



CREATION CARE TEAMS AND YOUTH MINISTRY: A VITAL CONNECTION

"Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift, which we have freely received and must share with others."

[*Laudato Si'*, 159].

Engaging youth and youth ministries (if your parish has one), in your Creation Care Team (CCT) is vitally important. Today's youth are the first to feel the impacts of climate change, and most likely, the last that can take action to prevent a global disaster. In addition, connecting with youth ministry is an important step toward integrating your creation care work into the entire parish.

The ideas below will give you a sense of how to approach this project. If something else has worked for you, we'd love to hear about it. Please contact us at programs@catholicclimatecovenant.org.



GETTING STARTED:

1. Set a time to speak with your youth ministry/education ministry leaders about their interest in Catholic teaching on creation care. Working cooperatively will grow and deepen engagement among parishioners in both areas. If the ministry leaders are interested, share the ideas and activities in this toolkit with them.
2. With your CCT, consider whether parish youth should be invited to a special meeting of the team. If you do invite young people, plan activities that are appropriate for that age group (see resources).
3. If your parish has a school, consider speaking with the school principal about integrating creation care into its curriculum and activities. Offer to share resources.

ACTIVITIES:

Pre-school and younger elementary school age:

Young children are naturally curious and interested in nature. They have an innate sense of wonder about God's creation. Encouraging experiences of a connection to the Earth is the best way to let them know God as the creator. Encourage them to play outdoors, plant flowers and trees, and learn about recycling and keeping air, water, and soil free of pollution. A very brief discussion afterwards will help them reflect on their experience.

Elementary school age:

By second grade, most children are ready to understand some of the science of climate change and our unique responsibility to take care of creation. Invite them to be part of recycling programs, have them paint reusable mugs to be used at Church events, or help them start a church garden and learn about composting. They could make "turn off" signs for every light switch in the Church/school. Invite them to participate in age appropriate CCT activities.

Middle and High School:

This age group has the critical thinking skills to make connections between their faith and how they live their lives. Creation care can be included in sacramental preparation. Study biblical passages and Church statements relating to nature, creation, and environment. Encourage them to participate in environmental service projects and put their faith in action. At this age they can provide leadership within your CCT.

RESOURCES:

1. **Friending Planet Earth:** Developed by the Center for Ministry Development and the Catholic Climate Covenant, this resource helps youth understand what solidarity & sustainability look like in the face of climate change. Also check Catholic Climate Covenant's [resource page](#) for more ideas and information.
2. **Caring for Creation, Caring for the Poor:** This resource from National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) provides tools to teach youth that care for creation is also care for the poor. The guide provides a practical small-group planning and training process that leads to a parish/school-wide learning experience. NFCYM also has an excellent [website](#) with information on to how to pray, learn, assess, act, and advocate for God's creation.
3. Catholic Relief Services has creation care activities in Food Fast, CRS' 24-hour retreat for youth.
 - [A Faith Perspective on Climate Change](#)
 - [Moving toward Food Security Game](#)
 - [Seeing the Big Picture of Climate Change & Food Security](#)
4. **US Catholic Conference of Bishops:** USCCB has resources on Catholic Social Teaching, the Environment, and Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

Good websites for climate education:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: [Energy Star Kids](#) provides information and activities to encourage kids to save energy; www.epa.gov/climatechange/kids provides climate change information and resources for teachers and students.
- U.S Department of Energy: [Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy K-12 Lesson Plans and Activities](#) presents energy-related lesson plans and links to education and training resources on energy.
- NASA: [Climate Kids](#) presents global climate change science for elementary-age children.
- NOAA: [Activity Book: Discover Your Changing World With NOAA](#) is a free activity book about Earth's climate system, and what you can do to explore, understand, and protect our Earth.

