



IOWA INTERFAITH POWER & LIGHT

Children and Youth Resources on Caring for the Earth

Introduction

When talking with children about climate change, match the conversation with the child's age and development. Young children may not be ready to learn about climate change as it can overwhelm and make them feel helpless. Before a child can learn to save creation, they must first learn to love it. Fortunately, the actions children can take to love Earth are the same actions that can heal Earth. Please consider this as you review the resources below and plan your lessons with children.

Activities

Grace Gardens: Grass into Grace

Turn your congregation's grass into grace by starting an organic vegetable garden to grow food for those in need in your community. Children and youth of all ages can participate with planting, weeding, harvesting, and composting. It's a great opportunity to learn how we are part of the earth, not apart from the earth, with lessons about faith, food, and climate change.

Recycling Program

Bottles and cans can be gathered in your faith community and taken to a local recycling station in exchange for money to assist an existing congregational activity or program.

Tree Planting

Join in on a community tree-planting on your grounds, in the local community, or in a waterway clean-up day.

Books for Children

I Love God's Green Earth: Devotions for Kids Who Want to Take Care of God's Creation, by Michael Carroll (2010)

Age Level: 8 and up

Kids love working on practical projects to help take care of Earth; they are often the family's biggest proponents of recycling. This book will attract those eco-friendly kids and teach them how creation care can actually draw them closer to God. Each devotion includes a Scripture verse, a "Connection" section to help kids apply both the Biblical and environmental lessons, and a "What Can I Do?" section with a takeaway activity. Jokes and fun facts are also included throughout the devotion to make this book fun, informative, and interesting to readers.

http://www.amazon.com/Love-Gods-Green-Earth-Devotions/dp/1414331797/ref=cm_cr_pr_product_top

Old Turtle, Wood, D. (1992). Duluth: Pfeifer-Hamilton Publishers.

Age Level: Elementary

This beautifully illustrated story book describes an argument that animals have about who God is. Old Turtle tells them about God and how humans are a gift from God to the Earth. Children and adults alike may enjoy this touching tale. From Web of Creation Website:

<http://www.webofcreation.org/GreenClass/youth%20and%20creation.htm>

Seven Days to Care for God's World. Erickson, D. & Erickson, D. (1991). Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press.
Age Level: 5-9

This book is a short story for children through which they are able to learn valuable information about God's creation. In this story, the main character is a young boy named Rupert. Rupert has gone to visit his grandparents and is helping them do work in their garden while at the same time learning about the earth that God created. The grandparents use the creation story from Genesis to explain the earth to Rupert and to teach him why we must care for it. At the end of the story is a short section with activities that a family could utilize to begin caring for creation. It would be a good introductory resource for children who are curious about creation and caring for the environment. From Web of Creation Website:

<http://www.webofcreation.org/GreenClass/youth%20and%20creation.htm>

World, World, What Can I Do? Hazen, B. S. (1991). Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing.

Age Level: Elementary

It is quite simple, yet makes a great effort at getting children interested and excited about what they can do to take care of Earth. The story is told in a rhyming fashion, which is catchy, but also easy to follow and understand. It touches on issues such as pollution, littering, plants, and animals. It would be a good book for young children or children that needed introduced or reminded about the importance of creation care. From Web of Creation website:

<http://www.webofcreation.org/GreenClass/youth%20and%20creation.htm>

Books for Leaders

Caring for God's World: Creative Ecology Ideas for Your Church, Kemper, K. ed. (1991), Prescott: Educational ministries, INC.

This book is concise yet quite helpful for a church that is striving to locate projects involving the environment and creation for children and youth. The book is divided into three sections: Children's Activities, Youth Activities, and All Church Activities. This book is particularly helpful because it has a great deal of specificity. For example, it explains how to begin a recycling program or produce an ecology fair. This source would be helpful if you were seeking project ideas with a lot of detail. It also includes various arts and crafts projects, plays, skits, and games. There are pieces that can be utilized in worship service such as litanies. One particularly helpful feature is the outlines for vacation church school programs. This book would be a good resource for both youth directors and pastors, as well as lay people.

Discover the World: Empowering Children to Value Themselves, Others, and the Earth, Hopkins, S. & Winters, J. eds. (1990), Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

This book is a good tool if you are looking for something to help children emotionally as well. It has ideas that work with children's self-esteem and encourage them to be respectful people. The book is designed for children ages 3-12 and has many charts and activities that teach children how to value themselves, others, and Earth. One feature of this resource that is quite helpful is that it explains and introduces children to a wide assortment of other cultures.

Good Earth Art, Kohl, M. F. (1991), Bellingham: Bright Ring Publishing.

This book is a great resource if you are specifically searching for a craft or project that will engage children in study of the environment. The projects not only raise an awareness of creation care but they also begin to implement it. For example some of the projects utilize things that are saved from the trash or collected from nature. The projects in the book are very creative and quite simple. There are also many helpful illustrations in the book that were completed by Cindy Gainer.

Loving Our Neighbor, the Earth: Creation-Spirituality Activities for 9-11 Year Olds, Jenkins, C. L. (1986), San Jose: Resource Publications, INC.

This book is a very helpful tool if you are looking for specific lesson plans. The book includes 20 lesson plans that can easily be photocopied and utilized to teach in a variety of settings. This book would be particularly valuable in the parochial classroom but may also be a valuable resource for vacation church school or even Sunday school. It could be particularly helpful if one was seeking a unit that focused on the environment. The material is written for 9-11 year olds and it divided into various topics. Some of these topics include, "To Celebrate Creation," "What Did You Have For Dinner," "God and Garbage," and "God is Like a Tree?"

Save the Earth: An Action Handbook for Kids, Miles, B. (1991), New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

This book is a great resource for getting children interested and excited in creation care. It is quite helpful because it gives lists and project ideas for things that children can actually do. The book is divided into sections and each section includes an overview description and facts about the topic, an example of an actual kid that is doing work in that area, projects that one can actually do, and a checklist to ensure that you are being environmentally friendly. The topics addressed in this resource are, land, atmosphere, water, energy, plants & animals, and people.

What on Earth Can You Do with Kids: Environmental Activities for Every Day of the School Year, Garber, M. D. & Spizman, R. F. (1991), Carthage: Good Apple.

This book is separated into chapters that are divided by month. This book is designed to be used as a year-long focus on the environment. However, parts could be taken out and used if they were specifically applicable to your project. The book contains activities, projects, bulletin boards and much more. It is designed for teachers of grades 1-5.

Your Will Be Done on Earth: Eco-Spirituality Activities for 12-15 year olds, Jenkins, C. L. (1993), San Jose: Resource Publications, INC.

This resource has similar features to Jenkins' book for 9-11 year olds. However, this book focuses on an older group of adolescents and hence the age appropriate topics are more intense. This book strives to connect science with theology and engage 12-15 year olds in discussions on these topics. The book includes 18 lesson plans that have activity ideas as well as documents that can be photocopied and passed out to students. Some of the topics in this resource include; "Called to Care for Creation," "The Earth is Polluted," and "The 'Green Squad' Detectives."

Theoretical Background for Leaders

Ecotherapy: Healing Ourselves, Healing the Earth, Clinebell, H. (1996), Minneapolis: Fortress.

Pastoral psychotherapist Howard Clinebell explores the relationships between human spiritual and emotional health and the health of the environment. This book integrates religious education and pastoral counseling with the environment. It also contains several chapters on youth.

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder, Louv, R. (2005), Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

This book argues that contemporary living has desensitized children and that young people need to have exposure to the outdoors and nature.

Websites

ABCs of Living Green

For young children, includes a short lesson for each letter of the alphabet. Some congregations have incorporated this program in their summer programs.

<http://syracuseculturalworkers.com/poster-abcs-living-green>

Earth Ministry

A comprehensive list of books, videos, and curricula about youth and environment from a faith-based perspective.

<http://www.earthministry.org/kids.htm>

Episcopal Relief and Development

For Children: The Abundant Life Garden Project

Downloadable elementary-age children's curriculum contains five thematic modules on Water, Seeds, Soil, Animals, and Harvest with two appendices to the lesson modules offering additional options and tips.

<http://www.er-d.org/children>

For Youth- Act Out: Empowering Youth to Heal a Hurting World

An intensive educational program for middle- and high-school students that brings the needs and hopes of the world together with the lives of youth, in a context frames by liturgy and filled with prophetic stories of Scripture. There are three thematic modules on Malaria, Clean Water and Sanitation, and Hunger and Economic Opportunity. Each module is structured to conform to a 24-hour lock-in/retreat timeline, but is modifiable for other uses, such as weekly youth group meetings, camp programs, or whatever else you can imagine!

<http://www.er-d.org/youth>

Interfaith Power and Light

Films, books, curricula for children's education on earth care.

<http://interfaithpowerandlight.org/resources/for-children-and-youth/>

National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Ministries

The Eco-Curriculum Review

To help church leaders research and select the very best resources for programming in their specific setting. Each review provides detailed descriptions of the curriculum materials, and the reviewer's commentary on many important criteria, such as how hard it is to teach, the theological slant of the materials, and the desired educational outcome of the curriculum.

<http://www.eco-justice.org/CurricReview.asp>

Tenders of the Garden

An eco-justice website for youth groups and youth leaders, with ideas and materials to help youth become familiar with and involved in faith-based eco-justice activities.

<http://www.nccecotenders.org/index.php>

National Religious Partnership for the Environment

Includes resources for children and youth for Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelical and Jewish congregations.

<http://climate.nfcym.org/>

Quaker Earthcare Witness

Provides background information and an outline of a curriculum called, "Earthcare for Children" that was created by this organization.

<http://www.spont.com/earthcare.htm>

The Story of Stuff

A six-session curriculum that helps Christian teenagers explore the relationship between their consumption, their faith, and the health of the planet.

<http://www.storyofstuff.org/other-media/curricula/>

Take AIM at Climate Change Music Video

Features lyrics based on the latest science, images showing NASA visualizations, and rhymes and rhythms inspired by contemporary rap and hip-hop. Tommy Boots, Jené, and friends review how changes at Earth's poles have global impact. The video shows how each of us can take "A-I-M" at global warming by using science and technology to "Adapt, Innovate, Mitigate."

http://www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/topnav/materials/listbytype/Take_AIM_at_Climate_Change_video.html

Web of Creation

Ideas and links to resources for all ages of children and youth by David Rhoads from the Lutheran School of Theology.

<http://www.webofcreation.org/religious-education/234-ideas-and-resources-for-teaching-youth-to-also-care-for-creation->

Sermons for Children

Children's sermons to go along with the ecumenical 4-week September Season of Creation

<http://seasonofcreation.com/>

Vacation Bible School**ReNew**

Kids demonstrate that being green can be easy, faithful, and fun. Although current threats to our environment can seem scary, ReNew is about hope, opportunity, and service. Kids and congregations lead the way as stewards of Earth. <http://renew.wearesparkhouse.org/>

See Earth Ministry for a listing of VBS curricula

<http://earthministry.org/resources/suggested-publications/for-children-and-youth/curricula/curricula-1>