

Adult
Week 1

Reading: Psalm 104

Questions:

Compare Psalm 104 to the Genesis account of Creation. What are the similarities? How might Psalm 104 further our understanding?

How might this psalm help inform our view of the relationship between God and nature?

What is the purpose of Creation? How do humans fit into that purpose as part of Creation?

How does this psalm testify to the power of God?

How does this psalm testify to the loving kindness of God?

Prayer: Creator of the universe, we pray in gratitude and praise. You were there at the beginning of all things, shaping our world and preparing it for us. You have provided the mountains and the trees, the waters and the earth. Help us to be caretakers of your gifts, protecting the land from abuse, and ready to share with all in need. Show us how to use our science and technology in creative, not destructive ways. Deepen our awareness of our connectedness with all your creation, so that future generations will also enjoy every blessing. –Michael Gormly

CREATION CARE
SUNDAY CURRICULUM
A Resource from the Environmental Task Force of the
North Carolina Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Week 2

Readings:

Job 12:7-10

and

Mark 12:28-31

Questions:

What are ways in which nature teaches us about ourselves? Teaches us about God?

How have you experienced God through nature?

How do you think the 'breath of every human being' relates to the whole of God's creation?

What are ways you show love in your life?

Have you ever thought about animals as your neighbor? What about plants?

What does loving our neighbor look like when we add all of creation into that?

How can you show love to all aspects of the earth?

How can we learn from nature how better to love God?

How can we learn from nature how better to love our neighbor?

Prayer: Oh how beautiful are your ways, O God, the works of your creation. Raise our consciousness to know and feel deeply in our hearts our connectedness to all that is. Instill in us the gift of being co-creators and sustainers of life. Teach us new and unsuspected ways of living so that current and future generations can walk humbly in beauty, love all compassionately, and live justly in solidarity with all creation. Loving and gracious God, give us the courage to seek this transformation of self and society and the strength to see it through. -School Sisters of Notre Dame Green Team

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Week 3

Reading: 1 Corinthians 14:4-8a

Questions:

What about nature reflects God's patience?

What can the earth teach us about patience?

How do we show kindness to the earth?

What in nature hurts when we are envious, boastful, arrogant, or rude?

How can we counteract the arrogance shown to the earth?

When it comes to loving nature, what might it mean to not insist on our own way?

Do people ever rejoice in doing wrong to the earth? How might you have also done that?

What truths about the earth and our relationship with the earth make you rejoice?

How can we bear, believe, hope, endure for the future of creation?

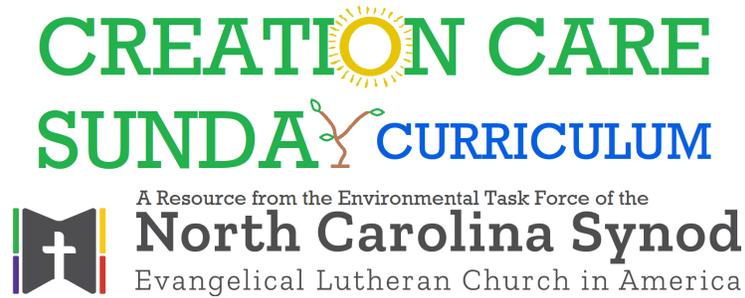
What might we have to hope for?

What might we have to endure, in our love, responsibility, and caring for the earth?

Prayer: Creator God, as we feast our eyes on autumn reds and yellows, we sense your creative power. As we marvel at the uniqueness of each winter flake, we rejoice that you know us each by name. As we hear the songs of birds of spring, we yearn to sing your praises. As we breathe the delicious scents of summer flowers, our souls rest in your love.

Forgiving God, we have not lived out our responsibility to be faithful stewards of creation. For this, we seek your pardon. Our over-consumption has impacted the poorest members of our human family most of all. For this, we ask your mercy. Our actions have endangered both the lives of our children today as well as those yet to be born. For this, we seek your forgiveness.

Living God, as we meet you in nature, inspire us to see anew our place in the web of life. In our daily lives, help us to make daily choices that reflect global solidarity. As we reflect on the teaching of our faith, equip us to advocate for laws and policies that reflect your call to faithful stewardship.



Adult
Week 4

Reading: "A Contemporary Retelling of the Creation Story"-Robin Denney

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light."

And spreading outward in every direction, the universe came into being, light and matter racing outward. And today, at the outer expanding edge of the Universe, God's voice echoes on, as it has done for the last 14 billion years, ever onward, "Let there be light." And there was light, and God saw that it was good.

Four and a half billion years ago the earth was born in light, in fire. Formed from the collisions of countless asteroids. And on the surface of the Earth there was nothing but burning molten rock, the same temperature as the sun.

As the earth cooled, and a crust of rock formed on the surface, ice rich asteroids and comets struck the face of the earth, and water vapor rose from its core, and thick clouds obscured the rock planet, and it rained, and it rained, and it rained for millions upon millions of years. And when the clouds began to clear 4 billion years ago, the planet was covered in a massive green ocean, and the skies were made of carbon dioxide, and they were red.

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

As volcanoes erupted under the green ocean, the magma quickly cooled, and granite was born. It floated on the heavy volcanic rock, and the land rose out of the ocean, and continents formed.

Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation." And in the shallow seas on the edge of the continents, life came to be, and it took its energy from the sun, and used the carbon dioxide of the sky, and it gave off oxygen. And for two billion years, simple photosynthesizing bacteria bubbled oxygen through the oceans, turning them blue, and filled the sky with oxygen, turning it blue, and the atmosphere was formed.

Then 700 million years ago, the young continents drifted together, and blocked the movement of the oceans over the poles, and the poles froze for the first time, and the ice spread out over the face of the planet. For 50 million years, an ice sheet a mile thick covered the whole face of the planet, and almost all life went extinct.

Then as volcanoes split apart the super-continent, the ice melted, and the continents drifted so that there were shallow seas between them.

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures." . . . And God saw that it was good. . . . God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas."

And then out of the destruction of extinction life bloomed in the waters as never before, sea creatures that fed on other creatures, and there were, at that time 500 million years ago, more different kinds of living things than have ever existed on the planet since.

And the atmosphere was finally dense enough to protect life from the destructive rays of the sun, and 300 million years ago life came up out of the water, first plants, and then creatures.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind . . . creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. And God saw that it was good.

The first age of land life was the age of insects. Massive insects swarmed the tropical jungles of earth. Then the amphibians came into being, and massive amphibians dwelt in the jungles. And then life was tested with another mass extinction.

Two hundred and fifty million years ago, an age of volcanoes began. And volcanoes erupted constantly for a million years, spewing poisonous gas that blocked the sun, and forming a new super-continent of lava.

The barren super-continent broke apart, and the pieces are the continents we know today. And while they were still close together, separated by shallow seas, life flourished again upon the earth.

So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

From the wreckage of extinction, rose the largest and most notorious creatures ever to walk or swim on the planet, the dinosaurs, who in turn gave rise to birds.

Then 65 million years ago, a massive asteroid six miles across struck the Caribbean. Dust and debris from the impact rained down over the whole earth. At the same time, massive volcanic eruptions began, filling the skies with thick poisonous gasses. The cloud of debris and gas blocked out the sun, and the jungles died, and with them, the dinosaur- all of the dinosaurs.

And as the poisonous clouds cleared, life returned again to earth, and the age of the mammals began.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness." . . . So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.

Two million years ago, the ancestors of humans came into being in East Africa. At that time the bridge of land that connects North and South America rose out of the ocean, and the Panama blocked the flow of tropical water over the poles, and the poles froze, and the ice ages, in which we are still living, began. Ice extended through the temperate zone, and many living things died. Humans adapted to the ice, and used it to spread out over the face of the earth. And the ice came and went in cycles of thousands of years.

God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

Ten thousand years ago, humans began to cultivate plants and raise animals, and with agriculture was born civilization.

God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food." . . . And it was so.

The work of creation has not stopped. Everywhere in the universe, from its outer edge to its core, the redemptive work of creation continues, bringing life and beauty from destruction and nothingness. The cycle of death and life, destruction and creation continues.

God saw everything that he had made, and indeed. It was very good.

Questions:

How does this account challenge your view of Creation?

In what ways can this view adapt your perception of the world around you?

All God made was good. What are some parts of Creation that you don't view as "good."
How can you shift that view?

Prayer: -All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. -Pope Francis