

Topic: Creation Care

God first created Earth, and then created humankind. And the first task he gave to humankind was to see that His Creation was good and to care for it-- to till and keep the Garden of Eden, and to care for the plants and animals on all the land and sea. Joining together to care for the masterpiece that God has made should be something that unifies us; a universal way to honor God through our actions.

When we look to the scripture, we see that God cares deeply about all of creation, not just humans. In the story of Noah and his Ark, God makes sure all the animals were on the ark (even mosquitos!). And when the flood recedes, God sets a covenant not only with Noah and his descendants, but “with every living creature that is with you... every animal of the earth with you.” And in the ten commandments, God commands not only humans to rest on the seventh day and observe the sabbath, but also the livestock-- the animals shall also have rest. In Leviticus God commands the people to also give their land rest by letting it go fallow (unplanted) for a year in the seventh year. In chapters 38 and 39 of Job, God speaks about all of the creatures and environments he has made and how intimately he knows them-- and of the joy and delight he takes in all of his creation.

God exhibits over and over again that He loves all of Creation, knows it in incredible detail, and does not find humankind separate from it, but a trusted partner in its care. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth’s abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we’re given.

Topic: Energy Efficiency at Home

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth’s abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we’re given. Being good stewards of resources also means using only what we need-- like the energy we use to cool or heat our homes, turn the lights on, and power our favorite gadgets!

Reducing your energy use at home not only protects the environment, it can be a real money saver! What can you do to reduce your energy use (and put some “green” in your pocket!)?

Today, I can:

- Turn off the lights, gadgets, and appliances I am not using and make sure I turn the lights off when I leave the room.

- Run only full loads in the dishwasher, washer, and dryer (or use a clothesline!).
- Program my thermostat to be a more energy-efficient temperature when I am away from home (set a little warmer in the summer and a little cooler in the winter).
- Set my refrigerator between 36F and 42F, freezer between -5F and 6F, and water heater at 120F (or lower if young children are in the house).
- Call my energy utility and ask about buying into clean energy options like wind and solar energy.
- Turn water off mid-task (washing dishes, brushing teeth, watering plants)-- running water, especially hot water, uses a lot of energy!

In the future, I plan to:

- Improve my home's insulation and insulate my hot water heater and hot water pipes.
- Replace burnt out incandescent light bulbs with LED light bulbs.
- Replace appliances with energy efficient options (look for the Energy Star logo).
- Clean and replace appliance filters (especially the furnace) on a regular schedule.

Short Text:

Being good stewards of God's creation means using only what we need-- like the energy we use to cool or heat our homes, turn the lights on, and power our favorite gadgets! Reducing your energy use at home not only protects the environment, it can be a real money saver! What can you do to reduce your energy use (and put some "green" in your pocket!)?

Today you can be sure to turn off lights and gadgets when you aren't using them and wait to run your dishwasher or washer/dryer until you have a full load ready. As your incandescent light bulbs burn out you can replace them with LED light bulbs and replace appliances with energy efficient options. In the future, you can plan to improve your home's insulation and insulate your hot water heater and hot water pipes.

Verse Options:

(Psalms 89:11) The heavens are yours, the earth is also yours; the world and all that is in it-- you have founded them.

Topic: Water for Life

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given. Water is our source of life-- quenching our thirst and the thirst of the plants and animals on which we depend for food. Water is also our source of spiritual life through baptism.

The Earth is blessed with a limited amount of water in our lakes, rivers, streams, and seas. Our life depends on protecting this water-- using it wisely and keeping it clean. What can you do to protect our living waters?

Today, I can:

- Turn water off mid-task (washing dishes, brushing teeth, watering plants).
- Repair leaking faucets or running toilets in my house.
- Allow my lawn to go brown in the late summer (brown lawns are not dead, they are dormant-- which is normal!)
- Reduce or stop using lawn fertilizer and pest killers. I will not use lawn chemicals before rain or heavy winds, which can carry chemicals to nearby water bodies or storm sewers.
- Use environmentally-safer cleaning and personal care products (shampoos and soaps) that might go down the drain.

In the future, I plan to:

- Replace parts or all of my lawn with native plants that do not require watering or fertilizer and provide good habitat for bees and butterflies.
- Collect rainwater in a rain barrel for all outdoor water needs.
- Install low-flow shower heads or toilets.

Short Text:

Water is our source of life-- quenching our thirst and the thirst of the plants and animals on which we depend for food. Water is also our source of spiritual life through baptism. The Earth is blessed with a limited amount of water in our lakes, rivers, streams, and seas. Our life depends on protecting this water-- using it wisely and keeping it clean. What can you do to protect our living waters?

Today you can remember to turn off water you are using mid-task (like when washing the dishes, brushing your teeth, or watering plants) and use environmentally-safe cleaners and personal care products that will go down your drains. You can reduce the amount of lawn chemicals you use and reduce the amount you water (a brown lawn is still a normal, healthy, lawn-- just dormant). In the future, you can transition parts or all of your lawn to native plants which require less watering and no lawn chemicals. You can also replace toilets and shower heads with low-flow options, which will reduce the amount of water wasted during daily activities.

Verse Options:

(Ezekiel 47:9) Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes.

Topic: Reuse and Repair

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given. Being good stewards means not being wasteful with the resources it takes to make the products we buy and use everyday. One of the easiest ways we can do that is to reuse and repair items like clothing or small appliances to extend their useful life. Did you know? Extending the life of an item of clothing cuts the carbon, water, and waste footprint of that item by 20 to 30 percent!

Not only are you protecting God's bounty of natural resources, you can save money by not having to purchase new items. And if *you* have some specialized repair skills, you can help others as well.

Today, I can:

- Put together a small sewing kit to make minor repairs to garment hems, lost buttons, or small holes.
- Find some online resources for repairing items, such as <https://www.ifixit.com/>.
- Purchase reusable replacements for disposable items I use regularly, such as cloth napkins, mesh produce bags, fabric or silicone snack bags, and glass food storage containers.
- Save glass jars and other containers to reuse in the bulk section of my grocery store on my next shopping trip.

In the future, I plan to:

- Look up repair practices of companies before I purchase an item. For example, some shoe companies will re-sole or provide other repairs for a fraction of the cost of a new pair of shoes.
- Bring small appliances that stop working to a repair shop instead of throwing them away and replacing them. Some counties or organizations host fix-it clinics where volunteers will fix the items for free or a small donation.
- Learn how to make common repairs to clothing like changing hems, replacing buttons, and darning.

Short Text:

Being good stewards of God's bounty means not being wasteful with the natural resources and energy it takes to make the products we buy and use everyday. One of the easiest ways we can do that is to reuse and repair items like clothing or small appliances to extend their useful life. Did you know? Extending the life of an item of clothing cuts the carbon, water, and waste footprint of that item by 20 to 30 percent! Not only are you protecting God's bounty of natural resources, you can save money by not having to purchase new items. And if *you* have some

specialized repair skills, you can help others as well. What can you do to reuse and repair, and extend the gifts of God's creation?

Today, you can put together a small sewing kit, purchase reusable replacements for some of your common disposable items like cloth napkins, mesh produce bags, and glass food storage containers, or save glass jars and other containers to reuse in the bulk section of your grocery store. In the future, you can make plans to look up the repair practices of companies before buying a product, look up "fix-it clinics" in your city or county where you can have small appliances repaired for free or low cost, and learn how to make common repairs yourself!

Verse Options:

(Psalm 104: 30) When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

(Romans 12:2) Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Topic: Green Work or Workspace

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given. We aren't limited to being conscientious about God's bounty in our personal life. We can adopt habits and activities in our workplace that reflect our value of stewardship towards God's bounty and set a good example for others.

You can make personal changes and advocate for organization-wide changes that will reduce your use of valuable resources and make your workspace healthier. What changes can you make at work to reduce energy consumption and waste?

Today, I can:

- Commit to printing less paper by emailing documents for meetings ahead of time and exploring digital project management options. When I do have to print paper, I will reuse it as scratch paper and recycle it.
- Bring my own lunch in reusable containers.
- Keep a reusable plate, cup, mug, silverware, and napkin in my workspace to use for daily lunch or office parties.
- Turn off and unplug any electronics or small appliances while they aren't in use and turn off battery-operated objects, like a computer mouse.

In the future, I plan to:

- Ask my employer about opportunities to telecommute, even occasionally, to reduce the miles I drive for my commute.
- Green my commute in other ways, like carpooling, taking public transit, or riding a bicycle; or pair my commute with other tasks that might require driving like grocery shopping to reduce the number of car trips I take in a day.
- Encourage my employer to adopt company- and/or facility-wide best practices like installing energy efficient lighting, a composting and recycling program, and providing the tools necessary for virtual meetings.

Short Text:

We aren't limited to being conscientious about God's bounty in our personal life. We can adopt habits and activities in our workplace that reflect our value of stewardship towards God's bounty and set a good example for others. You can make personal changes and advocate for organization-wide changes that will reduce your use of valuable resources and make your workspace healthier. What changes can you make at work to reduce energy consumption and waste?

Today you can commit to printing less paper by emailing meeting documents ahead of time and exploring digital project management options, bringing your own lunch in reusable containers and/or leaving a set of reusable dishes in your workspace, and turn off and unplug and electronics or small appliances while they aren't in use (like overnight). In the future, you can green your commute by telecommuting one or more days per week, taking public transit, or adding bicycling or walking to part of your commute. You should encourage your employer to adopt facility-wide best practices like energy efficient lighting and a composting and recycling program.

Verse Options:

(Isaiah 6:3) And one called to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

Topic: Appreciating Nature

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given. Spending time in nature is an opportunity to experience God's love with all of your senses-- He has created the brilliant colors of the fall leaves, the fragrance of the flowers, the tickle of a warm breeze on the back of your neck, the sound of moving water, and the flavor of wild blueberries.

There are dozens of ways to appreciate the natural world God has created for us, even if you don't usually consider yourself the "outdoor type." What will you do to appreciate and protect our natural environment?

Today, I can:

- Take a walk without wearing headphones.
- Eat a family meal outside (if the weather calls for it!)
- Start a hiking or walking club at my church to enjoy fellowship in God's creation.
- Look up the parks and other natural areas that are close to me and see what kind of activities are available for the season. Many parks might have equipment rental for enjoying activities like kayaking, snowshoeing, or bicycling.

In the future, I can:

- Donate money or write to my legislators about protecting my favorite natural, public spaces.
- Include natural spaces in my vacation plans to learn about the environment and ecosystems of new places.
- Learn more about the plants and animals native to my community and how they function together in the ecosystem.
- Plant pollinator-friendly flowers in my yard and gardens.
- Plan an outdoor worship opportunity focused on Creation.

Short Text:

Spending time in nature is an opportunity to experience God's love with all of your senses-- He has created the brilliant colors of the fall leaves, the fragrance of the flowers, the tickle of a warm breeze on the back of your neck, the sound of moving water, and the flavor of wild blueberries. There are dozens of ways to appreciate the natural world God has created for us, even if you don't usually consider yourself the "outdoor type." What will you do to appreciate and protect our natural environment?

Today, you can take a walk outside without wearing headphones, eat a meal outside, or start a hiking or walking club at your church to enjoy fellowship in God's creation. In the future, you can learn more about the plants and animals native to your community and their role in the ecosystem, plant pollinator-friendly flowers, and plan an outdoor worship service focused on Creation.

Verse Options:

(Psalm 19: 1-4) The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

Topic: Learning About Our Environment

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given. Understanding why a clean, sustained environment is important for all of God's creatures to flourish (including us!) is an important first step to accepting our responsibility to protect creation.

When we learn more of the scientific facts about our changing environment and how the changes impact some people more than others, it can equip us with the information and skills we need to help address those forces that cause harm. Learning more about the environment also empowers us each to take actions that are proven to be effective and that restore balance in creation and bring justice to all people.

Today I can:

- Learn more about the environmental crisis and ecological justice. A good place to start is the "Sources of Information" page in the InterFaith Creation Care website at <http://iccsmtc.blogspot.com/>.
- Research my church's position on environmental stewardship (each church could link to a statement, if they have it, like the ELCA)
- Read local or national news stories about the environment and our changing climate. If something sparks my interest, I will read other sources on the same story.

In the future I plan to:

- Join (or start!) a study group that is talking freely about the changing climate.
- Discuss openly with my friends and family what I have learned.
- Encourage the schools in my community to include climate change and ecological justice in science and social studies classes.
- Read books about environmental crises from perspectives that are different than mine and/or are typically underrepresented (consider the perspectives of women, people of color, indigenous communities, people who work in agriculture, or immigrant communities).
- Use what I have learned to inform actions I can take to be a part of the solution.

Short Text:

Being good stewards of God's creation means understanding why a good clean environment is important to our survival as human beings. Education can deliver the scientific facts about our changing environment and equip us with the skills to help address those forces that cause harm to it. It will give us the empowerment to engage our actions to make the changes that are necessary.

Today you can learn about the environmental crisis by reading news reports about the climate crisis and ecological justice and research and better understand your church's position on environmental stewardship. In the future you can join or start a study group that discusses

climate change, encourage schools to include climate change and ecological justice in curriculum, and use what you have learned to inform actions to protect and care for God's creation. You can help spread the message of creation care by talking freely with friends and family about what you know and what you plan to do to be a part of the solution.

Verse Options:

(Proverbs 18:15) The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out.

Topic: Reduce Your Food Waste

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given. Being good stewards of resources also means using only what we need—like being responsible about the food we produce and consume, and avoiding unnecessary waste!

Forty percent of all food produced in America is wasted and households-- not schools or restaurants-- are the largest wasters along the food chain from farm to fork. Even if we compost all of that, we still use a lot of water, land, energy, and labor to grow food we don't eat. No one *wants* to waste food, and each of us can do more to be wise with our food waste.

Today, I can:

- Take the time to meal plan for the week so that I only buy the ingredients I need and can use large portions for more than one meal in the week.
- Make sure I store my food properly so it doesn't spoil.
- Keep track of what I have in the house before I go grocery shopping so I don't accidentally buy something I already have.
- Create an "Eat First" section of my fridge so items don't get pushed to the back and new items get used before old ones are eaten up.

In the future, I plan to:

- Consider eating less meat and converting to more plant-based foods.
- Buy local produce where available and encourage growers to offer even produce that is not "perfect" and avoid throwing it away. Check out farmer's markets in my community for local, fresh foods.
- Participate in a co-op or community supported agriculture (CSA) and get fresh produce.
- Compost responsibly to avoid sending food waste to landfills; ask my garbage hauler or city whether organics recycling pick-up is available or if there are drop-off sites in my neighborhood. If organics recycling isn't available, I can learn how to start.

Short Text:

Being good stewards of God's creation means using only what we need-- like being responsible about the food we produce and consume and avoiding unnecessary waste! Forty percent of all food produced in America is wasted. Residents are the largest wasters along the food chain from farm to fork, yet we no one wants to waste food. What can you do to reduce food waste?

Solutions for families are to improve meal planning, store food properly, buy only what you need and use what you buy. Helpful resources on such topics as meal planning, food storage, "Tracking what you toss" and kitchen inventory are available through Dakota County website at www.co.dakota.mn.us/environment.

Verse Options:

(Ezekiel 36:35) And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like a garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced and are inhabited.

Topic: Trying a Plant-Based Diet

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given. Being good stewards of resources means using those resources wisely, especially in terms of our food supply.

Our current food system is rapidly deteriorating the planet-- using resources faster than we can replenish them. In its current form, we will not be able to feed the over 9 billion people expected to inhabit the Earth by 2050. Our growing population makes food less and less secure for more people, and *what* we're eating is pushing the planet towards a breaking point on climate change and deforestation. Our food system is responsible for over a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions, of which approximately 80% are associated with livestock production.

Today, I can:

- Reduce my meat consumption by having one meat-free day per week (lots of people try "Meatless Monday"), or one meat-free meal per day.
- Buy meat that is grass-fed or free range from local farmers.
- Learn more about the "foodprint," which measures the environmental impacts of growing, producing, shipping, and storing food at foodprints.earthday.org.

In the future, I plan to:

- Learn more about sustainable agricultural practices and support farmers who pursue them.
- Create a number of meat-free recipes that my family and I enjoy.

Short Text:

Being good stewards of resources also means using those resources wisely, especially in terms of our food supply. Our growing population is pushing food security to the edge, and what we're eating is pushing the planet to the breaking point on climate change and deforestation. The food system is responsible for over a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions, of which approximately 80% are associated with livestock production.

Adopting a completely plant-based diet may not be for everyone, but plant-based diets have been shown to provide significant health benefits like reducing your risk for heart, certain cancers, obesity and diabetes. In honor of the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, consider visiting their website <https://foodprints.earthday.org>, and exploring how you might benefit from a plant-based diet as well as how collectively this could benefit the Earth.

Verse Options:

(Psalms 89:11) The heavens are yours, the earth is also yours; the world and all that is in it-- you have founded them.

Topic: Advocate for Environmentally Friendly Legislation

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards. He calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given.

Being good stewards also means supporting justice in our world's institutions. As Jesus showed by example, we must become involved in raising our voices to the world beyond our church's doors. The effects of climate change and environmental degradation impact socially and economically vulnerable people most. We can work powerfully together to ensure a safe and healthy world for all, in this generation and several generations to come.

Today I can:

- Find out who my elected leaders are locally and nationally and learn more about their voting history regarding climate and the environment. Write to them as a Christian, explaining my support of actions and laws that safeguard the environment and encourage sustainability.
- Volunteer with my church or a non-profit organization that works to secure and safeguard the earth, or one that develops natural areas for all to enjoy.
- Donate time and/or money to a worthy environmental protection nonprofit.

In the future, I plan to:

- Create or support a Creation Care group in my own church and understand my church's stance on environmental justice and climate.
- Encourage and support church leadership in their outreach to influence just environmental policies.

- Work to ensure environmental protections and justice are incorporated into political candidates' platforms, and into our national and state laws.

Short Text:

Being good stewards of God's creation means supporting environmental justice in our world's institutions. Our changing climate and environmental degradation is impacting some worse than others, driving further inequity between those who have and those who do not. A strong Christian voice makes a powerful sound beyond the doors of the church.

You can research your local and national elected leaders and learn more about their voting record on environmental issues and contact them with your views and prayers for environmental stewardship as a Christian. You can also create or support a Creation Care group at your church to learn more about stewardship of Earth's resources and God's bounty. Your group can volunteer or raise money for an environmental nonprofit in your community.

Verse Options:

(Amos 5:24) But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream.

(Deuteronomy 16:20) Justice and only justice you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the lord your God is giving you.

(Proverbs 31:9) Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Topic: Gratitude Toward Creation

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given.

Let's take the opportunity this month to show some gratitude for the abundance we have in our lives! We can tread lightly on this earth by choosing sustainable products that: "Leave No Trace."

Today, I can:

- Stop using disposable plastic (convenience) items, either going without them, or replacing them with something reusable. I can ask for "no straw" at a restaurant, bring my own reusable bags when I shop, and buy unpackaged items or low packaging/non-plastic packaging when possible.
- Bring my own reusable container with me when I eat out, and use it for my leftovers--eating them later avoids food waste!

- Bring my own reusable water bottle or mug with me throughout the day (including for coffee at church on Sunday!), and keep a clean extra one in my car for a friend.
- "Green" my morning routine. Use a shampoo bar instead of bottled shampoo, switch to plastic free toothpaste tabs, and use packaging free shave cream with reusable high quality safety razor that will work for years!

In the future, I plan to:

- Buy an electric car to reduce polluting emissions. I may have to save up longer, but the return on investment is great, eventually saving me money! As these cars become more popular and cheaper, gas fueled cars may actually become a liability to own, with very low resale value.
- Ask to buy in to solar or wind energy from my electricity provider. There may be a slight cost, but the routine electric energy mix received at most homes in Minnesota continues to come mostly from coal, and coal is the most polluting source of electric energy. The good news is that wind and solar energy are growing very fast, and I can encourage that growth by opting in to a clean electricity program.

Short Text:

Being good stewards of God's creation means using products that can be used multiple times and are durable, are plastic free or compostable. When we use disposable "convenience" items on a regular basis, we use a disproportionate amount of God's bounty and create waste that pollutes and litters our lands or uses what precious space we have been given for landfills. We can also be more thoughtful about where the energy we use to power our lives comes from. Though it might be a slightly more costly investment, transitioning to renewable energies ensures a healthy planet for future generations.

We can buy plastic-free alternatives to a lot of our favorite products, and several everyday items are available without packaging like shampoo bars and toothpaste tabs. Single-use products may be more convenient and feel less expensive, but buying them over and over again can be a real drain on your wallet! You can also ask your energy company about options to buy in to cooperative renewable resources-- rather than buying your own solar panels (or your own windmill!), your monthly fee will be combined with the fees paid by your neighbors to support renewable energy.

Verse Options:

(Colossians 3:17) Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

(1 Thessalonians 5:18) In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Topic: The Web of Life

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given. Genesis 2:15 tells us, "The Lord placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it." Our very first call from God was to tend the garden. Other than taking care of each other, there is no more important thing we can do than tend the garden, our Earth, as it was divinely and perfectly created by God. The Garden of Eden is not a faraway place in distant history-- it is reflected in the environment all around us and even in your own backyard!

Ever since the last glacier receded from this land the plants, animals, insects, and even bacteria in the soil and water have been forming symbiotic relationships-- meaning they have evolved together and depend on each other for life. Plants capture energy from the sun and nutrients from soil and turn it into food for insects and other animals. Larger animals, in turn, eat the smaller animals, in a seasonal, self-sustaining system. When we bring non-native plants and animals into an ecosystem, it can disrupt the crucial balance that all life living there depends on.

According to *Science Magazine*, since the 1970s North America has lost over 3 billion birds, nearly 30% of the total. Some causes are habitat loss and ecosystem demise. There has been a 53% loss (700 million adults) of grassland birds in that same time period. Bees are experiencing a similar fate. Millions of bees are dying due to loss of habitat, pesticides (neonicotinoids), and parasites (the varroa mite). The garden is suffering and needs our tending.

Today, I can:

- Volunteer with a county park or an environmental protection group (Friends of the Mississippi River or Great River Greening are great resources, as well as Three Rivers Park District) in restoration efforts—removing invasive plants and participating in native plant planting events.
- Learn about sustaining wildlife with native plants in my yard with books like Bringing Nature Home or Nature's Best Hope by Douglas Tallamy, or Pollinators of Native Plants or Bees by Heather Holm.
- Help birds by providing water, food, and cover.

In the future, I plan to:

- Plant native plants in my yard. Some examples include:
 - Trees: Oaks, especially white or bur oaks, river birch, ironwood
 - Shrubs: prairie willow, American hazelnut, gray dogwood
 - Perennials: milkweed, purple coneflower, meadow blazing star, stiff goldenrod, bee balm, Joe pye weed
 - Grasses: little bluestem, prairie dropseed, Pennsylvania sedge

- Clean plant debris from my yard in the spring. Hollow plant stems and leaf litter provide shelter for insects and their larvae. Plant debris also provides birds with material for their nests in the spring.
- Install a rain garden to capture precious precipitation and help it soak into the ground rather than run off into storm sewers.

Short Text:

Genesis 2:15 tells us, "The Lord placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it." Our very first call from God was to tend the garden. Other than taking care of each other, there is no more important thing we can do than tend the garden, our Earth, as it was divinely and perfectly created by God. Ever since the last glacier receded from this land the plants, animals, insects, and even bacteria in the soil and water have been forming symbiotic relationships- meaning they have evolved together and depend on each other for life. When we bring non-native plants and animals into an ecosystem, it can disrupt the crucial balance that all life living there depends on.

There are many ways we can tend the garden, including volunteering with local and regional parks or environmental protection groups, planting native plants in our yards and gardens, and providing food, water, and cover for birds and insects by cleaning plant debris in the spring instead of the autumn.

Verse options:

Genesis 2:15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

Topic: Greener Transportation

Long Text:

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given. Being good stewards of resources also means reducing transportation energy use.

The energy used to move from one point to another has a detrimental impact on our health as well as all living beings in God's creation. Reducing the use of fossil fuels to get around by moving to clean alternatives is important to our survival and our family's wellbeing. What can you do to reduce your use of fossil fuels through transportation?

Today, I can:

- Where feasible walk, bicycle, carpool or use public transit.
- Keep my vehicle's tires properly inflated and the engine properly serviced.

In the future, I plan to:

- Purchase or lease my next family car with the highest Miles Per Gallon rating possible.
- Look seriously at purchasing or leasing an electric vehicle which are now readily available (and are a blast to drive!)
- When flying is absolutely necessary, I will buy carbon offsets.
- Consider taking a train.

Short Text:

Being good stewards of God's creation means reducing the dirty energy used to get around. Fossil fuels for transportation makes the air we breathe harmful to our health and those who are important to us.

Today you can be sure to- when feasible- walk, bicycle, carpool or use public transit. Be sure our vehicles tires are properly inflated. In the future you can remember to purchase vehicles that get the very best miles per gallon. Take a further step and consider purchasing an electric vehicle which are now readily available (check out this website to gain more information about EVs in Minnesota <https://www.pluginconnect.com/mnevowners.html>). Try to avoid air travel but if necessary buy carbon offsets or embark on the adventure of taking the train. Check out the Transportation page of Drawdown website for impacts and solutions of our transportation on our environment at <https://www.drawdown.org/>.

Verse Options:

(Colossians 1:29) To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

(James 2:17) In the same way, faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead.