



THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

# Love God, Love God's World

FACILITATOR GUIDE

## **Love God, Love God's World**

Learn more about Creation Care at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/>. Find our full curriculum at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/>.

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# Welcome

Welcome to the Love God, Love God's World creation care curriculum. Rooted in our values of love, compassion, and justice, this curriculum reflects The Episcopal Church's commitment to addressing pressing global challenges through education, reflection, and action.

Following the transformational model of the Sacred Ground curriculum, this is a film-based, small-group curriculum that looks at the many facets of environmental stewardship and justice. What makes this particular curriculum unique, and maybe a little different from other formation offerings, is that each session reflects the perspective and voice of a different contributor, drawing from their own personal passions and experiences. Participants are then invited to share their own stories and imagine what responding to the environmental challenges of our time could look like in their context.

This curriculum is developed both for participants who are new to this topic and for those who are active in climate work and creation care practices. The goal is to build community, connection, and shared imagination as we collectively seek to develop physical and spiritual resilience in our congregations, neighborhoods, and around the world. We invite you to embark on a journey of faith-inspired action, rooted in the belief that together, we can cultivate a more resilient, just, and sustainable world for future generations.

# Acknowledgments

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The views expressed in the films and the readings do not necessarily represent the views of The Episcopal Church, the Creation Care staff team, the advisors to this series, or the curriculum authors. Hopefully, they provide good food for thought. Please excuse one or two instances of the use of profanity in the materials provided.

# Facilitator's Guide

## Getting Started:

Interested in organizing a small group or “circle” to participate in Love God, Love God’s World: Creation Care Curriculum for Small Groups? You may be a layperson, priest, deacon, or diocesan staff person. You do not need to be an expert on climate change or environmental justice, or to have any particular small-group leadership experience. The most important thing as facilitator is to create opportunities for authentic and honest dialogue. This curriculum was developed primarily for adults but may be accessible to youth.

## Before You Begin:

If this is your first small group experience, or your first time as a small group leader, we recommend reviewing the resources found online here: [www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love/building-intentional-small-groups](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love/building-intentional-small-groups). Start with the Building an Intentional Small Group Ministry guide, which informs and expands on this facilitator guide with helpful topics such as Small Group Ministry Roles, How to Form Groups, Setting a Timeline, Choosing Location, and Creating Group Norms.

## Planning Session Timing:

It is important to identify what meeting rhythm works best for your group (weekly, every two weeks, monthly, etc.) and allocate about 75 minutes if you are not sharing a meal or 90 minutes with a meal. In order to give groups the freedom to start this dialogue series at any time of year, the series is not tied to the church calendar. However, facilitator(s)/organizers should meet with their church leaders to consider how the flow of the series can resonate with the seasons of the church year: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost.

## Creating Your Small Groups/Circles:

If you have a creation care/environmental justice ministry, or a related group (like a community garden ministry), then Love God, Love God’s World can build on your existing work and strengthen and inform group members in their ongoing leadership. If you are hoping to create a creation care/environmental justice ministry, then this dialogue series can spark conversation and build the desire and commitment for this within your congregation or diocese. Or, if you offer Christian formation programs at your church, Love God, Love God’s World can be a great offering.

This curriculum can also be an opportunity to build relationships beyond your congregation or institution. Is there a neighboring Episcopal church or other faith community in your town that you could invite to partner with you as you form your small group? What about an environmental community group?

We recommend that a small group/circle be a minimum of six people and no more than 12 people. If you are beginning your journey with a group larger than 12, you may gather together in person or on a digital platform as a larger group for prayer and announcements, and then split participants into smaller conversation groups. In that scenario, we recommend inviting participants to join the same small group each week to provide continuity and the opportunity for deep relationships to

form. And, depending on the size of the group, facilitators may wish to incorporate the use of breakout groups, such as pairs or groups of three to six, for even more intimate dialogue.

### **Registering and Access to Films and Materials:**

Once you have decided to proceed with organizing a small group, please visit The Episcopal Church website to register: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/>.

You will receive a confirmation email with a link and password that will enable you to access the Love God, Love God's World curriculum pages and licensed films and readings. You will share the link and password with your participants, but not others.

Many of the assigned films/videos in the curriculum are publicly available online at no cost and are linked to from the curriculum session pages. However, some of the films and resources are only available in the curriculum because The Episcopal Church has purchased the necessary streaming licenses to provide access to them at no cost to Love God, Love God's World participants. This is why the curriculum website is password-protected. And an important note: Our licenses do not permit the screening of the films for your full congregation or broader community. If members of the small group are inspired by one or more of the films and wish to share them with the whole congregation for a dialogue event, then please make arrangements with your church leadership to acquire the public performance license (and DVD or streaming access) from one of the films' distributors.

### **Curriculum/Session Structure (insight for facilitators on the session flow)**

*Here is a simple structure for a small group gathering, designed to create space for transformation, belonging, and engagement. This structure can flex from 75 minutes with no meal to 90 minutes with a meal. You can also adapt it to make room for specific content in any given session. Don't be afraid to assign a timekeeper to make sure the gathering keeps moving and no section gets rushed or cut.*

**Pre-Gathering Preparation** - Participants should review the primary resources, guiding Scripture, and reflection and discussion questions prior to the small group gathering. As a facilitator you will want to make sure that participants are clear on how to access the resources each week and that the goal is for them to review prior to gathering.

**Gathering and Welcome** - If you are sharing a meal, we encourage you to schedule your sessions for at least 90 minutes, with the first 30 minutes of the meeting focusing on the meal and check-in. Otherwise, welcome your participants; once everyone is settled, you can begin check-ins.

**Opening Prayer and Checking In** - If meeting in person, gather in a shape that allows all participants to see each other's faces. There is an opening prayer provided in each session. Once settled, invite people to take turns reflecting on a check-in question for a specified time. If you're starting with a meal, you can begin with the opening prayer and after the first 15 minutes shift gears toward check-in.

Check-in prompts can be as simple as (for the first session), “Why did you decide to participate in this specific small group opportunity?” Or (for other sessions), “Where have you seen God moving in your life since our last session?” The check-in question may link loosely to the session Scripture and topic. If you provide group members with the prompt ahead of time, they can ponder and respond to it prior to the gathering and begin to become more aware of God between meetings.

As the group leader, start the check-in and invite others to share by going around the circle to the left or right (if in person). Allow people to pass if they are not ready to speak, and return to them once you’ve gone around the circle. Going around the circle makes it easier to ensure that everyone is included. Another option for sharing is Mutual Invitation, introduced by the Kaleidoscope Institute. After a person shares, they turn to another person in the group—not necessarily someone nearby—and invite that person to share. Many find that Mutual Invitation engages the whole group and spreads leadership more fully. Again, the choice is the leader’s and/or the group’s to make.

**Engaging the Content** - Once everyone has checked in, it’s time to move into the next part of your small group meeting: about 40 minutes of content engagement and reflection. Each session of Love God, Love God’s World is anchored by a film, a reading and/or podcast, and a reflection from the author.

Participants will have been expected to watch, read, or listen to the primary content resources prior to the gathering, as well as read the included reflection by the session’s author. Each session seeks to explore and engage the topics raised in the films, readings, and other material. The group can choose to read the reflection out loud together or go directly to discussion questions depending on timing.

There are discussion questions provided at the end of each session for the group to engage. You will likely not have time for every person to respond to every question. That’s OK! You may want to choose a couple questions prior to gathering that you would like to prioritize for discussion or have the group decide. Sometimes, the leader will have to ask follow-up questions to keep the conversation going. Helpful follow-up prompts: How did that make you feel? Say more about that. What made you think of that?

The point of this time is life-giving conversation, so if that’s happening, there’s no need to shut down the conversation to get through all the questions.

**Drawing the Session to a Close** - When there are about 10 minutes left in your time together, bring the conversation to a close and invite participants to share a word or phrase that describes how they feel following the session and conversation. You can use a similar invitation process as you used in the opening check-in.

After all have offered a word, the facilitator or volunteer can pray a simple prayer bringing together the hopes and prayers of the whole group.

**Action Opportunities** - Each session offers action opportunities suggested by the session's author to either learn more about a particular issue or to explore how to learn more about getting involved in your community. These activities are just suggestions, and participants are welcome to offer their own. This portion does not need to be discussed during group meetings but can serve as additional engagement outside of the small group gatherings or be part of the next steps when the curriculum concludes.

## Conclusion of Curriculum and Next Steps

At the conclusion of the series, participants will wish to take some concrete next steps. Be generous and engage fellow parishioners in those commitments. Please collaborate with church leaders to determine what form this reporting back and engagement might best take. The discussion questions from Session Nine and the Action Opportunities included throughout the curriculum can serve as helpful starting points for next steps.

## SESSION TITLES AND BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS

### SECTION ONE | WHAT IS GOD'S DREAM?

Session One | God So Loved the World | Author: The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers

*Theme: Exploring God's love for creation and forming small group circles through storytelling by articulating individual experiences of love and grief in relation to creation.*

Session Two | Water & Our Baptismal Covenant | Author: Canon Ashley Hubbard

*Theme: Connecting the work of creation care to our baptismal covenant through water stewardship.*

Session Three | A Vision for Right Relationship with the Land & Covenant with the Creator | Author: The Rev. Rachel Taber-Hamilton

*Theme: Participating in story-sharing from an Indigenous perspective: land; living in "right-relationship" with creation; and Indigenous sovereignty and stewardship.*

### SECTION TWO | TRUTH-TELLING

Session Four | We Have Not Loved Our Earth as Ourselves | Author: Payton Hoegh

*Theme: How did we get here? Exploring humanity's role in climate change and environmental crises.*

Session Five | Our Health, the Earth's Health: Environmental and Public Health | Author: Adrienne Elliot

*Theme: Truth-telling about the intersections of environmental health and public health.*

Session Six | Lives in Peril: Extreme Weather and Disaster | Author: The Rev. Richard Acosta

*Theme: Migration, refugees, and climate crisis.*



## SECTION THREE | RESTORING THE COVENANT, REPAIRING THE EARTH

Session Seven | God Works with Our Broken Hearts: Grief, Repentance and Reckoning | Author: Payton Hoegh

*Theme: Exploring climate grief, lament and repentance*

Session Eight | A Better World is Possible: Communities Organizing for Change | The Rev. Jemonde Taylor

*Theme: Imagining community organizing and impact at the parish level.*

Session Nine | Resilience along the Way of Love | Author(s): Adrienne Elliot and Sarah Nolan

*Theme: Resilience and discernment toward environmental care and action.*

# PART ONE - SESSION ONE

## God So Loved the World

The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers

At the conclusion of this session, participants will:

- Express God's love for creation, in its glory, sacredness, and diversity.
- Recount experiences of grief and loss in relation to creation.
- Begin forming meaningful small group relationships shaped by commonly held norms.

*Please review the primary resources, guiding Scripture, reflection and discussion questions prior to small group gathering. Optional resources are available for a deeper dive.*

### PRE-GATHERING PREPARATION

Find these resources online at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/session-one/>.

#### Primary Resource:

- “Apollo 8”: Bishop Curry. Sermon from 50th Anniversary of the Apollo 8 Moon Landing. (Begins at 21:00 time stamp)

### GUIDING SCRIPTURE

#### Scripture: 1 John 4:7-12 (NRSV)

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

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### SMALL GROUP GATHERING

*Facilitator or volunteer can use the prayer below to open your time together.*

#### OPENING PRAYER

Great Spirit God, we give you thanks for another day on this Earth. We give you thanks to enjoy the compassionate goodness of you, our Creator. We acknowledge with one mind our respect and gratefulness to all the sacred cycles of life. Bind us together in the circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and one another. Amen.

— *From Native American/ Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian liturgies, prepared for the General Convention of The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, California, July 2009*

#### CHECK-IN

*Facilitator leads the group through brief check-ins from each participant.*

## Introductions

Each person shares their name, home city/state, and what inspired them to join this group.

## Welcome to the Journey

- **Introduction:** Facilitator introduces the journey and curriculum, drawing on language from curriculum introductory materials.
- **Norms:** Have you ever been in a small group where people developed trust, shared honestly, and grew in shared faith, commitment, or action? Tell the story of that experience. What practices or agreements would help this group to be a small community like that? Use these insights to create a set of norms for the small group.

## REFLECTION

*Group can choose to read the reflection out loud together or go directly to discussion questions depending on timing and how many participants were able to do the reading prior to the gathering.*

It all starts with love. In the beginning there was God, who existed not alone but as a community of love: Creator, Christ, and Spirit. God's love just kept spreading out and giving itself away (because that's what love does!). And so there was life: winds and light, oceans and birds, soil and skies, fish and trees. The wondrous array of color, flesh, and life that is creation—it all exists because of God's original love.

We human beings rise from this same loving source. God's breath animates us, and we are imprinted with God's image. No matter how far we wander, no matter how selfish and destructive our individual and collective actions may be, one thing is certain: When we love, we return to God's purpose and hope for us all, our deepest and truest reason for being. As 1 John 4 puts it so well, "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us."

Who is the "we" and "us" in this circle of love? It is certainly the whole human family, the ones nearby whom we see every day and the ones who are far away but inextricably yoked to us in this increasingly, sometimes terrifyingly, networked world. But the circle of neighbors keeps extending out to include the creatures and natural environment that God created and marked as "good" long before we humans ever existed. We hear this deep truth from Presiding Bishop Michael Curry in his sermon on the 50th anniversary of the Apollo moon landing:

It's not all about us. We are part of a greater whole. We are part of God's world, God's grand and glorious creation. And from the beginning—we and all creation—we have been made for relationship with our God, with each other, and with all of creation. This is God's world. We are God's children. And God loves the world and the children God has created.

Put even more simply, and with an ear to the spirituals, Bishop Curry reminds us: "God's got the whole world in his hands."

Given the severity of the climate crisis, it might seem tone-deaf or sappy to ground this journey so firmly in the love of God. Shouldn't we focus even more on facts and stats, pumping our neighbors and sermons with more information until people see things differently? Every expert on culture transformation will tell you increased knowledge only inspires limited change. We've got to pair new data with new hearts. And let's be clear: There is nothing soft or easy about loving the world as God does. If anything, when we tap

into God's love, we become more fierce, compassionate, bold, and powerful. Faithful people have changed societies, communities, and worldviews because we are inspired by God's dream of beloved, flourishing community and because the Spirit propels us to join God and make that dream real.

If there was ever a time to join God in the care of our created world and most vulnerable neighbors, this is that time. You don't have to be a climate expert or an impassioned advocate to know we are at a tipping point in the life of the Earth and all who share it. The majority of Episcopalians report that they care about climate change and want to address it. They also report feeling overwhelmed in the face of such a wide-ranging crisis. I count myself in this broad middle.

I'm no expert, but I am genuinely scared of the seemingly irreversible warming and denigration of our air, water, and land and the loss of species that help to keep the Earth in balance. I'm not a climate warrior, but I am furious that African Americans and poor people—my own communities of origin—are so often the ones who bear the brunt of storms, drought, heat, and environmental poison. At the same time, when I get really quiet, I admit to feeling shame, because so many people on this planet are suffering to make possible the disposable, exploitative, give-it-to-me-now, East Coast American way of life that I now enjoy. I need God's love to take on this challenge. I need God's power to pull me out of helplessness, despair, and cynicism. I need God's love to knit me into circles, communities, and partnerships committed to transformative action.

Back in 2019, a community of Episcopal leaders specifically began asking about the power of love to move people and communities toward greater love for creation. Together we crafted the [Creation Care Covenant](#), a pledge and framework that translates the loving, liberating, life-giving love of God into three interrelated commitments:

- **LOVING FORMATION:** God's love bids us to nurture and grow our love for the Earth and all of life through preaching, learning, storytelling, prayer, and contemplation. As we come to regard creation with love and wonder, we open the way for the transformation and renewal of our own minds and hearts.
- **LIBERATING ADVOCACY:** God's love bids us to stand alongside marginalized, vulnerable people, to advocate for changed laws, policies, and corporate and civic practices. We join in repairing creation and seeking the freedom and flourishing of all God's children.
- **LIFE-GIVING MITIGATION:** God's love bids us to join in mitigation (that is, reducing the severity, danger, and damage of climate change) and adaptation (by adopting practical ways of reducing our climate impact as individuals, households, congregations, institutions, cities, and nations. The more unselfish we become, the more simply, humbly, and gently we will live on the Earth.

This framework will shape a lot of the journey that's about to unfold. Over these nine sessions—through film, art, readings, prayer, reflection, and action—we will nurture and share our love for God's good creation and counter the dominant culture's sinful, selfish approach to the Earth and her people. We will discover how we can collectively lift our hands and voices to change laws and policies and thus heal communities and save lives on the frontline of the climate crisis. We will witness and then practice transformed, more interconnected ways of living. As small groups—communities of love filled with power, grace, and hope aplenty—we will take the next step on the way of love.

We may not save the world. But if we love one another and the Earth with a tiny fraction of the strength of God’s love for all of life, then we will have tapped into the heart of God. We will know the joy of holding God’s precious, beautiful, vulnerable world in our hands.

## Discussion Questions

*Facilitator guides the group through the discussion questions.*

1. John 3:16 tells us, “God so loved the world, he gave his only Son.” Presiding Bishop Michael Curry points out that, at least in the Koine Greek of the New Testament, the word for “world” is “kosmos” or “everything that is.” That means God has deep, abiding, self-giving love not just for humanity but for all of creation, “everything that is.” When have you experienced love, wonder, or awe in the presence of God’s creation? Describe that experience and the feelings that rose in you.
2. As you think back on your connections to the natural world, have you seen any of the places or creatures you love be damaged or limited because of human action? Share about that experience, including how you discovered the change and how you felt about that loss.
3. The author of the reflection places herself among the “broad middle” who care about climate change and creation care but feel overwhelmed around how they should respond. Where would you place yourself, and what experiences have led you to this place?
  - a. An advocate with deep knowledge and experience?
  - b. Concerned with limited knowledge or experience?
  - c. Ambivalent with little knowledge or experience?
  - d. Critical of climate action with any degree of knowledge and experience?
4. Later in 1 John 4, we read: “Those who do not love a brother or sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.” Have you ever witnessed another person suffering because of our changing climate? Recall that story or image, even if it was far away. What did you feel? What did you do, or wish you could do?

## CLOSING CHECK-OUT & PRAYER

What word describes how you feel right now? After you’ve shared, please invite another person to go.

*After all have offered a word, the facilitator or volunteer can pray a simple prayer bringing together the hopes and prayers of the whole group.*

## ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

*These are activities and engagement opportunities to explore different ways to get involved and learn more.*

- Consider various Scripture passages that speak of God’s love for creation. Which passage or even line most resonates for you? Feel free to consult this handout for creation care-related Scripture readings.
- Engage in story-sharing with at least one person in your church, family, or circle of friends. It can take as little as 10 minutes. Use the [Creation Care StorySharing handout](#) for prompts and guidance in this practice of listening for and sharing our stories.
- Go through the photos in your phone, in a photo album, or throughout your home. Identify at least one photo of a natural place or animal that—for you—has communicated the love and presence of God. Recall the story of your encounter with this place or creature. What difference did this make for you?
- Notice the news between now and your next session. Keep a log of the stories related to environment and climate change, taking special note of which ones are most compelling and stirring for you.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*The Rev. Stephanie Spellers serves as canon to Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry and spearheads Episcopal efforts around evangelism, reconciliation, and creation care. Her newest books are “The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline and New Hope for Beloved Community” and an updated 15th anniversary edition of “Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other and the Spirit of Transformation,” featuring new reflections by Spellers and other leaders (released November 2021). She has served as chaplain to the Episcopal House of Bishops, directed and taught mission and evangelism at General Theological Seminary, and served as a canon in the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island. Before that, she founded The Crossing, a groundbreaking church within St. Paul’s Cathedral in Boston, and led numerous churchwide renewal and justice efforts. A native of Frankfort, Kentucky, and a graduate of both Episcopal Divinity School and Harvard Divinity School, she and her husband, Albert deGrasse, make their home in New York’s Harlem neighborhood. Learn more about her recent works at [www.churchcrackedopen.com](http://www.churchcrackedopen.com).*



## PART ONE - SESSION TWO

# Water & Our Baptismal Covenant

Ashley Hubbard

At the conclusion of this session participants will:

- Be able to connect the work of creation care to our baptismal covenant.
- Understand what a watershed is and how the health of our waterways impacts individual and community health.
- Have explored the connection between Christian discipleship and water stewardship.

*Please review the primary resources, guiding Scripture, and reflection and discussion questions prior to the small group gathering. Optional resources are available for a deeper dive.*

## PRE-GATHERING PREPARATION

Find these resources online at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/session-two/>.

### Primary Resources:

- Film: “Triple Divide” [Redacted] (52 min)
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. “Braiding Sweetgrass.” Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013. “The Sacred and the Superfund,” pp. 310-340.

### Optional Resources:

- “Green Dreamer” podcast with Kamea Chayne, Episode 258 – “Judith D. Schwartz: Healing the Water Cycle to Restore Climate and Ecological Balance” (50 min).

## GUIDING SCRIPTURE

### John 7:37-38 (NRSV)

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”

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## SMALL GROUP GATHERING

*Facilitator or volunteer can use the prayer below to open your time together.*

### OPENING PRAYER

We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water.

Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation.

Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise.

In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John

and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ,

to lead us, through his death and resurrection,

from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

We thank you, God, for the water of baptism.

In it we are buried with Christ in his death.

By it we share in his resurrection and through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

We thank you, Creator, that we are called to a life of discipleship  
and that you give us everything we need for our visit within your creation.

We pray for guidance as we seek to hear creation's song of belonging, becoming, and belovedness.  
Amen.

\* Adapted from the Book of Common Prayer, pp. 306-307.

## CHECK-IN

*Facilitator leads the group through brief check-ins from each participant.*

## REFLECTION

*Group can choose to read the reflection out loud together or go directly to discussion questions depending on timing and how many participants were able to do the reading prior to the gathering.*

When I was in the third grade, I began to learn about Earth's renewable and non-renewable resources. To make this learning fun, my teacher had the class play a game where she held up pictures of resources, and students were to shout out a response. Sun—renewable! Fossil fuels—non-renewable! I thought this was such an easy game until she held up a photo of a river. Non-renewable, I shouted! To my surprise, the answer was wrong. I remember expressing my concern to the teacher about labeling water as a renewable resource. Although I could not articulate a scenario in which water would be completely used up, I wanted to hold space for the possibility that water could run out.

In my third-grade mind, I understood that water—and fresh water in particular—was not guaranteed. Many decades later, my concern for water remains. I believe water should be stewarded with the utmost care, respecting its restorative nature. We live in a time where we understand more and more about the complexities of the hydrologic cycle; however, we refuse to seek the balance that creation needs to flourish. Water projects prevent rivers from reaching the ocean, and we pump water miles from their natural spaces to irrigate arid deserts as farmland. Water has become a commodity instead of the gift that God intends.

God has a dream for the world that God has made—an interconnected, interdependent, interrelated creation. That dream is a vision of harmony and renewed life where humanity and the more-than-human parts of creation thrive together in community through mutual respect. God's dream includes you, me, and all of humanity living together as anointed people carrying on God's good work of creation and preservation of the world. In the words of Cherokee writer the Rev. Randy Woodley, God's dream is a community of creation living in Shalom (<https://www.randywoodley.com/>).

The Christian relationship with water finds sacramental expression in baptism. In baptism, water is the outward and visible sign of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is an inward and spiritual grace. Baptism is a story of becoming: Through it we become new life and join the (re)newed community in Christ. In the waters of baptism, we enter into a covenant—a promise—to follow Christ and to serve God and each other. Christians are born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5), and without water there is no baptism.

As Christians, our relationship with water is not transactional, nor do we view water as a commodity. Water is a symbol of renewed life. As we gather at the font, or in the living waters of our own ecosystems,



Christians are reminded that both baptism and water are gifts we receive from the Creator. We do not create them or build them or control them. We honor them through a life of discipleship, proclaiming by word and example the Good News of God in Christ (Book of Common Prayer, p. 305). We follow Jesus' example of living a truly human life through neighborly love and being good ancestors through kinship and responsibility to all who precede and follow us in our journey through creation. Through our baptismal covenant, we commit to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves. We commit to strive for justice and peace among all people, and with God's help we commit to not wasting or destroying all the goodness that God has given by striving for the preservation of the world.

The water of baptism reminds us whose we are: members of a covenant relationship with God and all of creation. Humanity lives into this covenant relationship through water stewardship, the careful and responsible management of the water that God has entrusted to our care. As disciples of Christ, we steward water because we recognize it as the primal element present before the foundations of the world were laid. Water is the life force that links humanity to the Creator and to the entire community of creation.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, in her chapter "The Sacred and The Superfund," lays out the instructions, or sacred purpose, of the Haudenosaunee: to express gratitude to the life-sustaining beings of the world and to care for them. As Christians, we find our sacred purpose in living a hope-filled life, believing in the power of resurrection, and working toward the peaceful renewal of the world. Baptismal language is covenantal language that reveals a covenantal relationship—the relationship between God, God's people, and creation.

With every sip and splash of water, humanity is invited to remember its connection with creation and the divine. God's dream for humanity is that we will actively participate in the physical and spiritual renewal of all of creation, as members within the community of creation. By activating our faith in God through the baptismal covenant, we affirm that water is not only a resource for human consumption but is the sacred bond that links all of creation. Water stewardship—practiced as Christian discipleship—proclaims water is the foundation for renewed life in Christ and embodies God's desire for humanity to be in right relationship with God and creation.

## Discussion Questions

*Facilitator guides the group through the discussion questions.*

1. This session's film and readings invite us to consider different sources of water, where our water comes from, and how it impacts both human and non-human life. Where does your water source originate from? Where does the water you drink come from?
2. As Robin Wall Kimmerer states in "Braiding Sweetgrass," water is faithful to its responsibilities for sustaining the world. Christian discipleship must include the responsibility of water stewardship—without water, there would be no baptism. How are you participating in the renewal of your baptismal covenant through water stewardship (continue, persevere, proclaim, seek, serve, strive)?
3. "Braiding Sweetgrass" highlights how industrial development turned the sacred Onondoga Lake in present-day Syracuse, New York, into a Superfund site. Are there Superfund sites in your area? If so, share what you know about the sites.
4. In "Triple Divide," we learn about the negative impact on individuals' health due to the unhealth of their water source. How does the health of a watershed affect communities in different ways?
5. "Triple Divide" references being a "good neighbor" several times. What does "being a good neighbor" to human and non-human creation look like?

## CLOSING CHECK-OUT & PRAYER

What word describes how you feel right now? After you've shared, please invite another person to go.

*After all have offered a word, the facilitator or volunteer can pray a simple prayer bringing together the hopes and prayers of the whole group.*

## ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

*These are activities and engagement opportunities to explore different ways to get involved and learn more.*

- Map your watershed and explore other watersheds using the U.S. Geological Survey watershed mapping tool: ([https://water.usgs.gov/wsc/map\\_index.html](https://water.usgs.gov/wsc/map_index.html))
- Discover your personal water footprint calculator: <https://www.waterfootprint.org/resources/interactive-tools/extended-water-footprint-calculator/> or your household water footprint: <https://www.watercalculator.org/wfc2/q/household/> (Spanish option available)
- Participate in or organize a World Water Day (March 22) activity: <https://www.worldwaterday.org/share-2023#activationkit> (available in six languages)
- Participate in a local watershed cleanup or habitat restoration project (check NOAA, local watershed groups and universities).
- Make personal commitments to solve sanitation and water crisis (<https://www.unwater.org/bethechange/>).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



***Ashley Hubbard** (enrolled, Cherokee Nation) was born and raised outside of Montgomery, Alabama. She is the canon for formation for the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota and serves The Episcopal Church as the secretary of the Task Force on Indigenous Liturgy and as a member of the Executive Council Committee for Indigenous Boarding Schools and Advocacy. As a former microbiologist, high school science teacher, and recent Virginia Theological Seminary graduate, Hubbard is passionate about ecotheology, environmental justice, and exploring the implications of God's call for humanity to be in covenant relationship with creation. In her time off, she enjoys spending time outdoors with her husband of 20 years, the Rev. Joe Hubbard; their three children, Hill, Hattie, and Hannah; and two family dogs, Bubba and Bella.*

## PART ONE - SESSION THREE

# A Vision for Right Relationship with the Land & Covenant with the Creator

The Rev. Rachel Taber-Hamilton

At the conclusion of this session, participants will:

- Have an understanding of how and why land-based environmental issues are intertwined with Indigenous identity, culture, and spirituality.
- Have greater knowledge of the historical experience of Indigenous people that informs Indigenous perspectives of environmental issues that affect them today and how the daily practice of creation care is interwoven with Indigenous stewardship rights of sovereignty.
- Have greater awareness regarding how their own personal stories and life experiences shape their relationships with the place/space where they live and the consequence of dislocation from the land due to the colonial and modern history of immigration.
- Have learned about how the Western cosmology that shaped Christianity informs the American corporate identification of land as a resource that can be owned, commercialized, and exploited—with non-human entities characterized as being without soul and devoid of Spirit/sacredness.
- Why reclaiming the sacred nature of creation is vital in the work of creation care and environmental advocacy.

*Please review the primary resources, guiding Scripture, and reflection and discussion questions prior to the small group gathering. Optional resources are available for a deeper dive.*

## PRE-GATHERING PREPARATION

Find these resources online at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/session-three/>.

### Primary Resources:

- Film: “Inhabitants: Indigenous Perspectives on Restoring our World” (1hr 16min).
- Reading: Chapter 4 | “Smohalla: If the Land has Anything to Say” from “We Survived the End of the World: Lessons from Native America on Apocalypse and Hope” by Steven Charleston, published by Broadleaf Books (2023).

### Optional Resources:

- Film: “Indigenous Land Stewardship: Tending Nature” (57 min)

## GUIDING SCRIPTURE

### Psalm 104:10-26 (NRSV)

You make springs gush forth in the valleys;  
they flow between the hills,  
giving drink to every wild animal;  
the wild asses quench their thirst.  
By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;  
they sing among the branches.

From your lofty abode you water the mountains;  
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,  
and plants for people to use,  
to bring forth food from the earth,  
and wine to gladden the human heart,  
oil to make the face shine,  
and bread to strengthen the human heart.  
The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,  
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.  
In them the birds build their nests;  
the stork has its home in the fir trees.  
The high mountains are for the wild goats;  
the rocks are a refuge for the coney.  
You have made the moon to mark the seasons;  
the sun knows its time for setting.  
You make darkness, and it is night,  
when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.  
The young lions roar for their prey,  
seeking their food from God.  
When the sun rises, they withdraw  
and lie down in their dens.  
People go out to their work  
and to their labor until the evening.

O Lord, how manifold are your works!  
In wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.  
Yonder is the sea, great and wide,  
creeping things innumerable are there,  
living things both small and great.  
There go the ships,  
and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

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## SMALL GROUP GATHERING

Facilitator or volunteer can use the prayer below to open your time together.

### OPENING PRAYER

**By the Rev. Rachel Taber-Hamilton**

Gracious Creator,  
You have made us in your image,  
With the same fierce forces that formed the universe.  
Help us to appreciate that each of us are expressions  
Of the diversity that you encompass and name as good.  
Guide us as we follow your Son

On the Sacred Journey of becoming fully human,  
The One who was with you from before time and through whom  
All things are made.  
Through Christ we are united with our ancestors—  
The stars, winds, and waters, the sun and moon—  
And with All Our Relations on Earth.  
Give us the grace to live in humility and balance  
With the animals and plants in the environments  
Wherever you have placed us, the peoples of the world,  
So that we might be the nurturers and cultivators  
That you need us to be.  
May we be Good Gardeners of healing and resurrection  
As we dwell in reciprocity with the Earth that you have made.  
Amen.

## CHECK-IN

*Facilitator leads the group through brief check-ins from each participant.*

## REFLECTION

*Group can choose to read the reflection out loud together or go directly to discussion questions depending on timing and how many participants were able to do the reading prior to the gathering.*

The creation story of my Indigenous tradition tells of how Grandfather Spirit was journeying in the midst of the stars when he heard the distant sound of a woman weeping. He walked far throughout the cosmos until he found Grandmother Spirit crying by herself in the great stillness. When Grandfather asked why Grandmother was crying, she told him that she was lonely and longed for the company of those whom she could nurture. She told him that her purpose was not fulfilled. So, Grandfather molded Grandmother Spirit into what we now inhabit as the Earth, so that she would never be lonely but have diverse life in abundance to nurture and to sustain.

Sacred stories of the Earth teach us how to live with the land as a divine covenant of ethical relationship. The sacred stories of Indigenous people are tens of thousands of years old and are intimately linked with Indigenous understandings of the local environment. Sacred stories teach how to identify and harvest medicines and their use, the habits and life cycles of the animals upon which they rely for subsistence, and the seasonal cycles of the year, including movements of the sun and moon. The spirituality and identity of Indigenous people root communities in a specific place. Each community's relationship to the environment is expressed in lifeways and technologies that are passed from generation to generation as spiritual imperatives. The ethical imperatives of how we are to live with All Our Relations (animals, plants, terrain, stars, water) are held with equal regard as our relationships with other people, with our ancestors, and with the Sacred.

When I have led retreats and workshops on creation spirituality and colonialism, there seems to me to be a common stumbling block for those whose ancestry in the Americas goes back only 400 years or less (almost 98% of the U.S. population). If it takes thousands of years to form an intergenerational relationship with sacred nature and spiritual wisdom of place, then the vast majority of non-Native Americans will likely have difficulty conceiving and living into a spiritual covenant with the land they occupy as settlers. Added to this reality is the phenomenon of urban development in post-World War II

America, the nomadic lives of those who move for education and employment, and patterns of moving from self-supporting rural agricultural areas to commerce-dependent urban areas. All of these may be contributing factors to further spiritual separation from the land. Indigenous people have also experienced separation from heritage lands, with nearly seven out of 10 Native Americans living in urban areas today.

At the same time, across the global landscape, Indigenous people comprise 5% of the world population but protect 81% of its biodiversity. In every nation and on every continent, Indigenous people are leaders in environmental stewardship and environmental justice advocacy. From Water Protectors to Guardians of the Rainforest, from the Indigenous communities defending the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve to the Maori people's influence on the decision of the New Zealand parliament to grant personhood status to the Whanganui River—Indigenous people are on the frontline of preserving environmental resources from degradation, depletion, and extinction. They do so at great personal risk and cost. For example, between 2016 and 2021, 58 Indigenous leaders were murdered in the Amazonian rainforest regions of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. The Indigenous people being killed are those who protect the water, life, and trees of the rainforest. Indigenous environmental protectors in the Amazonian rainforest regions are regularly threatened by the state, paramilitary organizations, extractive industries, and by organized crime.

Any ally dedicated to environmental advocacy and resolving the climate crisis needs to attend to the knowledge and experience of Indigenous communities locally and globally. Supporting Indigenous environmental concerns must include supporting the efforts of Indigenous communities to recover traditional lifeways, food ways, language, and land practices. These actions of cultural recovery empower Indigenous people to live into their unique divine covenant with creation, which is understood to be the manifestation of the Sacred. Loving our neighbors as ourselves means recognizing that all beings on Earth—and the cosmos itself—are our kin, All Our Relations. Within Christian faith, we are called to incarnate in action our love for Creator and creation in ways that reflect the stories of our Christian faith. We are called to be good stewards, emulating the healing ministry of Christ and the labor of resurrection. Our relationship with creation is the only place we have in this life to enact our love of God, our thankfulness for all that sustains us, and cultivate the relationships that weave all that is into a single sacred braid.

## Discussion Questions

*Facilitator guides the group through the discussion questions.*

1. The movie “Inhabitants” follows five Native American tribes as they restore their traditional land management practices that were disrupted by colonialism. How would you describe your relationship to the land where you live and the challenges you experience in having a sacred relationship with the Earth?
2. As you reflect on Psalm 104, what would you include in celebrating God's creation that is unique to where you live?
3. What aspects of your life and the environment in which you live need cultivation, nurture, restoration?
4. In Chapter 4 of “We Survived the End of the World,” Steven Charleston shares the story of Indigenous visionary and spiritual leader Smohalla. In Smohalla's revelation, he gave his people the message that the White settlers would bring about an apocalypse to the Indigenous people and that Indigenous people should reject the colonizer's ways of life and return to their Indigenous lifeways. What vision informs either your pessimism or hope for the future of the Earth?
5. What lifeways and spiritual practices do you live by that connect you to creation and reflect your care/stewardship of creation?

## CLOSING CHECK-OUT & PRAYER

What word describes how you feel right now? After you've shared, please invite another person to go.

*After all have offered a word, the facilitator or volunteer can pray a simple prayer bringing together the hopes and prayers of the whole group.*

## ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

*These are activities and engagement opportunities to explore different ways to get involved and learn more. For additional resources, see addendum.*

- **'Amazonia Viva'** - a virtual reality film [9 min], supported by the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative; to schedule the film for your diocese or group, contact [contato.amazoniavr@gmail.com](mailto:contato.amazoniavr@gmail.com) or [mayaralima.iriBrasil@gmail.com](mailto:mayaralima.iriBrasil@gmail.com). For more information about the experience, visit <https://amazoniavr.com.br/en/>
- I am often asked how to help and support Indigenous concerns on environmental issues. Becoming informed and helpful allies to Indigenous communities requires a long-term and intergenerational commitment to relationships and partnerships with Indigenous communities in ways that ask allies to follow Indigenous leadership on tackling Indigenous social and environmental justice concerns. To learn more about meaningful ways to be an ally to Indigenous peoples, I recommend that you review this resource developed by Greenpeace: <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/10-ways-to-be-ally-indigenous-peoples/>
- Check out the Indigenous Environmental Network, where you can find many more resources and connections. [ <https://sacredland.org/indigenous-environmental-network/>]
- Read the United Nations Statement on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is a foundational document on the importance of Indigenous sovereignty. The document provides an operative definition of Indigenous people and is a valuable resource for anyone seeking a meaningful relationship with Indigenous communities locally and globally: [\[https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf\]](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*The Rev. Rachel Taber-Hamilton is an Indigenous ordained priest in The Episcopal Church. As a Shackan First Nation person, she represents The Episcopal Church on the board of the Anglican Indigenous Network and was part of the project team for the network's video series, "Prophetic Indigenous Voices on the Planetary Crisis." She served on The Episcopal Church delegation to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and on Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's delegation to United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). She has written articles addressing Indigenous concerns for Anglican Theological Review, including "The Necessity of Native American Autonomy for Successful Partnerships" and "When Creation is Sacred." Taber-Hamilton is the rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Everett, Washington, and serves as vice president of the House of Deputies of The Episcopal Church.*



## PART TWO - SESSION FOUR

# We Have Not Loved Our Earth as Ourselves

Payton Hoegh

At the conclusion of this session, participants will:

- Recognize how consumerism and post-industrial human habits have contributed to climate crisis.
- Articulate the ways our culture and human priorities have been out of step with God’s call to love and care for Earth as demonstrated in biblical creation narratives.
- Think critically on and explore recourse for personal and communal habits that do not reflect the love of God for all creation.
- Describe a theological mandate for creation care that challenges consumerism and promotes deep, loving engagement with and love for Earth.

*Please review the primary resources, guiding Scripture, and reflection and discussion questions prior to the small group gathering. Optional resources are available for a deeper dive.*

## PRE-GATHERING PREPARATION

*Find these resources online at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/session-four/>.*

### Primary Resources:

- Film: “Three Seconds” | Spencer Sharp & Prince Ea (4 minutes)
- Film: “The Problem with Consumerism” | Our Changing Climate (10 minutes)
- Reading: “Pope Francis on Consumerism, Environmental Ecology, and Human Ecology” by Dan Dileo, from Millennial.
- *Emergence Magazine* podcast: “The Serviceberry: An Economy of Abundance – Robin Wall Kimmerer,” found on Apple Podcasts (47 minutes).

## GUIDING SCRIPTURE

### Job 38: 4-11; 40:3-4 (NRSV)

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone

when the morning stars sang together

and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

Or who shut in the sea with doors

when it burst out from the womb,

when I made the clouds its garment

and thick darkness its swaddling band,

and prescribed bounds for it,

and set bars and doors,



and said, “Thus far shall you come, and no farther,  
and here shall your proud waves be stopped?”

Then Job answered the Lord:

“See, I am of small account; what shall I answer you?  
I lay my hand on my mouth.”

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## SMALL GROUP GATHERING

*Facilitator or volunteer can use the prayer below to open your time together.*

### OPENING PRAYER

**By Payton Hoegh**

Creator God,

You formed this world in your loving hands.

With a resonant word you brought forth life:

Beautiful plants and beloved creatures you called good.

From the soil, you shaped humankind

And breathed the spark of life into our lungs.

Placing our feet on this Earth, our home,

Your desire has always been for us to walk alongside you,

Mindfully engaging with, tending to, delighting in, and caring for creation.

All too often, we have failed to live into this call.

We have not loved as you love.

We have been selfish and shortsighted.

We have been blind to the consequences of extraction, consumption, waste, and pollution.

Forgive us these shortcomings and open our eyes once again

To the beauty and blessing of this world you have created.

Set our hearts and guide our hands this day

To move once more into balanced relationship with Earth

So that all you have touched and stirred into life

Might be loved as you have taught us to love.

Amen.

### CHECK-IN

*Facilitator leads the group through brief check-ins from each participant.*

### REFLECTION

*Group can choose to read the reflection out loud together or go directly to discussion questions depending on timing and how many participants were able to do the reading prior to the gathering.*

Sitting on a shelf in my house is an old wooden pipe. It’s a dull, stained cherry, swirling with pits and scars of use and age. It was my grandfather’s. He died when I was 12, but whenever I look at it, I’m reminded of his smile, the way his laugh would build from his belly, and how he would cradle that pipe in his palm and thrust it out as he shook. It would sway and spark, smoke whirling as if playing along with the joke. That pipe holds memories of calloused hands, a cozy lap, warm hugs, and, most of all, love.

Sometimes I wonder at how we can wrap up so much sentiment in little mementos like that and miss the grand reminders of God's love all around us. I wonder how we can hold so dear and preserve with such determination precious tokens of our past while we fail to love and cherish what God has created with sacred intent.

In the book of Job, God details the attentiveness and care with which the world was made, saying, "Where were you when I laid the Earth's foundation ... Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7). This passage goes on to intricately outline God's passionate familiarity with the movement of water, patterns of weather, and the richness of life in all creatures. It celebrates how God formed all that is with the intimacy of touch and sighed the spark of life into creation.

As Prince Ea affirms in his poem "3 Seconds," all of this is a miracle.

Having formed humankind in the divine image, the God who traces the boundaries of the sea and who counts each month before a deer bears her fawns offers one simple charge: Love and tend to all that has been made with the same care and delight manifest in its creation.

As we have moved into the industrial age and harnessed new technologies to serve systems of extraction and consumption, Earth has been thrown wildly out of balance by a sharp rise in atmospheric carbon and the manufactured dominance of humanity over the rest of the natural world. Our "care" has not reflected God's love. Selfish and shortsighted, we have destroyed countless habitats, clear-cut forests, poisoned streams, rivers, and oceans. Our behavior has led to a mass extinction crisis that threatens innumerable species of wildlife as rates of loss rise to an estimated 1,000 to 10,000 times average natural occurrences. Calling us to wisdom, Prince Ea cries, "We willingly covered our ears to Mother Nature's screams... we see storms that are stronger than ever before or more droughts, hurricanes, and wildfire than ever before, because there's more pollution than ever before, more carbon, more trees cut down than ever before."

Whole communities—most often communities of color and those least responsible for the practices driving climate change—are desperate and displaced, increasingly imperiled by climate-related disasters made worse by values and choices so many of us spare only passing thought. Our Changing Climate's video essay, "The Problem with Consumerism," traces in heart-wrenching detail how the habits of consumers in relatively wealthy communities and countries contribute to the global environmental crisis we face: "Despite the fact that 100 companies were found to be the root cause of 70% of global emissions, the reality is, the people using those companies' products and burning their fuel are us."

We have been seduced into an ecologically costly system of accumulation that suggests the things we buy not only address needs and desires but establish status, nurture happiness, and demonstrate love. Our habits of consumption and waste have created whole continents of trash that float across the oceans. Junk heaps overflow, laborers are mistreated, and resources are exhausted as we manufacture more and more things to fill a void that only spiritual wholeness can satisfy.

As an alternative to this economy of manufactured scarcity that is destroying our environment, contemporary prophets like Robin Wall Kimmerer suggest we must embrace an economy of abundance—an economy characterized by gratitude, relationship, and reciprocity. This is a gift economy, or, put theologically, an economy of grace.

Surely this is the appropriate response to the intention and care expressed in Job. As we wrestle with the reality that we have not loved as we are called to love, we must acknowledge our complicity in the crisis we face, and, like Job, cover our mouths in humility as we set our hearts to graceful, faithful care of and relationship with creation.

What would it look like for us to see God’s loving craftsmanship in all of creation? What would change in us—in the way we live, purchase, and pray—if we saw in every stone and seed, creek and creature something of value beyond anything we could buy?

I imagine it might be like holding an old pipe passed on to a grandson, feeling the warmth of a grandfather’s embrace.

Perhaps, like Job, we would proclaim, “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear but now my eye sees you.” In saying so, perhaps we would be newly inspired to love this Earth, God’s creation, our home.

## Discussion Questions

*Facilitator guides the group through the discussion questions.*

1. The book of Job offers a rich, poetic outline of God’s creation of Earth and the artistry and loving care that defined this creative act. How have our own habits and choices reflected the tenderness and intention seen in God’s care for creation? How have they departed from God’s careful dominion?
2. In the poem “3 seconds,” Prince Ea explores loss of connection to the Earth as contributing to ecological imbalance and the environmental crises our global community is experiencing. As we seek to rekindle that connection as a reflection of God’s own care in creating each and every part of the universe, what most reminds you of the love God has for you and for all of creation?
3. “The Problem with Consumerism” outlines the way our consumer culture and habits of consumption are tied to the fearful consequences of the environmental crises we face. What factors do you believe have made unhealthy consumerism so prevalent in contemporary society? How might The Episcopal Church play a role in challenging consumerism and promoting an economy of abundance or “grace economy” akin to that described by Robin Wall Kimmerer?
4. What practices can you embrace individually or with your community that will help demonstrate loving care for and engagement with creation?

## CLOSING CHECK-OUT & PRAYER

What word describes how you feel right now? After you’ve shared, please invite another person to go.

*After all have offered a word, the facilitator or volunteer can pray a simple prayer bringing together the hopes and prayers of the whole group.*

## ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

*These are activities and engagement opportunities to explore different ways to get involved and learn more.*

- Go out into the natural world, your backyard, a local park, a nearby trail. Step into that space with intention. Open your eyes to creation as if seeing with God’s eyes. Reflect on how this changes your perception. Journal about your experience.
- Connect with your local Interfaith Power & Light chapter and get involved with efforts to promote loving care of creation in your community. <https://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/>

- Complete the free training to become a Blessed Tomorrow Climate Ambassador. Lead your congregation in deeper engagement with climate issues and organize creation care efforts that demonstrate loving care for your local ecosystem and community.  
<https://blessedtomorrow.org/blessed-tomorrow-ambassadors-training/>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*Payton Hoegh is the program director for the Center for Spirituality in Nature. A postulant in the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, he is passionate about community weaving, ecology, environmentalism, agriculture, justice, and equity. He holds a Master of Divinity degree from Claremont School of Theology. Hoegh has worked as chaplain and director of a faith-based young adult service program as well as a communications professional, specializing in creative digital design and storytelling for church and nonprofit partners. He also founded All Wanderers, an interfaith community that gathers in nature to hike, break bread, and engage what it means to be a spiritual being in the contemporary world. Hoegh lives with his wife, Jazmin, and cat, Zoey, in a tiny home near the Angeles National Forest in California.*

## PART TWO - SESSION FIVE

# Our Health, the Earth's Health: Environmental and Public Health

Adrienne Elliott

At the conclusion of this session, participants will:

- Define environmental justice, environmental racism, and sacrifice zones, especially in relation to redlining and other systems of oppression.
- Be familiar with the history of faith-based environmental justice.
- Recognize/analyze environmental justice issues in their community or town.
- Articulate practical theological responses to environmental justice issues.
- Feel equipped to seek partnership with community organizations in this work.

*Please review the primary resources, guiding Scripture, and reflection and discussion questions prior to the small group gathering. Optional resources are available for a deeper dive.*

## PRE-GATHERING PREPARATION

Find these resources online at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/session-five/>.

### Primary Resources:

- Film: “Environmental Justice: Opposing a Toxic Waste Landfill” from PBS Learning (4 mins)
- Film: “Living Without Water: Contamination Nation” from Vice News (15 mins)
- Film: “Cancer town: 'People are dying horrible deaths'” from The Guardian (8 min)
- Reading: “The Meaning of Air” by Bryce Upholt, from Emergence Magazine

### Optional Resources:

- Film: The University of California, Santa Cruz, Global Environmental Justice Observatory offers several short films on environmental justice and environmental racism issues across the country.
- Website: ArcGIS StoryMap on environmental justice with basic definitions, history, and mapping.

## GUIDING SCRIPTURE

### 1 Corinthians 12:12, 18-26 (NRSV)

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ...But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect, whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

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## SMALL GROUP GATHERING

*Facilitator or volunteer can use the prayer below to open your time together.*

### OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, Creator of the earth, this sacred home we share:

Give us new eyes to see the beauty all around and to protect the wonders of creation.

Give us new arms to embrace the strangers among us and to know them as family.

Give us new ears to hear and understand those who live off the land and sea, and to hear and understand those who extract its resources.

Give us new hearts to recognize the brokenness in our communities and to heal the wounds we have inflicted.

Give us new hands to serve the earth and its people and to shape beloved community.

For you are the One who seeks the lost, binds our wounds and sets us free,

And it is in the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen.

*Prayer from Carol Gallagher (member of the Cherokee Nation, bishop in The Episcopal Church, and regional canon, Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts), “A Prayer for Our Time and for the Earth,” from the 2019 meeting of the House of Bishops, Fairbanks, Alaska.*

### CHECK-IN

*Facilitator leads the group through brief check-ins from each participant.*

### REFLECTION

*Group can choose to read the reflection out loud together or go directly to discussion questions depending on timing and how many participants were able to do the reading prior to the gathering.*

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ...If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (I Corinthians 12:12, 26).

If we think of our church and the wider community as a single living organism, we all suffer when communities are exposed to environmental risks, even if we personally are less impacted. That is what it means to be in mutual relationship with one another, caring for our neighbors as ourselves and bearing one another’s burdens. From the perspective of environmental health—the branch of public health concerned with the effects of the natural and built environment—the exposures to which our most vulnerable members are subjected affect us all.

Statistically, communities of color experience disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards like toxic wastes and pollution, contaminated water, and other known health risks compared to whiter and

wealthier neighborhoods. In the United States, this is tied to **redlining**,<sup>1</sup> the discriminatory 1930s bank lending practices which refused loans for residents (often people of color) living in areas deemed financially risky (designated on maps by red lines). Tribal lands and reservations have similarly been used as toxic dumping grounds or test sites for the government and corporations.

Such areas have often become **sacrifice zones**<sup>2</sup> where the health and even life expectancy of poor people and communities of color are sacrificed for the prosperity, convenience, or comfort of others. Intersections of race, class, ability, age, and more can compound communities' vulnerabilities and diminish their capacity to withstand health hazards and climate-related disasters like extreme heat and storm events. Unequal political access also exacerbates a community's **cumulative burden**,<sup>3</sup> as wealthier, whiter communities with greater access to decision-making processes say "not in my backyard" to that new highway or cement manufacturing facility. For this reason, communities of color and the poor have historically organized for **environmental justice (EJ)**<sup>4</sup> - that is, fair treatment and equal access to the structures of decision-making that determine how environmental benefits and harms are distributed.

I was transformed in my own understanding and advocacy of these issues when my parish in Seattle, along with other churches nearby, participated in the Duwamish tribe's eco-tour of the Duwamish River Superfund site. This tour introduced participants to a history of injustices in the area, including the forced displacement of Native peoples from their ancestral land and lifeways; the rerouting of the river and pollution of the water, land, and air due to nearby highways, heavy industry, and Port of Seattle activities; and the drawn-out cleanup, lower life expectancy, and diminished health outcomes compared with other areas of the city. We learned about the decades of community organizing and political advocacy undertaken by various local stakeholders, as well as opportunities to stand in solidarity. Beyond raising awareness, churches in the diocese have participated in DuwamishAlive watershed restoration events, supported calls to action, and some pay "Real Rent," to the tribe, a symbolic step toward fair compensation for land that was unjustly taken.<sup>5</sup>

As Episcopalians, our baptismal covenant calls us to strive for justice and peace and to respect the dignity of every person. When we open ourselves up to learn something new, to bear witness to a story from someone with a perspective and experience in a body different than our own, we can be transformed. So, let us listen and learn—and act in solidarity. Let us suffer and rejoice with those who continue to advocate at every level for healthy food and clean water, land, and air; for environmental justice; for peace in their bodies; and for peace in their communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Read more about the consequences of redlining, including higher average temperatures (<https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=1d7c77f1b13c4a688bf123fd469d9792>), less access to nature (<https://www.nrdc.org/bio/drevet-hunt/california-seeks-reduce-inequity-access-nature>), and food apartheid (<https://www.nrdc.org/bio/nina-sevilla/food-apartheid-racialized-access-healthy-affordable-food>).

<sup>2</sup> Read more from the Climate Reality Project. <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/sacrifice-zones#:~:text=Sacrifice%20zones%20are%20areas%20where,adverse%20impacts%20on%20their%20health>.

<sup>3</sup> "The multiple inequities marginalized populations face such as increased exposure to climate or environmental impacts and reduced access to healthcare" (ECOS Introduction to Environmental Justice storymap).

<sup>4</sup> From The Episcopal Church's Creation Care and Eco-Justice [Glossary](#): 1. Fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies (EPA). 2. The universal right to collective environmental, political, economic self-determination.

<sup>5</sup>To learn more visit [www.drcc.org](http://www.drcc.org)

## Discussion Questions

*Facilitator guides the group through the discussion questions.*

1. Were you familiar with the idea of environmental justice and/or sacrifice zones before this session? How have these ideas and these communities' stories transformed you?
2. We often think of the environment as pristine wild areas and parks, but environmental justice reminds us that the places where we live and work are also our environment. How have you viewed the environment, and has your understanding of it changed or expanded?
3. Redlining is a topic that comes up multiple times in this session's resources. Often, these discriminatory maps from the 1930s reflect present-day environmental health (and other) inequities. Was this connection surprising to you? What do you know about the neighborhoods that were redlined in your area or other places with which you're familiar?
4. Faith communities have an integral part to play in the environmental justice movement, as we saw in the PBS video "Environmental Justice: Opposing a Toxic Waste Landfill." What was your reaction to the United Church of Christ's involvement, and how might The Episcopal Church address the intersections of justice, extractive economies, and care for the bodies of suffering members of our communities?
5. Think about your city or region. Are you aware of any local environmental health concerns and groups working to advocate on behalf of those impacted? What can your church do to support local environmental justice efforts?

## CLOSING CHECK-OUT & PRAYER

What word describes how you feel right now? After you've shared, please invite another person to go.

*After all have offered a word, the facilitator or volunteer can pray a simple prayer bringing together the hopes and prayers of the whole group.*

## ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

*These are activities and engagement opportunities to explore different ways to get involved and learn more.*

- There are many ways your faith community can work toward safeguarding human and environmental health, whether it's advocating alongside community-based environmental justice groups, providing space on your church property for a community garden and accessible food, or participating in civic engagement, such as leaving public comments or hosting candidate forums to ask about their environmental health policies. To get started, let's learn about what environmental and socioeconomic factors are present in your area.
  - Activity: Use the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice (EJ) Screen <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention EJ tracking <https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/Applications/ejdashboard/>, or The Episcopal Church's Explore Your Neighborhood mapping tools <https://generalconvention.org/explore-your-neighborhood/> to research EJ issues in the area around your congregation or community. For the Explore your Neighborhood map, climate impact layers will soon be available for sea-level rise, urban heat island effect, and more.
  - Use one of the tools and look at different sites to learn more about some of the environmental and public health impacts associated with nearby exposures like Superfund sites, urban heat, air pollution, food access, etc. What do you notice and what do you wonder about some of the areas most impacted? Is your parish, home, school, or workplace located in or near these communities? Do you know folks living in these areas?



- After using the tools, research local or regional EJ organizations already working on these issues in your area. A quick Google search with your city plus “environmental justice” and the type of exposure you’ve identified might yield some results. You may learn of other EJ concerns or threats beyond the ones identified on EPA’s EJScreen or the CDC’s dashboard. Do these EJ organizations have any campaigns or requests ongoing? How can you share these concerns and opportunities for advocacy with your church or wider community?
- Once you know about these EJ groups and their current areas of focus, get into action! Maybe your parish is located in or near a sacrifice zone/frontline community, and your parishioners are impacted by and already aware of these organizations. For folks outside of these areas, do you have opportunities to show up, support financially, and connect with members from parishes in these EJ communities? Ask how you and your (faith) community can amplify needs and fill gaps, and then listen. Work on building connections between your church, local EJ groups, and other community stakeholders like municipal officials, nongovernmental organizations, and other faith communities.
- CDC Environmental Health Tracking links:
  - Heat Dashboard <https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/Applications/heatTracker/>
  - State resource inventory—government environmental health and justice organizations by state <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/tracking/EJinventory.htm>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*Adrienne Elliott works for the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia in western Washington as the program coordinator for multicultural ministries & community transformation, which also includes some creation care. In 2022 she finished her master’s in climate science and policy at Scripps Institution of Oceanography and has remained in San Diego to be close to family. Beyond the work she does for Olympia, she is also involved with the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego’s creation care community. Elliott is passionate about the intersections of environmental justice, grassroots organizing, and activating the church for partnership with the wider community. In her free time, she enjoys coaching high school cross-country and track.*

## PART TWO - SESSION SIX

# Lives in Danger: Extreme Weather and Disasters

The Rev. Richard Acosta

*Translated by Andrew Thompson*

At the conclusion of this session, participants will:

- Explain the problem of migration due to climate change.
- Express the relationship between theology and extreme weather disasters.
- Understand the ways in which climate migration affects their lives and communities.
- Discern ways to respond theologically and ethically to the problem of climate migration.

*Please review the primary resources, guiding Scripture, and reflection and discussion questions prior to the small group gathering. Optional resources are available for a deeper dive.*

### PRE-GATHERING PREPARATION

Find these resources online at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/session-six/>.

#### Primary Resources:

- Film: “Fleeing climate change — the real environmental disaster” from DW Documentary (42 minutes). Also available in Spanish: *Los Refugiados Climáticos*.
- Website: Climate Change and Disaster Displacement from UNHCR

#### Optional Resource:

- “The Letter: Laudato Si” from YouTube Originals (1hour, 21 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rps9bs85BII&t=1s>

### GUIDING SCRIPTURE

#### Genesis 41:29-31,54-42:2,5 (NRSV)

There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. After them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; the famine will consume the land. The plenty will no longer be known in the land because of the famine that will follow, for it will be very grievous...and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in every country, but throughout the land of Egypt there was bread. When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do.” And since the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine became severe throughout the world.

When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you keep looking at one another? I have heard,” he said, “that there is grain in Egypt; go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die.”... Thus the sons of Israel were among the people who came to buy grain, for the famine had reached the land of Canaan.

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## SMALL GROUP GATHERING

*Facilitator or volunteer can use the prayer below to open your time together.*

### OPENING PRAYER

**By the Rev. Richard Acosta**

Lord, God of life, creation, harmony,

At the perfect time, this fragile and beautiful planet sprouted from your infinite love.

In your wisdom you created us, in your image and likeness,

So that we would administer and care for your work.

But ambition and selfishness blinded us.

We brought creation and everything that contains it to the extreme of its resistance.

With this we have also threatened the life and dignity of millions of brothers, sisters, and siblings

Who are forced to leave their homes to go to another land, as foreigners, as strangers,

As before your people were forced to leave the land which you gave them to look for food in Egypt.

Do not allow drought, hunger, and the evil of our hearts to win out.

Give us wisdom in our decisions and the strength to fight for life;

Give us the light to respond to our vocation and show care and concern for others, including other creatures;

Strengthen charity toward our migrant siblings

Who come to our territories looking for a better life.

Protect those who live far from their country.

May they one day return to their ancestral homelands,

And may we all live in fullness and harmony with creation.

Amen.

### CHECK-IN

*Facilitator leads the group through brief check-ins from each participant.*

### REFLECTION

*Group can choose to read the reflection out loud together or go directly to discussion questions depending on timing and how many participants were able to do the reading prior to the gathering.*

The signs of the times indicate the existence of a real crisis, of life and death, which has been sufficiently confirmed by the natural and social sciences: the environmental crisis caused by human action. For the first time, humanity finds itself compelled to stop, or at least decrease, its consumerist, predatory race that has been unleashed mainly since the Industrial Revolution and that has led the planet, in less than 300 years, to a brink of a new cataclysm.

The only one among all creatures made in the image and likeness of God, and to which God entrusted the administration of creation, has brought the planetary balance to the limits of its endurance, exploitation, and production. It is no longer possible to hide how the planet is bleeding to death in multiple ways (extinction, pollution, exhaustion, and injustice, among others). The paradox is that this species, the human, is completely vulnerable to an eventual global catastrophe because small variations in climate, salinity, temperature and sea level, radiation, marine currents, winds, soil fertility, the seasons, tectonic plates, and more leave it exposed to anguish, illness, precariousness, and death. Creation is a great system;

it is an immense and complex interactive web of life. Therefore, the inadequate relationship with the planet turns into a self-attack, a suicide, which must be avoided and requires everyone's participation.

In addition to the above, the environmental crisis is not only an ecological crisis but also a socio-ecological one. Those who suffer consequences of this damage first and most dramatically are the most impoverished on the planet, those who pollute the least, and those who live on the banks of rivers and beaches, on the outskirts of developing cities, in the countryside and in the jungle—all of whom form a new group that is the victim of the environmental crisis and, therefore, a new population that deserves special attention from governments, industry, organizations, and, of course, the church.

Today we speak of climate refugees, and the causes of this situation are varied. As the waters rise, cities disappear; extreme droughts make the soil infertile and drinking water scarce; farming activities become unviable in arid zones; forest fires displace communities; and hurricanes destroy entire populations. There is a lack of political will of governments and inequality. It all adds up. Climate change is displacing between 20 million and 25 million people around the world each year. These brothers and sisters are forced to leave their homes and even their countries because of global warming. It is expected that by 2050 displacements due to this cause could reach 1,200 million (some speak of more than 2 billion) coming from coastal cities, islands, African countries, South America, and even the United States. The first climate refugees from the United States were a group of Biloxi Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians from the Isle of Jean Charles in Louisiana.

Little empathy is needed to assess this tragedy: losing your living space, livelihood, places of study, the people you interact with on a daily basis, sometimes part or all of your family, your city or—even more serious—your country; going to live as a stranger in a foreign land, trying to communicate in a language you don't know, carrying out a job that is not your own. On occasion the refugee camps themselves bring their own tragedies if they are in poor countries. Although they are in refugee camps, they are nonetheless in strange places and without the possibility of living a full and dignified life.

Faced with this serious reality, the response from the church and theology must be two-fold: the denunciation of the situation of the most dispossessed—victims of the environmental crisis—and the defense of creation as a subject of rights. The environmental crisis is today a humanitarian crisis. It is not a question of mere ecological activism, but of social justice, of attention to the least fortunate.

If theology must respond to the urgent needs of the least fortunate, the lash that strikes the weakest on the planet today is intimately connected to the environmental crisis. The thirst to hoard, to have, to consume has led to an overexploitation of the planet, and this has led to the oppression of millions of brothers and sisters obliged to suffer the consequences so that a few may maintain their standard of living and comfort. The only way to be Christians is in dialogue with these contexts. We must be the voice of those who cannot raise their own. Human and planetary rights today are profoundly related.

## **Discussion Questions**

*Facilitator guides the group through the discussion questions.*

1. How does climate change affect the poorest on the planet?
2. Why might climate change affect those who have already been displaced for non-environmental reasons?
3. What can/should the church, and Christianity in general, do in this situation? What human and/or environmental rights can we promote and reinforce?

4. How can one implement concrete actions to combat climate change, based on liturgy, catechesis, and pastoral action?
5. Is it possible to engage in ecumenical work from this area?
6. How does this situation affect your life? What would you do if a climate refugee came to your door or your church?

## CLOSING CHECK-OUT & PRAYER

What word describes how you feel right now? After you've shared, please invite another person to go.

*After all have offered a word, the facilitator or volunteer can pray a simple prayer bringing together the hopes and prayers of the whole group.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*The Rev. Richard Acosta Rodríguez is a priest of the Episcopal Diocese of Colombia in Province IX of The Episcopal Church. He holds bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in theology and is a professor at the university and at the Centre for Theological Studies in the Diocese of Colombia. Rodríguez is also in charge of the Mission San Benito de Nurse and has spent the last 10 years researching the relationship between theology, the Bible, and the environment. His book, "Dios, Hombre, Creación," was published in 2014.*

## PART THREE - SESSION SEVEN

# God Works with Our Broken Hearts: Grief, Repentance and Reckoning

Payton Hoegh

At the conclusion of this session, participants will:

- Articulate the centrality of lament, repentance, and ritual as a faithful response to climate anxiety and as a necessary part of the work of creation care.
- Express their own stories of grief amidst climate crisis.
- Outline how rituals of personal and communal lament can be opportunities for truth-telling, repentance, and calls to action for creation care and engagement.

*Please review the primary resources, guiding Scripture, and reflection and discussion questions prior to the small group gathering. Optional resources are available for a deeper dive.*

## PRE-GATHERING PREPARATION

Find these resources online at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/session-seven/>.

### Primary Resources:

- Film: “Why Grief can be Strength in a Warming World” | Dan Sherrell | TEDx - YouTube (13 minutes)
- Poetry: “After the Fire” | Ada Limon
- Podcast: “An Obituary for the Land” - The New York Times - The Daily

### Optional Resources:

- Essay: “The Pall Of Our Unrest” by Terry Tempest Williams in Mountain Journal

## GUIDING SCRIPTURE

### Jeremiah 9:10; 17-20 (NRSV)

Take up weeping and wailing for the mountains  
and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness,  
because they are laid waste so that no one passes through,  
and the lowing of cattle is not heard;  
both the birds of the air and the animals  
have fled and are gone.

Thus says the Lord of hosts:

Consider and call for the mourning women to come;  
send for the skilled women to come;  
let them quickly raise a dirge over us,  
so that our eyes may run down with tears  
and our eyelids flow with water.

For a sound of wailing is heard from Zion:

“How we are ruined!  
We are utterly shamed  
because we have left the land,  
because they have cast down our dwellings.”

Hear, O women, the word of the Lord,  
and let your ears receive the word of his mouth;  
teach to your daughters a dirge  
and each to her neighbor a lament.

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## SMALL GROUP GATHERING

*Facilitator or volunteer can use the prayer below to open your time together.*

### OPENING PRAYER

**By Payton Hoegh**

Loving Creator,  
You are a God who weeps.  
Your face has felt the touch of tears and,  
Because of the breadth and depth of your love,  
You know the sting of brokenness and suffering.  
In this time of uncertainty and loss,  
As we face the fearful consequences of a changing climate,  
Grant us the courage to acknowledge that we have not loved as you called us to love.  
Teach us how to mourn so that we might remember how we are called to care.  
Give us the strength to grieve so that we might be moved to change.  
May our broken hearts, our tears and lament,  
Steel in us a commitment to repentance and guide us forward  
On the path to renewal, healing, and wholeness.  
Amen.

### CHECK-IN

*Facilitator leads the group through brief check-ins from each participant.*

### REFLECTION

*Group can choose to read the reflection out loud together or go directly to discussion questions depending on timing and how many participants were able to do the reading prior to the gathering.*

I still remember the panic I felt from the knock on the door that night.

Through eyes blurred with sleep, I took in the strange scene outside. The sky was dark, but it was streaked with an eerie orange glow. Twisted trees were haunting silhouettes, and a haze of smoke veiled the air. Window panes shook as helicopters roared overhead. The message from a kind neighbor relaying orders from the sheriff's office was brief and frank: Pack a bag, take only what you need. Get out quickly.

In 2017, the Creek Fire raged through the canyons around our home. It burned over 15,000 acres and leveled dozens of houses and structures. For over a week, my wife and I watched the news and checked

our phones. We became anxious experts at analyzing maps that traced the fire's spread. When we were finally able to return to our little house, the structure still stood, untouched. But just beyond it, mere feet from its foundation, the hillside was charred black, all the brush and vegetation burned away. From the street just above ours, you could still smell the smoke from homes of families who weren't so lucky.

As I stood in the driveway reeling with the mixed emotions of that moment, I felt my throat clench and my body begin to tremble. A desperate realization settled in my mind: *Nothing would ever be the same.*

As a global community, we are facing this same fearful anticipation of change. All around us is striking evidence of loss. We are bearing witness to increasingly devastating wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes - all part of a steadily unfolding pattern of more prevalent and powerful climate-related disasters. In just the past 50 years, over 2 million people have lost their lives in such catastrophic events. Whole communities have been displaced, homes erased by shifting sea level or unexpected cataclysm. Whole species of wildlife have been lost to extinction, and, with populations dwindling, 42,000 more could soon face the same fate. The scientific community warns that all of this is likely to grow worse.

So profound is this moment of upheaval that a new word has been coined to describe it: "solastalgia". Coined by Australian philosopher Glenn Albrecht, this term combines clashing roots denoting "comfort" with those for "loneliness" and "pain" to name the unique emotional toll of climate crisis. Solastalgia seems singularly suited to that numb, hollow feeling left in the wake of rising tides erasing whole islands, amidst swirling ashes and haunting quiet where trees and homes stood, laughter and joy once echoed.

"We have to figure out a way to access our grief about climate change to wrap our hearts around it," Dan Sherrell explains in "Why Grief can be Strength in a Warming World." "Emotional processing is going to make us braver, more resilient, more able to cope and to act."

In this time of change, our grief can carry us forward. For people of faith, it always has.

The voice of Jeremiah echoes across generations proclaiming: "I will weep and wail for the mountains and take up a lament concerning the wilderness grasslands... Teach your daughters how to wail; teach one another a lament..."

Our rites and rituals of mourning allow us to sit with our broken hearts. We are present in our pain and, in our lament, we acknowledge that nothing can return to the way it was. We must see and feel the wounds of the world because this opens us to the reality of our personal and collective hurt, to our responsibility for and from this pain, and to the hope that can be born of our brokenness.

As environmentalist and social activist Terry Tempest Williams explains in a moving obituary for the land:

Grief is love... To bear witness to this moment of undoing is to find the strength and spiritual will to meet the dark and smoldering landscapes where we live. We can cry. Our tears will fall like rain in the desert and wash off our skins of ash so our pores can breathe, so our bodies can breathe back the lives that we have taken for granted.

I will mark my heart with an "X" made of ash that says, the power to restore life resides here.

As Christians, we are called to this courage and boldness. Love demands nothing less.



What would it look like for us to join the God of Jeremiah in weeping and wailing for the mountains? For us to open our eyes to the wounds of the world like Thomas placing his hands in Christ' broken body?

What would change if each time we saw the cross hanging in our sanctuaries and around our necks we thought of an "X" marked upon our hearts proclaiming the restoration of life, rebirth, and resurrection as we transform the way we live?

Our selfishness and short-sightedness have led us to this painful moment. If we are to rise to the challenge of our time, if we are to honor the gifts we have been given and live once more into God's call of care and relationship with this Earth, we must grieve, repent, and change. In doing so, we can change the world.

## Discussion questions

*Facilitator guides the group through the discussion questions.*

1. What do you care enough about that you would change your life for it?
2. Grief and anxiety are so prevalent and specific in this time of climate crisis that a new term has been created to name it: Solastalgia. In "Why Grief Can Be a Strength in a Warming World," Dan Sherrell suggests that "solastalgia exists in some form in all of us. We just have not figured out a way to make space for it." What role can the church play in responding to the increasing prevalence of eco-anxiety and climate-grief? What could this look like in your congregation or community?
3. In her "Obituary for the Land," Terry Tempest Williams writes, "We have been living a myth. We have constructed a dream. We have cajoled and seduced ourselves into believing we are the center of all things... This is a lethal lie that will be seen by future generations as a grave, a grave moral sin committed and buried in the name of ignorance and arrogance." What does repentance look like when applied to such a grave moral sin and an issue as broad as climate change? How do we engage such repentance communally?
4. The prophet Jeremiah's lamentation calls for grief and weeping before conveying God's vow in Chapter 31: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me..." How can we honor the need for grief and mourning in this time of loss *and* the urgent call for action to mitigate the consequences of climate change so we might see the hope of God's promise in this fearful time?

## CLOSING CHECK-OUT & PRAYER

What word describes how you feel right now? After you've shared, please invite another person to go.

*After all have offered a word, the facilitator or volunteer can pray a simple prayer bringing together the hopes and prayers of the whole group.*

## ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

*These are activities and engagement opportunities to explore different ways to get involved and learn more.*

- Read "[Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church](#)" or "[Solastalgia: An Anthology of Emotion in a Disappearing World](#)." Reflect on your own stories and those of your community that demonstrate grief and courage in the face of climate crisis.
- Visit a site that is open to the public which has been impacted by environmental degradation or climate catastrophe. Be present in this space, be attentive to evidence of loss, and reflect on what emotions arise. Offer a prayer for restoration and healing: for yourself, for this place, and for the

Earth. Create a plan on how you and your congregation might be active in bringing about such restoration.

- Organize a service, ceremony, or ritual that provides space and opportunity for your community to reflect on the impact of climate change, to lament and repent together, and to commit to change that will honor God's call for us to care for and be in relationship with all of creation.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



***Payton Hoegh** is the program director for the Center for Spirituality in Nature. A postulant in the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, he is passionate about community weaving, ecology, environmentalism, agriculture, justice, and equity. He holds a Master of Divinity degree from Claremont School of Theology. Hoegh has worked as chaplain and director of a faith-based young adult service program as well as a communications professional specializing in creative digital design and storytelling for church and nonprofit partners. He also founded *All Wanderers*, an interfaith community that gathers in nature to hike, break bread, and engage what it means to be a spiritual being in the contemporary world. Hoegh lives with his wife, Jazmin, and cat, Zooey, in a tiny home near the Angeles National Forest in California.*

# PART THREE - SESSION EIGHT

## A Better World is Possible: Communities Organizing for Change

The Rev. Robert Jemonde Taylor

At the conclusion of this session, participants will:

- Connect the biblical themes of resurrection, power, and prayer to the work of environmental justice.
- Learn to positively impact the congregation's surrounding community with a lens focused on environmental justice.
- Receive tools to help the congregation move from environmentalism to environmental justice.

*Please review the primary resources, guiding Scripture, and reflection and discussion questions prior to the small group gathering. Optional resources are available for a deeper dive.*

### PRE-GATHERING PREPARATION

Find these resources online at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/session-eight/>.

#### Primary Resources:

- Film: "Building Community around Raleigh's Walnut Creek Wetlands" from Partners for Environmental Justice North Carolina (8 minutes)
- Film: "Remembering Kearneytown" from Pavithra Vasudevan and William A. Kearney (15 min)

#### Optional Resources:

- "Wading Deep Podcast" - This podcast series from Saint Ambrose Episcopal Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, highlights the impact of environmental racism, economic disenfranchisement, and the resilience and resurrection of a community.

### GUIDING SCRIPTURE

#### Mark 16:15, 20 (NRSV)

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation." And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it."

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### SMALL GROUP GATHERING

*Facilitator or volunteer can use the prayer below to open your time together.*

#### OPENING PRAYER

By the Rev. Jemonde Taylor

*Influenced by the Easter Chant of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewabedo Church*

God of power and life: heaven rejoices, earth exults,  
The mountains, hills, and trees of the wilderness shout for joy in your glory;  
Give us the power of the Holy Spirit to be agents of resurrection,  
Transforming human life and planet Earth;  
Through Jesus Christ our Savior, who rose from the dead  
So that the entire creation might have life, and have it more abundantly.  
Amen.

## CHECK-IN

*Facilitator leads the group through brief check-ins from each participant.*

## REFLECTION

*Group can choose to read the reflection out loud together or go directly to discussion questions depending on timing and how many participants were able to do the reading prior to the gathering.*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to Christianity. Resurrection is transformation. Resurrection is about transforming creation and nature as well as human lives. Saint Ambrose Episcopal Church, Raleigh, North Carolina, has a history of being a community of resurrectors: individuals empowered to transform unjust structures and systems.

Saint Ambrose formed in 1868, shortly after the Civil War, as a church for recently emancipated Black people. The church began in Smokey Hollow, an area where free Black people lived during enslavement. Noxious smoke from the nearby railway depot floated to the low-lying community, giving the community its name. The congregation remained in Smokey Hollow until 1900 when racial, government, and economic pressures forced the church from its property. Church leaders physically moved the church by placing it on logs and rolling it one mile south across two racial color lines to a newly designated Black community. Saint Ambrose remained at that second location until the 1960s, when the church chose to relocate again. In 1956, during segregation, Raleigh created a new development for Black residents named Rochester Heights, adjacent to Walnut Creek and nearby wetlands. The city discharged raw sewage for 70 years into the wetland. The area also served as an unofficial garbage dump site. In addition to this exposure to pollutants, residents experienced home flooding that persists to this day, leading to adverse effects on their homes and health.

Jesus told his disciples before his ascension in Luke 24:49 that they would be “clothed with power from on high.” Christians receive the power of the Holy Spirit at their baptism. The word “power” means capacity to do and act. Often Christians have shied away from speaking about or praying for power because the act sounds egotistical, or because some people’s experiences of power tend to be negative, associating it with unilateral or oppressive power. There is relational power, which is power built among people through positive relationships. Saint Ambrose’s members have embraced this teaching and moved past the negative connotation of power, placing it in the context of relational power among people to do, act, and effect change.

The church founded an environmental nonprofit (which came to be called Partners for Environmental Justice, or PEJ) in the 1990s to help resurrect the ravaged wetland and combat the ways this pollution was hurting Black residents. Volunteers manually pulled mattresses, autoclave medical sterilization devices, refrigerators, thousands of tires, trash and debris from Walnut Creek and the wetland. The 2009 ribbon-cutting ceremony for a multimillion-dollar education center across Walnut Creek from Saint Ambrose

ushered in an era for environmental awareness in Raleigh. In 2014, PEJ, Saint Ambrose, and the community supported a \$1 million city bond that helped categorize the Walnut Creek Wetland from a 5-acre center to a 58-acre park.

Saint Ambrose helped found a new, countywide community organizing effort named ONE Wake, composed of 43 religious and nonprofit institutions affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation in the fall of 2020. PEJ and ONE Wake worked to pressure elected officials and the developer to require advanced stormwater designs that aid in keeping rainwater onsite of the 150-acre development only 3,000 feet upstream from the church's flood-prone community. Keeping this rainwater onsite mitigates flooding while helping prevent polluted water from entering the creek.

Saint Ambrose launched the Healing Pod in 2021, a three-phase initiative: podcast; labyrinth; and therapeutic horticulture gardens to address the community's mental and emotional health. In April 2023, the Environmental Protection Agency designated the Walnut Creek Wetland Park as its 21st Urban Waters Partner location.

The resurrection is often understood as a past event or something that a select group of people can look forward to in the distant future. Few Christians see resurrection as something that should impinge upon the present moment. Mark records the compelling story of Christ's resurrection and his imperative to the disciples, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). The Greek word for creation is the English word "cosmos," which encompasses the entire universe. Through Christ's resurrection, the Good News of restoration is not only something meant for all nations, but the entire cosmos. The resurrection of Christ permeates every aspect of our personal, public, and cosmic reality. Prayer is essential to do this work. An example of this is Saint Ambrose's Litany for the Wetland (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/109ofl7fundNbpF5Gi1NNZ5wgpUN6R76r/view>). In its environmental justice organizing and its promotion of mental and physical health in the community, Saint Ambrose presents a powerful witness to the reality of resurrection in the world.

## Discussion Questions

*Facilitator guides the group through the discussion questions.*

1. Are there examples of environmental resurrection in your congregation's or surrounding community's past? What environmentally needs resurrecting in your congregation or community today?
2. Jesus told his disciples before his ascension in Luke 24:49 that they would be "clothed with power from on high." What are the local environmental needs in your community? How do you see your church becoming a power congregation by working to effect change in the environment (creation)? Are there local environmental groups that the congregation can partner with to move this effort forward? Research to find local community organizing efforts (i.e. Industrial Areas Foundation, Gamaliel Foundation, etc.)
3. Trees have been and continue to be important in the African and Black American Christian worship and spiritual lives. Some enslaved Black Americans in the 1800s met to worship God under a canopy of trees commonly called brush arbors or hush harbors. The faithful practiced Christianity in this holy and hidden manner. Today in Ethiopia, some Orthodox Christians worship God within "church forests." One church or monastery sits in the center of a forest ranging from 5 acres to 1,000 acres. The clergy and laity believe the tree canopy shading them "prevents prayers from being lost to the sky." Some of these churches are more than 1,500 years old. How might your worshipping community be more intentional about praying for God's creation? Does your community specifically pray for the environment during the context of worship? Consider having your church

leadership write a collect or litany concerning a local environmental effort to use in the context of worship over a period of time. (i.e., [Litany for the Wetland](#))

4. Throughout its history Saint Ambrose and its community experienced many examples of environmental racism. Has your community experienced environmental racism or do you observe it in other local communities? Do you see environmental injustice locally in historically under-resourced or underserved communities? Do you see these differences break along economic lines? Has your church caused harm by participating in environmental injustice against nature or people? How can your congregation partner more intentionally with those local communities to effect environmental change?

## CLOSING CHECK-OUT & PRAYER

What word describes how you feel right now? After you've shared, please invite another person to go.

*After all have offered a word, the facilitator or volunteer can pray a simple prayer bringing together the hopes and prayers of the whole group.*

## ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

*These are activities and engagement opportunities to explore different ways to get involved and learn more.*

- Read: [Moving From Creation Care to Embrace Environmental Justice](https://faithandleadership.com/moving-beyond-creation-care-address-environmental-justice) (https://faithandleadership.com/moving-beyond-creation-care-address-environmental-justice)
- Conduct a home and church energy audit. Some electric companies provide energy audits or green audits to customers.
- Check with local, county, or state agencies for environmental stewardship programs that benefit nonprofits (i.e., [Rainwater Rewards Cost Share Program](https://raleighnc.gov/stormwater/services/apply-raleigh-rainwater-rewards/raleigh-rainwater-rewards-subsidy-program), <https://raleighnc.gov/stormwater/services/apply-raleigh-rainwater-rewards/raleigh-rainwater-rewards-subsidy-program>).
- Contact and meet with elected officials at the local, state, and national levels to express your congregation's concern and response to environmentalism and sustainability.
- Work with The Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations in the [creation care policy area](https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/office-government-relations/about-us/) (https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/office-government-relations/about-us/).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Since 2012, the **Rev. Robert Jemonde Taylor** has served as the 11th rector of the historically African American Saint*



*Ambrose Episcopal Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. The church is in the Walnut Creek Wetland floodplain, where Raleigh released raw sewage for 70 years and then zoned the area as a community for Black residents. The church responded by helping found an environmental nonprofit, Partners for Environmental Justice, and partnering with Raleigh to create a \$2 million environmental educational center and the Walnut Creek Wetland Park. Taylor holds a Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering from North Carolina State University and a Master of Science in mechanical engineering with a concentration in robotics and vehicle design from Stanford University. He worked for Michelin Tire Company for three years before entering seminary and earning his Master of Divinity from General Theological Seminary. Learn more at his website (<https://www.jemonde.com/>).*

## PART THREE - SESSION NINE

# Resilience along the Way of Love

Adrienne Elliot, Sarah Nolan

At the conclusion of this session, participants will:

- Make connections between our faith and care of creation.
- Understand the importance of and distinction between physical and spiritual resiliency.
- Continue the work of discernment toward environmental action.

*Please review the primary resources, guiding Scripture, and reflection and discussion questions prior to the small group gathering. Optional resources are available for a deeper dive.*

## PRE-GATHERING PREPARATION

Find these resources online at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/session-nine/>.

### Primary Resources:

- Film: “The Church & Climate Resilience” by Georgia Interfaith Power & Light / Creation Justice Ministries (4:34)
- Film: “A Wilderness Like Eden: Stories from the Christian Food Movement,” Food & Faith video (15:48)
- Film: COP 26 Video
- Article: “They’re Turning Churches Into Climate Resilience Centers” by Brianna Baker, Grist, Jan. 13, 2021
- Article: “Despite setbacks, The Episcopal Church and Alaska Natives step up fight against drilling in Arctic refuge” by Egan Millard, Episcopal News Service, Aug. 29, 2019

### Optional Resources:

- Article: “Spirituality, Global Warming, and Grief: How Clergy Can Help Tackle Climate Anxiety” by Rebecca Randall on Grist/Sojourners, June 9, 2023
- “What If We Get This Right?” “On Being” podcast episode with Ayana Elizabeth Johnson (49 mins)

## GUIDING SCRIPTURE

### 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 (NRSV)

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

## SMALL GROUP GATHERING

*Facilitator or volunteer can use the prayer below to open your time together.*

### OPENING PRAYER

Holy God, your mercy is over all your works, and in the web of life each creature has its role and place.

We praise you for ocelot and owl, cactus and kelp, lichen and whale;

We honor you for whirlwind and lava, tide and topsoil, cliff and marsh.

Give us hearts and minds eager to care for your planet,

Humility to recognize all creatures as your beloved ones,

Justice to share the resources of the earth with all its inhabitants, and love not limited by our ignorance.

This we pray in the name of Jesus,

Who unifies what is far off and what is near,

And in whom, by grace and the working of your Holy Spirit,

All things hold together. Amen.

*From “Liturgical Materials for Honoring God in Creation,” Reports to the 78th General Convention Supplemental Materials, p. 237.*

### CHECK-IN

*Facilitator leads the group through brief check-ins from each participant.*

### REFLECTION

*Group can choose to read the reflection out loud together or go directly to discussion questions depending on timing and how many participants were able to do the reading prior to the gathering.*

“We know in part and we prophesy in part,” but what will we do? What will God do? The climate crisis is dislocating and at times may feel overwhelming and insurmountable. However, as people of faith, we are grounded in our belief in God’s accompaniment, in our hopeful vision of God’s Kingdom, and in God’s love that sustains us in the midst of crisis and calls us to embodying that love in action. And as people of faith, we have an important role in building physical and spiritual resilience.

“And the greatest of these is Love.” Love is an action and the antidote to the troubles we face. Loving God and God’s very good world means loving all of it. As we have learned, creation care and climate justice encompass everything from our food, waste, energy, and stormwater systems to honoring Native sovereignty and safeguarding the health and voting rights of communities of color. Co-conspiring with Spirit, we are invited to re-imagine, re-member and re-create a world that is more loving, liberating, and life-giving.

Each session in this curriculum explored pressing environmental issues, rooted in our loving, liberating, and life-giving faith—inviting us into resilience as we walk (and keep walking) the Way of Love.

Session One reminded us that we are part of a greater whole. And from the beginning we have been made for relationship with our God, with each other, and with all of creation.



Session Two invited us to imagine God’s dream for the world as an interconnected, interdependent, interrelated creation, and that the water of baptism reminds us whose we are: members of a covenant relationship with God and all of creation, including water stewardship.

Session Three lifted up why reclaiming the sacred nature of creation is vital in the work of creation care and environmental advocacy and why land-based environmental issues are intertwined with Indigenous identity, culture, and spirituality.

Session Four encouraged us to wrestle with the reality that we collectively have not loved the Earth as we are called and the negative impact that has had. It asked the question, what would change in us—in the way we live, purchase, and pray—if we saw in every stone and seed, creek and creature something of value beyond anything we could buy?

Session Five introduced the concept of environmental justice and highlights the disproportionate impact of climate change on the most vulnerable. We were asked to consider what it means to be in mutual relationship with one another, caring for our neighbors as ourselves and bearing one another’s burdens.

Session Six expanded upon how the environmental crisis is a humanitarian crisis, looking at the global plight of climate refugees. Reminding us it is not a question of mere ecological activism, but of justice and attention to the least fortunate.

Session Seven asked what it would look like for us to join the God of Jeremiah in weeping and wailing for the mountains? To lament, to grieve, and to honor the gifts we have been given and live once more into God’s call of care and relationship with this Earth.

Session Eight proclaimed that through Christ’s resurrection, the good news of restoration is not only something meant for all nations, but the entire cosmos. We saw that prayer is essential to this work and witnessed how a community committed to prayer was able to engage in environmental justice organizing and to promote mental and physical health for all.

Can you imagine it? See it, taste it, feel in your bones what it would mean if we lived into our call to Love God and Love God’s world? Can you envision ways that we might face the climate crisis with true resilience?

Physically speaking, our churches need to prepare our buildings, grounds, parishioners, and neighborhoods for our own climate vulnerabilities, like sea-level rise or flooding, fire danger, and even energy and cost-saving projects like solar, battery storage, electrification, and weatherproofing. Our congregations can also partner with our local municipalities to offer our spaces as a resiliency hub<sup>6</sup> or central community nexus for shelter, aid, and communications during extreme weather events and other disasters. Working with neighbors and local stakeholders builds social resiliency and trust, too. Building climate resilience is mitigating the most suffering while seeking to adapt to a changing climate to save all that we can. Equity and justice are at the heart of resiliency and require systemic transformation at the local and global scales.

Spiritually speaking, resilience is being existentially grounded, knowing we are in God’s hands. It enables us to remain faithfully committed to practices that connect us to God, our neighbors, and all creation, even in

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<sup>6</sup> Read more about this in this Grist article about Climate Justice Ministries, and in their resiliency toolkit: <https://www.creationjustice.org/resource-hub/category/resilience>.

the midst of crisis. Rooting our climate action in our faith tradition and baptismal covenant fosters this spiritual resiliency in our parishes, and it enables us to minister to our neighbors' existential and spiritual needs. We can offer meaningful spaces for ethical deliberation, liturgical and contemplative practices, and other forms of spiritual accompaniment to continually return to God's love.

And it starts with us in our small groups. With so many opportunities to act, discerning vocation is a great place to start—or to come back to if you are already active in creation care. As author and theologian Frederick Buechner said, vocation is “the place God calls you to...where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”

## Discussion Questions

*Facilitator guides the group through the discussion questions.*

1. Throughout this curriculum, we have encountered a multitude of stories that likely broke your heart, infuriated, or surprised you. What stories have stuck with you, and what stories are missing? What have you been feeling in your body and spirit?
2. How do we hold faith, hope, and love alongside the “litany of doom” that is truth-telling about what has and is going to happen as a result of climate chaos?
3. What is the role of transformative imagination and spiritual resiliency in this work, and how might we better practice both as people of faith?
4. To equip us to discern our vocation or climate action, we invite you to use Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's Climate Action Venn exercise (more details below). She asks us to find the intersection of our joy, our gifts, and the work that needs doing. What is in your climate action Venn diagram? What might be in your church's Venn diagram?
5. What do the next steps look like for you and/or this group in sustaining and deepening creation care and climate justice?

## CLOSING CHECK-OUT & PRAYER

What word describes how you feel right now? After you've shared, please invite another person to go.

*After all have offered a word, the facilitator or volunteer can pray a simple prayer bringing together the hopes and prayers of the whole group.*

## ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

*These are activities and engagement opportunities to explore different ways to get involved and learn more.*

- Engagement invitations for different levels: Use Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's Climate Action Venn [exercise](#) to discern how the Spirit may be calling you and your faith community into deeper climate action. You can also learn more from her [Climate Action Venn TED Talk](#) (10:11 mins).
- Remember, you can reframe the “you” to “your parish.” Using this tool in our personal lives and with our parishes can help us discern where God may be calling us. We invite you to do this exercise with your church in conversation with your neighbors' needs and assets.



- Just beginning? Try this exercise and see where you might start.
- Already engaged in creation care and environmental justice activities? What areas of focus have been in your climate action Venn and what level of action has it included? Where can you nurture and support this work in your life and in the life of your church or diocese?
- Do you want to explore new levels of engagement? Is there some spiritual or physical resiliency offering your church could provide to individuals, local institutions, or partner with other community organizations and faith communities to develop?

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



***Adrienne Elliot** works for the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia in Western Washington as the program coordinator for multicultural ministries and community transformation, which also includes some creation care. In 2022 she finished her master's degree in climate science and policy at Scripps Institution of Oceanography and has remained in San Diego to be close to family. Beyond the work she does for Olympia, she is also involved with the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego's Creation Care Community. Adrienne is passionate about intersections of environmental justice, grassroots organizing, and activating the church for partnership with the wider community. In her free time, she enjoys coaching high school cross-country and track.*



***Sarah Nolan** is originally from a small town in New Mexico and spent most of her early adulthood in and around the Los Angeles region. She was a cofounder of The Abundant Table, an Episcopal-rooted educational farm and worshipping community in the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, and was active in community organizing, cooperative farming experiments, and food justice initiatives in the state of California and the wider Episcopal Church. She recently served as the director of communications and giving at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, Virginia, and now serves as the director of development, giving, and economic justice at All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California. Sarah is a two-term member of the Episcopal General Convention's Task Force on Creation Care and Environmental Racism.*