



Episcopal
Relief & Development
Working Together for Lasting Change



Creation Care & You

A TOOLKIT TO WORK TOGETHER FOR LASTING CHANGE



Fernanda is harvesting beans in Calumbo Community in Angola. She will use the beans from her harvest in several ways: some will feed her family, some will be sold and the money used to buy clothes and pay for school and some seeds will be reserved for the next growing season.

Thank you to our partners for the photos in this toolkit:

Tanzania: Diocese of Central Tanganyika Development Services Coordination

Nicaragua: Consejo de Iglesias Evangelicas Pro Alianza Denominacional (CEPAD)

Honduras: Aanglidesh/Iglesia Episopal Hondureña

Angola: Anglican Church of Angola

Kenya: Anglican Church of Kenya, ADS-Nyanza

Sri Lanka: National Christian Council of Sri Lanka

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright ©1989 the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Psalm quotations are from the Book of Common Prayer.

Table of Contents

Creation Care & You	i
Introduction	<i>ii</i>
Important Reminders While Caring for Creation	<i>iii</i>
Overview of the Program	<i>iv</i>
How To Begin: Discerning Local Leadership and Setting Goals	1
Team Mission & Policy Statement Template	2
Community Survey Example	3
In Worship: Observances for the Care of Creation	5
Rogation Days and Garden Blessings	6
A Rite for the Blessing of a Garden	7
An Outdoor Guided Meditation	9
Lectio Divina: The Book of Nature	11
Creation Psalms	13
Worship Resources for the Season of Creation	16
Year-Round Worship Resources	17
Formation: Study and Grow with Creation Care	19
A Godly Play Style Story of Creation	20
Poetry & Reflections	29
On Campus: Caring for Creation in your Buildings and Grounds	34
Calculating Your Carbon Footprint	35
Benefits of Pollinator Gardens	38
Six Steps to a Successful Pollinator Garden	39
Fellowship: Earth Friendly & Green Gathering	40
Being Great Neighbors	41
Introduce Zero-Waste Living	43
Eat Pray Walk	44
The 5 R's of Kitchen Hospitality	47
Take Action: Local & Global	48
50 Easy Ways to Care for Creation	50
Pick One Thing – Introduction	52
Pick One Thing To Do This Week	53
Fun & Fundraising with Episcopal Relief & Development	63
How to Plan a Campaign	65
Helpful Tips	66
Get Creative with <i>Gifts for Life</i>	67

Introduction

Episcopal Relief & Development partners with locally-led organizations around the world to advance lasting change in communities impacted by injustice, poverty, disaster and climate change.

Our Episcopal faith, culture and values provide the framework for us to build strong relationships around the world with leaders and organizations on the ground, living in the communities we serve. We work with committed local partners to co-create innovative, unique and transformational programs. This approach is rooted in personal involvement and a deep trust that honors community agency in creating positive, climate-related results that last.

Extreme weather events like heat waves, droughts and floods are leaving millions of people without food and water. Often, those most at risk are isolated, rural, subsistence farming households, far from basic support services. Episcopal Relief & Development's extensive faith network allows us to reach these most remote communities and, through our partners, provide the skills, training, information and access to finance households need to cope and adapt to rising climate risks and uncertainty.

This toolkit offers ways we can care for the earth and help slow down global warming. We are hopeful and believe that by working together through prayers and action, we can prepare for future disasters and restore God's very good gift of creation.

Gleaning from our work across diverse communities, we have created this resource to meet faith leaders in a variety of contexts and provide direction and support to all, including:

- Churches large and small
- Schools, Campus Ministries, Camp & Conference Centers
- Those just beginning this conversation
- Those already engaged in Creation Care
- Emergent and non-traditional communities and missions

You are a part of our unique global network, working together for lasting change.

This entire toolkit, as well as more information about how you can engage with our work, is available on our website at www.episcopalrelief.org.

Important Reminders

While Caring for Creation

Do not fear. Over and over in Scripture, Jesus tells us not to fear. This is true in all things, and in our particular context, Jesus's words are a good reminder. Creation Care is nothing new and nothing to fear. It's already woven into the care God calls us to provide one another. This includes caring for everything among us: humans, animals, plants, oceans and all living things. The health of our earth is bound to the health of all. Chronic health problems, toxic living conditions and those affected by extreme weather events like floods, fires and droughts are consequences of our neglect, but we need not be afraid. There is hope.

Be at peace. Jesus calls us to face whatever comes as people filled with his light and peace. We are given agency and power to address the challenges before us and to restore creation anew.

Pray. Our Episcopal tradition holds that how we pray shapes what we believe. The Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, founder of the *Season of Creation* initiative in The Episcopal Church, writes, "Our prayers for the earth, and all that dwells thereon, break through our silence and our fears and move our yearning for justice and restoration of the earth into action."

Act. This toolkit can help you and your community to act now. It provides simple, though not always easy, ways you and your community can use your unique gifts, locations, power and access to make a difference and protect "this fragile earth, our island home."

Connect. You are not alone. As a faith leader, you are a part of a vast network of people longing to work together to care for creation. *Creation Care & You* offers prayer and action ideas that range from private devotions and small acts to full community worship and engagement.

Walk in love. The global conversation can be overwhelming. But small and large shifts in local communities build lasting change and give us hope. Throughout this guide, you will learn more about how your parish can be involved in Episcopal Relief & Development's investments in communities around the world, strengthening their resources and resilience in response to climate change.

Thank You. We are grateful to you for your willingness to work together, and through caring for creation, to seek peace, justice and hope in the world.

You and I are fortunate that offering love and kindness is at the heart of our work at Episcopal Relief & Development every day.

Sometimes, that love and kindness looks like a malaria net. Sometimes, it looks like shelter during a humanitarian crisis. Sometimes, it looks like access to clean water. It looks like many different things.

Thank you for offering the kind of love and kindness that gladdens the hearts of the millions worldwide who travel with us.

– Rob Radtke, President & CEO, Episcopal Relief & Development

Overview of the Program

How to Begin – Discerning Local Leadership and Setting Goals

The first step is to discern who among your community is ready to lead, and determine how the passion of your community can guide you.

In Worship: Observances for the Care of Creation

Prayers, plans, and resources for Rogation Days, outdoor Guided Meditation, Lectio Divina, Creation Psalms, the Season of Creation, and Prayers for Year-Round observances. Also includes links for resources for Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday, Earth Day and a Creation Rite of Passage.

Formation: Study and Grow with Creation Care

Poetry reflections, a *Godly Play*[™] styled Creation Care story, and links and ideas for an all-ages gardening project, StorySharing and a Creation Care Card Game.

On Campus: Caring for Creation in your Buildings and Grounds

Resources to measure your carbon footprint, build a pollinator garden and links and ideas for reducing your environmental impact.

Fellowship: Earth Friendly and Green Gathering

Hospitality practices include how to be eco-friendly neighbors, learn about zero-waste living, take a prayer walk in your neighborhood and other ideas for fellowship events with creation care at the heart.

Take Action: Local and Global

An engaging handout and fun activity for your parishioners. Also includes links and ideas for individuals and congregations to form partnerships with others to work together for lasting change in your communities and around the world.

Fun & Fundraising with Episcopal Relief & Development

Timelines and tips for planning a successful campaign, fun ideas for building community with fundraisers, and creative ways to use our popular *Gifts for Life* program.



How To Begin: Discerning Local Leadership and Setting Goals

A first step is to discern who among your staff, volunteers and parishioners are called to take leadership roles in the ministry of Creation Care. Together, these leaders can begin to identify their purpose and goals, and the parish can commission them in this important work of leadership and care.

In this section, you will find:

- » *Creation Care Ministry Team Mission & Policy Statement Template*
- » *Creation Care Parish Survey – Where is your shared passion & curiosity?*

Other ideas and resources include:

- Explore this [talk sheet](#), “5 Steps to Create Effective Climate Communications”, from the ecumenical resource at *Blessed Tomorrow: Caring for Creation Today*. Using these suggestions and your own, begin to develop a creation care plan.
- Check out the “Planting your Green Team, Growing Earth Stewards [Guide](#)” on the Diocese of Kansas’s Care of Creation Task Force’s webpage.
- Meet with your worship team to schedule observances throughout the year, including:
 - * Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday
 - * Earth Day
 - * The Season of Creation

The team should also reach out to other ministry team leaders including the altar guild, youth ministers, the vestry and wardens, music directors, local campus ministry groups, Christian formation leaders, an Invite Welcome Connect team and other evangelists and any other ministry that might intersect with Creation Care. Work together step-by-step to share the joy of achieving your goals.

Team Mission & Policy Statement Template

_____ (*insert parish, school or organization name*)
is committed to protecting the environment and minimizing harmful impacts. We are companions with all living things on earth and take seriously our role as protectors of God's creation.

Believing that the care of creation is a central part of our life, work and mission, we will take environmental concerns into account in our mission, worship, education, training, pastoral and administrative work.

We commit to the following goals:

- We will identify environmental issues on our campus and recommend appropriate action.
- We will offer opportunities for deepening the awareness of the relationship between our faith and our call to action to care for God's creation through worship and formation.

We will set measurable goals, short and long-term, and engage all generations of
_____ (*insert parish, school or organization name*) in this work.

Some of the ways we will live into these goals include:

1. We will ask our members to consider their personal impact on the environment in their daily lives.
2. We will inventory our consumption as a (*parish, school or organization*) and make shifts to vendors and suppliers that prioritize environmental considerations, including how they produce, source, package and transport materials and services.
3. We will continue to assess our campus, reducing the consumption of water and fossil fuels, updating energy-saving devices and bulbs, considering renewable energy, reducing our carbon footprint and being stewards of our land and property for wildlife to help manage and conserve biodiversity.
4. We will support and partner with churchwide initiatives for resources and encouragement, including [Episcopal Relief & Development](#), [Episcopal Creation Care](#) and the [Episcopal Public Policy Network](#).
5. We will encourage all suppliers and contractors to take environmental concerns into account in their work, and we will encourage environmentally friendly forms of transportation as appropriate and keep journeys to meeting venues close and convenient for all.

The _____ (*insert parish, school or organization name*)
Creation Care Ministry Team will meet at least twice a year to ensure continual improvement and progress, revisiting goals and maintaining our core principles. The Team will work with other leaders and ministry teams to implement and monitor these initiatives.

Community Survey Example

Greetings! Our impact on the environment is a consequence of the thousands of large and small choices we make every day. As your _____ (Creation Care Ministry team name) we are setting goals on behalf of _____ (insert parish, school or organization name) that will help us reduce our carbon footprint and strengthen our role in restoring God's creation.

We seek your help prioritizing our goals. Please take a moment to share your interests in this wide-ranging topic, so we can build this ministry based on your passions and preferences. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and ideas with us.

I am interested in _____ (insert parish, school or organization name) providing leadership and guidance in these areas:

WORSHIP:

I want _____ (insert parish, school or organization name) to remind me that we are stewards of this earth and to hold us accountable for being mindful and intentional in how we pray and hope to be a part of healing.

I would support (check those that interest you):

Observing the Season of Creation in our (parish, school or organization) with special Sunday readings September-October.

Attending a special prayer service for Creation Care.

Adding collects, litanies and other prayers to our weekly worship service, reminding us to be stewards of all of creation.

Adopting a prayer practice at home with a variety of daily devotions, action items and other ideas for personal engagement with creation care.

FORMATION	ACTION
<p><i>I want to learn more about how being a person of faith intersects with Creation Care. I am likely to attend or participate in creation-themed activities, including (circle those that interest you):</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Book Discussion / Speaker Series Bible Study / Personal Daily Devotions Sunday Guest Speakers or Preachers</i></p>	<p><i>I want to learn more ways to be responsible with my home and garden, including (circle those that interest you):</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Home Energy Audits / Reusable Resources Responsible Consumerism / Recycling Earth-Friendly Products & Practices</i></p>

I also want _____ (insert parish, school or organization name) to teach me more about how we can be more directly involved in (check those that interest you):

Understanding the carbon footprint of our church buildings and grounds and taking steps to reduce harm.

Exploring native gardening, tree and pollinator planting to beautify and make our entire campus more earth-friendly.

Exploring our neighborhood and promoting nature paths, free libraries, benches and drinking fountains.

Participating in neighborhood dumpster and clean-up days and helping with invasive plant mitigation projects.

ENGAGEMENT:


I am interested in _____ (insert parish, school or organization name) making other connections for Creation Care, including (check those that interest you):

Working with our Finance Ministry Team to identify how we can support environmentally conscious companies and consider divestment from the fossil fuel industry.

Partnering with [Episcopal Relief & Development](#) to help raise funds for their work and utilize their resources and connections to aid communities, building skills and providing education to address climate resilience and uncertainty around the world.

Partnering with the [Episcopal Public Policy Network](#) to learn more about how governmental interventions and legislation can bring about larger institutional changes.

Please use the space below to let us know if you have any other ideas or insights about this new ministry. If you would like our team to reach out to you directly, please include your name, email, and phone number. Thank you!



In Worship: Observances for the Care of Creation

We invite all Episcopalians to join together on [Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday](#) and year-round to pray for those living in need:

God, we pray as we walk your way of love with compassion, justice and reconciliation in our hearts, that we may inspire all the world to serve Christ in every living thing.

God of grace and love, hear our prayer. Amen.

In this section, you will find:

- » *Information about Rogation Days, including a garden blessing for the community, at church and at home*
- » *An Outdoor Guided Meditation contributed by Payton Hoegh, M.Div, Spiritual Communities Director of the Center for Spirituality in Nature*
- » *Information and resources for use in The Episcopal Church during the Season of Creation*
- » *Scripture and prayer resources for year-round observances for Creation Care*

Other ideas for resources and planning include:

- Learn about *A Child's Rite of Passage Journey* based on the Winnebago tradition from the Diocese of Kansas's Care of Creation Task Force [website](#) under "Formation Tools."
- Be ready to prayerfully respond to the needs of those affected by climate change, including victims of [disasters](#), including those made worse by climate change.
- [Help plan](#) your annual Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday, as called upon by General Convention.
- Check out Earth Day Resources from [Creation Justice Ministries](#), an ecumenical group started by the National Council of Churches.
- Download the ecumenical Season of Creation [Celebration Guide](#).

Rogation Days and Garden Blessings

What are Rogation Days and how can you celebrate them?

According to the Book of Common Prayer, Rogation Days are traditionally observed on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Ascension Day. They may, however, be observed on other days, depending on local conditions and the convenience of the congregation.

Anciently, the observance consisted of an outdoor procession, which culminated in a special celebration of the Eucharist. In more recent centuries, the procession has frequently taken place on a Sunday afternoon, apart from the Eucharist.

If the Rogation Procession is held on a Sunday or Principal Feast, it should take place apart from or following the Proper Eucharist of the Day. Under these conditions, the procession concludes with a suitable prayer and a blessing.

The congregation gathers at a convenient place and may sing a hymn. During the movement from place to place, to preserve the solemnity of the procession, it is desirable for the people to refrain from conversation and to join in hymns, litanies said or sung, bells, instrumental music or silence. At the stations, the Presider may cense the place.

A Rogation Day service can be found in the *Episcopal Book of Occasional Services 2022*, starting on page 113.

A Rite for the Blessing of a Garden

Presider Blessed be the God of all creation:

People **For in your goodness you make all things new.**

Presider God be with you (*or the Lord be with you*).

People **And also with you.**

Presider Let us pray.

Gracious God, you open wide your hand and give of your goodness to all things living: Renew the face of the earth and increase the sustainable harvest of the world, that the land may bring forth enough for all, and your people may share justly and give honor to you; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen*.

The presider or other appointed leaders from the congregation may then lead the People in prayer, using one or more of the following collects, as appropriate.

Lover of all you have made: Protect and sustain the creatures of our local habitat. Increase their well-being, watch over them with love, and give us wisdom to honor our kinship with them; through Jesus Christ, the first-born of all creation. *Amen*.

God, whose Spirit moved over the deep: We thank you for the gift of water. Bless the waters on the ground and under the ground, and the waters that fall from the sky, that this garden may flourish and bear good fruits; through Jesus Christ our savior. *Amen*.

God, who alone provides seed for the sower and bread for the eater, you have taught us to ask of you our daily bread: Bless the sowing of the seed this year, grant fertility to the soil, and strengthen the hands of the gardeners who till it, that through their labor your people may be nourished; through Jesus Christ, the bread of life. *Amen*.

Holy God, you have blessed our plowing and preparing of the ground: Protect what we planted in your name, and grant that working late and early, we and others may enjoy a fruitful harvest; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

Holy God, you have blessed our plowing and preparing of the ground: Protect what we plant and bring it to maturity, that we and others may enjoy a fruitful harvest; through Jesus Christ our Sustainer. *Amen*.

The Presider and People then say

Holy One: Bless and protect this garden and all who keep it. Strengthen and uphold them in their labor, that these plants may be good fruit and our care for the earth may witness to your love and justice; in the name of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. *Amen*.

The Deacon or Presider may dismiss the People with these words

Deacon Let us bless the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

This is from the Episcopal Book of Occasional Services 2022, pages 124-12. It is intended for public worship but may be used for private devotion as appropriate.

Other worship resources, including ways to support the work of Episcopal Relief & Development's climate change resilience programs, can be found at episcopalrelief.org/what-we-do/priorities/climate-resilience

*Join us in prayer that can help guide you through times of disaster, uncertainty, liturgical seasons and beyond.
episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action/worship-resources/let-us-pray/*

[An Outdoor Guided Meditation](#)

Reflection: Spirituality in Nature—A Beginner’s Guide

Restoring Balance

We don’t have to stretch our imaginations to see the imbalance in our relationship to creation. For generations, we’ve walled ourselves off from the rest of the created order, and, increasingly, infrastructure, technology and even our modern culture separate us from the natural world. This separation has not only contributed to growing environmental challenges, but it has also cut us off from an ancient and essential way of knowing God through creation. As we experience the growing consequences of climate change and the widespread challenges of ecological crises, our Episcopal leaders rightly insist that we must restore our relationship *with* creation in order to know and encounter God fully as our ancestors in faith did and to fulfill our vocational call to *care for creation*.¹

Fortunately, the Christian Church boasts a rich tradition of spirituality in nature that can guide us in this repair and restoration and that can inspire and equip us for the work of creation care.

Spirituality in Nature and the Christian Tradition

Relationship with the created world has been part of our story from the beginning. Genesis establishes a connection with nature in the most explicit terms as it traces God’s creative endeavor in shaping the contours of the earth, establishing the structure of day and night, speaking life into creatures of all sorts and kindling humankind into existence from a handful of soil and the loving touch of divine breath. Within the Old and New Testaments and documented throughout the history of our Church, followers of Christ have continuously looked to creation as a vital source of revelation and renewal, a sacred space for ritual and formation.

As modeled by teachers, saints and countless others over the centuries, spirituality in nature has taken many forms. We recognize it in the agrarian parables of Jesus and in Christ’s regular retreats into the wild as a place of prayer, preparation and peace. It is evident in Romans 1 when Paul affirms creation as clear evidence of God and in Saint Augustine’s call to attentiveness to the “Book of Nature” as a vital testament to the Word of God alongside Holy Scripture. We can trace progression of spirituality in nature through the emergence of monastic communities in the deserts of Egypt to the rich interweaving of land-based Christian theology in Celtic practice.

Relationship with the natural world and meaningful engagement with creation has long been an important part of the Christian tradition, a firm and formative thread in our religious practice.

¹ “Bishops close convention with climate emergency statement ahead of Lambeth” Episcopal News Service: www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2022/07/11/bishops-close-convention-with-climate-emergency-statement-ahead-of-lambeth

Spirituality in Nature in Practice

Despite being woven into the roots of our faith, deep, intentional engagement with creation in worship, liturgy, contemplation, formation, ritual and prayer has waned in our modern context, leading to an unbalanced relationship with the natural world.

Renewing attention to this ancient tradition of spirituality in nature moves us closer to restoring our relationship with creation. In doing so, we return to the heart of creation care, reground our faithful work and honor the unique contribution of spiritual communities in responding to environmental degradation and ecological devastation that are, in no small part, also spiritual crises. The late Rabbi Ellen Bernstein reminds us: “Science alone will not move us to care about the earth...In the end, we will only save what we love.”² And we can only love what we first notice, pay attention to, appreciate and delight in.

Intentional time and practice in the natural world can offer renewal, energy, guidance, resilience and inspiration, providing both a salve to our wounded souls and essential lessons that can serve as a blessed spark for our anxious hearts, reinvigorating us as we advocate for change.

To this end, as part of our creation care efforts, regular attention to the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit in and through nature can help us fall back in love with this beautiful world God has created. Intentional time and practice in the natural world can offer renewal, energy, guidance, resilience and inspiration, providing both a salve to our wounded souls and essential lessons that can serve as a blessed spark for our anxious hearts, reinvigorating us as we advocate for change. It can help us see and cultivate hope, nourish our communities and stir our imaginations as we seek ways to minimize waste, implement sustainability solutions, strengthen emergency preparedness and advocate for environmentally conscious legislation.

Many Episcopal congregations and communities are finding creative ways to incorporate spirituality in nature into their regular practice through outdoor worship, rogation rituals, mindful gardening offerings, labyrinth walks and much more. Organizations like [The Center for Spirituality in Nature](#) have resources and offer guidance on ways to regularly practice spirituality in nature individually and in community.

As part of the work of deepening relationships with local ecosystems, God and one another, the Center has built and supports a network of Spirituality in Nature Groups (SINGs). These groups offer creative, contemplative, nature-companioned spiritual formation that inspires and sustains active responses to the urgent challenges facing our world. This network includes several Episcopal communities whose creation-oriented practices enrich traditional prayer, worship, liturgy and ministry, particularly creation care.

We have included a Lectio Divina spirituality in nature practice that you can try for yourself or with your congregation. More practices can be found in the book, [Inside Out: 50 Spiritual Practices for Going Deeper in Nature](#) (Beth Norcross, The Center for Spirituality in Nature, 2018) and at www.centerforspiritualityinnature.org.

² <https://dayenu.org/media/on-the-passing-of-ellen-bernstein-founding-mother-of-the-jewish-environmental-movement/>

Lectio Divina: The Book of Nature

Intention

Adapt the traditional, familiar contemplative practice of Lectio Divina to observe nature as a sacred text. Examine this “text” closely and intimately, being open to the presence and movement of God within and through it.

Instruction

Begin by sitting quietly or walking slowly in a natural place. This can be a park or trail, your backyard or the parish grounds, or you can settle in at a window with a view of a wilder space.

In keeping with the ancient practice of Lectio Divina where a sacred text is read slowly until a word or phrase resonates, slowly scan the natural area. Be attentive and open until an element of nature attracts you.

Move closer to that aspect of nature and study it carefully:

- Be curious about it. If possible, feel it. Perhaps gently turn it around. Look at it from all sides.
- Be *with* it as if it were a friend.
- Use all your senses to explore it.
 - * What does it look like? What colors and patterns do you observe?
 - * What does it sound like?
 - * How does it smell?
 - * What is its texture?

In quiet reflection, you might ask this element of nature, “What can you teach me?” You might begin to pray, asking God, “What are you revealing to me in this element of nature?” And, “How might I embody your love for it and demonstrate faithful care?”

Allow space and time for contemplation.

Consider the gifts this element of nature contributes as part of an ecological system. Reflect on all it needs to support its life. How does your own behavior impact its ability to thrive?

How does this element of creation draw your heart and mind to God? How does the Holy Spirit move in and through it?

Don't force or overthink. This is an exercise of the heart, not the head.

Let the experience move you as it will.

If you are with a group, after a period of silent reflection, share inspiration, insights, joys and revelation that may have come from this contemplative time in creation.

Close with a prayer of gratitude for the element of nature you spent time with, a commitment to honor and care for it and an expression of thanks for the presence of God and the innumerable ways we can experience that presence.



Demonstration of the resilient gardening techniques in the Central Province of Sri Lanka.

Creation Psalms

Intention

Use the writing of verse as a means of engaging joy, gratitude, worry, fear or loss. Doing so offers clarity, cultivates open spiritual reflection and nurtures hope.

Instruction

Settle into a natural area that is relatively quiet and undisturbed. Start with a short prayer or a brief, grounding practice of centering to create a sense of presence and openness. This could be a body scan, guided meditation or short reading that invites mindful attention and intention.

Afterward, engage with the natural world around you in quiet observation or by experiencing the landscape on a gentle walk. Set aside 5-15 minutes for this study.

Following this time of attention and reflection, settle into a space where you can sit and write comfortably. Consider what you saw during your time of observation. What thoughts came to mind? What did you feel stirring in you emotionally? Did the Holy Spirit move during this time?

Psalms take many forms; they can be full of joy and thanksgiving or be a deep expression of lament.

If your observation of the natural world moved you to delight or gratitude, you might try writing some verses in the style of Psalm 104:

- 14 You make grass grow for flocks and herds
 and plants to serve mankind;
 That they may bring forth food from the earth,
- 15 And wine to gladden our hearts,
 Oil to make a cheerful countenance,
 and bread to strengthen the heart.
- 16 The trees of the Lord are full of sap,
 the cedars of Lebanon which he planted.
- 17 In which the birds build their nests,
 and in whose tops the stork makes his dwelling.
- 18 The high hills are a refuge for the mountain goats,
 and the stony cliffs for the rock badgers.
- 19 You appointed the moon to mark the seasons,
 and the sun knows the time of its setting.

- 20 You make darkness that it may be night,
in which all the beasts of the forest prowl.
- 21 The lions roar after their prey and seek
their food from God.
- 22 The sun rises, and they slip away
and lay themselves down in their dens.
- 23 Man goes forth to his work
and to his labor until the evening.

How does the natural world around you demonstrate God's abundant love, care and creativity? How does your feeling of joy, thanksgiving and delight direct your attention to God?

If you were moved in sorrow or pain, remember that psalms of lament represent a third of the psalter. They are a powerful means of honestly expressing hurt while moving toward hope.

Lament psalms often use a specific structure:

- Address: short, often emotional query. Why, God? How long must we suffer?
- Complaint proper: a longer explanation of the grievance
- Petition: what the psalmist wants God to do
- Motivation: the argument, why God should help
- Confession of trust and vow of praise: usually starts with "But," expression of faith in, and praise for, God.

If you're engaging in this practice as a group, you might identify a theme of lament and divide into smaller groups. Have each team work together on writing one or two parts of this traditional structure. After 10-20 minutes of writing, come together and combine the verses as a full five-part lament psalm.

Consider writing some verses in the style of Psalm 42. Just as the original psalm writers were, be as raw and honest as possible:

- 1 As the deer longs for the water-brooks,
so longs my soul for you, O God.
- 2 My soul is athirst for God, athirst for the living God;
when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?

- 3 My tears have been my food day and night,
while all day long they say to me,
“Where now is your God?”
- 4 I pour out my soul when I think on these things;
how I went with the multitude and led them into the
house of God,
- 5 With the voice of praise and thanksgiving,
among those who keep holy-day.
- 6 Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul?
and why are you so disquieted within me?
- 7 Put your trust in God;
for I will yet give thanks to him,
who is the help of my countenance, and my God.
- 8 My soul is heavy within me;
therefore I will remember you from the land of Jordan,
and from the peak of Mizar among the heights of Hermon.
- 9 One deep calls to another in the noise of your cataracts;
all your rapids and floods have gone over me.
- 10 The Lord grants his loving-kindness in the daytime;
in the night season his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.

When you have finished writing your psalm(s), read them aloud.

Close with a prayer of gratitude and words of intention to demonstrate love and care for the place in nature that has offered you a space to write and inspiration for your writing.

These outdoor meditations were contributed by Payton Hoegh, M.Div, Spiritual Communities Director of the Center for Spirituality in Nature and postulant for ordained ministry in the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. For more resources and information about spiritual practices and guided meditations and to learn about joining other Episcopal congregations in starting a local “Spirituality in Nature Group” community, visit www.centerforspiritualityinnature.org.

Worship Resources for the Season of Creation

During the Season of Creation, The Episcopal Church joins with billions of Christians around the world to celebrate in prayer and action our Gospel call to protect the earth that God entrusted to our care. The Season of Creation spans the calendar from the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation (September 1) through the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi (October 4)

The Rev. John Elliott Lein of Maine and the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas of Massachusetts, in partnership with [Episcopal Relief & Development](#), curated a collection of prayers, readings and liturgies to honor the Season of Creation. This collection represents communities from throughout the global Anglican Communion and offers special liturgies for the season as well as ways to expand Sunday liturgies and prayers to reflect our care for creation.

The liturgy guide can be found [here](#).

The Season of Creation not only calls us to thanksgiving and stewardship but, just as importantly, to action.

Prayer and study are important elements in our work to care for creation and help communities dealing with climate disasters find resilience. At Episcopal Relief & Development, we combine prayers with action. We work with you and other local faith and community-based partners in communities around the world to provide skills, training, information and access to finances to help people cope with and adapt to rising climate risks and uncertainty. You can be a part of Creation Care by participating in local initiatives and learning more about this important work around the globe. Find out more [here](#).

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.

Additional prayers for the season of creation are [here](#).

Year-Round Worship Resources

We are called to Creation Care year-round. This section highlights a handful of prayers and readings you can use any time. Consider rotating them into worship services, at camps and retreats, during meetings or in your publications and social media.

Prayers for Creation Care

The Book of Common Prayer offers many prayers for Creation Care. Here are some examples (along with the page numbers):

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.* (p. 827)

This is the supreme work of Jesus Christ, who reconciles us to God, one another, and God's whole Creation. Christian hope is in the renewal and restoration of all things.

—Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and glory. *Amen.* (p. 388)

O heavenly Father, who has filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works; that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (p. 814)

Almighty God, we thank you for making the earth fruitful, so that it might produce what is needed for life: Bless those who work in the fields; give us seasonable weather; and grant that we may all share the fruits of the earth, rejoicing in your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (p. 824)

Almighty God, whose loving hand has given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor you with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (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.* (p. 827)

Prayers in times of disaster

Listen carefully, I am about to do a new thing, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even put a road in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.

— Isaiah 43:19

For People Facing Great Uncertainty

God of the present moment, God who in Jesus stills the storm and soothes the frantic heart; bring hope and courage to all as we wait in uncertainty. Bring hope and peace with whatever lies ahead. Bring us courage to endure what cannot be avoided. For your will is health and wholeness; you are God, and we need you. *Amen.* (Adapted from the New Zealand Prayer Book, p. 765)

For Those in the Path of a Storm

On the Sea of Galilee, even when the disciples began to fear, Jesus showed that he was Lord over the waters by rebuking the storms, so that all would know that even the wind and the waves obey him. Creator God, we ask you to calm the wind and the waves of the approaching storm, and spare those in its path from harm. Help those who are in its way to reach safety. Open our hearts in generosity to all who need help in the coming days. In all things and in all times, help us to remember that even when life seems dark and stormy, you are in the boat with us, guiding us to safety. *Amen.*

(America: *The Jesuit Review*)

For First Responders

Almighty God, you lend your strength to all those who are there for us in times of crisis, fear and hurt. You give courage to the first responders who continue to do this important work they are called to do, looking beyond the risk for the sake of those who need your help and protection. We give you thanks for the many ways they give of themselves, their skills, knowledge and help in troubling times. Protect them, o Lord. Extend your shielding hand over them and comfort their hearts when they are tired and heartbroken. God, we also lift up prayers of thanksgiving and comfort for the families of first responders and all who support them. Give them hope and courage. Surround them with your loving presence and give them peace when their loved ones run toward uncertainty. All this we pray in your name. *Amen.*

(Sarah Swindall, Augsburg University)

For Those Working to Rebuild

Compassionate God, source of all comfort, we pray for the people whose lives have been devastated this hurricane season. Bring them comfort, we pray. Protect the vulnerable. Strengthen the weak. Keep at bay the spread of disease. Have mercy on all those working to rebuild. And may our response to their suffering be generous and bring you praise. We ask this in Jesus's name. *Amen.*

(Adapted from Christian Aid, UK)

Additional prayers are available on our website at [Season of Creation](#) and [Disasters](#).



Formation: Study and Grow with Creation Care

Ongoing formation is a vital component of our commitment to Creation Care. This section offers ideas and resources to help individuals and congregations move into a deeper understanding of how Creation Care is inextricably rooted in Scripture and part of our responsibility as faithful Christians working together for the glory of God.

In this section, you will find:

- » *A story on the gift of Creation in the style of Godly Play™ contributed by Kim McPherson*
- » *A reflection on praying with poetry, and four poems contributed by the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phillips*

Other ideas and resources for Creation Care Formation include:

- The popular (and free!) [Abundant Life Garden Project®](#) (ALGP) curriculum. While many churches use this curriculum in the summer with children, it can be used with adults and as an intergenerational activity throughout the year. Cindy Coe from St. Elizabeth's Church in Knoxville, TN, used ALGP during coffee hour with adults, youth and children in December. Learn more about her experience [here](#).
- The StorySharing [Study Guide](#) from The Episcopal Church's Creation Care website
- Play the Climate Conversations [Card Game](#), available from the Diocese of Massachusetts

Even in the darkest night, it's still within our power to hold faith. We can still embrace hope. And although we may feel ourselves unloved, we can still stand steadfast in our love for others and for God. All this is in our control. God gave us these gifts and he does not take them back. It is we who choose to discard them."

—William Kent Krueger, *Ordinary Grace*

[A Godly Play Style Story of Creation](#)

This *Godly Play*™ styled story can help your entire congregation relate to how our creation story reminds us to care for the earth and all living creatures.

There are several possibilities for using this creation story with your congregation

- In a Sunday School Circle
- As a homily during worship for the whole congregation
- For a study series. It might be particularly helpful during the Season of Creation, giving participants time to wonder about each day
- With youth, young adults or adults during small-group studies
- As a theme for a church dinner or other evening gathering
- As a way to celebrate Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday, by connecting the story to the work of the organization

If you have never told a *Godly Play*™ style story before, we invite you to [experience](#) the Creation Story as it is told in the original materials.

MATERIALS

1. You need the images for the tiles for each day. A digital copy of the Creation tiles (shown here) for you to print is available for free by clicking [this link](#) or going to the website godlyplayfoundation.org. Under their “Resources” go to “Equity Audit Toolkits” then “Creation.” You may also make your own, or purchase a [pre-made kit](#) from Godly Play.
2. There is a sheet of photographs at the end of the story for you to use on the seventh day of the story.



THE PRESENTATION

The size of the group in the circle or space may affect the presentation style:

- Small: use the *Godly Play*™ materials for Creation Story
- Larger: create poster-board size pictures of each of the 7 Days of Creation
- Large with projector: Use original tiles for each day, projected on a screen

DURATION

Over Several Sundays: You may wish to spread the story out and explore a day or two of creation each week. Start with the introduction every week. As you lay out the preceding days and remind the circle of their story, place them next to each other on the underlay. Then, share the expanded stories for each day of Creation & Creation Care.

All at one time: Simply read the story script for each day, but skip the daily wondering questions. We have provided a list of wondering questions for the entire story at the end of the one-day-at-a-time script.

LET'S BEGIN

To share the story, gather your seven tiles of creation and put them in a wooden tray or basket on the floor (or table) next to you. If you would like to use an underlay, we recommend a 60" x 8" piece of black felt. As you tell the story of each day, place the tile or image in front of you, starting to your far right on the floor or underlay. Place the tiles in a neat row, one at a time, so that the participants see them "right side up" and touching each other. After you tell the story of the day, pause before adding another or going into the wondering time of that day. When you have finished with the wondering time, pick up the tiles in reverse order and place them back in the tray.

INTRODUCTION FOR EVERY WEEK

As we think about all the things that are going wrong on this "fragile earth, our island home," we need to remember that God gifted us with everything and that because God has trusted us with all of these gifts, we need to turn away from worry and fear, and instead, hold God's trust that we can make it better. We need to nurture life and beauty. So, let's go back to the very beginning:

DAY 1: SHOW THE FIRST TILE

Say: In the beginning, there was nothing but the quiet stillness of the darkness, full of God's dream and what was to come...

And then on the very first day, God gave us the gift of light, so there wasn't only darkness but darkness AND light.

I'm not just talking about the lights in this room or the car lights or lights at your house, but all of the light that is light, the light that ALL light comes from... And God saw the darkness and the light and God said, "It is good." And that was the end of the first day.

DAY 1

These are the wondering questions. (If you're telling the entire Creation story in one sitting, skip this section; the wondering questions for that approach are found at the end of Day 7).

Say: Sometimes, we think of light when we understand something—when we SEE it for the first time. We often say that someone or something “shed light” on something. Perhaps the light is shining right now on how much we need to help this beautiful planet, this “fragile earth, our island home.”

WONDER TOGETHER

I wonder:

- What makes you smile when you think about light and dark...
- What you love about light, or what light you like the most...
- What you love about darkness... I wonder how darkness can be helpful...
- If there is something about our environment that you have noticed needs our help...what would be the most important...
- How you might help...
- What makes you smile when you think about all of this...
- Where you go to experience the beauty of creation...
- What you can do to care for life and beauty...

DAY 2

Say: On the second day of creation, God gave us the gift of water. I don’t just mean the water we drink from a cup or we use to wash our bodies or swim in. I don’t even mean just the water in a river or a lake, or the oceans, or the water that comes down from the sky in rain. I mean all of the water that is water. This is the water that all of the water comes from. And God separated the waters above from the waters below.

When God saw the water, God said “It is good.” And that was the end of the second day.

WONDER TOGETHER

I wonder:

- When you think about water, what makes you smile...
- What water is near you...
- What water you like the best...
- What is most important about water...
- How it would feel to be very thirsty and have no water...

- How it would feel if someone then came and gave you a big glass of fresh water... In some places, people don't have clean water—or there have been floods and there is way too much water, so they have no place to live. In other places, people have found ways to nurture life by using flowing water to light houses and cook food and make it warm in winter. And lots of people do things to make sure they don't waste water and to make sure the water stays clean. They nurture—care for—life!

I wonder:

- How we can nurture life with water...
- What we can do to NOT waste water...
- How we can make our water the cleanest it can be...

DAY 3

Say: On the third day of creation, God gave us the gift of the dry land, separate from the water, and all of the green and growing things...so many!

WONDER TOGETHER

I wonder:

- Where you go on the land that is beautiful...
- What are some of your favorite “green and growing things” (plants, flower, trees)...
- If you have ever planted any...

We all live on some kind of land. But some people live on good land, and some people live on land that has been poisoned with chemicals or on the soil that is too thin. And some people live where there isn't enough water to grow anything.

The good part is that we know there are ways to make it better.

Some dairy farmers move their cows from one pasture to another, which allows the grass to grow back and the land to be healthy.

Some places are planting lots and lots of trees, which help to clean the air.

Farmers are growing food organically, and people are letting their lawns go back to their wildness for the bees and butterflies.

I wonder:

- Which green and growing things do you think are the most important...
- If we could leave out any of these growing things—and still have everything we need...

DAY 4

Say: On the fourth day of creation, God gave us the gift of the lights that guide us— the sun that guides us during the day and the moon and the stars that guide us at night.

Maybe you've been lucky enough to be outside somewhere at night where you can look up and see a sky full of stars...and the beautiful moon. And you know the sun. Sometimes, it can feel very hot, and sometimes it just feels good.

WONDER TOGETHER**I wonder:**

- If there is a place you can go to see the stars at night...
- If you have ever driven by a solar farm...

One of the things we're learning is that the sun can give us energy for things like lighting our homes, making them warm in winter and cool in summer. This is called solar power.

I wonder:

- If you have anything that is powered by the sun (a lantern, solar panels, lights along a walkway)...
- If you have learned something that makes you want to do more to care for our planet...
- How light helps you...
- When light helps you...

DAY 5

Say: On the fifth day of creation, God gave us the gift of all the creatures that swim in the waters and all of those that fly.

WONDER TOGETHER

I wonder:

- If you've ever had a bird come close to you or sing near you...
- What that was like...
- If you've ever seen a fish jump out of the water or a turtle dive in...

Birds are a great example of how we need each other. They eat lots of insects that we don't want around, and they spread seeds so that more plants can grow in new places.

We are not alone on this beautiful planet. There are so many other creatures that live here, too. We need to take care that we live with all the other creatures, making sure that they live beautiful lives, too!

Sometimes, we forget that we all need each other!

I wonder:

- If you know anyone who has helped any birds or creatures who live in the water...

DAY 6

Say: On the sixth day of creation, God gave us the gift of all the creatures that live on the land: the people and all the animals. When God saw the gift of all the people and creatures that live on the earth, God said "It is very good."

WONDER TOGETHER

I wonder:

- What animal you like best...
- What creature you think is most important...
- How many creatures we need or if there are any we could leave out...

God gave us freedom, and we know that while we are not perfect, we can do better. We are learning that we all need each other. And we need to do our part to make sure that all of God's creatures live the best lives that God dreamed for them! Maybe God knew that we could make things better, especially when we all work together.

I wonder:

- How we could do that...

DAY 7

Say: On the seventh day of creation, God rested and gave us the gift of a day to rest and to remember the gifts of all the other days. God gave us freedom. God created us for one another, and God trusts us to care for all of it—and not just for us but for all the children and grandchildren and all who will come after us.

And God smiled.

These 7 days of creation are all gifts God has given to us, and they are all so beautiful and important.

Think about looking up into the night sky from a place where there are no city lights. The sky is filled with the star lights, like glitter!

Think about how it feels to drink a cool glass of water when you are very hot from being outside playing or working in the sun.

Think about the delicious food that you eat, like a ripe, juicy strawberry, or the satisfying feeling when you take a big gulp of milk after eating a warm cookie.

Think about the feeling you get when you pet your dog or cat or when you watch a squirrel in your yard, being still and quiet and looking so soft or when you are outside, and the songs of the birds make you want to sit and listen.

These are the gifts we have all been given. And these are the gifts we are meant to take care of, so that everyone can have them, enjoy them and pass them on.

But we haven't been doing a very good job of taking care of these beautiful gifts. We have to do better.

And if every single one of us helps, we can make it better. Please listen to that: we can make it better. We all can do something. We can't fix everything by ourselves. But we can help.

And someday we will so happy because we will know that together, we did it. So, let's talk about things we can do.

We have friends in an organization called Episcopal Relief & Development. When we visit people in their villages and towns, we learn how conditions in their communities are changing. We partner with them to find new ways to support the reliance on the earth's resources in responsible ways. Securing clean drinking water and having enough to care for food crops is essential, and through solar power and other means we are finding ways to have access to both. We are invited to join them in this work by learning more about how they do it. We will do that on Episcopal Relief and Development Sunday (or any Sunday!) this year and maybe even buy someone a goat!

I wonder:

- If you have any ideas about what we can do to make this earth more clean and beautiful...

WONDER TOGETHER (if the story is told at the same time)

I wonder:

- Where all of the light comes from...
- Which part of this story you like the best...
- Which part is the most important...
- Which part is about you, or where you see yourself...
- If there is any part we could leave out...
- If there is something you hope we can help with...What would be most important...
- If there is something you can do for our earth that might make God smile...
- If there is something we can do together...
- Where you go on this earth that you find to be beautiful...
- How you can care for life and beauty right where you live...

(Adopted and contributed by Kim McPherson, Godly Play™ Foundation Trainer Emeritus, and the Rev. Tom Blackmon. Additional support and guidance from Kathleen Capcara, Godly Play™ Foundation Trainer and consultant.)

This sample excerpt is from Episcopal Relief & Development's "Creation Care & You" program for Church Leaders, scheduled for release in the fall of 2024. Formatting and content may vary from the final publication.)



Poetry & Reflections

Artists, musicians and writers around the world invite us to use our senses to explore and deepen our relationship to earth. Many prayer practices include tactile components like beads, paths, smoke, water and chimes. Language transformed into hymns, psalms and poems has the power to stir our senses, unmasking the mystery of the world around us and revealing God's life in new ways.

Praying through psalms and poetry reminds us of the beauty and brokenness we are called to heal and increases our desire to make lasting changes. The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phillips has been writing, preaching and teaching the church about our responsibility for the earth for decades

You are invited to read her poems with all your senses. Pay attention to the places that ignite your passion to be an advocate for Creation Care. If you are doing this in a group, leave time for silence before beginning a conversation about what you saw, heard, touched, tasted and smelled as you walked the paths of these poems.

Hymn for Two Pines

In this year of great burning
it seems a vain task
to feed two great pines that grew as gaunt
as prisoners-of-war, transparent
through two droughty years,
trying to buy them time,
to buy me time, to listen
to their calm wisdom and so, learn
to will one thing.

Seems we flail, adrift
like torn-loose astronauts,
untending the ground
we are knotted to by wonder and design,
unfallowing, unhallowing neglected fields,
stoning life out of soil
with our high-rise aspirations,
the flattening pavements of our collective wills.

So here in one churchyard, suburban,
nondescript, though I describe it daily,
I feed two trees
through noon's combustion of late-summer sun,
and I am earthed and mended doing this,
like any hermit carrying night and the Milky Way in her eyes.

Underneath Are the Everlasting Arms

Because you are a person of good conscience
I have no doubt you rise in the morning with zeal
to pray and mend and shift and heal the world,
girder by girder to build up the shining city
or dismantle the wreckage of its worst.

And likely, as the polar winds buffet your walls,
you wake, as I do, in the lonely hour
intuiting the dying of the forests,
the smell of distant smoke,
and the muddying and drying up of water sources,
perhaps even your own wellspring.

Because you are kind and have your eyes open,
I suspect, with all the frightened children,
you, too, feel the steel chicken wire between your fingers,
palpating the horror, the sorrow
from which thousands will bear scars always —
be they Uighur, Rohingya, Syrian, Latinx or Kurd —
they are all our own.

Here we are, rowing our tiny boats
in unforgiving seas out of sight of the inundated land
hoping help will materialize across the waters
and come to us and come to them,
and in the meantime holding on to one another.
Take courage, hold fast, and row.

But in this moment, you are here
among friends, in this warm, calm and sustaining air
that none of us create nor earn,
and the thankful breath has just come into our lungs
and will again. Allow it, notice it, and be glad.
There are moments like this when you need not add your grief
to the world's griefs. There is suffering enough.

We are all bell-divers in the world's rude weather,
tethered to love's inexhaustible supply.
So place your feet with care on the fragile reef
and pause to wonder at the mystery of it and the beauty,
and the mercy holding you, and all of us,
even in the uttermost parts of the seas.
Today, pause and be thankful
simply to watch the bubbles rise.

Birdsong Says to Us: Live Here

Turn of Summer into Fall.
Such silence.
Just the scratch of a squirrel's claws up the trunk of the sugar maple
twig breaking
leaves swish and shush.
And then, a lone vireo piping.

Our human ears are made for birdsong
more than any other voices, save our own —
the way elephants and earthworms are attuned —
to the slower music of the ground,
its deep vibration.

The air to us seems derelict
once the Spring wrens have gone from the porch
and the redwing blackbird drifted on from his stump in the swamp.

Out west, as a storm blows up
all the fibers of the Sitka spruces sing
a string bass under the bow of the wind

that we strain to notice,
nor do we hear the silence
where forests were.

We are more loud, than listeners.
The drone of rubber on the asphalt highway
turns to a hiss in rain,
a schirr in snow,
so near the city —
even the wooden house rumbles at intervals,
and at night, creaks and sighs
like an old dog turning in its dreams.

But quiet tells us, the birds are going.
Every Spring, a thinner symphony.
Sparser bluejays at the winter feeder.
Fewer kinglets whistling
in the northern birches.

My ears are less sharp with age, but we all seem to be turning up
our music's volume
as though afraid to be drowned out by the arriving silence
predicted so long ago.

A Little Number for Late Fall

Daylight holds its breath
here in Westwood. Comes to a halt.

So quiet this Sunday hour —
no dog barking on the block

except the dog you imagine in too much silence
barking from the house next to yours.

But not here.

How loud the mind can be
humming down its customary rails.

How cluttered with its plans and recollections.
Clickety-clack.

Here, even the grass seems to have paused from growing,
stiff like fingers against the ground's chin,
in a brown study, as they say,
looking back. Looking in.

The mind is the eternal mill
grinding the heart's gravel
to one bland macadam.
But in the topaz wood
each leaf
is shimmying down to its own music
like a tot dancing with abandon
at the world's delight
when no one is watching.

Nothing entirely stands still that is living.
A seethe and press of joy
shifts everything from below.
Magma shifts and resettles its hot coils.
Waters rise and push the sand aside.
Moles heave up the turf
and the plump grubs snooze away winter in their elbows of air
under the roots of the alders.
Makes you want to bring your mind out to play!

Bring your imaginary dog -- do some shimmying yourself.
Even with winter coming on
the bulbs are stretching their toes under the blanket
and the wood is laying its green dress away in the trunk
humming the band's last number.
Imagining the next.



Judith, a farmer in Oyani Village in Western Ghana, was trained to grow high-value food and now applies her knowledge for her dairy animals, which tripled their milk production. She can sell the extra milk and uses the money to pay for school fees for her two daughters and to buy extra food for her family.



On Campus: Caring for Creation in your Buildings and Grounds

This section helps you explore the opportunities on and around your church's campus to increase your community's ability to care for creation, in both large and small ways.

In this section, you will find:

- » *A tool for measuring your campus' carbon footprint*
- » *Benefits of Pollinator Gardens*
- » *Six Steps to a Successful Pollinator Garden in churchyards and at home*

Other ideas and resources include:

- Installing "[Good News Gardens](#)" and/or working with [Plainsong Farm](#)
- Exploring solar power options for your facilities
- Building homes for non-commercial pollinators
- Starting a little "free library" with creation care ideas and resources for your neighborhood businesses and households
- Installing and maintaining a public drinking fountain
- Creating permeable surfaces for parking and walkways
- Planting native trees and plants
- Researching carbon taxes and carbon offsets
- Starting a water garden
- Distributing take-home plans for "[Pizza Gardens](#)"
- Researching ways your building can become [climate resilient](#)
- Connecting with your state's [Interfaith Power & Light](#) affiliate
- Partnering with the National Wildlife Federation to establish your campus as a part of their [Sacred Grounds](#)™ congregational program

Calculating Your Carbon Footprint

A "carbon footprint" is a way to measure how much greenhouse gas (carbon dioxide) an organization, event or product emits.

What is your church's carbon footprint? More importantly, do you know how to use your carbon footprint to improve both the environment and your church's environmental communications?

Knowing your church's carbon footprint is important for several reasons:

- It promotes your church's efforts to become more environmentally sustainable.
- It demonstrates fiscal responsibility because, generally, long-term costs decline when your carbon footprint declines.
- It enhances your church's reputation in the community as a responsible and caring organization.
- It inspires your church members and others in the community to reduce their carbon footprints.

Knowing your church's carbon footprint and ways to reduce it enables your church to determine how much it will cost to reduce energy consumption. If the church is undertaking a capital campaign, for example, this information can be valuable in demonstrating why the church needs money and how the congregation is a good steward of money and the environment.

Switching to low-energy light bulbs and replacing the old church van with a hybrid model will reduce emissions, but your building's heating and cooling systems are by far the largest energy consumers and where you should focus your work. Reducing energy consumption is the best way to shrink your church's carbon footprint. This is hope-filled work that helps us care for God's creation.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

— Romans 8:18-23

Steps to determining—and reducing—your carbon footprint

The carbon footprint of an individual, household or organization is measured as the total amount of green gasses, including carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂e) generated by conscious actions, choices and habits. Measuring these carbon footprints helps you gauge where you are doing well, and where you can make adjustments to reduce the impact of your community on the earth. If you would like to learn about the role carbon offsets play in the work of greenhouse gas reductions, we recommend the [Climate Action Reserve](https://climateactionreserve.org) online at climateactionreserve.org.

The survey provided at the beginning of this Creation Care toolkit might have shown that your community is passionate about reducing their carbon footprint. If so, we recommend that you share this resource with your church Vestry or Council, your Buildings & Grounds Ministry Team and staff, and others on your campus who are able to provide leadership regarding your facilities.

How do you find out how much energy your church building consumes and translate that into your carbon footprint? Here are some options:



In Tanzania, Episcopal Relief & Development partners with The Diocese of Central Tanganyika to teach beekeeping as a sustainable livelihood in drought-prone communities.

1. Calculate how much energy your church building consumes by using information from the U.S. Energy Information Administration and [this table](#). You'll need details on square footage, building age, type of roofing and wall materials and type of heating and cooling systems to calculate energy consumption. The resulting sum is described in kilowatt-hours (kWh).
This number is your church's carbon footprint. Now, you have a starting point for finding ways to reduce that footprint.
2. Use energy-use-calculation software. These calculate energy use based on the systems in your building and provide projections and suggestions for reducing energy use. They are designed for building maintenance professionals, so if you go this route, collaborate with your church facilities team. Online resources like [Energy Star Portfolio Manager](#) or the free [online carbon footprint calculator](#) can help you measure and track your energy consumption. Congregation-specific tools and information are also available on the [Energy Star for Congregations](#) and [Cool Congregations](#).
3. Hire a company to conduct a building energy audit. Search your local Google directory for "building energy audits." This is the most expensive method and shouldn't be undertaken unless church leaders are making a serious commitment to energy reduction via building upgrades. The benefits of hiring a company to conduct the audit are that they also act as consultants during the retrofit process, are required to be pre-certified on the state level and can provide the most comprehensive information available on energy consumption now and after upgrades are made. They also can calculate how long it will take to recover a church's investment in new systems through energy savings, a crucial piece of information when seeking capital-improvement funds.
4. Share your church's carbon footprint process and energy-reduction steps with your church members and the community. Let them know ways that they can reduce energy consumption in their own homes or commercial buildings.

Being able to communicate in specific and accurate terms about energy usage and energy reduction will prepare you to talk with authority about your church's commitment to environmental protection.

The news and images about climate change can be frightening. Exploring opportunities to make a difference in creation care with your congregation can create an environment of hope and perseverance, which is an antidote to that fear. Episcopal Relief & Development has a [helpful resource](#) for individuals and congregations who would benefit from exercises, prayers and conversations to build resilience during uncertain times.

After using the resource for discerning your carbon footprint, we encourage you to consider inviting a local expert to provide a more detailed study, including recommending improvements to gardens, roofs and other means of beautification that make a difference.

Additional means of measuring the environmental impact of your buildings and grounds can be found in the [Eco-Church Survey](#) and the Church of England's [self-guided checklist](#).

Benefits of Pollinator Gardens

Pollinator gardens benefit the entire ecosystem, including humans, wild animals and insects. As a bonus, they attract fanciful creatures to your gardens, help local beekeepers and beautify your grounds. In addition to beautification, adding a pollinator garden to your borders, parking lot medians, water gardens and other hard-to-mow places can provide nice sitting areas around benches, are easy to maintain once established, and are typically less expensive than other flowering gardens. You'll also find that neighbors and parishioners frequently "exchange" native plant starts and seeds, so it's a great way to make connections in your community.

A pollinator garden is designed to attract and support a variety of species, including bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. These plants include annuals, which only live for one season before dying, and perennials, which come back every year. Shrubs and bushes can also act as pollinator plants.

Pollination occurs when an insect, bird, mammal or even wind takes pollen from the male part of a flower to the female part of a flower, fertilizing the plant. The pollination process is necessary for crops that sustain all human and animal life. In fact, living pollinators are responsible for 75% of our food supply.

Insect pollinator populations have experienced a 20 to 40% decline in recent years. We can help reverse that decline by planting pollinator gardens in our homes and on community grounds.

Small but Mighty

Pollinators serve as inspiration for all of us to do what we can to make a difference. Bees are among the tiniest of our animal friends, but around the world they are responsible for a third of the world's food production. Teaching about the global impact of their small acts reminds us that together we can, and must, do the same. The climate crisis simmers against a global backdrop of conflict, high food and energy prices, inflation and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2030, Episcopal Relief & Development aims to equip 30,000 community-based climate resilience change agents and strengthen coping mechanisms of 150,000 households across 300 communities, globally. You can learn more about this strategy and how to support the work [here](#).

Six Steps to a Successful Pollinator Garden

1. Find the Right Spot

You need an area that receives plenty of sunshine. A local nursery or garden expert can offer suggestions for the best mix of sun and shade. You also want to create a timeline for the project so that you're planting during the optimum season.

2. Variety Is Best

Pollinator gardens depend upon blooming plants attracting bees and other pollinators. Make sure to have a variety of plants that will bloom at different times of the year.

3. Prep the Soil

It's always helpful to start by getting your soil tested. (Local extension offices are good places to go for the tests). The results can help you determine if you need to add certain nutrients. If you're planting in a raised garden bed, use soil for flowering plants because it will include some of these important nutrients

4. Water

Plants need water, especially when they're trying to get rooted into the ground. Consider either a rotation of manually watering plants or, if the church can afford it, install an irrigation system.

5. Maintain and Monitor

As with any growing thing, gardens need regular attention. In addition to watering, you'll need to weed regularly (this might be a good time to launch a "Lay Weeder" program. Avoid using pesticides since they can also harm the pollinators.

6. Be Patient and Persistent

Not everyone has a green thumb, but we're convinced that through trial and error, you can cultivate a pollinator garden. Keep trying!



Fellowship: Earth Friendly & Green Gathering

One of Episcopal Relief & Development's goals is to help everyone be prepared, especially in the context of their communities, when climate-influenced and other disasters strike. Building your community's assets is an essential step in preparation, and our [Pastors and Disasters](#) tool kit can help.

Through your continued support of Episcopal Relief & Development, you are supporting communities near and far.

At Episcopal Relief & Development, our climate resilience portfolio spans 15 countries across Central and South America and Sub-Saharan Africa. We prioritize investment in communities that are prone to climate-related disasters, conflict and food insecurity. These conditions tend to be protracted. Thus, we center our work at the nexus of emergency response and long-term resilience.

In this section, you will find celebrations that make a difference and reminders to make good choices around the environmental impact of hospitality, including:

- » *Being Great Neighbors, collaborations to be Eco-Friendly*
- » *Introduce Zero-Waste living*
- » *Eat Pray Walk, fellowship and care together as neighbors*
- » *The 5 R's of Kitchen and Hospitality Creation Care*

Other ideas and resources include:

- Conducting an inventory for water and power usage in the church kitchen
- Connecting with local food sources for compost options
- Sharing meal preparation space with others in the community
- Hosting local artists by displaying creation-themed art in your hallways and other spaces
- Phasing out bottled water
- Sponsoring a "Wine into Water" [event](#) supporting *Gifts for Life*
- Offering other fun events, game nights and fellowship ideas as suggested [here](#) that support Creation Care and Climate Resilience through Episcopal Relief & Development's *Gifts for Life* initiative

Being Great Neighbors

When looking for ways to improve the environment, you don't need to look very far. You can make a widespread difference just by walking through the neighborhood! Small acts like paying attention, making connections, picking up trash or planting a tree go a long way to supporting your community and the health of our planet. And it's a fun way to connect to each other, do Creation Care and share our work over a meal together.

Invite the Neighborhood

Chances are there are people living nearby who also want to make the neighborhood more eco-friendly. Invite them to your Creation Care Team meetings. They can help engage even more people in your neighborhood events.

Episcopal Relief & Development seeks to assist individuals and whole communities to believe in themselves, their knowledge, their abilities, their values and their worth to break through traditional hierarchical perceptions of power and cycles of dependence reinforced by an overemphasis on outside solutions and outside funds. [Learn more](#) about how we do this, and how you can use asset-based community development in your own neighborhood.



Carolina and her family receive fruit trees for their kitchen garden in the Aanglidesh area of Honduras.

Plant a Tree

Or plant lots of trees. Find out from your civic leaders how to get permission to plant in easements and other public areas. Check with your neighbors and see if they would welcome a free tree to their property—they only need to agree to water it for the first two years. Find an area in your neighborhood that would be perfect for some tall, woody plants or one currently succumbing to soil erosion.

Planting new trees is a great way to let nature take hold again and get a group of neighbors working together. Buy the trees in bulk through the Arbor Day Foundation or ask a local nursery for a discount or donation. When your saplings grow larger, they'll help cool your neighborhood, combat climate change, foster living habitats and clean the air.

Start a Neighborhood Vegetable or Pollinator Garden

Plant a neighborhood garden on your church grounds, at a local park or playground or join an existing garden (with permission). Your neighbors will notice you making this gift to them. These green spaces attract kids, pets and families and are the perfect spot to meet your friends and hang out. While you're there, pick up litter and collect pet waste. See tips for planting pollinator gardens earlier in this handbook, and check out the [Good News Gardens](#) for tips on planting a vegetable garden.

Pick Up Litter

If you go on a prayer walk or are just taking a stroll around your church grounds and the nearby neighborhood, carry a small trash bag to pick up waste. Trash that isn't bound for recycling or a landfill often ends up in a stream, which can harm aquatic life.

Get Involved in Your Watershed Group

Do you know which stream or river receives the runoff water from your community and its neighbors? No matter how close or far you live from the nearest stream or river, your actions impact its health. Everything on this earth rests on a watershed—the area of land around a body of water—and affects its quality. Find out which river is yours and discover if there's a watershed group associated with it. These organizations often hold tours and educational events that teach you how to care for your watershed right from your own backyard.

Encourage Recycling

One of the easiest ways to improve the environment is to recycle. A community that produces less trash by using existing items to create new products is a great thing. Next time you're hauling the trash and recyclables to the curb, chat with your neighbor about doing the same. To encourage others who may be less equipped, hand out recycling bags or help them replace broken bins. Go even further and host recycling bins for neighbors on your church and community grounds.

Introduce Zero-Waste Living

Tell your parishioners and neighbors that the average American creates approximately 4.4 lbs of trash per day and that only 9% of plastic actually gets recycled. These stats will likely surprise them and make them curious about how they can reduce their waste. Zero-waste living is a commitment to reducing the amount of trash that ends up in landfills.

Encourage people to start small, where they are, and try to gradually add Creation Care practices as they are able. Here are a few ideas to begin:

1. Encourage your congregation members and neighbors to do a **trash audit**. This will help them realize where their trash is coming from and how they can reduce it.
2. Learn more about zero-waste items like menstrual cups, reusable water bottles or bamboo utensils. These items can be expensive, so consider giving **zero-waste items** to your neighbors and parishioners or to local homeless shelters. You might make zero-waste “goodie bags” and give them away at your next meeting or from your Creation Care Little Free Library.
3. Hold **zero-waste workshops** for your parishioners and neighbors that teach them how to make zero-waste DIYs like toothpaste, deodorant, mouthwash or lip balm. During the holidays, you can even teach how to wrap gifts sustainably without plastic.
4. Host a neighborhood **compost heap** on your church property. Composting is a great way to reduce food scrap waste and lower methane emissions.
5. Organize a **cleanup**. Notice some trash around the neighborhood? Maybe litter and pollution on the local beach? Organize a cleanup and ask a local representative if they’d provide some materials to help you clean it up (like garbage bags, litter picker-uppers and garbage pickup). If your community already hosts those or other events like dumpster days or electronic recycling, be sure to organize your congregation and neighbors to show up and help.
6. Share **zero-waste resources** within your community. Create a list that is accessible through social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Website, etc.) that helps your community easily access local bulk food stores, compost drop-off sites, farmers’ markets, or zero-waste shops they can utilize in the area. Or, you can share zero-waste DIYs, recipes and ideas in a document.

Eat Pray Walk

Episcopal Relief & Development seeks to assist individuals and whole communities to believe in themselves—their knowledge, their abilities, their values, their worth. This approach can help break through traditional hierarchical perceptions of power and cycles of dependence that have been reinforced by an overemphasis on outside solutions and outside funds.

We use Asset-Based Community Development to catalyze change and development based on utilizing the gifts and capacities of people and their communities. The ABCD model discourages development brought in from an outside source but rather energizes change and development from within. For truly sustainable development, it's important to focus on a community's strengths versus solely its needs.

You can join us in this work by revealing the climate strengths in your neighborhood. Also, in partnership with your neighbors, you can begin discernment about what climate-related improvements can be addressed.

The idea of Eat Pray Walk is not about taking a stroll in the neighborhood or prepping for a 5K. It's not just walking around. It's not just praying. It's walking through your neighborhood praying with your eyes and your heart wide open. It's noticing signs of hope and signs of need—and how God calls you to be present to both. Pay extra attention to the environment. Do an assessment. How are the plants? The trees? The animals? How is the soil? Where is the water coming from, and where is it going?

When your walk is complete, then it's time to say your prayers, break bread with others in your community and re-imagine how your Creation Care ministry team could join God and your neighbors in caring for the earth in your own backyard.

Guidelines for Planning and Introducing Your Prayer-Walking

- Plan your route ahead of time. Try to walk on a variety of days and times, not just Sunday morning. What's happening on a Tuesday at 5 p.m.?
- Meet at your community space or church and pray before you leave. Form groups of 2-6 people. Multiple groups can cover different areas. If the group is too large, you're likely to focus on each other instead of the neighborhood.
- If your area is dependent on cars, you can still do a prayer walk. Your route should include common gathering places: shopping centers, groceries, dog parks, town squares, community gardens, your community's 5-block radius and more.
- As you walk, look around with care and pray, either in silence or aloud softly. Use the Prayer Walk Community Observation Guide on the following page as a tool.
- Don't call attention to yourselves. Respect the dignity of community members. Be present as servants, not tourists. As veteran prayer walkers say, "You can be on the scene without making one."
- Although it is not the primary purpose, be open to opportunities to interact with people you encounter. If anyone asks what you are doing, be prepared to respond: "We're the Creation Care Ministry Team from (*church/community/school*) and we are praying and getting to know our neighborhood better."
- Offer to pray if it feels appropriate.

How Should We Pray?

- **Pray for discernment:** Seek the gift of seeing the community through Christ's "lens" and to discern what God is already doing there; ask God to show you how you can pray with greater insight for the people, events and places in the community.
- **Pray for blessings:** Pray for every person, home, school, business and situation you encounter.
- **Pray with empathy:** See and feel what your neighbors live with every day; offer intercession for signs of brokenness and give thanks to God for the blessings and gifts in the community.
- **Pray with gratitude:** Give thanks for the beauty of all living things, including plants, people, water, air and animals.



Abubakari, a teacher in Lamaiti Secondary School, in Tanzania, assists his students in weeding together in their kitchen garden plots.

Concluding the Neighborhood Prayer Walk

Immediately afterward, perhaps over a meal, gather to share your prayers, observations and experiences:

- What did you learn about the neighborhood?
- Where was God's presence especially apparent?
- What surprised you?
- What was hard? What was engaging?
- What ministries and what worship would truly speak here? With whom could you partner and learn?

An important note: the goal for your Creation Care team is not to define problems to be solved—or to come up with all the solutions—but to look for opportunities to partner with neighbors to imagine what is possible with the gifts available. This is not about doing *for*; it's about doing *with*.

Prayer Walk Community Observation Guide

On your walk, look for evidence of the following:

People groups—Who is standing at bus stops, hanging on street corners, going into businesses, playing in parks, waiting in line at the store? How much do people interact with one another?

Places of activity—What are the places with the most activity? Cafés, shopping plazas, heavily trafficked intersections, playgrounds, schools?

Structures—What are the types and conditions of the structures (homes, businesses, roads, parks)? How much “free space” is there in the community? What is the mix of private and public space?

Services—Where do people go to shop, eat, study, worship and receive assistance? What appears to be the quantity and quality of available services? Who provides services, and who is receiving?

Signs of change—Note businesses opening or closing; housing under construction, for sale or being demolished. Look for unusual languages on shop signs and buildings used differently from their original purpose.

Signs of hope—Where do you see evidence of God's grace and God's people at work? Look for other churches and nonprofit organizations, playing children, uplifting artwork, faith symbols, social gatherings and gardens. Look especially for local assets that could be connected with neighborhood needs.

Signs of need—Look for evidence of hardship, hurt or injustice. Is what you see specific to particular areas or affecting the neighborhood as a whole? Be aware that marginalized people and social problems are often hidden, especially in communities that appear well-off.

(This resource was initially adapted by Stephanie Spellers and the Missional Vitality Team in the Diocese of Long Island from resources by Waymakers and then adapted for Episcopal Relief & Development's Creation Care toolkit for parishes, communities and individuals.)

The 5 R's of Kitchen Hospitality

Episcopal Relief & Development works with local community health workers to train residents in safe garbage and waste disposal.

By ensuring the safety and security of land and water sources through integrated sanitation and hygiene and water programs, these locally driven solutions protect land, water and people. [Learn more](#) about these programs and how to support them.

From composting and beeswax wraps to opting for energy-efficient appliances, Creation Care teams have many options to reduce waste and become more sustainable, starting in the kitchen.

Making sure your church kitchen is environmentally friendly—possibly even setting a goal to reach zero waste—is another way we can care for Creation. And while you're doing this in your schools, churches and other faith communities, you can also encourage neighbors and parishioners to do the same in their home kitchens. A great way to begin is by embracing “the 5 R's” of zero-waste in your kitchens:

1. **Refuse:** Be selective about the products you accept in your kitchen. For instance, refuse single-use plastics or excess packaging from suppliers, and opt for reusable alternatives. No more Styrofoam or plastic. Use your community's dishes, glassware and washable linens. If you don't have any, send folks out thrifting for reusable dishes and cutlery. Use paper, cloth, beeswax and other reusable materials to wrap and store food.
2. **Reduce:** Minimize the energy you use in your kitchen by installing energy-efficient appliances. Minimize food waste by reducing portion sizes.
3. **Reuse:** Find creative ways to repurpose items, such as using glass jars for storage or turning food leftovers into new meals.
4. **Recycle:** Set up a comprehensive recycling system for paper, glass and metal, ensuring proper waste separation and disposal. This is especially important at large congregation-wide events, even weddings and funerals.
5. **Rot:** Implement a composting system for organic waste, turning food scraps into valuable fertilizer for your kitchen garden or local farms.



Take Action: Local & Global

It's time to take action. We are compelled by Scripture to care for creation. God desires that we participate in preserving this "fragile earth, our island home."

As part of long-term earthquake recovery efforts, in partnership with International Blue Crescent (IBC), Episcopal Relief & Development has supported the construction of a solar-powered water pump that will provide safe water to over 35,000 people in Soran, Syria. This new development is one of many next steps to create resilience. To read more click [here](#).

"The people of Soran are now more resilient to future disasters, and indeed, future disasters have been averted with the installation of the water tanks and solar-operated pumps." Heather Sonya Üner, Program and Partnerships Manager adds, "This supply of potable water bolsters the community of Soran in terms of health and resilience to future shocks."

In this section, you will find:

- » *50 Easy Ways to Care for Creation (Handout/Bulletin Insert)*
- » *Pick One Thing! A fun activity with options for service, contributions and prayers*

Other ideas and resources for taking action include:

- Episcopal Relief & Development partners with faith and community organizations to advance lasting change in communities affected by injustice, poverty, disaster and climate change. Learn [more](#) about how you can adopt models of lasting change in your community and support our work in Creation Care and Climate Resilience work across the globe.
- The Episcopal Church supports policies that protect the natural resources that sustain all life on earth. Learn about The Episcopal Public Policy Network (EPPN)'s activism around [Creation Care](#), including advocating for policies that mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, promoting sustainable energy and the safe and just use of natural resources and supporting communities impacted by a lack of environmental stewardship.

- Host a wine and cheese and EPPN evening, with an expectation that everyone will draft at least three postcards to elected officials regarding environmental legislation.
- [Check out](#) the variety of engaging and creative ways you can support the ongoing work of Episcopal Relief & Development.
- Promote use and ease of public transit.
- Invite an expert in the field to help your church's endowments and congregation members divest from fossil fuels.
- Invite a local farmer to discuss organic farming, food transportation costs and the environmental impacts of food production on your community.



Coastal Cleaning Project conducted with the support of youth volunteers from the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka.

50 Easy Ways to Care for Creation

1. *Avoid single-use products such as plastic or Styrofoam cups, bottles, cutlery and straws.*
2. *Use reusable bags for shopping. Recycle plastic bags at most grocery stores.*
3. *Refill a reusable water container instead of buying bottled water.*
4. *Ride a bike or walk instead of driving.*
5. *Buy fair trade products that are ethically and sustainably sourced.*
6. *Turn off the car engine if sitting idle for more than 10 seconds.*
7. *Use washable napkins at mealtimes.*
8. *Bring your own coffee mug to the local café. Some even give discounts.*
9. *Take part in a community garden. Save unused water for plants.*
10. *Carpool with a group to an event.*
11. *Buy only what you need. Buy local. Buy ethical. Buy organic.*
12. *Organize a neighborhood cleanup on your street or community party.*
13. *Choose energy-certified appliances and products.*
14. *Go to the library instead of buying books, DVDs and CDs.*
15. *Start a compost bin in your backyard.*
16. *Buy produce/goods with little or no packaging.*
17. *Rent a boat without a motor—a kayak, rowboat or canoe—and get some exercise.*
18. *Reduce junk mail by opting out. Go paperless and subscribe online.*
19. *Pick up litter when you see it.*
20. *Donate unwanted blankets, towels, pillows or stuffed toys to an animal shelter.*
21. *Water your grass at cooler times of the day, such as in the morning or evening.*
22. *Minimize water use when brushing teeth, cleaning and washing dishes.*
23. *Be mindful of animals and their habitats when exploring the outdoors. Do not touch or remove them.*
24. *Ban Styrofoam. It contains a known carcinogen.*
25. *Use plant-based products.*

26. *Plan a volunteer or ecologically focused vacation.*
27. *Buy wood products, cards and paper FSC-certified or responsibly sourced.*
28. *Buy fresh, local, unpackaged food with real ingredients and no chemicals.*
29. *Take unwanted clothing and other items to a donation center.*
30. *Recycle used electronics and video games. ([bestbuy.com/recycle](https://www.bestbuy.com/recycle))*
31. *Have a picnic with reusable plateware and utensils and cloth napkins.*
32. *If you can't recycle it, don't buy it.*
33. *Avoid gas spills, yard chemicals and street runoff that goes to storm drains.*
34. *Donate unwanted furniture to a refugee center or [Habitat.org/restores](https://www.habitat.org/restores)*
35. *Dispose of hazardous cleaning agents, oils and paints at hazardous drop-off or recycling centers*
36. *Repurpose used hand wipes for housecleaning chores.*
37. *Buy from companies with eco-friendly, sustainable and ethical practices.*
38. *Buy free-range eggs or local farm eggs, meat and even milk. Check out local delivery options from local farms.*
39. *Donate unused paint to a school or charity project. Dispose of it properly, not in sinks or drains.*
40. *For Halloween and costume parties, make your own with vintage or borrowed items.*
41. *Supply a recycle bin at your next community event.*
42. *Use natural wrap, reusable fabric or recycled material for wrapping gifts. Avoid metallic decor paper; it is not recyclable.*
43. *Frequent restaurants that offer fresh foods from local farms.*
44. *Try a mixture of vinegar and water with lemon for a fresh, biodegradable cleaning agent.*
45. *Subscribe to [Earth911.com](https://www.earth911.com) for the latest news on recycling.*
46. *Recycle or dispose of batteries properly; they may have toxic contents.*
47. *Buy plates, cups and utensils made from earth-friendly, sustainable or plant-based materials.*
48. *Recycle old appliances, vacuum cleaners, answering machines and more at your electronic retailer.*
49. *Take baths less frequently and shorten your shower time.*
50. *Learn about ecological impacts at [earthday.org/earth-day-quizzes](https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-quizzes)*

Pick One Thing – Introduction

Every day at Episcopal Relief & Development, we see individuals making small changes that build into lasting community wellness. Using [Asset-Based Community Development](#), we teach and learn best practices for inspiring people to be agents of health in their communities.

People often tell us they are overwhelmed by the topic of Creation Care—the problems seem too big for them to really make any difference. This activity provides a way to engage people, giving them hope and the gift of opportunities to get involved as they are able.

Some members have financial resources to help but not much time. Others may have time to give to small projects but aren't sure where to begin. Others may feel inspired to take action by organizing a group of people but need some direction. Many wish to expand their prayer lives to include prayers for our stewardship of the earth, keeping them always mindful of the wonder of creation.

This project is simple. **Invite people to do one thing.** They can choose whether it's big or small, takes time or money. The idea is that everyone can do something. We just have to take that first step.

Choose a Sunday morning to place a display sign (provided on the next page) on a table near a well-traveled entrance. Maybe it's in the narthex. Maybe it's in your coffee hour area. Next to the sign, place three nice-looking, preferably re-purposed, containers with the labels provided here. Print out and cut apart the slips, also provided, and place them in the matching containers. We encourage you to make your own slips as well, relevant to your buildings and grounds and to your community.

Make sure to keep the containers stocked with slips. Perhaps only put them out one Sunday a month or every Sunday during the Season of Creation. Schedule times to have them out, and submit invitations in your communications for participation. Don't leave them out forever, and rotate them in different locations. Novelty gets noticed; sameness fades into the woodwork.



Pick One Thing To Do This Week



PRAY



**TAKE
ACTION**



DONATE

1. Select a container
2. Draw one slip of paper
3. Follow the instructions

(as well and as often as you are able)

**Small acts add up to big changes –
for you and for our community.**

- » *The previous page is the suggested table sign, made to accompany your containers of action item slips. Feel free to modify it, or create your own, according to your own need.*
- » *This page has labels you may enlarge or reduce to fit your containers. The following pages are to be printed and cut apart. Some may be as thin as the slips of paper found in fortune cookies. Others, especially the prayers, will be cut into thicker strips.*



PRAY



TAKE ACTION



DONATE



Pray

Cut these apart and add them to your **Prayer Container**. Be sure to replenish them as needed. Check with your regional Creation Care teams for prayers you might borrow from Earth Day services and add them to your slips. Ask your youth group, Vestry, children and other teams to write prayers for the earth and include them with these slips.

These prayers were collected from a variety of sources, including the Book of Common Prayer and the Season of Creation liturgies authorized for use across much of The Episcopal Church.

.....

O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and remembering the account that we must give one day, grant that we may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

.....

Gracious God, the air sings with songs of glory, water flashes silver with creation, and the forests bloom with leaves for healing nations. May your light and love fill our hearts and souls and minds, that we may share your abundant grace with the world. *Amen.*

.....

Bountiful God, you call us to labor with you in tending the earth: Where we lack love, open our hearts to the world; where we waste, give us discipline to conserve; where we neglect, awaken our minds and wills to insight and care. May we with all your creatures honor and serve you in all things for you live and reign with Christ, Redeemer of all, and with your Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

.....

Creating God, your name is written on every leaf, every bird, every river, every stone, every living being. We praise and worship you for the magnificence of your creation. Make us attentive to the wounds of the earth and willing to work for the healing of the whole creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. *Amen.*

.....

Great Spirit God, we give you thanks for another day on this earth. We give you thanks for this day to enjoy the compassionate goodness of you, our Creator. We acknowledge with one mind our respect and gratefulness to all the sacred cycle of life. Bind us together in the circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and one another. *Amen.* (Collect from Ojibwe Evening Prayer)

.....

Loving God, Creator of all, we thank you for the beauty of Creation; show us, we pray, how to respect the fragile balance of life. Guide by your wisdom those who have power to care for or to destroy the environment, that by the decisions we make, life may be cherished and a good and fruitful earth be preserved for future generations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

.....

Gracious God: Grant that your people may have in them the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, and guide us into harmony of relationship through loving-kindness and the wise use of all that you have given; for you are drawing all things into communion with you and with each other by the power of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

.....

Blessed God, fountain of life: Grant that we may see all water as holy, and so protect and preserve the waters of the earth and the life they sustain. In the name of Christ, the living water, we pray. *Amen.*

.....

Creator God, you call us into being. Inspire us with your extravagant generosity, and sustain us with hope in resurrection life. All this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. *Amen.*

.....

Gracious One, reaching our need overcoming our alienation: give us a spirit of gratitude for the abundance of the earth, the wildness of its creatures, the global threads that bind friend and foreigner; may our thanks be the soil in which a dream of justice grows; through Jesus Christ, the Lord of the harvest. *Amen.*

.....

God of evolving diversity, made known in seed and soil, and the wonder of animal worlds: free our hearts from the anxiety which knows only domination; open our being to learn from the life with which we share this earth; through Jesus Christ, the Lord of the harvest. *Amen.*

.....

God, whose word is ingrained in all we eat and drink; free us from the consumption that destroys the roots of life; teach us to eat the living bread in whom all hungers are satisfied by the life that gives of itself and is never consumed; through Jesus Christ, the Lord of the harvest. *Amen.*

.....

God, maker of marvels, you weave the planet and all its creatures together in kinship; your unifying love is revealed in the interdependence of relationships in the complex world that you have made. Save us from the illusion that humankind is separate and alone, and join us in communion with all inhabitants of the universe; through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who topples the dividing walls by the power of your Holy Spirit, and who lives and reigns with you, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

.....

Bountiful God, you call us to labor with you in tending the earth: Where we lack love, open our hearts to the world; where we waste, give us discipline to conserve; where we neglect, awaken our minds and wills to insight and care. May we with all your creatures honor and serve you in all things, for you live and reign with Christ, Redeemer of all, and with your Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

.....

We give you thanks, most gracious God, for the beauty of earth and 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.*

.....

Loving God, who hears every voice, knows each cry of injustice, and is attentive to the suffering of the earth: teach us to listen. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may listen to the world you have created and not close ourselves off from it. Reveal to us the ways in which we have failed to hear your voice in how we treat the earth. God, who listens to every living thing, Help us listen as you do. *Amen.*



Take Action

Cut these apart and add to your take **Action Container**. Be sure to replenish them as needed. Check with your regional Creation Care teams for other ideas, and research local environmental agencies and add ways to partner with them to this list. If you have a green team, be sure to add “Join Our Green Team!” on several slips.

.....

Use cold water for laundry

.....

Hang laundry on a clothesline

.....

Use cloth napkins instead of paper

.....

Replace vinyl shower curtains with PVC-free, plastic, cloth or bamboo

.....

Use energy-efficient light bulbs

.....

Make sure your home is properly sealed and insulated

.....

Cut dryer sheets in half; replace with vegetable-derived ones or “dryer buddies”

.....

Clean your clothes dryer filter before every load to reduce dry time

.....

Get rechargeable batteries, and learn how to dispose of old batteries properly

.....

Water your plants in the morning or at night to minimize evaporation

.....

Avoid rinsing dishes before putting them in the dishwasher

.....

When it's not in use, keep your fireplace closed

.....

Use reusable shopping bags; take plastic bags to recycling drop-off locations

.....

Start a compost heap, or consider using/hosting a community compost heap

.....

Cut down on paper junk mail by contacting agencies and opting out

.....

Replace lighters with paper matches

.....

Choose cotton swabs with a paper stick instead of plastic

.....

Recycle your Christmas tree

.....

Wrap gifts with salvaged gift wrap, fabric, newspaper and other reusable materials

.....

Keep pollution-fighting plants in your home and office

.....

Try metal razors for shaving instead of plastic

.....

Borrow books at your local library, instead of buying them,
and buy or borrow used books and textbooks

.....

Donate leftover paint to community projects like Habitat for Humanity

.....

Choose biodegradable wipes; halve them for smaller jobs

.....

Commit to having at least one vegetarian day a week

.....

Replace plastic straws with a metal or glass; take them when you go out

.....

Buy and carry with you a reusable takeout container for restaurant leftovers

.....

Find a coffee shop that allows you to bring your own mug

.....

Save paper towels by turning clothing into kitchen rags

.....

Ask for and buy local produce

.....

Avoid harmful chemicals in microwave popcorn; pop it on the stove instead

.....

Plant pollinator-friendly flowers in your yard or in containers

.....
Buy shade-grown, organic, fair trade, and equal exchange coffee
.....

Turn your computer off overnight
.....

Recycle old cell phones and appliances properly
.....

Keep your vehicle's tires properly inflated
.....

Use a commercial car wash, which is more water-efficient and channels their runoff water appropriately
.....

Minimize the weight of your vehicle by keeping your trunk clutter-free
.....

Use auto power-down features on game consoles and other appliances
.....

Switch to the standard picture mode on your TV to save energy
.....

Avoid idling your vehicle
.....

Figure out how to use public transport to work, school or to the store
.....

Offer to help remove invasive species from a local park or green space



Donate

Here are suggestions to cut-apart into slips and put in your **Donate Container**.

Numerous agencies do very good work in the areas of creation care and climate resilience. If your Green Team is doing a fundraiser, add slips directing donors to them. If you have a local community garden, compost or recycling project in need of funds, add them as well.

We have listed the top agencies recommended by The Episcopal Church that target Climate Resilience, Climate Disaster Response, the Care of Creation and education initiatives. This is a relatively small list, so you will need to make multiple sheets from this page. You might wish to also direct people to the [Episcopal Public Policy Network](#), which is engaged in lobbying for legislation improving our care of the earth.

.....

Weddings – Birthdays – Anniversaries – Honorariums: Consider giving gifts from the Episcopal Relief & Development’s [Gifts for Life](#) catalog. Water, bees, literacy, transportation, livestock and much more.
<https://support.episcopalrelief.org/gifts/catalog>

.....

Donate to Episcopal Relief & Development’s [Climate Resilience](#) initiatives. Episcopal Relief & Development works with local faith- and community-based partners in remote communities around the world to provide the skills training, information and access to finance households need to cope with and adapt to rising climate risks and uncertainty.
<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-we-do/priorities/climate-resilience/>

.....

Donate to Interfaith Power & Light, which partners with Episcopal churches to support [environmental](#) stewardship and climate action.
<https://interfaithpowerandlight.org/>

.....

Donate to Episcopal Camps & Conference Centers, which provides outdoor experiences for all ages, teaching about [stewardship](#) of nature and care of the earth in diverse settings.
<https://www.episcopalccc.org/>



Fun & Fundraising with Episcopal Relief & Development

*But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?
In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being.*

— Job 12:7-10

You are invited to join us in Making Lasting Change

Thanks to leaders like you and faith communities across the church, awareness about creation care and climate issues continues to grow. With your financial support, we can expand our capacity to make lasting changes in how we help communities build resilience in the face of climate change.

OUR FOUR KEY FOCUS AREAS ARE:

- Strengthening rural livelihoods.
- Promoting tree planting and land management practices.
- Developing [disaster response](#) strategies, offering the [Pastors and Disasters Toolkit](#) and [The Resilience Course](#) as resources to communities.
- Creating economic stability through Savings with Education (SWE) programs, financial management training to help people start and expand small businesses, and build partnerships that offer loans and insurance products, thus enabling households to pay for necessities and invest in their livelihoods.

In this section you will find:

- » *How to Plan a Campaign – A flexible play-by-play plan.*
- » *Helpful Tips that contribute to a successful campaign.*
- » *Creative ways to build community and raise money using our Gifts for Life program.*

Other ideas and resources for taking action include:

[How to Hold an Alternative Gift Market](#) – a creative way to engage all ages in fighting disease and extreme poverty.

[Virtual Ideas for Engaging Community](#) - An excellent opportunity to engage your community in the work of Episcopal Relief & Development.



Kelly is from the El Abra community in Nicaragua. In her family garden, she successfully uses organic fertilizer to help her crops.

How to Plan a Campaign

Here are some simple steps to get you started on a successful fundraising campaign for Episcopal Relief & Development.

STEP 1: Assess Interest and Capacity in a Campaign

- Begin conversations about a fundraising campaign.
- Discover if there is energy and excitement for Episcopal Relief & Development's work with Creation Care and Climate Resilience.
- Talk to members of your congregation, your rector and your deacons.

STEP 2: Develop and Discuss a Plan

- Goal: Will there be a total fundraising goal?
- Timing: Set the duration for one day or one month.
- Launch: Discuss when to launch and announce the campaign to your community.

STEP 3: Pre-Launch Preparation or Campaign Planning

- Prepare for the launch.
- Ensure the Rector will add announcement into their remarks.
- Determine who will speak for the group.
- Develop a presentation on your effort.
- Utilize the resources and toolkits on our [website](#) to generate ideas for your campaign.

STEP 4: Announce the Campaign

- Present an overview of Episcopal Relief & Development, the fundraising goal (if you have one), your proposed timeline and how members can get involved.
- Ask the church leadership to reinforce this message as well.
- Organize a Campaign booth to provide resources to members and collect donations.

Step 5: Send Updates on Campaign

- Keep members informed on campaign progress to maintain your momentum!
- Use weekly announcement times to share your progress.
- Schedule emails or website updates for your community.
- Share stories and photos of your efforts on the website or weekly e-blasts.

Step 6: Celebrate Success!

- Announce the completion of campaign, recognize leadership and thank everyone!
- Publish an article in your community newsletter.
- Be sure to inform us of your activities, so that we can share and celebrate your success with you!

Helpful Tips

Your Role

- Be sure to partner with your Episcopal Relief & Development Diocesan Ministry Partner. We can help you locate yours, or one from your Province. Email us at engagement@episcopalrelief.org
- Spread the word with your local Bishop, clergy and church leadership to raise awareness about the Episcopal Relief & Development fundraising campaign.
- Share stories about benefits from the campaign realized by your communities.
- Be a resource for information and material – see the [website](#) for toolkits and additional resources.
- Your successes, large and small, can build awareness and encourage creative and exciting fundraisers that engage and inspire your diocese, parish and community.

Examples of Awareness-Building

- Share stories about how Episcopal Relief & Development's programs help women, children and climate resilience.
- Offer prayers in support of the work of Episcopal Relief & Development.
- Invite a speaker from Episcopal Relief & Development to join an adult forum or other meeting to speak about our work.

Examples of Fundraising

- Organize bake sales, movie nights, Super Bowl parties and other activities to support the campaign -- your imagination is the limit!
- Share the donation link via email and social media to suggest donations for birthdays and other occasions "in lieu of gifts."
- Create Crowdfunding or Peer-to-Peer online fundraising pages around events like Walk-a-thons, Fun Runs, Read-a-thons, etc.

For More Information

- Explore our [Faith Formation resources](#).
- Print resources, including brochures and donation envelopes can be ordered through Forward Movement. The resources are free at www.forwardmovement.org.

Be sure to share your stories with Episcopal Relief & Development. We will be highlighting the work of communities across the country. You can send updates to engagement@episcopalrelief.org.

Questions? Send an email to: engagement@episcopalrelief.org

Get Creative with *Gifts for Life*

Here are some fun ideas for fellowship, and other ways your community can support our [Gifts for Life](#) program:

- Organize a read-a-thon, dance-a-thon or walk-a-thon. Collect pledges from family friends for each mile or hour of your activity.
- Organize a weekend car wash and use the proceeds to purchase *Gifts for Life*.
- Arrange a silent auction for your church and community members. Ask members of your congregation to donate items that can be put up for bidding.
- Have your adult or children's Sunday school class host and make an inexpensive dinner with an admission charge. Decide together what *Gifts for Life* selections to purchase with the proceeds.
- Encourage your children to write letters to family members, friends, classmates and club or team members to raise money to purchase a special gift. Have them mention that the gift will make a difference for children in need.
- Sponsor a church or neighborhood garage sale. Gather gently used books, crafts, clothes and household goods to sell, and use the money you raise to purchase items from the *Gifts for Life* catalog.
- Hold a wine-tasting event and use the proceeds to purchase clean water or other basic needs for a family or community. Please [click here](#) to learn how St. Paul's Episcopal, Franklin, TN, hosted a "Wedding at Cana" event.
- Instead of going out to dinner with friends, hold a potluck and put the money saved into a basket. Then go through the *Gifts for Life* catalog as a group and choose items based on the amount collected.
- Hold a Game Night and ask people to make a donation in order to participate. The group can then decide together what gifts to purchase with the collected funds.
- "Get the Warden's Goat": Raise enough money to buy a goat in honor of your church's warden. In the same way, you can "get the priest's goat," the treasurer's, the auditor's or whoever you choose.
- Instead of holding a regular family, office or group gift exchange, pool the funds that would have been spent and choose *Gifts for Life* as a group, or give gifts to everyone based on their various interests. For example:
 - * For your child's teacher: [Nurture & Nourish the Earliest Learners](#) or [Educate Children Orphaned by AIDS](#)
 - * For new parents or grandparents: [Care for Moms & Newborns](#)
 - * For an avid gardener: [Seeds, Tools & Training, Fruit Trees](#) or a [Community Garden](#)
 - * For a farmer: a [Cow](#), [Pig](#) or [Flock of Chickens](#)

- * For someone in health care: [Vitamins and Medicine](#), [Health Clinics](#) or [Training of Community Health Workers](#)
- * In honor of a baptism: [Clean Water](#)
- * For campers: [Mosquito Nets!](#)
- * For a banker, accountant or church treasurer: [Micro-credit Loans for Women](#)

Portions contributed by Barb Hagen, former Ministry Partner of the Diocese of Montana. Find out how you can become a Ministry Partner by emailing us at engagement@episcopalrelief.org.



Daniela, a dairy farmer in Yuscarán, Honduras, is part of a saving group in her community. Daniela shares that she can get two liters of milk from her cows, which is essential to feeding her baby and caring for her family. "This savings group has been very supportive of me. When I needed it the most, they approved a loan to buy food for my animals, and with that, I feel more confident that they are well-fed and will continue to give me the milk we need."



Thank you for using this Creation Care toolkit.

We hope that it has made a difference in how your community sees themselves as stewards of creation, through prayer, partnership and action.

Please visit our website for additional toolkits from Episcopal Relief & Development that will guide your community to join us in making lasting change around our other priorities:

- Women & Girls
- Early Childhood Development
- Disaster Response

For over 80 years, Episcopal Relief & Development has worked with an extensive network of faith and community partners to advance lasting change in communities affected by injustice, poverty, disaster and climate change. Inspired by our faith, we reach over three million people each year by focusing on four interconnected priorities: nurturing the potential of caregivers and young children, reducing violence against women and girls, strengthening communities' resilience to climate change and facilitating humanitarian response to disasters. Together with our partners, we leverage what's working well to drive impact, learning and sustainability. Together, we create lasting change.

www.episcopalrelief.org