



What can we do as a Congregation?

Opening Prayer

Creator of all, we come to you today deeply grateful for your creation.

As we look around us we are amazed at the greatness and majesty of all that you have made.

Creation speaks of your greatness - the vast expanse of the sky, the mountains, trees, lakes and streams speak of your great design.

You have given us such beauty in the colors of the rainbow, the beauty of flowers and fields.

Words cannot adequately express the magnificence of all you have created.

We join in praise with the writer of the psalms when he says, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth."

May we show our love and reverence to you, our God, by caring for all that you have created.

We humbly give you praise and thanks. Amen.

<http://www.allcreation.org/home/christian-prayers>

Bible Study

Matthew 25: 14- 30 (Parable of the 'talents')

This is a very familiar passage for most of us – how has your understanding of it changed (if at all) as you have grown in your spiritual life?

Some of Jesus' parables begin by saying "The kin(g)dom of God is like. . . (e.g. bridesmaids, workers in the vineyard, etc.) Other parables do not reference God's kin(g)dom (e.g. unjust steward, unjust judge.) The Talents does **not** say that the kingdom is like this. So is it be read as a story about God's ways, or as a description of the world's ways, in the form of one ruthless master?

What talents or "assets" does your congregation have that God has given you to use? (think of buildings, land, locality and local community, abilities, special interests, people...) Make a list that everyone in the group can see.

Some say the message of this parable is, "Don't sit on your assets, church! Use them for Christ's work!" Are any of these assets over-used or under-used in your ministry and mission?

Slide Presentation <https://youtu.be/KPMPhs8BOrc>

This is in four sections with discussion questions after the first three.

Liturgical

- ⇒ What is your congregation doing to consciously include Creation care in your liturgy?
- ⇒ Do you celebrate Earth Sunday or the Season of Creation?
- ⇒ When do you include Creation in the Prayers of the People?
- ⇒ What else would you like to do?

Educational

- ⇒ What educational activities about creation care and climate change have you attended?
- ⇒ What have you particularly enjoyed?
- ⇒ What has your congregation offered?
- ⇒ What might you consider doing?
- ⇒ What would your friends enjoy – what would be fun?

Practical Stewardship

- ⇒ When you hear the word “stewardship” what does it mean to you?
- ⇒ Does it make sense to say that stewardship of creation is at the heart of our calling as Christians?
- ⇒ How might a greater awareness of the stewardship of Creation affect your congregation?

Local Action - this will be covered in Session 5

Group Conversation

Looking at the list of congregational assets that you identified in the Bible Study, how might those be used to enhance your practice of Creation Care? Try to be very specific

Possible Activity (in small groups)

Group 1: identify prayers in the Book of Common Prayer that relate to Creation Care – what are the main themes? Is there a prayer you would want to add?

(Collects for Various Occasions p251ff, Prayers and Thanksgivings p814ff).

Group 2: Which of the eucharistic prayers in the Book of Common Prayer most highlights creation? Do any of them ignore it completely?

Closing Prayer

Holy God, earth and air and water are your creation, and every living thing belongs to you:
have mercy on us as climate change confronts us.

Give us the will and the courage to simplify the way we live, to reduce the energy we use,
to share the resources you provide, and to bear the cost of change.

Forgive our past mistakes and send us your Spirit,
with wisdom in present controversies and vision for the future to which you call us
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Resources

You Don't Have to Make it All Up. There are many organizations who provide Guides and Resources

Remember that others have been here before and may help us with some of the groundwork.

The Episcopal Church has goals and a vision for Care of Creation. Learn more about them at www.episcopalchurch.org/creation.

The Unitarian Universalist Association has developed for over thirty years their certification of Green Sanctuaries, which some consider the gold standard of guidelines for greening faith communities. Check it out at <https://www.uua.org/environment/green-sanctuary>

The United Church has its CreationJusticeChallenge, with three stages to becoming recognized as a green congregation. A one-page summary of action steps is in your study guide, and will be referred to in the "active stewardship" section below. www.ctucc.org/greenchurch.

American Baptists have workshops and trainings with their Creation Justice Network, offering a three-stage plan for greening congregations, United Methodists offer Global Ministries Earthkeeping trainings and webinars. Many other religious bodies offer resources for greening our churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples

Interfaith Power and Light for twenty years has been mobilizing faith communities for climate action. IPL has branches in most states and nations but the Diocese of California was its birthplace and its founder is Canon Sally Bingham. Among its many programs are CoolCongregations.org, CoolHarvest.org, and CO2Covenant.org. Find IPL resources at Interfaithpowerandlight.org.

Liturgy

[Episcopal Liturgical Resources for Honoring God in Creation](#): Explore a host of liturgical resources for honoring God's creation, from the Episcopal Church's Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music. [En Español aquí](#).

"A Time for Creation: Liturgical Resources for Creation and the Environment," Church Publishing (UK) a collection of prayers, readings and other liturgical resources intended to deepen awareness so that we take greater responsibility for our actions, repent of our misuse of natural resources and amend our ways.

Seasonofcreation.org has many resources both for action and for liturgy, particularly focused on the September Season of Creation

Study

[A Life of Grace for the Whole World: A Study Course on the House of Bishops' Pastoral Teaching on the Environment](#) by Jerry Cappel and Stephanie M. Johnson, 2017 (Youth and Adult separate versions with leaders' guide)

This five-session study guide unpacks key teachings from the 2011 *Pastoral Teaching from the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church* issued in Quito, Ecuador. The sessions offer "connections between the reconciling work of God in the church and the reconciling work of God in all creation." With the addition of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, reading and reflecting on the Bishops' words will inspire conversation and meaningful action in deepening

our care for creation.

Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth Ilia Delio, Keith Douglass Warner, Pamela Wood, , Cincinnati, Ohio, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007

The authors combine good science with solid theology and practical applications, displaying the genius of the Franciscan tradition in lively dialogue with today's environmental crisis...a profound theology of our medieval Catholic heritage that can help put 'our Sister Mother Earth' at the forefront of religious concern in the 21st century. An excellent tool for parishes, schools, and study groups.

Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change, Jim Antal is a good next step for those wanting to understand more fully the way that our faith intersecting with the climate crisis leads to action. There is a study guide available here: <https://www.stbenslososos.org/climate-church-climate-world-a-study-guide/>

Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home, Pope Francis Encyclical Letter, Catholic Church, 2015

Laudato si' (Praise Be to You) is the second encyclical of Pope Francis. In it, he critiques consumerism and irresponsible development, laments environmental degradation and global warming, and calls all people of the world to take "swift and unified global action." Francis says that instead of viewing humanity as having "dominion" over the earth, we must see that everything is interconnected and that all of creation is a "kind of universal family". There are several study guides available.