

CARING FOR CREATION



“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it...
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!” (Ps 24:1, 150:6).

April 22 is Earth Day.

Genesis (2:15) invites us to “keep” the garden of Eden. *Shamar* or “to keep” is an act of protection and care-giving. It is the same word used in the blessing “may the Lord bless you and keep you” (Num. 5:24). The Bible portrays God as the source and sustainer of life (Isa. 40:28-29), shepherd (Ezek. 34:15), creator and provider (Ps. 104) and compassionate liberator (Ex. 3:7-8). Our care for creation must reflect God’s care (Living Faith 2.4.1).

Climate change is...

Climate describes the prevailing weather and temperature patterns of a particular region over long periods of time (years). The earth’s ecosystem is dynamic and changes. Greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, emitted by human beings through the combustion of fossil fuels, are warming the earth’s surface and the oceans. Over the last century, the surface temperature has risen about 0.74 degrees Celsius (a difference of 4 or 5 degrees is the difference between the earth’s current temperature, and the last ice age).

Did you know?

- By 2100, loss of habitat could result in a 20 % loss of species in vulnerable ecosystems such as the Canadian Arctic and boreal forests.
- In 1995, 166 million people lived in areas lacking sufficient water for basic needs. In 2050, that number will rise to 1.7 billion. The reduced availability of water is one impact of climate change. Water scarcity is one factor exacerbating the conflict in the Darfur region in the Sudan. Climate change will continue to impact human health and food production.
- In some countries, yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50%. The increasing number of hungry people will be one of the most devastating consequences of climate change.
- Rising sea levels increase the risk of coastal flooding, and could cause population displacement. More than half of the world’s population now lives within 60 kilometres of shorelines.

This resource can be used during an Earth Day service (see page 3 and 4 for an Earth Day liturgy), or any caring for creation initiative. See “what we can do” on page 2 for suggestions.

What we can do

- Worship God. Pray, sing, and reflect on our calling to be caretakers of God's creation.
- Invite young people in your congregation to lead an Earth Day worship service, reflecting on their hopes and concerns for the future.
- Invite an Aboriginal elder to share traditional teachings about the relationship between human beings, the earth and the Creator (www.presbyterian.ca/healing).
- Buy locally. Shop at your community farmers' market. Host a 100 mile meal at church. Eat less meat.
- Host a congregational star party. Learn about God's ongoing creation in distant galaxies. Invite a member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada to show you the night sky.
- Host a community forum on climate change.
- Learn about your ecological footprint (www.footprintnetwork.org).
- Conduct an energy audit on your church or home. See (www.kairosCanada.org) and (www.fairtrade-Canada.org) for resources.
- Plan a nature prayer walk.
- Discontinue use of disposable products when alternatives exist.
- Reduce our air travel. This is the single biggest step one person can reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Websites

Hold the Ctrl button and click underlined titles to access resource URLs.

Ecumenical organizations:

- [KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives](#)
- [The World Alliance of Reformed Churches](#)
- [The World Council of Churches](#)

Other organizations:

- [The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)
- [The Pembina Institute](#)
- [David Suzuki Foundation](#)

Resources

Hold the Ctrl button and click underlined titles to access resource URLs.

Books - Ecology and Theology

Eco faith: Creating & Sustaining Green Congregations, Charlene Hosenfeld, Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, 2009.

A New Climate for Theology, Sallie MacFague, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2008.

Earth and Word: Classic Sermons On Saving The Planet, edited by David Rhoads, Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., New York, 2007.

Redeeming the Time: A Political Theology of the Environment, Stephen Bede Scharper, Continuum, New York, 1998.

Joining the Dance: Lenten Reflections about Sabbath and the Stewardship of Creation, By Cheryl Bradbee, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2007.

Books – Climate change

Heat: How to Stop the Planet Burning, George Monbiot, Allen Lane, 2006.

The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review, Nicholas Stern, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007

Keeping Our Cool: Canada in a Warming Climate, Andrew Weaver, Toronto, Penguin Group, 2008.

Articles & Papers

The Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth, The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), 24th General Council in Accra, Ghana, 2004.

Caring for the Planet and Ecology, Energy and Environment in the *Social Action Handbook*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2009.

Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers, Fourth Assessment Report, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Christian Faith and the Canadian Tar Sands, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives.

Films

An Inconvenient Truth, Al Gore.

Earth day liturgy

Call to Worship

Adapted from Living Faith

Reader: The Living God is Lord! Creator of all, Sustainer and Ruler of the universe.

All: Praise the Lord!

Reader: We hold in reverence the whole creation as the theatre of God's glory and action.

All: The whole universe testifies to your majesty!

Reader: The Psalmist sings; the earth is the Lord's, the earth and all that is in it!

All: Creator God, sustain us!

Reader: God's love permeates all creation.

All: Come, Holy Spirit; fill us with God's peace.

Reader: Your Spirit renews the world, and all creation.

All: Praise the God of love and justice! Amen.

Scripture

- Creation is Sacred—Exodus 3:1-6; 16:26-30
- Stewardship of Creation—Genesis 1:28; 2:15 and Deuteronomy 8:7-11
- Renewal of Creation—Romans 8:19-22
- Abundance—Luke 12:12-15

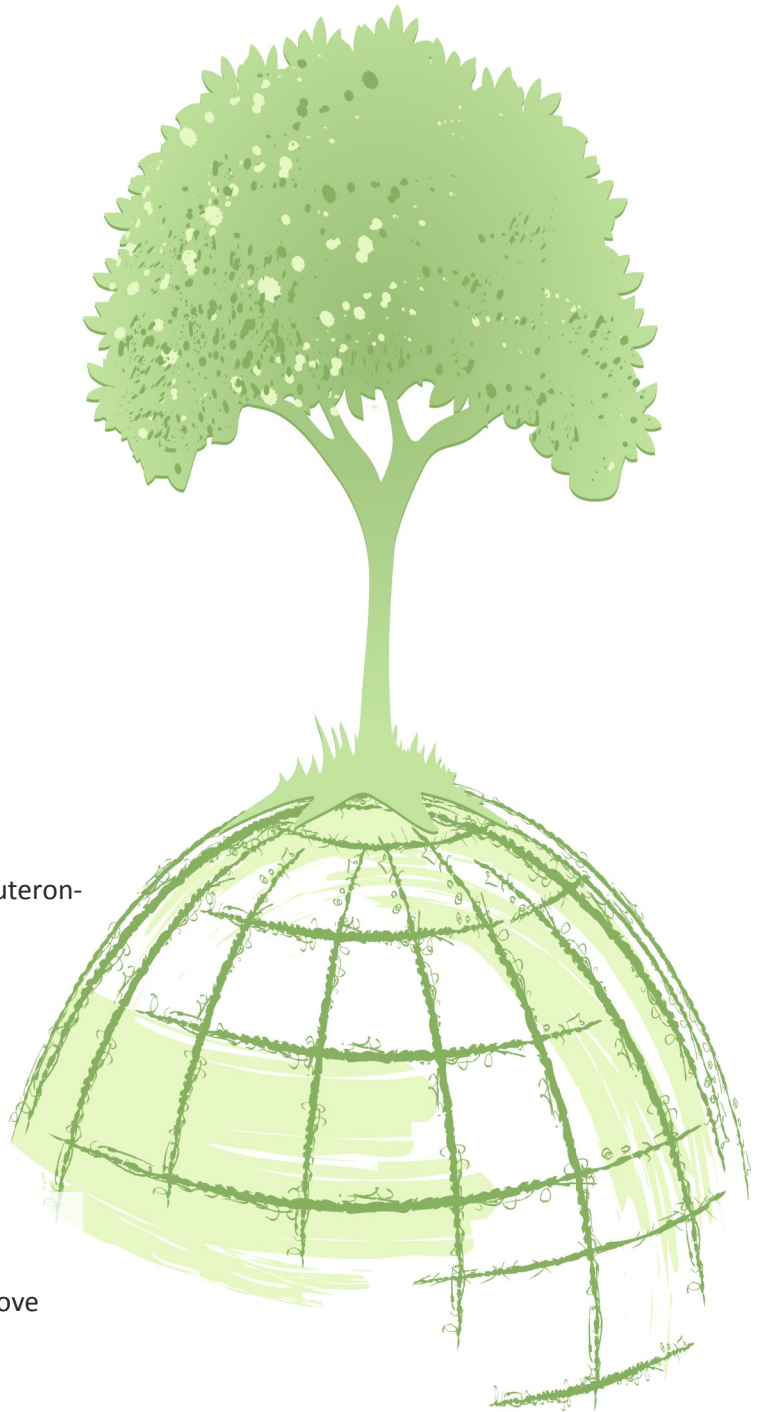
Our Calling

We proclaim that God is Lord and Creator. We acknowledge that human life depends upon the created world.

Our calling is to live in a way that reflects the Creator's love and purpose for all creation. (Living Faith 2.2, 2.3, 2.4)

Suggested Hymns

- 667 – God you touch the earth with beauty
- 714 – Wordless, ancient earth's foundations
- 716 – Pray for the wilderness
- 717 – We cannot own the sunlit sky
- 719 – God in great love for us lent us this planet



Blessing

The mystery of human existence is that we belong to God and have been made in the divine image. In God we live and move and have our being. We know ourselves only when we know God. Creator God, our lives must reflect your love and purpose for all creation.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you. Amen.

Closing Prayer

We rise each day, O Saviour

We rise each day O Saviour,
we breathe in deep and slow;
We thank you, God, for breath refreshed,
for air and life to know.
Your Spirit flows and wakes the soul;
our hearts speak gratitude.
Our planet breathes, and
humans thrive at every latitude.

The noonday sun is high o'er head;
my thirst calls out to me.

The water in our well is clean and
cold and sets me free.

Warm rain descends, baptizing us
in your community;

Creator God, we have enough!
Thanks for sufficiency.

The shadows lengthen; day is done.
Our fields provide our meal.

The rich soils nourish us again;
we offer grace and kneel.

Your body and your blood for us;
salvation lets us live.

Communion with our Christ, our Lord;
our lives to you we give.

We dedicate ourselves to you,
O God who guards the poor;
Help us to render justice now;
avoid consumption's lure.

Remind us that we share your gifts
with children yet to come.

We welcome them, unseen, unheard,
to the feast of your kingdom.

Creator God, we rise each day
to choices we must make;
You told us not to be afraid,
for Christ died for our sake.

We live together in your world;
we seek to care for all;
New heaven and earth await your time;
we choose to live your call.

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(May be sung to the tune of Hymn # 238, *Beneath the cross of Jesus*)