

# Youth Retreat: Creation and Creation Care

## RETREAT MODULE INTRODUCTION

Dear Retreat Leader:

Thank you for your willingness to serve as a leader for this retreat at a camp or conference center. The hope and prayer is that this retreat module will provide an enriching experience for all middle school and high school participants as well as you and your leadership team.

## Purpose

The intent of this retreat module is for you as a congregational leader to have a tool that equips you and a team for retreat leadership. A variety of opportunities to explore and discover God's word in community abound at camps and conference centers. Without a lot of time and effort this module provides a model for a retreat that is flexible and can be adapted to your group.

## Why Retreat

A retreat refreshes and revitalizes, taking us out of the daily grind of our normal lives and provides an enjoyable breathtaking experience. Retreats are important for our minds, bodies and souls. They provide a restful setting, experiences in the out-of-doors, time exploring God's Word, and activity that engages us in community - rekindling and deepening relationships with one another and with God.

## Why Retreat at a Camp or Conference Center

The setting of a camp or conference center enhances the experience of God spiritually, mentally, and physically. The center lets us step away and encounter a place of wonder and discovery, rest and renewal. It opens up an opportunity for individuals and groups to be outdoors connecting with one another, creation, and the Creator.

## Shared Leadership

Team leadership is ideal, spreading out the work load and sharing in the ministry. There is joy in hearing different voices and in equipping others to serve alongside

one another. The community that is built can overflow into other ministries as well as into other retreats in the future. This model envisions the inclusion of members of a team with varying gifts.

## **Flexibility is the Key**

Be flexible throughout your retreat, giving the Holy Spirit space to enter into the retreat experience and community being built. Activities are designed for both inside and outside (weather permitting) with opportunities to spend quality time in the environment of the camp or conference center, especially outdoors.

## **What You Will Find**

Here is what you will find in the module to assist in planning your retreat:

- List of supplies/resources
- Sample schedule
- Song suggestions
- Additional resources
- Options like adapting for various sized groups
- Spaces of free time to just relax or participate in some of the activities provided at the camp or conference center
- Scripture readings are provided for convenience - leaders may use other biblical translations and/or invite participants to bring their own Bibles

## **Planning a Retreat**

1. Create a team to help plan, administer and lead the retreat:
  - Make reservations at the camp or conference center
  - Develop a registration form and process
  - Arrange travel for leadership and participants
  - Design a schedule with gatherings, activities, meals, and rest
  - Gather supplies needed
  - Consider any safety concerns especially for your group at this location
  - Invite leaders to assist before, during and after the retreat
2. Get the Word Out:

They say that the average person needs to hear and/or see something 7 times before it is ingrained in their memory. That means you need to share the invitation for your retreat in as many places as you can, in as many forms as you can.

- Identify your audience by determining who should be invited to participate
- Work backwards from your retreat date to calculate required deadlines for invitations, registrations, and advertisement prior to the retreat
- Use newsletters, flyers, bulletin inserts, bulletin boards to get the word out
- Include an informational flyer with the registration form
- Use email notices, social media and websites to advertise
- Follow-up as registration dates get close with reminders to register
- Confirm registrations and include a what to bring list
- Build excitement as you send a reminder closer to the retreat date

### 3. Retreat Schedule:

Begin with the provided sample schedule and adjust it to best meet the needs of your group. Don't forget to include meals and free time so there is rest in the midst of activities.

### 4. Evaluation:

Follow-up after the retreat, with a paper, electronic, or verbal evaluation. Ask what was most meaningful, least meaningful, what might be changed for a next retreat. This will provide you with an overall sense of how the retreat was received, as well as notes for any future events.

## Use of Space

- Inside & outside – take advantage of the outside space as well as the various activities provided at the camp or conference center
- Safe space for your retreat – both physically in your location as well as for the conversations, interactions and experiences
- Worship space – remember that worship is a central part of our community; keep familiar rhythms while at the same time introducing new ways of worshipping in a different setting
- Small groups – create a safe and welcoming space for sharing; invite all voices to be heard; instill respect for various opinions to be voiced and heard
- Special needs – consider what hearing, sight, mobility etc. needs exists in your group; be inclusive with all of your spaces and adapt activities as necessitated

## Gathering in Community

- Gather in circles when possible – around a table, standing or sitting, circles provide a sense of community; we can see one another's faces, listen to and hear one another better
- Music – select songs that are easy to sing, and have word sheets or music sheets available; introduce new songs by teaching them and listening to the music before singing

## Provide Hospitality

Hospitality is important for all participants to have a comfortable and grace-filled experience. Consider what simple things will make people feel welcome and comfortable.

- Hospitality area – provide water/beverages and snacks; find out whether the camp or conference center can provide this or whether you will need to bring them
- Locations – provide maps and information on where everything is located; consider a tour or scavenger hunt for your group to learn where to find locations for the retreat; good signage and clear directions can make a big difference
- Get acquainted – everyone may not know everyone else, so assume that you need name tags and activities to get to know one another
- Safety – bring first aid kits, safety equipment and instructions for any special activities
- Schedule – make copies available for those who wish to have a printed schedule of the retreat with meeting locations and times.
- Greeters – these welcoming faces are necessary for anyone who is unable to attend the entire retreat and coming for only part of it; be sure to have someone who will greet them and help them get settled in when they do arrive; also be sure to welcome them into the group and fill them in on what you are doing as they join the retreat in progress
- Participation – encourage everyone to fully participate and to share concerns with leadership if they are not comfortable with certain activities; most activities can be adapted to meet the needs of your group
- Be aware – there may need to be some adjustments made to include those with mobility, dietary, hearing, etc. concerns for your particular group; ask the questions during planning in order to address these to the best of your ability

## Openings & Closings

The strength of your retreat is often determined by how you start and finish. Open strong with an organized plan for the retreat, including opportunities for everyone to get acquainted/re-acquainted and to build community.

Closing strong can wrap up the experiences of the retreat and encourage participants to take home what they have discovered to share with others. Shape your closing with a summary of the experiences you have shared and leave space for goodbyes.

Above all, have an amazing, fun-filled and God-filled experience playing in creation, exploring God's word, enjoying activities, sharing experiences and building community in the beauty of your camp or conference center.

Blessings on your retreat experience!

## Biblical and Theological Introduction

Living Hope is our called response to God's perfect design for creation. God's intention for creation is one of clean air and water, and for thriving landscapes which shelter and nourish all living creatures. When natural systems become unbalanced, creation suffers through pollution or lack of resources. God's plan for the world is one of interdependence, balance, and harmony. God gives us hope in many ways, not the least of which is through creation. In creation we experience an ecosystem that reproduces, regenerates, and brings new life into the world. This life gives us hope for each new day. God calls us to practice hope-in-action with all of creation. We are invited to respond to the many gifts of God's creation by practicing thoughtful care through our daily choices and actions that build up or tear down, the living world. God's story of the living creation is still being written. We are part of the story. Thanks be to God!

## Retreat Practices

*When asked which is the greatest commandment, Jesus responds, "Love God, Love Neighbor." (Matthew 22:34-40 NRSV, paraphrased)*

As you begin planning a retreat to nurture the spiritual needs of your youth, it can be helpful to remember that much of youth ministry is relational work. When a youth group plays together and prays together, they are leaning into the wonder

and mystery of God's boundless and unconditional love. No one is expected to have all the answers, rather, you are invited to embrace the freedom of learning together. Participating in a retreat invites a group to immerse themselves in God's loving creation, and grow deeper in their relationships with one another and with God.

Here are a few best practices to cultivate a welcoming space and meaningful retreat experience:

- **Be authentic.** Be you, be kind, and have fun! When every person participates in a whole-hearted way, it builds trust and shared experiences.
- **Greet each person by name.** Names matter. It's important to take the time to learn each name and pronunciation, and to call people by name during your time together. Ask if there is a preferred nickname. And, it's human nature to make mistakes! If you forget a name, or how to pronounce a name, lead by example and ask for help. People notice when you make the effort, and it is appreciated.
- **Keep it simple and inviting.** The leadership role for this curriculum is not intended as a teaching role. You are not expected to have specific knowledge and answers to impart upon the participants. Rather, simply practice the ministry of presence by inviting everyone to participate in experiencing the story in a new way, yourself included!
- **Use the curriculum as a tool, not a script.** The curriculum provides more content than you will actually need, allowing some flexibility as you discern your group's unique needs and how the group may respond to each experience. It is often a good strategy to transition activities while energy is high and before a specific activity fizzles. If an activity is not gaining momentum, switch it up. Likewise, if an activity is a big hit, give it a few more minutes.
- **Share blessing.** Blessings come in many forms. In worship, congregations often share the Peace of Christ. People say "God bless you" when someone sneezes. At the close of each session, you are invited to share the practice of blessing, such as:

*"May the earth bless you,  
and may you bless the earth,  
in planting and protest,  
and sharing food."*

- from the *Iona Abbey Worship Book*

## Guiding Principles

- **Brave Space:** It is important to nurture “brave space” for youth to express themselves without judgment or rigid expectations as they explore their identities as beloved children of God. The term, “brave space,” encourages people to practice active listening, vulnerability, compassion, and grace, in a space where they are not judged.
- **Mutual Invitation** can be especially helpful to intentionally welcome every voice during discussions. This is when we give our attention to one person at a time. As the speaker finishes what they wish to share they invite another in the group to share, with a phrase like, “I invite [name] to share with the group.” As each person finishes their contribution to the discussion, they invite someone who has not yet spoken.
- **Creative Expression:** In many of the activities, prompts are provided. However, individual rule-free creativity is encouraged.
- **Play!:** When we play, we grow in our relationships with each other and with God. Sometimes people tend to sit on the sidelines. Be invitational. If the main activity isn’t engaging to everyone, find additional ways for people to participate.
- **Honoring Community:** Creating a covenant as the group initially gathers, is a great practice in establishing expectations around relationship-building and shared space. It encourages a positive and uplifting experience for all. Session One includes a covenant writing exercise.
- **The 7 R’s of Sustainability:** Here are some possible ways to practice each:
  - **Reduce/Reuse/Refuse:** Use reusable water bottles, washable dinnerware, and cloth napkins. Avoid using disposable items for meals.
  - **Rot:** Use a lidded kitchen bin for food scraps that can be composted following the retreat. Be mindful of the facility’s waste guidelines, and be careful not to attract wildlife.
  - **Recycle:** Provide a bin to hold paper scraps, bottles/cans, and other recyclable items.
  - **Reduce/Reuse/Repurpose:** When gathering supplies for the retreat, try the “buy nothing” approach by sourcing gently used and re-homed items from the community or a local recycling/reuse hub. Request gently used supplies from your congregation. This is a great way to engage your congregation before your retreat, and it can also begin the groundwork for follow up projects that your youth group initiates when they return home.
  - **Repair:** Does the facility have any small repair projects your group could help with during the retreat? Or, do participants have any

personal items that could benefit from a simple repair (i.e. socks with holes or a backpack with a threadbare corner)? Consider bringing a simple sewing kit to include in the Maker's Space to support this idea.

- **Returning Home:** Throughout the retreat, consider what creation care practices or projects might you share with your community? A few ideas are included in the section following Session #3.

## Retreat Schedule

The design of this retreat models the rhythms of worship: Gather, Story (share), Wonder, Play, Bless. Throughout the retreat, participants will be guided in group activities as well as opportunities for individual reflection and response. Activities vary to engage all the senses, support multiple learning styles, and provide a balance of facilitated discussions and recreation. Some activities are ready for groups of all sizes, especially the community-building games. Other activities may be better suited for smaller groups of 5-10 people. If you have a large group, it might be good to pre-assign small groups so they are ready to go throughout the weekend. This also provides the opportunity for small groups to develop stronger relationships through the retreat.

### Day 1

5:00 p.m.: Registration & Welcome Activities  
6:30 p.m.: Dinner  
7:30 p.m.: Session #1, "God creates hope in all things."  
8:30 p.m.: Break  
9:00 p.m.: Campfire Gathering  
9:30 p.m.: Free Time until Lights Out (Optional: Flashlight Tag)

### Day 2

8:30 a.m.: Breakfast  
9:30 a.m.: Session #2 (part 1), "God sustains creation through hope."  
12:30 p.m.: Lunch & Free Time  
2:30 p.m.: Outdoor Recreation (Nature Hike, Rock Hopping, etc.) and/or Creation Care Project on-site or in the community  
5:00 p.m.: Session #2 (part 2), Slow-Food Meal Prep  
6:30 p.m.: Dinner  
8:00 p.m.: Session #2 (part 3), Evening Gathering  
9:30 p.m.: Free Time until Lights Out

### Day 3

8:30 a.m.: Breakfast



9:30 a.m.: Session #3, “God calls us to practice hope-in-action with all of creation.”

10:45 a.m.: Closing Worship

11:30 a.m.: Pack Up & Clean Up

12:30 p.m.: Closing Lunch & Dismissal

## ***Retreat Overview***

### **Session One: Celebration of Light (John 1:1-5)**

- Focus: God’s intention for creation.
- Key Idea: God creates hope in all things.
- Activities: Community-building Games; Developing a Covenant; The Story of Light; Campfire, S’mores, & Star-gazing
- Creation Care: Leave no trace. Paying attention and raising awareness about how we share space with living creatures and landscapes. Reducing waste and considering the ways we can enjoy nature without disrupting natural systems.

### **Session Two: The Creation Story (Genesis 1-2:4)**

- Focus: Days 1-7 of Creation (Light, Sky, Dry Land, Day/Night/Seasons, Creatures of Sea and Sky, Creatures of Dry Land, Sabbath)
- Key Idea: God sustains creation through hope.
- Activities:
  - Part 1 (morning): Community-building Games, The Story of Creation, Nature Exploration
  - Large portion of unprogrammed time before and after lunch for free time activities such as exploring the outdoors, facility-specific activities, and/or local/site-based creation care projects.
  - Part 2 (late afternoon): Preparing and Sharing a “Slow Food” Meal
  - Part 3 (evening): Evening Gathering
- Creation Care:
  - Part 1 (morning): Daily Living- Reducing personal consumption and choices about sustainable materials when making purchases. Reduce/Reuse/Recycle/Repurpose/Refuse.
  - Part 2 (late afternoon): At the Table- Information and actionable ideas regarding the environmental impact of some of our current food practices. (i.e. Food Sourcing, Composting, Reusable Napkins and Dinnerware, etc.)

### **Session Three: The Parable of the Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9)**

- Focus: Caring for Creation
- Key Idea: God calls us to practice hope-in-action with all of creation.
- Activities: Closing Worship

## Recommended Personnel & Supplies

### Personnel:

Retreat Leader(s) and Volunteers. Consider inviting a Guest Speaker to join you for the “Slow Food” dinner on day 2 (i.e. Ranger, Hunger-Relief Worker, Bee Keeper, Farmer, etc.). This person could share a brief 10-minute talk about their work and why creation care is important to them. Following the talk, everyone can work together to prepare and share the meal.

### General Supplies:

Bibles and Hymnals, Bluetooth Speaker (in addition to background music, it could be fun to “play” nature sounds during some of the indoor activities), Paper (Scraps, Newsprint, Copy Paper, Cardstock), Pens/Pencils/Markers, Painter’s Tape, Pipe Cleaners, etc.

### Maker’s Space Supplies:

Puzzles, Origami Paper & Instruction Book, Friendship Bracelets Instructions and String, *Praying-in-Color* Book, Watercolors and Paper, Natural Materials for Mandala Patterns, Prayer Beads, Finger Labyrinths and/or Printed Handouts, etc.

### Session-specific Supplies:

- Living Tree: Poster Board, Markers, Construction Paper, Scissors, Leaf Template (optional).
- Session #1: Newsprint, Markers, Bibles, Supplies for Campfire & S’mores, Phone or Tablet with Internet and an App with Constellation Maps.
- Session #2: Bibles, Printed “Zine” Handouts (one per person), Binoculars and/or Field Microscopes (optional), Index Cards, Pens/Pencils, Paper, “Slow Food” Meal Supplies, Board Games (optional), Binder Clips.
- Session #3: Individual Zines or Pieces of Blank Paper, Writing Utensils, Candle, Matches, Snuffer, Bibles, Hymnals, Musical Instruments for Accompaniment (optional), Prayers from Session #2 (thanksgiving / confession), Printed Liturgy for Worship Leaders (create your own or use/adapt the one provided).
- Napkin Rings: Leaf Template, Construction Paper, Hole Punch, Pipe Cleaners, Scissors, Markers

## **Model Creation Care throughout the Retreat**

### **Create Your Own Napkin Ring to be used with cloth napkins (Gathering Activity)**

Make unique pipe cleaner napkin rings so participants have a method to keep track of individual cloth napkins that can be used throughout the retreat (extra napkins should be available if/when a napkin is used to clean up a spill, etc).

*Supplies: Cloth Napkins (1 per person, plus a stack of extras), Pipe Cleaners, Markers, Construction Paper, Scissors, Printed Template (Appendix), Hole Punch.*

Trace and cut out leaves using the template. Write your name on the leaf-shaped paper. Punch a hole in each end of the name tag. Twist one or more pipe cleaners together. Thread the pipe cleaners through the two holes on the tag (running behind the paper so the side with the name is still visible), and twist the ends together creating a loop/ring to hold a napkin.

### **Create a “Living Tree” poster to build awareness of the 7 R’s of Sustainability: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot, Repurpose, Repair, Refuse**

This can be an ongoing activity throughout the weekend that can also be shared with your community following the retreat.

*Supplies: Poster Board, Markers, Pre-cut Paper Leaves.*

On a piece of poster board, draw a tree trunk and seven branches, each labeled with one of the 7 R’s. Encourage participants to add leaves with ideas that support each practice. For example, the branch labeled “reuse” might have leaves that are labeled “cloth napkins,” “water bottle,” and “shopping bags.” The “refuse” branch might include the ideas “single-use food/drink containers,” “straws,” and “plastic grocery bags.”

### **Create a “Slow Food” Meal: Make a Slow Food Supper on Saturday Night.**

Work together. This sort of meal is one in which time is taken to consider where food comes from, what resources were required to grow it, how it traveled to stores and eventually into your hands. It values the food, growers, preparers as well as the smells/tastes/textures/nutrition of the food that brings us together in community as we gather to eat. You are encouraged to bring ingredients with you

to prepare a meal together, where as many participants as possible have a role in preparing the food and space.

*Supplies: Meal Ingredients, Meal Preparation Utensils, Cutting Board, Pots/Pans, Reusable Plates, Cups, Flatware, Napkins, Tablecloths, Supplies to Create a Centerpiece.*

## **Environment/ Spaces**

### **Gathering Spaces**

Create a flexible gathering space, both outdoors and indoors. Most of the activities are geared towards being outside, however it is important to have a flexible indoor space available as well in case of inclement weather.

### **Maker's Space**

Set up a simple Maker's Space in a common area with ready-to-go activities. Some participants will appreciate the invitation for creative expression or other low-key activities during free time or inclement weather. Origami could be especially fun by inviting participants to add to an Origami nature scene with different animals throughout the retreat. Setting up the space and materials at the beginning of the retreat invites participants to follow their curiosity throughout the event. They may choose a different activity each time, or they may come back to the same activity many times. This space provides opportunities for youth to try both new and familiar forms of response activities as they process the experience of the retreat.

*Supply Examples: Puzzles, Origami Paper & Instruction Book, Friendship Bracelets, Praying-in-Color Book, Watercolors, Natural Materials for Mandala Patterns, Prayer Beads, Finger Labyrinths, Simple Sewing Kit and Fabric Scraps, etc.*

## **DAY 1**

### **Celebration of Light (John 1:1-5)**

**Focus:** God's intention for creation.

**Key Idea:** God creates hope in all things.

**Setting:** This entire session could take place around the campfire. Or, you could begin with some of the initial activities indoors, and shift to the campfire for the second portion.

### **Activities:**

#### **Community-building**

Greet one another by name through the practice of Mutual Invitation (see introduction). Answer the question: "What is one thing you would like to learn how to do (i.e. hobby, skill, or ability)?"

#### **Play "Yes, Let's!" and "One Word at a Time Story"**

**Yes, Let's...!:** Invite participants to begin by walking around the space, without following a specific path. The leader yells out an action such as "let's climb a tree," everyone responds with "yes, let's!" and begins to act out the motion. The leader touches another player's shoulder, and they shout out the next action and the game continues. Consider using different categories such as nature, camping, and creation care.

- Examples: go fishing, paddle a canoe, make S'mores, fly a kite, hop like a rabbit, plant a tree, pitch a tent, etc.

**One Word at a Time Story:** Invite participants to stand or sit in a circle to create a story together, one word at a time. Remind the group that great stories have interesting characters, a clear setting, and flow from beginning to middle to end. Consider starting with "Once upon a time..." and concluding with "The end."

- Example: "Once- upon- a- time- there- was- a- hiker- who- climbed- a- mountain- only- to- discover- it- was- really- a- volcano- so- they- ran- back- down- the- mountain- as- fast- as- they- could- the- end."

#### **Developing a Covenant**

Introduce the idea of a community covenant, an agreement or set of promises to honor and support relationship-building. Developing a group covenant at the beginning of the retreat can be helpful in establishing hopes and expectations

about how people will treat one another, share space, and participate throughout the event. In the Bible, the Apostle Paul writes words of encouragement to a community of people, the Ephesians. He writes:

*“ 4 Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God. <sup>2</sup> Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, <sup>3</sup> and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together. <sup>4</sup> You are one body and one spirit, just as God also called you in one hope. <sup>5</sup> There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> and one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.” Ephesians 4:1-5 (CEB)*

As part of the Body of Christ, God calls us into compassionate and loving relationships that reflect the internal nature of God. Simply put, God calls us to live, to love, and to be loved...in community.

Note: If your group signed a covenant prior to the retreat, this can be a good time to review the expectations and clarify any points of confusion. Use your judgment to determine if it's helpful for your group to continue with the covenant-building activity as written in this curriculum or it's better to move to the next activity.

Ask youth to share ideas that can support this community during the retreat. Capture the ideas on a sheet of newsprint. If needed, ask if they have ideas that hinder the community. As ideas are shared, get a general consensus for the group if these ideas are agreeable for the purposes of the covenant. This initial discussion and agreement also provides an opportunity for accountability if/when participants fall into habits that aren't aligned with the covenant. Once the covenant seems complete (your ideas included), ask participants to sign their name on the newsprint as a gesture of agreement.

Sample Covenant:

As we share this journey together, we will intentionally build community and nurture a brave space by:

- Practicing acceptance
- Honoring personal space
- Greeting one another by name, making new friends, keeping old friends
- Respecting other people and their time
- Listening, being present and attentive
- Participating
- Refraining from personal technology during group activities

## Read “The Story of Light”

*<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. (John 1:1-5 NRSV)*

Draw attention to the capitalization of “Word”. Why are certain words capitalized when we write them? This scripture is trying to communicate the “Word” as a living being in some form. Continue reading verses 6-18.

*<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.*

*<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified to him and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’”) <sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known. (John 1:6-18 NRSV)*

At this time, we come to recognize “the Word” is referring to Jesus. Read John 1:1-5 again, this time using “Jesus” in place of “the Word.” How does this change our understanding of how the world came to be? Invite participants to keep this in mind as they explore God’s creation throughout the retreat. Invite participants to respond to 1-2 of the following questions,

- Where do you see hope in creation?
- How do different parts of creation demonstrate hope for a future?
- How does God’s act of creation demonstrate hope?

## **Creation Care: Talk about the idea of “Leave no trace.”**

Ask participants what this phrase means to them. Encourage awareness and sensitivity to how we share space with living creatures and landscapes.

- Example: rock-stacking in streams can disrupt the living spaces for salamanders.

Throughout the retreat, be proactive about reducing waste, picking up litter, and considering the ways we can enjoy nature without disrupting natural systems.

Note: This may be a new concept for youth, especially younger ones. They may have participated in activities that damaged creation, without considering their impact. Reassure them that this exercise is not meant to point fingers at anyone. It is designed to help us learn and to do better when given the chance.

## **Campfire, S’mores, & Star-gazing**

*Supplies: Campfire Circle, Wood, Matches, S’more Ingredients, Constellation App (optional).*

Enjoy a time of fellowship around the campfire. This can be a great time to introduce a few of the songs that will be used throughout the retreat. It’s also a great time to consider the magnitude of God’s creation through the celebration of the “light in the night sky.” There are quite a few user-friendly star-gazing apps to help you identify various constellations. You could use one to see what is visible in your area.

## **Blessing:**

*(from Iona Abbey Worship Book, p. 168)*

Have one person read this blessing aloud or print it and have the group say it in unison.

*“May the earth bless you,  
and may you bless the earth,  
in planting and protest,  
and sharing food.”*



## DAY 2

### The Creation Story (Genesis 1-2:4)

**Focus:** Days 1-7 of Creation (Light, Sky, Dry Land, Day/Night/Seasons, Creatures of Sea and Sky, Creatures of Dry Land, Sabbath)

**Key Idea:** God sustains creation through hope.

**Setting:** This entire session is designed to take place outdoors. Adaptations to activities can be found in the Appendix in case of inclement weather.

### Activities, Part 1 (morning):

#### Community-building

Greet one another by name through the practice of Mutual Invitation. Answer the question: “If you could have one creature power (example: camouflage, flight, swimming) what would it be?”

#### Play “I am a Tree” and “Three-Headed Expert”

##### I am a Tree

Three participants create a scene with their bodies. The first person states that they are an object in nature and positions themselves to mimic that object. Then, anyone from the group can add on as an object that goes along with the first object. For example, the first person might be a tree and the second person might be an apple on the ground and the third person might be a squirrel. Once the third person is in place, the other participants go back to sit in the audience while two new participants join the scene in a new way.

- Examples: Cave/Bat/Bear; Bear/Stream/Fish, Fish/Worm/Bird

##### Three-headed Expert

Three participants will act as one, three-headed expert. The audience will ask a question for the three-headed expert to answer. The three-headed expert will respond by speaking only one word at a time. It’s helpful for the response to begin by restating the question. The three-headed expert will signal they are finished by responding with a celebratory, “Ta-da!”

- Example: “Why is the sky blue?” “The- sky- is- blue- because- it- is- the- color- of- our- favorite- flavor- of- candy. Ta-da!”
- Other question ideas:
  - Do allergies exist on the moon?
  - How were the pyramids built?
  - What happened to the City of Atlantis?

- Which came first, the chicken or the egg?
- Why did the chicken cross the road?
- In a game of tug-of-war, who would win... Superman or Thor?
- Where do all the missing socks go?

## **Read the Story of Creation**

<sup>1</sup> When God began to create the heavens and the earth— <sup>2</sup> the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God’s wind swept over the waters— <sup>3</sup> God said, “Let there be light.” And so light appeared. <sup>4</sup> God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God named the light Day and the darkness Night.

*There was evening and there was morning: the first day.*

<sup>6</sup> God said, “Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other.” <sup>7</sup> God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. <sup>8</sup> God named the dome Sky.

*There was evening and there was morning: the second day.*

<sup>9</sup> God said, “Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear.” And that’s what happened. <sup>10</sup> God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. <sup>11</sup> God said, “Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth.” And that’s what happened. <sup>12</sup> The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.

<sup>13</sup> *There was evening and there was morning: the third day.*

<sup>14</sup> God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. <sup>15</sup> They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth.” And that’s what happened. <sup>16</sup> God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. <sup>17</sup> God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was.

<sup>19</sup> *There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.*

<sup>20</sup> *God said, “Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky.”* <sup>21</sup> *God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.* <sup>22</sup> *Then God blessed them: “Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”*

<sup>23</sup> *There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.*

<sup>24</sup> *God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened.* <sup>25</sup> *God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was.* <sup>26</sup> *Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.”*

<sup>27</sup> *God created humanity in God’s own image,  
in the divine image God created them,  
male and female God created them.*

<sup>28</sup> *God blessed them and said to them, “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.”* <sup>29</sup> *Then God said, “I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food.* <sup>30</sup> *To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food.” And that’s what happened.* <sup>31</sup> *God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.*

*There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.*

<sup>2</sup> *The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed.* <sup>2</sup> *On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done.* <sup>3</sup> *God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.* <sup>4</sup> *This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.*

*(Genesis 1-2:4, CEB)*

## ***Work Together, Create a Prayer of Thanksgiving***

This prayer can be as simple as asking each person to share something they are thankful for about creation (i.e. sunshine, mudpuddles, mountains, etc.) and replying with a unison response of “Thank you God!” For example:

Leader: “We are thankful for sunshine.”

All: “Thank you, God!”

This prayer can be used in the closing worship.

## ***Creation Care, Daily Living: Review the 7 R’s of Sustainability: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot, Repurpose, Repair, Refuse.***

Revisit the Living Tree and add ideas that are focused on reducing personal consumption and choices about sustainable materials when making purchases.

## ***Nature Exploration***

Supplies: Binoculars and Field Microscopes can be especially fun with this activity.

Creating a “Zine” (short for magazine) is a great way to capture field notes and drawings during this experience. Historically, Zines are small batches of self-published mini-magazines that reflect an individual’s unique personality and interests. For the purposes of this activity, participants will use the Zine template with printed prompts to guide them in searching for different parts of nature representing each day of creation (Light, Sky, Dry Land, Day/Night/Seasons, Creatures of Sea and Sky, Creatures of Dry Land, Sabbath). Explore in pairs, trios, or small groups and when the whole group reconvenes later, participants can refer back to their Zine to share what observations they made about God’s living creation. *(See the Appendix for Printable Zine Handout; one 8.5x11” double-sided and reversible, folded piece of paper, configured into a mini-journal.)*

## **Zine Pages**

**Front Cover:** Decorate the cover to represent your personality. You could write your name in a fun way or draw an image that is meaningful to you or make a few abstract doodles.

**Light:** Trace leaf shadows. Sit under a tree or other shrub in a way that the light filters through the leaves and casts shadows on your paper. Trace the shadows. Consider writing a word in each leaf shadow as a form of prayer such as “food” or “shelter” or “water,” etc. If it’s a gloomy day and shadows are hard to come by, see if there is a fallen leaf nearby that you could trace.

**Sky:** Practice cloud-gazing, can you see any recognizable shapes in the

clouds? Draw what you see, or what you imagine would be an awesome cloud shape.

**Dry Land:** Touch the earth with your hands. Get a little muddy or dusty! Is the earth dry, moist, or sticky? Smudge your paper with the soil or jot a note about your observations.

**Day/Night/Seasons:** What signs of the seasons do you notice? Is spring ready to emerge? Are leaves falling into piles on the ground? Is the air hot or cold? Draw a symbol representing the season or jot a note about your observations.

**Creatures of Sea and Sky:** Look for birds or insects flying in the air. Listen for creatures that live in the streams or ponds. Jot a note about what you hear.

**Creatures of Dry Land:** Look for creature tracks and human tracks, noticing your own footprints. Draw a creature track.

**Sabbath:** What signs of “rest” do you notice in nature? Any birds or creatures in a posture of rest? Is the vegetation in a season of rest? Did you bring a hammock or bench for a time of rest? Draw an image or jot a note about your favorite way to practice rest.

### ***Following the Nature Exploration, regroup for a brief conversation about the adventure.***

Invite participants to share what they discovered along the way.

Ask participants to think about what “hope” means to them, and what kinds of things they hope for today, and for the future. How does hope influence our behaviors? If we are hopeful, how do we care for things? If we are hopeful, are we more engaged? For example, if someone hopes to do well on a test, they may also choose to study and prepare. Without hope, someone might feel like their efforts will make no difference in the matter.

### ***Blessing***

Have one person read this blessing aloud or print it and have the group say it in unison.

*“May the earth bless you,  
and may you bless the earth,  
in planting and protest,  
and sharing food.”*

## Free Time

Provide a large portion of unprogrammed time before and after lunch for free time activities and exploring the outdoors. This is a great time to take advantage of location-specific offerings such as canoeing, ropes course, horseback riding, etc. You might also consider asking the facility ahead of time if there are any specific creation care projects your group could help with on-site or in the surrounding area (i.e. trail maintenance, litter pick-up, removing invasive species, etc.).

## Activities, Part 2 (late afternoon):

### ***Community Building***

Greet one another by name through the practice of Mutual Invitation. Answer the question: “If you could invite anyone, fictional or from real life, who would you invite to a dinner celebration?”

### **Telephone Pictionary**

*Supplies: Index Cards, Pens/Pencils, and Binder Clips.*

- Each participant is given an index card for every person they have in a group, so if 10 people are in the group, each person is given 10 sheets of paper. Participants should number their cards in a small corner space to help keep them in order, and bundle them with a binder clip.
- Invite participants to write down some type of phrase (i.e. “ice cream melts” or “there were three cats”) on the top sheet of paper then pass the entire stack to the person on their left.
- That person will read the phrase, move that sheet to the back of the stack, then draw a picture representing that phrase on the next sheet of paper.
- They’ll then pass it to the person on their left, who will then look at the drawing, move that sheet to the back of the stack, and then write a sentence that describes that picture.
- This process repeats until the stacks make it all the way around the circle.
- The players then read out their original phrase and show everyone else what eventually became of that phrase. You’ll probably find that it’s completely different!

### ***Creation Care, At the Table: Review the 7 R’s of Sustainability: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot, Repurpose, Repair, Refuse.***

Add ideas to the “Living Tree” focused on information and actionable ideas regarding the environmental impact of some of our current food practices. (i.e. Food Sourcing, Composting, Reusable Napkins and Dinnerware, etc.).

## **Create a Prayer of Confession**

Make a list of the ways we cause harm to creation (Examples: pollution, wasted water, plastic waste, etc.) with a unison response after each word/phrase of confession, such as “Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.” For example:

Leader: *“For wasted food in a world with hunger...”*

All: *“Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.”*

This prayer can be used in the closing worship.

## **Sharing a “Slow Food” Meal**

Select the menu and purchase ingredients ahead of time. Work together to prepare all aspects of the meal and to clean up. Pair this mealtime with one of the options listed: 1) to include a guest speaker, or 2) to further engage in a creation care discussion as a group.

The Bible is filled with feast stories celebrating God’s abundance, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. When we gather together to prepare a meal with fresh ingredients, we are reminded of the blessings we receive through the gift of food which we often take for granted. When we gather at the table, we are reminded of the blessings of relationship with one another and with God, that we also often take for granted. This activity is intended to help the group slow down and reconnect with all aspects of gathering – organizing and preparing ingredients, cooking the food, setting the table, practicing care for relationships, and taking care of the cleaning as well.

**Option #1:** Consider inviting a Guest Speaker to join you for dinner (i.e. Ranger, Hunger-Relief Worker, Bee Keeper, Farmer, etc.). This person could share a brief 10-minute talk about their work and why creation care is important to them. Following the talk, everyone can work together to prepare and share the meal.

**Option #2:** Practicing Mutual Invitation, share stories and observations from the nature exploration time. Then, transition to conversations about how the group might take action to support creation care at home. Is the group showing strong energy around a handful of creation care issues? Would it be helpful to spend a little time making a list of issues to consider? This discussion provides a good foundation for the reflection time during the closing worship.

## **Blessing**

Have one person read this blessing aloud or have the group say it in unison.

*“May the earth bless you,  
and may you bless the earth,  
in planting and protest,  
and sharing food.”*

## Activities, Part 3 (evening)

Plan your own activities or choose one of the following options.

### **Option #1: Community-building Games**

Play community-building games such as Charades, Scattergories, Pictionary, Heads-up, etc. Plan ways to incorporate the creation care theme into these activities such as generating nature based word lists that could be used for a few different options.

### **Option #2: Board Games and Maker's Space**

Create a low-key gathering with a variety of ways to engage in activities together or work independently. Set out some board games and invite people to use the materials in the Maker's Space. Continue modeling the value of slowing down and honoring relationships, story-sharing, and casual conversation.

### **Option #3: Variety Show**

Each small group could share an act or activity with the group. Groups could lead an improv game for the whole group or share a skit of some sort. Share a variety of cheesy jokes for the fun of laughter. Lead an energizer with the whole group. Additionally, individuals are invited to share a gift or talent if there is specific interest. The Variety Show is a great opportunity for all participants to share in the gift of recreation and community-building. Challenge participants to plan their act using the theme of creation and/or creation care.

## DAY 3

### The Parable of the Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9)

**Focus:** Caring for Creation

**Key Idea:** God calls us to practice hope-in-action with all of creation.

**Setting:** Outdoor Worship Space

**Activity:** Closing Worship

### Preparing for Worship

*Supplies: Individual Zines or Pieces of Blank Paper, Writing Utensils, Candle, Matches, Snuffer, Bibles, Hymnals, Musical Instruments for Accompaniment (optional), Prayers from Session #2 (thanksgiving / confession), Printed Liturgy for Worship Leaders, Copies of the Affirmation of Faith.*



**Youth Leadership:** This worship service is designed with the intention that many people will participate in leading worship, and that the overall service will be led by the youth. The groups have had the opportunity to write two of the prayers, so the youth will likely already feel some ownership for the liturgy. Components with multiple parts have been labeled with “Person A, B, C,” etc. Other parts of worship that need only one reader, do not have a leadership label, though these parts should be assigned as well. Depending on the size of your group, some participants may lead multiple parts, as needed.

## Order of Worship

### ***Call to Worship***

Leader: Let us prepare to worship God.

### ***Candle Lighting***

(adapted from *Young Children and Worship*, pp. 72-74)

#### **Person A:**

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning. Through the Word all things were created; without the Word nothing was created that has been created. In the Word was life, and that life was the light of all humankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can not overcome it."

#### **Person B:**

Once there was someone who did such amazing things and said such wonderful things, people followed. They wondered who this person was. When they asked, the person responded, "I am the Light."

### ***Prayer of Thanksgiving*** (created during Session 2 in the morning)

\*If the group did not create a prayer of thanksgiving, invite participants to speak out, popcorn-style, naming something in creation for which they are thankful. As each person shares, invite the group to respond, "Thank you, God!" For example:

Participant: "I am thankful for sunshine."

All: "Thank you, God!"

### ***Song***

"*God Welcomes All*" (#399, *Glory to God Hymnal*)

## **Prayer of Confession** (created during Session 2 in the afternoon)

\*If the group did not create a prayer of confession, invite participants into a brief time of silent prayer of confession. Considering the theme of creation care, when have you made choices that have caused harm to creation? Explain that the prayer will close with the words:

Leader:        “Lord, in your mercy,  
All:             ... hear our prayers.”

## **Assurance of Forgiveness:**       (adapted prayer from Rev. Thom Shuman)

While our failures and frailties are many, God's grace has been ours before time began. This is great news - we are forgiven. God plants the seed of faith deep within us, growing a harvest of grace and hope. Thanks be to God, who has given us the promise of life in Christ Jesus our Lord! Amen.

## **Passing of the Peace**

Leader:        Let us share the Peace of Christ with one another.  
                  Peace be with you.  
All:             **And also with you.**

## **Song**

“Listen to the Word That God Has Spoken” (#455, *Glory to God Hymnal*)

## **Scripture - “The Parable of the Fig Tree”**

<sup>6</sup> Jesus told this parable: “A man owned a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> He said to his gardener, ‘Look, I’ve come looking for fruit on this fig tree for the past three years, and I’ve never found any. Cut it down! Why should it continue depleting the soil’s nutrients?’ <sup>8</sup> The gardener responded, ‘Lord, give it one more year, and I will dig around it and give it fertilizer. <sup>9</sup> Maybe it will produce fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down.’”  
(Luke 13:6-9 CEB)

## **Message**

Invite the youth to restate the main ideas. Or, simply draw attention to a few key points from the passage and then continue with further discussion. For example:

- The focus of the story is a tree that hasn’t produced any fruit for three years.
- The landowner wants to cut it down.
- The gardener wants to practice hope-in-action. The gardener wants to

do whatever they could to nurture the tree and to wait and see if the tree would bear fruit again.

- What happens to the tree? (We don't know!)

All together, in small groups, or in pairs, take some time for further reflection and discussion as follows. Two sets of questions are provided, so you can choose which best fit your group dynamics.

**Option #1:**

- What do you think happened to the fig tree? How would you write the next chapter for this story?
- Does it surprise you that this Bible story is unfinished?
- Why do you think Jesus tells this unfinished story?
- Where are you in the story, or what part of the story is about you?

**Option #2:** The blessing used throughout the retreat says, “May the earth bless you, and may you bless the earth, in planting and protest, and sharing food.”

- How do we bless the Earth through hope-in action?
- What are ways that we plant?
- What are ways that we protest?
- What are ways that we share food?

If participants worked in small groups allow for sharing with the whole group. After a brief time of sharing, prepare for a time of individual silent reflection for 3-5 minutes. First refer to the Zines that were used for the Nature Exploration. When folded as a booklet, the pages show the prompts for the what to explore. When unfolded, the reverse side, provides the prompts below. Invite participants to reflect on the prompts and jot down their personal responses, in the Zine. Share the prompts verbally before entering silence:

- What aspects of creation care capture your attention and energy? What are you passionate about preserving or changing? As your mind moves through various ideas, choose one idea to keep as a focal point.
  - In this moment, what one thing are you passionate about preserving or changing? Write it down.
  - In this moment, identify one small step you can take, one hope-in-action, to support this commitment to creation care. Write it down.
  - Silent Reflection

**Song**

*“Amazing Grace” (#649, Glory to God Hymnal)*

## ***Affirmation of Faith (unison)***

(adapted from the *Iona Abbey Worship Book*, p. 38)

Let us affirm our faith together.

(In unison)

We believe in God,

Who conceived all that is created,

God, who cares for all people.

We believe in Jesus Christ.

God's firstborn and only Lord of the earth.

He came from both heaven

and the womb of the virgin Mary;

he lived in solidarity with humankind,

befriending, teaching,

healing and restoring;

he was denied and betrayed by his friends;

and was done to death by the state.

He descended to the place of oblivion,

rose to life again on the third day,

and ascended to heaven

where he sits at God's right hand.

This same Jesus will come again in glory

to judge the living and dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

whose dynamic presence can make all things new.

And we believe in the holy catholic church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body

and the life everlasting. Amen.

## ***Prayers of the People***

(adapted prayer from Rev. Thom Shuman)

**Person F:**

During the following time of prayer, you will be invited to lift your prayer requests in voice or in Spirit, as you feel led. After a period of sharing, we'll close in unison with the Lord's Prayer. Let us pray.

**Person C:**

Lead us, Author of Creation,  
into all those places  
where we will discover your hope  
waiting to nourish and restore  
our famished souls.

**Person D:**

Lead us, Shepherd of Your beloved children,  
into all those places  
where we may have the joy  
of filling the emptiness of others  
with your goodness.

**Person E:**

Lead us, Spirit of Goodness,  
into all those places  
where deeds of kindness  
and hands overflowing with mercy  
speak louder than callous expressions.

**Person F:**

At this time let us, lift the prayers of the people, by voice or in Spirit. Lord, hear these prayers: [*allow for sharing and after a period of sharing continue this time of prayer with the following*]

Give us yourself this day,  
God in Community, Holy in One,  
as we pray as Jesus has taught us, saying...  
(In unison)

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

***Song***

*“Sanctuary Song” (#701, Glory to God Hymnal)*

***Charge and Benediction***

**Person #5:**

God’s story is still being written.  
We are part of the story.  
May we receive the blessings of the earth,  
and may we bless the earth,  
in planting and protest,  
and sharing food. Amen.

## ***Changing the Light***

(adapted from *Godly Play*, Vol. 6, p. 76)

[light the candle]

**Person #1:** This is the Light that all Light comes from.

**Person #2:** The Light present at the beginning of Creation.

**Person #3:** The Light given to us in our Baptism.

**Person #4:** The Light of Love and Peace and Hope and Great Joy.

**Person #5:** The Light of Christ, God with us.

**Person #1:** May we remember:

**Person #2:** God created all of creation in hope and called it good;

**Person #3:** God sustains creation through hope;

**Person #4:** And, God calls us to practice hope-in-action with all of creation.

**Person #5:** Watch as we change the light.

**Person #1:** Now, the light is in this one place.

**Person #2:** As we change the Light...

*[use snuffer to gently and slowly extinguish the Light]*

...it begins to fill every place...

**Person #3:** ...even the darkest shadows.

**Person #4:** God's Hope-filled Light goes with us everywhere we go...

**Person #5:** ...and the darkness cannot overcome it.

**All:** Thanks be to God. Amen.

# **APPENDIX**

## **Activities When Returning Home**

What creation care practices or projects might you share with your community?

### ***Worship***

If your congregation enjoys the practice of Youth-led Worship, you might consider sharing the prayers written by the youth and/or incorporating other parts of this curriculum's closing worship with your home church. This could be an especially meaningful way to engage the congregation in reflection and action to support creation care in new ways.

### ***7 R's of Sustainability: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot, Repurpose, Repair, Refuse***

#### **Building Awareness**

- Build awareness by posting the "Living Tree" Poster at church or in a local library.
- Take action by hosting a "Buy Nothing Sale." People contribute items they no longer need, no money is exchanged, and shoppers take what they can use. Be sure to create a plan for leftover items, how can you direct these items to other donation centers, to keep them out of the landfill? Include a lunch gathering to further nurture relationships and creation care conversations

#### ***Earth Care***

- Create a Monarch Waystation in your community. Perhaps your congregation would like to nurture this kind of space on the church grounds? Or, partner with a local school or other community organization.
- Coordinate a creation care project at a local park or community garden. Contact the organization to learn more about their specific needs and how your group might be able to help.

#### ***Share Food***

- Host a Food Packaging Event (combating global hunger and malnutrition)
- Host a Batch Cooking Event: People bring ingredients and recipes, they work together to prepare and cook the meals, and all the meals are then divided into freezable containers
- Host a Bread-Baking Event to prepare the Communion Bread
- Create Seasonal Gifts of Bundled Mulling Spices

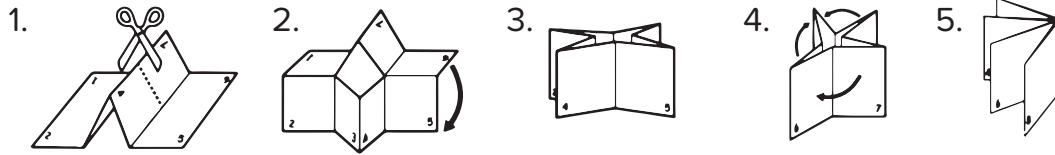
## Printed Materials

- Zine Prompts - Leader Handout p. 33
- Zine Template - for Nature Exploration p. 34-35
- Nature-themed Napkin Rings Instructions & Diagram p. 36-37
- How to Draw a Finger Labyrinth Instructions & Diagram p. 38



## Zine Template and Instructions

Photocopy pages 34-35 front to back; 1 per participant. Fold the page along the solid lines and cut along the dashed line (as indicated in the figure below).



Use the following prompts to guide you in searching for different parts of nature representing each day of creation. Add your thoughts and doodles to each page of your Zine. The reverse of the page or interior of the booklet includes prompts for reflection used in worship (see p. 27).

**Front Cover:** Decorate the cover to represent your personality. You could write your name in a fun way or draw an image that is meaningful to you or make a few abstract doodles.

**Light:** Trace leaf shadows. Sit under a tree or other shrub in a way that the light filters through the leaves and casts shadows on your paper. Trace the shadows. Consider writing a word in each leaf shadow as a form of prayer such as “food” or “shelter” or “water,” etc. If it’s a gloomy day and shadows are hard to come by, see if there is a fallen leaf nearby that you could trace.

**Sky:** Practice cloud-gazing. Can you see any recognizable shapes in the clouds? Draw what you see, or what you imagine would be an awesome cloud shape.

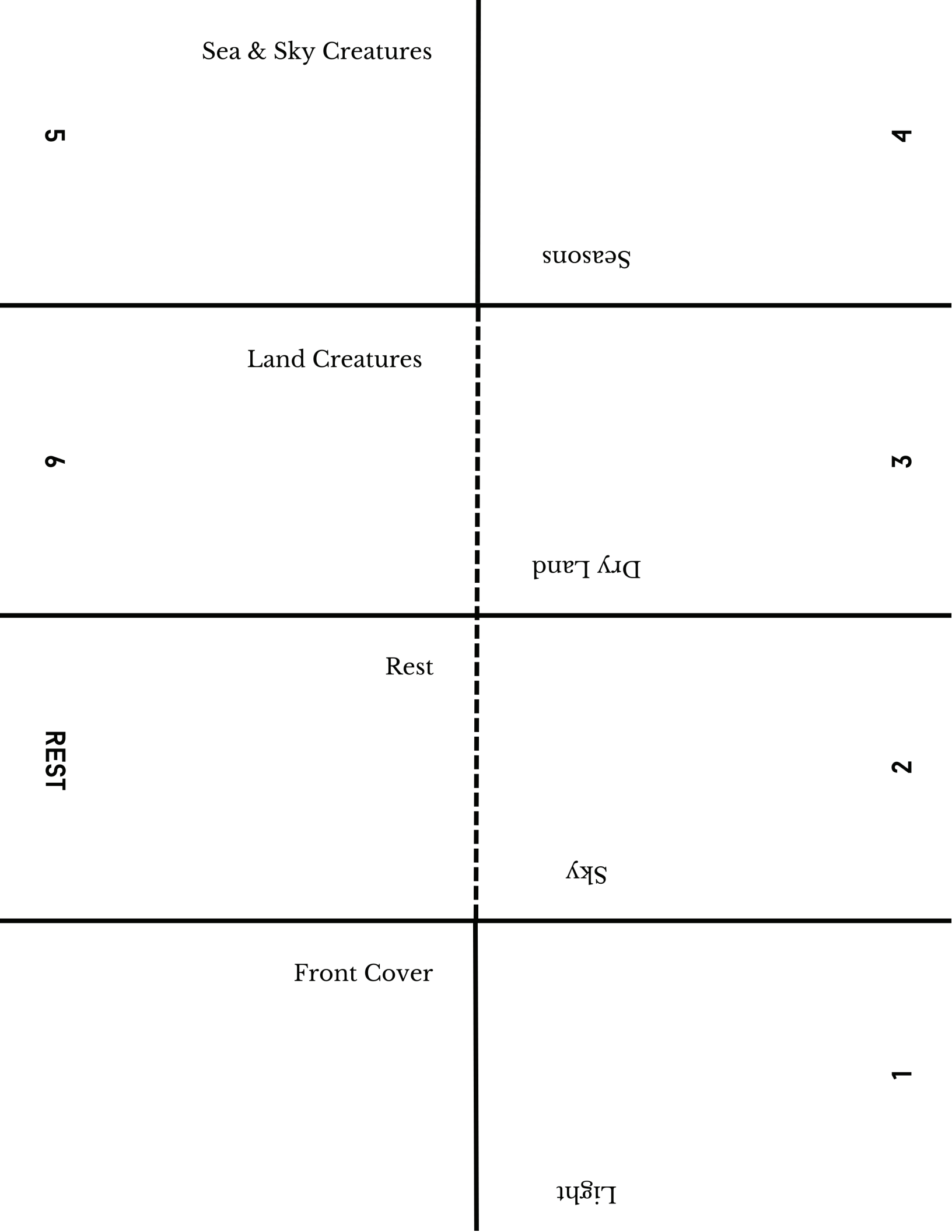
**Dry Land:** Touch the earth with your hands. Get a little muddy! Is the earth dry, moist, or sticky? Smudge your paper with the soil or jot a note about your observations.

**Day/Night/Seasons:** What signs of the seasons do you notice? Is spring ready to emerge? Are leaves falling into piles on the ground? Is the air hot or cold? Draw a symbol representing the season or jot a note about your observations.

**Creatures of Sea and Sky:** Look for birds or insects flying in the air. Look for creatures that live in the streams or ponds. Draw something you see/hear or jot a note about your observations.

**Creatures of Dry Land:** Look for creature tracks and human tracks, noticing your own footprints. Draw a creature track.

**Sabbath:** What signs of “rest” do you notice in nature? Any birds or creatures in a posture of rest? Is the vegetation in a season of rest? Did you bring a hammock or seat for a time of rest? Draw an image or jot a note about your favorite way to practice rest.



Sea & Sky Creatures

5

4

Seasons

Land Creatures

6

3

Dry Land

Rest

REST

2

Sky

Front Cover

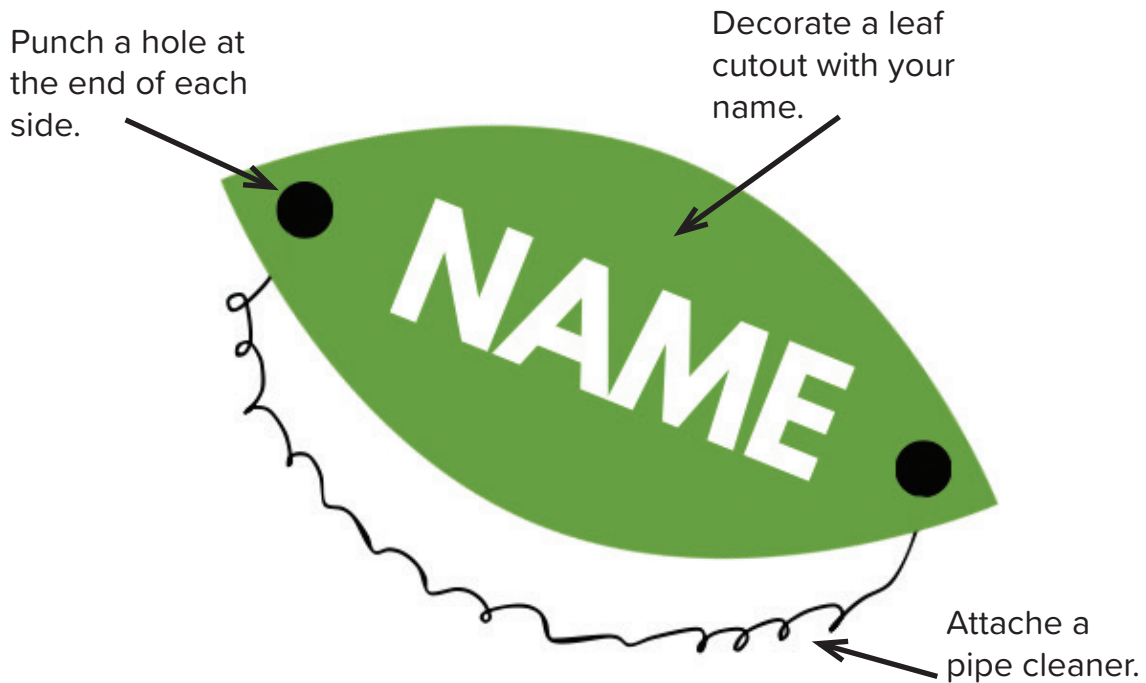
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Light

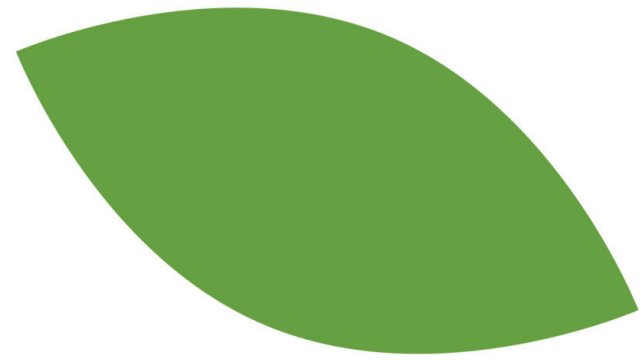
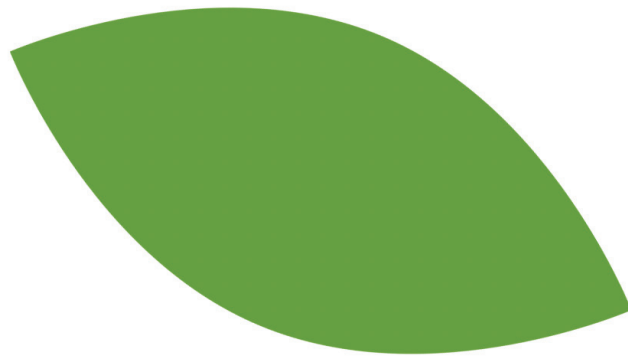
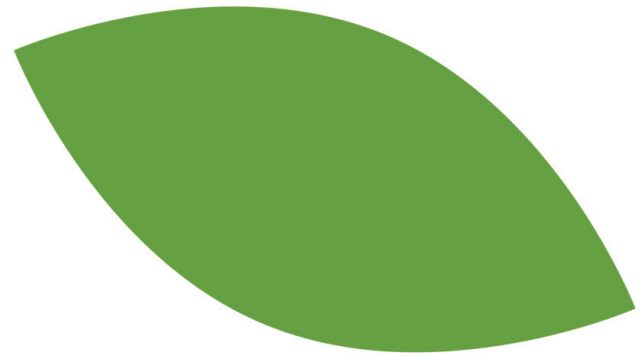
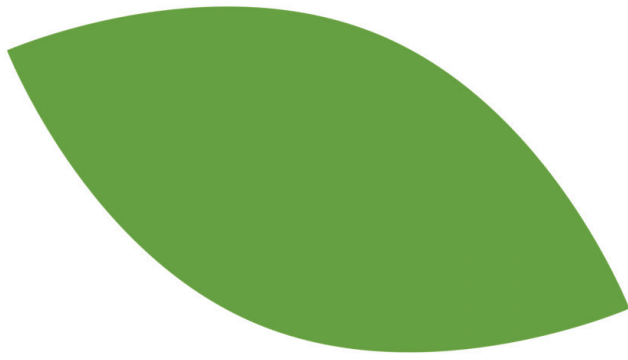
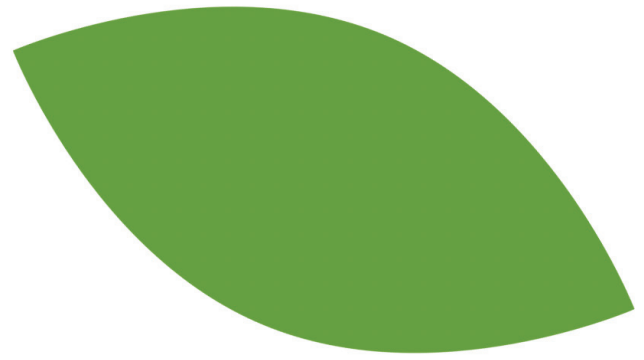
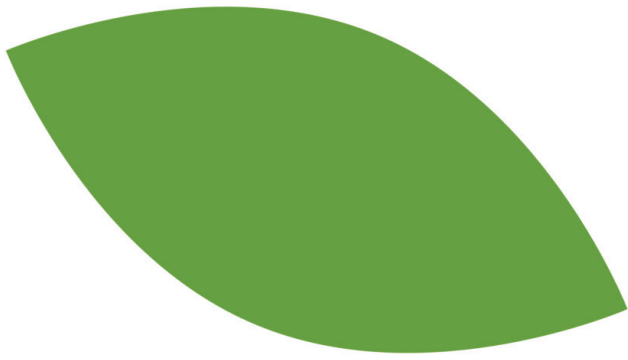
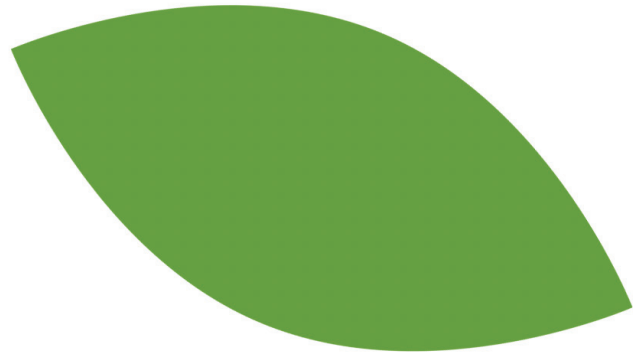
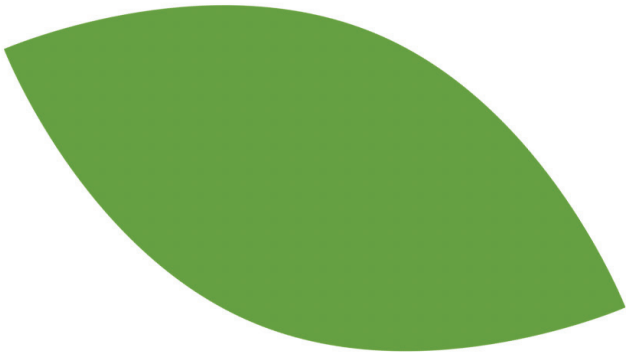
## Prompts for Reflection

- What aspects of creation care capture your attention and energy? What are you passionate about preserving or changing? As your mind moves through various ideas, choose one idea to keep as a focal point.
  - In this moment, what one thing are you passionate about preserving or changing? Write it down.
  - In this moment, identify one small step you can take, one hope-in-action, to support this commitment to creation care. Write it down.
  - Silent Reflection

## Napkin Ring Diagram and Instructions



1. Use the template on the following page to trace and cut out a paper leaf.
2. Write your name on the leaf-shaped paper with a marker, to create a name tag.
3. Punch a hole on each end of the name tag.
4. Twist 1-2 pipe cleaners together.
5. Thread them through the holes in the name tag, being sure they run behind the paper, so your names is still visible.
6. Form a 1.5" circle and twist the ends together.



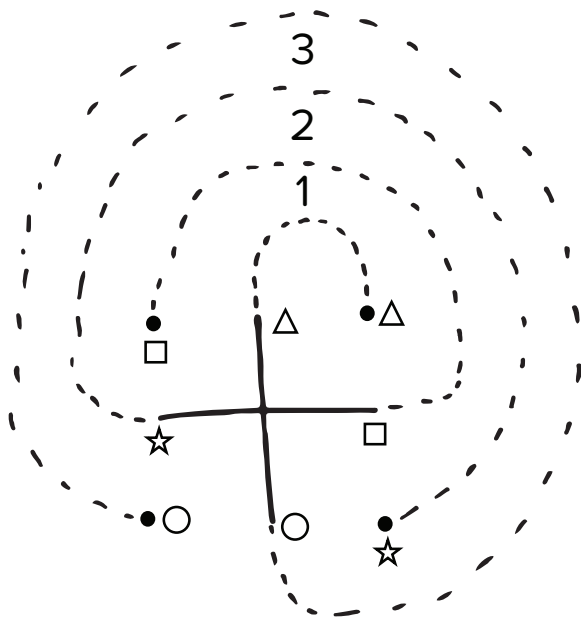
## Create a Finger Labyrinth

A labyrinth is a tool that offers a spiritual space for prayer and reflection. It is not a maze, it is not intended for you to get lost or stuck in a dead end. A labyrinth has one path to follow inward, and the same path to follow outward.

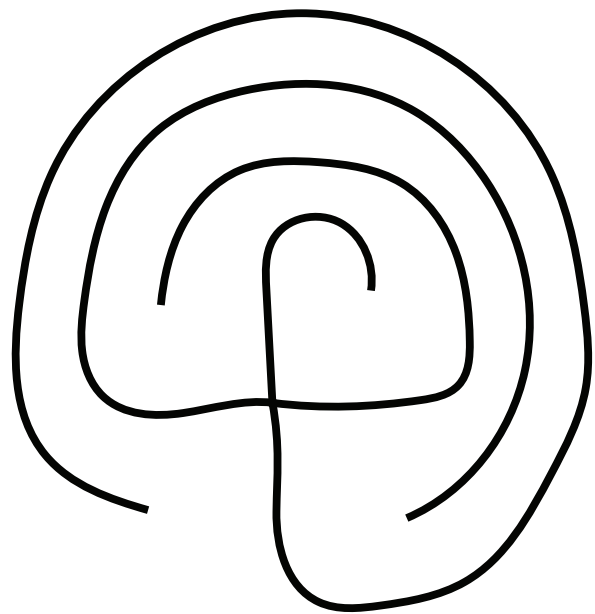
Using a finger on your non-dominant hand, begin at the opening of the labyrinth and follow the path into the center. When you arrive at the center, pause and pay attention to your deep down thoughts and feelings. What might God be saying to you? Receive God's love and blessing. When you are ready... return along the same path. As you exit the labyrinth, give thanks and praise to God.

To draw a finger labyrinth, use the seed pattern below as reference. Begin by drawing a cross with four dots, one in each open corner. Create a line to connect the points of each matching symbol (i.e. triangle to triangle, etc.).

### 3 Circuit Labyrinth



seed pattern for labyrinth



completed finger labyrinth

## Additional Resources

Mutual Invitation Tool Kit: <https://tinyurl.com/37ahv97y>

Monarch Watch Monarch Waystation Program:  
<https://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations/>

Food Packages to Combat World Hunger:  
<https://againstglobalhunger.org/food-packaging/>

Book: *50 Ways to Help Save the Earth, Revised Edition: How You and Your Church Can Make a Difference*, by Rebecca Barnes

## Supplemental Content

### **Activity: Create a Land Acknowledgement**

Five Steps to Writing a Land Acknowledgement — Care About Climate: <https://www.careaboutclimate.org/blog/five-steps-to-writing-a-land-acknowledgement>

### **Reading Together**

The Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address - Greetings to the Natural World:  
[https://americanindian.si.edu/environment/pdf/01\\_02\\_Thanksgiving\\_Address.pdf](https://americanindian.si.edu/environment/pdf/01_02_Thanksgiving_Address.pdf)

### ***The Story of Three Sisters, the indigenous practice of Companion Planting***

God's living creation often teaches us about interdependence. The Three Sisters is a common farming technique practiced by the Native Americans. This style of planting utilizes three different crops to their full potential in one space to create a circle of interdependence based on giving and receiving. The plants work together in this way:

- Sister **bean** fixes, or makes available in plant form, nitrogen from the air.
- Sister **corn** provides the support for Sister Bean's trailing vine.
- Sister **squash** provides ground cover to hold moisture and maintain a healthy soil environment while deterring animal invaders with its spiny stems.

For further consideration and discussion: What other examples of interdependence can we find in creation?

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## **About the Author**

In life and ministry, Lisa Kaufer is passionate about cultivating relationships and spaces where people are invited to play, share stories, listen, learn, and grow together. She attributes much of her leadership approach to more than a decade of sharing Godly Play stories, participating in the Arts, Recreation, and Worship Conference, volunteering with the Montreat Youth Conference, and serving as a Design Fellow for Princeton Theological Seminary's Log College Project to design new forms of ministry with youth. Lisa graduated from The University of Arizona with degrees in Communication and Spanish, and serves as a Director of Faith Formation in her hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio where she lives with her family. In 2020, Lisa launched The Muddy Fork, a creative studio at the intersection of art, recreation, and faith formation, specializing in ceramic finger labyrinths and play-filled ministry resources for all ages.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CAMP  
AND CONFERENCE ASSOCIATION



**Campfire  
Collective**



Presbyterian Mission  
**Office of Christian  
Formation**

This retreat module was developed by Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association/Campfire Collective and Presbyterian Youth Workers Association in collaboration with the Office of Christian Formation in the Presbyterian Mission Agency. The task force for this project was Emily Hooker, John Leedy, Christy Williams, Miatta Wilson, and Joel Winchip.

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