

## Operation Creation!

*A five-session care for creation curriculum for elementary children  
New Community Project*

This curriculum was written for use in Vacation Bible School settings, but could be adapted to other short-term learning contexts. Without diminishing the Genesis creation accounts, it draws in a variety of creation stories (i.e., Native American, other faith traditions, children's literature) when speaking of the earth's beginnings. This is done in order to raise awareness that many different cultures have thought about how the earth began.

While it is not possible to make people care about the earth, it is possible to help them understand what we are doing to the earth and what we can do differently and better. This curriculum attempts to do this by connecting with the individual and meeting him or her in a familiar place. These materials combine information with a teaching approach that also invites thoughtful interaction and even emotional involvement.

A possible project for the week could be the *If a Tree Falls...* program of the New Community Project. Contributions can go toward planting trees (\$1 plants 10 trees); paying for stoves that save wood (\$81 per stove); or preserving Amazon rainforest (\$20 for 1/10 of an acre or \$200 per acre). Color posters, bookmarks and other promotional materials are available. NCP sends 100 percent of contributions to the project.  
<http://www.newcommunityproject.org/treefalls.shtml>

Take home materials (to educate the children's families) on care for creation themes are available at no charge from the New Community Project. Examples include: *The Average American* (US consumption patterns—and what an individual can do to reduce these); *To Do List* (list of six conservation practices—with sticky tab for posting on refrigerator); *Drive the Car Fast* (limiting—"fasting from"—car use); *The Be(e/a)tles Guide to Saving God's Earth* (the Fab Four lead us on a magical mystery tour of earth-keeping practices). To order, email NCP at [ncp@newcommunityproject.org](mailto:ncp@newcommunityproject.org) or call 888-800-2985.

An optional activity that could be used later in the week with older elementary children is included at the end of this material (inviting students to create short skits around care for creation themes). Another option is to contact NCP about providing a resource person who has traveled to the Amazon or the Arctic or has some other creation-related interest and is a skilled presenter with children.

As far as possible, use good environmental practices in carrying out this program. Use one-side clean paper for printing projects; have children mark their drink cup and use it throughout the week (if using disposables); encourage car-pooling of children to the event site.

## **Day One: We care for the Earth because God made it**

### Introduction

Pass around an acorn and ask the children to give you one word that describes the seed (e.g., soft, round, brown). Depending on the size of the group, do this with all the children or just half. After everyone or half have had a turn, share with the group some other info about acorns: This small nut or seed gives life to many. It can make a new tree that can live to be 450 years old. It feeds deer. A single deer (100 lbs.) needs 5 lbs. of food a day. If a female deer is healthy, she may be able to have twin fawns rather than one or none. Without proper nourishment, she may become weak and unable to live successfully through winter months. This seed also supplied Native Americans and settlers with a food (e.g., flour, medicines, coffee substitute) and wood for building. Knowing this, send the acorn around again and ask for a one word description. Did the answers change? Did the acorn mean more if a greater story was understood?

[ *Option: If there is no direct access to an acorn, locate a coloring sheet off the internet of an acorn. As the children color, the leader can tell about the various aspects of an acorn described above.* ]

The creation story is full of rich imagery and for children may actually seem like fantasy or magic. To shift children away from the “Poof, God made it!” scenario, read Genesis with emphasis on “God did it” part rather than how. What God made was “good” and eventually “very good” by God’s standards. Who are we to argue with God’s standards?! Introduce the humans’ role in caring for creation. This will be looked at in further detail at Day Four.

Scripture: Genesis 1: 1-31 (*If children are very young, you may want to read this out of children’s Bible to cut down on the length of the text.*)

Prayer: God, You gave life to the world. We hear your voice in each soft breeze. Let us see beauty in all you have made and help us learn the lessons. You have hidden in every tree and rock. Make us wise to understand what you teach us. Amen

*Songs Celebrate the Earth* by Mary Isabelle Appropriate hymns can be used

### Craft

Make tie-dye t-shirts using only blue and green to create earth-like design in center of shirt. If choose this idea, have kids gather shirt fabric and rubber band in bull’s eye fashion or lay shirt flat and begin twisting fabric in circular motion starting at the center of the shirt. Use squeeze bottles to apply dye.

Another option is to have kids make rainbow tie-dye t-shirts by accordian folding the t-shirts either lengthwise and rubber banding (horizontal stripes) or accordian folding widthwise and rubber banding (vertical stripes). Have kids dip into dye and/or apply dye with squeeze bottles. Supply rainbow of colors. Liquid Rit dye works best. Wet shirt and wring water out after shirt is rubber banded then apply dye. No need to treat shirts in saltwater after they dry. Wash in cold water.

### Activity/Snack

Have the children put together their own snack mix as a means to experience the Genesis story in another way. Supply food items for group and ziplock bags for each child.

Day 1 – God created light and dark (mini Oreo cookies or raisins and yogurt raisins)

Day 2 – God separated water on top from water below. Top was sky and bottom was ground (Frosted Mini-Wheats: frosted side for clouds; unfrosted for ground)

Day 3 – God made green grass, trees, flowers and fruit (respectively, green Skittles, stick pretzels, red/pink Runtts or jelly beans, raisins)

Day 4 – God created sun, moon and stars (dried banana chips or orange and yellow Runtts or M&Ms)

Day 5 – God made birds and fish (goldfish crackers)

Day 6 – God made people and animals (Smiley-face cookies or Keebler elf cookies and animal crackers)

Day 7 – God rested and made this day holy (marshmallow “pillows”)

God looked at everything and said “It is good!” Have kids yell “It is good! It is very good!” Time to eat your creation crunch!

### Story

*Earth on the Turtle’s Back* (Native American tale) In this Native American story, there are clear parallels with Genesis (tree in center, people doing something they shouldn’t, a Creator or Great Spirit). All of these parallels reinforce the message that we are not the rulers; there is something greater that gave life. It is our responsibility not to take this lightly but to honor the gift.

### Mission

Introduce Monarch Waystation project and visit garden site. This is part of a national program called Monarch Watch out of the University of Kansas. Monarch Watch focuses its attention on the life cycle and migration of the monarch butterfly. Since monarchs travel great distances to Mexico to winter, this project takes on a global context in helping those involved to see not only the importance of what’s in our own backyards that may benefit monarchs but how we live our lives can affect wintering grounds in Mexico (loss of habitat, climate change). For a more detailed description of this project and organization log on to [www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org).

### Closing

Bring out the acorn (or the colored acorns) again and remind the children that something that seems so small can make a big difference. We will spend time learning that while each of us is one small person in God’s grand creation, we can each make a big difference. The difference we want to make is to keep the gift of this planet clean & healthy for ALL people and ALL the other creatures and plants that share this earth as home. We care because God made it!

Take Home Assignment: Invite children to take 3 – 5 minutes some time during the rest of the day to sit quietly outside (making sure their parents know where they are!) looking

at something in nature. Get close to a tree, a bug, watch a bird, dig around in the dirt, or lift a log (don't forget to gently put it back in place).

Use *Thank You, God* prayer each day for closing:

Thank you, God for each new day you give to me, For earth and sky and sand and sea, For rainbows after springtime showers, autumn leaves and summer flowers, Winter snowscapes so serene, harvest fields of gold and green, Beauty shining all around, lilac scent and robin sound, Stars that twinkle high above and all the people that I love. Amen

## **Day Two: We care for the Earth because God cares for it**

Introduction Begin by asking if they took the 3-5 minutes yesterday to study/experience something nature. What was it? What did they learn? After giving the kids time to share, tell them you have something miraculous to share with them!

Pass around a cocoon or bring in monarch butterfly caterpillars/chrysalis (leader take around the chrysalis to children/do not pass). If a live caterpillar/chrysalis or cocoon is not available, look for videos or books on butterflies or moths at the library. (Another interesting insect for children to experience is a honey bee. Many local beekeepers welcome the chance to bring a demonstration hive into a classroom.)

Watching a caterpillar create a chrysalis is nothing short of miraculous. It holds a kind of mystery and awe about it that grabs just about everyone. Each chrysalis is different (e.g., size, shape, color) depending on the species of butterfly. When a caterpillar makes a chrysalis (generally, moths make cocoons and a butterfly make a chrysalis), its entire body begins to change internally until the time is right. When this time comes, the caterpillar's skin will split revealing a new body underneath that forms the chrysalis and eventually the adult butterfly. The magic begins even before the transformation as the caterpillar performs the job of attaching itself to the leaf or twig that will hold the pupa. A stillness happens before the change begins, calling for our patience as we wait and watch.

Adaptations in the animal world (and plant) are remarkable. To us they seem like extraordinary skills but to the animals and plants, it's about survival and continuing their species. For instance, ask the children if they've heard of dung beetles. The insects roll up balls of orangutan dung and lay their eggs there. A certain fly knows this, and lays its eggs there too, so that when the fly larva hatch, they eat the beetle larva. But wait! There is an orchid (tropical flower) that figured this out, and it developed a scent like dung to attract these flies. Why do you think the orchid wanted the flies to land on it? To pollinate it! In fact, this fly is the only insect that pollinates this flower—so if this fly would become extinct, so would this orchid. [The earth is losing 50-100 species of plants and animals a day to extinction. Why are they becoming extinct? (invite responses) Reasons: cutting forests, over-fishing oceans, pollution, global warming, farming, road and building construction.] God is truly a master of creation through caring enough to give all creatures, big and small, the unique skills they need to survive.

### Scripture

Psalm 24: 1-2 (states God's ownership) Leviticus 25: 1-7 (instructions concerning the earth's care; if we care for something, we don't exploit it. We recognize that just as we need rest so does creation – rest from our use and time to replenish itself.)

### Prayer

God of all creation, grant us this day some meeting with bird or moon, sheep or star, insect or the sun itself: that we might marvel and know our place and praise you again and for ever and ever. Amen

### Song

*Celebrate the Earth* by Mary Isabelle (from United Church of Christ)

*Everything We Got* by Robin Mann (from Seasons of the Spirit curriculum 2004-05)

### Story

*Mr. and Mrs. God in the Creaton Kitchen* by Nancy Wood

This book showing the workings in Mr. and Mrs. God's kitchen as they make different things. Sometimes creatures come out a little differently than intended but it all works out in the end. Humans are created and the story leaves us with a question and a responsibility!

### Activity

Animal Olympics Children will get the opportunity to try some of the amazing skills that animals have and see how people stack up to the animal world. This can be done as a group going from one station to another or simply set up stations and have kids rotate through at their own pace. Each child will need a Creature Feat Sheet (check-off list at end of resources) to keep track of their own "score".

#### Station 1: Hummingbird

A hummingbird can beat its wings 90 times a second. Have children see how many times they can flap their "wings" (arms) in five seconds. Need someone to time and help count. Record on Feat Sheet.

Station 2: Bullfrog A bullfrog can jump 7 feet. Draw out on pavement a starting/jumping line and additional lines at 6" to one foot intervals from there –or- lay out string on the grass as the starting/jumping line and use a tape measure to measure jump length. Have child stand at starting line and do a standing long jump – no running start! Record length of jump on Feat Sheet.

Station 3: Snake A snake is able to slither on its belly under objects without legs/feet. Set up three heights of "limbo" poles and see if kids can make their way under each pole without knocking off the pole. The highest poles they can limbo under but the lowest pole, they must slither on their bellies! Record success on Feat Sheet.

Station 4: Fox A fox can run about 26 mph at top speed = .43 miles (763 yds.) per minute = approx. 125 yds. in 10 seconds. Create a running course about 125 -150 yds. long and give kids 10 seconds to run as far as they can. Record distance on Feat Sheet.

Station 5: Skunk A skunk can spray its scent 5-10 feet with accuracy. Supply squirt guns and targets (cup or small bucket) to see how accurately kids can spray water. Have child stand about 5' from a cup and try to fill it with water with 20-30 pulls of the squirt gun trigger. Measure how much water was collected and record on Feat Sheet.

Station 6: Ant An ant can carry 20 times its own weight. You will need a 5 gallon buckets, rope and phone books. Tie the rope to the handle of the bucket and throw the rope over a sturdy tree branch. Put a phone book in the bucket and see if the child can pull the free end of the rope to raise the bucket off the ground. Keep adding phone books until the bucket can't be lifted COMFORTABLY by the child. Record on Feat Sheet. (If the child knows how much s/he weighs, you can figure how much s/he would be able to lift if the child was an ant.)

Following this activity get feedback from the children. What activity was the hardest? Which was their favorite? Could they do the same things all the animals could do? Maybe, yes, but could they perform the skills as efficiently? God shows tremendous care in giving animals and us the tools we need to be successful at living. Part of that care is making us different – having different skills and talents. How boring would life be if we were all the same! If everything in nature was the same, it just wouldn't work. It is in the differences (diversity of life) that we can find what holds us together as one (balance and stability). One thing none of the animals we pretended to be could do well is eat what we are having for snack. Kids make the best ice cream lickers!

### Snack

Popsicles or some kind of ice cream treat on a stick

### Mission

Work on Monarch Waystation by adding soil amendments and tilling. Add sticks to garden to layout where plants are going to be.

### Closing

Review the day with the children. We have spent time recognizing some of the amazing feats animals do everyday. One of the most amazing feats we can do is to care for the earth as God cares for it and us. How does God care for you? (with love, compassion, fairness, respect, unselfishly, etc.) How then can we use those same ideas to care for the earth? If we can see ourselves as part of God's creation rather than sitting at the top of the heap then maybe we will be more compassionate toward it. We can show respect by not creating so much waste. We can be fair/unselfish by recognizing that the earth's resources are not just for us but must be shared by ALL. The key is to ACT on these things with concrete changes in behavior.

### Take Home Assignment

Show the children a compact florescent light bulb. Using a small lamp, let them feel how much heat it gives off (very little—it won't burn their hand). Ask if they can touch a regular light bulb in this way without getting burned (no). Explain that this bulb uses about five times less energy than a regular light bulb, but still gives the same amount of light. Why is saving energy a good thing? (saves money, prevents pollution) In fact, during its lifetime of 10 years, this bulb can save 500 pounds of pollution! Give the children a slip of paper with this information on it and the assignment to ask their parents if there are florescent bulbs in their home.

Prayer:

Thank you, God for each new day you give to me,  
For earth and sky and sand and sea,  
For rainbows after springtime showers, autumn leaves and summer flowers,  
Winter snowscapes so serene, harvest fields of gold and green,  
Beauty shining all around, lilac scent and robin sound,  
Stars that twinkle high above and all the people that I love. Amen

**Day Three: Field Trip – or – Taking stock of God's earth**

Begin by having the children report on whether their house has compact florescent bulbs.

If possible, arrange for the children to visit a nearby nature center, wildlife preserve or farm to pick fruit or get a tour of the grounds. Visiting an organic farm would be an added plus, as the children can learn about this less-impactful way of producing food. Many children don't know where our food comes from nor do spend time outdoors.

If this activity isn't feasible, here are some optional activities:

*Earth—what's on it!* Draw a large globe on the dry erase board. Ask the children to name the various things that are important to life on planet Earth. As they name them, draw in the things they mention (water, atmosphere, trees, birds, food, fish, sun, etc.). Ask why various ones of these are important—why did God create them, what do they do for the earth or for other living creatures? (Birds distribute seeds, eat insects; small fish are food for larger fish, fish are food for people; trees make oxygen, put water into the air for rain, clean the air, provide homes for animals, etc.)

Mention that many of these things are in trouble because of human actions. The large fish are nearly gone from the seas (90% of the large predatory fish—tuna, marlin, swordfish—have disappeared due to over-fishing); the Amazon rainforest loses about six million acres of trees per year (mostly due to cattle ranches, but also for growing crops and getting lumber); many birds are endangered as the world's forests disappear; even polar bears are not doing well as the ice melts from global warming.

*Earth Care Quiz!* Make a multiple choice quiz to help them see how we all contribute to the problems the earth is having. Correct answers underlined.

1. How many water bottles do Americans throw away every day? (40; 40,000; 40 million) (Enough to stretch about 6,000 miles!)

2. How many cattle now live in the Amazon rainforest (the forest being cut to make cattle ranches? (57; 57,000; 57 million)
3. How many trees does it take every year to make all the paper we use in this country? (1000; 1 million; 1 billion)
4. Cars create a lot of pollution. Which country in the world has the most cars and drives the most miles? (China, the United States, England) (the US has 230 million cars and drives as many miles as the rest of the world combined)

Discuss these. How can we keep from throwing away so many water bottles (not buy water in bottles; refill our bottles and use them again; recycle the bottles)? What can we each do to not use so much paper? How can a family not use the car so often?

#### **Day Four: We care for the Earth because God wills it**

Introduction Begin by talking about the different sounds we can hear in nature. Sound can be very important to a creature because a certain sound can send a message of alarm or greeting. Frogs, for example, make noise in the spring to see who is in the neighborhood (i.e., pond) after their winter hibernation. Actually, it is the male frogs that make the noise and the females that listen for their match. Without different sounds, different species of frogs couldn't find each other!

But sound isn't only made by animals. Have children close their eyes and listen. Play a tape or CD with ocean or water sounds on it and read a meditation or simply stay silent. It is amazing how still you can get kids to lay if you approach it in the right manner. Don't drag this exercise on too long though. Invite the children to slowly open their eyes and sit up quietly. Ask how they feel? Talk about other sounds in nature that are quieting to them and ones that are powerful.

God can speak to us through the sounds we hear. Does God only speak in quiet, pleasant sounds or can you hear God in loud, powerful sounds? To know the will of God we need to listen. God does speak but not in the way the kids are listening to you speak. Some of us hear God through the voice of others, some through an intuition or feeling in their hearts, some through sounds in nature. God speaks to us through scripture and other stories. The key for us is to listen.

#### Scripture

Matthew 25 (how do we care for one another? If we should care for one another, shouldn't we also care for the land and water that sustains us?)

Genesis 2 (till and keep – another way of looking at this is through a simple definition of conservation. Conservation is the use [till] but not abuse [keep] of natural resources.)

#### Prayer

Mother, Father God, remind us every day that all life is sacred. Let us feel in our hearts that we are a part of creation and help us to respect the natural world. The earth is so beautiful! Teach us and help us to understand that we can live together in balance and peace with other people, creatures, plants, water, air and the land. Amen.



### Song

*Celebrate the Earth* by Mary Isabelle (from United Church of Christ)

*Everything We Got* by Robin Mann (from Seasons of the Spirit curriculum 2004-05)

*All God's Gifts* from Godspell

### Story

*Old Turtle* by Douglas Wood This is a beautifully written and illustrated story about how we often cannot see the gift of creation from another's perspective. We want to make God and what God does all about us. By refusing to look outside ourselves, we hurt others both in and outside our path. Old Turtle wants the people and creation to see this but also wants them to find the truth for themselves. God may will for us to care for creation but God knows we must find our own way to know that will.

### Activity/Craft

Conservation Commandments

Ask children if they recall the story of Moses and the 10 Commandments. What were the commandments all about? Why are rules or guidelines important? Name places where there are rules the children need to follow. Today, we are going to come up with some of our own guidelines or commandments to be good stewards or "keepers" of creation.

[Option: Read Dr. Seuss' story of "The Lorax" prior to doing the following activity. It is a long story, so perhaps the first few pages could be read and the remainder paraphrased. This is a great story to describe what can happen when we get greedy, etc.]

Brainstorm with children what the Caring for Creation commandments might be. Ask the children to think about areas of God's earth that are struggling or suffering because of what humans do. For instance, most of the large fish (tuna, halibut, swordfish) are gone from the seas due to over-fishing. The ice is melting under the feet of the polar bears—and they could all die in 100 years—because of global warming and our use of cars and factories. Thousands of people get sick every year around the world from breathing polluted air. The earth loses about 40 million acres of forests every year—why? (housing, cattle ranches, wood, oil drilling, farms)

Encourage the children to think about what actions God might want us to take to help the earth, its people, and all its creatures get better. Then begin to take suggestions for Creation Commandments. Here's what one group came up with:

1. Turn off lights (when not in use)
2. Don't litter (pick up after yourself)
3. Use less water/save energy (take shorter showers; shut water off when brushing teeth).
4. Reuse items (buy used items; give away old clothes in good condition)
5. Recycle (all items I can where I live).
6. Walk or ride my bike whenever possible... benefit: exercise and less pollution)
7. Air conditioning set at 78 degrees and heat at 68 degrees (saves energy)
8. Reduce (the amount of stuff I use or buy)
9. Plant a tree (in your yard or find where you can donate a tree to be planted)
10. Learn more about how I can care of God's creation

After kids write or draw their ideas on the cards (one per 4x6 card), punch a hole in the corner of each card and put them on a large ring (available at office supply stores). Kids can take these home and flip through them with their families to talk about what they can do. New cards can be added when new ideas arise. Kids make even want to keep track on the back of an idea card how many times they follow through with the action.

### Snack

Blueberry muffins (using our blueberries from the farm!) and juice

### Mission

Plant monarch waystation

### Closing

Show a turtle shell or real turtle if you have one; if not, show picture of Old Turtle from the story. What made Old Turtle smile? Perhaps because the people and creatures understood his message and decided to live according to it. We will not always be perfect in our attempt to follow God's will but God is faithful. (More about that tomorrow!) Don't give up trying and giving thanks for the blessing of God's creation!

### Prayer:

Thank you, God for each new day you give to me,  
For earth and sky and sand and sea,  
For rainbows after springtime showers, autumn leaves and summer flowers,  
Winter snowscapes so serene, harvest fields of gold and green,  
Beauty shining all around, lilac scent and robin sound,  
Stars that twinkle high above and all the people that I love. Amen

## **Day Five: Covenant and Creation**

### Introduction

Kids should close their eyes. Peel an orange and see how long it takes the children to comment or recognize the smell. (Sometimes a small fan is helpful to spread the scent among the group.) All week we have taken time to see, hear, touch and now smell creation. What are some other natural smells the children enjoy? Even bad smells have their place (bad smelling flowers attract beetle or fly pollinators, skunks use their scent for protection).

Each day we have talked about why we should care for creation. Can you remember why? Because God made it, because God cares for it and because God wills it. All good reasons but as we learned yesterday (Conservation Cards), the best way to show our understanding is to ACT on our knowledge. We are going to finish our week by seeing that God, once again, has given us an example of this as we recall the story of Noah.

### Scripture

Genesis 6-9 (*Because of the length of the story, tell it in your own words but read the ending at Genesis 9: 8 – 17.*)

God commanded and Noah acted. Because Noah acted or was faithful, God established a covenant with the people AND the earth's creatures to never destroy the earth by flood again. This is an awesome promise! And God even gave a visible sign as a reminder of his faithfulness to the covenant. What was it? If God has promised to never destroy the earth and its inhabitants again then how do the kids think we should respond? (If God will not destroy creation then neither should we!)

### Prayer

God, we join with you, the earth and each other to bring new life to the land, water and air. We join with you, the earth and each other to renew the forests, celebrate the seas and sing to the stars. We join together with you, the earth and each other to encourage justice and peace and preserve the future. We join together for the healing of the earth. Amen.

### Song

Review from previous days.

### Story

*The Story of Naamah* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

This is a Jewish Midrash story of Noah's wife and her faithfulness to God's call.

### Activity/Craft

Creating Creation (from *Children's Ministry* magazine) Give the narrator a flashlight to read the Bible passage. Begin with lights out. Play classical music in the background as the narrator reads Genesis 1 aloud, pausing briefly to allow each part of the creative process to be experienced by the children. As each thing in creation is mentioned, use the corresponding special effect:

1. "Let there be light" – turn on room lights.
2. "The evening and morning were the first day" – turn room lights off.
3. "Dividing the waters" – play recorded water sounds; spray water in front of an oscillating fan so it lightly sprays kids.
4. "Fruits and seeds" – pause as an orange is broken open in front of the fan, allowing aroma to fill the room.
5. "Sun" – turn a 3-way lamp on high inside a black cardboard tube. It should make a round, bright light.
6. "Moon" – turn the lamp to its lowest setting and shine it through the cardboard tube for a dimmer light.
7. "Stars" – cover a box-style cheese grater with black poster board on the three sides with the largest holes. Shine a light inside the cheese grater and move around the room sparkling stars over the ceiling.
8. "Fish and fowl" – play recorded whale and dolphin sounds, then bird sounds.
9. "Animals" – play animal sounds.
10. "Humans" – play sounds of people talking or singing.
11. "Rest" – play sounds of waves and music.

Another approach to this activity: Divide the children into 11 groups--assign each group one part of God's creative activity to act out in a no-words charades-like game with the whole group trying to guess what part of the creation they are representing. Groups should prepare/practice for their part without letting the others know which part they are representing, then take turns presenting to the whole group. After each group presents, a leader might ask the whole group to give ideas about why that part of the creation (animals, fish, stars, etc.) is an important part of God's universe.

### Snack

### Mission

Finish Monarch Waystation

### Closing

Review the week and simply let the children tell you what they liked and learned. Bring out the acorn from the first day. Pass it around the group; if you are holding the acorn then it is your turn to speak. Thanks the kids for their participation and let them know that just because the week is over, our call to care for creation is not. God gave us this wondrous gift of the earth to use but to use wisely. Everything we do affects the planet and sometimes the choices we make affect places and people far away. Very simply we need to always THINK about our choices beyond ourselves and SHARE with others the bounty of God's creation.

### Prayer:

Thank you, God for each new day you give to me,  
For earth and sky and sand and sea,  
For rainbows after springtime showers, autumn leaves and summer flowers,  
Winter snowscapes so serene, harvest fields of gold and green,  
Beauty shining all around, lilac scent and robin sound,  
Stars that twinkle high above and all the people that I love. Amen

### *Optional Activity: Creation care skits*

Group the children in drama teams of 5-8 children and an adult. Give each group one of the following skits to create and perform for the rest of the group. Ask that their performance be 2-3 minutes in duration.

*Bad News, Bears* You have to break the news to a polar bear that because of global warming, its life will be much more difficult in the future—and polar bears could even become extinct. Polar bears are known for being ferocious and temperamental—and don't take bad news very nicely.

The facts: polar are threatened by global warming. They live on and hunt from the ice pack in the arctic, but now the ice is disappearing. Already the average weight of polar bears has fallen by 30 percent—in just the past 25 years—due to less food and having to spend much more time and energy swimming in the open sea between ice packs. Some even drown in the process. Some scientists believe that polar bears will disappear from

the wild by the end of the century, unless global warming is halted. Global warming is mostly caused by burning fossil fuels such as gasoline and coal.

*Monkey Business* You are a group of monkeys in the Amazon Rainforest. You have found out that a company is planning to cut down a large section of the forest to make room for cattle ranches. You must find a way to stop this from happening without harming the loggers.

The facts: Six millions acres of Amazon Rainforest are being cut down every year. Most of this is to make cattle ranches; in fact, there are more cattle in the Amazon these days than any other large mammal—about 57 million cows. Brazil is the largest beef exporter in the world, and about 40,000 tons of Brazilian beef is shipped to the US every year—even more goes to Europe. Rainforest is not really good for raising beef, as the pasture is not so nutritious and the soil soon wears out—and the cattle have to be moved to other areas. Most US consumers don't think about the fact that their quarter-pounder may have needed 55 square feet of rainforest to raise the beef for that burger.

What's important about rainforest? Up to 80 percent of the world's species of plants and animals call the rainforest "home." Many of our medicines come from these plants. The rainforest helps regulate the world's climate and rainfall. These forests are also home to native people who have lived there for thousands of years.

*Student Teachers* A group of friends has learned how important forests are to the earth and to people, and want to get their school to start buying recycled paper and recycling the paper they use. The principal doesn't seem very interested in this issue—he/she has "more important" things to think about.

How can you help the principal and the rest of the school see how important forests are, and why the school should use recycled paper—and recycle the paper it uses?

The Facts: The world's forests are disappearing at the rate of 25 million acres a year. The causes are many, but paper production is a leading one. In the US, we use 760 pounds of paper per person per year—seven times more than anyone else in the world! It takes three and a half pounds of wood to make one pound of paper. And paper production is also the leading cause of water pollution in the United States. Forests are the home to the majority of the world's creatures, help regulate rainfall, stop flooding, clean the air, and affect the climate—when trees are cut down, it can become much hotter and drier in an area. When natural forests are cut down to make room for "tree plantations" for growing trees to make paper, these plantations are all of the same kind of tree (not like a forest) and the animals won't come back to live there. In fact, there are 40 percent fewer animals in the world today than just 35 years ago; a main reasons is the disappearance of forests.

*Judgment Day* Humans are being judged by God and the angels as to how well they have taken care of God's creation. It's a heavenly courtroom scene. Plants and animals could be called as witnesses.

*Operation Creation*  
by Barb Holtz with Jody Gunn and David Radcliff  
New Community Project  
[www.newcommunityproject.org](http://www.newcommunityproject.org)

Creature Feat Sheet

1. I flapped my “wings” \_\_\_\_\_ times in 5 seconds.
2. I ran \_\_\_\_\_ yards in 10 seconds.
3. I slithered under the highest, middle, lowest (circle one or more) level of bar without knocking it down.
4. I long jumped \_\_\_\_\_ feet.
5. I could lift \_\_\_\_\_ telephone books.
6. I collected \_\_\_\_\_ teaspoons of “spray”.

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