

# **Touch the Earth Lightly**

## **Session 4: Earth Day**

This session focuses on raising the awareness of the impact we make on the Earth and how each person can make a difference in the care of the Earth.

### **Materials Needed:**

- 6" x 6" origami paper in various colors
- Instructions for Origami paper folding
- Blank Tibetan Prayer flags - <https://buddhagroove.com/products/wish-fulfilling-blank-tibetan-prayer-flags> (\$21.00 for 25 flags)
- Sharpies to write prayers on flags
- Cover or newspapers to protect the table from marker bleeding through the flags
- Paper and writing utensils to write a covenant

### **Preparation Ahead of time:**

- Cut up Worship Bulletins into 6" x 6" squares and recycle them to fold the origami peace cranes

### **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

### **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!**

### **Opening Song: For the Beauty of the Earth**

### **Prayer**

**Eternal and Gracious Creator,**

**We come to you this day,**

**each with different stories, different pains  
asking for your blessing and your wisdom.**

**Guide our hearts and minds into stillness  
as we seek to hear your voice.**

**In the sounds of this worship,  
and the silences in between,  
let us grow in the wisdom held by you, O Lord.**

**Let us grow in the wisdom held by the Earth,  
by each other,**

**and by the blessed safe keepers of traditional  
knowledge.**

**In Jesus' name  
Amen**

#### **Song – Touch the Earth Lightly**

##### **Stanza 4**

*God of all living,  
God of all loving,  
God of the seedling, the snow, and the sun,  
teach us, deflect us,  
Christ reconnect us,  
using us gently and making us one.*

In this stanza we ask God to teach us, deflect (or change) us, connect us, and use us. Let's keep those thoughts in mind as we begin.

#### **Scripture**

##### **Genesis 1:26-31 from The Message**

God spoke: “Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature  
So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,  
the birds in the air, the cattle,  
And, yes, Earth itself,  
and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.”  
God created human beings;  
he created them godlike,  
Reflecting God’s nature.  
He created them male and female.  
God blessed them:  
“Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!  
Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,

for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.

29-30 Then God said, “I’ve given you  
every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth  
And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,  
given them to you for food.  
To all animals and all birds,  
everything that moves and breathes,  
I give whatever grows out of the ground for food.”  
And there it was.

31 God looked over everything he had made;  
it was so good, so very good!  
It was evening, it was morning—  
Day Six.

**Reflection/Proclamation/Story– Pushing back the sky**

Listen to a folk tale that has been told around the world, from China, to Canada to Africa.



Once upon a time, the world was very different to what it is today. The sky was dark and heavy and very low and almost touched the earth.

Because the sky was so low people had to walk around bent over. If they stood up straight, they would bump their heads. So, this is how they walked (bend over to show them)

After some time, people began to argue about small things, and they became angry at one another. They began to fight, pushing and shoving each other.

There was a little girl who saw her people arguing and fighting. She knew this was not right, but because the sky was pressing down upon her people, it made them cross and tired and so they fought and argued. That was all they did.

One day when she was busy sweeping, she felt so angry and so tired of being bent down, that she stood up straight, she took her broom and hit the sky as hard as she could. To her surprise she felt the sky move up a tiny bit. She realized that if the other people in the village also helped, they could push it up some more. So, she called the people out of their houses and told them her plan, but they were grumpy and told her it would never work. She pleaded with them to try and so they also began to hit at the sky. They all felt the sky move up little bit more.

She was a very smart little girl. She explained if they invited all the other people in their region to come to their village and if everyone worked together, they could push the sky up and out of the way. They could push it back to where it belonged. And the people agreed with her and they invited all the other people to come to their village.

So hundreds of people came to the village and were told the plan of how they would push the sky upwards. They all agreed it was a good idea, and they started shouting and yelling and hitting the sky with brooms and spades and sticks, but when they tried to push the sky there was chaos, some pushed it one way and some pushed another, and the sky didn't move at all. They had a big problem. Everyone spoke a different language and so they each had a different word for "push." How would they know when to push together?

Then the little girl picked up her broom and began to dance. She started singing and dancing with joy. She sang: one, two, three, Harambee! (which means – let's work together). And as she sang Harambee, she hit the clouds with her broom. Soon everyone followed her lead, singing: one, two, three, harambee and they began to dance as they worked.

The music rose and fell, and others joined in, and they were stunned to see that the clouds were rising, ever so slowly, above the courtyard, above the houses. It got harder to reach the clouds, so they climbed the trees and went up the hills, and into the mountains, teaching everyone the song as they went along. And that is why the sky is high above us and blue and beautiful.

One, two, three – harambee. One, two, three – harambee. One, two, three – harambee. This went on for ages, it seemed. But the next generation forgot the song because the sky was high and beautiful. They forgot that the people who went before them, the people who spent so much time bent over – they were the ones who lifted the sky.

And now our sky is becoming heavy again, heavy with carbon pollution... carbon from burning coal and using gasoline.

## Follow up Discussion

- What do you think we can do??

- I wonder why this is called a folk tale?
- What parts of the story did you like best?
- Are there ways we can be like this little girl?

Here is a real-life story of a young girl who at the age of 12 spoke to the United Nations in hope of making a difference. Note that this was filmed in 1992 and is not high quality.

**Video:** Severin Cullis Suzuki speaks to the United Nations at the age of 12.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJJGulZVfLM>

If you want to know more about Severin Cullis Suzuki, look at the Additional Resources at the end of this session. Additional videos of her more recent efforts can be found on YouTube.

### Follow up Discussion

- What surprised you about this story?
- This happened over 30 years ago, do you think a similar situation could take place today?
- What concerns do you have today that you would want to tell others about how you feel?

Here is another real-life story of a group of students and what they did to make a difference.

### Video

<https://kidscorner.net/kids-in-action/sorting-our-garbage-earth-day>

### Follow up Discussion

- What did you like about this story?
- I wonder how you could make a difference to demonstrate caring for the earth?
- What would that project look like?
- What would you need to make that happen?

Take an Earth Day Quiz! There are informative and engaging multiple choice quizzes set up on all sorts of different earth care topics. These could be projected for a group to answer or sent home as a link for individuals to try.

<https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-quizzes/>

**Charge:** Write an Earth Care Covenant

Distribute paper and writing utensils

1. First, pick an area where you want to make a difference
  - Education – learn more about \_\_\_\_\_
  - Energy
  - Food
  - Water
  - Reduce/Reuse/Recycle
  - Paper Use
  - Transportation
  - Nature
2. Write down 2 things you could do in the area you selected.
3. Decide how long you will promise to do this. Write that down on the covenant.
4. Sign your name and date.
5. Take a copy of the Earth Day Handout for additional ideas.

## **Focus Activity: Make Tibetan Prayer flags**

### **About Prayer Flags**

Traditionally, prayer flags are used to promote peace, compassion, strength, and wisdom. The Tibetans believe the prayers will be blown by the wind to spread the good will and positive energy wherever they go. Therefore, prayer flags are thought to bring benefit to all.

Each hue signifies an element — and the flags are always arranged in a specific order, from left to right: blue, white, red, green, yellow. Traditionally, blue represents the sky, white represents the air, red symbolizes fire, green symbolizes water, and yellow symbolizes earth. All five colors together signify balance.

### **Directions:**

Cover the tables to protect them from the markers bleeding through.

Spread the prayer flags the length of the table(s).

Invite everyone to write a prayer on a flag appropriate to the color of the flag.

- Blue represents the sky
- white represents the air
- red symbolizes animals (suggested change to fit the session)
- green symbolizes water
- yellow symbolizes earth.

Go and hang the prayer flags outside. Remember the reasons for which they are hanging there every time you pass them by.

## **A Litany of Gratitude**

**Leader:** We live in all things  
All things live in us

**People:** **We rejoice in all life.**

**Leader:** We live by the sun  
We move with the stars

**People:** **We rejoice in all life.**

**Leader:** We eat from the earth  
We drink from the rain  
We breathe from the air

**People:** **We rejoice in all life.**

**Leader:** We share with the creatures  
We have strength through their gifts

**People:** **We rejoice in all life.**

Leader: We depend on the forests  
We have knowledge through their secrets

**People: We rejoice in all life.**

Leader: We have the privilege of seeing and understanding  
We have the responsibility of caring  
We have the joy of celebrating

**People: We rejoice in all life.**

Leader: We are full of the grace of creation  
We are graceful  
We are grateful

**All: We rejoice in all life**

### **Sending**

Leader: Christ calls you to be his disciples,  
to serve him with love and compassion,  
to serve Earth by caring for creation  
to serve Christ by caring for all creatures.  
Will you care for creation?

**People:** **We will care for one another**  
**We will care for creation.**  
**We will celebrate with the universe!**

Leader: May the Spirit of God, who is the one power above all and in all and through all,  
fill you with an awareness of Christ's presence permeating the universe and  
pulsing within you.  
Go in peace! Serving Christ and loving Earth!

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

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 - All Things Bright and Beautiful**

Show creation photography taken by members of the congregation.

## **Earth Day Handout**



The universe can be defined as everything that exists, everything that has existed, and everything that will exist.  
It was molded and continues to be shaped by the very hands of God.

It is our responsibility, as recipients and participants of this great gift, to care for our own little corner of the universe.

The tips below are only a beginning...



### **Aim to leave no trace of your presence in the natural world...**

#### **Deal with your trash...and everybody else's!**

- ✓ Wherever you are, clean up after yourself!
- ✓ Make use of your community's recycling resources.
- ✓ Choose rechargeable batteries, then recycle them when they are no longer usable.
- ✓ Be sure to recycle *all* batteries to keep harmful metals from entering the environment.
- ✓ Rain water runs off of driveways, parking lots, and streets. It picks up litter, pet waste, cigarette butts, plastic water bottles, yard waste, lawn and auto chemicals and other debris. That polluted water travels through underground pipes that lead directly to our rivers, streams and lakes. Unlike sewage, this water isn't normally treated. The most effective way to reduce stormwater pollution is to stop it from entering the system in the first place.

#### **Reduce your plastic consumption**

- ✓ A significant amount of litter and debris is made of plastic — especially shopping bags and water bottles. To limit your impact, use reusable water bottles and food containers and bring your own cloth tote or other reusable bag when shopping,

#### **Maintain your car**

- ✓ Keep up with car maintenance to reduce leaks of oil, coolant, antifreeze and other hazardous fluids.
- ✓ Proper car maintenance may also increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste.
- ✓ Recycle used motor oil. Don't pour waste oil into gutters or down storm drains or onto the ground.
- ✓ Skip the home carwash. Take your car to a professional carwash since they're required to drain their wastewater into sewer systems, where it is treated before being discharged. This spares our local rivers and lakes from the brake fluid, oil and automotive fluids that could otherwise contaminate our water.
- ✓ Whenever possible, use the bus or a bicycle or even go on foot as an alternative to single-passenger, gas-powered vehicles.

#### **A few more simple tips...**

- ✓ Maintain your lawnmower or use a non-motorized push mower. Poorly maintained lawnmowers are responsible for a large amount of air pollution!
- ✓ Reduce your junk mail. Recycling helps, but if you visit [DMAchoice.org](http://DMAchoice.org) to opt out of receiving the mail at all, you'll be doing the planet, your postal carrier, and yourself a big favor.
- ✓ Leave animals and plants in their natural environments.



## Well, aim to leave *the right kind* of trace of your presence in the natural world...

### Plant...

- ✓ ...a tree! They help keep soil in place and slow water down, reducing flooding and enabling more rainwater to trickle down into groundwater supplies. Trees also help clean the air we breathe. They produce oxygen and reduce carbon dioxide.
- ✓ ...a rain garden! It will help absorb stormwater, filtering it through the soil and into groundwater. It's also a great way to beautify your home.
- ✓ ...native species! Landscaping with native wildflowers and grasses is better for the environment since, once they're established, they do not need fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides or watering. Their deep roots help your garden absorb water and hold soil together to prevent erosion.



## Save our water...

### Inside your home

- ✓ Run washing machines and dishwashers only when they're full. Large loads = less water used. (And turn off the auto-dry feature and let your dishes dry naturally!)
- ✓ Turn the faucet off while you brush your teeth.
- ✓ Take a shorter shower. If you use natural soaps without harsh chemicals, the water from your bath or shower can be reused on your garden. Also, this water can be reused to flush your toilet. All you need to do is put a bucket in the shower with you to collect the water!
- ✓ Repair drips promptly. If you stop a faucet from leaking one drop each second, you can save 2,700 gallons of water a year!

### Outside of your home

- ✓ Make sure your sprinkler is watering your lawn or plants...not the sidewalk or driveway!
- ✓ Water in the morning before 10am and again in the evening after 6pm, at shorter intervals. This helps prevent run-off and evaporation.
- ✓ Use a rain barrel. Rainwater is actually preferable for flowers and grass, as city water may be chlorinated and well water may have excessive mineral content.



## Save electricity...

- ✓ Use Energy Star appliances and heating and cooling systems in your home.
- ✓ Switch off lights when exiting unused rooms, and turn off electric appliances that are not being used.
- ✓ Replace normal, energy-consuming light bulbs with more economical and energy efficient compact fluorescent ones.
- ✓ Get a programmable thermostat and set it as low as is comfortable in the winter and lower the setpoint when you're sleeping or away from home. Set it as high as comfortable in the summer and raise the setpoint when cooling isn't needed.
- ✓ Skip the dryer and hang your clothes out in the sun to allow them to dry naturally.



## Think about the chemicals you use...

- ✓ For most household cleaning, you can use baking soda, white vinegar and Castille soap. You will save money and cut down on dangers for people, animals, and the environment.
- ✓ Limit pesticide use, lawn chemicals, and fertilizers. Potentially dangerous to people, pets and wildlife, they'll eventually be carried into our water supply by runoff.
- ✓ Inspect vehicles to make sure they're not leaking oil or other fluids.

- ✓ NEVER pour chemicals, medicines, oil or paint into the drain or toilets. Check with your county's household hazardous waste program to properly dispose of or recycle chemicals and keep them out of rivers and oceans.



### A few random tips...

- ✓ Don't "dispose of" unwanted pets by turning them loose. The mammals you care for, along with aquarium fish and reptiles, are not animals who can just survive on their own. In addition, some can become invasive species in a given location.
- ✓ Clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month or as recommended.
- ✓ Buy from local vendors and manufacturers. When you buy from local stores, farmers, and manufacturers, you are eliminating the energy used to ship goods from one place to another, resulting in a very positive impact.
- ✓ Offer financial and volunteer support to non-profit organizations that work with conservation issues. Many such organizations exist with the goal of preservation and stewardship of wildlife, wilderness, waterways, mountains, and oceans. They can easily be found on the internet.
- ✓ Spread the word! The more people who reuse, recycle, conserve, and protect, the more of an impact we can have! You may think one person can't change the world, but any positive step you take is magnified by the positive steps that everyone else takes!
- ✓ People protect things they care about...So get out there and explore nature! Spending time outside enjoying the world around you will make you appreciate the universe that God has gifted to us...and will lead to a greater desire to do whatever it takes to protect and sustain it!

**Little things really do mean a lot, and the more eco-conscious you become in your daily life, the more you are doing to preserve our planet...and the universe...for the long haul. While it isn't always convenient or easy to live a more environmentally sustainable lifestyle, it is a way of life that will honor the Creator!**

## Additional Resources

### More About Severn Cullis-Suzuki

The Girl Who Silenced the World for 6 Minutes( Video and audio restoration )  
362,618 views • Oct 5, 2011 •

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

This is an incredible video of a Canadian girl who spoke to the United Nations and left them completely silent and speechless for six minutes. Her name is Severn Cullis-Suzuki, and her speech was given at a U.N. assembly in Brazil when she was twelve years old. She had raised all the money to travel to the delegation, five thousand miles from her home, herself.

#### Biography

Severn Cullis-Suzuki was born and raised in Vancouver, Canada. Her mother is writer Tara Elizabeth Cullis. Her father, geneticist and environmental activist David Suzuki, is a third-generation Japanese Canadian. While attending Lord Tennyson Elementary School in French Immersion, at age 9, she founded the Environmental Children's Organization (ECO), a group of children dedicated to learning and teaching other youngsters about environmental issues. In 1992, at age 12, Cullis-Suzuki raised money with members of ECO, to attend the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Along with group members Michelle Quigg, Vanessa Suttil, and Morgan Geisler, Cullis-Suzuki presented environmental issues from a youth perspective at the summit, where she was applauded for a speech to the delegates. The video has since become a viral hit, popularly known as "The Girl Who Silenced the World for 6 Minutes". In 1993, she was honoured in the United Nations Environment Programme's Global 500 Roll of Honour.<sup>[7]</sup> In 1993, Doubleday published her book Tell the World, a 32-page book of environmental steps for families. Cullis-Suzuki graduated from Yale University in 2002 with a B.Sc. in ecology and evolutionary biology.<sup>[3]</sup> After Yale, Cullis-Suzuki spent two years travelling. Cullis-Suzuki co-hosted Suzuki's Nature Quest, a children's television series that aired on the Discovery Channel in 2002. In early 2002, she helped launch an Internet-based think tank called The Skyfish Project. As a member of Kofi Annan's Special Advisory Panel, she and members of the Skyfish Project brought their first project, a pledge called the "Recognition of Responsibility", to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in August 2002. The Skyfish Project disbanded in 2004 as Cullis-Suzuki turned her focus back to school and enrolled in a graduate course in the University of Victoria to study ethnobotany under Nancy Turner. Severn is married and lives with her husband and child in Haida Gwaii.

A search in YouTube for her name produces numerous videos of advocacy efforts she has recently made.

An additional Focus Activity that could be done over several sessions.



Idea from the congregation of United in Christ Lutheran in rural Lewisburg, PA

Create three “trees”: Creation, Eco-crucifixion, and Eco-Resurrection. The project was part of their unit on the Apostle’s Creed, focusing on God as Creator (a collage of images of Creation); Earth as being “crucified” (a collage of images of environmental devastation); and humans working with the Holy Spirit to restore and heal Earth (images of renewable energy, restoration projects, children planting gardens, etc.). The trees were explained by the students during the Children’s Sermon.