

Creating Our Care of Creation Covenant

Preparations

Arrange a classroom table “altar” with a cloth, a candle, a clear container with water, and a Bible open to Ezekiel 36: 26-28. Before participants arrive, decorate the classroom or meeting space with Legacy of Alabama posters and Wheels from earlier sessions, and newsprint pages from Session Four. Have available a piece of plain paper and a piece of cardstock-weight paper for each participant, with extra paper available. Have colored pencils, crayons, and markers available for those who want to embellish their Covenant. Have an 18” piece of ribbon or raffia for each person.

Reflection: 10 minutes

1. Someone reads the Scripture *I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you, and make you keep my laws and sincerely respect my observances. You will live in the land which I gave your ancestors. You shall be my people and I will be your God.* Ezekiel 36: 26-28 NJB

2. Introduce 3 minutes of silent reflection with the following sentences: God’s covenant with the Hebrew people promises a new heart. How have you experienced a “new heart” during this Watersheds and Warming course? In what ways are you learning to respect the laws and ways of God’s Creation? In what ways can we honor the land of our ancestors, and bequeath it to our children and grandchildren, and into future generations.

3. Invite comments and insights from participants: 5 minutes

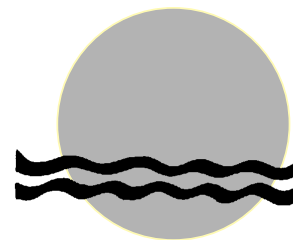
4. Re-read the above passage from Ezekiel.

5. As we begin to prepare our Covenant to be good stewards of God’s gift of all Creation, let us join together in a prayer from our Book of Common Prayer.

*O merciful Creator,
your hand is open wide to satisfy
the needs of every living creature:*

*Make us always thankful
for your loving providence;
and grant that we,
remembering the account
that we must one day give,
may be faithful stewards
of your good gifts;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit
lives and reigns, one God,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

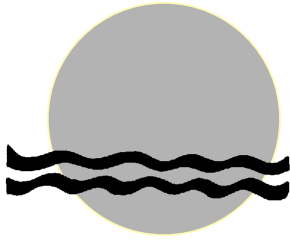
BCP p. 259



*Choose life,
so that you
and your descendants
may live.*

Deuteronomy 19b

“Songbirds, butterflies and perhaps even some of God’s furrier critters may soon trek their way to St. Alban’s Church in Bluff Park, thanks to the environmental efforts of four little girls, all age seven. [The girls] took to heart a lesson they learned in Sunday school about the importance of individual responsibility in caring for God’s creatures. The four young ladies set about to create a habitat for wildlife on the church grounds – and not just any old habitat, but one officially certified by the National Wildlife Federation.” <https://secure.nwf.org/backyard/certify.cfm>
Birmingham News, August 29, 2007 Bluff Park “Extra”



Covenant for Stewardship of Creation

I believe that God made and loves the universe
with all its marvelous order
and the infinite complexities of living creatures.

I believe that God has given humanity the gift and
responsibility of serving as stewards of creation.

I believe that our diocese encompasses
a fragile ecosystem of surpassing beauty
with an unusually rich diversity
of plant, animal and aquatic life.

Therefore, from this day forward
I will strive to be a good steward of creation.

I will educate myself,
my family, friends, and neighbors,
those with whom I work,
and the members of my parish.

I will advocate for wise and just environmental policy.

I will provide and engage in opportunities
for service in the stewardship of earth.

This is my solemn covenant.

Education: 25 minutes

1. Read this introduction. The focus of Session Five is to each create our personal Covenant to “educate the people of the diocese, advocate for wise and just environmental policy, and provide opportunities for service in the stewardship of Earth” (the mission statement of our Diocese of Alabama Task Force for The Stewardship of Creation). We are called into Care of God’s Creation in our personal life choices, in our church community, in our local civic community, and in the larger Earth community. The focus of our Covenant is our Watersheds: our rivers, streams, and lakes and the areas of land that shed water into these local water systems; and Warming, referring to global warming, the impacts of climate change, and our responsibilities.

2. Instruct participants to divide their plain piece of paper into four quadrants. Across the top of the top left quadrant, write PERSONAL. Across the top of the top right quadrant write PARISH. Across the top of the bottom left quadrant write COMMUNITY, and across the top of the bottom right quadrant write GLOBAL. (Have a sample to show them.) Invite participants to read aloud the Covenant for Stewardship of Creation, each reading a phrase in turn. Celebrating this Covenant will be the focus of Session Six (our next session), which will include a Stewardship of Creation Covenant Prayer Service. Today we are each preparing our personal Covenant scroll.

3. Spend 10 minutes, as a group, following up on your Session Four consensus as to what activity you are choosing to implement in your parish. Discuss what you might each write in the PARISH quadrant of your Covenant. Refer to Session Four newsprint for your prioritizing process. Choose roles for implementing your project.

4. Allow 10 minutes, in silence, for participants to reflect quietly, and then write out, their Covenant commitments for the four areas on their plain piece of paper. Invite them to choose from the broad range of possibilities surrounding them in the room, or from other opportunities that may occur to them.

5. Once participants have completed their lists, ask them to prioritize their choices in each quadrant, and number them, beginning with "1" as their first choice in each of the four areas. Next, ask them to rewrite their choices, in order of priority, on the card-stock-weight paper. This will be their Covenant Scroll for Session Six. (Have a sample to show them.) Encourage them to use colored pencils, crayons, and markers to decorate their Covenant.

6. Give each person an 18" piece of ribbon or raffia, and ask them to roll up their Covenant and tie it with the ribbon or raffia. Have them write their name on an outside edge of the scroll.

Action: 5 minutes

1. Share that participants are welcome to take their scroll home, add to it if they would like, and bring it back next

session for a Prayer Service in celebration of our Care of Creation Covenant. The scrolls will be the focus of the Session Six Covenant Prayer Service.

2. Invite participants to bring something that symbolizes how their relationship with Watersheds and Warming has changed during this course of study. These items will decorate the table "altar" for the Covenant Prayer Service.

3. Pray one, two, or all of the scripture/prayers to celebrate your time together.

I set before you life and death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live, in the love of Yahweh your God, obeying his voice, clinging to him; for in this your life consists, and on this depends your long stay in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob he would give them.

Deuteronomy 30:19b-20 NRSV

When the animals come to us
asking for our help,
will we know what they are saying?

When the plants speak to us
in their delicate, beautiful language,
will we be able to answer them?

When the planet herself
sings to us in our dreams,
will we be able to wake ourselves,
and act?

Gary Lawless

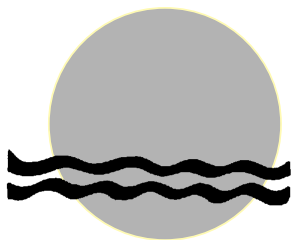
Earth Prayers from Around the World, p. 87

We give you thanks, most gracious God,
for the beauty of earth and sky and sea;
for the richness of mountains, plains, and rivers;
for the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers.

We praise you for these good gifts,
and pray that we may safeguard them for posterity.

Grant that we may continue to grow
in our grateful enjoyment of your abundant creation,
to the honor and glory of your Name,
now and forever. Amen.

Thanksgiving for the Beauty of the Earth, BCP p. 840 #8



*A stream
is a nursery
for all types
of organisms.*

*Be in awe
of God's creation.*

Resources: *Wading in the Waters*

<https://aww.auburn.edu/> or 1-888-844-4785. This is the site for Alabama Water Watch, a significant contributor to this Guide. It offers among other things an online newsletter with information of news as well as activities related to our watersheds. As you move forward with your covenants you may wish to keep in mind staying in touch with water issues in Alabama by book-marking and regularly checking this site.

<http://awrri.auburn.edu/index.php> This is the site for the Alabama Water Resources Research Institute at Auburn University. Check out The River of Words page by clicking the button in the left hand box. This page displays poetry and art from K-12th graders from Alabama and around the nation that were entered in an annual contest depicting rivers in words or pictures. This is also a site to explore for updated information about sustainable living as you live into your covenant.

Watershed Stroll Camp McDowell Environmental center in Nauvoo, AL - <http://www.campmcdowell.com/>

As a class, or with friends and/or family, one of the best ways to connect with your watershed is to explore it.

Senses Stroll

Each participant needs a pen and an 8-1/2" by 11" piece of paper. Each person folds their paper in half top to bottom, then in half side to side. Open the paper and there will be 4 quadrants. On the top of the top left quadrant write SEE; top right, TASTE; bottom left, TOUCH; bottom right, SMELL. Go outside to an area where you will have space to walk in a natural setting for about 10-15 minutes. Ask participants to be in silence, and to write on their paper what they are aware of through their senses.

When the time is up, participants can gather outside, or return to the classroom to share what they experienced through noticing God's Creation through their senses.

Stream Activities:

Follow a stream near your church to see where it goes.

Sit by the stream and journal about your experience.
Then share your reflections.

Write a group poem about the stream. Have each participant write a word or phrase on a slip of paper. As a group, rearrange the papers to create a poem.