

# Celebrating 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 Revelation 22:1-2,17. Provide a basket for the Covenant scrolls. As participants arrive, invite them to add their symbols of how their relationship with Watersheds and Warming has changed during this course.

## Reflection: 15 minutes

Someone reads the Scripture  
*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let everyone who hears say, “come.” Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.*

Revelation 22:1-2,17

Remind the group that we have been studying water as a gift of life, and delving into our varied responses to, and responsibilities with, this gift. In this Session we come together to express our Covenant commitment to Care for God’s Creation. Participants can read the following prayers in turn, with all saying the responses. Have the lights dimmed and invite the group to listen for the images, words or phrases that resonate with them in light of what we have learned and experienced during this course. We will have an opportunity to share our responses at the end of the Prayers of the People.

## Prayers of the People

Beloved God, known to our creation by a thousand different names, we thank you for giving us power through your Spirit to reveal your life to the world: strengthen, bless and guide all that we do.

*Guide us in your grace.*

We thank you for your creation, and pray for the earth that you have given us to cherish and protect; nourish us in your love for all that you have made.

*Guide us in your grace.*

Every part of this earth is sacred,

*Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore.*

Every mist in the dark woods,

*Every clearing, every humming insect is holy.*

The rocky crest, the grasses of the meadow, the beasts and all the people,

*All belong to the same family.*

Teach your children that the earth is our mother;

*Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth.*

The water’s murmur is the voice of our father’s father.

*We are part of the earth and the earth is part of us.*

The rivers are our brothers; they quench our thirst.

*The perfumed flowers are our sisters.*

The air is precious,

*For all of us share the same breath.*

The wind that gave our grandparents breath also receives their last sigh,

*The wind that gave our children the spirit of life.*

This we know, that all things are connected,

*Like the blood which unites one family.*

All things are connected;

*Our God is the same God, whose compassion is equal for all.*

For we did not weave the web of life;

*We are merely a strand of it.*

Whatever we do to the web

*We do to ourselves.*

Guide and bless us in our work and in our play, and shape the patterns of our political and economic life, that all people may share in the fulfillment of your creative work.

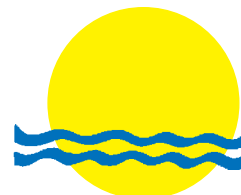
*Guide us in your grace.*

We thank you for the gift of life, with all its blessings and sorrows. Shield the joyous, and comfort and strengthen those in any need or trouble. Bless those who will be born today and those who will die, that, joining with the company of all your saints, we may rejoice in one unending song of praise.

*Guide us in your grace.*

These, our prayers and thanksgivings, we offer to you, O God. Let us give thanks for the web of all of life in the circle that connects us.

*Thanks be to God, the God of all, the God known by a thousand names, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*



Session Six  
Celebration



*Never doubt  
that a small group  
of thoughtful  
committed citizens  
can change the world.  
Indeed,  
it is  
the only thing  
that ever has.*

Margaret Mead

The Prayers of the People Source: *The Witness of God's Mercy* compiled by Jeffery W. Rowthorn; author, Peter Holroyd based on words of Chief Seattle, with permission.

(Remain silent for a full minute.)

Take 10 minutes for the group to share images, words or phrases that resonated with them, in light of what we have learned and experienced during Watersheds and Warming.

**Education: 15 minutes**

Leader: We now come full circle as we reconnect with the deep time story of our Universe as a context for Celebrating our Care of Creation Covenant. We have a brief version of the Story to share, as a way to again immerse ourselves in this awesome story of God's Creation.

(To the leader: Use the chart on the facing page for the Arm Span Universe Story, which is an abbreviated version of the Story from Session One. Invite participants to stand, with enough room to stretch their arms out from their sides in a full open-arm span.)

Leader: The Cosmic Story on the span of our outstretched arms is an adaptation of the deep time Story, developed by Heather Montgomery for use at the McDowell Environmental Center. ([www.campmcdowell.com](http://www.campmcdowell.com)) As I read selected emergings from the Universe Story, we can point to the places on the span of our outstretched arms that represent the proportionate Story of the Cosmos, Earth and us.

Referring to the chart on the facing page, begin as follows.

With the pointer finger of your right hand, touch the tip of the end of the middle finger of your left hand. This represents 14 Billion Years Ago, the Flaring Forth of the Universe. Now touch your left wrist. This is 12.5 Billion Years Ago, Galaxies, Stars and Supernovas. Now with your left hand pointer finger, touch a place on your right arm half way between your right shoulder and elbow. This is 4.6 Billion Years Ago, Grandmother Star Births the Solar System. Touch a place 1.4 inches closer to your right elbow, 4.3 Billion Years Ago, Earth and Moon Formation. Continue with this same kind of direction through to the conclusion of the Story chart on the facing page.

**At conclusion of the arm-span Cosmic Story, leader continues:**

Our outstretched arms now hold the story of the embrace of God's Care of Creation. It is in this embrace that we now look again at our Covenant commitments. An appropriate gesture would be to lift our arms in thanksgiving as we pray, *Thanks be to God.*

Invite participants to return to their chairs.

Location on arm	Distance on a 6 foot arm span	Number on Walk	Emerging
Left finger tip	0 inches	1 14 BYA	Flaring Forth
Left wrist	7.29 inches from beginning	2 12.5 BYA	Galaxies, Stars and Supernovas
½ way between right shoulder and right elbow	22 inches from the end	3 4.6 BYA	Grandmother Star Births Solar System
1.4 inches closer to right elbow	1.4 inches closer to the end	4 4.3 BYA	Earth and Moon Formation
Another 1.4 inches closer to elbow	1.4 inches closer to the end	5 4 BYA	First Rain and Simple Cells
1 inch before right elbow	.4 inches closer to the end	6 3.9 BYA	Photosynthesis: Earth Eats Sunlight
2 inches before right wrist	9.7 inches from the end	7 2 BYA	Oxygen-loving Cells
Middle of right palm	4.9 inches from the end	8 1 BYA	Sexual Procreation
Just before middle knuckle of longest finger	2.7 inches from the end	9, 11, 12, 600,540, 510 MYA	Ecosystems Eyes Backbone
Middle knuckle of longest finger	2.4 inches from the end	13 450 MYA	Plants and Animals Move onto Land
Between last two knuckles	1.6 inches from the end	16,18 330,300 MYA	Insects Pangaea
Last knuckle	1 inch from end	19 225 MYA	Dinosaurs
Base of fingernail	.6 inches from end	21 150 MYA	Birds and Flowers
Middle of fingernail	.3 inches from end	24 65 MYA	Dinosaurs Extinct
Tip of finger/nail	.03 inches from end	29 150,000 YA	Modern Human

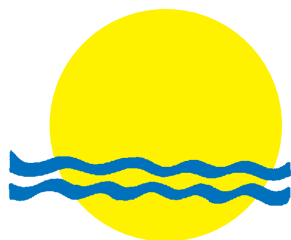
**Action: 15 minutes**  
**Blessing of Covenants**

1. Have 4 sheets of newsprint on the wall or on easels, titled PERSONAL, PARISH, COMMUNITY, and GLOBAL. On PARISH newsprint, write group action choice from Sessions Four and Five.
2. Give each participant a sheet of paper. Instruct them to fold it in half and then in half again, making four sections. Label each section with one of the four categories listed on the newsprint.
3. Invite everyone into a full minute of silence as they reflect upon and then write down their first step toward implementing their Covenant, one first step in each of the 4 categories.

4. Invite everyone into another full minute of silence as they reflect upon their first step in each of these areas.
5. Then invite participants to come up to the newsprint, all at the same time, and write their specific Covenant commitment FIRST STEPS, one on each of the newsprint sheets. They can keep their personal copy to take home with them as their reminder.
6. With everyone again seated, look at the PARISH newsprint sheet, and clarify how they will implement this commitment. Take the time to be specific and schedule any gatherings or meetings. Assign tasks to specific people, including time-lines.

Choose someone to coordinate if that is needed.

7. Now dim the lights again and invite everyone into a full minute of silence. Then ask the people to come up one by one, and place their personal Covenant in the basket on the decorated Covenant table, and remain standing in a circle around the table.
8. When everyone has done this, the leader invites the group to conclude the Watersheds and Warming sessions by praying the Stewardship of Creation Covenant together.



### *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.

### **Closing Prayers**

Participants extend their right hand toward the Covenant scrolls in the basket, and together pray the following Closing Prayer:

*Gracious God, Creator of the land, water, and the sky we ask that you bless our covenant commitments: come and renew the face of the whole earth. Give us new purpose to care in love for the world of your making, and turn our hearts and the hearts of the whole human family to care in thanksgiving and reverence for the world you have given; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Participants then take their personal scroll from the basket.

Leader:

Let us go forth in peace to love and serve in Care of God's Creation.

Response:

Thanks be to our Creator God.

*Glory be to God  
whose power,  
working in us,  
can do infinitely more  
than we can ask  
or imagine;  
glory be to God  
from generation  
to generation  
in the Church  
and in Christ Jesus  
for ever and ever.*

*Amen.*

Ephesians 3:20-21 NJB