

A Life of Grace for the Whole World

A study course on the House of Bishops' Pastoral Teaching on the Environment



"The gracious invitation of the incarnate Word to live, in, with, and through him, a life of grace for the whole world, that thereby all the earth may be restored and humanity filled with hope."

The House of Bishops' Pastoral Teaching

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FORWARD TO THE CURRICULUM

In September 2011, The House of Bishops of The Episcopal Church, while meeting in Province IX in Quito, Ecuador, issued a pastoral teaching that challenges the Church to face the urgency of the environmental crisis and to take bold and faithful action as an expression of our love for God and God's creation. This is the first time the House of Bishops has released a pastoral teaching about the environment. The 2011 Pastoral Teaching is substantially the document that was drawn up and drafted by the House of Bishops' theology committee over a two year plus period of work. We are deeply grateful to these gifted theologians for their efforts, which ultimately led to the development of this curriculum.

The teaching we produced invites the Church to recognize the salvation of *all* creation as the work of Christ in the world. It presses us to recognize that because we are called to live in Christ and with Christ, we in turn seek to live "a life of grace for the whole world." It encourages the church to respond in terms that have always been central to its Christian faith and life: repentance, worship, redemption, salvation, obedience and holiness. This is important, for it is calling the church to be faithful to itself.

At the heart of the Bishops' teaching is a call to the Church to recognize a real and present challenge of our day:

We are especially called to pay heed to the suffering of the earth. . . . We [human beings] are engaged in the process of destroying our very being. If we cannot live in harmony with the earth, we will not live in harmony with one another.

This is the appointed time for all God's children to work for the common goal of renewing the earth as a hospitable abode for the flourishing of all life. We are called to speak and act on behalf of God's good creation.

Empowering the church to both speak and act on behalf of God's good creation is what this pastoral teaching. The unity of voice from this episcopal leadership on this matter speaks to an increasing understanding of the connection between faith and the environment. No longer can we dismiss the issues of climate change and other issues of environmental degradation as foreign to the church and our shared faith as Episcopalians.

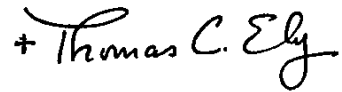
Recognizing the importance of the House of Bishop's Teaching, and how much more urgent the call is today, I worked with several Bishops and institutions in the Episcopal Church to help create a curriculum which invites reflection, prayer and engagement in the Bishops' call for a flourishing life for all creation. I am grateful to each of them for their support in this project. Please see the list of acknowledgements on page 3 for a complete list of supporters.

This curriculum provides abundant tools for the discovery, discussion and decisions central to the House of Bishops' Teaching. The curriculum for adults and youth of the same title, *A Life of Grace for the Whole World*, is a helpful companion to the pastoral teaching that will enable groups of Christians to engage the connection between their faith and the call to renew the earth. Church leaders and teachers will find abundant resources for leading formation groups of adults and youth through these sessions. Camp leaders will find opportunities for engagement in an issue important to youth, while retreat leaders can adapt this curriculum for deep and meaningful reflection in a 1-2 day long retreat.

For just such a time as this, *A Life of Grace for the Whole World* is much needed guidance from the Episcopal Church's House of Bishops on how the church can make faithful and fruitful responses to these pressing issues of environmental destruction and injustice. This curriculum is an invitation for Christians to engage this clarion call for living lives of grace for the whole world.

I invite you to respond to this invitation for those who walk the earth today and for all future generations.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Thomas C. Ely". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

The Right Reverend Thomas C. Ely, Bishop of Vermont

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WELCOME TO FACILITATORS

The fact that you are reading this suggests that you may have an interest in how Christianity intersects with the environmental crisis. You may be a skeptic, a newly open seeker about this issue, or a full-fledged member of the environmental choir. But if this subject interests you at all, you are part of a rising tide. A growing number of people in the Church want to explore and understand the connections between present day environmental realities and core issues of Christian faith, morality and spirituality.

At the same time, others within the Church remain convinced that these issues are largely political and have no place in congregational life. These Christians believe that the Church should focus solely on the welfare and salvation of human beings, separate from the rest of creation.

Despite these voices, more and more people in the Church are seeking and finding ways to align their faith with the pressing issues of environmental (and human) health and wellbeing. Making this connection is important, for the world needs the Church to respond in ways that embody our commitment to love God and our neighbor and to bear witness to the Risen Christ.

The House of Bishops' Letter

In September 2011, The House of Bishops of The Episcopal Church, while meeting in Province IX in Quito, Ecuador, issued a pastoral teaching that challenged the Church to face the urgency of the environmental crisis and to take bold and faithful action as an expression of our love for God and God's creation.

The Episcopal bishops meet twice a year and from time to time (but not often) they produce a pastoral teaching such as this one. This is the first and only time that the House of Bishops has released a pastoral teaching about the

environment. This pastoral teaching invites the Church to recognize the salvation of *all* creation as the work of Christ in the world. Because we are called to live in Christ and with Christ, we seek to live "a life of grace for the whole world."

The pastoral teaching encourages us to address these issues in terms that have always been central to Christian faith and life: repentance, worship, redemption, salvation, obedience and holiness.

At the heart of the Bishops' teaching is a call to the Church to recognize a real and present challenge of our day:

We are especially called to pay heed to the suffering of the earth. . . . We [human beings] are engaged in the process of destroying our very being. If we cannot live in harmony with the earth, we will not live in harmony with one another.

This is the appointed time for all God's children to work for the common goal of renewing the earth as a hospitable abode for the flourishing of all life. We are called to speak and act on behalf of God's good creation.

A Life of Grace for the Whole World

This study course is intended to encourage Christians, "To speak and act on behalf of God's good creation." It also reminds the Church that in doing so, we are also speaking and acting on behalf of God's good Church, which is blessed and called as co-workers in God's unfolding plan "to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20).

These study sessions are designed to make connections between the reconciling work of God in the Church and the reconciling work of God in all creation. Using the Bishops' pastoral teaching, the Bible, and the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, participants will discover

important ways that the Church can respond faithfully to the mounting social and environmental challenges of our time.

Goals for These Sessions

Each of the five sessions corresponds to a section of the Bishops' Pastoral Teaching.

Session 1 – A Time for Repentance and Renewal (paragraphs 1-5)

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communities can take to respond to the commitments listed by the House of Bishops.

How to Use this Course Material

This course of study is designed to require little or no advance preparation by participants. However, the facilitator will need to make selections before each meeting. Each session is designed to last one hour. We have provided more material than a group can cover in a single hour, so that facilitators have an ample range of materials from which to select. Facilitators are asked to review the materials beforehand and to choose whichever options best fit the context. If time allows, the sessions can be greatly enhanced if the facilitator is able to review the additional resources about faith and life that are listed in *Additional Resources* and widely available on the Internet.

Each session includes direct quotes from the pastoral teaching, followed by a series of reflections and questions. The copy of the Bishops' teaching that is provided with this material numbers the paragraphs for easy reference. Participants are also invited to explore how the Church's prayers and worship, especially those found in the Book of Common Prayer, can help us experience and express our reconciliation with God and God's creation. Opportunities for short Bible study reflections are also included, to help us draw from our biblical heritage.

Each session follows the same format:

Welcome and Review: Opening prayer and review the previous session(s).

Engage: Introduce the pastoral teaching selection and explore with reference to our life experience.

Encounter: Encounter relevant biblical and liturgical sources related to the topic.

Connect: Connect the session topic to particulars in our faith life.

Commit: Identify our own understanding, intentions and commitments.

Wrap-up: Looking ahead, optional hymn, and closing prayer.

Suggestions for Presenting the Materials and Fostering Conversation

Discussing environmental issues has the potential to become highly politicized. We risk shifting from prayerful conversation toward arguments and conflict over politics and economics. To avoid this we recommend that the facilitator consider the following methods of group guidance:

As the session leader, commit yourself beforehand to keep the focus on Christ, faith and the Church. If someone tries to engage the group in extensive political or scientific debate, be prepared to return the conversation to Scripture, faith and the role of the Church.

Our intention in these sessions is to create a sanctuary for careful and respectful listening and speaking. We are called to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

Although Christians share a commitment to social and environmental justice, we may disagree regarding the best way to implement it and may hold quite different political views. Our intention is to explore the values we share, to create a space in which to understand our differences, and to listen together for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

During the first session, establish group covenantal guidelines that create space for holy conversation and true dialogue. A list of suggested

points for the covenant can be found in *Appendix 1*. [MBJ: I don't have Appendix 1] During subsequent sessions, the facilitator should remind participants of the covenant during each review period.

Remind participants that the first disciples also argued and disagreed – this is natural and is part of our faith history! To help foster a conversation of hopefulness rather than of anger or fear, remind participants that God's grace is alive and active in the world, even when it seems hidden from us.

SESSION 1: A TIME FOR REPENTANCE AND RENEWAL (PARAGRAPHS 1-5)

Objective: To recognize and respond to the Bishops' call for confession, compassion and attention to the present crisis of the earth, and to identify ways to speak and act on behalf of God's good creation.

Background for Facilitator

We know that . . . we are now demanding more than [the earth] is able to provide. Science confirms what we already know: our human footprint is changing the face of the earth and because we come from the earth, it is changing us too. We are engaged in the process of destroying our very being. (From the Bishops' teaching)

In 2011, author and environmental activist Bill McKibben published a new book with the title, *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*. The title was not a typo. McKibben deliberately changed the spelling of "earth" to "eaarth" in order to illustrate the point of the book: human activity has already altered the living systems of planet earth to such an extent that the planet is fast becoming a different place; it is less hospitable to human thriving and to the ongoing existence of countless other creatures. Future generations will have to adapt to living on a planet that is very different than the one on which you and I were born.

This means that the Church is living, worshipping, serving and proclaiming in a world in many ways unlike the one inhabited by earlier generations. We face many converging trends, from climate disruption to deforestation and species extinction, from toxins and pollution to a growing scarcity of fresh water and arable land, all of which, along with a growing worldwide

population, have together altered the earth in fundamental and in some cases irrevocable ways.

Given the new reality in which we find ourselves, the Church needs to revisit its inherited faith and practice. How do we apply our values and teachings in the midst of this unprecedented situation? The language, priorities, and practices of our parents and grandparents cannot function unaltered in the context of an altered earth. In other words, the faith of the past generations that made sense on planet earth may need some adjustments in order to be the faith for future generations who live on planet *eaarth*. As the Church has done in the past, we are called to reengage and reimagine Christian faith for our own day.

The Bishops' pastoral teaching acknowledges this reality:

Christians cannot be indifferent to global warming, pollution, natural resource depletion, species extinctions, and habitat destruction, all of which threaten life on our planet. Because so many of these threats are driven by greed, we must also actively seek to create more compassionate and sustainable economies that support the well-being of all God's creation. We are especially called to pay heed to the suffering of the earth.

In many ways, these are new challenges presented to the Church, and they call the Church to reconsider its role as both participant in the problems and actor in the solutions. Greed, of course, is nothing new, and acts of compassion have always been hallmarks of a faithful life in Christ. But what is new for human societies today is that the consequences of our choices have unparalleled consequences. Continuing with business as usual is already causing great suffering worldwide and could inflict unspeakable harm in the very near future.

Larry Rasmussen uses a biblical metaphor to capture this essential idea:

Our present condition is new wine without new wineskins. This does not bode well. . . The new wine is not the vintage we expected. It is a planet undergoing sufficient change in its core surface processes that it tallies as geophysical, and not only economic, political, cultural, or religious, change; change of such an order of magnitude that some scientists have named it a new geological age.¹

This is the focus of Session One: To help participants recognize the relevance of these issues to the life of the Church today and to invite new forms of repentance and renewal that connect to these realities. The impact of our species on the planet in just a few hundred years is comparable to the changes wrought in geologic time, over hundreds of thousands of years. While the planet has undergone such extensive changes before, it has never experienced them in such a short span of time. As Christians, how are we to live in this new age? What does the gospel of God's salvation say to us in this day? What does it call us to say to others about these things?

Prepare Before the Session

- Copies of the Bishops' Pastoral Teaching for each participant (**Note:** save paper by reusing copies each week)
- Copies of the *Ash Wednesday Litany of Penitence Grid* handout from *Appendix A* for each participant (if you choose that option)
- Newsprint and markers for the facilitator
- Book of Common Prayer for each participant
- Bible for each participant.
- Hymnals (optional)

¹ Larry Rasmussen, in an address at the Festival of Faiths in Louisville, Kentucky, 2010.

WELCOME

Introductions (as necessary): Take the opportunity to invite participants, as they introduce themselves, to state in one sentence their hope for this class and/or their reason for attending.

Invite people to join you in prayer, and read the opening prayer.

Opening Prayer (BCP, page 827):

Almighty and everlasting God, you made the universe with all its marvelous order, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures: Grant that, as we probe the mysteries of your creation, we may come to know you more truly, and more surely fulfill our role in your eternal purpose; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ENGAGE (10 MINUTES)

Distribute a copy of the *Bishop's Pastoral Teaching* to each participant, and introduce it using concepts from the *Welcome to the Facilitator* and the *Background for Facilitator* sections from this curriculum. Explain that all the Episcopal bishops meet twice a year and from time to time (but not often) they produce a pastoral teaching such as this one. In September 2011, while meeting in Province IX in Quito, Ecuador, they produced this pastoral teaching on the environment. *This is the first time that the House of Bishops has ever written a pastoral teaching about the environment.* Tell the participants that these sessions will reflect on this teaching, along with the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Bible, as texts that invite the Church to respond to today's pressing environmental challenges.

How long will the land mourn, and the grass of every field wither? For the wickedness of those who live in it the animals and the birds are swept away, and because people said, "He is blind to our ways." (Jeremiah 12:4)

Lead a discussion asking questions like: **What do you think Jeremiah saw when he looked around at the land? Do you think the land can mourn? If so, what does the mourning look like?** Ask, **If Jeremiah were here today, looking with his prophetic eyes, what would he see and say? How are decisions in our day affecting the land, the grass, animals and birds?**

Then ask, **Are these things creating a form of exile for us? In what ways?** (Answers may include: we are now separated from land, from healthy bodies and ecosystems, from the web of life).

Option 2: Ash Wednesday Litany of Penitence

Lead the participants in a discussion of the *Ash Wednesday Litany of Penitence* (BCP p. 267-8). Give each participant a prayer book, and open the books to the confession on page 267. Then provide each participant with the *Ash Wednesday Litany of Penitence Grid* handout from the *Handouts* page, along with pens or pencils.

Say something like, **The Bishop's teaching points**

Idea: Place a globe in the middle of the group, or post a picture of the earth in sight of the group, and invite the participants to use this as an aid in reflection during the reading of the litany.

us to confession, and it challenges the Church to make this confession in light of the urgency of the

environmental crisis. Read paragraph two from the Bishop's teaching:

The mounting urgency of our environmental crisis challenges us at this time to confess "our self-indulgent appetites and ways," "our waste and pollution of God's creation," and "our lack of concern for those who come after us" (Ash Wednesday Liturgy, Book of Common Prayer, p. 268). It also challenges us to amend our lives and to work for environmental justice and for more environmentally sustainable practices.

The Bishops' Teaching [2]

Then say, **Let's take a few minutes to consider this confession in the light of this urgency. Let's read through the litany together, with this question in mind: "What particular things might we confess as individuals, as a church and as a society, in light of the Bishop's teaching?"** Point their attention to the handout and say, **As we read through the litany together and confessions come to mind, let's use this grid to organize these confessions into items that are for individuals and items that are for society, according to the four sections:**

- Personally Done
- Personally Left Undone
- Publicly Done
- Publicly Left Undone

We will pause after each response, and provide a moment for you to record what confessions come to mind.

Read through the litany, and pause after each response to provide time for reflection and recording of thoughts. Then ask, **What issues for confession came to mind for you in each category? Where are some opportunities for more public confession? Personal confession?**

CONNECT (15 MINUTES)

Say, **An ancient Christian practice of confession and repentance is called “Examen.” Let’s consider how we might apply this practice to these issues of our day.** *Note: Depending on the size of the group, you may choose to break your participants into two or more groups for this exercise.*

Read the following quote from the pastoral teaching:

We are especially called to pay heed to the suffering of the earth. The Anglican Communion Environmental Network calls to mind the dire consequences our environment faces: “We know that we are now demanding more than [the earth] is able to provide. Science confirms what we already know: our human footprint is changing the face of the earth and because we come from the earth, it is changing us too. We are engaged in the process of destroying our very being. If we cannot live in harmony with the earth, we will not live in harmony with one another.”

The Bishops’ Teaching [4]

Say something like, **The bishops are very clear that a proper response to today’s situation involves taking time for reflection. Let’s take a moment to try out a practice of reflection, repentance and confession.** Invite participants to reflect on this through the practice of Examen.

The Examen and God’s Creation

Say something like: **St. Ignatius developed various spiritual practices to bring individuals and communities closer to God. One of those practices is called the “Examen,” which many people use today as a daily spiritual practice. This practice provides a way for people to pause, get in touch with their thoughts and feelings, and then examine them. Today we will use a variation of the Examen in order to consider how, “We are engaged in the process of destroying our very being,” and how, “If we cannot live in harmony**

with the earth, we will not live in harmony with one another.”

Invite the participants to quiet reflection and silence, and slowly read the following questions, pausing with silence after each set for reflection:

Recall a time when God seemed especially present to you in the natural world. Maybe you sensed God’s presence when you were out in nature, or when you were with an animal or pet.

What was the essence of that presence? How did it affect you? What did it show you or reveal to you?

What feelings are stirred up in you now as you recall that presence? Do you notice gratitude, or hope, or joy?

Are you aware right now of any separation from that presence? What enhances your connection with God? What closes it down?

Consider ways we are “engaged in the process of destroying our very being” and ways we are out of harmony with the earth and each other. How might a deeper sense of the presence of God serve to heal these things?

Pray silently for harmony with God and all of God’s creation. Look toward tomorrow with hope for a deepening harmony with God and all of God’s creation.

Invite everyone to sit quietly, allowing the experience to be absorbed. Then invite everyone to spend some time sharing in pairs (or as a whole group, if you prefer).

COMMIT (10 MINUTES)

Read the following paragraph from the Pastoral Teaching:

This is the appointed time for all God's children to work for the common goal of renewing the earth as a hospitable abode for the flourishing of all life. We are called to speak and act on behalf of God's good creation.

The Bishops' Teaching [1-2]

Say, **Consider what it means to “speak and act on behalf of” something.** Ask, **Think about a time when someone spoke or acted on your behalf. (Perhaps a time when someone came to your defense or spoke up to support you.) What was that situation? What was involved in that person's speaking or acting on your behalf? How did you feel and respond?** Ask one or both of the following questions: **In what ways is this an appointed time for you personally to speak and act on behalf of all creation? How is our day an appointed time for the Church to speak and act on behalf of all creation?**

WRAP-UP

Looking to the week ahead, invite the participants to:

- Take their copy of the Pastoral Teaching home, and read paragraphs 6-7 before the next session.
- Continue the individual spiritual practice of Examen or the Reconciliation of a Penitent (if that option was used). Instructions on how to practice the Examen can be found at: <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen>.
- Go outside this week for a contemplative walk in as natural and undisturbed a place as they can find. Invite them to gaze, smell, touch, and listen, and to be open to God's presence.

Optional Closing Hymn: “There's a Wideness in God's Mercy” (Hymnal 469, 470)

Closing Prayer (said together):

May God give us the grace to accept the gracious invitation of the incarnate Word to live in, with, and through Him. May we be part of a life of grace for the whole world, that all the earth may be restored and humanity filled with hope. Rejoicing in your works, O Lord, send us forth with your Spirit to renew the face of the earth, that the world may once again be filled with your good things: the trees watered abundantly, springs rushing between the hills in verdant valleys, all the earth made fruitful, your manifold creatures, birds, beasts, and humans, all quenching their thirst and receiving their nourishment from you once again in due season.* AMEN

*(Psalm 104)



SESSION 2: A TIME FOR GRACE FOR THE WHOLE CREATION (PARAGRAPHS 6-7)

Objective:

To recognize that God's grace and plan for redemption encompasses all creation and to embrace the whole creation as fellow recipients of grace.

Background for Facilitator

In the end, we will protect only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.

- Baba Dioum

These words from the Senegalese environmentalist, Baba Dioum, succinctly describe the goal of this session – to recognize that God's love and purpose encompasses all creation and to join in that love. This quote has also been adapted to say,

We will not save what we do not love, and we cannot love what we do not know.

So, at the heart of the work of embracing grace for all creation is to "familiarize" (make family) ourselves not just with our human kin, but also with the whole family of God's created order. For that, the Church will need to invite God's good creation more fully into its liturgy, prayer and fellowship, which are the places where the Church learns how to identify and be family.

What would help the Church to expand its understanding of family to include the entire Earth-community? Perhaps the first step is to identify the places where the Church traditionally celebrates love and family. When does the Church most feel like a family? Is it in excellent worship? Fun fellowship? Shared service? Where are words of love and appreciation commonly spoken? During the peace? At

potlucks? How is grace and salvation most openly recognized and celebrated? In Church music? The Eucharist? The presence of children? These are the times and places that make Church life together become *sacred* life together. How can the Church expand its sacred community to more fully encompass our non-human kin?

Affirming the biblical witness to God's abiding and all-encompassing love for creation, we recognize that we cannot separate ourselves as humans from the rest of the created order.
– The Bishop's Pastoral Teaching

This work cannot be done just by offering occasional lessons for children or by holding an annual celebration of St. Francis. This kind of transformation must engage the daily and weekly life of the Church. Our task is to recognize the salvation of *all* creation as the work of Christ in the world and to consider it as the very work of *being* Christ in the world. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu has said, "The act of reconciling us to all of God's Creation is Christ's supreme work." The Church is therefore challenged to include in our worship, prayer, fellowship, and service the proclamation of Christ's redemption and reconciliation of all things.

If it is true that we will save only what we love, the converse is also true: we will be saved only by what we love. By inviting the rest of creation into our worship, prayer and life together, we in turn will learn to love them and to recognize their holiness and worth. As we acknowledge their holiness, we will more fully recognize the holiness of all things, including our own lives.

Prepare Before the Session

- Book of Common Prayer for each participant
- Bible for each participant

- Copies for each participant of the Lord's Prayer from the New Zealand BCP, from Appendix A.
- Copies for each group of *The Bible Story for a Six Year Old* from Appendix A (if that option is selected).

WELCOME

Welcome the participants, and particularly any first time participants. Then open the class by saying something like, **Let's take a minute to check in with each other about how we responded to last week's session. Since we last met, have you thought about what was discussed or have you practiced the Examen? What was your experience of that?**

Opening prayer (from A New Zealand BCP), said together:

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be; Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe. The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world. Your heavenly will be done by all created beings. Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and testing, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

ENGAGE (15 MINUTES)

Option 1: Do All Dogs Go to Heaven?

Ask something like, **Have any of you ever had to talk with a grieving child (or adult) about whether or not his or her beloved pet or animal friend would be with God after it died? What did you say? What was the other person's response?**

Option 2: Dog and Cat People

Create the following on a flip chart:

I am a:

- 1) Dog person
- 2) Cat person
- 3) Other (please specify)
- 4) None of the above

Do a quick survey of the class. Then say, **The Humane Society estimates that of the 6-8 million dogs and cats that are kept in animal shelters each year, about 50% are euthanized. Ask, Do you think that God is concerned about these animals? If God is concerned, would it make sense within the Church's mission for us to visit these animals, or to advocate for their rights and well-being, just as we would for humans? Why or why not?**

After either option above, create the header and list below on the flipchart or marker board:

From the Bishops' teaching:

- 1) God's loving concern
- 2) God's redemptive love

Read or have someone read the following excerpt from paragraph six of the Bishop's pastoral teaching:

In creating the world God's loving concern extended to the whole of it, not just to humans. And the scope of God's redemptive love in Christ is equally broad: the Word became incarnate in Christ not just for our sake, but for the salvation of the whole world.

The Bishops' Teaching

Then say, There are two important concepts in this paragraph from the teaching that we want explore today. These are: (1) God's creative love is extended to the whole of creation, and (2) God's redemption in Christ also extends to the whole of creation.

Ask, What is your response to these teachings from the Bishops? Are they surprising and new to you, or old and well established for you? How surprising might these teachings be to others in the church?

ENCOUNTER (15 -20 MINUTES)

Have the reader continue reading the remainder of 6-7 from the Bishops' teaching.

In the Book of Revelation we read that God will restore the goodness and completeness of creation in the "new Jerusalem." Within this new city, God renews and redeems the natural world rather than obliterating it. We now live in that time between God's creation of this good world and its final redemption: "The whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for . . . the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:22-3).

The Bishops' Teaching [1-2]

Say, In these two paragraphs, three Scripture texts are mentioned: 1) The Genesis account of a good creation, 2) The Book of Revelation, where God

will create a "New Jerusalem," and 3) Romans 8, where the whole creation waits.

Option 1: Telling the Bible Story

On a flip chart or marker board, place the header and major sections for a "Bible Brochure":

The Story of the Bible Brochure	
Title:	
Front Cover:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •
Inside pages:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •
Back page:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •

Describe the following scenario for the participants: **The church has asked us to create a brochure that they can take on a mission trip that tells the Bible story to those who have had no previous exposure to the Christian faith. For them, English is a second language. Lets see if we can outline the basic elements of our brochure.** Allow participants to share what they think belongs in the outline, and fill it out as best you can in 5 minutes or so.

Distribute Bibles to the participants and ask a participant to read Genesis 1:20 – 31. Say something like, **The blessings in this passage describes God's loving concern for the created order. It describes the intended relationships God established for all creation.** Ask, **Who is included in the blessings in these verses?** (Possible responses: Swarms of living creatures, birds of every kind, living creatures of every kind, cattle,

humans, etc.). **What does the blessing include in these verses?** (Possible responses: Thriving and expansion for all creatures and humans, a role of dominion for humans, every green plant for food to all). Ask, **Do you believe these blessings still apply? How do you think we should interpret the word “dominion”?** Does this passage give human beings a license to exploit and destroy the natural world? (That is how it has sometimes been interpreted in the past.) Could to have “dominion” (*dominus*, Latin: Lord) mean to exercise a loving oversight, to love the world as God loves it?

Say, **Now let’s consider the second important concept in the paragraph from the teaching, which is how God’s incarnation and salvation extends to the whole creation.**

Have someone read Romans 8:22-23. Ask, **How well did our descriptions of the Bible story include what is described here in Romans? What changes or additions would we need to make to it in order to align with this text? Is there anything else that our Christian faith and imagination invite us to add?**

Have someone read Revelation 21:2. Ask, **How well did our descriptions of the Bible story include what is described here in Revelation? What changes or additions would we need to make to it in order to align with this text? Is there anything else that our Christian faith and imagination invite us to add?**

Option 2: The Bible Story for a Six Year Old

“If you can't explain it to a six year old, you don't understand it yourself.” — Albert Einstein

Distribute to the participants *The Bible Story for a Six Year Old* handout from the *Appendix*, and Bibles for each participant. Then provide these instructions: **We are going to imagine how we can explain the story of the Bible to a six year old. Since all good stories have a beginning, middle and**

end, we should consider how the following scriptural passages can be reflected in our narrative.

1. Genesis tells of the beginning

Note: If time is short, you may also want to create three groups, with each group assigned to only one part of the story – beginning, middle or end.

2. Romans 8 tells of the middle

3. Revelation tells of the end

Divide the room into work groups or partners, or work together as a group. Take no more than ten minutes to produce your gospel story. After the participants are finished, have each group share the story they have produced.

Ask, **Where is the human family in our storylines? Where is the non-human family and the rest of creation in our storylines? What aspects of our Scripture texts are included in our stories? What aspects remain missing?**

CONNECT (15 MINUTES)

Distribute a Book of Common Prayer to each participant.

Option 1: The Catechism of Hope

Present this scenario: **You are having lunch with a friend, and the conversation turns to the question, “What does your faith teach you to hope for?” How would you answer?** Take a few minutes for the participants to answer the question.

Then have the participants turn to page 861 in the *Book of Common Prayer*, and say, **Let’s consider the answers to this question from the catechism in our prayer book.** Have someone read the first two sets of questions and answers:

The Christian Hope

Q. *What is the Christian hope?*

The Christian hope is to live with confidence in newness and fullness of life, and to await the coming of

Christ in glory, and the completion of God's purpose for the world.

Q. *What do we mean by the coming of Christ in glory?*

A. By the coming of Christ in glory, we mean that Christ will come, not in weakness but in power, and will make all things new.

Ask, **How did your response correspond with the answers provided in the prayer book? What did you include beyond the prayer book answer? What did you exclude?** Then ask, **Considering our sessions about the Bishops' teaching so far, how might you modify the answers to these questions to reflect the Bishop's teaching?**

Option 2: The Eucharistic Story

Have participants turn to Eucharistic Prayer A in the *Book of Common Prayer*, starting at page 362. Say something like, **Each time the church celebrates the Eucharist, we are telling the story of the Gospel of Christ. We tell a story of what God has done, what God is doing and what God will do.** Have one of the participants read the following from the prayer book:

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

Ask, **What is the story being told here? What is the beginning, the middle and the end?** (Answers may include: God made us for himself, there was

a fall into sin, Jesus came to reconcile us and the whole world). Ask, **In what ways does this story include the whole creation? In what ways does it leave it out? How might the story be made more inclusive of all creation?**

COMMIT (10 MINUTES)

On a flip chart or marker board, place the categories:

Inclusion and Celebration:

- 1) Worship and Fellowship
- 2) Mission and Service

Read this sentence from the teaching aloud:

Affirming the biblical witness to God's abiding and all-encompassing love for creation, we recognize that we cannot separate ourselves as humans from the rest of the created order.

Say something like, **Listed on our chart are ways we share life together as Christians. Let's consider ways we can include the rest of creation to live in Christian hope. Considering these two categories of our lives together, what are some ways we can, as a community of faith, begin to broaden our inclusion and celebration of the rest of the created order in the Christian hope?**

Collect responses from the participants,

WRAP-UP

Looking to the week ahead

Invite the participants to:

- Take their copy of the Pastoral Teaching home, and read paragraphs 8-12 before the next session.
- Continue the individual spiritual practice of Examen, if that was the option used, or the individual spiritual practice of the prayer of reconciliation, if that was the option used.

- Spend time reflecting on the Eucharistic story (BCP p. 361 ff) and how it might invite the whole creation into its story.
- Go outside this week for a contemplative walk in as natural and undisturbed a place as they can find. Invite them to gaze, smell, touch, and listen, and to be open to God's presence.

Optional Closing Hymn: *All Creatures of our God and King* (Hymnal 400)

Closing Prayer (said together):

May God give us the grace to accept the gracious invitation of the incarnate Word to live in, with, and through Him. May we be part of a life of grace for the whole world, that all the earth may be restored and humanity filled with hope. Rejoicing in your works, O Lord, send us forth with your Spirit to renew the face of the earth, that the world may once again be filled with your good things: the trees watered abundantly, springs rushing between the hills in verdant valleys, all the earth made fruitful, your manifold creatures, birds, beasts, and humans, all quenching their thirst and receiving their nourishment from you once again in due season.* AMEN.

*(Psalm 104)



SESSION 3: A TIME FOR JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY (PARAGRAPHS 8-12)

Objective:

To understand how individual and communal actions can create damaging eco-justice problems that disproportionately affect the poor, and to encourage participants to seek to live more just and sustainable lives.

Background for Facilitator

The Bishops' Pastoral Teaching offers an opportunity to consider how our society's corporate and institutional systems, combined with individual lifestyle choices, affect the environment, and how "privileged Christians" are called to respond to these harmful impacts with honest reflection and conversion. As the Bishops' teaching clearly asks for honest debate and reflection on how our values mesh with our spiritual calling, this session provides a wonderful opportunity for us to deepen our appreciation of what it means to follow Jesus and to be stewards and guardians of God's creation.

A key topic explored in this session is "eco-justice." The World Council of Churches describes eco-justice as linking environmental and social justice, so that we address both humanity's destruction of the earth and the abuse of economic and political power that cause poor people to suffer disproportionately from the effects of environmental damage. This concept of eco-justice encourages people of faith to notice and take into account the impacts of our choices on both the environment and humanity. Jesus calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves, and in this session we will look at our definition of "neighbors" and how our actions affect them.

This session presents thought-provoking concepts and it challenges some traditionally held notions of success and wealth. Such conversation may lead some participants to feel

defensive about their own choices. As suggested in the introduction to this program, the facilitator should support the conversation by keeping it focused on right relationships with God and God's creation, and not let it get diverted by debates about secular models of success. We are also invited to consider that perfection is not what God asks of us; as Thomas Merton notes, "the desire to please [God], in fact pleases [God]." At the heart of our reflection throughout this session is our desire to please God and to grow into a deeper relationship with our Creator.

Prepare Before the Session

- Copies of the Bishops' teaching for each participant (note: save paper by reusing copies each week)
- Newsprint and markers
- Book of Common Prayer for each participant
- Bible for each participant
- Hymnals (optional)
- Copies of the opening and closing prayer
- Paper, pencils, markers or colored pencils

WELCOME AND REVIEW

Invite the participants to reflect briefly on any ideas and concepts from the previous sessions that stood out to them. Ask, **Have you had any experiences this week that somehow made connections with what we have encountered in the previous sessions?**

Opening Prayer (from *Enriching our Worship*), said together:

God of all mercy,
We confess that we have sinned against you,
opposing your will in our lives.

We have denied your goodness in each other,
in ourselves, and in the world you have created.
We repent of the evil that enslaves us,
the evil we have done,
and the evil done on our behalf.
Forgive, restore, and strengthen us
through our Savior Jesus Christ,
that we may abide in your love
and serve only your will. Amen.

ENGAGE (15 MINUTES)

Have a participant read paragraph 9 of the *Pastoral Teaching*.

The Church has always had as one of its priorities a concern for the poor and the suffering. Therefore, we need not agree on the fundamental causes of human devastation of the environment, or on what standard of living will allow sustainable development, or on the roots of poverty in any particular culture, in order to work to minimize the impact of climate change. It is the poor and the disadvantaged who suffer most from callous environmental irresponsibility. Poverty is both a local and a global reality. A healthy economy depends absolutely on a healthy environment.

The Bishops' Teaching

Say, **Let's consider what the bishops have to say about the poor and disadvantaged in these paragraphs.** Say, **In this paragraph, the Bishops remind us of our historical connection to working with what they name as "The poor and disadvantaged."** Let's take some time to understand just who these are. Ask, **What are some local concerns and issues around poverty and disadvantage in our community? Who are the groups most affected?**

Say, **Let's also consider the word "suffering" from the teaching. To what suffering do you think the Bishops are referring? How has the Church responded to this suffering in the past, and how is it responding today?**

Ask, **Why would the poor and disadvantaged suffer more from environmental threats?** (Possible answers may include how toxic incinerators and dumps are often sited in lower income neighborhoods, how low-income people may be unable to afford to insulate, cool, or heat their homes, if they own one, or to move away from rising seas; how poor countries suffer most from drought or collapsed food systems, etc.).

ENCOUNTER (15-20 MINUTES)

Option 1: The Land, the Poor and the Wild Animals

Distribute Bibles to the participants and say, **The Bishops state in paragraph 11 that we are called "to move from a culture of consumerism to a culture of conservation and sharing."** Let's consider an example of how such conservation and sharing was part of the covenant with Israel. Have someone read Exodus 23:10-12:

Exodus 23:10-12

For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.

For six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your home-born slave and the resident alien may be refreshed.

Say, **In the covenant God made with Israel, the people were to "Honor the Sabbath and keep it holy" by taking rest each week on the Sabbath day and by granting rest to their servants, aliens in the**

land, and their farm animals. In this passage we see a description of the “Sabbath Year,” which was to be observed once every seven years. Without getting into a debate about how practical keeping such an observance may or may not be in our own day, let’s consider the principles behind the covenant arrangement.

Ask, **What principles do we see underlying this covenant arrangement with the people of Israel? What reasons are given for keeping this practice?** (For instance, that the poor may eat, wild animals may eat, farm animals may be relieved, and slaves and aliens may be refreshed). **What do these principles suggest about how we might view the role of work and production in society? What objections do you think have been raised to this Sabbath practice over the years?**

Ask, **In what ways are these same principles applied in our day in our society? How do we limit work and provide relief?** (Answers may include: tax relief for charities, social programs for the poor, Sunday “blue laws,” the 40-hour work week, child labor laws, national parks). Ask, **In what ways are we failing to honor these principles in our day in our society?** (Answers may include: commercial overfishing, farming land to exhaustion, agri-business destroying small farming communities, cutting forests to extinction, destroying habitat, etc.). Ask, **In what ways is this an issue for Christians? What internal or external pressures prevent us from taking a Sabbath, a day of rest? How do you imagine that our lives as individuals and as a society might change if we honored the Sabbath? How might our relationship with God change?**

Option 2: Exploring Justice in the Baptismal Covenant

Distribute copies of the *Book of Common Prayer*, and ask everyone to turn to page 303. Read responsively the following sentences from the Baptismal Covenant, with one participant reading as the *Celebrant*:

Celebrant: Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People: I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People: I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People: I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People: I will, with God’s help.

Say, **The Baptismal Covenant is recited during the Easter vigil and on days when there are baptisms. Recall the last time you recited the Covenant? What was the occasion?**

Ask, **What does the word “covenant” mean to you?** (Possible answers include: agreement, contract, relationship, promise made by God.) **Where are some places covenants occur in the Bible?** (Possible answers include: God’s promise to Abraham as the first of many future generations, and God’s promise to Noah not to destroy the earth again.)

Say, **This covenant involves a promise to, “Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?” Ask, Who do we consider to be our neighbors? Given the focus of this study program, how can we expand our view of whom we include as neighbors?** (Possible answers may include: people presently suffering from social and environmental injustice, other-than-human creatures, the land itself, future generations.) Ask, **How might an expanded view of “neighbor” change how we serve Christ by loving our neighbors?**

Say, Justice is not only responding to immediate needs but also involves questioning and challenging any systems that perpetuate injustice. Ask, What are examples of how the Church, congregations or individuals have challenged systems of injustice in the community or around the world? (Possible answers may include: civil rights movements, abolition, suffrage, child labor, apartheid, LGBTQ movement, human trafficking). Ask, Can you think of examples of members of the Church or communities of faith that are speaking out today and taking action against environmental injustice? Given today's environmental challenges, where else might the voice of the Church be needed?

Say, I am going to read aloud the definition of eco-justice from the World Council of Churches. As I read the definition, listen for what words or phrases stand out to you.

Read aloud the following:²

The linking of environmental and social justice to challenge both humanity's destruction of the earth and the abuse of economic and political power which result in poor people having to suffer the effects of environmental damage.

Then ask, What did you hear in this definition? How would you put it in your own words? What relationship do you see between the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor? How does this understanding of eco-justice compare with the ideas of justice in the Baptismal Covenant?

CONNECT (15-20 MINUTES)

Option 1: Honest Debate about Sustainability

Read aloud the following paragraph (#11) from the pastoral teaching:

Privileged Christians in our present global context need to move from a culture of consumerism to a culture of conservation and sharing. The challenge is to examine one's own participation in ecologically destructive habits. Our churches must become places where we have honest debates about, and are encouraged to live into, more sustainable ways of living.

The Bishops' Teaching

Say, The Merriam Webster dictionary defines privilege as "the advantage that wealthy and powerful people have over people in society." Ask, Given this definition, do you think that you are one of the "privileged"? Why or why not? Are there people in your community and congregation who may not be privileged? Who are people that are not privileged around the world?

Ask questions like: What type of issues does the church have honest debates about? What things are we not willing to debate honestly? Why do you think the Bishops ask for an "honest debate" about sustainable living? Is there something dishonest about the way we as a Church have spoken so far about sustainable living? Ask, What role should the Church have in encouraging "more sustainable ways of living?"

Option 2: Exploring the Heart of the Current Environmental Crisis

Invite someone to read aloud the following paragraph (#12) from the pastoral teaching:

² <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/eco-justice>

The wealthier nations whose industries have exploited the environment, and who are now calling for developing nations to reduce their impact on the environment, seem to have forgotten that those who consume most of the world's resources also have contributed the most pollution to the world's rivers and oceans, have stripped the world's forests of healing trees, have destroyed both numerous species and their habitats, and have added the most poison to the earth's atmosphere. We cannot avoid the conclusion that our irresponsible industrial production and consumption-driven economy lie at the heart of the current environmental crisis.

The Bishops' Teaching

Say, the Bishops' Pastoral Teaching lists a series of significant worldwide environmental problems that have been caused by wealthier nations, and points out that these same wealthy nations are now asking developing nations to take action to alleviate the crisis. Ask, what do you think of the Bishop's statement that wealthier nations have forgotten their complicity in environmental degradation?

Say, The bishops also note that a consumer-driven economy lies at the center of our environmental crisis. How do we as individuals contribute to a consumption driven economy? (Possible answers may include: the focus on shopping as a pastime, the drive for the newest technology, demand for cheap goods, ownership as status symbol, etc.)

Next for Either Option 1 or 2

On a marker board or flip chart, place the following:

Prayer of Confession:

1) Goodness Denied

2) Evil that Enslaves Us

3) Evil We Do

4) Evil Done on Our Behalf

Read the following from the prayer of confession in the *Welcome* portion of this session:

We deny the goodness in each other. We repent of the evil that enslaves us, the evil we have done, and the evil done on our behalf.

Say, **The confession we read prompts us to make confession in each of these four areas of life. Let's think of specific examples for each of these confessions, in light of our discussions today.** Lead the participants in naming examples for each category on the list.

Ask, **In light of today's discussion, what types of evil "ensnare" us?** (Possible answers could be our focus on possessions, our need to succeed as all costs, our sense of privilege, etc.) Ask, **Thinking about today's discussion, what types of evil have been "done on our behalf"?** (Possible answers might include industrial pollution, uncontrolled development and land use, etc.) **In considering this prayer of repentance from an eco-justice perspective, what ways can the Church and its members respond to the systematic causes and problems of environmental degradation and injustices?** (Possible answers may include lobbying and advocating, divestment from fossil fuel, public witness at marches and protests, modeling individual and congregational sustainable practices. etc.)

COMMIT (10 MINUTES)

Say, **At the center of Christian belief is the promise of new life in the Resurrection. Resurrection is not limited to the eternal realm but is rather a constantly renewing life in the Kingdom here and now. Let's reimagine that life, which God is inviting**

us to enter and experience in the present moment.

Hand out paper, pencils and markers or colored pencils. Invite participants to draw a heart in the center of the paper. Then read the following from the teaching:

God calls us to die to old ways of thinking and living and be raised to new life with renewed hearts and minds.

The Bishops' Teaching

Say, **Let's do an exercise of the heart. Take a few minutes to reflect in silence on ways that we can die to old ways and be raised into new life. In the area surrounding the heart, jot down some of the "old ways" of thinking to which God is calling us to die, individually and collectively, in the context of the environmental crisis.** (Possible ideas could include consumer driven habits, greed, pride, ignoring the needs of others, imagining that the economy can flourish even if the environment is destroyed, imagining that human beings are separate from the rest of creation, etc.)

After a few minutes, say, **Inside the heart space, write what "renewed minds and hearts" might look like in your life as an individual and in the life of your faith community. Keep in mind that this is not a "to do" list but simply an exploration of new ways of living.** (Possible ideas could include deepening prayer life, more direct contact with nature and other creatures, Sabbath keeping, etc.)

Give participants about 4-5 minutes to reflect and write or draw on their paper. As time allows, ask them to share their writings either in small groups or with the larger group.

WRAP-UP

Invite participants to take home their "heart reflections" and to put them in a visible place as a reminder of renewed hearts and minds.

Invite participants to go outside this week for a contemplative walk in as natural and undisturbed a place as they can find. Invite them to gaze, smell, touch, and listen, and to be open to God's presence.

Ask participants to read paragraphs 13-16 for next week's session.

Optional Closing Hymn: "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee" (Hymnal 376)

Closing Prayer (said together)

May God give us the grace to accept the gracious invitation of the incarnate Word to live in, with, and through Him. May we be part of a life of grace for the whole world that all the earth may be restored and humanity filled with hope. Rejoicing in your works, O Lord, send us forth with your Spirit to renew the face of the earth, that the world may once again be filled with your good things: the trees watered abundantly, springs rushing between the hills in verdant valleys, all the earth made fruitful, your manifold creatures, birds, beasts, and humans, all quenching their thirst and receiving their nourishment from you once again in due season.* AMEN.

*(Psalm 104)

SESSION 4: A TIME FOR RENEWAL OF ANCIENT PRACTICES (PARAGRAPHS 13-16)

Objective:

To identify paths for healing through the Church's ancient traditions of fasting, Sabbath-keeping and mindfulness, and to apply them in our individual lives and in our churches.

Background for Facilitator

In the Bishops' teaching we read:

Ancient wisdom and spiritual disciplines from our faith offer deep resources to help address this environmental crisis. Time-honored practices of fasting, Sabbath-keeping, and Christ-centered mindfulness bear particular promise for our time.

In this session, we want to consider these promising resources for our day and time. It is important to help participants make connections between the environmental ills manifest in the world and the condition of our souls, which such practices as fasting, Sabbath and mindfulness address. Some participants may already be fairly adept at understanding how such practices contribute to godliness in general, and may recognize their place in the Christian spiritual life. But most people may not understand the connections between these traditional practices and our relationship to the environment.

What are these connections? Why do the Bishops suggest that these practices bear "particular promise for our time"? What is it about "our time" that particularly calls for the renewal of these holy habits? How do they help us to "turn ourselves around, and come to think, feel, and act in new ways"? In this session, the goal is not to train participants in these practices or to fully explain them, but rather to make the connections between our actions and their spiritual roots.

This session will focus primarily on Sabbath. The Bishops' teaching suggests that Sabbath is a universal principle anchored in the very act of creation and an urgent truth we need to recover in our day. It is not simply a covenant marker of Israel nor a day of rest and worship for Christians, but rather a core principle of justice and right relationship rooted in creation itself, reaffirmed by Jesus in his ministry, and culminated in the final act of reconciliation to God through Christ of all creation.

The enjoyment of Sabbath is the joy of those who are rich in grace and not bound to idols, which demand endless work and striving. The abundant grace given at creation is the freely given grace of God; thus all of God's creatures and all of creation are fellow participants in the Sabbath. This truth was established in the law of Israel, which not only kept Sabbath as the people of God, but which also granted Sabbath to the alien, the animals and the land. It was also made clear by Jesus, who condemned lives of grasping acquisition and challenged the hierarchies of power and consumption.

In this we recognize how our rampant consumption and the consequent exhaustion of living systems are a violation of God's Sabbath rest in creation. To practice Sabbath is to declare that God continues to care for all living things, that God's kingdom has drawn near and we live in the anticipation of it. Sabbath offers an alternative story to the "American Dream" story that is so very much with us. It offers a path to obedience to Jesus, who called us to consider the lilies and to decline the building of bigger barns (Luke 12). It offers a path to empowerment through trust and contentment rather than struggle and competition. It offers a path of discernment for choosing what is wise and a prophetic voice about core issues of our day.

Prepare Before the Session

- Copies of the Bishops' teaching for each participant (**note:** save paper by reusing copies each week)
- Copies of the Participant Handout for each participant
- Newsprint and markers for facilitator
- Book of Common Prayer for each participant
- Bible for each participant
- Hymnals (optional)

Welcome

Briefly ask for comments or thoughts from the previous session. Then say, **This session is about returning to Christian spiritual practices with a particular focus on Sabbath keeping.**

Opening Prayer

Say, **In the Bishop's teaching, we find a challenge to consider the spiritual practices of Sabbath keeping, Christian mindfulness and fasting. These practices are about learning to be awake and aware in the present moment, and to experience a sense of rest and contentment. Rather than rushing into the session with words and questions, let's begin with a few minutes of silence to rest and be content. I invite you in the silence to bring awareness to your breath and to the present moment. I invite you to rest in the present moment, breath by breath, breathing in God's presence. After the silence, I will read a prayer.**

Invite the class to sit for a few minutes of silence to feel the presence of God. After the silence, lead the group with the *Prayer for Quiet Confidence* (#59 BCP, p. 832).

ENGAGE (15 MINUTES)

Discuss the moment of silence with questions like: **What was it like for you to sit in silence? Did you notice thoughts and feelings arising in the silence? Did you have a sense of breathing in God's presence?**

Ask, **What issues and concerns sometime separate us from abiding in rest and contentment?** (Answers may include: job stress, family behavior, family wellbeing, health concerns, conflicts in relationships, etc.) Ask, **How are these things rooted in anxiety or fear?** (Answers may include: fears of: rejection, failure, sickness, suffering, grief, regret, poverty, loneliness, etc.).

Say, **Today we will consider the call from our Bishops to reflect on our sense of separation from God, and to notice how this sense of separation affects our relationship with the rest of creation. We will then explore how Christian spiritual practices can lead us into a deeper connection with God and God's creation.**

Have a participant read paragraph 16 from the teaching:

The practice of Christ-centered mindfulness, that is, the habitual recollection of Christ, calls believers to a deepened awareness of the presence of God in their own lives, in other people, and in every aspect of the world around us. Such spiritual perception should make faithful people alert to the harmful effects of our lifestyles, attentive to our carbon footprint and to the dangers of overconsumption. It should make us profoundly aware of the gift of life and less prone to be ecologically irresponsible in our consumption and acquisition.

The Bishops' Teaching [16]

Say, **Let's explore some moments or events when we felt especially aware of the presence and closeness of God in our lives. See if you can bring to mind a moment when you felt close to God. What was happening inside you or outside you when you had that experience? Have the participants share stories and insights for a few minutes. Then ask, How did those moments of awareness affect your sense of safety, contentment and anxiety?**

ENCOUNTER (15-20 MINUTES)

Option 1: Exploring Sabbath in the Bishops' Teaching

Say, We are going to read a section of the Bishop's teaching on the ancient disciplines of fasting, Sabbath-keeping and Christ-centered mindfulness. As we hear the passage read, listen carefully for what the Bishops are calling the church to do.

Have the class read the following paragraphs from the Bishops' teaching:

Our current environmental challenges call us to ongoing forms of repentance: we must turn ourselves around, and come to think, feel, and act in new ways. Ancient wisdom and spiritual disciplines from our faith offer deep resources to help address this environmental crisis. Time-honored practices of fasting, Sabbath-keeping, and Christ-centered mindfulness bear particular promise for our time.

Sabbath-keeping is rooted in the Book of Genesis, where the seventh day is the day in which God, humans, and the rest of creation are in right relationship. In our broken world, keeping the Sabbath is a way of remembering and anticipating that world for which God created us. Sabbath requires rest, that we might remember our rightful place as God's creatures in relationship with every other creature of God. Such rest implicitly requires humans to live lightly on the face of the earth, neither to expend energy nor to consume it, not to work for gain alone, but to "savor the grace and givenness of creation."

The Bishops' Teaching [13-15]

Ask, **What do you hear the Bishops' asking the church to do?** (Answers may include: forms of repentance, new thinking, feeling, actions, take up ancient practices). **Why do you think the Bishops chose these particular disciplines with regard to the environmental challenges of our**

day? (Answers may include their connections to: over-consumption of resources, anxious hurry, seeking happiness in status and possessions, etc.)

Say, **The Bishops' teaching puts a particular emphasis on Sabbath-keeping.** Ask, **What are the connections between Sabbath keeping and living lightly on the face of the earth?** (Answers may include: remembrance of the care of God, a reminder of contentment and safety, a respite from feeling driven to accomplish, achieve, consume, and dominate). **What are some ways we can join in "neither expending energy nor consuming it"?** (Answers might include: slowing down, choosing simplicity, being content with less, hurrying less, loving more, playing more, working less).

Option 2: Bible Study of Exodus 20:8-11

Distribute Bibles to the participants, and ask them to turn to Exodus 20:8-11. Read the passage to the group:

Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.

Say, **This is the fourth of the Ten Commandments that God gives to Israel.** Ask, **What is the reason given to Israel for remembering the Sabbath in this passage?** (Answers may include: God also rested at creation, God is creator of all and cares for all, God blessed rest).

Ask, **Who is included in this rest?** (All classes of people, the animals and the stranger.) Say, **In our urban society, the working animals, slaves and immigrant labor are not always visible to us. But we do have them. Who are these in our day?** (Answers may include: the working poor, office

workers, migrant workers, production lines of meat processing, store clerks, etc.) **How might honoring Sabbath rest affect and even transform social relationships and commerce?** (Answers may include: all classes of people and all living things are seen as rightful participants in God's graceful rest, the poor have rights to leisure, commerce is subjected to limits, animals have intrinsic rights).

Next, for either option 1 or 2 do the following: Explain the following insights about the Sabbath:

In these passages, we see that Sabbath is not only a personal practice. It is also corporate and social. It is not simply about a person's individual practice of rest and spirituality. Sabbath is about creating justice and right relationship among all created beings. Sabbath declares that all creation is valued not just for what it produces. All things have intrinsic rights as fellow recipients of God's graceful care. The purpose of the Sabbath is not recovery of personal strength but the recollection of God. It is the practice of restoring right relationships: worker to work, farmer to field, peasant to leisure, and animals to labor.

Write a heading on the newsprint, "Sabbath Remembering."

Sabbath Remembering

Say, Remembering is at the heart of Sabbath-keeping. Ask, what does Sabbath keeping tell us to remember about life, relationships, commerce and priorities? Make a list on the board of responses from the participants. Be sure to include such things as: life is more than work, all creatures are not valued simply for their utility, all creatures and classes of people have intrinsic rights, and commerce has limits.

Ask some follow-up questions like, **How are we doing in our world today with these values and principles? If we were to honor the Sabbath, not simply as a day, but as right relationship to all creatures, what would need to change in our work life and patterns of consumption? How could we make these changes within our faith community?**

CONNECT (10-15 MINUTES)

Say, In our society, people often respond to the greeting "How are you?" by saying, "I am so busy!" Ask, Do you recall the last time someone responded to you like this? Say, Sometimes we say this as a mark of pride and a symbol of success. We feel that if we are very busy, then we must be doing something right.

Distribute paper and pencils to all participants. Have them divide the paper into two columns. On the left column label it "How I Spent My Time."

How I Spent My Time

Say, Take one minute to write down things you did this past week (details are not needed). (For example, work, drive, cook, clean, use technology, watch TV, shop). Ask, Are any of the things on your list a surprise to you?

Now for the right column write "Things I Wish I Had Done."

Things I Wish I Had Done

Say, Take one minute to write down a few things you wish you had done during the week. (For example, spend more time with family and friends, take a walk, go running, garden, read a book, paint, play a musical instrument, etc.) Ask,

What was stopping you from taking the time to do those things? If you were more content and less anxious, how do you think your lists would change?

Ask, In which ways can our faith community be helpful in restoring Sabbath to our lives and righting our relationship with God's creation?

COMMIT (10 MINUTES)

Invite the participants to turn to page 825 of the *Book of Common Prayer* and read aloud together prayer #32:

O God, in the course of this busy life, give us times of refreshment and peace; and grant that we may so use our leisure to rebuild our bodies and renew our minds, that our spirits may be opened to the goodness of your creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Say, This is a prayer for good use of leisure time. Ask, Are there some times in the upcoming week you can find an opportunity for refreshment? How might this open your spirit to the goodness of creation?

WRAP-UP

Invite the participants to pray this prayer on the good use of leisure time (BCP p. 825) several times throughout the week as a reminder of the refreshment found in God.

Invite participants to notice what they do with their leisure time. Do they choose activities that "rebuild [their] bodies and renew [their] minds"? Do their leisure time activities truly provide rest and refreshment, or do they provide only distraction and escape?

Ask the participants to read paragraphs 17-18 from the Bishops' teaching for the next week's session.

Optional Closing Hymn: *Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God* (Hymnal 711)

Closing Prayer (said together)

May God give us the grace to accept the gracious invitation of the incarnate Word to live in, with, and through Him. May we be part of a life of grace for the whole world that all the earth may be restored and humanity filled with hope. Rejoicing in your works, O Lord, send us forth with your Spirit to renew the face of the earth, that the world may once again be filled with your good things: the trees watered abundantly, springs rushing between the hills in verdant valleys, all the earth made fruitful, your manifold creatures, birds, beasts, and humans, all quenching their thirst and receiving their nourishment from you once again in due season. AMEN.*

*(Psalm 104)



SESSION 5 – A TIME TO COMMIT AND ACT (PARAGRAPHS 17-18)

Objective:

To discern nourishing and effective actions that the participants and their local faith communities can take to respond to the commitments listed by the House of Bishops.

Background for Facilitator

One of the greatest challenges the environmental crisis brings is the temptation to despair. The problems seem overwhelming and the human condition seems intractable. We can exhaust ourselves, emotionally and spiritually, swimming against that tide. During this final session, participants are encouraged to move forward not in despair but in hope for the work of God in the world. We are encouraged to celebrate how the salvation story invites us to live out of a hope-filled celebration of God's whole creation. In so believing, we join in the song of redemption for all the earth, and sing that song not only with our voices, but also with our hearts and hands.

For indeed we are called to serve as Christ's hands and hearts in a hurting world, reaching out in love and rejoicing in God's grace. We do these things with the whole living Body of Christ as it reaches toward hope. However, if we begin to believe that the world's future relies solely on our efforts, we will have lost sight of the hope that is at the center of our faith.

Another challenge is the risk of burnout from the overwhelming "to-do" list these challenges bring. Monk and theologian Thomas Merton said that:

There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which an idealist fighting for peace by nonviolent means most easily succumbs—activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow

oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone is to succumb to violence. More than that, it is cooperation in violence. The frenzy of the activists neutralizes their work for peace. It destroys their own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of their work because it kills the inner wisdom which makes their work fruitful.³

Our response to the Bishops' teaching then is not to commit ourselves to too many projects nor to want to help everyone, but rather to serve the Lord in faithfulness and love. This distinction is important, for it encourages faithful action, not frenzied activity and exhaustion.

Our final session gives participants an opportunity to discern what God is asking them to do, and invites them to commit to specific actions that can heal creation and strengthen their faith. These actions should not be considered a "to do" list of goals and duties, but rather a free and faithful response to the call of a loving God. The facilitator is encouraged to remind the participants that they are building on the previous sessions' foundation of reconciliation with God through renewed minds and hearts.

Prepare Before the Session

- Copies of the Bishops' teaching for each participant (note: save paper by reusing copies each week)
- Newsprint and markers for facilitator
- Book of Common Prayer for each participant
- Bible for each participant
- Hymnals (optional)
- 1-2 small bowls of water for blessing

³ Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*

WELCOME

Invite the class to review highlights of the previous sessions. Go around the room and invite participants to name one thing from the previous sessions that stood out to them. Then say, **In this final session, we will explore the Bishops' invitation for action. To provide time for this, we will have a chance to consider specific actions. Some quiet time in this session will allow space for discerning God's invitation to respond to the issues raised by the teaching, while open discussion will allow us to explore possible opportunities for shared action.**

OPENING PRAYER

Ask participants to open their *Book of Common Prayer* to Psalm 104:25-31, on p. 736. Invite the group read the verses aloud, in alternating voices.

ENGAGE (5-10 MINUTES)

Invite the class to take a moment to remember a time when they were involved in doing something active for a good cause or for an important reason. Say, **Let's take a moment to think of a time when you actively participated in doing something that made a difference to your family, to the wider community, or to the world. What action did you take, and how did it make a difference?** Allow participants to briefly respond.

ENCOUNTER (15-20 MINUTES)

On five separate sheets of newsprint create a header for each from the list of topics below (one per sheet). Or, on a marker board, create five columns, one for each item:

- 1) Acts of Repentance
- 2) Acts of Prayer and Worship
- 3) Acts for Individuals and Communities
- 4) Acts to Uproot Social Injustice
- 5) Acts for Climate Justice

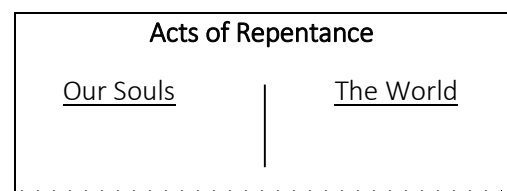
Say, **In the conclusion of their teaching, the Bishops commit to taking personal actions in response to the environmental crisis, and they invite the people of the church to respond, as well. In this session, we will consider the Bishops' suggestions and reflect on how we are called to act.**

Have someone read the following section from the teaching:

In assuming with new vigor our teaching office, we, your bishops, commit ourselves to a renewal of these spiritual practices in our own lives, and invite you to join us in this commitment for the good of our souls and the life of the world. Moreover, in order to honor the goodness and sacredness of God's creation, we, as brothers and sisters in Christ, commit ourselves and urge every Episcopalian:

The Bishops' Teaching

Referring to each of the flip chart pages with headings, divide each heading into two columns with the following sub-headings: "Our Souls" and "The World":



Say, **The Bishops state that these actions are for both the "good of our souls" and the "life of the world." Before we begin to list specific actions and commitments, let's first consider each area of commitment and ask ourselves, "How can acting on this commitment be good for both our souls and the world?"** Move from one heading to the next, and read the corresponding invitation from the Bishop's teaching. For each set of actions called for by the Bishops, invite the class to respond with suggestions for both soul and world on each flip chart page. When all five charts are

complete, ask, **Are there any other areas of commitment we should include? Are there any additional lists we should make?** If a good suggestion is made, create an additional list.

CONNECT (15-20 MINUTES)

Next, distribute paper and pen to each participant. Say, **In light of these areas of commitment, let's now consider what specific commitments we might be led to make. Let's do this in two steps: 1) What are specific items to which God seems to be calling you personally, and 2) What are specific items to which God seems to be calling the Church as a whole and our own faith community?** Allow several minutes of silence for reflection and writing. When the participants are ready, say, **Let's consider our own personal commitments first. Would anyone like to share from your list?** (Be sure to be considerate of each participant's right to keep his or her personal commitments private).

Then say, **We have considered our own personal responses to the Bishops' call to action. Now let's consider how the Church, both as a world organization and as a local faith community, might make some commitments in these areas.** Using the lists on the flip charts or marker boards, record responses from the participants for each of the areas of commitment.

When the lists are complete, ask, **Do we see any areas of overlap where there are common interests and similar paths forward?** Take responses from the participants. Ask, **Do any of these items stand out as items on which this faith community can act?** Highlight any items on the lists that the participants name as possible points of common action.

COMMIT (15 MINUTES)

Say, **In these sessions, we have been considering how God is calling us into a deeper relationship with the created order. We have also been invited to consider how God's redeeming work embraces**

not only human beings but also the whole creation. In each session we have concluded with a prayer that is excerpted from the Bishops' Teaching and includes portions of Psalm 104. As our final reflection together, let's listen to this prayer one last time, and then share what part of it now stands out to each of us as being particularly important. Read the prayer for the group:

May God give us the grace to accept the gracious invitation of the incarnate Word to live in, with, and through Him. May we be part of a life of grace for the whole world, that all the earth may be restored and humanity filled with hope. Rejoicing in your works, O Lord, send us forth with your Spirit to renew the face of the earth, that the world may once again be filled with your good things: the trees watered abundantly, springs rushing between the hills in verdant valleys, all the earth made fruitful, your manifold creatures, birds, beasts, and humans, all quenching their thirst and receiving their nourishment from you once again in due season (Psalm 104). AMEN.

The Bishops' Teaching

Ask, **Now that we have spent this time together, what about this prayer stands out to you?**

CLOSING PRAYER AND COMMISSIONING

Say, **As a final closing, we will bless each other with water as our sign of commitment to go forth in the world with renewed hearts and minds, loving all of God's creation.**

Gather in a circle and place water bowls on the table in center. Lead the group in the following ceremony:

Facilitator: **May God bless this life-giving water, which reminds us of our baptismal promise to seek justice for all that God loves. Amen.**

Taking the small bowls of water, bless the hands of the person next to you with these words: **God bless our hands for service to all creation.**

After everyone's hands have been blessed, say, I invite you to join me in saying aloud a closing prayer.

Let us pray:

Response: Gracious God, you created us.

Leader: Open our eyes to see and celebrate the beauty in all that you have made.

Response: Gracious God, you created us.

Leader: Open our hearts to feel the pain of a wounded world and to reach out in compassion to all who suffer.

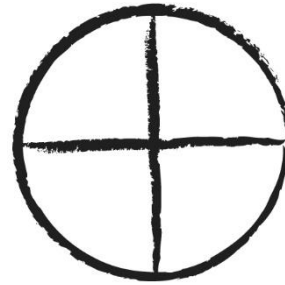
Response: Gracious God, you created us.

Leader: Open our mouths to protest injustice and to speak out on behalf of your whole creation.

Response: Gracious God, you created us.

Leader: Open our hands to re-weave the web of life and to pass on to generations yet unborn a just and livable planet. We pray this in the name of the crucified and risen Christ, whose Spirit sets us free. *Amen.*

Optional Closing Hymn: "Lord, You Give the Great Commission" (Hymnal 528)



APPENDIX A

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2. Ash Wednesday Litany of Penitence Grid (Session One)
3. The Lord's Prayer from the New Zealand BCP (Session Two)
4. The Gospel for a Six Year Old (Session Two)

A Pastoral Teaching from the House of Bishops of The Episcopal Church

Quito, Ecuador, September 20, 2011

Section 1: A Time for Repentance and Renewal (Confessional)

That the church recognize and respond to this call for confession, compassion and attention to the present crisis of the earth, and identify ways speak and act on behalf of God's good creation.

[1] We, your bishops, believe these words of Jeremiah describe these times and call us to repentance as we face the unfolding environmental crisis of the earth:

How long will the land mourn, and the grass of every field wither? For the wickedness of those who live in it the animals and the birds are swept away, and because people said, "He is blind to our ways." (Jeremiah 12:4)

[2] The mounting urgency of our environmental crisis challenges us at this time to confess "our self-indulgent appetites and ways," "our waste and pollution of God's creation," and "our lack of concern for those who come after us" (Ash Wednesday Liturgy, Book of Common Prayer, p. 268). It also challenges us to amend our lives and to work for environmental justice and for more environmentally sustainable practices.

[3] Christians cannot be indifferent to global warming, pollution, natural resource depletion, species extinctions, and habitat destruction, all of which threaten life on our planet. Because so many of these threats are driven by greed, we must also actively seek to create more compassionate and sustainable economies that support the well-being of all God's creation.

[4] We are especially called to pay heed to the suffering of the earth. The Anglican Communion Environmental Network calls to mind the dire consequences our environment faces: "We know that . . . we are now demanding more than [the earth] is able to provide. Science confirms what we already know: our human footprint is changing the face of the earth and because we come from the earth, it is changing us too. We are engaged in the process of destroying our very being. If we cannot live in harmony with the earth, we will not live in harmony with one another."

[5] This is the appointed time for all God's children to work for the common goal of renewing the earth as a hospitable abode for the flourishing of all life. We are called to speak and act on behalf of God's good creation.

Section 2: A Time for Grace for the Whole World (Sacramental)

That the church recognize that God's grace and plan for redemption encompasses all creation and to commit to embracing the whole creation as fellow recipients of grace.

[6] Looking back to the creation accounts in Genesis, we see God's creation was "very good," providing all that humans would need for abundant, peaceful life. In creating the world God's loving concern extended to the whole of it, not just to humans. And the scope of God's redemptive love in Christ is equally broad: the Word became incarnate in Christ not just for our sake, but for the salvation of the whole world. In the Book of Revelation we read that God will restore the goodness and completeness of creation in the "new

Jerusalem.” Within this new city, God renews and redeems the natural world rather than obliterating it. We now live in that time between God’s creation of this good world and its final redemption: “The whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for . . . the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:22-3).

[7] Affirming the biblical witness to God’s abiding and all-encompassing love for creation, we recognize that we cannot separate ourselves as humans from the rest of the created order. The creation story itself presents the interdependence of all God’s creatures in their wonderful diversity and fragility, and in their need of protection from dangers of many kinds. This is why the Church prays regularly for the peace of the whole world, for seasonable weather and an abundance of the fruits of the earth, for a just sharing of resources, and for the safety of all who suffer. This includes our partner creatures: animals, birds, and fish who are being killed or made sick by the long-term effects of deforestation, oil spills, and a host of other ways in which we intentionally and unintentionally destroy or poison their habitat.

Section 3: A Time for Justice and Sustainability (Prophetic)

That the church make connections between life choices and the corresponding participation in systems of injustice toward all neighbors, and examine ways to live into more sustainable ways of living and more just ways of praying, worshiping, fellowshiping and serving.

[8] One of the most dangerous and daunting challenges we face is global climate change. This is, at least in part, a direct result of our burning of fossil fuels. Such human activities could raise worldwide average temperatures by three to eleven degrees Fahrenheit in this century. Rising average temperatures are already wreaking environmental havoc, and, if unchecked, portend devastating consequences for every aspect of life on earth.

[9] The Church has always had as one of its priorities a concern for the poor and the suffering. Therefore, we need not agree on the fundamental causes of human devastation of the environment, or on what standard of living will allow sustainable development, or on the roots of poverty in any particular culture, in order to work to minimize the impact of climate change. It is the poor and the disadvantaged who suffer most from callous environmental irresponsibility. Poverty is both a local and a global reality. A healthy economy depends absolutely on a healthy environment.

[10] The wealthier nations whose industries have exploited the environment, and who are now calling for developing nations to reduce their impact on the environment, seem to have forgotten that those who consume most of the world’s resources also have contributed the most pollution to the world’s rivers and oceans, have stripped the world’s forests of healing trees, have destroyed both numerous species and their habitats, and have added the most poison to the earth’s atmosphere. We cannot avoid the conclusion that our irresponsible industrial production and consumption-driven economy lie at the heart of the current environmental crisis.

[11] Privileged Christians in our present global context need to move from a culture of consumerism to a culture of conservation and sharing. The challenge is to examine one’s own participation in ecologically destructive habits. Our churches must become places where we have honest debates about, and are encouraged to live into, more sustainable ways of living. God calls us to die to old ways of thinking and living and be raised to new life with renewed hearts and minds.

[12] Although many issues divide us as people of faith, unprecedented ecumenical and interfaith cooperation is engaging the concern to protect our planet. And yet, efforts to stop environmental degradation must not be simply imposed from above. Those most affected must have a hand in shaping decisions. For example, we welcome efforts in the United States to involve Native American tribal leaders and to empower local community organizations to address environmental issues. Similar strategies need to be employed in myriad communities in various locales.

Section 4: A Time to Renew Ancient Practices (Holiness)

That the church identify paths for healing from the Church's ancient traditions of fasting, Sabbath-keeping and mindfulness and to apply them to local lives and churches.

[13] Our current environmental challenges call us to ongoing forms of repentance: we must turn ourselves around, and come to think, feel, and act in new ways. Ancient wisdom and spiritual disciplines from our faith offer deep resources to help address this environmental crisis. Time-honored practices of fasting, Sabbath-keeping, and Christ-centered mindfulness bear particular promise for our time.

[14] Fasting disciplines and heals our wayward desires and appetites, calling us to balance our individual needs with God's will for the whole world. In fasting we recognize that human hungers require more than filling the belly. In God alone are our desires finally fulfilled. Commended in the Book of Common Prayer, fasting is grounded in the practices of Israel, taught by Jesus, and sustained in Christian tradition. The ecological crisis extends and deepens the significance of such fasting as a form of self-denial: those who consume more than their fair share must learn to exercise self-restraint so that the whole community of creation might be sustained.

[15] Sabbath-keeping is rooted in the Book of Genesis, where the seventh day is the day in which God, humans, and the rest of creation are in right relationship. In our broken world, keeping the Sabbath is a way of remembering and anticipating that world for which God created us. Sabbath requires rest, that we might remember our rightful place as God's creatures in relationship with every other creature of God. Such rest implicitly requires humans to live lightly on the face of the earth, neither to expend energy nor to consume it, not to work for gain alone, but to savor the grace and givenness of creation.

[16] The practice of Christ-centered mindfulness, that is, the habitual recollection of Christ, calls believers to a deepened awareness of the presence of God in their own lives, in other people, and in every aspect of the world around us. Such spiritual perception should make faithful people alert to the harmful effects of our lifestyles, attentive to our carbon footprint and to the dangers of overconsumption. It should make us profoundly aware of the gift of life and less prone to be ecologically irresponsible in our consumption and acquisition.

Section 5: A Time to Commit and Act (Behavioral)

That the church identify particular actions their local faith community can take in toward the areas of repentance, worship, stewardship, justice and advocacy, and to commit to those actions.

[17] In assuming with new vigor our teaching office, we, your bishops, commit ourselves to a renewal of these spiritual practices in our own lives, and invite you to join us in this commitment for the good of our souls and the life of the world. Moreover, in order to honor the goodness and sacredness of God's creation, we, as brothers and sisters in Christ, commit ourselves and urge every Episcopalian:

- To acknowledge the urgency of the planetary crisis in which we find ourselves, and to repent of any and all acts of greed, overconsumption, and waste that have contributed to it;

- To lift up prayers in personal and public worship for environmental justice, for sustainable development, and for help in restoring right relations both among humankind and between humankind and the rest of creation;
- To take steps in our individual lives, and in community, public policy, business, and other forms of corporate decision-making, to practice environmental stewardship and justice, including (1) a commitment to energy conservation and the use of clean, renewable sources of energy; and (2) efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle, and whenever possible to buy products made from recycled materials;
- To seek to understand and uproot the political, social, and economic causes of environmental destruction and abuse;
- To advocate for a “fair, ambitious, and binding” climate treaty, and to work toward climate justice through reducing our own carbon footprint and advocating for those most negatively affected by climate change.

[18] May God give us the grace to heed the warnings of Jeremiah and to accept the gracious invitation of the incarnate Word to live, in, with, and through him, *a life of grace for the whole world*, that thereby all the earth may be restored and humanity filled with hope. Rejoicing in your works, O Lord, send us forth with your Spirit to renew the face of the earth, that the world may once again be filled with your good things: the trees watered abundantly, springs rushing between the hills in verdant valleys, all the earth made fruitful, your manifold creatures, birds, beasts, and humans, all quenching their thirst and receiving their nourishment from you once again in due season (Psalm 104).

¹ From “*The Hope We Share: A Vision for Copenhagen*,” a statement from the Anglican Communion Environmental Network in preparation for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), December 2009.

² We are indebted to the Episcopal Bishops of New England for their earlier 2003 Pastoral Letter, “*To Serve Christ in All Creation*.” Several of these “commitments” and other phrases herein are quotations or adaptations of their work.

On the web:

Episcopal Church House of Bishops issues A Pastoral Teaching
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/newsline_129891_ENG_HTM.htm

For more info contact:

Neva Rae Fox

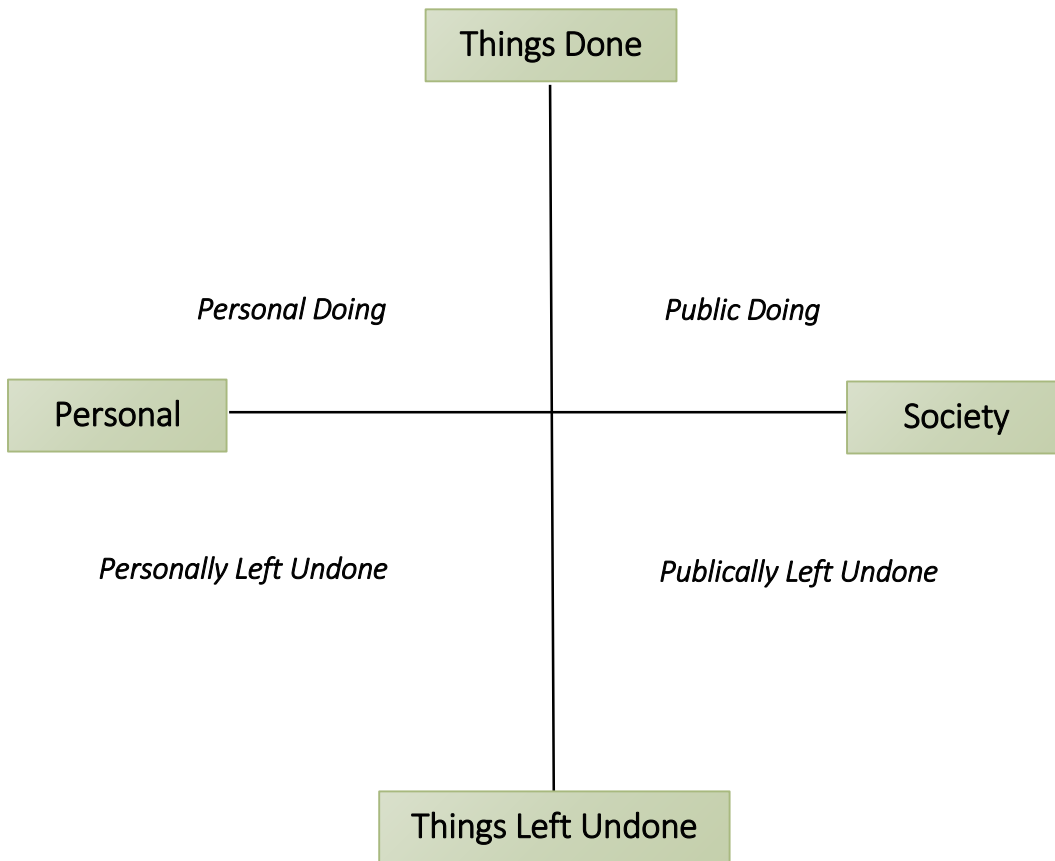
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ASH WEDNESDAY LITANY OF PENITENCE GRID (BCP 267 – 268)



THE LORD'S PRAYER

From A New Zealand Prayer Book

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be;
Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe.
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world.
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings.
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and testing, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.

Amen.

THE BIBLE STORY FOR A SIX YEAR OLD

(Using no more than three sentences per chapter, describe the Gospel to a six year old)

Chapter 1: Once Upon a Time (Genesis Chapter 1)

Chapter 2: And then it so happened (Romans 8:22-23)

Chapter 3: And they lived happily ever after (Revelation 21:2)

APPENDIX B

Resources on Creation Care and Eco-Justice Concerns

Episcopalian Resources/Networks

The Episcopal Ecological Network: www.eenonline.org.

The Episcopal Network for Economic Justice: www.enej.org.

The Episcopal Public Policy Network: www.episcopalchurch.org/eppn.htm.

The link to the “Getting Started on the Genesis Covenant” resource guide:
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/sites/default/files/genesis_covenant_final.pdf

Episcopal Church Foundation, Vital practices, <http://www.episcopalfoundation.org/>

Resources Available from Church Publishing: www.churchpublishing.org

To Serve and Guard the Earth: God’s Creation Story and Our Environmental Concern by Beth Bojarski is a practical parish or small-group resource suitable for high school groups and adults that connects the growing Christian environmental concern with the theology of creation in Genesis.

Faith and Nature: The Divine Adventure of Life on Earth by Phyllis Strupp is an eight-session, downloadable, intergenerational, faith-formation resource focused on appreciating and living in harmony with God’s creation.

Michael Schut’s books include an anthology of essays with community-building study guides.

Simpler Living, Compassionate Life: A Christian Perspective

Food and Faith: Justice, Joy, and Daily Bread

Money and Faith: The Search for Enough

Worship and prayer resources

Rowthorn, Ann, *Feast of the Universe*, Leaders Resource, 2010

Stewart, Ben, *Watered Garden: Christian Worship and Earth’s Ecology*, Fortress Press, 2011

Harper Bible, *The Green Bible Devotional*, Harper Collins,

Harper Bible, *The Green Bible*, Harper Collins,

www.seasonofcreation.org

www.letallcreationsing.org

Environmental Justice Resources

WEACT – www.weact.org (NYC)

Urban Habitat – www.urbanhabitat.org (Oakland)

Delco Alliance for EJ – www.einet.org/chester (Philadelphia)

Little Village Environmental Justice Organization – www.lvejo.org (Chicago)

Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice – www.sneej.org (Southwestern US)

Deep South Center for Environmental Justice - <http://www.dscej.org/> (Louisiana)

General Info about gardening, congregational gardening and fair trade coffee

Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association: www.biodynamics.com

The USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program: www.sare.org

Local Harvest: www.localharvest.org/csa/

Bishops Blend: <http://www.er-d.org/BishopsBlend/> (a collaboration with ERD and Pura Vida Coffee)

Eco-faith Organizations (many with liturgical and educational resources)

Earth Ministry: www.earthministry.org

Interfaith Power and Light www.theregenerationproject.org: A Religious Response to Global Warming

GreenFaith www.greenfaith.org; www.greenfaith.org/programs/certification

Web of Creation www.webofcreation.org

Blessed Tomorrow <http://blessedtomorrow.org>

Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology -<http://fore.research.yale.edu/>

Books

DeWitt Calvin, *Earthwise: A Guide to Hopeful Creation Care*, 2011

McKibben, Bill. *Eaarth* New York: Times Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2007.

Delio, Ilia, et al, *Care for Creation (a Franciscan spirituality of the earth)*, Ohio, St Anthony's Messenger, 2007

Gottlieb, Roger, *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future*, 2009

MacDuff, Mallory, *Sacred Acts: How Churches are working to save the earth's climate*, 2014

Santmire, Paul, et al, [God's Earth is Sacred: Essays on Eco-Justice](#), 2010

Torgerson, Mark, *Greening Spaces for Worship and Ministry: Congregations, Their Buildings, and Creation Care*, Alban Institute, 2012

Grim, John and Tucker, Mary Evelyn, [Ecology and Religion \(Foundations of Contemporary Environmental Studies Series\)](#), 2014



