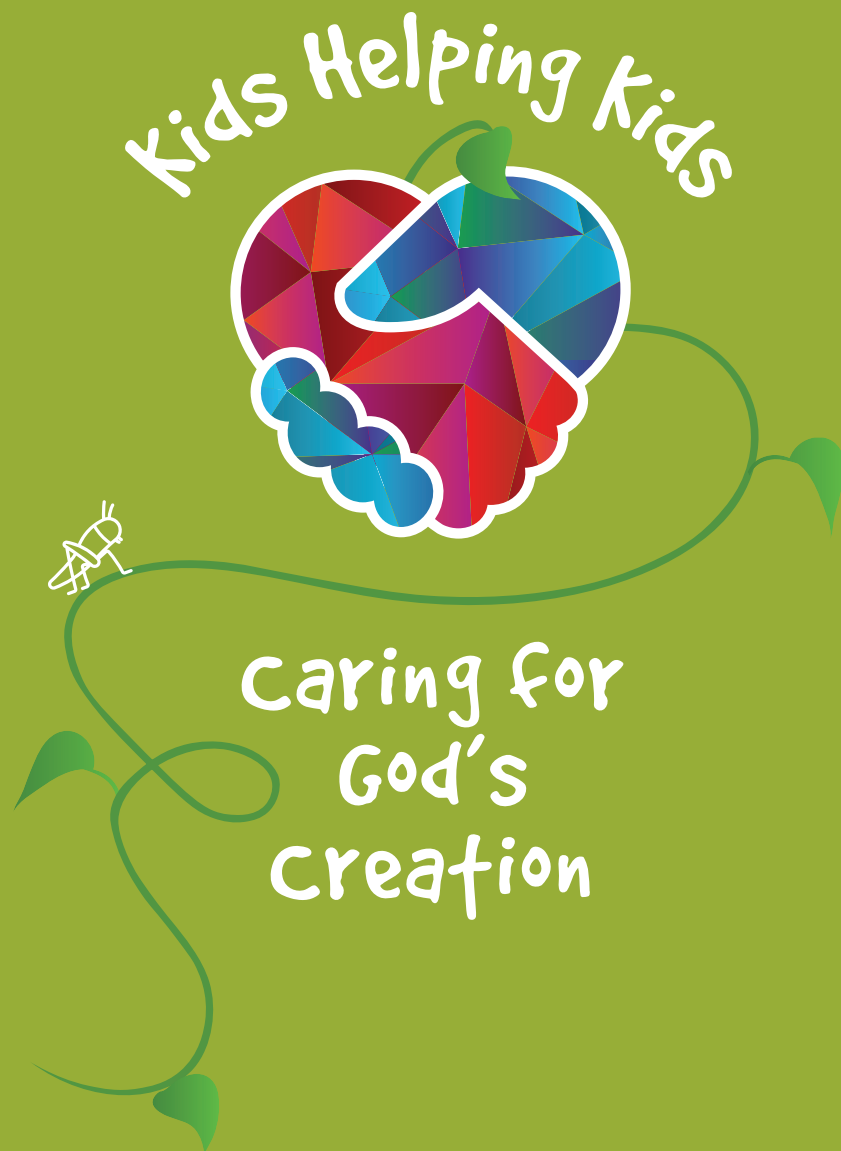




The Evangelical Covenant Church



FREE 12-PART RESOURCE ENCOURAGING  
CHILDREN TO LIVE INTO GOD'S MISSION





The Evangelical Covenant Church



12-PART RESOURCE ENCOURAGING  
CHILDREN TO SERVE GOD & OTHERS

# Caring for God's Creation

PSALM 24:1

**Through the Kids Helping Kids resource, children will learn from and be inspired by children from around the world. The following resource shares stories from children who are involved in caring for God's creation through Covenant partnerships.**

Kids Helping Kids enables us to partner with children on their spiritual journey to:

- fulfill Christ's commandment to love God and our neighbor,
- foster a larger kingdom view,
- provide a shared faith experience to build community,
- learn from the faith stories of other children around the world, and
- reflect and share their own stories of faith and what it means to respond thoughtfully and responsibly to other children's stories.

### **How can your whole church be inspired by this resource?**

Through this resource we not only want to encourage children to care for creation, but to motivate and model stewardship for the adults in their congregation. We encourage you to find creative ways for the kids to share what they are learning and how they are engaging in creation care (for example, you could suggest ways for them to display their murals, help them host a recycling drive, encourage them to share a story from the resource with the congregation during the service, etc.). There are also many ways this resource could be used in an intergenerational space.

Many of the stories and activities focus on recycling used materials. Some of the activities and crafts include using recyclable materials. These activities start toward the middle of the resource. One way you could prepare the children for this section of the resource beforehand

is to have a recycling drive to collect these materials in the weeks leading up to these activities. Involve the children and the whole church if possible.

### **Why take an offering each week?**

Before taking an offering with the children each week, please read one of the stories, explore where it takes place in the world, engage in the cooperative game or craft, talk through the reflection, and pray for the child whose story was read, using the prayer prompts. In this way, your children will connect with the bigger picture of God's kingdom and ways Covenant partners are walking alongside children.

We invite all churches to take an offering to begin teaching financial stewardship to children. What has God blessed us with? How can we share with others? Please remind children that even if they are unable to give money, their prayers are also offerings to God.

### **Gifts should be made out to:**

Kids Helping Kids: Caring for God's Creation  
Mail to: The Evangelical Covenant Church,  
attn: Covenant World Relief and Development,  
8303 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631

**Thank you for joining us this year in caring for God's creation.**

**Email questions to:** [CWRD@covchurch.org](mailto:CWRD@covchurch.org)

**To download additional Kids Helping Kids resources go to:** [CovChurch.org/kidshelpingkids](https://CovChurch.org/kidshelpingkids)

Thanks to Katie Isaza, Covenant global personnel, and Jesse Bolinder, associate pastor of youth, children, and families at Harbert Community Church in Sawyer, Michigan, for their work on the content.

*The Kids Helping Kids: Caring for God's Creation curriculum is copyright ©2020, The Evangelical Covenant Church. Permission granted to reproduce for local church use only. All Scriptures are NIV unless otherwise noted.*



## Creative Ideas for Helping Others

Children involved in Kids Helping Kids have thought of some creative ways of raising money and praying for children around the world.

Here are some ideas to share with the children in your ministry.

### Neighborhood Fair

Children set up a neighborhood fair with a variety of games, shows, and food.

### Odd Jobs

Children work in teams to clean up yards, garages, and basements.

### Reading Marathon

Children find people to sponsor them for each book they read.

### Recycling

Children and families gather recyclables and turn them in for money.

### Lemonade and Brownie Stand

Children sell lemonade and brownies made with fair-trade chocolate.

### Bible Reading

Children find people to sponsor them for each chapter or book of the Bible they read.

### Offering Challenge

Children challenge an adult class or small group(s) to match their offering.

### Prayer Ideas

- Spend some time during each ministry gathering to pray for the children.
- Encourage a child to pray for children whose stories they read during the worship service.
- Make prayer journals for children and families to use at home.
- Make a bracelet as a reminder to pray daily.

We hope these ideas will inspire the creativity of the children in your church. We would love to hear about how the children in your church use these or other ideas. Please send your stories to [cwrd@covchurch.org](mailto:cwrd@covchurch.org).

Thank you for partnering with us in ministering to children all over the world and especially for your ministry to the children in your church.

## Angel and Breiner's Story

BE PEACE, MAKE PEACE

COLOMBIA

In the small town of El Bagre Antioquia in Colombia, you can't help but be amazed at God's creation. Lush forests, rivers and streams, birds, flowers, and all different types of animals are found in this region. Have you ever seen a red guacamaya (*gwah-kah-may-ah*) bird? Another name for them is macaw. In El Bagre you can see these colorful birds flying overhead.

Even with all the beauty, the environment there has been damaged because people are mining for natural minerals, like gold. The rivers are polluted and there are now hills of mud where trees used to grow tall.

A group of children and youth from the town are trying to change that through a project called Be Peace, Make Peace. They are finding ways to care for the creation around them and they are teaching others to do the same. The project is supported by Covenant World Relief and Development and led by youth and children from a Covenant church who want to be promoters of peace in their town. The peace they promote is called *shalom* in the Bible. Shalom includes a good relationship with all creation.

The children are helping to lead clean-up days in different neighborhoods and spaces in the city. They have planted trees and picked up garbage. They have also learned about the need to care for the environment through a special fair called *Ecoguardianes* or "Guardians of the Ecosystem." At the fair they visited different booths in small groups.



At one of the booths they learned about how God created everything as we read in Genesis 1 and 2. At another booth they learned about how the earth is suffering because of the ways that we have mistreated it. They also learned how they can be guardians of the ecosystem in their own town, where the water and land are polluted.

Each child had an opportunity to commit to specific actions that they want to take to be a guardian of the ecosystem, like recycling materials, planting trees, making good use of the water, and not burning garbage, which sometimes happens in places that do not have garbage bins and trucks to take away the trash. By caring for their environment, they are promoting peace. Kids like Angel and Breiner are modeling shalom.

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*God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*

— GENESIS 1:31



## Caring for God's Creation

### Read Genesis 1:1-27, 31

God is the creator of the world. The Bible tells us that God created the earth and all that is in it. God created the trees, flowers, birds, animals, fish, and humans. And what does Genesis tell us about God's creation and how God felt about the things God created? It was good! When you see a beautiful flower or a tiny hummingbird, or hear the sound of a powerful waterfall, or play with a puppy, what feelings do you have? We see that from the very beginning God's creation is good and there is harmony and wholeness. There is shalom. Shalom is the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament to talk about peace. It's a beautiful word that means not only absence of conflict, but wholeness, wellness, and good relationships. This is what God intended when he created the world and humans.

### Reflection

Look at a globe or a map and find the country of Colombia. How are the children in the Be Peace, Make Peace project putting into practice what they have learned about shalom? Why is it important to remember that God's creation is good? What would it look like to have a good relationship with God's creation? Are there things that the children in El Bagre are doing to care for their town that you could do where you live?

### Cooperative Activity: Nature Walk or Nature Appreciation

**OBJECT:** Observe God's good creation and praise God for all that God created.

**SET-UP:** Determine if the weather and location allow

you to take the kids outside for a walk. If a walk isn't possible, have them look out the window, or put pictures of different aspects of creation on the wall (the larger the better) and put out pieces of nature for them to look at, such as rocks, leaves, shells, pinecones. Have drawing paper and pencils or crayons for each child.

**ACTIVITY:** If you can go outside, encourage children to pick up a rock or a leaf and observe it. After a time of observing God's creation, give each child a piece of paper and a pencil. Invite the children to take time to look at the world that God has created. Ask them to either write or draw a prayer to God in response to the wonderful world that God has created. After they have time to observe and respond, invite them to share as a group or with one other child what they felt as they observed God's creation.

**DEBRIEF:** How did it feel to spend time looking at things God has created? What special things did you notice that maybe you haven't noticed before? How does looking at creation and remembering that God created all things good inspire you to take care of creation?

### Prayer

God, thank you for your creation. Thank you for your creativity and care. Thank you that from the beginning you wanted there to be shalom—peace, wholeness, and harmony. Thank you for the ways we see your love through creation. Help us to be people who love and care for your creation, like the children and youth in Colombia. We pray for them as they share about God's shalom with others in their neighborhoods and community.

**MATERIALS:** *Globe or world map, paper, pencils, markers or crayons, a place to walk outside or a window or pictures of nature and pieces of nature (rocks, shells, leaves, pinecones)*

## Crystal's Story

BE PEACE, MAKE PEACE  
COLOMBIA

My name is Crystal and I am twelve years old. I live in El Bagre Antioquia in Colombia, where for the past two years I have participated in the Be Peace, Make Peace project. I have learned about friendship, unity, and everything related to shalom. Shalom means harmony with God, with myself, with others, and with all creation.

In order to take care of creation, we pick up trash around the neighborhood. We cut the grass in the local park so that children can play there without having to walk through the weeds. And we also plant trees so that the soil that has been damaged by the gold mining can be recovered.

I like to sort the garbage and put it in the correct place, so that the materials that can be recycled are separated. I like to teach my neighbors how to do it too. Members of my family, including my mom and two aunts, are involved with this project, too. We are committed to doing everything we can for the environment. This is a legacy we want to leave. It's important to take care of creation so we have a better world.

One of the ways that we take care of creation is to take care of the forests. We need to protect animals too. The earth is a gift from God, and we should take care of it.



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*The Lord God took the human and put him in the garden of Eden to farm it and take care of it.*

— GENESIS 2:15, CEB





### Read Genesis 1:28-31, 2:15

Once again, as we read Genesis, we see that creation is good. What do you see in God's creation that makes you say, "This is good"? How does it make you feel to know that not only is God's creation good but God gave humans the responsibility to care for it? Another way of understanding this is that God gave humans the responsibility to serve and protect creation.

### Reflection

Look at a globe or a map and find the country of Colombia. Crystal has learned that it is important to care for the environment. Do you know what it means to be a steward? A steward is someone who is given the responsibility to care for something. How is Crystal being a steward of creation? In what ways can you take responsibility for caring for creation where you live? What does it look like when we don't take responsibility and when we make creation serve us, instead of us seeing ourselves as those who were created to serve and care for creation?

### Cooperative Activity: Mural

**OBJECT:** Help children become aware of the natural world around them and think about the ways they can care for creation and be guardians of the ecosystem.

**SET-UP:** Create a questionnaire about where the children live. Include questions such as: What is the name of the town/city where you live? What does it look like? What natural resources does it have (plants, animals, streams or lakes, etc.)? Who lives there? What changes have you seen in your neighborhood? If you are working with small children, ask them the questions. You can use images to help. Have paper and materials ready to create a mural together.

**ACTIVITY:** Begin in smaller groups and if they can read, have them answer the questionnaire (or if they cannot read, work together in a large group with the teacher, or invite a guest from the community to facilitate the dialogue). After they have answered the questionnaire, reflect together on the answers. Have a map available or pictures of the different natural resources, animals, or important places in your area. Talk about what challenges you have when it comes for caring for creation in your community. Then invite them to work together on a mural that represents where they live. They can draw pictures, write words. Maybe one group focuses on what the community has and another focuses on ways to care for the community and the creation.

**DEBRIEF:** Have you ever thought about God's creation that is around you, right where you live? Why is it important to think about how we treat the creation around us? In El Bagre, Crystal and others have seen the damage that mining is doing to the environment. Is there anything you discovered that is hurting the environment where you live? How can you be good stewards or guardians of the ecosystem right where you live?

### Prayer

God, we praise you for your love as seen through creation. We know that the earth belongs to you. Thank you that you have trusted us to care for your creation. Help us to be good stewards of your creation. Thank you for Crystal, and for the other children in El Bagre, who are actively finding ways to care for their environment and are teaching their neighbors and us about the important role that you have given us.

**MATERIALS:** *Globe or world map, local maps, large sheets of paper, paints or markers, some sort of aprons to keep clothes clean, pictures of the community (people, places, animals), questionnaire*

## Samuel's Story

HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION FOR LASTING DEVELOPMENT  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Have you ever seen a banana plant? Would know how to grow one? Bananas are a common food and crop in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (or DRC). But Samuel and his friends live in Goma, a city of two million people, and they didn't know where the bananas they ate came from. That changed when these children became involved in the Friends Protecting Nature environmental club, and they were able to take a trip to the countryside to see where bananas are grown.

God has created many different fruits and vegetables for us to enjoy and to help keep us healthy. When we know how to grow these different foods that are gifts from God, we can help feed not only ourselves and our families, but entire communities.

Friends Protecting Nature is run by Humanitarian Organization for Lasting Development (HOLD-DRC), a Covenant World Relief and Development partner, and teaches children ages eight to eighteen about the relationship of people to nature, and what people can do to protect the environment. They learn about the air we breathe, the soil in which we grow food, and how to deal with waste by recycling and composting. Then the children tell their parents and friends about what they are learning and doing. There are now Friends Protecting Nature clubs in four schools in Goma, thanks to the work of the young volunteers at HOLD-DRC.



Why do kids like Samuel in Congo care about caring for God's creation? Because he understands that breathing clean air is important. Through the Friends Protecting Nature club, Samuel is learning about the effects that burning garbage has on air quality and the benefits of composting and recycling. Goma can't do much about the air pollution from a nearby volcano, but the people of Goma can do some things to improve their air quality.

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*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world,  
and all who live in it.*

—PSALM 24:1



## Caring for God's Creation

### Read Psalm 24:1-2, 65:5-13

The Scriptures tell us that the earth and all that is in it belongs to God. What are some of the things God created that are mentioned in these psalms? How do we see God's great care for creation? We read about the water that provides good soil for grain to grow. What happens when there isn't enough water or when the soil is damaged because of pollution?

### Reflection

Look at a globe or a map and find the country of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the Friends Protecting Nature club they learned about where the bananas they eat come from and why it is so important to have good soil. What do you eat? Have you ever thought about where the food you eat comes from before it arrives in the store? Why is it important to remember that the world belongs to God? The earth is not our possession, but God has given us the important responsibility of caring for it. How are children in DR Congo taking their responsibility seriously? How are we caring for God's creation where we live?

### Cooperative Activity: Group Juggle

**OBJECT:** Think about and identify the many things we are grateful for, the gifts God gives us, the foods we enjoy, how we can care for the creation, while showing how we are all connected.

**SET-UP:** None.

**ACTIVITY:** Have everyone stand in a circle. Identify a topic to share, such as favorite fruits and vegetables,

and toss a ball from one person to the next. When you receive the ball, you say your favorite fruit, and then toss the ball to someone else. Once you make it through the whole circle, challenge kids to do it again, keeping the same order, but do it quicker, or take a step back, or ask them how fast they think they can do it, and how few times they'll drop the ball in a round. Let the group help decide the challenges. After they've mastered the challenge or change, make a new challenge or pick a new topic. Suggested topics as you toss include: something in God's creation they are thankful for; favorite fruits or vegetables; ways to care for creation.

**DEBRIEF:** How can we work together to help care for creation? In what ways do you think our decisions and choices can have an impact on other people? How is caring for creation connected to caring for our neighbors/other people? Do we know what materials are recyclable? How can we in our church, family, neighborhood develop a habit of recycling?

### Prayer

God, you have made all things good. We look at the mountains, the fields, the rivers, the stars, the flowers, the plants and animals and see how you created a connected relationship. Thank you for the food that grows in the fields and on trees. Forgive us when we forget how important the relationship with your creation is. Help us, like Samuel and his friends, to learn more about the way our world works so that we can do a better job of caring for it.

**MATERIALS:** *Globe or world map, ball*

## Froy's Story

IGLESIA CRISTIANA SE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

My name is Froy and I am eight years old. I experienced a natural disaster a few years ago, and it was scary. My parents and I had to leave our home in Santa Rosa, California, because there were wildfires and heavy smoke all around us. We got in our car and drove.

When we got to Petaluma, a nearby city, we stopped at a shopping center and parked outside of a store. We didn't have a place to stay, so we spent all day there. I remember being hungry and tired from sitting in the car. But then my mom saw a post on her phone about a shelter where we could go. It was run by a Covenant church called Iglesia Cristiana SE.

The people from the church welcomed us and were very nice to us. We were happy and felt safe to be there. I missed my home and my bed, but I was glad we were no longer in the car and that we had a place to sleep. There was food and games and lots of people who had left their homes, too. One of the boys I met was named Monserrat.

I understand that climate changes when weather patterns change. And that affects us. When it got too hot in summer, and it didn't rain, the area where I live became very dry. When a fire started near Santa Rosa it spread very quickly. This affected me a lot because I am sick and I can't be around smoke. I wasn't able to breathe, and my parents had to spend money to take me to the doctor and buy medicine. My mom got sick too, and she had to be taken to a doctor. Still, I'm thankful that there was a church that was so kind and good to us.



At the shelter I thanked God and thought that he was good to us because our house didn't burn. We had a safe place to stay, we had food, and good people helped care for us. I now want to help others if they ever need it.

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*I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit.*

— LEVITICUS 26:4



### Read Psalm 104:1-15, Leviticus 26:4

In Week 3 we read Psalm 65 and heard that God created with purpose and with care. Psalm 104 shows us this same picture of God who created things to be in harmony and in relationship. What happens when things get out of harmony in nature? What happens when there isn't enough rain? What happens when there is too much rain?

### Reflection

Look at a map and find the state of California. Can you find the city of Santa Rosa? Have you ever experienced a natural disaster? Fires can be caused by different things. One of those things is when there is not enough rain and the grass and trees are so dry that they catch fire easily. What are some things that we humans do that affect the environment and contribute to conditions that cause wildfires? This area of California is known for agriculture and growing things like grapes and other fruits. What would have happened to the crops in the area after the fire? How did the fires affect Froy and his family?

### Cooperative Activity: Charcoal Drawings

**OBJECT:** Create collaborative artwork or a booklet to portray Psalm 104.

**SET-UP:** Print different verses of Psalm 104 on cards—these will become part of the artwork.

**ACTIVITY:** Have the children divide up into pairs and pick one of the verses from Psalm 104 to draw using charcoal pastels. If you have a small group, each child could do their own drawing. Ask them to glue the printed verse somewhere on the artwork. Once they have all completed their drawings, assemble the artwork in a way that it can be displayed in a common area in the church for adults to see, or have them hanging on a wall somewhere as a gallery. You can also make a booklet of the artwork and have it on display. You could include Froy's story on the first page of the booklet.

**DEBRIEF:** Why do you think we used charcoal to create the pictures? How do you think it feels to lose what you love or need in life? How can Psalm 104 can bring hope? What does Psalm 104 tell us about God and God's creation?

### Prayer

God, your creation is good, but we know that we can see the effects of sin and bad decisions even in nature. We pray for Froy and those in Santa Rosa, including Monserrat, who had to leave their homes and flee for safety from the fire. We pray for those who lost their jobs, for the crops that burned, and for families that lost their houses. Help us to care for one another, like Iglesia Cristiana SE cared for so many families.

**MATERIALS:** US map, charcoal pastels (compressed charcoal), watercolor paper or other heavy paper, wet wipes, smocks/old t-shirts, Bible verses from Psalm 104 on cards or printed out, charcoal "spray fix" (optional, it helps prevent smudging once the drawing is done)



## Mia's Story

IGLESIA CRISTIANA SE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Hello, my name is Mia and I live in Novato, California. My mom is from Peru and my dad is from Guatemala. My family and I go to Iglesia Cristiana SE, a Covenant church in Petaluma, California. I was six years old when there were wildfires in nearby Santa Rosa. Although the fires did not come to our city, we lost electricity.

My mom took my little sister and me to church so we could help the people that went there for shelter, like Froy. The church looked really different. Instead of chairs there were beds set up that were smaller than real beds. We had to clean and get ready for all the people that needed a place to stay. A lot of people came. I didn't know any of them. I was able to help by passing out drinks and food, including cupcakes and muffins. Some of them looked sad and worried. There were a lot of kids and babies. I felt sad because they didn't have their homes because of the fires. I was able to sleep in my bed and they were sleeping in little beds at the church. I prayed to God to stop the fires so these families could go back to their homes. I thanked God for our church, because we were working together to help these families. I thanked God because my family was still at home.

I hope another fire doesn't happen, but I know it could. I would be scared, but I would want to help others. God says we need to love, and a way of showing love is by being kind to others. I love God, and I want to love people. I am happy I got to help, and if there is another time when I get asked to do it, I will say yes!



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*I will weep and wail for the mountains and take up a lament concerning the wilderness grasslands. They are desolate and untraveled and the lowing of cattle is not heard. The birds have all fled and the animals are gone.*

— JEREMIAH 9:10

### Read Psalm 104:16-35, Jeremiah 9:10, Matthew 19:28

As we continue to read Psalm 104, we see a beautiful picture of how things in creation are connected to one another. So, what happens when something in creation is hurt or broken; for example, when there is no rain for the fields? How does it make you feel to think about creation hurting? What is God's response when he sees that creation is suffering? God wants to see creation at its best. And we are told that through Jesus all things will be renewed and restored. This is our hope, and this is why we continue to find ways to care for creation.



### Reflection

Look at a map and find the state of California. Can you find Novato in Marin County? How did the fires in nearby Santa Rosa affect Mia and her family? How did that make Mia feel? How do you think you would you feel? Why did Mia want to help others who had lost so much in the fires?

### Cooperative Activity: Connected

**OBJECT:** Remind us that all creation is connected and actions can have positive or negative consequences in the world around us.

**SET-UP:** If you have a large group divide them into smaller groups and make sure there is a ball of string for each group. You can do a variation of this game for smaller kids.

**ACTIVITY:** Have the children form a circle. Give one person the ball of string and instruct them to hold the end of the string in one hand and throw the ball of string to a person on the other side of the circle. Continue until there is a crisscross of string across the circle. Once every person is holding part of the string, ask them to think silently of a living thing they would find in a park. Then ask one person to say what they thought of. That person answers and then with their free hand, plucks their part of the string. The person they are connected to answers the question next and plucks their string. This continues until everyone has answered the question. Ask, "How are these living things connected?"

Then introduce a situation, like "cutting down trees," or "increase in air pollution," and ask them to think about the ripple effect those situations have on creation. One person answers with a specific example, plucks the string and the next person answers. Ask them, "What positive actions you can take to be good stewards of creation?" You can start by giving them

an example: replanting trees, recycling paper, biking, using less plastic. Ask them to think of a tangible way they can show love to other people. Hand out paper and invite them to draw or write one way they want to make a positive impact on the world around them or have them make a card to encourage someone else.

For younger children, you can sit and roll the ball of string in a circle, or you can pass it around the circle and form a chain. Ask similar questions to the ones above. It might be helpful to have images to show them when asking them to think about the different effects our actions have. For example, show a picture of a forest fire and ask them how this hurts God's creation. Talk about the ways that even though it might be happening in a place far from where we live, we should still show care and find ways to help. Invite them to think about the positive ways they help on a daily basis. Show them a picture of someone picking up garbage and ask how this helps creation.

**DEBRIEF:** Why is it important to remember that creation is connected and what we do matters? Why should it make us sad when we see examples of nature suffering around the world? What have you seen that makes you sad? Are there specific ways we can help in our families, our church to make a positive impact, like Mia and her church?

### Prayer

God, we see that nature suffers, when we experience such dramatic changes in weather. We feel sad when we hear of droughts and floods, because we know how that affects both animals and humans. We know that is not what you intended. Please help us to better care for your creation. Help us to care for one another when we experience the negative effects of changes in climate, like Mia and her church Iglesia Cristiana SE cared for those affected by the fire. Please be with Mia and help her to continue to be a helper to those around her.

**MATERIALS:** *Globe or map, ball(s) of string, paper, colored pencils, markers*

## Aranya's Story

THAI FAITH AND MUSIC FOUNDATION  
THAILAND

My name is Aranya and I am eleven years old. I live in northeast Thailand. I love God and I love God's creation. It shows me God's greatness.

God created the sun, moon, and stars. God gives us days, months, years, which in Thailand make a winter season and a summer season. In God's majesty God created plants. God created to show faithfulness, so that humans, plants, and animals can rely on one another.

But humans do not love the world, and we cause the world to be damaged. We make it dirty and we even throw plastic out that ends up in the seas and the oceans. The animals in the oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers eat it and then die. The same thing happens in the forest. There is plastic that animals eat and then die. This damages our world. That is why I think recycling is so important.

I'm so glad that Covenant World Relief and Development helped support a garbage recycling program for us through the Thai Faith and Music Foundation. This is one way we can help protect the world's environment and save animals from dying. I am learning so much about how to make our world cleaner and this makes me happy. I want to care for the environment and teach others to do the same.

Sawasdee ka. Good-bye.



### Read Psalm 19:1-4, Matthew 10:29

God made the heavens and the earth. When you look up at the stars and the moon, what thoughts do you have about God? What do you think when you watch the clouds going by in the sky? Creation moves us to worship and give glory to God—even the small birds, like the sparrows, as they sing invite us to worship God. What is your favorite bird? What does it sound like when birds sing? God's creation is so diverse, and Jesus tells us that God cares for even the smallest sparrow.

### Reflection

Look at a globe or a map and find the country of Thailand. Look at the northeast corner where Aranya lives. What do you imagine it is like there? (If you can, find some pictures and information on that region of Thailand.) What does Aranya feel when she looks at the skies? Aranya says that God created humans, plants, and animals to rely on each other. How do they rely on each other? What does Aranya feel when she sees that fish and animals are dying because of plastic

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*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care.*

— MATTHEW 10:29





waste left by humans? What can be done so there isn't so much plastic hurting our oceans, rivers, and animals?

### Cooperative Activity: Making Discoveries

**OBJECT:** Help kids discover ways we create waste and how we can reduce our waste (particularly plastics) so that our oceans, rivers, lakes, and animals aren't harmed.

**SET-UP:** Have plastic objects that children may interact with daily (sandwich bags, grocery bags, water or juice bottles, packaging, disposable cups, etc.) available to show them or hide them throughout the room. Have paper available (scrap paper) that can be used to make cards containing both the ways we waste plastic and how we can reduce our use of it. With smaller children, it is recommended to make picture cards ahead of time of the different ways we hurt creation by using and throwing away plastic, and the actions we can do to reduce the use of plastics.

**ACTIVITY:** Today the children are going to be asked to be problem solvers. The problem is we are using too much plastic and it is hurting creation in many different ways. Let's figure out the ways we use plastic and find ways to reduce our use of plastic. Begin by asking children to think about a normal day for them. Ask them to think about from the time they get up, get ready for school, go to school, come home, etc., what they use that is made out of plastic. Have some examples ready (of objects listed above), or have the objects hidden throughout the room for the children to find. If you have a white board, write down what the children share. Then ask them, "Why is it a problem to use and throw away so much plastic?" (Some possible answers: time it takes for it to decompose, the toxic chemicals that go into the ground and water when it

decomposes, the collection of plastic in the oceans, the danger it poses to animals, fish, birds, and us.)

Divide kids up into groups or partners and give each group five to six cards (using paper scraps). And ask them to write one example on each card of how we overuse and waste plastic products. With younger children use pictures and have them look at the picture and explain what is going on. Invite them to share their answers with the rest of the group and tape up their cards in a column along one part of the white board or wall. It is okay if groups have several of the same ideas. Group the similar ideas together on the board. Give each group another set of cards (scrap paper) and ask them to write a solution for each of the problems they listed. For example, using 3-4 sandwich bags every day for lunch is a problem, using reusable bags or packing things in small plastic container that can be reused every day is a solution.

For younger kids (grades 1-2) either do this exercise with picture cards, or have the problems and solutions already written out and ask them to match them.

**DEBRIEF:** Aranya knows how using and throwing away plastic products hurts creation. Are there ways you have seen that you can reduce the amount of plastic you use on a daily basis? How can you be an example and teacher in your house, your school? Remember that we can reduce and recycle and that is one way we show love and care for God's creation.

### Prayer

God, thank you for Aranya. Thank you for her love for you and your creation. Thank you for the Thai Faith and Music Foundation that is helping her and other children to care for creation by recycling. Help us to find ways to recycle and to not throw away so much plastic that ends up hurting the creation that you love.

**MATERIALS:** *Globe or world map, information and pictures about northeast Thailand, plastic objects that children might use or see daily (sandwich bags, grocery bags, packaging, bottles, disposable forks, spoons, cups and plates), scraps of card-sized paper, markers, tape*

## Erick's Story

FUNDEFAM

MEXICO

Fundefam is a Covenant World Relief and Development partner and community organization in Monterrey, Mexico, that hosts many community groups including Kids Club. My name is Erick and I was a part of this club and youth group when I was younger. Here they teach us about the environment and how to take care of it. We do this by using recycled materials for different art projects. We learn the value of reusing and recycling materials and the finished project is beautiful. We can put this into practice in our homes and find new ways to use materials that we would normally consider trash.

Do you know what a healthy diet looks like? This is another thing that children learn at Kids Club as they discover sustainable ways of producing foods in gardens here in the city. The children and their families take care of the gardens and are growing fruits and vegetables that are important for a healthy diet. It is one of the things that has motivated me to go to college and study energy administration and sustainable development and to work in a company that helps create urban gardens. From the time I was little I was interested in nature, plants, and animals. I have learned that caring for creation is a part of being a follower of Jesus.

Another great part of Kids Club is summer camp. There we learn how to care for God's creation, including animals. At last year's summer camp, biology students from the local university brought different



species of reptiles and arachnids (spiders) and taught the children how to treat and take care of them. Jaime, a boy at the camp, shared that he never imagined that he could learn how to protect animals. Jamie and his friends at the Kids Club have been amazed by a creative God that will take care of them and their families, just as God takes care of every detail in creation.

*The righteous care for the needs of their animals.*

— PROVERBS 12:10

**Read Psalm 50:9-12, Job 12:7-10, Proverbs 12:10**

God knows everything that was created, from the flowers of the field to the insects and animals. The earth and all that is in it belongs to God. We saw in Genesis that from the beginning God gives humans the responsibility of caring for, serving, preserving, and protecting what God has created. What in God's creation shows you God's beautiful creativity? Why is



## Caring for God's Creation

God concerned that we care for not only plants and the land, but also animals? Do you have any animals that you and your family take care of?

### Reflection

Look at a globe or a map and find the country of Mexico. Can you find the city of Monterrey? What do you think Monterrey is like? (Have some simple facts ready and a picture of what it is like, if possible.) Monterrey is a big city, and there isn't a lot of land for growing things as there is in northeast Thailand where Aranya lives. Still, the children in Monterrey are learning many ways to care for creation as they garden, recycle, and take care of animals. Do you live in a city or in the countryside? Have you ever had a garden, or have you ever grown fruits and vegetables? What was that like? What types of animals are in your town and neighborhood? How have you taken care of animals where you live? What are other ways you can care for animals?

### Cooperative Activity: Fruit Basket Upset (with variations)

**OBJECT:** Think about the food we eat, and the relationship between different living things.

**SET-UP:** A circle of chairs, one for each child.

**ACTIVITY:** Assign a fruit to every child. There should be multiple kids with the same fruit, for example, you might have three bananas, four apples, and three oranges. To begin, use fruits that the kids are familiar with. Then the next time around introduce them to fruits (showing pictures) that they might not be familiar with or aren't readily available where they live. Begin with the teacher or volunteer standing in the center of the circle. The center person then can yell any fruit or combination of fruits. The people with that fruit(s) have to get up and switch seats. The person in the center is trying to sit in one of their seats. Players may

not keep the same seat. The person in the center can also yell, "fruit basket upset," and then everyone gets up and switches seats. The person who doesn't get a seat takes a turn in the middle and calls out the fruit(s). The game can go on for as long as you want. You can change the dynamics by changing the types of fruit or maybe not using fruit, but vegetables. Or maybe teach the names of the fruits in Spanish.

You can also ask the kids to come up with the names of animals that depend on plants, vegetables, and fruits for their food. Then choose three to four of these animals and assign an animal to each child. Repeat the game, but instead of using the names of fruits, uses the names of these animals. Yell "animals on the move" to indicate all children should get up from their seats and move.

**DEBRIEF:** Where do you get your fruits and vegetables? Have you ever read the stickers on your fruit to see what country they come from? How would your diet be different if you couldn't get fruit and vegetables from others states and countries? Have you ever thought about what animals need to eat to survive? What happens when animals can't find the food they need to eat? Why is it important to think about the food we eat and how our actions affect the animals that God created?

### Prayer

God, thank you for Fundefam and the Kids Club. Thank you for how it has offered a space for kids like Erick to understand the importance of taking care of creation, no matter where we live. Thank you that you not only created and care about plants and trees, but spiders, bees, squirrels, cats, dogs, birds, deer, and all the other animals. Thank you for Erick and others who are teaching people to garden and take care of God's creation. Show us ways that we too can care for the animals, plant life, and humans around us.

**MATERIALS:** *Globe or world map, information and pictures about Monterrey, Mexico, pictures of uncommon fruits*

## Mayra's Story

FUNDEFAM

MEXICO

In 2014, when I was a young teenager, I joined the Fundefam youth group in Monterrey, Mexico, along with two of my sisters. Not long after, I was named the secretary of the group. I also became part of the staff organizing summer camps. One year the theme at summer camp was space, and an astronomer came to talk to the kids about the sun. They discussed ways to take care of the ozone layer so that the sun rays don't harm us.

I am now in my second semester of studying medicine at the local university. As part of my studies, I am developing a project with Fundefam to recycle batteries. The idea came to me because there's no place to take used batteries in the community, and it can have a bad effect on the environment if people just throw them away. I wanted to work with Fundefam because it is a place that attracts people of all ages and from different communities, and I knew many people could work together on the project.

The main idea is to invite all the groups in Fundefam to bring their used batteries there, and to spread the news to the community. We will take all the batteries we collect to a place that takes care of this type of waste. I want to encourage people to spread awareness of the importance of not just throwing batteries in the trash. I want to make sure that we take care of the land and the soil. If we don't throw away the batteries in the right way, we could hurt the earth. So, helping to recycle and teach others to dispose of used batteries properly is one way I think God has asked me to take care of creation.



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*"...because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers."*

— LEVITICUS 25:23

### **Read Leviticus 25:1-7, 23-24, Deuteronomy 15:4, Genesis 12:1-3**

We see in the Bible that land is important. From the beginning when God makes a covenant with Abraham, God promises a land to the people of Israel. In Leviticus, God tells the people, through Moses, how they are to care for the land. God gives instructions for giving the land that is farmed a year of rest. Just as God rested after creation, and humans and animals are to have a day of rest, the land is also supposed to rest. How does this show God's care for the land? Do you think it would have been hard for the people to follow these instructions, since they depended on growing food from the land? God tells them to trust that God will provide for their needs, to remember that the land belongs to God.



## Caring for God's Creation

### Reflection

Look at a globe or a map and find the country of Mexico. We see from Mayra's story that she was impacted by her time at Fundefam and now she is doing what she can to care for creation. What is one way she is trying to care for the land where she lives? According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Americans throw away more than *three billion* batteries every year! There are chemicals in batteries that can pollute the soil. What happens if the soil is polluted? What are some of the things (electronics, toys) in your house that use batteries? What do you do with used batteries? Do you have a place to recycle them? Could there be a place at the church to collect used batteries? How would this be a way to teach others about the importance of caring for the land we live on?

### Cooperative Activity: Create a Game

**OBJECT:** Discover ways to have fun without relying on new toys, games with batteries, or other electronic devices.

**SET-UP:** If you can't go outdoors, have recyclable materials available to make games (boxes, bottles, bottle caps, paper bags, newspapers, etc).

**ACTIVITY:** Start by brainstorming together different games the kids like to play. Explain that we don't always need to buy new toys, toys that use batteries, or electronics to have fun together. We can use things that are around us and use our creativity. Today we are going to be inventors and work together to find materials that we can use to play a game with each other. Suggest ideas, maybe as simple as tic-tac-toe with sticks and rocks; hop-scotch, drawing lines on pavement with a sedimentary rock; a game of I Spy; or even better, creating a totally new game. Divide kids up into partners and groups (depending on how big your

group is) and take them outdoors, around the church property to collect whatever materials they might need to use for their game. Give them only a certain amount of time. Encourage kids to think about what kind of game they might create or re-create using the stuff they find outdoors. You can either than play the games outside or bring them back inside to design and prepare their game to share with the rest of the group.

If it doesn't work to go outside, ask them to create a game using recycled materials that you have available (for example, a ball toss, using plastic bottles with the tops cut off and balls made out of crumpled up newspaper). Have the kids work in teams to design a game, and then ask them to share with the rest of the group.

**DEBRIEF:** How often do we need to use electricity or batteries in our lives? How many of our toys require electricity or batteries? What would it look like to cut down on our energy use, by doing simple things like we did today? How did you feel trying to use your imagination and create a game? What are other ways we can reduce the amount of batteries or energy we use in our lives? When God commands his people to rest, how do you think using less electricity could help us rest?

### Prayer

God, thank you for giving us land. Your creation is good. Thank you that you care so much about your creation that you want it to experience rest. Help us to take care of the land you have given us, like Mayra. Help us not to take for granted the creation you have asked us to care for. Please help Mayra and the kids at Fundefam as they teach their families and community about recycling batteries. Help us to be like them and be examples for the people around us.

**MATERIALS:** *Globe or map, recyclable materials, scissors, glue, tape, markers*



## Mercy's Story

JITokeZE

KENYA

My name is Mercy. I am nineteen years old and I am from Trans-Nzoia County in Kenya. I am a student at Jitokeze, a Covenant World Relief and Development partner organization, where I am studying fashion design and sewing. As a student there, I also have to learn about organic farming. The food we grow includes maize (corn), beans, bananas, and sweet potatoes.

What amazes me is that we can produce vegetables without buying non-organic fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. Fertilizers help plants grow, and herbicides and pesticides kill weeds and insects, but they can contain harmful chemicals, and they can be expensive to buy. Through Jitokeze, I have learned to use animal droppings to keep the soil fertile, so the plants grow better. I have also learned the technique of raising nursery beds, which allows us to use smaller spaces and conserve soil and water. It is important to conserve soil because without it we cannot grow any food and we will not have food to eat.

I have noticed a great difference in the taste of the food we grow at Jitokeze. The vegetables we get from our school farm are soft and tender, have a good taste, and can be harvested over a long period of time. For this reason, I plan to start my own garden back home to raise vegetables for my family. I will teach them organic farming so we can conserve our soil and ensure we are eating healthy food that is free from chemicals.



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*The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth;  
you founded the world and all that is in it.*

— PSALM 89:11

### Read Deuteronomy 8:1-18, Psalm 89:11

Again, we see the importance of land for the people of God. Here in Deuteronomy we are reminded that God has cared for the people and will fulfill the promise to take them to a good land. How do these verses describe the land? What does the land contain? Why is it good? Whose land is it? Why is it important for the people to remember God is the one who provided the land and God has cared for them and their needs? We are reminded that the earth belongs to the Lord and the land is good.



### Reflection

Look at a globe or a map and find the country of Kenya. What is Mercy learning about growing food that is so important for her, her family, and her community? Why is the land and taking care of the soil important for Mercy? Why is land important for us, whether we live in a big city or a small town or a farm community? How does caring for the land show our gratefulness to God? What are the ways we can help to make sure the land is good for growing food?

### Cooperative Activity: Plastic Bottle Planters

**OBJECT:** Create colorful plastic bottle planters to grow simple plants in like spring onions, basil, mint, etc.

**SET-UP:** You may want to have adult volunteers help you clean and cut some if not all of the bottles. If you are going to have them paint the bottles you may want to start with that activity and then read the story and do the reflection.

**ACTIVITY:** There are many different ways to make plastic bottle planters, and you can find many ideas online (one good site is at [https://youtu.be/\\_kdw7wGIYxs](https://youtu.be/_kdw7wGIYxs)). Just cutting bottles in half and using the bottom as a planter works well. Children can paint, color with sharpies, decorate in different ways, or not

decorate the planters at all. These could be taken home if there is enough for everyone, or they could be displayed in a space in the church and the children can have the responsibility to help water and care for them. Or they can be given away. This would be a great activity to do intergenerationally, including parents or adults from the church and working together with the children.

**DEBRIEF:** Mercy discovered that she can grow vegetables without using chemicals that hurt the earth. What is something you have learned about how to care for creation? For example, how can we find ways to reuse materials, like plastic bottles, to keep from harming our soil and water? What kind of message does it send to others when we care about God's creation?

### Prayer

God, thank you for the earth. Thank you for Mercy and the students at Jitokeze who are caring for the land where they live. Please be with her as she sets an example for people around her. Help us to find ways to care for the land and the water. Help us to find ways use less plastic. Forgive us when we take for granted the food we have and the places it is grown.

**MATERIALS:** *Globe or world map; old soda/pop or water bottles (make sure they are already used, don't buy more just to do the activity); starter plants like basil, onion, rosemary, or flowers; potting soil; scissors; spray paint (various colors), paint, paint markers, sharpies, etc; decorations like googly eyes or ribbons; glue*

## Lily's Story

AUDUBON PARK COVENANT CHURCH  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

My name is Lily. I am eight years old and live in Florida, near Orlando. My church, Audubon Park Covenant, cares about the earth and I have learned to care about the earth too. At my church we have planted fruit trees in a garden. This helps the animals like squirrels and raccoons who can eat the fruit. It also helps people because we can eat the fruit too.

I have taken time to work in the garden and we have started our own garden at my house. I love to walk through my garden and learn about the plants and help care for them. We are growing loquats, kumquats, star fruit, pomegranates, and we even have a banana tree. We also have lots of other plants that have edible leaves and we can pick the leaves and make salads. I also use the leaves to feed my pet hamster.

Planting gardens are an important way of taking care of the earth, and more and more people are deciding to plant gardens because they see us and our church planting trees and caring for the environment.

Another way I like to care for the earth is by using my bike and scooter to get around. I like to walk and use my scooter to get to and from school. I think next year I will use only my bike. I don't like using cars because they use gas and I know that can cause air pollution.

I want to do what is right and care for the earth. I know God cares about the earth because he gave us trees



that give us oxygen. If we don't care for the earth the environment will go bad and we will lose trees and the animals won't be safe.

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*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

— JOHN 1:1-3





## Caring for God's Creation

### Read John 1:1-3, 14, Mark 4:30-32

As we read the New Testament, we see that Jesus is connected to the creation around him. He spent much of his time outside, walking from place to place. Many of his stories, examples, and parables use images of creation, like plants, birds, animals, seeds, fish, sheep, grapes, and grain. Can you think of stories like this? What does Jesus compare the kingdom of God to in Mark 4:31? In other places in the New Testament, we see that Jesus pointed people to the things that were around them, the things God created. And John tells us that Jesus was there from the beginning. He was directly involved in creation and then he took on the form of a human to come and live on the earth, with creation. This is how valuable creation is.

### Reflection

Look at a globe or a map and find the state of Florida. Can you find the city of Orlando? What do you know about the weather in Florida? What type of trees are common where Lily lives? (If possible, have pictures of the different vegetation and fruit trees that Lily talks about). Lily understood that God cares for her and for the creation around her and she wanted to show her care too. Have you ever thought about how the things we do hurt the earth? Lily talks about air pollution and how it is important to ride bikes and cut down on gas. Think about where you live, the trees, animals, plants, around you. What are some of the things that cause pollution where you live? Are there things that you can do that would help and not harm the earth?

### Cooperative Activity:

#### Happy Creation or Sad Creation Collages

**OBJECT:** Help children think about the things and actions that have a positive or a negative effect on creation.

**SET-UP:** Set out magazines, scissors, glue, markers, and poster boards.

**ACTIVITY:** Have the children work in two groups. They will be cutting out images they find in magazines that either represent ways we hurt creation or ways that we help creation. Assign one group to make a collage of with harmful actions and the other group to make a collage of helpful actions. When they are done, then ask them to present their collage to the other group. They can also draw pictures to include in the poster. For younger children, you might want to have images for them to select, such as littering, oil spills, car exhaust, recycling, picking up litter, riding bikes, etc.

**DEBRIEF:** What did you learn from this activity that you didn't know before? Is there anything that surprised you? What are some of the small actions that can either help or hurt God's creation? How do these small or big actions help to show Jesus's love to those around us?

### Prayer

God, thank you for Lily and for Audubon Park Covenant Church. Thank you that they have looked at the creation around them and have found ways to help improve the life of their community and care for what God has given them. Thank you for Jesus who came to be with us, who showed us your love and who time and time again invited people to look at the beauty of creation and to trust in God's provision. Help us to take care of the creation around us.

**MATERIALS:** *Globe or world map, pictures, images, magazines, scissors, markers, glue, poster boards*

## Akshara's Story

HINDUSTANI COVENANT CHURCH  
INDIA

My name is Akshara. I am twelve years old and I live in Ambedkar Nagar, a slum full of houses made out of scraps of wood, metal, plastic and cardboard, located in the city of Pune. This is one of the largest slums in Pune, and the people who live here are migrants from the countryside. They have come here because there are opportunities to earn money each day at a nearby market. But the area is overcrowded and dirty, which creates health problems. In my neighborhood it is common to see water waste from the homes flowing down the narrow lanes, people throwing garbage anywhere and everywhere, and sewer systems that don't work.

I am fortunate because I live in a street that recently has been given an award by local government authorities for the ways we have kept it clean. I can see how different my street is from the others around me, so I have decided to do what I can to create a cleaner neighborhood.

The Hindustani Covenant Church (HCC) is a Covenant World Relief and Development partner and recently organized a rally and a cleanliness drive. I participated with other kids from my community. I have asked eight of my friends to join me in creating a cleaner environment. Some of the ways we do



this is by continually asking our neighbors not to throw garbage around, and when we do see trash on the ground, we pick it up and put it into garbage bins.

I am also trying to practice cleanliness in my school. I keep reminding my friends to keep their classrooms and school campus clean. One exciting thing that has happened is that I have been elected minister of cleanliness in the children's parliament formed by HCC involving children of the slum. I want to take my responsibility seriously.

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*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;  
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?*

— PSALM 8:3, NRSV



### Read Psalm 8, Deuteronomy 10:14

The earth is the Lord's. And yet we, as humans have been given the special job of caring for creation. Remember the word "steward"? In Psalm 8 we are reminded about our role as stewards of the earth. What responsibility have we been given? How are we supposed to carry it out? Think about the care and love that God shows us and how God treats us. How then should we care for those things God has given us responsibility for?

### Reflection

Look at a globe or a map and find the country of India. Can you find the city of Pune in the west? How does Akshara describe the place where she lives? What are her major concerns? How does she see people not caring for the place they live? How is she setting an example for them? What are ways you show cleanliness in your home, your school, outside in the neighborhood? Do you see trash in your neighborhood? Why is trash a problem? How do you help to keep your home, school, neighborhood, and church clean? What are other ways you could help?

### Cooperative Activity: Speed Sorting

**OBJECT:** Learn how to sort and recycle materials.

**SET-UP:** Put piles of recycled materials on one side of room with bins for sorting and designate a starting line on the other side of room. This is material that has been collected and cleaned, with no sharp edges or breakable, previous to the activity (plastic bottles, paper, boxes, etc.).

**ACTIVITY:** Make teams (as many as you need depending on the size of your group) and have them line up on one side of the room. On this same side of the room, behind the teams, place separate bins labeled plastic, paper, cardboard. On the other side of the room, fill a garbage pail or make a pile (laid out on a piece of fabric) of recycled materials, all mixed together. When you say go, one person from each team will run/walk quickly to the pile, then walk

back to the other side of the room and put one item in the correct bin for that material—plastic in one bin, paper in one, cardboard in another, or however you determine to sort it out. If including aluminum, make sure there are no sharp edges. Once the item is deposited in the bin, the next person from the team goes. The idea is to work together to recycle all the materials as fast as possible. Time them to see how long it takes to get everything sorted. The game ends when all the materials have been sorted into the bins. Afterward, look together to make sure things are where they should be. The idea is to help kids see that they can recycle and they can work together to recycle. Check with local recycling facilities to see what you can actually take to have recycled. You can make this more challenging by having them sort the plastic by its number (in the triangle imprinted on the plastic). Some recycling centers will not take numbers 3, 4, 6, and 7.

Be sure to recycle the stuff afterward.

**DEBRIEF:** Akshara says that she asks her neighbors not to litter, and when she sees trash on the ground she picks it up and throw it into garbage bins. She also reminds her friends at school to keep their classrooms clean. What are ways you could adopt some of the attitudes and practices of Akshara? What are ways we can encourage the adults in our church to join us in our efforts to recycle? What are ways to reduce our use of plastics that can't be recycled?

### Prayer

God, we thank you that you have shown such love and care for us and that you have given us a special responsibility to care for the earth where we live. Thank you for Akshara. Help her as she tries to teach others the importance of keeping their neighborhood clean. Thank you for the important role you have given her. Help us to follow her example and find ways to care for your creation in our own neighborhoods.

**MATERIALS:** *Globe or world map, a collection of recyclable materials, bins for sorting the materials, signs to label the bins*

## Manoj, Laxman, and Rohit's Story

THE HINDUSTANI COVENANT CHURCH  
INDIA

My name is Manoj and I am twelve years old. My friends Laxman, who is ten, and Rohit, who is eleven, and I live in a village near the city of Solapur in India. We have seen what happens when there is too little rainwater year after year. We have also learned how important it is to plant trees. Trees help clean our air and God made so many different kinds of trees.

Along with our classmates, we decided to do our part to improve our local environment. We talked to the staff of the Hindustani Covenant Church who are working in and around our village to conserve water. They taught us what we can do to help.

One of the things we did was make seed balls. Each ball was made up of cow dung and at least 100 seeds of many different kinds. We took those balls along with us whenever we traveled outside of our village and threw them in places where there were no trees. We encouraged our friends to do the same. Those seed balls contain moisture and nutrients that help the seeds survive even in open land and allows them to sprout and grow. Seeds inside the balls are not eaten up by animals and have more chances of survival.

We also grew young fruit trees. We collected used milk cartons from women of the village and used them as containers to grow the small trees. Then we planted these saplings on roadsides, school grounds, public spaces, and unused land in the village. So far, we have planted 300 trees and we are taking care of them.

Children can take care of their environment. We can see that God's creation is good, and we want to do our part to care for it.



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*God was pleased to bring all things back to himself. That's because of what Christ has done. These things include everything on earth and in heaven. God made peace through Christ's blood, by his death on the cross.*

— COLOSSIANS 1:20, NIRV

### Read Colossians 1:15-17, 20, Revelation 22:1-3

The Bible begins with the story of creation, the goodness of creation in the garden. We see a world that experienced shalom—peace. We know that sin has created destruction and that is experienced in all creation. Our friends, Manoj, Laxman, and Rohit, have experienced firsthand what happens when creation is not cared for and there is destruction. Still, the Bible reminds us that through Jesus, new life is possible. Do you remember what shalom means? It means wholeness, harmony, relationships that are restored. We look forward in hope that shalom will be restored





## Caring for God's Creation

as God intended from the beginning of creation, as Jesus makes things new and brings back together that what is separated, repairing what is broken. The Bible closes with another picture of a beautiful garden, a picture where creation is restored and made right. What are some of the images of nature in Revelation 22? How does it make you feel to think about God making all things new, from the land to the animals to our lives?

### Reflection

Look at a globe or a map and find the country of India. Can you find Solapur where these three friends live? What made them decide to start creating seed balls and planting trees? Have you experienced the negative effects of not enough rain or too much rain, too much heat or too much cold, polluted air or water? How have you experienced all the good that is found in creation? What in creation brings you joy and makes you worship God? How does planting trees, for example, show the hope we have in Jesus and in all of creation being reconciled or made whole?

### Cooperative Activity: Recycled Paper Seed Balls

**OBJECT:** Spread flowers and God's beauty around your community. Create pockets of new life and beauty and create havens for pollinators.

**SET-UP:** Depending on amount of time you have, you may want to prepare some paper pulp by ripping and blending up scrap paper, otherwise, you can have all the materials simply set up and ready to go. Additional volunteers to help with blenders is important, and the more blenders the better!

**ACTIVITY:** Kids will shred/rip paper and put into buckets of water to soak. The longer it soaks the better, so if you have a bunch soaking ahead of time, it may help and/or speed up the process. Once the paper has soaked at least ten minutes, put the soaked paper into the blender, about a third of the way up, and then top off

with water. Blend! If it is too thick, pull out some paper. Pour this mixture, which should be a thick pulp, into a colander and let the water run out. Don't squeeze all the water out. You'll want it to be wetter than you think so it doesn't fall apart when making your shapes. Pour the seeds into your pulp. Knead and mix them into the pulp with your hands. Finally, grab a small handful of the mixture, squeeze out as much water as you can, and roll it into a firm ball, or squish it down into a pancake (these dry faster). Place on a drying rack or stack of newspaper to dry (best to dry in sunshine). Once dry you can find a place that needs some new life and beauty. You can use any seeds you'd like though try to find some that are native to your area. Plant the seed balls in soil and water.

You might want to plant them around the church in pots, or have the children take them home. They can also be offered to people in the congregation to encourage the church to consider ways of caring for creation.

**DEBRIEF:** In what ways does God give us new life? How can our seed balls serve as a reminder that we not only find life in Jesus, but we too can be people who spread God's love and life around? How can we help improve our environment where we live, like the children in India are taking initiative to care for their environment? How is recycling paper and planting new flowers a way of caring for creation?

### Prayer

Thank you, God, for flowers, trees, and all plants. Thank you for the way that trees work to clean the air we breathe. Thank you for our three friends in India who are setting an example for people to care about clean air and conserving water. Help us to put into action what we learn and find ways to make the environment around us better and show the world that you are the Lord of all, who will renew and restore all things. Together with all creation we give you praise and glory.

**MATERIALS:** *Globe or world map, wildflower seeds, old paper/newspapers, old blenders/food processors, buckets/bowls, water, colander*

