



Families and Environmental Sustainability

Earth Day is celebrated annually on April 22nd. It provides an opportunity to reflect on what it is that we value about our natural World.

It can include activities such as an Earth Hour – when we switch off all electricity for an hour and light a candle to create a space of spiritual reflection to pray and share with our friends and families.

Whatever the date may be, we can still engage in the following activities and reflections with our families or church groups.

Why is Uniting Church SA engaging in this?

As an active expression of the responsibility the SA Uniting Church has in caring for God's Earth, in 2014 the Presbytery and Synod formed an **Environmental Action Group** to engage the church in addressing those questions that arise directly from the environmental challenges confronting us today. Over the past two years the Environmental Action Group has worked with the Justice Officer and congregations to ask environmental questions, invite theological reflection, and assist in making value judgements grounded on sound environmental principles. The Environmental Action Group has researched and prepared the following 4 helpful resources available here:

<http://sa.uca.org.au/justice-advocacy/environmental-advocacy/ea-resources>

1. **Divestment from Fossil Fuel Investments**
2. **Environmental Sustainability**
3. **Water and Power (Environmental Sustainability)**
4. **Environmental Leadership Guidelines**

Some parts of Fact Sheet 2 and 3 are included below.

❖ Engaging in Scripture

Gather together and look up the Bible passages listed below or use www.biblegateway.com to search for references to 'creation'.

- You could talk, draw or write about these. Adapt this to suit the ages and interests of those in your family/group.
- Discuss God's plan for creation, using the notes below, including the role of human beings and how humans relate to creation.
- Using playdough (or the like) make something from creation or mind-map or draw all the different parts of creation you read about in the Bible. Gather natural items and make a collage as you reflect together.

Genesis 1: 9-31 - *Everything that God made is good* – there is no good, better and best in God's creation; thus human superiority is a myth. How can our lives show that everything God made is good?

Genesis 2: 15 - *The 'garden' is to be cared for* – that is the whole of earth, and its intricate web of life of which we are a small part. Write your name/ family name /church name somewhere on a piece of paper, then create a web of words and links around your name about your part in the web of life.

Genesis 1: 26 - *God's invitation* - to have dominion as God has dominion over all creation by loving, cherishing and nurturing it. Brainstorm ways that you/your family/church can care for creation?

Genesis 9: 8-17 - *God's covenant is with all creation*. Make a plan/ set a goal about how you will make a difference/change the way you live.

John 1: 1-3, Hebrews 1: 2 & 10 - *Jesus, the Christ, is the co-creator*. Discuss, meditate or pray about the wonder and mystery of God's creative process through Jesus. Turn these verses into prayers.

❖ Engaging in Prayer

*Creator God,
Out of the darkness,
life emerged*

(A candle is lit)

*In light and breath
you gave birth to the world*

(Take a deep breath in and out)

*Jesus is the light of the world
In him all things are made whole*

(Cup your hands together, then make them into a ball. Hold them together for a few moments.)

- Write or draw your own prayer response to these Scriptures and your conversations.
- Sit outside, hold a leaf/flower/rock while praying.
- Remove your shoes or open your hands and enjoy the feel of the wind, water, grass, dirt or sand and thank God.
- Move or point to different parts of creation and offer prayers of thanks and renewal.
- Ask for God's Spirit to help us care for creation.

❖ Engaging in Action in our Homes and Churches

Live Lightly

- Choose an electricity retailer that is committed to renewable sources
- Reduce usage of gas and electricity
- Improve insulation of houses
- Install PV solar panels
- Install solar water heating
- Use fans rather than air conditioners

Travel Lightly

- Walk or ride a bike
- Take a train or bus
- Drive a fuel efficient car
- Pay for offsets if flying

Shop Lightly

- Grow your own vegetables or buy those grown locally
- Buy less packaged and prepared food
- Eat less meat and fish
- Buy locally-made products
- Buy products that last, not throw-aways
- Don't buy bottled water; drink tap water or rain water

The above list is from **Fact Sheet #2: Environmental Sustainability**. For ideas for water conservation around churches and how to reduce electricity bills see **Fact Sheet #3: Water and Power**.

Fact Sheet #4: Environmental Leadership Guidelines – If your church sets up an Environmental Action Group, consider how you might engage people of different ages to be involved, including children, youth and young adults. Also consider asking them how their areas of ministry/programs could be more environmentally friendly.

Fact sheets are available here <http://sa.uca.org.au/justice-advocacy/environmental-advocacy/ea-resources>