

Genesis 1: The Message

²⁶⁻²⁸ God spoke: “Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature

So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,
the birds in the air, the cattle,

And, yes, Earth itself,
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.”

God created human beings;
he created them godlike,
Reflecting God’s nature.
He created them male and female.

God blessed them:
“Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!
Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,
for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.”

²⁹⁻³⁰ Then God said, “I’ve given you
every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,
given them to you for food.

To all animals and all birds,
everything that moves and breathes,
I give whatever grows out of the ground for food.”
And there it was.

³¹ God looked over everything he had made;
it was so good, so very good!
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Six.

2 Heaven and Earth were finished,
down to the last detail.

²⁻⁴ By the seventh day
God had finished his work.
On the seventh day
he rested from all his work.
God blessed the seventh day.
He made it a Holy Day
Because on that day he rested from his work,
all the creating God had done.

Leading the Way is a resource produced by the Diocese of Truro Discipleship Team.
It is designed to help individuals, congregations and communities to explore the
way of life which will enable them to flourish in Jesus Christ.

LEADING THE WAY

Way of Life - a pattern for Christian Living

Journeying Out Treasuring- God’s Cre- ation.



“Door. Bridget Macaulay. Used with permission

Leaders Guide.



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These resources undergird and expand the principles identified within the ‘Way of Life’ framework for discipleship. Whilst the ‘Way of Life’ booklet was intended for individual use and development, we have come to recognise the need for churches to consider the same framework for themselves as a body. Equally, we have come to recognise the need for individuals and churches to look beyond themselves, and see how this framework for discipleship might lead to the flourishing of their local community.

This material might be used by a house-group, a working-party, a PCC, or even a whole congregation. The need to consider this particular area might have arisen through Accompanied Ministry Development, through a perceived need within the congregation, or through a concern of the PCC/Ministry Team. There is probably more material here than can be used in one session, so tailor it to your context, or let it spill over into another time.

* Prayer

Draw together all that you have done in this session use the prayer below, or pray together the prayer on the front of Caring for Creation a Simple Guide.

O God, who set before us the great hope that your Kingdom shall come on earth and taught us to pray for its coming: give us grace to discern the signs of its dawning and to work for the perfect day when the whole world shall reflect your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

* Other Resources

See the back of the ‘Caring for Creation - a Simple Guide’ leaflet and also the websites suggested within this booklet.

Are there people in your community who champion environmental issues?

- ⇒ Could you invite them to speak to your congregation/PCC to see what you could learn from them? Can you name them?

Have you considered making your churchyard a 'Living churchyard' (if it is not already)? See: <https://ecochurchsouthwest.org.uk/actions/living-churchyards/>

- ⇒ Might this be a way to involve local schools or other community groups in the priorities of the church? Identify the groups and the key people to speak to about this.

Proposals for renewable energy-generating projects can divide people within local communities.

- ⇒ How might your church provide enable the pros and cons of such projects to be explored and debated in a safe and open environment?
- ⇒ Who might you make use of to help you in this?

NB:

There are a number of web links for this particular LtW. Prior to leading the session it might be helpful to print off any documents that would be helpful to the conversations.

NB

If you have the opportunity prior to meeting, ask participants to bring with them something from their garden or neighbourhood.

* Beginning where we are

Light a candle and place it on a table and then lead a prayer.

If you have had the opportunity to ask participants to bring with them something from their garden or neighbourhood, ask them to place it on/around the table, before using this Psalm together:

Lord our God,
the whole world tells the greatness of your name.
Your glory reaches beyond the stars.

I see your handiwork in the heavens:
the moon and the stars you set in place.
Your glory reaches beyond the stars.

What is humankind that you remember them,
the human race that you care for them?
Your glory reaches beyond the stars.

You treat them like gods,
dressing them in glory and splendour.
You give them charge of the earth, laying all at their feet:
cattle and sheep, wild beasts,
birds of the sky, fish of the sea, every swimming creature.
Your glory reaches beyond the stars.

Lord our God,
the whole world tells the greatness of your name.
Your glory reaches beyond the stars.

From Psalm 8.

* Icebreaker

Either: Ask participants to explain which object they brought and why. Let this lead into a brief conversation about the parts of creation which we value and enjoy (and perhaps those parts for which we have a concern).

Or: Ask participants to think of an experience of creation which has prompted a response of awe - share with each other. Then an experience which has prompted a feeling of concern - share with each other.

* Introduction

Creation matters because it is God's creation, not humanity's (as acknowledged through Psalm 8). God's generosity and creativity is seen in the abundance, diversity and beauty of creation (refer back to the icebreaker session).

The Old and New Testaments of the Bible point to a relationship between the world and those who live in it, such that when the world prospers, so do those who inhabit it. The opposite is also seen to be the case, and an indication of a withdrawing of God's favour.

God has created a world in which relationships are important. Not just relationships between people, and between us and God, but also the relationships we have with creation itself. God puts us into a stewardship relationship with creation. But the ways in which we have treated the world in the past and in the present often stray wildly from God's purpose. Our actions often give rise to injustices among people, as well as harm to the environment.

The above material is taken from the 'Simple Guide to Caring for Creation' leaflet (p3) - give each participant a copy if they don't already have one, and encourage reading (again). If you feel that more teaching is needed in this area, you could go through the simple guide leaflet in more detail - but don't just read directly from it!

⇒ (Operation Noah offers suggestions for churches who are just beginning to think of this, through to more 'advanced' churches: http://operationnoah.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/How-green-is-your-church_suggested-actions_9-March-15.pdf)

Do you make use of the agricultural year in planning your worship (Harvest, Lammas, Plough Sunday, Rogation Sunday, Sea Sunday...)? Resource ideas can be found here: http://germinate.net/resources/?_sf_s=worship

⇒ If you are located in a more urban setting, do these themes still make sense to you, or what would be the natural equivalent services for your congregation?

Have you considered what would be involved in becoming an 'eco-congregation'?

⇒ Are there people in your congregation who could drive this project and inform others of what it entails?
<https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/>

(If there is a small group of people within the congregation who would like to look at these matters in more detail, they use any of the resources cited here: <https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/resources/>)

• Community

Do you invite the local gardening club and/or allotment association to your harvest services?

⇒ Could you or do you invite them to contribute produce? Who would be your contact for this?

⇒ How will you make use of the produce in your local community?

⇒ Identify 1 area where you are prepared to make some change and note how you might do that.

(You could use the ‘Nine ways to live gently on the earth’ as a way of thinking this through: <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/leaflet/nine-ways.pdf> summarised on p5 of the Simple Guide).

What can you take up (rather than give up) which might have an impact on God’s creation?

⇒ What could you grow, or make, or share, or give away, or urge others to do?

Are you aware of Pope Francis’ encyclical “Laudato si”? You can read a summary here: <http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/summary-of-laudato-si-pope-francis-encyclical-environment-quotes.html?referrer=https://www.google.co.uk/>

⇒ What has reading this prompted you to think about or do?

- **Congregational.**

How often does the environment feature in the worship of your church? (For example; in your intercessions, your hymns of praise or concern, your sermons, your visual aids and/or your decorations?)

⇒ Could/should you do this more?

⇒ How might changes happen? Who could be involved?

Are there any steps which your church could make towards being more ‘environmentally friendly’?

For example: is there a system for sharing car journeys to church on Sundays?

- **Bible ‘conversation’**

We are going to spend some time now listening to God through a passage from the Bible.

Text: Genesis 1.26-2.3. The Message

As this is a very familiar passage from the Bible, we have deliberately used an unfamiliar version of it (from The Message) to help us to look at it in a fresh way. Full text can be found on the back page of this Leaders Guide.

Participants will find the full text in their booklet pgs. 4 & 5

Explain to the group the full process for this Bible conversation before you begin. Ensure people know that they will not be made to say anything if they don’t want to. The process is this:

Have someone read the passage aloud, followed by a time of silence (at least long enough for people to read it again for themselves).

People are encouraged to note a word or phrase that particularly strikes them, and to stay with that word/phrase, being open to what God might be saying to them through it.

Give everyone an opportunity (by going around the group) to say what their word/phrase is (and no more). People can ‘pass’ if they wish.

Have a different person read the passage again, followed by a time of silence, in which people can consider further the meaning of their word/phrase.

Going around the group, invite people to say something

briefly about what it was in the word/phrase which struck them. Again people can 'pass' if they wish.

Have the passage read for a final time, followed by silence, during which people are invited to make a personal (silent/written) response to God if they wish.

Now that you have explained the process, use an opening prayer and go through each step.

Holy Spirit of God;
open our ears and our minds,
our hearts and our spirits,
that we may hear you speaking to us
through these words of Scripture.
May we be ready to be encouraged and challenged,
guided and changed.
For the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

* Questions

In the light of this Bible passage, and what it has been saying to people, consider one or more of these groups of questions (also in participants' booklet).

It would be possible to split the participants into 3 groups, to consider one category of questions each, and to report back to the rest.

Alternatively, you may wish to allow people to consider the personal questions themselves later, alone or with a spiritual guide.

If the people of the church are struggling to know what they are about, perhaps it would be best to focus on the congregational questions. Or if you feel your congregation needs to learn to look beyond themselves, perhaps the community questions will be most appropriate.

These resources are here to be used by you in whatever way feels most appropriate for your particular context.

• Personal

Think of a time when you have made something yourself (anything from a cake or a bookshelf, a painting or a shed).

- ⇒ How did you feel as you worked on, and then completed, your project?
- ⇒ How would you have felt if someone had then misused or damaged it?
- ⇒ Do your answers help you to think about God's involvement with creation?

How much do you let the implications of climate change impact on you? Or do you tend to put it to one side, and think that it is someone else's problem?

- ⇒ Has reading the Simple Guide changed your attitude in any way?

When was the last time you re-assessed your use of the world's resources? This can mean anything from water and energy to food, clothing and electrical goods.