Module 3. Care for God’s Earth!

**Reach Out! Connect! Share!**
***Kentucky Council of Churches
Campus Ministry Modules*Care for God’s Earth!**

**Module Flow**

1) Introduction

2) Guiding Question

3) Guiding Bible Passage

4) Bible Passages

5) Bible Studies: Reflection and Activities

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2. The Earth is God’s Loving Gift to Us. Psalm 136:1-9

3. God Established a Covenant with Us for Creation Care. Genesis 9:8-16

4. God Gave Us the Earth as a Gift. Genesis 2:15

5. A Terrible Vision of Destruction. Isaiah 24: 1-5

6) Mission and Outreach with Community and Global Partners

7) Enrichment Resources: The Green Bible. WCC, TED , etc.

**Introduction**

Who really owns the earth, the air, the oceans, the streams? Who owns the soil as it moves from the Kentucky hills down the Ohio River and into the Mississippi Delta? God does! This concept is key to God's covenant relationship with the people of Israel and to our identity as a people of God. We are called through our covenant relationship to participate as stewards in God's creative work … to care for the earth for our own and future generations… so that all may live in peace and abundance (KCC Policy Statement, “Caring for God’s Earth”).

**Guiding Question**

How can we care for God’s Earth?

**Guiding Bible Passage**

Psalm 24: 1-2

1 The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it,

 the world, and those who live in it;

2 for he has founded it on the seas,

 and established it on the rivers.

**Bible Passages**

Psalm 24: 1-2;

Psalm 136:1-9;

Genesis 9:8-16;

Genesis 2:15;

Isaiah 24: 1-5.

**Getting started**

You will need: Bibles, a candle, bits of trash, a plastic bag. A fishbowl (glass) filled with cloudy water. A fishbowl (glass) filled with clear water.

One piece of cardboard/posterboard for every participant, glue and staples, string, adhesive tape, sticky tack etc. White paper, colored markers, crayons, pencils, and/or pens

Preparation

Arrange the plastic bag on the table as if it were a tablecloth. Place a candle in a candleholder (not directly on top of the plastic as it might melt). Place bits of trash on the plastic bag. Arrange the fishbowls (glasses) on the table. Fill the fishbowls (glasses) with water.

**Bible Study Introduction**

The Bible Reflection will highlight 5 different Bible Passages: Psalm 24; Psalm 136; Genesis 9; Genesis 2 and Isaiah 25.

The Bible Passages can be reflected on consecutively in one group or the group could be divided up into smaller groups. The small group could discuss one of the Bible Passages and report their discussion to the larger group when the group reconvenes.

**1. Bible Study: The Earth Belongs to God: Psalm 24: 1-2.**

**Opening Prayer**

Read Psalm 24:1-2 out loud. Pray the Lord’s Prayer.

**Bible Study**

Read: Psalm 24: 1-2. The earth belongs to God. In Psalm 24 we read that the earth belongs not to us, but to God.

Ask: What implication does this have for the way we treat the earth?

Reflect: How have I worked together with God to take care of creation? How have I worked to destroy creation? What concrete steps can I take to work to care for creation?

Activity: Have the participants draw up a covenant with each other detailing specific steps they will take to care for creation in the next week/month.

**Resources**

Read: The Kentucky Council of Churches Policy Statement on Caring for God’s Earth.

<http://www.kycouncilofchurches.org/council-statements/>

Click on “Caring for God’s Earth”

Ask: How does this statement deepen your understanding of the Biblical Passages?

**Creation Art**

Ask the participants to go outside and collect “pieces of nature”. When they return inside give each participant half a piece of cardboard/poster board. Ask them to create a picture of the way the world is on one side of the poster board using the “pieces of nature” that they collected. Ask them to create a picture of the way they wish the world would be on the other side of the poster board using the “pieces of nature” that they collected.

Before the session ends give each member of the group a plastic bag. Ask them to carry the plastic bag with them throughout the week and to collect “trash” from the college campus and to bring it with them to the next session.

**Closing Prayer**

Gather around the worship center. Reread Psalm 136: 1-8 out loud. Pray the Lord’s Prayer.

**2. Bible Study: The Earth is God’s Loving Gift to Us. Psalm 136:1-9**

**Opening Prayer**

Read Psalm 136: 1-9 out loud. Pray the Lord’s Prayer

Gather at the Worship Center to pray Psalm 136: 1-9. Psalm 136 tells us that God’s steadfast love is the reason that God created the world.

**Bible Study**

Read: Psalm 136: 1-9. Psalm 136 tells us that God’s steadfast love is the reason that God created the world.

Ask: According to Psalm 136:1-9 what did God create and why did God create? What implications does this have for us in our understanding of God and creation? What is our place in creation? Are we special and if so why are we special?

Reflect: How have I worked together with God to take care of creation? Have I appreciated God’s loving gift? How have I worked to destroy creation?

Activity:

Ask the participants to review the covenant they drew up with each other detailing specific steps they took to care or destroy creation in the past week.

**Closing Prayer**

Gather around the worship center. Pray Psalm 136:1-9 and close with the Lord’s Prayer.

**3. Bible Study. God Established a Covenant with Us for Creation Care.**

**Genesis 9:8-16.**

**Opening Prayer**

Gather around the Worship Center, read Genesis 9:8-16 and pray the Lord’s Prayer.

**Bible Study**

Read Genesis 9:8-16. According to Genesis 9:8-16 not only did God create the world, but established a covenant with it.

Ask: If this is true who owns the land, the oceans and the air? If this is true how are we being true or false to God’s covenant? If God made a covenant with the world do we have any responsibility to it?

Activity: Ask the participants to review the other covenants they have in their lives i.e. with their spouses, with their bank, with their credit card company, with their employer. Ask them to reflect on how seriously they take these covenant obligations and the steps they take to fulfill them. Do they take their covenant obligations with God for the earth as seriously?

Have the participants draw a diagram of intersecting circles on a sheet of poster board to illustrate the relative importance of the different areas of their lives and how they intersect. What is the relative importance of creation care?

**Closing Prayer**

Gather around the Worship Center, read Genesis 9:8-16 and pray the Lord’s Prayer

**4. Bible Study. God Gave Us the World as a Gift. Genesis 2:15.**

**Opening Prayer**

Gather around the Worship Center. Read Genesis 2:15 and pray the Lord’s prayer.

**Bible Study**

Read Genesis 2:15.

According to Genesis 2:15 what does God want us to do with the gift of the earth.

Reflect: Think about your favorite gift. It could be the first bike you got, your favorite pair of shoes or your first car. How did you take care of them? Are you taking care of the earth in the same way? How is planting a seed taking care of the earth. Reflect on our relationship to plants, trees and flowers.

View: Marla Spivak. *Why Bees are Disappearing*

[*https://www.ted.com/talks/marla\_spivak\_why\_bees\_are\_disappearing*](https://www.ted.com/talks/marla_spivak_why_bees_are_disappearing)

What concrete steps can we take in our neighborhoods to enjoy God’s gift to us?

Activity. Have the participants draw a tree with roots, trunk and branches. Have them write their reflections on how they feel about God’s gift of the earth to them and the concrete steps they intend to take to enjoy God’s gift on the roots, the trunk and the branches.

**Closing Prayer**

Ask the participants to gather at the Worship Center. Read Genesis 2:15 and pray the Lord’s Prayer.

**5. Bible Study: A Terrible Vision of Destruction. Isaiah 24:1-5.**

**Opening Prayer**

Gather around the Worship Center. Read Isaiah 24: 1-5. Pray the Lord’s Prayer.

**Bible Study**

Read Isaiah 24: 1-5. Isaiah 24: 1-5 tells us what will happen if we do not follow God’s desire for us to care for the earth.

Reflect: Is this happening now? Think about the “end of the world” movies that you have seen. How do they describe the end of the world? Which ones talk about environmental degradation as being the cause of the extinction of live on the earth?

Listen to the TED talk: Allan Savory, *How to Fight Desertification and Reverse Climate Change* [*https://www.ted.com/talks/allan\_savory\_how\_to\_green\_the\_world\_s\_deserts\_and\_reverse\_climate\_change -*](https://www.ted.com/talks/allan_savory_how_to_green_the_world_s_deserts_and_reverse_climate_change)

Activity: Give the participants black and white plastic bags, newspapers, plastic bottles of all sorts and pieces of trash. Ask them to write and perform a play about what the world would look like if the environment continues to be degraded. Ask them to end with a vision of hope.

**Closing Prayer**

Gather around the Worship Center. Read Revelations 21: 1-7, which is God’s promise for a new heaven and a new earth. Pray the Lord’s Prayer.

**Mission and Outreach with Community and Global Partners**

**College Wide Activities**

Talk with your College’s and University’s Student Government to brainstorm about how to witness to God’s desire for an abundant creation. Ask if you can help plant trees and flowers on the college campus or any other activity that would celebrate God’s beautiful creation.

**Community Wide Activities**

Connect with the following city, state and world-wide groups to see how you can deepen your involvement in creation care.

Citizens Climate Lobby. <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/>

Louisville Parks <http://www.olmstedparks.org/volunteer/>

Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest

<http://bernheim.org/get-involved/volunteer/group-volunteer-opportunities/>

Fellowship of Reconciliation

<https://louisvillefor.org/>

Creation Care Conferences and Events

[*http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/time-for-creation*](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/time-for-creation)

**Enrichment Resources**

**The Green Bible**

The Green Bible NRSV published by Harper One in 2008 is an invaluable resource. It contains poems, reflections by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Barbara Brown Taylor and N.T. Wright et al. The Green Bible Trail Guide provides Bible Study helps. Where Do You Go from Here at the end of the Bible provides suggestions for action for individuals, families and church groups.

**Online Resources**

Kentucky Council of Churches Statement on Care for the Earth.

[www.kycouncilofchurches.org](http://www.kycouncilofchurches.org)

World Council of Churches Creation Care Events:

[*http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/time-for-creation*](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/time-for-creation)

Rev. Dr. Olav Fykese Tveit. *Creation is Not for Sale*

[*https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/speeches/creation-is-not-for-sale*](https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/speeches/creation-is-not-for-sale)

Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Guillermo Kerber. *Making Peace with the Earth, Action and Advocacy for Climate Justice*[*www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/making-peace-with-the-earth-action-advocacy-for-climate-justice*](https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/making-peace-with-the-earth-action-advocacy-for-climate-justice)

**Video Resources**

TED Talks

Allen Savory. *How to Fight Desertification and Reverse Climate Change* [*https://www.ted.com/talks/allan\_savory\_how\_to\_green\_the\_world\_s\_deserts\_and\_reverse\_climate\_change -*](https://www.ted.com/talks/allan_savory_how_to_green_the_world_s_deserts_and_reverse_climate_change)

Marla Spivak. *Why Bees are Disappearing*

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