**South Dakota Creation Care Network**

**Lesson Plan and Resources**

**Spring Focus: Earth Day Sunday**

New Year’s Creation Care Resolutions. \_\_\_\_ Completed? \_\_\_\_ Progress? \_\_\_\_ Whoops!

The Springtime calendar is filled with opportunities to work with the minister and educators to bring Creation Care into church services. The CC Network’s focus has been on Earth Day Sunday. Too close to Easter! Yes, the date for Earth Day, always April 22, is close to Easter Sunday in 2022 (April 17), but Easter is on an earlier date for most years to come.

For a review of the secular Earth Day, go to the Earth Day website below. Long story short, concern for the environment (e.g., huge fish kills, smog, rivers burning, and our first look at Earth from space) grew so much during the 1960s that a major event was needed to provide a voice to this emerging environmental consciousness. The first Earth Day put environmental concerns on the front page.

<https://www.earthday.org/>. and <https://www.earthday.org/history/>.

Earth Day.org has a “Faith and Environment” campaign. Here you will see a great example of interfaith Creation Care commitments as video statements. There is Creation Care information for most major religions.

<https://www.earthday.org/campaign/faith-the-environment/>.

The first Earth Day Sunday events were organized by churches to raise awareness about the biblical theology of Creation Care and our responsibility to tend God’s Garden. Today, many churches celebrate Earth Day Sunday. Some have shortened the name to Earth Sunday. Earth Day Sunday is not a set date, but try to celebrate Earth Sunday on the Sunday closest April 22.

The main goal of the Diocesan CC Network has been to have a “communion” of Creation Care events and activities across the Diocese on Earth Sunday. In 2015 there were 12 parishes in the CC Network, and half of those hosted an Earth Sunday activity tailored to their interests.

Vital Practices is a ministry of the Episcopal Church Foundation. Their mission is to be a comprehensive resource that helps Episcopal faith communities. Vital Practices offers Earth Day Resources on liturgy, green congregations, climate change, and church gardens.

<https://www.ecfvp.org/tools/113/earth-day-resources>.

There are plenty of Earth Sunday resources from groups like Creation Justice Ministries (TEC is a member), and Interfaith Power and Light. Their toolkits include liturgical resources, sermon starters, biblical insights, and action ideas. They focus on climate change, but fashion your Earth Day activity to suit your mission or parish. Find resources at:

<https://www.creationjustice.org/earthdaysunday.html>.

<https://www.faithclimateactionweek.org/>. (USA map of actions)

Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas is the Creation Care Advisor for the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, and she has many other Creation Care credentials, and has a great web site called *Reviving Creation*.

<https://revivingcreation.org/>.

Rev. Bullitt-Jonas recently (2022) taught an on-line course titled *Preaching Resilience: Cultivating Climate Justice from the Pulpit.* <https://www.creationjustice.org/resilience.html>. She discussed nine things that should be in a climate sermon – perhaps in any Creation Care sermon.

Another organization that provides a variety of Creation Care resources, including Earth Sunday materials, is *Let all Creation Praise*. It is a Christian ecumenical organization active in providing environmental resources for faith communities in the area of worship, education, building and grounds, lifestyle at home and work, and public witness Their website says “Because of the increased interest in our worship resources, we decided to develop an independent website wholly devoted to providing worship resources for caring for creation.”

<http://www.letallcreationpraise.org/worship-services/earth-day>.

Pep up your Earth Sunday event by decorating with planet Earth balloons. There are many choices that depict Earth as it appears from space (no labels or political boundaries).

The real goal of Earth Sunday activities is to get past the one-special-day thinking and move toward transforming how we will respond to Creation’s problems. The first Earth Day in 1970 was a “teach-in” because we really didn’t know much about environmental problems. Now we know! And, part of the solution resides with religion (which has until recently ignored or minimized care for God’s Garden). You can argue science until the cows come home, but that just appeals to people’s intellect. Getting Creation Care into churches and into the liturgy appeals to one’s heart. Whenever you appeal to someone’s heart, that’s a much more powerful message.

**Other Creation Care Opportunities in Spring**

* **Faith Climate Action Week** (Interfaith Power and Light or IPL) Faith Climate Action Week is IPL’s premier week at the end of April for climate action: sermons, worship services, educational events, and hands-on-action to show that people of faith are leading the way to heal our climate. IPL info is usually about climate change
  + <http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/2016/01/faith-climate-action-week/>.
* **Soil and Water Stewardship Week** by the National Association of Conservation Districts. The Association says that conservation needs more than facts, it needs heart. They have sermon starters, hymns and scriptures to assist in topics on soil, water and energy conservation. You can download (free) guides, bulletin inserts, litanies, and other materials.
  + <http://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/stewardship-and-education-materials/stewardship-outreach-materials-churches/>.
* **Rogationtide:** is a time to bless the fields, and ask (Latin *rogatio*) for God's mercy on all of Creation. Modern ceremonies also remind us of our obligations to care for the Creation as well as our hope for abundant services from the Creation. Major and minor Rogation days lead up to Ascension Day, but can be held on regional growing times. There is some help from TEC on this observance with (link below) material for a Rogation procession, including petitions to be added to the Great Litany and the prayers of the people.
  + <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/loving-formation/>.
  + The propers in the BCP (pp. 207-208, 258-259, 930) have widened their scope to include commerce and industry and the stewardship of creation.
* **Planning Gardens and Landscaping;** Spring is a time to begin thinking about maintenance, care, and planting of church gardens and landscaping. More about gardens in the Summer lesson plans. However, a Spring activity to prepare for gardening and landscaping in the months to come might be the *Beating of the Bounds Ceremony*.
  + **Beating the Bounds:** (Google it) It is an old English tradition linked with Rogation days. Walk around the bounds of your parish. The tour is a way to acknowledge stewardship of the property, remember obligations to the neighbors, and to understand how the results of our own land stewardship travels downwind, downhill, and downstream to adjacent properties and neighbors.
    - St Paul’s is on a corner lot in Brookings, so it doesn’t take much time to Beat the Bounds. Usually about a dozen folks carry willow switches and beat the bounds for a few minutes between the end of Sunday service and coffee time. We wave to curious neighbors and passers-by as we plan the spring clean-up.
* **Lay Hands on the Earth**: In many faith traditions, when prayers of healing are offered, people place their hands on the patient. The patient is our Mother Earth. She is struggling to recover from the effects of toxic poisoning and exhaustion. Intentionally lay your hand on her and say, “Thank you, Mother, for all you have given us. Be healed of all that harms you.” It is only a symbol, but symbols have power. If every person on our planet went outside to lay hands on the earth and ask for healing, it might inspire us all to act, to work, to give for the sake of our Mother.
  + Laying hands on the earth is the idea of Steven Charleston is a member of the Choctaw Nation and an Episcopal bishop. Laying hands on people is a Native American tradition. Put down the idea that the earth is nothing more than a vast accumulation of natural resources. Instead, we must see the earth as a living presence. We must recognize the interrelatedness of all life and begin to actively engage in protecting and learning from all our relations.
  + Perhaps once we can see God in plants and animals, we might learn to see God in our neighbors. And then we might learn to love the world. —Richard Rohr

**From the *Catechism of Creation*…**

***Question***: What does it mean to “care for creation?”

***Answer:*** It means that Christians are commissioned to model for all humankind how to love and serve the earth, the part of the creation upon which we dwell.

**The Clearing Rests in Song and Shade**

Wendell Berry

*The clearing rests in song and shade.*

*It is a creature made*

*By old light held in soil and leaf,*

*By human joy and grief,*

*By human work,*

*Fidelity of sight and stroke,*

*By rain, by water on*

*The parent stone.*

*We join our work to Heaven’s gift,*

*Our hope to what is left,*

*That field and woods at last agree*

*In an economy*

*Of widest worth.*

*High Heaven’s Kingdom come on earth,*

*Imagine Paradise.*

*O dust, arise!*



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