

LUTHERANS RESTORING CREATION

Becoming a Creation-Care Congregation

A Self-Organizing Kit

Guidelines and Resources

Lutherans Restoring Creation is a grass roots movement that seeks to foster programs and resources that are an expression of the theology and polity of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: recognizing creation as a gift of God entrusted to our care; acknowledging Jesus Christ as the redeemer of life; and celebrating the life of the Holy Spirit as our sustainer. We seek to be motivated not by achievements or accolades but by the God's grace and the love God has for creation. Learn more at www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org.

Why Lutherans Care for All Creation

- 1. Theology:** We affirm God as creator of all, with an incarnational theology that cherishes the continuing presence of God in, with, and under all reality. We see redemption as the restoration of creation, as “new creation.” We see the Spirit leading us toward the fulfillment of creation.
- 2. Cross and Resurrection:** The gospel leads us to see God in solidarity with the human situation in all its pain and agony, especially the most vulnerable—humans and other life forms. A theology of the cross gives us solidarity with “creation groaning in travail” and stresses that God redeems *all* creation. Our affirmation of resurrection offers hope for new life in this world.
- 3. Worship and Sacraments:** We affirm that the material is a vehicle of the divine and that Christ is present in such ordinary elements of life as grapes and grain—the basis for our delight in and reverence for creation. Our worship invites us into transforming encounters with God in the flesh and in the world. We are called to worship God *with* creation.
- 4. Ecclesiology:** Our human vocation is “to serve and to preserve” Earth. We believe that the church exists for the sake of the world. We do not have an escapist theology. We are called to a vocation of continual reformation in response to the needs and crises of this life. A story: when Luther was asked what he would do if the world would end tomorrow, he replied, “Plant a tree.”
- 5. Ethics:** We have an ethic of faith-active-in-love for neighbor and for all creation. Liberated from a legalism that enslaves, we are freed to address new situations, such as the ecological state of the world. We do so not to dominate but as servants to all of Earth community. We do so not out of fear or guilt or arrogance but joyfully out of grace, love, and gratitude.
- 6. Social Ministry:** With a heritage back to the Reformation, Lutherans have a history of social ministry to the poor, the elderly, the sick, the oppressed, the marginalized—through hospitals, homes for the elderly, social ministry agencies, Lutheran Immigration Service, and Lutheran World Relief. We extend that service to healing Earth community (www.elca.org/careforcreation).
- 7. Advocacy:** ELCA Lutherans have relevant social statements: “Caring for Creation” and “Sustainable Livelihood for All.” We have a staff person in environmental/hunger advocacy in Washington, DC and in Lutheran Public Policy offices in many states (www.elca.org/advocacy).
- 8. Scholarship and Education:** Many Lutheran scholars have written and spoken on ecology—in theology, ethics, biblical study, and social commentary. Colleges and seminaries of the ELCA have environmental ministry courses that prepare Lutherans for leadership in church and world. Many continuing education events for clergy and laity highlight creation care.
- 9. Caring for Creation across the church:** Several synods with creation-care committees have declared themselves to be Care-For-Creation Synods. Many Lutheran congregations incorporate Earth-care commitment in their life and mission—worship, education, building and grounds, discipleship at home and work, and public ministry. Lutheran camps have brought environmental concerns to many people. The ELCA headquarters has a Green Team that works to model environmental action. The ELCA offers grants for environmental projects.
- 10. Grassroots Organizations for Earthkeeping:** Lutherans have led in the Green Congregation Program, the Green Seminary Initiative, the Web of Creation, promoting creation-care worship in the church year and the Season of Creation (www.letallcreationpraise.com), and Lutherans Restoring Creation (www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org).

Lutherans are in a critical position to listen to the cry of the poor along with the cry of Earth and to take leadership in addressing these critical issues of our day. In the context where you are living and working, we invite and encourage you to participate in this endeavor.

Lutheran Restoring Creation Congregation Kit

Items in the Kit

Why Lutherans Care for Creation: Theological Foundations	2
1. Overview of the process	4
2. Getting started and the Green Team	5
3. Adopting the Program and approving a mission statement	6
4. Mission statement	7
5. Certificate for display	8
6. Action Plan guidelines	9
7. Action Plan form	10
8. The Action Plan	11-14
• Worship	
• Education	
• Building and grounds	
• Discipleship at home and work	
• Public witness/ policy advocacy	
9. Covenant with Creation	15-16
10. Brief ritual for the Mission Statement and/or the Covenant with Creation	17
11. Additional LRC Resources for congregations.	18

Lutherans Restoring Creation Kit
Becoming a Creation Care Congregation
Nature and Process of the Program: An Overview

The purpose of this kit is to enable you to have a basic program and organization to function as a creation-care congregation as well as have access to the resources needed to carry out this program on an ongoing basis. Whether or not you are already active in greening your congregation, this kit will enable you to identify yourself with Lutherans Restoring Creation, provide an overall plan for your efforts, and help you to further your congregational commitment to ecology and justice.

This is not a certification program. No one will tell you what to do or require you to submit a report. Nothing is expected for you to do aside from what *you* choose to do in carrying out your commitments to the program. There is no cost for this program apart from what *you* decide to spend on your mission to care for creation.

Stated positively, this is a program of identification with the goals and mission of Lutherans Restoring Creation. It is a commitment program. That is, we are inviting you to embrace a mission statement for your congregation and then proceed to carry it out as you are able. You will be responsible to yourself and to Earth community for what you do and how you do it. This is a program for any and every congregation—large or small, urban or rural, old or young, wealthy or poor, or any ethnic identify. For each congregation, there are multiple ways for you to carry out a commitment to God’s creation. Maybe you have already done a great many projects, programs, and actions that are Earth-friendly as part of your commitment to care for Earth. This program will celebrate everything you have done, move your program forward, provide some structure to your efforts, and enable you to act in solidarity with other Lutheran congregations.

The steps are simple

- 1. Approval of Mission Statement.** The pastor(s) and church council approve a mission statement on behalf of the congregation, expressing your creation-care commitment in the following five areas: worship, education, building and grounds, member discipleship, public witness. You can make the commitments public in a brief ritual within a worship service.
- 2. A Green Team and the Action Plan.** As part of this process, the pastor and church council authorize the establishment of a “green team” to carry out the commitments through the action plan. If you already have a green team, affirm it. Or, the church council or another committee may serve to carry out the creation-care commitments.
- 3. Promote your identity.** Fill in and display the certificate identifying your congregation as a creation care community affiliated with Lutherans Restoring Creation. Promote this identity among the members. You may also want to display the “Ten Reasons Why Lutherans Care for Creation.” Encourage the congregation members and request the committees to participate in carrying out the commitments.
- 4. Report and renew.** We encourage the green team to report their projects and events to the church council/ congregation and to redo the action plan process on an annual basis.

There are instructional suggestions in this kit for each step with links to relevant resources.

Lutherans Restoring Creation Creation-Care Congregational Program

Getting Started

The program can begin from any place—pastor, interested lay people, a standing committee, the church council. Once there is some interest, take the program to the pastor and church council for discussion, approval, and implementation on behalf of the congregation. If desired, have the congregation approve the mission statement at a duly constituted congregational meeting.

This is not a top-down program. It is directed by you at the congregational level. You are free to change, adapt, and add to the program. Edit the mission statement to meet your needs and commitments. Develop your way of implementing the program (see below under The Green Team); adjust the action plan to serve your situation; celebrate all that you do.

Lutherans Restoring Creation stands ready to assist you in providing this program, in making resources available for its implementation, and for promoting your story on our online website as you choose to share it with us: www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org.

The Green Team

1. Formation. A green team may come into existence in a variety of ways: a self-designated group that approaches the pastor and the church council for authorization, appointed by the pastor and the church council, or recruited in response to an educational program on Earth care or a care for creation worship service.

2. Maintain Momentum. Maintain the green team through regular meetings, representation from various committees, invitations to current and new members, and periodic renewal of the action plan.

3. Choose a name: Green Team or Creation Care Task Force or Earth-Care Committee or Find the name that works best for you and your congregation.

4. Leaven for the Entire Congregation: “Team” is our term for the group that sees that the commitments to care for creation are carried out, because a “team” functions differently from other committees. A team is not responsible for all the programs related to creation-care. Although the team may take the leadership on some projects, mainly it serves as leaven in the congregation to see that others carry out the action plan: various committees, staff, youth group, older adult organization, Bible Study Groups, and functionaries of the church carry out the different programs. The green team will support others in doing the project and follow up to see that there is accountability for carrying it out. [See the directions for the use of the action plan.]

5. Alternatives. We recommend that a distinct group, such as a Green Team, has the responsibility to give leadership in carrying out the creation-care commitments. However, there need not be a separate group. The functions of the Green Team can be carried out by a standing committee such as the social ministry committee or the stewardship committee or by the church council through its representatives from the various committees, as long as the arrangement is working well to fulfill the commitments of the mission statement.

Lutherans Restoring Creation Adopting the Program and Approving the Mission Statement

1. Engage the whole congregation. The purpose of accepting the program and approving the mission statement is to engage the entire congregation through its leadership to be aware of our Christian vocation to care for creation and to participate in this mission of the congregation. The benefit of pursuing efforts in five areas serves to make the mission comprehensive and to generate an identity of creation-care as integral to the congregation. The program gives structure to your efforts in creation-care and makes them intentional and public. Consider the mission statement in relationship with the statement in the kit titled “Why Lutherans Care for Creation.”

2. Inform the pastor and the church council. Those who initiate the process can present to the pastor and church council the proposal to accept a creation-care mission for your congregation. The council may share the statement with to the congregation and invite input.

3. Not a certification program. Clarify that the program is identified with Lutherans Restoring Creation, that it is not a certification program, and it does not commit the congregation to any particular actions, projects, or expenses apart from what the congregation chooses to do. Share the statement “Why Lutheran Care for Creation.”

4. Adapt and approve. We encourage the clergy and church council to choose the long (next page) or the short version (see below) and to adapt it to your congregational ethos. In a formal procedure, the council will approve the statement, authorize the green team, and establish protocols for responsibility and reporting (See the page in this kit on The Green Team). You may want to approve the program and the mission statement in a meeting of the congregation.

5. Revise your congregational mission statement. Consider revising the overall mission statement of your congregation to reflect your commitment to be a creation-care congregation.

6. Announce the approval of the program and the mission statement. Through the newsletter, bulletins, and personal witness at congregational gatherings, urge people to support the program. Consider using the brief ritual in this kit in a worship service as a means to acknowledge the sacred nature of our common vocation of creation-care.

8. Renew your commitment annually. Consider renewing the commitment to be a congregation that cares for creation on an annual basis, such as at an Earth Sunday or at a service when you make your stewardship commitments (See “Covenant with Creation” and ritual in this kit).

9. Make your witness public. You may want to let the larger community know about your creation-care commitment via a local newspaper or through your synod media outlets.

Short Version:

We affirm our commitment to care for God’s creation. As a congregation, we will incorporate creation-care into our worship life, the educational program, the maintenance of building and grounds, our personal discipleship at home and work, and in our public witness. We seek to make caring for God’s creation an integral part of the identity and mission of our life together.

Lutherans Restoring Creation Congregational Care-for-Creation Mission Statement

As a congregation committed to care for creation, we affirm God's creation in all its glory and beauty. We acknowledge God as the source of all things. We acknowledge Christ as the redeemer of all things. We acknowledge the Spirit as the sustainer of all things. As a result, we strive to respect all of life as sacred. We accept our vocation as Earth-keepers who care for creation. We accept our responsibility to live justly in relation to our fellow human beings in ways that all creatures may mutually thrive together.

Worship: We seek to worship throughout the year so that we express our gratitude and praise to God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer. We are committed to glorify God intentionally together with all creation. In worship, we will celebrate creation, confess our sins against creation, grieve the losses of creation, and commit ourselves to care for Earth.

Education: We seek to learn about the biblical, theological, and ecclesial traditions concerning creation, including the biblical mandate calling us to care for Earth. We seek to learn about the degradations of creation due to human activity, how these degradations are causing human suffering and oppression, especially among the poor and vulnerable, how we as Christians are implicated, and what we as Christians can do to restore Earth-community for future generations.

Building and Grounds: We agree to assess the impact that our activities and learn how the use and maintenance of our property may have upon creation—in such matters as energy and water use, cleaning products, lawn care, paper use, food choices, recycling and waste, and transportation. We will strive to make choices that lessen our negative impact on Earth and that serve to renew and restore Earth community.

Discipleship as Home and Work: We encourage ourselves as individual members of this congregation—at whatever age, economic level, ethnic group, or walk of life—to care for creation in our personal lifestyle, in our homes, and at our work—knowing that our habits and practices can contribute significantly to care for creation. We seek to foster a closer relationship with nature so that we can live simply and walk lightly upon Earth.

Public Ministry: We seek to change the systems that foster the degradation of creation and to rectify the human injustices that result from it. And we seek to alert members to environmental policies and legislation that protects creation and to encourage their active participation in the development of public policy. We encourage members to engage in civic activities that foster ecological health.

Because we desire to leave Earth a better place for our children, we will promote love and respect for creation among our youth, teach them responsible Earth-care practices, and engage them in projects that restore creation. We will pursue this mission in a grace-filled manner, seeking to find hope and joy in the commitments and sacrifices these provisions may entail and in the restorations they engender. We seek to let our care for creation be known to others.

LUTHERANS RESTORING CREATION

recognizes

Located in _____

as a

CARE FOR CREATION CONGREGATION

WORSHIP

EDUCATION

BUILDING AND GROUNDS

DISCIPLESHIP AT HOME AND WORK

PUBLIC WITNESS

Pastor _____

Council Representative _____

LRC Director *David Rhoads*

Date _____

Lutherans Restoring Creation Action Plan Guidelines

1. Study the action plan: For more information, consult the full LRC Manual for Congregations and the websites resources listed with each category.

2. Choose a project from each category for the year. Identify the projects you are already doing [such as Earth Sunday worship]. Then choose a new project from each of the five areas. As you proceed, fill in the *Action Plan Form*. If feasible, choose more than five projects. Or, in light of projects you have already done, choose five projects from three or four areas.

Choose actions/projects that . . .

- Have support in the congregation
- Have people who are committed to carry them out
- Are affordable for the congregation
- You have energy and inspiration for

3. Delegate the responsibility: If the green team is doing the project, identify a point person. If other individuals or committees will be responsible for a project, contact them to see if they are willing to do it [e. g. The Worship Committee]. Offer access to the resources available to do the project [e. g. two websites]. Support them.

4. Identify a committee member to follow up: Designate a member from the creation-care team to offer support to the committee to whom the project has been delegated and follow up to track the project through to completion. Or use the liaison representatives to the various committees who are on the church council [e. g. a liaison to the worship committee].

5. Make the project ongoing: When it is completed for that year, set things up so that the project will continue into the next year [e. g. Put the celebration of Earth Sunday on the worship calendar as a regular part of each year].

6. Report: Report your successes to the church council and the congregation. Promote your identity as a creation-care congregation [e. g. Church newsletter with pictures of Earth Sunday celebration. Local newspaper]. Choose someone from your committee to do publicity or work with the publicity person in your congregation.

7. Start again for the next year. Begin process of choosing projects for the following year. Begin with #1 above. [e. g. celebrate The Season of Creation]. Be sure to revisit the overall vision provided by the five areas.

8. Other. If the projects recommended in the action plan do not fit your situation, consider opportunities that use the resources of your congregation or serve the needs of your community. And there are many more suggestions for projects in the LRC Manual for Congregations and on the website www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org.

Evaluate and adjust: Meet regularly (once a month or once every two months). As you work through the year, evaluate your action plan. Where needed, go back and retrace steps to make sure your action plan is being carried out. Affirm where it is working. When the steps suggested here are not working for you, revise the plan and adjust it to your needs and situation.

Remember the overall goal: To incorporate care for creation into the identity and mission of your congregation so that there is an ethos of care for God's Earth in all that you do.

Lutherans Restoring Creation: Action Plan Form

Name of Congregation _____ **Date** _____

LRC Contact Person (name, e-mail, phone#) _____

1. Worship:

Project One: _____

- a. Committee/group to refer to: _____
- b. Person to follow up _____

Project Two: _____

- a. Committee/group to refer to: _____
- b. Person to follow up _____

2. Education:

Project One: _____

- a. Committee/group to refer to: _____
- b. Person to follow up _____

Project Two: _____

- a. Committee/group to refer to: _____
- b. Person to follow up _____

3. Building and Grounds as Model:

Project One: _____

- a. Committee/group to refer to: _____
- b. Person to follow up _____

Project Two: _____

- a. Committee/group to refer to: _____
- b. Person to follow up _____

4. Discipleship as Home and Work:

Project One: _____

- a. Committee/group to refer to: _____
- b. Person to follow up _____

Project Two: _____

- a. Committee/group to refer to: _____
- b. Person to follow up _____

5. Public Witness and Policy Advocacy:

Project One: _____

- a. Committee/group to refer to: _____
- b. Person to follow up _____

Project Two: _____

- a. Committee/group to refer to: _____
- b. Person to follow up _____

6. Promoting our care for creation Identity in the congregation

Project: _____

- a. Committee/group to refer to: _____
- b. Person to follow up _____

Lutherans Restoring Creation Action Plan

The goal is to make a difference by transforming attitudes and commitments and by embracing concrete actions that reduce human ecological impact on the Earth and contribute to justice for people affected by environmental degradation.

Part 1. Transformation through Worship: “Let all creation praise God”

- a. **All Worship:** Render every service as creation-care worship: Make it explicit in the call to worship, confessions, prayers, and blessing/commission, plus scriptures, hymns, and sermons. For ideas and resources go to www.letallcreationpraise.org.
- b. **Season of Creation.** Observe a four-week optional season to celebrate creation as part of the church year, with liturgies, sermons, and alternative scripture lessons, all available for your congregation at www.letallcreationpraise.org.
- c. **Special Worship Services.** Observe a special day, such as Earth Sunday in April [www.creationjustice.org], Rogation Sunday [www.letallcreationpraise.org], or a “Greening of the Cross” service in the Easter Season [www.letallcreationpraise.org].
- d. **Blessing of the Animals.** Hold a service near the time of St. Francis Day (October 2) or any time in the church year [www.letallcreationpraise.org].
- e. **Appoint the sanctuary.** With creation-care banners, greenery, art. [www.letallcreationpraise.org]
- f. **Green your worship practices:** energy-saving lights and heat; altar plants, local wine, green cleaning products, eliminate/recycle/reuse paper, intinction [www.letallcreationpraise.org].
- g. **Other:** For example, develop your own worship resources and occasions for celebration.

2. Transformation through Education: “Know your traditions and your world”

- a. **Earthbound:** Adult education for this six-part video series produced by the ELCA to explore the theological foundations of Earth care and to examples of Lutheran Institutions carrying them out. Available now through LRC at half price. Go to the home page at www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org. Highly rated.
- b. **“Caring for Creation.”** Organize a forum or study group to read and discuss the ELCA Social Statement. Hard copies available from the ELCA with guide. Or go to: <http://www.elca.org/en/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Caring-for-Creation>. Also, see the 52 excerpts from this social statement for use in the church bulletin each

week. Download them and give them to the person preparing the bulletin. Go to: <http://www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/Home/congregations/bulletin-newsletter-items/excerpts-from-social-statement-caring-for-creation>.

- c. ***Awakening to God's Call to Earthkeeping***. An ELCA curriculum for adult forums or study groups. Or consider using the ELCA Lenten series "Creation Waits with Eager Longing" Copies available at [www.elca.org/caringforcreation].
- d. **Youth**. *Luther's Small Catechism updated for our Ecological Concerns* for youth groups/ confirmation classes. Go to www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/Home/individuals.
- e. **Children**. "ReNew," a Green VBS program from Sparkhouse at Fortress Press. Available for preschool, lower elementary, upper elementary. Visit the ordering site for Fortress Press at <http://store.augsburgfortress.org/store/>.
- f. **Other:** For example, organize forums with local experts or develop a book study or a Bible study.

3. Building and Grounds: "The church as an alternative community"

- a. **Energy Stewards Initiative**. LRC program for congregations to reduce your energy use/costs and carbon footprint, with online tracking of energy data, an action plan, and consultation and accountability through regular webinars. Or get an energy audit and follow steps to reduce energy. <http://www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/Home/project-elca-cuts-carbon-emissions>.
- b. **Overall environmental audit**. Use the *Comprehensive Environmental Guide for Churches, Their Buildings and Grounds* and the checklist that comes with it to do an overall environmental inventory of your congregation, and take action. Go to <http://www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/comprehensive-environmental-visioning>
- c. **Choose a specific project:** Replace all incandescent bulbs; retrofit fluorescent lighting; develop a recycling program; reduce paper use; purchase green cleaning products; make Earth-friendly food choices; eliminate Styrofoam; develop Earth-friendly lawn care, among others. For ideas, consult the *Comprehensive Environmental Guide*.
- d. **Use of land:** Community garden; restore to prairie; maintain any natural habitat; plant trees; create a sanctuary or peace garden; nurture animal life.
- e. **Know your property as an "Earth community."** Get to know the trees, plants, animals, insects, birds, and other creatures who live with you on this space. Live in such a way that all of you may thrive together. Pray for them. Worship with them. Include some in your church directory as your creation family. For directions, go to: <http://www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/stewarding-your-property-as-an-earth-community>.

- f. **Other:** For example, work with property committees of other churches in your area to plan together for creation-care maintenance and to hold each other accountable.

4. Discipleship at home and work: “Love your neighbor/ Care for Creation”

- a. **Covenant with Creation:** Plan a worship service in which members can identify Earth-friendly the Earth-friendly practices they are willing to commit to at home and work. Use a brief ritual that makes these commitments a stewardship offering. Example covenants and ritual available at www.letallcreationpraise.org.
- b. **Conduct a workshop on making your home Earth-friendly.** Use the material available in the *Comprehensive Environmental Guide for Congregations, Their Buildings and Grounds* as a guide to inform members about the areas of greening they can do. <http://www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/Home/congregations/building-and-grounds>.
- c. **Support groups.** Excellent for change of habits and accountability for “eco-recovery.” Use *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life* [www.earthministry.org]. Northwest Earth Institute has excellent resources in many environmental areas for small groups [www.nei.org].
- d. **Devotional resources:** Recommend creation-care resources to members for personal devotions. Ask people to sign up to follow a discipline with a resource for a season of the church year. Many resources are available at www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org.
- e. **Hold a retreat.** Lead a retreat for people to get closer to the natural world. For guidelines, see www.letallcreationpraise.org.
- f. **Other:** For example, convene a group to discuss how they can green their workplace.

5. Public Witness/ Policy Advocacy: “The church exists to serve the world”

- a. **Hands-on project.** Learn what environmental projects are happening in your area and what organizations are sponsoring them. Recruit members of your congregation to partner with them in the effort. Restore a habitat, clean up trash, plant trees.
- b. **Informational forums.** Learn what environmental organizations are active in your community and invite a representative of one or more to present a forum on their program. Promote the ways that your congregation can support their efforts.
- c. **Legislative forum.** Invite the head of the Lutheran Public Policy office in your area to preach and present a forum at your congregation. Or invite a local official familiar with local state and regional issues around the environment. If there is a critical issue in your area, plan a forum for information and conversation about it, and act on it.

- d. **Action alerts:** Invite members to sign up to receive action alerts via e-mail from the ELCA e-Advocacy Network at <http://www.elca.org/en/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Advocacy/Get-Involved>. The process for contacting legislators is made very simple and easy. Become familiar with the ELCA resources on advocacy at www.elca.org/advocacy.
- e. **Partner with other faith communities.** Join with others seeking to green their congregations. If no such organization exists, start one by asking the green team of one or more other congregations to meet with you and share ideas. Or, if you have been active for several years, offer to mentor another congregation in becoming a creation-care community. For an example, visit www.racinegreencongregations.org.
- f. **Other.** For example, identify an issue of ecological justice in your community and support the vulnerable who are being affected by environmental degradations.

PERSONAL COVENANT WITH CREATION

BE AN EARTHKEEPER:

Every action has consequences on other humans and on the Earth. Become aware of the outcome of your actions, reduce your impact on others, and walk lightly on Earth.

I pledge to work toward the following environmentally safe practices. Mark those you currently practice and check those you will now add to your environmental disciplines.

1. EDUCATION

- ___ Learn about the environmental crisis and ecological justice.
- ___ Read about or join a study group fostering voluntary simplicity.

2. GREEN YOUR LIVING SPACE

Energy Use

- ___ Alternative energy: solar/ geothermal/ purchase wind from your energy company.
- ___ Purchase Energy Star appliances (refrigerator, dishwasher, washer/dryer, water heater, dehumidifier) and high efficiency furnace, air conditioner, and windows.
- ___ Get programmable thermostat. Lower thermostat in winter; raise it in summer. Change settings when away. Use ceiling fans.
- ___ Clean/ replace filters for all appliances/furnace with filters.
- ___ Replace all incandescent light bulbs with CFL or LED bulbs
- ___ When not in use, turn off lights, TV, computer, appliances. Prefer natural light.
- ___ Turn off TV, computer, microwave, etc. at the strip/ plug.
- ___ Run full loads in dish washer, washer, and dryer. Use short cycles/ clothes line.
- ___ Use microwave/ toaster oven/ slow cooker rather than oven/range.
- ___ Set refrigerator at 36F to 42F, freezer at -5F to +6F, and water heater at 120F.
- ___ Use cold or warm water when washing clothes; rinse in cold water.
- ___ Insulate walls/ attic. Repair leaks around windows/doors. Lock windows to seal.
- ___ Repair hot water leaks. Insulate water heater ("blanket") + hot water pipes (wrap).
- ___ Contribute to organizations that will offset your carbon use with tree planting projects

Cleaning Products

- ___ Use non-toxic dish detergent and laundry detergent.
- ___ Use safe cleaning products either purchased or homemade.
- ___ Avoid spray or disposable products for cleaning, air-freshening, and cooking.

Water Use

- ___ Do not let water run while doing tasks.
- ___ Install low-flow shower heads and faucet aerators.
- ___ Repair faucet leaks and toilet runs immediately.
- ___ Take a short shower rather than a bath, and shower less often.
- ___ Wash dishes and laundry on full load.

Food

- ___ Buy fair-trade products.
- ___ Buy organic products.
- ___ Buy local produce and products.
- ___ Buy only what you will consume, and then use all you buy.
- ___ Put on your plate only what you will eat, and then eat all on your plate.
- ___ Eat fewer (or no) meat meals each week. Have a "hunger" meal each week.

Paper Use

- ___ Use recycled, post-consumer paper products for kitchen, bathroom, and cleaning.
- ___ Avoid paper towels; use cloth napkins and handkerchiefs.
- ___ Use electronic media rather than paper.
- ___ Use recycled, post-consumer, acid-free note/office paper or paper from tree farm.
- ___ Use the paper completely on both sides. Avoid bright-colored paper.

Reduce/ Recycle/ Reuse

- ___ Avoid use of paper, plastic, and Styrofoam in plates, cups, and utensils.
- ___ Recycle glass, tin, plastic, newsprint, mixed paper, cardboard, etc.
- ___ Recycle batteries, printer cartridges, cell phones, plastic bags.
- ___ Safely dispose of computers, printers, paint, and other toxic products.
- ___ Do not put grease or strong chemicals down drains.
- ___ Buy products with less packaging.
- ___ Compost food scraps and lawn clippings.
- ___ Use canvas bags for shopping or reuse paper/plastic when shopping.
- ___ When eating out, take your own plastic container for leftovers.

Yard and garden

- ___ Cultivate a green lawn and garden. Avoid herbicides and pesticides.
- ___ Avoid gas-powered implements. Use hand mower, rakes, and brooms.
- ___ Grow your own vegetables. Share with neighbors and food pantries.
- ___ Plant native grass, trees, and shrubs

3. TRAVEL

- ___ Purchase high mileage car. Maintain engine/tire pressure. Change oil/air filter.
- ___ Over 55 miles per hour, drive more slowly. Easy stops and starts. Do not idle.
- ___ Where feasible walk, bicycle, and carpool.

4. WORK

- ___ Green the work space and work practices: office, shop, factory, classroom, farm.
- ___ Advocate with employers to green your company, agency, or institution.
- ___ Promote greening among fellow workers and clients/customers/students.

5. NATURE

- ___ Enjoy as kin the plants and pets in your living space.
- ___ Take ten minutes a day to enjoy/love nature. Take a retreat with nature.
- ___ Use devotional materials that enhance your love of nature and your care for it.

6. PUBLIC COMMITMENTS

- ___ Advocate for environmentally friendly legislation and policies.
- ___ Restore a local habitat; protest a local environmental violation.
- ___ Contribute to social justice organizations and environmental organizations.
- ___ Invest in socially responsible stocks and bonds that foster eco-justice.

SIGNED _____ DATE _____

Litany for the Congregational Mission and the Personal Covenant with Creation

L: For the marvelous grace of your Creation, we pour out our thanks to You, our God.

**C: We praise you, O life-giving God,
for plants growing in earth and water,
for life inhabiting lakes and seas,
for life creeping in soils and land,
for creatures living in wetlands and waters,
for life flying above earth and sea,
for animals dwelling in woods and fields.**

L: How many and wonderful are your works, our God! In wisdom you have made them all!

**C: But we confess, dear Lord,
As creatures privileged with the care and keeping of Your Creation that we have abused
Your gifts of creation through arrogance, ignorance, and greed.**

**We confess, Lord, that we often are unaware of how deeply we have hurt Your good earth
and its marvelous gifts.**

**We confess that we are often unaware of how our abuse of creation has also been an abuse
of ourselves.**

For our wrongs, Lord, we ask forgiveness. We offer our repentance.

L: The God who loves all creation loves and forgives you. And God calls you to use your freedom to fulfill your human vocation to serve and preserve all community.

We promise to reverence Your creation as a gracious gift entrusted to us by You, our God.

**We pledge to make care for creation and human justice for the vulnerable an integral part
of our life and mission as a congregation.**

**We promise anew to be good stewards of what You have entrusted to us. We offer our
personal covenant with creation to pledge our commitment to care for Your good Earth.**

L: Creator God,

You have given us every reason to learn and promote this wisdom of lives lived in harmony with Creation. May You daily be present with us, gracing our service, our loving, our striving, through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

C: Amen

Lutherans Restoring Creation Resources for Creation Care Congregations

The goal of the LRC program is to incorporate creation care into the full identity and mission of your congregation and to foster an *ethos* in which everyone considers creation care to be part of your life together and your witness to their community. Therefore, choose actions and programs that contribute to this goal.

As you work your creation care congregational program, you may want to expand the choices for the action plan to make bolder plans, to draw upon particular assets, and to address local needs and opportunities. Consult the many additional resources on the websites sponsored by LRC.

- 1. LRC Manual for Congregations.** This manual has many ideas for eliciting the full participation of the congregation as well as some principles for pursuing creation-care. There is also an excellent manual for congregations developed by students at Luther College, with many ideas and resources.
- 2. An Expanded Action Plan.** The congregational manual includes a much fuller action plan following the same categories as in your action plan in this kit: worship, education, building and grounds, personal discipleship, and public witness/policy advocacy. You will find there more choices and links to more resources. Explore the site for additional ideas.
- 3. “Reviving Your Efforts” and “Taking It To The Next Level.”** The manual includes many ideas for maintaining a vital creation care program and for taking it to the next level. If you find that the actions in the action plan have been exhausted by your efforts or you want more choices, consult the ideas in these sections, which come at the end of the manual.
- 4. Stories.** For ideas and inspiration from others, consult the story section on the LRC website to see what programs and projects have been carried out by other Lutheran congregations
- 5. Theological foundations.** There are theological reflections for each of the five areas of the action plan, identifying the biblical, theological, and ethical foundations for choosing programs and taking actions. These are helpful for study sessions or adult forums. For more resources, check out the “Theology” section on the left sidebar of the LRC site.
- 6. Special LRC Congregational programs.** Consider joining the *GreenFaith* certification program for Lutheran Congregations. The program includes mentoring to complete a set of actions and events. LRC also sponsors *Energy Stewards Initiative*, a program that features online tracking of energy use, an action plan, and bi-monthly webinars that guide you through a process designed to lower energy use and carbon footprint and to free up funds for other ministries. Go to the sections of the LRC website on the left sidebar to access information.
- 7. Two more LRC websites.** LRC sponsors www.letallcreationpraise.org, a website devoted to care for creation worship throughout the year, featuring resources to celebrate an alternative four-week Season of Creation with alternative lessons, liturgies, and ideas. We also sponsor www.bibleandecology.org, which has resources for scriptural inspiration and Bible study.
- 8. Be creative.** We encourage you to develop your own resources for this program. And we hope you will share them with us so that we can energize and inspire other congregations to join this effort to restore creation.