stewards of creation, focusing on how each of us personally could participate in the Parish plan for action.
- ❖ Close with the above prayers and the Lord's Prayer.

Resources for this Session

On Our Challenge to God's Creation:

www.ucsus.org then click on "Environment" tab and scroll to "What's New" and click on "Hurricanes & Climate Change." Also, from "Environment" click on "Global Warming" then Gulf Coast Ecological Heritage at Risk." This site, The Union of Concerned Scientists, contains a wealth of information about the environment from the world of science.

On Changing Our Threat to Creation:

www.webofcreation.org/estew/index.html and click on "Why use less energy." (If you are having difficulty accessing this site try a Google search.) This particular link is to the Environmental Stewardship Program of the Eco-justice Working Group of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

www.protectingcreation.org and click on "Your Congregation." This site is to the Interfaith Climate Change Network and gives information on how places of worship can be better stewards of God's creation.

Stewardship of Creation-Session IV Land of Surpassing Beauty

Reflection (12 minutes)

- ❖ Invite someone to lead a reading in unison of *A Song of Creation*, BCP pp. 88-90. *Ask everyone as they watch the CD-Rom presentation to notice scenes they recognize, or that remind them of places they know, and to remember who they were with and what they were doing when they were there, and then remain silent for one minute after it has finished playing.*
- ❖ Dim the lights and play the CD-Rom.

Education (18 minutes)

- ❖ Ask someone to read aloud paragraphs 8 through 11 of the Bishop's Pastoral Letter.
- ❖ Then discuss the following questions, writing the group's answers on the newsprint.

Question 1

Describe ways in which your church property and the surrounding area are "land of surpassing beauty, which supports rich diversity of plant and animal life."

Question 2

How does what you are learning here "support your ministry of stewardship?"

Action (15 minutes)

- ❖ Invite each person to share the ideas they had for how they could participate in the Parish plan for action.
- ❖ Lead the group to "fine tune" the Parish plan for action in light of today's discussion.
- ❖ Ask the group to pray daily for all creation using BCP p. 840 #8 and/or the prayer from the New Zealand Prayer Book as printed in the handout.
- ❖ Close with these prayers and the Lord's Prayer.

Resources for this Session

On Our Diocese as a Land of Surpassing Beauty:

Consult with local environmental groups to learn what characterizes your area as a land of surpassing beauty. To find them look in your phone book or local "yellow pages" under "Environmental, Conservation & Ecological Organizations." Or, go to Google (or your preferred search engine) and type in the name of your local river or water-source, then type in "organizations." Bring brochures to share with the class.

On Supporting Stewardship Ministry:

<http://EENonline.org/action/links.htm> This link takes you to the electronic resources of the Episcopal Ecological Network. The EEN provides resources to the Episcopal Church in the USA to encourage *Reflection*, *Education* and *Action* on faith-based environmental issues.

www.southface.org Southface is a regional resource contiguous with Province IV. Southface helps people save energy and water and conserve natural resources. Southface fosters unique partnerships and develops programs that will enable anyone to understand and adopt responsible practices for environmental living.

Stewardship of Creation-Session V **Embracing Stewardship of God's Creation**

Reflection (8 minutes)

- ❖ Invite someone to read the opening paragraph of the Bishops' Pastoral Letter.
This time, just allow yourself to become immersed in the CD-Rom presentation as it plays, then remain silent for one minute when it is finished playing.
- ❖ Dim the lights and play the CD-Rom.

Education (10 minutes)

- ❖ Ask someone to read aloud the last two paragraphs of the Bishop's Pastoral Letter.
- ❖ Review the resources, especially the Province IV coordinator for environmental concerns and the curricular materials that are available.

Action (27 minutes)

- ❖ Invite the group to commit to a specific plan of action.
 - ❖ Plan for how to educate children and youth in "earth stewardship."
 - ❖ Plan for further education for adult Parishioners.
 - ❖ Decide on two or three specific actions for the church to take, with a time-line for completion.
 - ❖ Develop a plan to encourage specific action for Parish individuals and families to do at home or at work.
 - ❖ Close with prayer #1 BCP p. 814, the prayer from the New Zealand Prayer Book, and the Lord's Prayer

Resources for this Session

Province IV Coordinator for Environmental Concerns:

Joyce Wilding, email: joycewilding@comcast.net Curriculum information is available relevant to your congregation.

Environmental Resources – Your State:

www.theregenerationproject.org then click on the "Your State" tab.

Curriculum Reviews - All Ages:

www.eco-justice.org then click on Eco-Curriculum Reviews "Explore the Reviews."

Eco-action for the Church:

www.brethren.org then click on "Youth CFL Project," a fund-raiser for youth selling compact fluorescent light bulbs.

Eco-action for Families:

www.earthministry.org scroll then click "Caring for All Creation: On the Road, At the Table, In the Home."

Environmental Education at Diocesan Camps:

www.ecandcc.org/home.html then click on "Camps and Conference Centers." Continue with a "Search by State", for example:
Alabama, Camp McDowell, Environmental Center
Mississippi, Camp Bratton-Green and The Duncan M. Gray Conference Center, Eco House
North Carolina, Camp Summit and The Summit: An Episcopal Center, HARP

Resources for Going Deeper

If you or your congregation or group would like to learn more or go deeper into learning about the issues raised in this course, the following resources are suggested.

Session I

Earth Community, Earth Ethics by Larry Rasmussen (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996) See especially the Introduction, pages 1-19.

What Does It Mean to Have Dominion? (Genesis 1) by Carol Newsom, Ph.D., Professor of Old Testament, Candler School of Theology, a three-lecture series given on October 17, 2004 at Independent Presbyterian Church, 3100 Highland Avenue, Birmingham, AL 35205. A CD of the series is available from the church for \$10 plus \$3 postage and handling. Contact person: Paul Romjue, Director, Christian Education. (205)933-1830

Session II

Discussion Course on Exploring Deep Ecology by Northwest Earth Institute, (Portland, Oregon: Northwest Earth Institute, 2001) Information about how to start a course is available online at www.nwei.org then click on "Discussion Courses." This nine session program explores views of our relation to earth, and our patterns of consumption. Short, selected readings support moving from a view of earth as a collection of sources to be consumed for our needs, to an awe-inspired view of earth as an intricate life-support system for all species.

Session III

Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril by Sallie McFague (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001) See especially "The Contemporary Economic Model and World View" pages 71-97; and "The Ecological Economic Model and World View," pages 99-123.

Session IV

Eco-Church: An Action Manual by Albert Fritsch, S.J., with Angela Iadavaia-Cox (San Jose, California: Resource Publications, Inc. 1992).

Session V

Putting Energy Into Stewardship: Energy Star® For Congregations Guide by The Environmental Protection Agency and available as a 90-page PDF file online at www.epa.gov/congregations A free hard copy is available from EPA by calling 888/STAR-YES (888/782-7937).

Your Local Library as a Resource

If the above books are not available locally see if your librarian can help to secure them through inter-library loan. You may also wish to look for other resources to augment the sessions. Your librarian can help with where to look in the catalog to find material.

The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama Task Force for the Stewardship of Creation wants your experience with this Study Guide to the Bishops' Pastoral Letter to be both positive and helpful. If you have questions or are experiencing problems accessing any of the resources we are willing for you to contact us. We would appreciate your feedback and suggestions for further resources.

Dr. Eleanor McKenzie DelBene, Chair
The Rev. Deacon Gerri Aston

Eleanor@presence.org
gerriaston@charter.net

Participant Handout

Prayers

God of unchangeable power, when you fashioned the world the morning stars sang together and the host of heaven shouted for joy; open our eyes to the wonders of creation and teach us to use all things for good, to the honor of your glorious name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

(Copyright material taken from *A New Zealand Prayer Book- He Karakia Mininare o Aotearoa*, p. 569, is used with permission.)

#40 For Knowledge of God's Creation, BCP p. 827

Almighty and everlasting God, you made the universe with all its marvelous order, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures: Grant that, as we probe the mysteries of your creation, we may come to know you more truly, and more surely fulfill our role in your eternal purpose; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

38 For the Right Use of God's Gifts, BCP p. 827

Almighty God, whose loving hand *hath* given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor *thee* with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of *thy* bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

#41 For the Conservation of Natural Resources, BCP p. 827

Almighty God, in giving us dominion over things on earth, you made us fellow workers in your creation: Give us wisdom and reverence so to use the resources of nature, that no one may suffer from our abuse of them, and that generations yet to come may continue to praise you for your bounty; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

#8 For the Beauty of the Earth, BCP p. 840

We give you thanks, most gracious God, for the beauty of earth, sky and sea; for the richness of mountains, plains, and rivers; for the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers. We praise you for these good gifts, and pray that we may safeguard them for our posterity. Grant that we may continue to grow in our grateful enjoyment of your abundant creation, to the honor and glory of your Name, now and for ever. *Amen*.

#1 For Joy in God's Creation, BCP p. 814

O heavenly Father, who *hast* filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold *thy* gracious hand in all *thy* works; that, rejoicing in *thy* whole creation, we may learn to serve *thee* with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, *thy* Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*

Resources

Episcopal Ecological Network <http://EENonline.org.html>

Resources for *Reflection*, including worship; *Education*, including both a print and an electronic bibliography; and *Action* are found here.

Web of Creation: Transforming Faith-based Communities for a Sustainable World

www.webofcreation.org Click on the "Home & Work" button for links to inspiration and ideas about caring for God's creation.

The Union of Concerned Scientists www.ucsusa.org This site has information about our world that is of concern to scientists.

Earth Ministry www.earthministry.org Scroll down to "Caring for All Creation: On the Road, At the Table, In the Home" then click to find many ways you and your family can become better stewards of God's creation.