

Stewards of the Bay:



*A Toolkit for Congregations in
the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*

Churches for the Chesapeake—Water Action Toolkit
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES USA
ECO-JUSTICE PROGRAM

Stewards of the Bay:

A Toolkit for Congregations in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Writers: Joanna Butcher and Cassandra Carmichael

Reviewers/Contributors: Bill Breakey, Charlie Conklin, John Hill, Corinne Irwin, Beth Norcross, and Rev. Arthur H. Underwood

Editors: Cassandra Carmichael and Kimberley Marchant

Design: Libby Kleine

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National Council of Churches USA

110 Maryland Avenue, NE, Suite 108

Washington, DC 20002

(202) 544-2350

www.nccecojustice.org

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Introduction

The purpose of this “*Stewards of the Bay*” guide is to provide Christian communities living in the Chesapeake Bay region with a simple manual that suggests ways to contribute to the protection of the Bay.

The everyday choices we make—whether in our homes, at our places of work, or within our churches—have a profound influence on the health of the natural communities in which we live. In this guide we provide tips and resources to enable your congregation to discuss what wise choices and positive actions you can make to help restore the Bay for this generation and those to come.

As you learn more, we hope that you’ll feel empowered to take simple actions that make meaningful changes for God’s creation.

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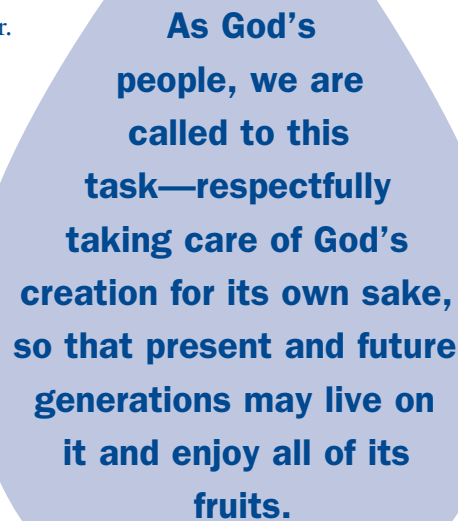
Why Churches Care About the Bay: Theological and Ethical Foundations

God's creation is wonderfully complex, interdependent, and beautiful. The gifts of creation and the responsibility of its stewardship were given to all of humanity so that each would have access to its bounties. As God's people, we are called to this task—respectfully taking care of God's creation for its own sake, so that present and future generations may live on it and enjoy all of its fruits.

Those wondrous pictures of the earth from outer space offer a particularly good place to start to understand the importance of God's gift of water. What strikes one in looking at those pictures is not the land masses, but the abundance of water. From outer space, one can see clearly that earth is a "blue planet" – a water planet.

Throughout both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, water plays a significant role in helping us understand the nature of God, God's purposes in the world and our relationship with God. One need only think of the crossing of the Red Sea, Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River, the woman at the well, and Jesus describing himself as living water. In fact, the Bible includes over 500 references to the word "water" and countless more on water-related subjects, like rivers, rain, seas, floods and storms. Many of the main water themes that run through the Bible include creation, sustenance, purification and transformation and begin to tell us about God and the relationship God would like us to have with the waters God created.

The best place to begin to appreciate the importance of water is with the creation stories themselves. To understand the stories, it is important to remember that the ancient writers did not have a concept of infinite space as we do. And, the writer had to accommodate his/her experience of water coming from the sky in the form of rain, being on the surface of the land in the form of seas and rivers, and available from under the ground from wells.



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In the first chapter of Genesis, God first separates the waters into those from above and those from below by forming a solid dome called the sky. Then, God creates the earth out of the waters. Only after the water is in place does God put vegetation, animals and other creatures on the earth. Genesis 1:20 teaches that creation literally comes out of the waters. From the beginning, all of creation is dependent on the gift of water. This ancient narrative is uncannily similar to modern understanding. Science confirms that life as we know it first arose in the water, and it goes without saying that without water, life on earth can not be sustained.

For five days, God creates and creates. After each challenging day of creation, God stops and acknowledges that it is indeed "good." This declaration reminds us that even before humans were created, God loved and valued creation for its own sake. Regardless of how small the creature, God recognized its value before even before humankind.



Why Churches Care About the Bay

And we know from our own experience that, indeed the creation is good. We all enjoy a blue sky and the green buds of spring. We love the feel of cool water on our skin on a hot summer day, the glowing colors of fall and the gleam of sunshine on snow in winter. We are sometimes almost overcome at the myriad stars shining on a clear night, and love to see the full moon lighting up the nighttime world with its pearly glow. We marvel at the mysteries of migrating birds and butterflies and fish—such as the shad who return to Chesapeake streams each spring. We are enchanted by the attentiveness of a mother bird to her chicks and charmed by the beauty of wildflowers in the spring. We are often left speechless by the splendor of a sunset, or the fury of a thunderstorm, or the power of falling water. We enjoy the fruits of summer and the harvest in the fall, the fresh fish, crabs and oysters that are pulled from our waters. Yes, the Earth—and the whole universe—is good. God made it that way.

On the sixth day, God creates both men and women in God's own image and gives humans "dominion" over the earth (Genesis 1:27-28). The combination of having been created in God's image as well as being given dominion over the earth has often been misinterpreted as giving humanity absolute right to use and exploit creation for its own purposes. What the Scripture actually says is that the earth and its

waters belong to God and God alone. In the ancient Near Eastern world the word "image" was understood as one's representative and often used for a king standing in for, or representing, a god. The human role, therefore, is to stand in for the Creator, to represent God's creative purposes in the world, not humanity's. As images of God, we are called to love, value, and sustain the waters of the world just as God does.

The word "dominion" is understood in the same vein. Dominion is not domination. Dominion is exercised in recognition of God's sovereignty over earth. We are given the privilege of joining God in the care-taking of the waters. If we are looking at a model of how to establish leadership in creation, we need look no further than Jesus who taught us to lead by being servants.

In the creation story, on the seventh day God "rested." A special kind of rest; the Hebrews called it "menuha." In this "menuha," God enjoyed all that had been created, and God continues to invite humans to enter into this deep enjoyment. To fulfill our ministry, it is important to take time apart, time for "Sabbath rest."

**Explore more water theology by conducting an adult education or Sunday school class.
See the curriculum located in this Toolkit for suggestions.**



Water: A Source of Life

At 4,480 square miles, the Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the U.S, and supports the livelihoods of thousands in the maritime industry from fishermen and packing house employees to recreational enthusiasts. For generations, the people living in the six state region have come to depend on the Bay and its riches to provide them economic opportunities, such as the commercial fishing of seafood.

FRESHWATER: SCARCITY AND JUSTICE

Freshwater is one of God's most precious gifts and is vital as the life support of the planet, its ecosystems, and its inhabitants. While so important in sustaining life, less than one percent of the world's freshwater is available for human use, whether for agriculture, drinking and household use, transportation or energy production. Freshwater is in high demand and the competition is ever increasing as overuse and water quality issues continually threaten existing supplies.

Freshwater ecosystems come in many forms and include all inland bodies of water, including—among others—lakes, rivers, and wetlands. These ecosystems, also known as watersheds or catchments, are globally threatened by unsustainable land use and water management.

These fragile freshwater ecosystems, which make up the larger Chesapeake Bay watershed, face a broad range of threats. These include the direct impacts of dams, overfishing, pollution, stream channelization, water withdrawals and diversions, as well as the indirect consequences of terrestrial activities such as logging, agriculture, industry, infrastructure development, and mining.

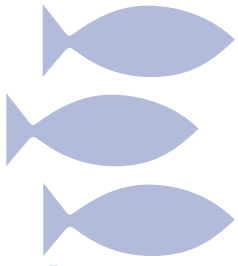
USE AND POLLUTION

Together, agriculture and industrial practices claim the highest rates of use of freshwater resources. As industrial and agricultural use has increased, as well as residential development, so has pollution. Excessive uses of pesticides and fertilizers have a negative effect on water stores, and ultimately on both human and ecosystem health. For example, excessive use of fertilizers contributes to excess nitrate production in water systems, which has been shown to cause infant brain damage and, in some cases, death. In the United States, more than 40 million people take their drinking water from systems that exceed health-based standards. Even the Chesapeake Bay, for instance, is on the Environmental Protection Agency's "dirty waters" list. Now facing a range of threats—from pollution to shellfish disease—many sections of the Bay are unsafe for fishing.

UNSUSTAINABLE USE

Groundwater resources are used by about one-third of the world's people. Excessive withdrawals—extraction of groundwater at a rate greater than can be naturally recharged—are occurring across nearly every continent. This unsustainable use of groundwater also increases the risk of secondary effects such as land subsidence and saltwater intrusion. Increased and expansive urbanization, in addition to overuse, threatens groundwater recharge rates. In the Chesapeake Bay region the population is expected to grow by 43 percent between 1990 and 2020, putting enormous pressure on its groundwater resources.

Good water management plays a vital role in realizing the abundance of the Earth's freshwater supply. Communities, in both the developed and developing world, must take seriously the need to use and protect this life giving and sustaining resource for today's inhabitants and future generations.



Creation in the Chesapeake

The Chesapeake Bay, beloved by all who live on its shores, is the conjoined estuary of several major rivers, about 150 smaller rivers, and the countless tributaries that feed them. The Susquehanna, the Potomac, the York, and the James are the largest rivers that flow into the bay. They drain freshwater from an area—its watershed, more than 64,000 square miles of land—east of the Appalachian Mountains that extends from central New York to central Virginia and includes parts of six states: Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia and all of the District of Columbia. A vast volume of freshwater flows into the Bay and mixes with saltwater from the Atlantic Ocean. From the tidal areas on all rivers to the southern mouth of the Bay, there is a gradient of salinity, which fluctuates across the seasons.

The Bay was formed when, following the last ice age, sea level rose, “drowning” the valley of what we now call the Susquehanna River. This ancient channel of the river remains at the bottom of the bay—a deep channel that permits ocean-going vessels to travel north and south. On either side are wide stretches of shallow water on what were the banks of the ancient waterway.

Its shoreline is enormously convoluted and indented with numerous creeks, bays, rivers, and inlets that provide shallow water and sheltered habitat for the Bay’s rich, though threatened, diversity of wildlife.

These three factors—the salinity gradient, the indented shoreline, and the wide stretches of shallow water—are what give the Chesapeake its extraordinary qualities, and expansive diversity of habitat. Sadly, however, pollution is over-

coming these qualities and today the Bay is not in good health. Its beautifully complicated web of life requires a delicate balance of oxygen, nutrients (notably nitrogen and phosphorus), plants, animals, bottom feeders, and predators. This balance has been upset because of industrialization, urbanization, and population growth across the watershed. Large expanses of forest were cleared to make way for agricultural land. And intensive agricultural practices—while successful in providing inexpensive food—have also contributed to the pollution of the rivers that, in turn, feed the Bay. In recent years, as the population of the region continues to boom, forest and agricultural land give way to urban and suburban development.

CHESAPEAKE BAY FACTS

Area	4480 sq. miles
North-South Length	200 miles
Width at widest point	35 miles
Shoreline	11,600 miles
Average depth	21 feet
Area where depth is less than 6 feet	700,000 acres
Volume of water	18 trillion gallons
Average volume of water from Susquehanna River	19 million gal./min.



Creation in the Chesapeake

Two main problems wreak havoc below the surface of the Bay: shellfish disease and excessive nutrient flow. In the first half of the 20th century, two to four million bushels of oysters were harvested each year (15 million bushels in 1884). Since the introduction of non-native oysters in the 1950s, which brought viral disease, oyster populations are in steady decline and reached a low of only 25,000 harvested bushels in 2003. This loss of oysters has not only hurt the seafood industry, but also reduced the filtration of algae from Bay waters, a natural ecological function the shellfish provide. Without this free ecosystem service, the algae reduce water clarity and coat the leaves of subaquatic vegetation, screening out the light they need for photosynthesis and oxygenation. When extensive beds of vegetation are lost, fish, crabs, and other marine organisms lose their sheltering habitats. And when the algae die, bacteria begin to break down their dead tissues, using up an already waning supply of oxygen.

Excess nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus, also promote the growth of algae. These nutrients come from both *point* and *non-point* sources. A point source, such as the outflow from a sewage plant or factory, or non-point sources—contamination from a combination of unidentified sources—such as agricultural and urban runoff.

Point source pollution is relatively easy to identify and to deal with as regulations such as the Clean Water Act give the government the authority to compel industries and factories to stop discharging polluted water. While there has been considerable progress in industrial pollutant regulation, sewage treatment plants are in many cases still discharging excessive quantities of nitrogen into the Bay. For example, in 2002 10.4 million pounds of nitrogen were released in Maryland alone. With new sources of funding, the introduction of modern technology for all sewage treatment plants is becoming feasible and this discharge may be significantly reduced in coming years.

LIFE IN THE BAY

SPECIES

plants : 2,700

fin fish : 348

shell fish : 173

waterfowl : 29

Non-point sources, on the other hand, are much more difficult to control. Agriculture, one of the major non-point sources, begins on land with nitrogen-rich animal manure, which, if improperly applied as fertilizer or dumped as waste, can release large amounts of nitrogen into surface water that will ultimately end up in the Bay. Excess nutrients, when left unabsorbed, also can flow through groundwater, polluting rivers and streams. Septic tanks can have a similar effect, although to a lesser degree, as the nitrogenous waste seeps into the groundwater and horizontally traverses soil layers until it enters a stream.

Ecosystems have ways of dealing with some of these problems. For example, if rainwater collects in a freshwater wetland or infiltrates into the ground, much of the pollutants it contains can be absorbed, metabolized by bacteria or plants, or filtered out. Because of expansive development, however, we now have huge areas of impervious surfaces—roads, parking lots, roofs, driveways—that prevent water from infiltrating the soil. The practice has been to channel surface water off these surfaces into storm drains that too often deliver the water straight into streams and rivers with no filtration or cleansing action to remove the oil and other pollutants that flow off the surface. In times of heavy rain, storms pour more water into streams than they are naturally designed to accommodate. Stream beds wash out; the scouring action of the excess water turning the beds into gullies. Sediment and debris washes out, burying native plant life and churning downstream water in the rivers and Bay. In other cases, storm drains feed into public

POPULATION GROWTH IN THE WATERSHED

1900:
5,000,000 people

2000:
15,000,000 people



Creation in the Chesapeake

wastewater treatment plants, increasing the cost of operating the plants and sometimes leading to serious overload during rainy weather. Newer regulations and designs require the use of stormwater ponds that treat not only volume but water quality, thus reducing the detrimental effects of stormwater from impervious surfaces.

All of these issues involving groundwater and streams feeding pollutants into the bay lead to serious Bay water quality problems. The most extreme results are summer “dead zones,” where the water is devoid of oxygen and no longer capable of sustaining life. In the summer of 2005, there was a dead zone including 36 percent of the area of the Bay, the largest ever recorded.

Recent State of the Bay Reports indicate that pollution continues to degrade the Bay, that the balance of the Bay’s ecosystem is deeply disrupted, and that our challenge to re-create a saved Bay is great.

While we face an uphill battle for the Bay, these problems are not insurmountable. If we—as individuals, as communities, as congregations, and as voters—are committed to work together, we can, ultimately, mitigate these threats and restore beauty and ecological integrity to the Bay.

For more information about the Chesapeake Bay and its ecology:

- www.cbf.org
- www.alliancechesbay.org
- www.bayjournal.com
- www.chesapeakebay.net
- www.umces.edu

OUR CALL FOR THE BAY

We are not asked to go out and rid the world of its problems in a single day. Serving on the mission field does not always mean traveling to remote foreign villages to preach the Gospel. Many of us can serve, preach, and minister to others from our own backyards. It is important that congregations come together to do these things, and that they begin with their own houses of worship. Small changes in buildings can make a difference in the environment. Congregations can serve as a witness to their neighbors, to other churches, to the community, and to the government of the responsibility humans have to protect and conserve God’s creation.

When God created humans, we were given stewardship over the Earth and the creatures and plants that fill it. Creation was made in its entirety to work together in a symbiotic relationship, making each ecosystem reliant on other ecosystems. Riparian habitats depend on the weather to sustain their environment. Creatures on the land side of the shoreline need creatures of the water to maintain the nutrients in that water, and keep life moving, often times providing food for the animals on the land. Trees provide the oxygen necessary for human life. Delicate ecosystems are constantly threatened by a world too concerned with growth, industries, technology, and consumption. We must do what we can to protect all God’s creatures, great and small, and ensure that technological and industrial progress do not lead to dissipation of these important habitats and systems.

**Every year, more than 1,000,000 waterfowl
overwinter along the Chesapeake Bay.**



Chesapeake Congregational Life

VISION

Perhaps your congregation has already formed a creation awareness group (a committee or task force dedicated to caring for God's creation) or you are just beginning to explore how your congregation can become better stewards of God's creation. Either way, a vision—in the form of strategic plans, a mission statement, or statements of purpose—is a great place to begin and will, ultimately, help to guide your congregation to develop and live a Chesapeake congregational lifestyle. The process of composing a vision will likely help your group better understand its shared ideals and goals.

If you are just getting started, here are some tips for where to begin:

- Prayer can be a helpful spiritual tool. Beginning activities with prayer, using prayer as a problem-solving method, and sharing prayers of thanksgiving for accomplishments can build a strong ministry.
- See if your denomination has a statement or policy about caring for creation. Visit www.ncccojustice.org for a list of policy statements and denominational contacts.
- If your denomination has a statement, explore with your group the prospect of creating a more specific vision for your congregation.
- If your denomination does not have a statement, explore with your group creating an original vision for your congregation.
- If your congregation doesn't have an existing creation care group, start recruiting others for this environmental ministry. Identify an interested group of people using announcements, church bulletins, and word of mouth. Make sure you get the approval and involvement from your clergy and other key church leaders including those individuals who deal with building and grounds.
- Take an inventory of time, talent, and interest once you have established a group.
- With your congregational vision in mind, agree on a mission for your creation care group.
- Create an action plan and develop measurable objectives and goals for how to achieve your vision.
- Remember that every journey starts with a single step. Small projects that are successful are great ways to get an action plan off the ground.

Meeting Management

Meetings should be conducted on a regular basis and be soul-nourishing, concise and enjoyable. If possible, distribute an agenda ahead of time and assign a timekeeper if needed. Ensuring time for personal sharing and prayer, along with fellowship time and refreshments will help strengthen the ministry. Remember to keep a positive atmosphere.



Chesapeake Congregational Life

CHESAPEAKE COVENANT CONGREGATIONS

Join other churches in the Chesapeake Bay watershed region as a part of the Chesapeake Covenant Congregation program. Each governing body of a participating congregation makes a promise that they will engage in ecological ministries to help protect the Chesapeake Bay. The covenant includes a commitment to environmentally focused worship, education, lifestyle change, and involvement in the global, national, and local communities. Congregations are encouraged to implement principles from all four categories to reflect the holistic nature of the commitment to care of the Earth—specifically to care of the Chesapeake.

To learn more about this program, or how you can obtain help for getting started, contact:

NCC, Eco-Justice Programs
110 Maryland Ave., NE, Suite 108,
Washington, DC 20002

To become a Chesapeake Covenant Congregation, fill out the covenant form (in the Appendix) and return to:

NCC, Eco-Justice Programs
110 Maryland Ave., NE, Suite
108, Washington, DC 20002

WORSHIP

Worship is an essential component of caring for God's creation. It is the place where together we listen for God's call and accept our part of the covenant with the Holy. In our praises we rejoice in the beauty and wonder of creation, sense God's enlivening presence in our midst, and find our souls fed with the wisdom and courage that we will need to be faithful. The spirit of our worship will flow into our action and make it fruitful. And it is also the place where we offer back to the Holy what we have ventured, that it may be gathered into God's promised peace.

PLANNING A CREATION CARE SERVICE

While important to plan for special occasions (e.g., Earth Day, the Rogation Days, or Sundays in a "Creation Season"—a series of worship services in the fall intentionally focused on Creation themes), it is equally valuable to integrate the dimension of Creation in your congregation's worship throughout the year. In planning, look at all the elements of worship: Scripture, psalmody, music, preaching, prayers (including litanies), and acts of congregational offering and dedication, as well as the forms for opening (call to worship) and closing (benediction).

Scriptures

First, consider the Scripture passages you wish to use. Does your congregation typically follow a Church-year lectionary or do you have the freedom to substitute your choices for one or more of the readings? If you can choose the readings, select those that highlight a special theme, perhaps one that seems appropriate both to the time of year and to special concerns of your congregation—for example, a spring fair or an autumn harvest festival. These readings do not need to be specifically about nature but may suggest interesting interconnections, for example, how God nurtures and "waters" life and quenches our thirst, both physically and spiritually. In addition, you might consider supporting Scripture with writings from theologians, scientists, environmentalists, and poets. For examples of water-related worship themes, including Scripture and sermon suggestions, see "Worship and Water Theme" on page 10.

Music

Music is another pathway to awakening our souls to the beauty of God's Earth and our covenant with God and God's creation. There are many wonderful hymns and anthems extolling the glory of God's creation. It is helpful to include some new music along with the familiar. Metrical settings of psalms are included in many hymnals and are easy to sing.

TIPS FOR WORSHIP:

Not only hear the call from God and affirm the commitment of the Covenant, but also undertake ongoing study of the issues around water use and preservation in the Chesapeake region. Have worship proclaim the glory of God in Creation.



Chesapeake Congregational Life

A moving testimony to our unity with the powers of nature, St. Francis' "Canticle of the Sun," with its invocation of "Brother Sun and Sister Moon," "Sister Water," and "Brother Fire," invites us to join our voices with their praises. It has been adapted for easy metrical hymn singing.

There are also songs (canticles) based directly on Scriptural texts, for example, "A Song of Creation" (*Benedicite omnia opera domini* based on The Song of the Three Young Men [additions to Daniel] verses 35-65) and "The First Song of Isaiah" (Isaiah 12:2-6), which includes such verses as "Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation."

Other sounds

You can also introduce sounds of nature at certain times. Many CDs are available with sounds of waterfalls, or waves, songs of birds, or wind in the trees, etc. These may be used as background for a time of prayer or reflection, or for a prelude.

Preaching

By including Creation themes, ministers can illuminate the sacredness of nature and our responsibility, as God's people, as stewards of God's gift. For example, water is the Creator's gift for the entire world to share and it is imperative that we ensure its just distribution and preserve its quality and purity. Through God's word, a preacher may call us to a simpler Christian lifestyle in which our delight shifts away from consumer-driven goods toward the wonders of the universe.

Preachers can reflect on how Caring for Creation is an essential part of the ministry of the Church. In the New Testament, the Cosmic Christ is the Center of the universe and promises that our final home will be in a transfigured cosmos. Thus, it can be taught, that to care for rivers, streams, and forests is essential to prepare, in the Spirit of God, for our ultimate destiny (Cf. Colossians 1:1-29 and Revelation 21; Isaiah 66.)

Prayers

It is helpful to allow places for congregational participation – in the call to worship, perhaps, and also in the general

intercessions and thanksgivings. Litanies may be used effectively, noting the particular concerns of the congregation. Prayers can be wide-ranging, so as to include concerns for justice, for church leadership, for the oppressed and suffering, as well as for specific ecological petitions. This breadth is a good context for connecting this particular gathering with the wider outreach of the Church.

Offering

In a Caring for Creation service, there can be opportunity to involve the people in offering gifts from God's creation. During the offering, congregants can be asked to bring stones from their local streams and waterways. In the fall, they can offer autumn leaves, blades of wetland or beach grass. What we offer is a token of our concern for the renewing of God's creation.

WORSHIP AND WATER THEMES

"Wash and be Clean"

Theme: Healing Waters

Pools and streams have healing gifts for those who come in faith, with openness of heart and with respect for the powers of nature. Naaman almost missed his promised healing because of his pride and spiritual blindness. Likewise, the man at the Pool of Siloam was invited to set aside his anxieties and doubts and to receive the healing power of the water simply through Jesus' word. Will our own Chesapeake Bay and the streams that feed it continue to heal us if should we fail to see God's healing presence in them? How can we renew our own body and soul by treating the Bay with respect?

Readings:

- 2 Kings 1–14 (Naaman and Elisha)
- Psalm 84: 4–7
- John 5: 1–9 (10–15) (Healing at Pool of Siloam)
- Alternative contemporary reading: "The Hidden Messages of Water" by Masaru Emoto (e.g., "Water is the life flow of majestic nature" [pg. 38] or quote from Joan S. Davis of Zurich Technical University, "The important thing is that we recover our respect for water." [p. 63].)



Chesapeake Congregational Life

“Wade in the Water”

Theme: The Womb—Waters of New Life and Vision

C.S. Lewis in “The Four Loves” says that he cannot ever imagine sensing the meaning of God’s glory without the magnificence of waterfalls. For this very reason, we are in desperate need of recovering our intimacy with the Earth. For many of us, this will call for deep change—a cultural rebirth. Ezekiel witnesses God’s promise to a people who have lost their way the sprinkling of clean water and the gift of a new heart, a “heart of flesh” to replace their hearts of stone. And Jesus tells well-born Nicodemus that being of good family is not enough: “You must be born from above ... of water and the Spirit.” Are we ready to be born again in our relation to creation, to become indeed brothers and sisters of all God has made? Can we use this new relationship to be better stewards of the Bay?

Readings:

- Ezekiel 36: 24–28
- Psalm 46
- John 3: 1–10

“Launch out into the Deep”

Theme: Meeting God afresh in the “Deep Waters”

Deep waters call for a trusting heart and invite adventure into the unknown. The disciples of Jesus at the shores of Lake Gennesaret had fished all night and caught nothing, yet Jesus bids them to launch anew, this time trusting themselves to the deep waters. And something wonderful happened! Likewise Jacob at the Ford of Jabbok was invited to trust. Afraid of meeting his brother, he wrestled all night with God and was powerfully transformed. Can the waters of the Bay be for us a place of transformation, as we move deeply into the unknown rapids of advocacy for clean water, the elimination of agricultural “run-off,” and (hopefully) creative dialogue between developers, farmers, and legislators for a restored Chesapeake? In this new relationship with creation, God will meet us and our nets will be full.

Readings:

- Old Testament, Genesis 32: 22–30
- Psalm: Psalm 36: 5–10
- Luke 5: 1–11

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?” (Isaiah 55: 1)

Theme: Returning to the true “waters of life”

God cries out to an Israel whose heart is set on comfort and power: “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.... Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?” This speaks directly to the sickness at the heart of our culture today. We have become addicted to the ever-increasing cornucopia of consumer goods. What is alarming is the central place we give them in our lives and hearts. We were born to find our deepest joys in God’s creation and to be its voice of thanksgiving as we offer it back in praise. The rhythms of the Earth, the land and the waters, are to be our guide and the touchstone of the patterns of our living, our joys, and our hopes. Can we find our way back to these “waters of life?” Jesus said to the Samaritan woman beside Jacob’s well, “If you knew ... who it is who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” Surely it is the mission of the Church today to attend to the lands and waters, their purity and their beauty, and to equip us as God’s saints to call into being the renewed life of the Chesapeake Bay and, with its waters, the new and vibrant life of our souls.

Readings:

- Old Testament, Isaiah 55: 1–3, 6–9 (“Come to the waters”)
- Psalm 42: 1–3, 6–8
- John 4: 1–15 (The woman at Jacob’s Well)

A CREATION SEASON

The Creation Season is a period of three to six weeks, usually in the fall and often starting near St. Francis’ Day (October 4), when a congregation agrees to focus its worship and education on themes related to God’s Creation.

The consecutive Sunday themes may be based on the elements of earth, air, fire, and water, or aspects of our call to simple living, or the ways God’s love in nature interacts with our own spiritual growth. Whatever we choose, however, it needs to be connected with Scripture and often dovetail with assigned readings in the lectionary. For more information on creation season materials visit www.seasonofcreation.com.



Institutional Life

Caring for creation begins at home—and, in this case, in our church home. How we care for our church property can speak to how we regard our place on the Earth. Recognizing that we are part of the complex web of creation, not separate from it, not “above” it, but embedded in it, causes us to treat it lovingly. Loving God and loving our neighbor includes caring for the Earth that God has created. We can start with the patch of earth that is our church property.

Within the church and its surrounding grounds, some simple changes can be implemented to make our sacred spaces healthier and more environmentally-friendly. Our worship facilities do impact God’s creation, and so it is our obligation to reduce this burden on the Earth and create more sustainable spaces. We can also encourage our congregational members to choose to live in a way that nurtures the world in which we live.

Our church buildings were built to the glory of God, the service of humanity and the world, and the potential of the Spirit. It is inside these structures that we celebrate Creation and the Creator. And we look to our houses of worship and their spiritual centers for guidance. What happens within in our congregations can have a positive ripple effect across the region as homeowners, businesspeople, government workers and others help their own buildings begin to emulate the ethical example set by their church.

The key elements of a green church life

- I. Reduce waste
- II. Reduce and eliminate toxics
- III. Create incentives for transportation alternatives
- IV. Control stormwater and green the landscape
- V. Conserve water
- VI. Conserve energy and use green power
- VII. Purchase and invest responsibly

I. REDUCE WASTE AND CONSUMERISM

Why?

Our everyday choices—both at home and at church—about the products we use and discard have a great impact on creation. The more we think about what is behind our purchased goods—Where did this product come from? What impact does throwing this away have on the environment?—the more likely we will make wise choices about what we use and buy. For example, U.S. office paper consumption is excessive—in 1999, roughly 63 pounds a month per American!—driven mostly by printer and copier paper consumption. By choosing to reduce our use of paper, by reusing the paper we don’t completely use, and by recycling the paper that we do use, we can make a significant dent in our own contribution to waste production. Reducing waste and recycling reduces air and water pollution and the need for landfill space—all good acts of responsible creation stewardship.



DON'T FORGET CHURCH OFFICES

Look for ways to close the loop on paper recycling:

- 1) buy recycled paper
- 2) reuse unused or partially used paper
- 3) set printers to print on both sides of the paper
- 4) recycle fully used paper. Producing virgin paper requires a chlorine bleaching process that releases the carcinogenic chemical dioxin and other toxics. Purchase the highest percentage of post-consumer waste, process chlorine-free paper possible.



Institutional Life

What can we do?

Reduce and reuse

Our churches can live more lightly by simply reducing use, including the use of disposable kitchen and dining products. For church meetings and potlucks, consider asking people to bring their own dishes and silverware. You might even request that parishioners donate their unused dishware to the church, which will provide reusable dishes for most events.

Recycle

Establish a recycling program at church. If minimal recycling already exists, look into ways to ramp up your recycling program. Are recycling receptacles conveniently located? Do you know what recyclables your municipal recycling will accept? Are bins clearly marked? Are office goods like used cell phones, computers, and toner cartridges being recycled?

Make smart institutional purchases

Your environmental group could consider meeting with the church committees who make institutional purchases to discuss making better choices, such as avoiding disposables and excess packaging and buying recycled products. If disposable cups and plates are unavoidable, make sure that they are biodegradable (e.g., not Styrofoam or plastic). Your congregation can also team up with other congregations to buy environmentally friendly items together to save money through bulk purchasing. When purchasing produce – farm products, buy locally if in season. This supports our local agricultural industry and saves the energy to transport food purchased from faraway places.

II. REDUCE AND ELIMINATE TOXICS AND PESTICIDES

Why?

Like our homes, our churches can be a hidden source of toxics. Many of the products we find in the church have toxic substances, which have the potential to cause a variety of avoidable harms, ranging from upset stomachs to irritated skin to developmental disorders and even to cancers.

What can we do?

We can improve human health and lessen adverse environmental impacts by using non-toxic (or “green”) cleaning products in our houses of worship and limiting or eliminating the use of pesticides on our church lawns. Non-toxic cleaning products can be found locally at some national grocery chains, local food cooperatives, and natural food stores.

Try using alternative methods of pest control first. If your problem is persistent and you do decide that pesticides and weed killers are the best options, be sure that you are aware of the dangers they pose. Carefully read all labels, and take the proper precautions to ensure limited human contact with recently treated areas.

Hand-pick weeds instead of spraying them;

Set traps to control rodents; mulch to reduce weed



If you are troubled by insects, think twice before blasting them with insecticides. Insecticides are non-discriminatory—they kill all insects. The fact is that the majority of insects are beneficial to the environment: they provide food for birds, they pollinate flowers. Some insects serve to control other insects, and in a healthy system, they all live in balance. If you hope to have songbirds surrounding your church, you need to have insects for them to eat. So, understand that it is not necessary or desirable to get rid of all insects. Be sure you are not doing more harm than good. Think control, not elimination.

Where can we learn more?

- The Green Guide provides lists and recommendations about green products purchasing at www.thegreenguide.com.



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- For institutional purchasing of green cleaners, visit the Center for a New American Dream's institutional purchasing web site at www.newdream.org/procure. Download the specific church purchasing guide at www.newdream.org/publications/purchguide.pdf.
- Consult the Pesticide Action Network of North America's Pesticide Advisor for chemical-free alternatives at www.panna.org
- For more information on reducing exposure to toxins in your church, download www.epa.gov/OPPTpubs/Cit_Guide/citguide.pdf

III. CREATE INCENTIVES FOR TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

Why?

The manufacture and, more important, the use of personal vehicles cause more environmental damage—especially air pollution and global warming—than any other single consumer spending category. Our cars and light trucks are responsible for almost a quarter of annual U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, the main greenhouse gas. So driving a car may be the single most polluting activity that most of us do. Aside from important activities such as driving more fuel efficient cars, with modest change your congregation can make immediate impact by giving cars a break on Sunday.

What can we do?

Post a carpooling board

Encourage parishioners to try carpooling to church together. This will not only save gas and reduce individual car emissions, but it also provides opportunities for church members to spend some time in fellowship with one another.

Hold a "Ride Your Bike to Church Day"

Sponsor a bike riding or alternative transportation day. Provide water for people as they arrive and set aside space for bike parking in the car lot. Take it a step further and teach a bike safety class, including basic safety tips such as wearing helmets, displaying reflectors, and using arm turn signals.



Calculate your ecological footprint.

Discuss the impact of our everyday choices after calculating how much "nature" your own lifestyle requires.

An ecological footprint estimates how much productive land and water you need to support what you use and what you discard. You might be surprised how much your driving habits contribute to how large your footprint is. For a simple quiz, see www.myfootprint.org

Participate in Car Sharing

Instead of purchasing a new church vehicle, consider joining a car sharing program like Zipcar. Having access to a car only when you need it could save your church in maintenance, gas, and insurance costs, and will promote goodwill for all creation.

Use Public Transportation

If available, encourage members of the congregation to use public transportation.

Where can we learn more?

- Join the discussion about the moral issue of transportation, at www.whatwouldJesusdrive.org.
- The Union of Concerned Scientists has a comprehensive discussion of vehicle contributions on the adverse effects of the U.S. transportation system. See www.ucsusa.org.

IV. CONTROL STORMWATER AND GREEN THE LANDSCAPE

Why?

Rain falling in forests or vegetative areas is mostly absorbed into the soil where it accumulates in the ground water, eventually replenishing streams and the Bay. Some rain, depending on the amount, may run off directly into streams and



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lakes. With increasing development, streets, parking lots and buildings prevent water from its natural course into ground water and streams, instead causing large amounts of water to be directed into storm drains overloading the streams in the area, causing excessive erosion, not to mention loss of ground water recharging. According to the Center for Watershed Protection, water quality begins to degrade when 10 percent of the watershed contains impervious surfaces. For naturally producing trout streams, the threshold is an alarming 2 percent. Conservation landscaping, or BayScaping as it's known in the Chesapeake region, is a method of landscaping properties that promotes a healthy ecosystem. It encourages and fosters the natural relationships between plants, animals, and weather, making it a holistic approach to protecting and conserving God's creation. To some degree, it mitigates the detrimental effects of impervious surfaces.

What can we do?

Manage stormwater

Bio-retention systems, or rain gardens, try to replicate natural hydrologic function by holding water from a storm event until it can permeate the ground into the groundwater system. They are specifically designed to take in the stormwater from an impervious surface, like a rooftop, church parking lot, or street. Layers of mulch absorb rain water and runoff, and slowly release it to the underlayers of the soil and the roots of trees, shrubs, and groundcover. The plants take up the nutrients like nitrogen in the water, and microorganisms break down some of the pollutants, while others dissipate in the ground until they are no longer a concentrated contaminant. Properly managing a church's stormwater can help protect God's waterways and groundwater.

Rain Barrels/Cisterns

Rain barrels and cisterns collect rainwater during storm events that you can use to water your landscape. This is an easy way to promote stormwater management and reduce the unnecessary use of potable water. They can be purchased at many garden centers and are also appropriate for use in the home.

In Anne Arundel County, for example, you can purchase Rain Barrel kits and built Rain Barrels from Arlington Echo

Education Resource Center:

- <http://www.arlingtonecho.org/rainbarrel.htm>, or contact Darren Rickwood at 410-222-3822.

Lawns

Many churches are surrounded by lawns. Lawns are environmentally bad for several reasons: they do not provide a diverse community of plants and animals that is most appropriate for a healthy environment; they are planted with non-native grasses that do not provide shelter or food for native animals or birds; they often require the addition of extra water; they often require fertilizer that can contribute excess nutrient runoff into streams; cutting lawns generally demands consuming fossil fuel and adding pollutants to the air; and lawns are less permeable than planted areas. So seek ways to reduce the area of lawn around the church. Replant these areas with native plants, trees, and shrubs that increase biodiversity and make a positive contribution to the integrity of the environment.

Rain Gardens

Rain gardens are gardens built to contain and infiltrate rainfall from a specific area of impervious surface for a typical rain event. Bio-retention systems are the same in principle to rain gardens, but often imply a large area.

Plant natives

Native plants are specifically adapted to the local environment, and don't require additional water or fertilizers that non-native plants may need to survive. In addition, native wildlife has adapted to native plants, and depends on them for food and habitat to grow and thrive. As the Chesapeake region continues to be developed, reestablishing native habitat on properties—large and small in the Chesapeake watershed—is imperative to the preservation of the Chesapeake ecosystem.

- For tips and suggestions for bayscaping your property, and to learn about the benefits specifically for the Chesapeake Bay region, visit www.cbf.org and www.alliancechesbay.org/pubs.cfm and <http://www.cwp.org/>



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BUILD A SIMPLE RAIN GARDEN

1. Calculate rain garden size

- Measure the footprint of the impervious surface.
- Divide the area by 3.

Example:

15 feet x 15 feet = 225 square feet of impervious surface; $225/3 = 75$ square feet needed for rain garden

2. Dig the rain garden

- Locate garden at least 10 feet from buildings to avoid flooded basements! Use an underground pipe or gravel swale to direct water to rain garden.
- Create a garden with a 3 inch depth. Dig to a 6 inch depth, then add 3 inch of Leafgro or similar material.
- Use a “water test” to level garden: Place a hose in the downspout, and adjust the soil to level the garden and create channels.

3. Plant the garden

- Plant drought-tolerant plants (shrubs, grasses, and perennials) that can tolerate standing in water for up to 24 hours.
- Mulch the garden well.
- Water the garden well, especially until the plants are established.

- For more information on native plants, use an excellent free guide for gardeners and landscapers: *Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping*, published by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Also available from many environmental organizations, including Adkins Arboretum (410) 634-2847, the Maryland Native Plant Society (301) 809-0139 and The Nature Conservancy, (301) 897-8570

Control pests

Pesticides tend to kill beneficial insects as well as the bothersome ones, keeping the system out of balance; they are dangerous for pets and small children in excessive and concentrated quantities; and pesticides wash off landscapes, killing aquatic life in nearby streams. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a method of using native insects and plants to keep your property in balance and control invasive insects and other pests.

For information on using integrated pest management, visit the Maryland Integrated Pest Management Resource Web site at www.mdipm.umd.edu

Manage fertilizer applications

The application of chemical fertilizers, by individuals and lawn-care companies, can substantially increase the amount of nitrogen in the system. Those nutrients that aren't absorbed into the lawn are washed into local waterways. Good nutrient management starts with soil testing. By knowing the composition of your soil, you can add the proper amounts of slow-release nutrients (such as compost), allowing you to keep a flourishing garden and protect the health of the Bay.

SUCCESS STORY: Invasive “ecoparties”

Maryland Presbyterian Church in Towson, Maryland, embarked on a process of eliminating alien invasive plants from its wooded suburban property. At monthly “ecoparties” after Sunday worship, members get together to remove unwanted plants. So far, they’ve held ecoparties to focus on garlic mustard, Ailanthus trees, English ivy, wineberry canes, and Devil’s tear-thumb. The church is also restoring the landscape by planting native plants.



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Eliminate invasives

Non-native, invasive plants have done great harm to the Bay ecosystem—a major reason for the loss of native plants in our Bay landscapes. Increased development, loss of forests and habitat, and extensive use of lawn grasses, edge out native plants and make way for encroaching invasive species. While control of invasive plants can be difficult and time consuming, your congregation can band together to stop the intrusion. Consider removing non-native, invasive plants on your grounds and replacing them with native plants. Some common local invasive examples include multiflora rose, English ivy, Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus*), kudzu, purple loosestrife, garlic mustard, and Bradford pear.

Where can we learn more?

For more information on how to promote water conservation at your church see:

- An extensive list of 282 exotic invasive plant species can be found at www.invasive.org
- For strategies for removing invasive plants, see The Nature Conservancy's Invasive Species Initiative site at www.tncweeds.ucdavis.edu
- For an excellent, free, concise manual for identifying and eradicating invasive species see: *Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas*, published by the National Park Service/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Available from many environmental organizations, including The

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (202) 857-0166 or the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (410) 260-8540.

V. CONSERVE WATER

Why?

Increases in water consumption adds to stream, river, and Bay pollution and can cause depletion of groundwater supplies. Waste water from toilets and sinks either is disposed of in a septic system, affecting the quality of the ground water, or is disposed of in a municipal wastewater treatment plant that in most cases cannot remove all of the pollution before discharging it to a river or the Bay. With little or no up-front costs or adverse user impacts, your congregation can implement water-saving practices that can lower your utility costs and promote conservation landscaping principles.

What can we do?

- Run automatic dishwashers only with full load.
- Wash dishes by hand with a basin of rinse water, rather than running water.
- Water the grounds in the evening to avoid rapid evaporation.
- Fix leaking toilets and sinks. A leaking toilet can waste 45,000 gallons of water in six months.
- Install water-saving toilets and low-flow faucets.

Where can we learn more?

- visit <http://maryland.earth911.org/master.asp>

SUCCESS STORY: Congregational restoration

The men's maintenance breakfast group at Calvary United Methodist Church in Annapolis, Maryland, teamed up with environmentally concerned members of the church to begin some shoreline restoration along College Creek, a tributary of the Chesapeake. They constructed a buffer planting along the creek to absorb and filter runoff water between the impervious surface of the parking lot and the creek. By planting this buffer, the group not only improved the stormwater management of their property, but they have a lovely garden on the water as well. The congregation is now planning to build a rain garden.



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VI. CONSERVE ENERGY AND SAVE ON COSTS

Why?

The electricity that feeds the thousands of houses of worship in the Chesapeake Bay region comes mostly from burning coal. Carbon emissions from coal-fired power plants are projected to increase by 45 percent between 2000 and 2025. Surprisingly, lighting accounts for about 25 percent of American electricity consumption, and this consumption of electricity is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. Since most church sanctuaries are large spaces used only periodically throughout the week, religious buildings are prime for energy savings. Compact fluorescent light bulbs, with a modest upfront investment, can save energy costs 65 to 75 percent over standard incandescent lights. An action as simple as installing a programmable thermostat has the potential to save hundreds of dollars a year in utility bills, as well as prevent literally “tons” of pollution. Most religious office areas are high-traffic, well-used areas where small changes like weather-stripping, energy-efficient appliances, or compact fluorescent bulbs can make a significant difference in energy use.

What can we do?

Conduct an energy audit

Start with an energy audit of your church building. This will provide a baseline for where to begin and help prioritize the most cost-effective interventions. Ask your power company if they help with audits or visit www.energyguide.com.

Replace inefficient lights with clean, efficient lights

Following your energy audit, replace incandescent lights with low-mercury compact fluorescent light bulbs, which use less energy than traditional lighting. They are now found at most major home improvement stores and come in sizes to fit all light fixtures.

Purchase “green power”

Check into purchasing “green power” from your local energy company. Green power is electricity generated using environmentally friendly renewable and reusable resources, such as solar, wind, biomass and water. To learn more about your local options, see www.epa.gov/greenpower/index.htm

Where can we learn more?

- Visit Interfaith Power & Light – <http://www.interfaithworks.org/>
- Consult the “Putting Energy into Stewardship” guide from the U.S. ENERGY STAR program. Make an action plan and commit to substantial energy reduction over a period of time, then measure the savings in utility costs. Find the guide at www.energystar.gov and click on “congregations.”
- Should you not find compact fluorescent lightbulbs at your local retailer, these national companies offer a good selection. Real Goods at www.realgoods.com and Seventh Generation at www.seventhgen.com

VII. GREEN BUILDING AND REMODELING

Why?

When it’s time to remodel or make improvements, our congregations can choose to make wise purchases that reduce adverse affects on congregational and creation health. Green building and remodeling is an approach that makes your space look better and work better for your church and creation. With careful planning, you can build or rebuild a sacred space that is beautiful, inspiring, welcoming, and sustainable. Environmentally-friendly building products and



Certified Green Buildings

The United States Green Building Council (USGBC), a nonprofit organization, has developed the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system, which makes it easier to determine how to create a healthy and green building. The LEED system utilizes a list of 34 potential attributes and certification is given at the silver, gold, and platinum levels. Through USGBC, congregations can find helpful resources to improve the quality of their buildings and might even want to consider seeking LEED certification.

Find out more, at www.usgbc.org/leed.



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energy-wise designs will enhance creation, and its resources, rather than deplete it.

What can we do?

- Find an architect who is knowledgeable about environmental design and who can help create a structure that requires little energy to maintain.
- Use renewable, non-toxic building materials to limit the negative impacts on creation and maximize indoor air quality.
- Seek renewable, local building materials that will require less transportation for delivery and reduce the use of transportation fuel.
- Keep an eye toward energy efficiency in order to cut down on energy consumption, reducing air pollution and carbon emissions, which lead to climate change.

Where can we learn more?

- Looking for a national source of green building products, check out Green Building Supply at www.greenbuildingsupply.com and Green Home at www.greenhome.com.
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources has a Green Building Network. For more information visit www.dnr.state.md.us/ed/mdgbn/



Unitarian Universalist Green Sanctuary Program

As a part of the Unitarian Universalists Ministry for Earth, their Green Sanctuary Program is to promote sustainable lifestyles through living in a way that nurtures life, builds relationships, and rejects material consumption as the sole determinant of happiness. The program includes a certification process for congregations to receive accreditation as a “Green Sanctuary.”

Learn more about UU’s Green Sanctuary Certification process, see www.uuaspp.org

- For a great resource on green remodeling, check your library or local bookstore for *Green Remodeling: Changing the World One Room at a Time* by Johnston and Master (New Society Publishers, 2004).

Contributions to this section from Naomi Friedman, Center for a New American Dream, Director of Sustainable Markets and Howard Ebenstein, DC Energy Office, Energy Program Specialist

SUCCESS STORY: Adat Shalom Green Building Process

Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda, Maryland, is the second synagogue in the US to receive the EPA’s ENERGY STAR Congregation award. Together with their green-savvy architects, they designed and built a space that they believe “expresses a deep sense of community, a respect and love for Jewish tradition, and a full embrace of the natural world and of our responsibility as stewards of Creation.” The site itself features passive solar heating, new and reused building materials from local and certified sustainable sources, low-energy use lighting fixtures. Adat Shalom members wanted their new home connect with, rather than be removed from, the natural world. Now their courtyards, gardens, and amphitheater host a range of worship activities and community events.

To read more about Adat Shalom green building process, visit www.adatshalom.net/lech_lecha.html.



Education and Outreach

As stewards of all God’s creation, we have the responsibility to educate ourselves and others about the creation’s wondrous, living diversity, how it is placed at risk by human activity and what can be done to undo past damage and plan for more faithful stewardship in the future. We must prepare ourselves with the necessary tools to protect the systems that sustain life for not only humans, but for all of creation. And we must respond with action—and guide others—to responsibly conserve and preserve God’s gifts that we have been so abundantly provided.

While individual efforts to protect our environment are important, these steps alone are not sufficient. It will require our collaborative efforts to address the systemic problems that affect the well-being of the God’s creation. The actions you take with your congregation and in the local and global community will be important to protect God’s natural gifts for this and future generations.

CONGREGATIONAL EDUCATION

Church communities can educate children and adults about the theological and spiritual aspects of God’s creation, and the practical implications for Christian living, through Sunday School classes, vacation Bible school, and adult studies.

Form an environmental study and action group

A study and action group can be a great way for parishioners to gather for fellowship, learning, and action. Whether as a core group or as supplemental to a creation awareness group, this group can help the rest of the congregation become more environmentally aware and promote positive changes within the church community.

Train your leaders

Special events are a great way to motivate others to join in your ministry. Consider hosting your own training event for

churches in your area. The National Council of Churches, in partnership with local faith-based organizations, also host several regional training events around the country. The program for each day and a half event includes basics on water, how to motivate and inspire your congregation, advocacy training, hands-on field trip opportunities, fellowship, and congregational success stories. Special clergy events (with continuing education credits offered) are also offered.

- For a list of upcoming events visit www.nccecojustice.org
- To host your own event, reference the sample agendas located in the Appendix.

Share in fellowship

God’s Great Outdoors:

Sponsor hikes, walks, and bike rides that integrate faith. Encourage participants to stop along the way and thank God for the creations they witness. These trips will be a great opportunity to share in fellowship and enjoy together the glory of God’s lands and waters. You might also consider organizing outdoor field trips for adult study classes or youth groups to learn more about local and regional environmental issues.

- Join a National Public Lands Day event in September near your place of worship. For more information, go to www.npld.com

Waste-wise Meals:

For congregational dinners, ask environmental group members or volunteers to “sponsor” a table. Each sponsor should provide the dishes, silverware, and cloth napkins for their table. While significantly reducing the waste for the event, you can also use the task as a learning opportunity to discuss the connection between daily household resource use and the health of the local environment.



Education and Outreach

Green Coffee Hour:

Replace a standard Sunday coffee break with responsible, “green” coffee selections. An average congregation drinks an estimated 5,200 cups of coffee per year, which requires 7,300 square feet of land for the coffee bushes. Coffee producers and conservations now know that coffee plantations grown without chemicals under forest cover provide great habitat for wildlife and migratory birds; this shade grown coffee also makes for productive coffee crops. So next time your creation awareness group or environmental study group is scheduled to host Sunday coffee, provide shade-grown coffee in reusable ceramic mugs instead. The Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis’s Green Sanctuary Committee began with one green coffee hour a month, and once the congregation learned more about its benefits, now every coffee hour is responsible and green.

- For more information about shade-grown, fair trade coffee, go to www.newdream.org/consumer/buycoffee.php
- To learn about Equal Exchange’s Interfaith Coffee Program, visit www.equalexchange.com/interfaith-program

Educate your congregation

Adult education

Sacred Waters is a five-week adult Christian education course on understanding and appreciating God’s wondrous gift of water. The course is designed to be taught in five consecutive one-hour weekly sessions but is easily adaptable to a number of different educational formats. Each session covers a specific aspect of the sacred gift of water.

+ Tips for Getting Your Church Involved

- Spend time talking with church members and find out their passions
- Form a group of people for support, inspiration, and longevity
- Determine stakeholders in and outside of church and seek their involvement
- Identify points of leverage where your group and or church can have the most impact
- Identify both the needs and the assets within the community
- Create an inventory of skills, talents, and passions of the people within the group. Figure out what is missing, and see if there are people within the congregation that you can ask to join the group or help with a specific project
- Create and inventory of local and national groups for support and resources
- Publicize programs, events, and initiatives throughout the church, using various types of media, such as the bulletin, newsletters, websites, and word of mouth
- Start with small, accessible and achievable projects and build upon them
- Choose projects that are visible and be clear about your goals
- Encourage church leaders and stakeholders to incorporate advocacy into the life of the church: worship, fellowship, Sunday School, fundraisers, church council meetings, youth and young adult ministries
- Continue to raise awareness and seek involvement
- Celebrate your success, both big and small!

Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School curricula that are devoted to creation care is an excellent way to take advantage of children’s natural enthusiasm for God’s world. Various themes such as water, wildlife, sun, recycling, and forest ecology can bring into focus the beauty of God’s creation and the importance of valuing and caring for creation. At the core of any VBS should be the idea of fun and creativity. Consider pooling resources with a local farm or nature center. Many secular environmental education materials can be modified for Vacation Bible School.



Education and Outreach



Taking these principles home

Make the same changes within your household as you recommend for the church.

- Keep thermostats lower in the winter, and use air conditioning as little as possible in the summer.
- Install programmable thermostats
- Turn off lights when you leave a room or leave the house
- Take shorter showers and use less hot water
- Use CFLs instead of incandescent bulbs
- Track energy use through bills
- Ensure your home is properly insulated, especially around windows and doors
- Install lower-energy, high-efficiency appliances
- Ride your bike, carpool, or use public transportation when possible
- Practically consider your needs and desires when considering lawncare, fertilizers, and pesticides

Youth education

Most young people enjoy spending time outdoors and these activities can be enhanced when children become familiar with Biblical principles of creation care. Instead of telling children about God's creation, let them experience it. Be receptive to their observations, questions, and reflections and make sure that there is time allotted for discussion and follow-up after the activity. Whatever the activity, it should be participatory, fun, and foster a sense of wonder about the world that God created.

COMMUNITY, NATIONAL, AND GLOBAL OUTREACH

Involve the whole community

Share your congregation's environmental awareness with others—extend involvement beyond the walls of the church and into the community. Doing a community environmental project is a great way to get the church involved in your neighborhood, which will foster a positive and on-going relationship with community members that are not currently involved in the church.

Don't do it alone

If there's an environmental or Chesapeake Bay issue that your church is grappling with, likely your neighbors are too. Consider ways to express your congregation's opinion, such as letters to the editor, letters to congressional leaders, and public service announcements, or contact other local and

World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Earth

The World Council of Churches, a fellowship of churches in more than 120 countries, has a justice, peace, and creation concerns team that, in part, focuses on issues of the ecumenical Earth. The team is mandated to analyze and reflect on the interrelatedness of justice, peace, and creation. Four of their focus issues on the environment are economic globalization and ecology; climate change; biotechnology, agriculture, and indigenous peoples; and the vision of earth as home.

For more information on the WCC and their ecumenical participation, see www.wcc-coe.org



Education and Outreach

regional churches. As you know, public policy makers are far more likely to respond to an issue that has generated public concern.

Track legislation and other public issues

Keep track of how your governmental leaders at the city, state, and national level, vote on environmental issues. The national denomination offices of your particular denomination or the Eco-Justice Program office of the National Council of Churches can provide you with this information on national environmental issues. Or visit the League of Conservation Voters Web site at www.lcv.org.

Participate in the public process

As members of the faith community, we must hold accountable those people in positions of power for the decisions they make regarding our health and the health of God's creation. And to adequately represent the people, those lawmakers need to hear from the religious community about how we stand on current environmental issues. Write letters to newspapers and legislators about creation care issues that concern your members. Suggest that parishioners include how their faith has helped them come to a concern about the issue.

Legislative Advocacy Tips

- **Develop relationships with your legislators**
- **Invite your senator and representative(s) to special events**
- **Express the opinions of the church through calls, letters, and emails**
- **Stay informed of the issues that affect your church and community**
- **Participate in you churches national advocacy efforts in Washington, DC**

Research has shown that 91 percent of those interviewed perceived a degree of reduction in stress levels after having visited a garden.

Grasses for the Masses

Grasses for the Masses is a project in which participants grow underwater grasses for 8–10 weeks in their homes, and then plant them in a Chesapeake Bay tributary. Underwater grasses are key to the Bay's health—they filter sediments and nutrients, slow erosive wave action, provide habitat for fish, crabs, and migrating birds, and improve water clarity.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation trains workshop leaders to run Grasses workshops. This project works very well for churches. Usually, one or two systems are set up in the church itself, and 20–25 church families agree to grow underwater grasses in their homes. The entire church can get involved with the project, even those who aren't able to grow grasses in their own homes.

For more information about Grasses for the Masses, contact the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

Conclusion

God asks us to be good stewards of all God has entrusted us with. What better place to start than in our own houses of worship?

Together we can make a difference. God's Earth is our haven, our shelter, our refuge, and it is our responsibility to protect it. Access to what the Earth provides to us, in food and water especially, is a gift from God and we must ensure is available to our neighbors today and our children tomorrow. We must do what we can to rectify the damage that has already occurred, and remedy the opinion that God's creation is simply a commodity for our consumption. God asks us to be good stewards of all God has entrusted us with. What better place to start than in our own houses of worship? We are asked to be set apart and holy, and to be examples to those around us. If we establish these values in the body of the church and our congregation conforms to them, we prepare ourselves to be that example. We start in our own neighborhoods and watersheds so that we may show those around us the importance of God's Earth, and our responsibility to nurture and shelter it, while it does the same for us.

STEWARDS OF THE BAY

Appendix

Sample Water Regional Training Event Agenda

Note on location: Many church buildings, which can be obtained for little or no charge, are ideal for hosting events since they often have space for plenary sessions, worship, workshops, and meals.

FRIDAY EVENING

- 7-9pm Reception with optional plenary speaker
Suggestions:
- Include music or other artistic element
 - Include ice breakers to increase fellowship opportunities

SATURDAY

- 8:45 am Registration
- 9:15am Welcome and worship
Suggestion: Include an opening “ritual” to create a sacred space for the event
- 9:30am Keynote speaker
Suggestion: Focus on theology and water
- 10:45am Break
- 11:00 Concurrent Workshops
- 12:30pm Lunch
- 1:45pm Concurrent Workshops
- 3:15pm Break
- 3:30pm Closing Worship
Suggestion: End with a closing “ritual”

WORKSHOP SUGGESTIONS:

(Note: Many secular environmental organizations, government agencies, and universities can help provide workshop leaders or resource persons for workshops. You can also tap into nearby seminaries or college religious departments for workshop leaders.)

- Public Witness and Advocacy
- Water 101: the science of watersheds
- Worship/Preaching Tools and Techniques
- Theology of Water
- Education, Organizing and Outreach in Your Congregation
- Local Water Issues

How to Host a Regional or Local Training Event

- **Identify planning committee.**
Suggestion: keep the planning committee small (2-5 people).
- **Set date and location.**
Suggestion: churches will often donate their facilities and are ideal spaces for hosting events since they typically have worship spaces, kitchen facilities, dining areas, and classrooms for breakout sessions.
Note: Planning committee members should do a walk-through of the facility so they can visualize the space when planning workshops, tabling areas, food set-up, etc. The committee should also identify a “point person” at the facility who can answer questions during the planning process. See list of questions to ask the facility manager in the Appendix.
- **Identify any co-sponsors.**
Suggestion: contact local and regional secular environmental groups as well as other religious organizations.
- **Set agenda.**
Note: sample agenda located in Appendix.
- **Design worship service.**
Suggestion: consider adding an opening and closing ritual that includes hands-on experiences.
- **Identify plenary speakers and worship leaders.**
- **Identify workshop leaders.**
Suggestion: regional and local environmental organizations often have staff or skilled volunteers who are ideal workshop leaders.
Note: Be sure to include different learning styles (e.g., hands on activities, music, poetry, art, etc.) when designing the various workshops so that the workshops are both engaging and educational.
- **Secure caterer or other food service option.**
Suggestion: when choosing a caterer, be sure to ask about vegetarian options and accommodating other special dietary needs.
Suggestion: whenever possible, use locally grown, organic food.
Note: many churches provide food service options, often through their women’s groups.
- **Determine the registration process and develop registration form.**
Note: for sample registration forms, visit www.nccecojustice.org.
Suggestion: to save time, make sure your registration software includes ways to print out name tags, registration check-in sheets, and contact lists.
Suggestion: set a registration deadline with a reduced fee to encourage early registration.
- **Design and distribute promotional materials: fliers and brochures.**
Suggestion: promote the event through email and church listservs.
Note: for sample promotional materials, visit www.nccecojustice.org.

- Promote event with local and regional media as well as local and regional faith groups and environmental organizations.
Suggestion: send out email and snail mail information.
Suggestion: consider inviting religious leaders, heads of local and state government agencies, and elected officials.
- Promote tabling opportunities with local and regional environmental organizations and government agencies.
Suggestion: charge a small fee for tabling and exhibit opportunities.
- Determine what audio visual equipment speakers and trainers will need and ensure that it will be available.
- Create a conference evaluation form to be included in registration packets. Feedback is vital!
- A day or two before the event, send a final email out to participants with directions to the location and a reminder of start times.

For the Event Day

- Prepare registration packets.
Suggestion: include registration list with contact information, agenda, worship materials, speaker bios, and advance presentation materials.
Note: to reduce waste, you may want to make presentations and supporting materials available on the web, rather than in hard copy. You may also want to collect and reuse plastic nametag holders after the event.
- Set up appropriate signage inside and outside the location site.
- Set up tabling location.
- Set up registration table.
Note: have blank registration forms on hand for on-site registration and be sure to have petty cash on hand.
Suggestion: have registration list on hand for easy sign in process. Consider dividing the list in half alphabetically and assign two volunteers to check attendees in so that the registration process is efficient.
Suggestion: place the registration table in a visible location.
- Set up dining area.
- Set up audio visual equipment for plenary and workshop speakers and worship leaders.
- Be sure to arrive at the event location early in order to tackle any last minute logistics.
- Assign clean up duties and make sure that you leave the event facility in good shape when everyone leaves.
- Enjoy the event!

Questions to Ask the Facility Manager or Point Person

In addition to walking through the building and seeing the space where various components of the event will take place, you should identify a point person who can answer questions as you go through the planning process. Here is a list of suggested questions:

- How and when we will be able to access the building before the event?
- Will there be a sexton or building manager on duty if we need assistance?
- What are the clean-up procedures for the kitchen and dining facility?
- Where should people park?
- Is there audiovisual equipment available for our use? Will it be set up for us or how will we access it the day of the event?
- Where are the bathrooms, light controls, and thermostats?
- Are there tables available for groups to use when tabling?
- Are there any other events taking place at the facility the same day that we should know about?

Worship Resources

I. HYMNS AND OTHER SONGS

A Short List of Hymns (listed by first lines)

Most are widely available in many versions and hymnals. Some, marked with an asterisk, are adapted from Reformation sources or are modern. They may be found in The Hymnal, 1982 (Episcopal)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation

(Words: Joachim Neander. Melody from *Stralsund Gesangbuch*, 1625.)

For the beauty of the earth

(Words: Folliot Sandford Pierpont. Traditional English melody.)

All creatures of our God and King

(Words from Francis of Assisi. Melody from *Cologne Gesangbuch*, 1623.)

Before the Lord Jehovah's Throne

(Words: Isaac Watts – based on Psalm 100. *Musikalisches Handbuch*, 1690.)

*Lord of all being, throned afar...

(Words: Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1848. Traditional German melody, arranged by Samuel Dyer, 1828.)

Joyful, joyful, we adore thee

(Henry Van Dyke, 1907. Music: Beethoven, adapted by Hedges, 1867.)

*I bind unto myself today

(Adapted from “The Deer’s Cry” by St. Patrick. Traditional Irish Melody.)

How wondrous and great thy works, God of Praise!

(Henry Ustik Onderdone, 1826. Melody arranged from J. Michael Haydn.

Another tune is by Thomas Ravenscroft, *Whole Book of Psalmes*, 1621.)

*Earth and all stars

(Herbert Brokering, b.1926. Music: David N. Johnson, b. 1922.)

All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small

(Cecil Frances Alexander. Traditional English melody, arr. Martin Shaw, 1915.)

*Sing praise to God who reigns above, the God of all creation

(Johann Jacob Schutz, b.1640. Melody from *Une Pastourelle Gentille*, 1529.)

*O creating God, your fingers trace the bold designs of farthest space

(Jeffrey Rowthorn, b.1934. Music: *Wilderness* by Reginald Thatcher, 1868-1957.)

O worship the King, and gratefully sing his power and his love

(From Psalm 104 by Robert Grant. Music adapted from Michael Haydn.)

This is my Father's world

(Maltbie D. Babcock. Music: Franklin K. Sheppard.)

He's got the whole world in his hands

(Traditional spiritual)

Love divine, all loves excelling

(Charles Wesley. Music: John Zundel.)

The last verse, “Finish then thy new creation,” links humans with cosmic fulfillment.

Worship Resources

(HYMNS AND OTHER SONGS CONT.)

Other Songs for Choir or Solo

(These songs are not in most hymnals and will need to be listened to online, though some also have sheet music available online. References given with each song ... and enough words to guide your selection.)

(a) **“As torrents in summer”**

(Words by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; music by Edward Elgar, 1857-1934)

A cappella SSA and SATB arrangements available at: <http://www.musicroom.com/Default.aspx>

As Torrents in Summer half-dried in their channels
Suddenly rise, though the sky is still cloudless
The sky is still cloudless
For rain has been falling far off at their fountains

So hearts that are weary rise full to o'erflowing
And they that behold it marvel and know not
Marvel and know not
That God at their fountains has been flowing.

(b) **“Awake”**

(Words by Peter Mayer) *Sheet music not available. Recording on Earth Town Square, available at:* <http://www.peppermintcds.com/peterdemo.html>

Clouds are swift, rocks are ancient	Waves are crashing, rivers churning
Mountains are high, oceans great	Planets twirling, stars ablaze
Winds are restless, trees are patient	Storms are raging, atoms whirling
And you, my child, are awake	And you, my child, are awake

To perceive these wondrous things
To count the beat of a blackbird's wings
To tell a story, and dance and sing

(c) **“Blue Boat Home”**

(Words by Peter Mayer.) *Sheet music at* <http://www.peppermintcds.com/peterdemo.html>
Recording on Earth Town Square, available at the web site above.

Though below me I feel no motion
Standing on these mountains and plains *(Two other verses follow)*
Far away from the rolling ocean
Still my dry-land heart can say
I've been sailing all my life now
Never harbor or port have I known
The wide universe is the ocean I travel
And the earth is my blue boat home

Worship Resources

(HYMNS AND OTHER SONGS CONT.)

(d) “Swimming to the Other Side”

Online recording, lyrics, and sheet music available at: <http://www.pathumphries.com/stos.html>

CHORUS:

We are living ‘neath the great Big Dipper
 We are washed by the very same rain
 We are swimming in the stream together
 Some in power and some in pain
 We can worship the ground we walk on
 Cherishing the beings we live beside
 Loving spirits will live forever
 We’re all swimming to the Other Side

*(Three verses, each followed
 by the chorus, follow)*

II. ADDITIONAL SERMON STARTERS

“God’s Gift of Water”

Water is so abundant on this planet that some believe the Earth should be called the “water Planet.” In the account of Eden in Genesis 2, a river flows out of Eden to water the garden. Life and water are overflowing. God blows moist breath into the clay to bring the human to life. Water and earth are combined by God to make us humans.

Throughout the stories of the Hebrew Bible water plays a key role. When Hagar and Ishmael are sent into the desert to die, God finds for Hagar a spring. God opens Hagar’s eyes and she sees the well of water at Beer’lahai-roi. (Genesis 21:19). There is enough water for all if we just look.

One of the first treaties or covenants between humans in the Bible is a water-use compact. After Abraham complains to King Abimelech about access to a well, they swear an oath about access to the well’s water and name the well “Beersheba” - the “well of the oath.” (Genesis 21:25-34)

God’s economy is always an economy of abundance; but some circumstances require careful planning.

After the Israelites follow Moses into the desert, they doubt God’s abundance and complain to Moses that they are being brought into the desert to die of thirst. First, they complain of the bitterness of the water at Marah (Genesis 15:24). Then, despite God’s having turned the water sweet and his leading them directly to Elim, a place of 12 springs, they still complain at Horeb that there is no water. So Moses strikes the rock with his shaft; and the waters flow out. Both the account in Numbers 20 and in Exodus 17 agree on the wonderful flow, but in the Numbers 20 version Moses is punished by being denied a sight of the Promised Land ... because he did not give God the credit for bringing the water from the rock.

The abundance recounted in Exodus and Numbers has a simple formula: worship God above all and you will have all that you need. “You shall worship God and I will bless your bread and your water. (Exodus 23:25) In Numbers 24:7 God promises, “water shall flow from his [Israel’s] buckets and his offspring shall have abundant water.”

Many psalms and the Book of Proverbs remind us of God’s bountiful gift of water and our need to share that gift. Proverbs tells us that the one who gives water will get water in return. Chapter 25, verse 25 directs us to give food and drink even to our enemies., and adds: “even if they are thirsty, give them water to drink.”

For Jesus, the sharing of God’s gifts was often exemplified by the use of water. In Mathew 10:24 he says “Whoever gives

Worship Resources

(ADDITIONAL SERMON STARTERS CONT.)

even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I say to you, none of these will lose their reward.”

Despite the abundance of water on the Earth, we humans are doing rather a poor job of sharing the abundance. Concern over the pollution of fresh water and the many efforts to limit access to fresh water has led the United Nations to declare 2003 “The Year of Fresh Water.”

According to the United Nations’ Committee on Economic, Cultural, and Social Rights, water is not just an economic commodity. On November 28, 2002 the Committee declared that access to water is a human right. The Committee defined water as a limited natural resource and a public commodity fundamental to life and health.

“The human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, affordable, physically accessible, safe and acceptable water for personal and domestic uses,” states the Committee document. This is a modern secular way of recognizing that water does not come from our own private ventures but is provided by God for all persons. Those that declare water to be best provided by private efforts are repeating Moses’ heresy of not recognizing God as the giver of water.

Today, some 1.1 billion people do not have access to clean, safe drinking water; and some 2.4 billion do not have adequate sanitation or sewage, according to the United Nations.

The nations of the world gathered for the Millennium Summit in 2000 and again for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002. At both of these summits, the leaders of the nations of the world committed themselves to reducing by half the numbers of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015.

The World Bank estimates that up to \$870 billion will be needed over the next ten years to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation in developing countries. In the absence of international direct funding to improve water access in third world countries, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are demanding that countries privatize water supplies, hoping that the private sector will supply the funds that rich nations refuse to supply. Many business people see that this will not work. A United Methodist businessman at the World Summit on Sustainable Development told the U.S. delegation: “As much as I might like to work in Africa on these problems, I am in business to make money, and I don’t see how I can make money doing this. There is still a role for the U.S. government. I support the U.S. doing more.”

According to the World Council of Churches, 80% of the disease in poor countries is related to poor drinking water and sanitation. Six thousand children a day will contract diseases linked to unhealthy water. By 2005, half of the world’s poorest countries will face moderate to severe water shortages unless the development goals of the Millennium and World Summits are met.

Forty percent of the world’s population goes thirsty every year; but if water is plentiful in your area, it is easy to be unaware of the human costs in other lands. Consider the stark differences in water use. In the United States, for example, it continues to climb while in East Africa water use per capita has, by necessity, been cut in half in the last 30 years. In East Africa women and children must walk an average of 21 minutes for each trip to collect water!.

In Matthew 25 Jesus elaborated on the comments he made earlier (Matthew 10) about providing a child with a drink of cold water. He now declares that one of the ways that both individuals and nations will be judged will be by whether we have provided water and other services “to the least of these, my brothers and sisters”—that is, the poorest members of the human community. The stakes are high. Those who carry out this command are promised eternal life. Those who turn away give themselves into eternal punishment.

Jesus told his disciples that he came that we might have life, and “have it abundantly.” (John 10:10b) His other sayings

Worship Resources

(ADDITIONAL SERMON STARTERS CONT.)

make clear that he meant this as combined spiritual and physical reality. For example, he said that he came not to reject but to fulfill the vision of the prophets—which always included social justice. As his followers, then, we are bidden to work on fulfilling that vision. And indeed he empowers us to do so: for he said, “The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.” (John 14:12)

Let us take heart, then and go forth to fulfill the vision—providing water for God’s children everywhere. We begin at our own table when we give thanks to God for our daily bread (and water) and thus initiate in our hearts our sharing with all in need.

In the words of Isaiah the prophet: “Let all who thirst come to the water. Though you have no money, come; receive grain and eat.” (Isaiah 55:1).

“Sacred Oceans and Seas”

“And God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures’ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm . . . And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas . . .’” (Genesis 1:20-22)

“Yonder is the sea, great and wide; creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. (Psalm 104:25)

In comparison to the land, God’s oceans are indeed vast, occupying 70 % of the Earth’s surface, and they are home to over 90% of all life on Earth. In another translation, the Psalmist (104:25) states, “There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number – living things both large and small.” Even with Scriptural passages such as these to remind us, nevertheless when we talk about the Earth, we are usually referring to just that 30% of the Earth’s surface we call land. We know little or nothing about much of ocean life. Scientists hope to identify many of the estimated million-plus species of life in the oceans (only a small fraction of which have been identified to date) through a comprehensive global study, and expect to discover at least 5,000 new species of fish.

God, with an overflowing love for us and all Creation, has provided an oceanic world as part of our earthly heritage. As God’s stewards, guided by the Spirit that hovers over the waters, humans are to care for the oceans bequeathed to us by God as much as we care for the land and the air. In so doing, we will be sharing with others the generosity of God’s love and the extravagance and beauty of Creation. In awe and deep thanksgiving, we will be answering God’s call as we maintain the productive capacity of the oceans’ waters and the integrity of the oceanic systems that support such an abundance of life and have an untold wealth of beauty.

Current industrial fishing practices and pollution are leading us to the exact opposite of proper Christian stewardship, obscuring the glory to God that God’s ocean creatures proclaim. Nearly one-third of the world’s fisheries have collapsed or are near collapse; and about half are being fished at their maximum level. By over-fishing we are in effect stealing from people in poverty and from future generations. Fish is the primary source of protein for coastal communities and is especially important for those living in poverty. Fish make up about 19% of the total animal protein consumption of developing countries in the world.

As Christians, we are called to be especially concerned for the poor and vulnerable. Marine pollution caused by our personal choices as consumers (especially as drivers), by improper land use and development planning, and by agricultural runoff adversely affects “neighbors” downstream who live near the sea or depend on the oceans for their livelihoods and health. We must begin truly to care for the oceans by insisting on the protection of coastal areas.

By restoring the beauty and regenerative capacity of God’s oceans, we will enlarge our understanding and appreciation of God’s compassion. We will show our caring for our neighbors and for God’s other creatures as we make choices that mini-

Worship Resources

(ADDITIONAL SERMON STARTERS CONT.)

mize the impact humans make on these great bodies of water. Thus we will help “the seas and all that is in them” (Psalm 146:8) to resound to the glory of God.

Globally, the gap between those who will be able to withstand environmental change and those who will not is widening. The poor and disadvantaged will be hurt most by the depletion and degradation of our oceans. However, we will all suffer ... and God’s other creatures will also suffer. Conservation of the waters is an urgent call for prayer and action by all Christians.

The oceans are one of God’s masterpieces and home to an outstanding array of life. God’s oceans also provide for all of us, supplying both food and atmospheric control that all life depends on. We cannot afford to take them for granted or think of them as indestructible,

(Freely adapted from an article by the Rev. Jim Ball in “Creation Care” magazine. Scripture verses are from the New Revised Standard version of the Bible.)

III. Worship and Liturgical Resources

A Call to Worship

(May be read responsively, as indicated by bold type, or else by the worship leader alone.)

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

(Psalm 124:8)

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due God’s Name;
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
**the God of glory thunders,
the Lord over the mighty waters**

(Psalm 29:1-3)

The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.”

And let everyone who hears say, “Come:

And let everyone who is thirsty come.

**Let everyone who wishes
take the water of life as a gift.**

(Revelation 22:17)

A Responsive Prayer

Creator God,
whose Spirit moved over the face of the waters,
**who gathers the seas into their places
and directs the courses of the rivers,**
who sends rain upon the earth
that it should bring forth life:
we praise you for the gift of water.

Worship Resources

(WORSHIP AND LITURGICAL RESOURCES CONT.)

Redeemer God,
 who spared Noah and creatures of every kind
 from the waters of the flood,
 who led your people over dry land through the seas
 and across the Jordan to the land of promise,
 who marks our adoption as children
 with the sign of water:
we thank you for the gift of water

Sustaining God,
 create in us such a sense of wonder and delight
 in this and all your gifts
**that we might receive them with gratitude,
 care for them with love,
 and generously share them with all your creatures,
 to the honor and glory of your name**

(Prayer by the Rev. John Paarlberg)

For the Harvest of Lands and Waters

O gracious Father, who openest thine hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness: Bless the lands and waters, and multiply the harvests of the world; let thy Spirit go forth, that it may renew the face of the earth; show thy loving-kindness, that our land may give her increase; and save us from selfish use of what thou givest, that men and women everywhere may give thee thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Book of Common Prayer, 1979)