

Touch the Earth Lightly

Session 2: Endangered Species

This Session we worship with the entire living family on Earth. We celebrate birds, animals, reptiles, and all living creatures. A special focus for this session is endangered or extinct species.

Materials Needed:

- 6" x 6" origami paper in various colors
- Instructions for Origami paper folding
- Sets of crayons or markers
- Paper Plates
- Markers or paint and paint brushes
- Pencils
- Battery Tea Lights/Votive Candles
<https://tinyurl.com/3rysanhd>

Preparation Ahead of time:

- Cut up Worship Bulletins into 6" x 6" squares and recycle them to fold the origami peace cranes
- Print pictures of endangered species from website:
<https://www.woojr.com/endangered-animals-coloring-pages-animals-from-north-america/#sthash.oqd7bTl2.qjtu>
- Print or project a copy of the picture on page 4 to illustrate the story
- Copies of the handout - **Honoring Wildlife**

Gathering Activities

- Fold origami peace cranes– then string them together to be installed in the sanctuary – as you are folding say a prayer for the planet, endangered species, etc.
- Collect pictures of creation taken on cellphones as people are gathering (or ahead of time). Examples: sunset, animals, insects, trees, flowers. Have someone receive these during the session to display a slide show/PowerPoint presentation at the very end of the session
- Have each person choose a picture of an animal.
Option: Have an adult or youth look up information about that animal on the ICUN Redlist website: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

Opening Prayer:

Leader: The Lord be with you!

People: And also with you!

Leader: Please repeat this prayer and these motions after me.

May God be in my mind (using your right hand, touch middle of forehead)

May Jesus be in my heart (using your right hand, touch middle of chest)

May the Holy Spirit be by my side (using your right hand first touch the left shoulder, then the right shoulder.)

Amen!

Song – Touch the Earth Lightly (Stanzas 1 & 2)

*Touch the earth lightly,
use the earth gently,
nourish the life of the world in our care:
gift of great wonder,
ours to surrender,
trust for the children tomorrow will bear*

*We who endanger,
who create hunger,
agents of death for all creatures that live,
we who would foster
clouds of disaster,
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!*

What did you notice that was different about the 2 stanzas?

Did the second stanza make you feel differently?

This stanza challenges us to think about our responsibilities to care for the earth – especially the creatures. Let's keep that in mind as we begin....

Opening Sentences/Call to Worship

Leader We invite our animal family to worship with us,

**People All our kin living on this planet,
from the busiest bee to the tallest giraffe.**

Leader We remember our animal relatives who have become extinct,

**People Dinosaurs, dodos and Texas grey wolves,
Oregon bison and the woolly mammoth.**

Leader We join our brothers and sisters in praising God,

**People Gliding eagles and watchful cougars,
Gorillas in the mist and polar bears in the snow.**

Leader We summon the kin we have come to love,

**People The stray cat and the backyard dog,
The goat, the pony, and the little lamb.**

Leader All our animal family in all the world,

**People Raise your voices to the skies
in a family festival of praise.**

Leader Sing, family, sing!

People A song of praise for all creatures!

We name, silently or aloud, other living creatures and invite them to join us in praising our Creator.
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Leader We celebrate with the entire animal family.

People Sing, family, sing!

Opening Song – *For the Beauty of the Earth*

Reflection/Proclamation/Story

Play a recording of frog sounds so everyone can imitate a frog sound when called for!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONhJ9COoMXg>

A Story from Zambia – The King who Killed Frogs

THE KING WHO KILLED FROGS



Once upon a time there was a great king. He was powerful and lived in a beautiful valley with all his people.

There were animals and plants, trees and food. The valley had a river and pools of water and for this reason there was rich, rich soil.

But he was not happy because at night the frogs would croak. Croak, croak, Oh this drove him crazy to hear the frogs croak. He would lie in his bed and toss and turn but still they drove him crazy! Croak, croak (the children repeat croak, croak)

So he called his soldiers and said to them “tomorrow you must kill all the frogs in the valley so that we can sleep in peace”

An old wise woman came to him and said “Great king I advise you not to kill all the frogs because we don’t know what impact it will have”.

“Silly old woman” he said “what impact can frogs have, ugly, noisy creatures, I want to sleep in peace.”

So the soldiers went out and killed all the frogs. And sure enough the king slept peacefully.

For weeks he slept peacefully until one night he heard an annoying sound – zzzz (the children repeat the noise) –a mosquito! It buzzed around his head and kept him awake. So he grabbed a book and whacked and whacked, he kept missing but eventually he killed it and slept peacefully.

But the next night there were two mosquitoes in the room, he hardly slept and the next morning he had nasty bites. His servants working in the palace also had bites and were cross because they had not slept a wink.

So he called together his soldiers – “I command you to go and kill all the mosquitoes!” he yelled.

The soldiers began to laugh but he shouted so fiercely at them that they agreed to go and kill mosquitoes. They went out with sticks and swords and with all the weapons they could find. But they could only kill one or two.

But the next night there were ten mosquitoes in the king’s room zzzzzzzz (the children repeat). He was going crazy! And it got worse, soon there were swarms of mosquitoes everywhere in the palace.

When he woke up one morning, he found that his servants had all left to go to live in a different village where there were no mosquitoes. In that village at night you would hear “croak, croak, croak, croak” as the happy frogs ate up the mosquitoes...

Discuss the meaning of this story.

Which other insects and creatures help us even though we may think they are not important? (e.g. bees that pollinate, ants that eat up rubbish etc.)

Scripture:

Bible reading 1 Cor 12: 14-18

The bible tells us all parts of our body are important and so are all parts of God's family of creation. (From The Voice)

14. the body is not made of one large part but of many different parts.

15. Would it seem right for the foot to cry, "I am not a hand, so I couldn't be part of this body"? Even if it did, it wouldn't be any less joined to the body.

16. And what about an ear? If an ear started to whine, "I am not an eye; I shouldn't be attached to this body," in all its pouting, it is still part of the body.

17. Imagine the entire body as an eye. How would a giant eye be able to hear? And if the entire body were an ear, how would an ear be able to smell?

18. This is where God comes in. God has meticulously put this body together; He placed each part in the exact place to perform the exact function He wanted.

Discuss what it would be like to have no hand, or one eye, or one leg etc. Explain how we are all important and we all have something important to do in God's world!

Focus Activity -

This video has an important message for us all. Try and count how many different kinds of animals you see.

Show video: *Put it back* - Exquisitely beautiful environmental anthem and video, sung by Dorian Harewood, lyrics by Marilyn Hencken and music by Barry Fasman

<https://www.facebook.com/GreenAnglicans/videos/1620360848059325/>

Follow up questions:

- What did you like about the video?
- Why is the song called Put it Back?
- How did this video make you feel? Happy? Sad? Hopeful? Challenged?
- What are some things we can do to help put the world back the way it was?

Focus Activity

Biodiversity game:

Have everyone line up in different ways - height order, oldest to youngest, names beginning A–Z or by number of brothers and sisters.

- Notice that everyone is different. There is no better or worse, only variety!
- Get students to guess how many different plants, animals, birds, insects, reptiles there are in the world. (There are about 9 million species on earth)
- This is called biological diversity (biodiversity)

Watch a video : Why should we care about Biodiversity?
(Start video at 3:00 time stamp, stop at 6:50)

Produced by Smithsonian Institution – part of
Earth Day Video 2019 from Catholic Climate Covenant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CED8o7mKI>

Focus Activity

Show the pictures of the Endangered Species you picked out as you were gathering. Share what you learned about this animal.

Paper plate Handprint of endangered species

<https://www.greenkidcrafts.com/endangered-animal-handprint-craft/>

- Take a paper plate and turn it upside down.
- Using a pencil, trace handprint onto the back of the paper plate.
- Determine the direction of the handprint depending on the animal.
- For instance, for the Chimpanzee I had fingers pointing up. For the Brown Bear, I had the fingers pointing down.
- Paint the handprint the color desired for the chosen animal. Ensure to take into account special details like the Asian Penguin's white stomach or the Rhinoceros horn.
- Paint on special details and the face. Let dry and you're finished!



Closing Reflection

Pass out the remembrance candles (tea lights). Remember birds and animals with whom we have felt a close kinship, creatures that are endangered and species that have become extinct.

Leader Take the remembrance candle you received and hold it quietly in front of you. Remember birds and animals you have loved or with whom you felt a spiritual kinship. Share your memories with the person next to you.

Leader Remember also those of our kin who are endangered those who have had their homes destroyed and those who have become extinct, through human greed and exploitation.

People **We hear creation groaning.
We hear fellow creatures crying out in pain.
And we hear members of our animal family weeping.**

Leader As you remember, you are invited to come forward and light a candle to commemorate an endangered or extinct species.

You may name the animal as you light the candle and remember one of our lost ones

(Play a recording or sing *How Great Thou Art* while people come forward to light candles and place them on a table.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcPnyOXpL7w>

or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TmtcKMFFBU>

Leader We share the sorrow of our animal family.

People **We share the sorrow.
We share the memory.
And we are sorry!**

Prayer

Jesus Christ, teach us to empathize with Earth.

**Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,
cries for justice from the air, the clouds and the sky,
cries of our fellow creatures deserted and dying.**

**Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the Spirit
in creation, groans of longing for a new creation.**

**Jesus Christ, make our hearts sensitive to the songs of our kin,
songs of celebration echoing around us.**

Christ, teach us to care. Amen

Sending Out

Leader Christ calls you to be his disciples,
to serve him with love and compassion,
to serve Earth by caring for creation,
and all creatures in danger or need.

Charge: Distribute or make available copies of the handout - **Honoring Wildlife**

Leader Will you care for creation?

People **We will care for all creatures!
We will nurture our planet!
We will sustain our endangered kin.**

Closing Blessing

Leader May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all,
fill you with the knowledge of God's Wisdom sustaining this planet

and the pulsing of Christ deep within you.

Go in peace!
Serving Christ and loving Earth!

People **We go in peace,
serving Christ and loving Earth.**

Closing Blessing

In the name of Jesus —

Let us Love...**with Open Hearts!** (Touch heart)

Let us Learn...**with Open Minds!** (Hands on each side of head)

Let us Serve...**with Open Arms!** (Both arms stretched out)

Closing Song

Show creation photography taken by members of the congregation during the singing of
All Things Bright and Beautiful



HONORING WILDLIFE

We need to be always mindful that we are part of an interdependent web of life. Our lifestyle choices impact God's many creatures: what we buy, what we eat, where we build our buildings and parking lots, how we vacation or play. The things we do every day influence the very survival of the marvelous array of life on this planet we call our home.

- Protect natural environments and waterways. Clean up local parks and bodies of water.
- Be aware of invasive species. They are one of the leading threats to native wildlife. Approximately 42% of threatened or endangered species are at risk primarily due to invasive species.
- **Plant native plants and remove any invasive plants in your garden.** There are many good native plant alternatives to common exotic ornamental plants.
- Do your part to fight pollution. Every day the byproducts of our daily lives—sewage, exhaust, trash, agricultural and lawn chemicals, industrial and powerplant emissions and more—make their way via the air and water into the natural environment and become pollutants. As big as our planet is, it is not big enough to dilute or absorb all the waste and chemicals that billions of people are continuously producing.
- Recycle! Recycling 1 ton of paper saves **7,000 gallons of water, 3 cubic yards of landfill space and 4,100 kilowatt-hours of electricity.** Consider switching to e-billing to cut down on your paper consumption. In the US, paper products make up the largest percentage of municipal solid waste, and hard copy bills alone generate almost **2 million tons of CO₂**. Reuse containers and reduce waste. The average child's school lunch generates **67 pounds of waste over a year.** Ask for paper bags when available or use reusable bags. The US uses 100 billion plastic bags annually. Less than 1% of plastic bags are ever recycled and the rest often end up as trash or worse yet, as immediate dangers to wildlife.
- Conserve water. Don't leave faucets running. Repair leaks. (A leaky faucet that fills a coffee cup in 10 minutes will waste an estimated 3,000 gallons of water per year!) Use the lowest setting on your washing machine for the amount of clothing you're washing. You'll use less water and your clothes will get just as clean. Using cold or warm water can also save up to **80% of the energy required to wash clothes.**
- Become a citizen naturalist. Citizen naturalists are people concerned about the environment who choose to help make a difference both locally and nationally. They spend time outside, observing nature with a critical lens. Anyone can be a citizen naturalist – all you need is a passion for nature and helping your community! The National Wildlife Federation (www.nwf.org) lists many projects that you can get involved in, right from your own backyard: frog and toad monitoring, bird and firefly counting, monarch butterfly migration pattern recording...
- Educate yourself about animal conservation issues and support agencies and organizations that strive to protect animals.

National Geographic Society
World Wildlife Fund
Wildlife Conservation Society

www.nationalgeographic.com
www.worldwildlife.org
www.wcs.org