

A general outline for meeting

- Opening Prayer (for ideas, see ELW p81/LBW p49)
- Introductions
- Reflection: Give three minutes for individual writing on one or more of the following, then time to share:
 - ✓ Why do I believe church or faith relate to caring for the environment?
 - ✓ What have I personally encountered that makes me concerned about the environment?
 - ✓ What is my biggest concern about the environment locally, in our country, and/or worldwide?
 - ✓ How do I feel my concern relates to God and faith?
- Exercise: Use a sheet of paper with columns to brainstorm what your congregation is already doing with the following:
 - ✓ Education (adult forums, VBS)
 - ✓ Energy Efficiency (lightbulb upgrades, solar panels)
 - ✓ Donations (ELCA World Hunger...)
 - ✓ Advocacy (contacting legislators, LOPPW alerts)
 - ✓ Other (gardening, altar flowers, coffee supplies)
- Discussion: What are tangible next steps? Where is our excitement? What would invigorate our congregation? Who is willing to be a champion? Whose skills are available to us? Who is God calling us to be?
- Set goals and a schedule for follow-up.
- Closing prayer (for ideas, read a hymn text from ELW #730-740 or see LBW p934 under “Creation”)

Remember these helpful websites:

www.lopw.org
<http://www.elca.org/advocacy> & <http://www.elca.org/hunger>
<http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-EngagedChurch/Advocacy>
www.elca.org/Our-Work/Related-Ministries/Outdoor-Ministry
www.LutheransRestoringCreation.org
bit.ly/EcoCatechism
www.WisconsinIPL.org
www.creationjustice.org/
www.renewwisconsin.org



Simple Steps to Starting a team for Caring for God's Creation in your Congregation



Introductory ideas for churches that want to do more. Note that you may not find all these steps necessary—please feel free to skip ahead or pick and choose what fits your congregation.

Step I: Investigate!

What is already happening and where is there interest in your church?

- Talk to others in your church about your interest
- Connect with your pastor and other leaders to learn what is already being done and how invested they might be
- Identify areas of need or obvious starting points
- Tour your church (physically and programmatically) to get a sense of your place and assess your status
- Pay attention to words and actions of caring for creation in
 - ✓ worship (prayers, hymns, sermons...)
 - ✓ building, facilities, grounds, landscaping, water and energy use...
 - ✓ education (children and adult, small groups, special events)
 - ✓ advocacy & community outreach (relationships with elected officials and neighbors)
 - ✓ member lifestyles (how you encourage creation care away from church)
- Remember, you can also look to other resources for ideas. Find possibilities at www.LutheransRestoringCreation.org. Visit other congregations or talk to friends.
- You can also contact a synod Care for God's team member!

A special note of thanks to Pastor Nick Uthall of the South-Central Synod/LOPPW Care for God's Creation ELCA World Hunger Team for all of his work on this resource.





Step II: Organize!

Who else has obvious connections to this concern and practice?

- Publicize what you've discovered of your congregation – where you're doing well, where some obvious next needs might be. Help them understand what's going on
- Don't forget you can "ground" your announcements in faith. One possibility is a list of Bible passages connected to caring for creation at www.letallcreationpraise.org/devotional-resources/52-readings
- Either by announcement or direct invitation, ask some people to join in a session for celebrating and dreaming
- Depending on your sense of interest, you might hold an event or class or forum that allows a broad group to gather generally, or you might already have had conversations that allow you proceed directly to gathering a small team

Step III: Gather!

Where is the energy and what can be your focus?

- If you're feeling ready for a team, invite interested people to learn from each other and to discern a strategy for your congregation. This will provide the seeds for growing your next steps.
- A good initial group might be a gathering of 3-8 people. You may simply want to gather their input and reflections.
- If you're trying to establish a Green Team or Caring for God's Creation Committee, you might ask for commitments to meet twice per month for an hour for several months to provide the groundwork of the ministry to come.

Sample Plan Ideas

- Put weekly ecology tips in the bulletin announcements
- Work with the property committee to do a building energy audit to find inefficiencies and simple solutions
- Plan an outdoor Sunday School class or field trip
- Encourage youth to do a creative project
- Hold adult forums featuring church and secular experts (Don't forget our synod's Speakers' Bureau)
- Have a work day where people care for church grounds or clean up the neighborhood to practice stewardship
- Hold a fundraiser by selling seedlings
- Encourage your pastor and other worship leaders to recognize Earth Day in worship services
- Include local lakes, parks, and animals in prayers
- Hold a blessing of pets. Find sample services at bit.ly/PetBlessingOutline
- Hold a film series (*An Inconvenient Sequel*, *EscarPMENT*, *Happy Feet*, *March of the Penguins*, *Princess Mononoke*, *This Changes Everything*)
- Hold book studies (*Care of the Earth*, Sittler; *Church on Earth*, Wild & Bakken; *Earth-Wise*, Cal DeWitt; *God, Creation, and Climate Change*, ed. Bloomquist; *The Lorax*, Seuss; *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Dillard)
- Read the brief but still important 1993 ELCA social statement on Caring for Creation bit.ly/ELCAcreation
- Deepen your engagement with these Called Into the World study guides (see p 4): bit.ly/SocStmntStudies
- Share LOPPW action alerts in your church newsletter, which include policy impacts about the environment.
- Develop trained advocates in your congregation with this manual from LOPPW, including tips, exercises, explanations, and history: bit.ly/LOPPWmanual
- Let your Congress people know about our synod's support for Carbon Fee & Dividend from this 2017 resolution: bit.ly/SCSWresolutions2017
- Talk to your city council to promote community efforts.
- Encourage people to vote!