

Introduction:

The Season of Creation presents an interesting opportunity to explore the ways in which we can seek to safeguard the integrity of God's Creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth as per our Marks of Mission and Baptismal Covenant. To further understand the challenge and grace of this opportunity see this article (<http://stpaulstrinity.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SeasonofCreation.pdf>) which is scheduled to appear in the September edition of the Huron Church News.

This program is designed to incorporate lectionary readings during the Season of Creation (Sept. 1 – Oct. 4). To inspire reflection on the upcoming readings, sessions can be held in the week prior. The dates indicated here identify when the associated reading(s) will appear in Sunday worship. As many are still on vacation prior to Sept. 1st, there is no session included for that Sunday.

Note: this program utilises videos as a way to engage in reflection and inspire conversation. Thus, it is necessary to have tools available to show these videos as part of the program.

Sept. 8 - Energy

Scripture:

- Dt 30:15-20 – Choose life, heaven and earth are called as witnesses and our relationship with God is intimately tied with how we live on the land.
- Lk 14:25-33 – Cost of discipleship is about making choices for good that is beyond our own. Jesus challenges us to give up our possessions. Hard to do in a material world and yet there is value in continually checking our relationship to things. What are our priorities? What is important? How do our choices impact the health of the wider world?

Open with scripture of choice. Invite people to reflect on the passage. What stands out to them? What connections do they see with Creation? How do our choices matter? What do we need to make informed choices?

Video: There are multiple videos available on YouTube that highlight the issues around the extraction of bitumen from Canada's Tar/Oil Sands. Here are some suggestions but feel free to explore other options

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPOZdnXbfw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LaF5NfcjWHs>

Discuss: what in the video is familiar? What information is new? How does this information make you feel? What questions/concerns does this raise?

Video: Alternative energy options can be found here: <https://youtu.be/KepnUrzZBug>

Discuss: what in the video is familiar? What information is new? How does this information make you feel? What questions/concerns does this raise?

Pulling it together: The village of Eden Mills is working towards becoming the first carbon-neutral community in Canada. Their story can be found here:

https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/eden-mills-ontario-canadas-first-carbon-neutral-community/?fbclid=IwAR0gUj0BfT9bOmSCBBok0PxU3_amU9XSmZ8hufyHzmtxRnpN6Pz3UAlmNSk

Every choice we make has implications. To what extent do we consider the environmental impact of our choices? What efforts have we made to move towards carbon-neutral buildings and communities? What questions can we raise with our leaders – in our churches, in our communities and for those running in the upcoming Federal election – that shine a light on the importance of considering climate change in our decision-making?

In an effort to support churches moving towards more sustainable choices, the Anglican Foundation is offering grants to combat climate change. More information can be found here: <https://www.anglicanfoundation.org/rfp/>

What project might your Church/community undertake to move closer to a carbon-neutral and zero waste Church/community?

Re-read the scripture used earlier: what does this passage tell us about our responsibility? What will we take from this conversation as we go forward?

End with prayer

Sept. 15 – Safeguarding the integrity of creation

Scripture:

- Lk 15:1-12 – Jesus rejoices over the lost sheep repenting and returning. How are we like the lost sheep in need of repentance and returning?

Invite people to reflect on the passage. What stands out to them? What connections do they see with Creation?

Activity: Bring a small puzzle (50-100 pieces), while the image can be anything, something from nature would be ideal. Invite participants to put together the puzzle. As you do so, discuss how nature is like a puzzle. There are many pieces that come together to make life possible. Each piece is equally important because without one piece, no matter what that piece may be, the puzzle is incomplete.

Such connectivity helps to frame the context for the story of creation in Gen 1 (have copies of the text available to walk through what God is doing)

- God begins by creating light and establishing a pattern of active/rest time;

- Water, sun and soil are the beginnings of the resources needed to nourish life on earth;
- It is only on the 5th day that God finally brings forth beings that can utilise these resources – fish and sea creatures, then animals and insects.
- Everything has its place and its purpose. Elementary science programs teach that there are eco-systems containing producers (sun, plants), consumers (those who eat what is produced), decomposers (like worms and scavengers), herbivores (plant eaters), carnivores (animal eaters) and omnivores (eat both plants and animals). Each of these is important to maintain balance.
- On the 6th day, God introduces human beings inviting us to take care of all that God has created.
- Looking at what has been created God says that it is all very good and then God rests.

Review 5th Mark of Mission – To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. Look at the first part about safeguarding the integrity of creation: what does this mean? Consider Genesis 1 – God created and said it was good. All things have a place and purpose. There is a balance and an integrity to what God has done. How have our choices imposed an alternative approach to creation?

Video – The eco-systems we create can be found here: https://youtu.be/u5_NMsw03XY

Discuss: what in the video is familiar? What information is new? How does this information make you feel? What questions/concerns does this raise? What can we do differently?

Pulling it together: To what extent do we recognise that the choices we make about how we live in this world create alternative eco-systems? If we embrace the challenge to 'safeguard the integrity of God's creation', how might this impact the choices we make in regards to our properties? What might we choose to do differently? How might we repent and return to God?

What questions can we raise with our leaders – in our churches, in our communities and for those running in the upcoming Federal election – that shine a light on the importance of safeguarding the integrity of God's creation?

What project might you undertake as a Church/community in an effort to better safeguard the integrity of God's creation?

Re-read scripture: what does this passage tell us about our responsibility? What will we take from this conversation going forward?

End with prayer.

Sept. 22 – Plastics

Scripture:

- Lk 16:1-13 – parable of the dishonest/shrewd manager who endears himself to others out of fear of losing his position. The point Jesus makes is that it matters how we use what we have available to us. We can't make things idols. We can't serve God and money.

Invite people to reflect on the passage. What stands out to them? What connections do they see with Creation? In what ways do our consumption patterns undermine the integrity of creation?

Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xINyWpPB8>

Discuss: what in the video is familiar? What information is new? How does this information make you feel? What questions/concerns does this raise?

Activity: Plastic hunt – invite participants to bring to the table all of the plastic that they can find in the room (or a specific designated area). This can include plastic they are carrying in the purses or pockets. Separate the plastic into single use and multi-use.

Discuss: How easy/difficult was it to locate plastic? What will we do with these plastic items when we are finished with them? What do we envision happening to them when we are finished with them? How often do we think about what will happen? To what extent can plastic be like the shrewd manager – exploring ways to continue to exist after we are 'done with them'?

Note: we are content to believe that every bit of plastic that we put in the recycle bin will be transformed into something else. Unfortunately, for this to happen there needs to be someone who will purchase the compressed plastic and transform it. As well, the plastic must be uncontaminated (i.e., clean) for it to be usable. In fact, less than 20% of recycled plastic is currently recycled. See this report for more information:

<http://www.oecd.org/environment/waste/policy-highlights-improving-plastics-management.pdf>

We are called to sustain and renew the life of the earth: How could/should this knowledge change our practices? What can we do to reduce our plastic use? How might the items on the table be replaced by more sustainable options?

Suggestions: plastic bottles – reusable water bottles; coffee cups – travel mugs; straws – reusable straws; plastic cutlery – reusable cutlery; plastic bags – reusable bags; plastic wrap – containers, bees wax wrap, alternative wraps; Styrofoam/plastic containers – corn & potato starch containers, re-usable containers, compostable cardboard; pens for note-taking – phones/tablets; etc

Explore suggestions. Where can more sustainable products be purchased? Identify local places and share these with the group.

Note: some communities also have Facebook pages/groups that explore zero waste. Invite participants to take advantage of the tips suggested in these.

Pulling it together: To what extent do we recognise the amount of plastic we consume? If we began to gather up all of the plastic in our homes, how much might we find? Where else is there plastic in our churches? What steps can we take to reduce single use plastics in our homes, churches and communities? What considerations are made regularly to move towards zero waste in our homes, churches and communities?

What questions can we raise with our leaders – in our churches, in our communities and for those running in the upcoming Federal election – that shine a light on the importance of moving closer to a sustainable world through a reduction in new plastic production?

What project might you undertake as a Church/community in an effort to better sustain and renew the life of the earth?

Re-read scripture: what does this passage tell us about our responsibility? What will we take from this conversation going forward?

End with prayer.

Sept. 29 – Stuff

Scripture:

- 1 Tim 6:6-19 – don't place security in money or possessions, but in godly virtues reflected in our relationship with God, each other and creation. To what extent is the love of money and desire for goods part of the problem?

Invite people to reflect on the passage. What stands out to them? What connections do they see with Creation? In what ways do our consumption patterns undermine the integrity of creation? What do we need to do to sustain and renew the life of the earth?

Video: The Story of Stuff <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GorqroigqM>

Discuss: what in the video is familiar? What information is new? How does this information make you feel? What questions/concerns does this raise? What can we do differently?

Activity: How much do we need – a thought experiment.

Brainstorm – how many different kinds of beverage vessels can/do you have? (Make a list - such as mugs, juice, highball, red wine, white wine, champagne, shot, beer, coffee cups, tea cups, etc).

To what extent is this great variety of drinking vessels a reflection of social expectation and the promotion of consumption? How many drinking vessels do we actually need? This is only one aspect of our consumption. To what extent do we also over-purchase other items based on social expectations? Explore gadgets, clothing, technology, etc.

Pulling it together: A poster once claimed: the one who dies with the most toys wins. How many toys do we have that we may not really need but are told by society that we

need? Is ownership a kind of 'idol' we are called to rebuke as indicated in the reading? What changes can we make in regards to how we consume as individuals and churches that might help to sustain and renew the life of the earth?

What questions can we raise with our leaders – in our churches, in our communities and for those running in the upcoming Federal election – that shine a light on the importance of sustaining and renewing the life of the earth by moving away from the idolisation of stuff?

What project might you undertake as a Church/community in an effort to better sustain and renew the life of the earth?

Re-read scripture: what does this passage tell us about our responsibility? What will we take from this conversation going forward?

End with prayer.

Oct. 6 – Food

Scripture:

- Lk 17:5-10 – increase our faith! Our efforts matter. They shape and form what we are expected to do because we believe, even if that belief is only the size of a mustard seed.

Invite people to reflect on the passage. What stands out to them? What connections do they see with Creation?

Where does our food come from? In 2015, Global news explored the contents of a 'typically Canadian' lunch. The results are found here:

<https://globalnews.ca/news/2044985/deconstructing-a-canadian-classic-tracking-the-origins-of-kraft-dinner/>

Review this article. What do you find interesting/surprising/disturbing about the information provided? To what extent do we consider the source of our food when we make purchases?

Video: food can be found here: https://youtu.be/IRPP_XQ_71k

Discuss: what in the video is familiar? What information is new? How does this information make you feel? What questions/concerns does this raise? To what extent does it matter whether we recognise where our food comes from? What seeds does this knowledge plant in regards to our relationship with food? If we acknowledge that food is a gift from God – how might this impact the ways in which we view and use food?

Consider the following video and article:

<https://globalnews.ca/news/2952243/food-waste-5-graphics-that-show-just-how-much-food-we-throw-away/>

Note: If global food waste were a country, it would be the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases after China and U.S. By using up every edible bit of your food, you're doing your bit to look after the environment.

Discuss: what in the video is familiar? What information is new? How does this information make you feel? What questions/concerns does this raise? To what extent do we each contribute to food waste? What might we do differently?

Note: composting is far better than simply throwing away as the latter contributes to methane production. However, at present, food production far exceeds the need complicating the equation. When we buy more than we need, we support over-production. How might we be better consumers?

Pulling it together: What seeds have been planted in you today? How does the information presented invite you to think differently about food? How might this influence choices at home and at church? What more can we do to promote sustainability in regards to food production and consumption?

What questions can we raise with our leaders – in our churches, in our communities and for those running in the upcoming Federal election – that shine a light on the importance of sustaining and renewing the life of the earth through the production and consumption of food?

What project might you undertake as a Church/community in an effort to better sustain and renew the life of the earth?

Re-read scripture: what does this passage tell us about our responsibility? What will we take from this conversation going forward?

End with prayer.

Oct. 13 – Feast

Celebrate the Season of Creation by planning an environmentally friendly meal. This resource from Kairos has some great suggestions about how to make this happen:

<https://www.kairoscanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/SUS-CJ-100MileChurchPicnic.pdf>