

***The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square
Children's Educational Program - "Care for Creation"***

Overall Goal and Background: Leadership at The Sanctuary of Kingdom Square have become aware of the threats to God's sacred waters right here in our sub-watershed. Our rivers and streams are not safe to wade in, fish in, recreate in...this does not give glory to our God. As a community of faith that seeks to answer the call to be good stewards of all of God's Creation, community leaders can contribute to their healing and restoration by educating each other on the issues and solutions.

Strategy: In order to educate the adults in the congregation, we will start by educating their children! We know that our children are the future caretakers of Creation and it is our duty and obligation to prepare them for this sacred role.

Program: The *Children's Care for Creation Educational Program* will be a 3-hour Sunday School educational program that focuses on creation care and specifically how that relates to our waterways. The program will be set up so that teachers can reuse the content/materials and re-teach this program each year. The program will be administered to all young people who attend Sunday School on that particular day. There are roughly 100 students in the program. Nine (9) teachers plus any available assistants will be needed to teach the content. Due to church policies to protect children and the need to have background checks on all adults who interact with the children, only church-approved teachers can work directly with the children.

When: This will take place on one Sunday School session in April or May. Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake and Maryland Sea Grant will teach the teachers how to run these stations at a "training class" a few weeks in advance. This will be a 2.5-hour training class that will teach everyone the stations, the final reflection portion, answer any questions, and put together bins of materials/supplies for the stations. The Sanctuary may also wish to do a field trip with the Anacostia Riverkeeper to provide a hands-on connection to the sacred waters of which we will be discussing.

Format: The format of the program will be a series of educational stations set up in the room where the children normally attend Sunday School. Instead of their regular lesson that day, they will be divided into 9 groups of 8-12 children per group and will rotate through educational stations. There will be 3 different stations, but each station will have 3 teachers each, so that 9 groups can rotate through the 3 stations. We believe this format will allow for a large number of students to actively participate in all activities in a limited amount of time.

The draft schedule for the 3-hour program:

- 15 minutes – Opening reflection/introduction/set the stage
- 5 minutes – split children into groups and get them started at their first station
- 105 minutes - Rotating Stations – 3 stations, 30 minutes each + 5 minutes in between for rotations
 - "Water, Water Everywhere"
 - "Running Through the Watershed"
 - "Don't Break the Web of Life"
 - Optional Station 4: "Carry My Bucket"
- 5 minutes – bring all kids back together for closing blessing/reflection
- 20 minutes – final discussion/blessing

This totals 2 hours, 30 minutes. This leaves time for bathroom breaks or snacks if needed, and if the stations need more time. The content below offers a 4th “optional” station if the teachers want to alter the schedule to use up more of the remaining 30 minutes.

Content:

Opening Reflection - This will be an opening reflection incorporating some scripture readings that talk about the sacredness of Creation and water, and our responsibility to care for it. Teachers can select their own Bible scriptures, or IPC can help with that (there are a multitude of scripture readings!)

Teachers will also be prepared with materials to talk to teach the students about:

- What is a watershed - pictures/maps that can be shown on a screen if available, too
- Where Chesapeake Bay watershed and the Anacostia subwatershed
- Where is your congregation in your subwatershed
- What happens when rain falls on the ground - where does it go?
- The purpose is just to give some baseline information

Lastly, we will talk about the Anacostia River and how dirty it has become. We will talk about our brothers and sisters who depend on the river for food and how humans degradation of the Earth has made it so that the fish in the river are not safe to eat. We will talk about how important it is that we each do our part to care for water so that we can heal the river and the Earth.

Station 1: Water, Water Everywhere - The water that we drink and play in has been on the Earth since its creation, in fact, the water you use today could be the same water that Jesus was baptized in. Water is continuously cycling around the Earth with no beginning or end and no new inputs of water along the way. Plants and animals are composed of 60% water and the amount of water available for their use is very limited in this cycle and as such needs to be care for extensively.

*"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to keep and take care of it."
(Genesis 2:15)*

In this activity children will learn: 1) where water is stored on earth and for how long; 2) how water moves from one storage area to another and in what form; and 3) how much water is available for our use and how it could become polluted (and cleaned) as it moves through the water cycle (hydrologic cycle).

Materials:

- Teacher guidance (provided by MD Sea Grant)
- Pipecleaners
- Water Cycle Die
- Signs to identify the 9 water storage areas
- Colored beads for each storage area

This activity can be done inside (with enough space) or outside and there is the possibility for all 3 groups of children could participate in the activity together. Children will become molecules of water moving around the planet.

Introduction (5min): Children will be introduced to the concept that the water we use today is the same water that has been on the Earth since the start of time - that it is not created or

destroyed - but rather relocated and recycled. They will be asked to identify where we find water on the planet. They will also be asked to reflect on all of the people who have depended water on water in the past...and all of the people yet to be born who will need clean water to survive.

Activity (15min): Children will be told that they are going to become molecules of water - moving through the water cycle - creating their own water cycle bracelet. They will be told the 9 storage areas for water on Earth (examples: surface waters, underground aquifers, water vapor, ice, etc.) and shown the “play area” (names of storage areas will be on laminated signs and will be placed in locations around the room or yard with a small bowl of colored beads - each storage area having a different color bead and a “water cycle” die specific to that storage area). Children will be given a pipe cleaner and split evenly among the storage area. They will then be told to the rules of the game:

1. Water cannot move to just any storage area - and the die represent all the places a water molecule can move from that specific storage area. (example: ice must become an ocean before it becomes water vapor)
2. When told to “go” - the first child at each storage area will put a bead on their pipe cleaner, roll the die, and move to the storage area shown on the die. If there is line of children at that storage area they are to go the end of the line and wait their turn. Since some water molecules spend long periods of time in a storage area (ie. ice glaciers 20-100 years) some die have the word “stay” - a stay keeps the child at that storage area for another turn - after they collect another one of that station’s beads on their bracelet, they go to the end of the line (in some cases children can stay at a storage area for several times in a row).
3. Once at the new storage area - children repeat the process - collect a bead, roll, move.
4. After 8-10 min call a stop to the process - gather children together.

Wrap up (10 min): Have children compare their bracelets. Engage the children with the following questions: What are you seeing? Where did you spend the most amount of time? the least? Where do you think the most amount of water is on the planet? Where does the water we use come from? How does it compare in volume to all the water on the planet? [The message here: we can only drink/use a very small percentage of the Earth’s water - so we must take care of it.] As water moves through the cycle how could it become polluted? How does the cycle naturally clean the water? How are we disrupting the cycle with our pollution?

Teachers will be provided all the materials they need to answer these questions themselves. Students will be given a “water cycle” handout to take home. If the resources are available from year to year - children could also take the bracelets home. Otherwise the bracelets/beads could be disassembled and reused year after year.

Station 2: Running through the Watershed - Stormwater is excess rain that does not soak into the ground or absorbed by trees and plants. Instead it "runs off" into storm drain pipes and flows, untreated, into streams. When impervious surfaces prevent or inhibit the flow of water into the earth, more water is left on the surface, which results in more stormwater. Excess stormwater is one of the biggest threats to the our watersheds. As the water runs over land, it picks up pollutants like oil, fertilizer, pesticides, pet waste and trash. These pollutants impact a stream’s water quality. As the stormwater increases in volume and speed, it causes stream bank erosion and dumps more sediment

into the stream, which harms aquatic insects, fish and animals that depend on the stream for their food and habitat.

"You shall not defile the land in which you live, in which I also dwell..."
(Numbers 35:33)

In this activity children will be able to: 1) describe forms of pollution from urban areas; 2) explain what happens when pollution enters our waterways and why we should care; and 3) identify ways to treat urban runoff.

This activity will take place on a life-sized game board where children will act like drops of water moving across the watershed picking up "pollutants" along the way. Suggested solutions to this pollution problem are also suggested on the game board.

Materials:

life-size game board produced by MD Sea Grant (x3)
pollution stickers/tags

Introduction (5 min): Children will be introduced to the concept of stormwater runoff. They will be asked to identify parts of the landscape where runoff might be more significant than others and some pollutants that likely come from them.

Activity (20 min): Children will become rain drops flowing through the watershed on a life-sized game board. As they move through the game they will collect various pollutants associated with the area of the watershed they are going through. For example, as they follow an "urban route", the rain drop will stop off at places where they will collect "trash", "oil from a car", etc. The pollutants will be signified by stickers or tags that can be affixed to the student's clothing.

After a number of "rain events" we will determine the "dirtiest" droplets and assess the water quality of stream. Students will then decide what 2-3 stormwater capturing practices they would like to employ. Those practices are placed on the game board and the children play the game again and compare their results to the first play. Did they clean up the stormwater? Should they have tried something different? If time permits - they can try a different combination.

Wrap Up (5 min): Have children reflect on the sources and types of pollution presented and their associated treatment practices. They will then brainstorm ways we could get people to take responsibility to care for their watershed.

Teachers will be provided all the materials they need to answer these questions themselves.

Station 3: Don't Break the Web of Life— God created the Earth with a divine plan for balance, with many different creatures, insects, plant species, and resources all woven together into a Web of Life. When that web of life is out of balance, it falls apart. While we were given "dominion" over the Earth, that doesn't mean we use and abuse; it means we must be good stewards and care for all living things and all resources on the Earth.

"How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small." (Psalm 104:24-25)

In this activity children will be able to: 1) understand the importance of native species vs. invasive species 2) understand what a web of life is and how it relates to our faith 3) begin to recognize our careless or thoughtless behavior that pushes the web of life out of balance.

Materials:

Large ball of string
List of Native Species

Introduction (5 min): Students are taught what a native species is and examples of natives species in our region. Example to be shared, a native oak tree can support over 500 different species of insects, animals, and birds by providing badly needed food and shelter for these species.

Activity (15 min): Kids stand in a circle and are assigned a native species that they will be for the activity. A ball of string is held by the first student and he/she re-announces their "species". The student holds the end of the string and then passes the ball to someone across the way in the circle. That person announces their "species". They hold onto their section of the string, and then pass the ball across the way to someone else. This continues until each student is holding a piece of the string. The end result is a "web" created by the string. The teacher then will start eliminating certain species or resources (water becomes undrinkable so the fish dies, or a tree is cut down for development of a shopping mall, etc.). When a species is eliminated, that student drops their piece of the string. The end result is that the web of life falls apart.



Wrap Up (5 min): The teacher will conclude with a group discussion of what are some things we do that destroy the web of life and what are ways we can RESTORE the web of life.

OPTIONAL Station 4: "Carry My Bucket" - We are so blessed here in the US with an abundance of water that we take it for granted. Where does our drinking water come from - and what will happen if that drinking water becomes so polluted that we cannot safely drink it? This activity will expose students to water scarcity issues in hopes of teaching them the importance of caring for our water so that future children do not need to worry about their drinking water.

*"Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?"
(Ezekiel 34:17-18)*

Materials:

Bucket
Cups

Water

Introduction (5 min): Teacher will get the students to think about how easy it is for us to turn on the faucet and have clean water. But, children in other parts of the world have to walk for miles to carry water to their village from a shared well. In California, severe drought is causing water to be very expensive and poor families are spending 25%+ of their income buying bottled water. What will happen in the future - will there always be clean water on the Earth?

Activity (20 min): There is a bucket that is the “well” and is full of water. Working in teams, students have to collect water for their “family” but they have certain obstacles they need to overcome (they need to walk around the room 3 times to represent how far they have to walk to the well, etc.). The objective is to teach them how we are blessed here in the US with water that comes out of our sink and that with that blessing comes great responsibility to not abuse or take this water for granted.

Wrap up (5 min): Teachers will express gratitude for the blessing of clean and readily accessible water. Students will discuss what it might be like to not have water come out of the faucet. They will discuss what are some causes for water scarcity and what actions can each person take to halt causes of scarcity such as climate change, global warming, and water pollution.

Closing Reflection - Renewal through our Baptism - The last portion of the program will give the students time to reflect on what they learned. Staying in their small groups and working with the teacher of the station they just ended on, they will write onto crepe paper what they feel they have done that is not responsible stewardship of our sacred waters. They will share with each other what they wrote down, then all students from all small groups will place their written-down “failings” into a glass bowl at the front of the room. At this point, the students will all direct their attention as an entire group up to the front of the room and this glass bowl. Reflecting on our baptism and the renewal that we receive from God through our baptism (scripture will be provided to guide the reflection here), one volunteer will pour water over all of the crepe paper in the glass bowl. The color of the crepe paper will run off and this will symbolize the forgiveness and renewal we receive from Christ’s unconditional love. It is with this newfound renewal that the students (facilitated by one of the teachers) will discuss as an entire group the things they can do to preserve and care for our sacred waters. There will be discussion about how it pleases God to give Him glory through our actions of stewardship, and how God forgives us for our mistakes as continually strive to live more sustainable lives.