

Seeds of Harmony - Service of Story and Song

Peace Forum Saturday Evening Worship
Saturday, 17 October 2026, 7:00 p.m. Central Time

Shannon McAdam, Council of Twelve, presiding
Susan Naylor, Piano



Video - What does Sacredness of Creation mean to you?

Welcome

Call to Justice

*Hymn *Community of Christ Sings* (CCS) 20, “God Within, God Around”

*Prayer of Creation - *attached*

Sharing Through Story and Song

Story from Dominican Republic

Hymn CCS 332, «Des colores»

Story from Germany

Hymn CCS 551, “By Night We Hasten”

Story from the Philippines

Hymn CCS 147, “God of Creation”

Disciples’ Generous Response

Hymn CCS 130, “For the Beauty of the Earth” - *French translation attached*

*Sending Forth

*Postlude “*In dunkler Nacht*”

**Indicates please stand*

Postlude video: www.YouTube.com

Prayer of Creation

by Channin Daugherty

from *Daily Bread*

I hear the ever-present “hum” of the Divine

In the flutter of leaves as they move in the wind

With the squirrel as she buries acorns in the soil

In the grass as it turns from green to brown

In the laughter of a child

In the gaze of one with wisdom of years

In the tears that fall

In the birds as they fly

With the grey whales as they jump and spout

In the smell of the dark soil of earth as it falls from my hand

In the hand of one holding the hand of another

In the eyes of a stranger

This is the song with no tune.

This is the song of the Divine moving through all creation.

We are connected

We are and the Divine is.

For the Beauty of the Earth / Pour la terre et sa beauté

1.
Pour la terre et sa beauté,
Pour les cieux et leur beauté,
Pour l'amour qui m'a comblé
Dès le jour où je suis né,

*Mes louanges par ce chant
Vont à toi, Dieu tout-puissant.*

2.
Pour la joie de notre amour,
Pour nos frères, pour nos sœurs,
Pour nos amis de toujours
Pour les mots plein de douceur.

*Nos louanges par ce chant
Vont à toi, Dieu tout-puissant.*

3.
Pour le jour et pour chaque heure,
Et pour le repos des nuits
Pour les monts, les fruits, les fleurs,
Et pour le soleil qui luit,

*Mes louanges par ce chant
Vont à toi, Dieu tout-puissant.*

Public Domain

Young Adult Articles: Germany and Missional Practices

These practices are based in the Enduring Principle Sacredness of Creation. As we engage with creation through these practices we allow ourselves, as individuals and as a community, to find our place within the divine creation.

As you enter into Wild Spirituality Practices, free yourself of preconceived ideas of human separateness from Creation. For many of us, this division comes from the Genesis scripture:

Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

—Genesis 1:26 NRSVue

We often interpret this to mean that humankind is to impel the Earth to submit to human purposes. A different way to look at this is to rethink what it is to be made in the image of God in the midst of creation. To be created as the image of God is not meant to elevate humankind over creation, but for humans to stand as representatives, mirrored images, or reminders, of the Divine Creator. In this way, humans have a role to play within creation as part of all that God has created. To be a healthy or righteous reminder of the creator changes how we interact, care for, and use the bounty of creation. Our choices, our actions, our consumption, and civic engagement should reflect this place in creation and God’s restoring purposes in the world.

*Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The **restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth** is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.*

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b

Wild Spirituality Practices

Terra Divina: A Spiritual Practice of Engaging with Earth

To begin, become present to the moment and the place where you are.

- Begin to wander, taking in with all of your senses: seeing, smelling, feeling, hearing, and tasting.
- Allow your attention to be caught by something in the landscape. It could be something as large as the whole sky, or something very small, perhaps lichen on a rock or a clump of moss. Whatever it is, spend some time with this other. Get close to it. What does it look like? Feel like? What is it doing? How does it interact with what is around it? What might it have to say to you?
- Then, respond to the other. You could speak or sing to it. Mirror it. Say a prayer or write about it in a journal.
- Finally, offer your gift of gratitude to this other, and let it go.

Terra Divina

Step one is *lectio*. This is reading the text of the landscape. Like reading a book, except now it's another language that you are reading – of clouds and birds and trees and sunlight. Here we are beginning to open ourselves up to the truth, wisdom, or gift that the landscape may be offering us. Let's imagine you are going for a walk in the woods. You are beginning to create space for something to catch your attention. You become aware of the various sensations you feel, noticing the places where your attention lingers. Perhaps there's a breeze, and you notice that your attention keeps coming back to the sound and the motion of the leaves on the trees. This, you sense, may be a gift to you – although you don't know why.

Step two is *meditatio*. This is meditation, where we clear our mind of all but that which is right before us. We begin to wonder about what has captured our attention and what is the gift it brings to us. The gift can be surprising or challenging, but we can rest with the gift, trusting in our acceptance of the gift. If leaves have caught your attention, you might notice that most of the leaves are held by branches which themselves are swaying, taking the shock of the wind into themselves. Perhaps the truth or gift here is that you too are being held, that you can bend or sway without breaking.

Step three is *oratio*. This is prayer of yearning. Here we let the natural world work within us. Take a moment to allow whatever has caught your attention (the physical sight, sound or sensation – not your thoughts about it) to carry the weight of your prayers or yearnings. As things come to mind you let them be carried by the simple presence of this element of the natural world. You might let the sight and sound (or later in the day the *memory* of the sight or sound) of the

branches absorbing the destructive power of the wind, to absorb the destructive power of whatever is concerning you.

Step four is *contemplatio*. This is contemplation or presence. This can be like stepping into warm sunlight. It can also feel like nothing. Either sensation is normal and good. Allow yourself to let go of whatever has caught your attention, and enjoy the sense of being alive, of being held, or of being at one with the divinely created world. Some experience this as being held in a benevolent universe. In the ancient Jesus tradition this is understood as being in the presence of the community of God, the Holy Trinity. So now you close your eyes and let the sound of the wind in the leaves and the sensation of the breeze on your face work within you. After a few minutes there may be a hint that, as the great English mystic Mother Julian of Norwich discovered through her own practice of Terra Divina, ‘all will be well and all manner of things will be well.’ [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Wild Conversation: Wandering

Enter: Often formational practices begin with an invitation to “cross a threshold.” This means to identify a marker (doorway, crack in the sidewalk, stick or branch on the trail, or a fork in the path). You cross a threshold when you go through the doorway, take the fork in the path, step over the stick, cross the bridge or enter the grove of trees. As you cross your threshold, allow yourself to enter into a different way of seeing. As you take the step to cross the threshold, make that step an intentional move into a more alive, joyful, mystical, whimsical, informed, and healthy relationship with God, others, yourself, and the Earth (Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b). www.HeraldHouse.org

Wander. Allow yourself to be drawn to something (the river, the sun, shadows, the breeze?) or someone (a crow, a hawk, a bug, a tree?) that seems to be calling you. Don’t question or second guess. Just respond by opening your imagination and offering your full presence. Release any agenda or expectation and simply be in the presence of the other.

Ask Permission. As you experience presence with this other, ask permission to enter its space. Wait for an answer...a sense of Yes in your body. Don’t overthink.

Wonder. Be fully attentive, listen closely. Use all your senses. Notice little things. Smell. Listen. Observe. Enter tenderly into this relationship.

Ask. Ask the other to engage with you. Ask it whatever question arises in you. For example: Is there despair in you? Can you share your joy with me? Patiently await a response. Allow your curiosity to be genuine. And then take the time to listen.

Share. Engage in a conversation. This is not your native language, so words sometimes don’t work. Instead, write something about this experience in a journal, paint or sketch the experience,

or practice stillness, listening deeply, allowing images and emotions to arise. Share your concerns, anguish, or deep compassion with the other. Note what barriers you sense may be blocking your communion with this other part of sacred creation. Listen. Be Open. Be Still.

At the conclusion of your time with the other, ask yourself, What insight comes up from this encounter? What invitation did you receive to enter into a deeper experience with the divinely created world?

Gratitude. Before you leave this encounter, offer a song, a poem, an action (perhaps a bow or a prayerful “Namaste.”) The purpose here is to offer honor and gratitude. Your full attention has been the gift you offer. Just as we brighten when someone gives us their full, open attention, so it is with all living beings.

Return: Return to where you began. As you recross the threshold, turn and offer one more word of gratitude.

Wandering

1. Intentionally find and cross a threshold (root, path, branch, etc.) into an acute awareness in the center of your being that you are in a wild space.
2. Walk slowly, listening with each step, for the silent whisper that a living one (plant, creature, element of wind, fire, earth, water) is seeking your attention.
3. Enter into a space of mutuality – communicate or “listen” attentively to what the living one has to share with you.
4. Invitation – Offer your thoughts as a spiritual release or a gift of presence rather than expecting a response.
 - a. Sit in the stillness – “Be still and know that I am God.”
 - b. Be held in the wonder of the Holy One, Creator of all.
5. Be present to your body and emotions, as well as thoughts or realizations that come. What is “spoken” through intuition beyond calculated thinking?
6. Return to group and share in a time of reflection.

Quote Reflection

Select a poem, prayer or quote (for ideas see Appendix 1)

Move to a place where you are in contact with nature (a lawn, under a tree, sitting in the sun, standing in a puddle).

Read the poem, prayer, or quote aloud.

Be still and present to what your senses are bringing to you (what do you hear, smell, touch?).

Note any words or images that come to mind.

Read the poem, prayer or quote aloud again.

Be still and present to what the wind, rain, sun, tree, or grass is bringing to you.

Note any words or images that come to mind.

Read the poem, prayer or quote aloud.

Be still and present for another minute.

Return to group for a time of reflection and sharing.

Sit Spot

The penultimate activity in *Guided Forest Bathing* (Red Wheel, 2021, [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1641520000)), and sometimes the last activity when self-guided, is [Sit Spot](#). Sit Spot is a mindfulness practice - or as Amos Clifford notes, when done in the context of forest bathing, Sit Spot is a practice-within-the-practice - in which a person selects a specific location in nature that feels ‘right’ to them and then spends time just sitting there, observing and connecting with the natural surroundings in a mindful and intentional way. As the name suggests, it involves sitting in one spot in nature, usually for at least 20 minutes, giving wildlife time to become accustomed to your presence and resume their own behavior. Through staying still in your chosen spot you can often cultivate a deeper comprehension of yourself, others, and the wider natural world, as well as relaxing, unwinding and slowing down.

Find a spot in nature where you can spend some time in rest and reflection. It could be forest, field, shoreline, park, or a garden. Ideally, it is a spot that you will return to again and again.

You have no agenda here, no reflection questions following. You are simply sitting still and being present as part of sacred creation.

Breathe with Nature

We often feel rejuvenated after a walk outside, especially when we encounter lovely flowers, interesting terrain, or a quiet grove of trees. The practice of breathing with nature is a way to take in our surroundings physically and spiritually. The divine spirit hovered over the waters at creation, that same spirit has been experienced as breath, wind, and deep awareness of divine presence. Breathing with nature is synchronizing your breath with the natural rhythms that

surround you (waves, wind, birdsong, your steps as you walk). In *Breath Prayer*, (Broadleaf 2021) [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1608081111), author Christine Valters Paintner reminds us that ancient Christians left cities and populated places and went into the wild places to find places of “radical stillness” where they could encounter the undomesticated spirit, the creative, divine one.

Take a walk into a natural space, near trees in your neighborhood, in a city park, on a patch of grass near the edge of a parking lot, in an open field, forest, or shoreline.

Walk slowly, listening attentively to any sounds of nature. This might be birds chirping, small creatures chattering, flowing water, wind in the trees. Synchronize your breathing with the rhythm of your surroundings. Paintner writes, “One of nature’s gifts can be a deep sense of solace and support. A sense that we belong here, that we are part of creation.”

As you walk, pause several times to breathe deeply:

Breathe In: Feet Bless the Earth

Breathe Out: I belong here.

You can adapt the breath prayer by substituting other words for “feet” (hands, eyes, ears).

As you conclude your walk, offer a prayer of gratitude for sharing breath with this most sacred creation.

Grounding in Creation

Grounding is the practice of standing or walking barefoot on earth, noticing connection with and energy from the Earth.

Grounding in multiple health and well-being movements refers to direct skin contact with the surface of the Earth, such as with bare feet or hands. The idea that contact with the energies of the Earth brings a sense of well-being is found in the literature and practices of diverse cultures from around the world. In religious communities, removing shoes in the presence of the divine is a symbol of entering sacred or holy ground. This idea lives in Community of Christ as an aspect of the Enduring Principle, Sacredness of Creation. All creation is sacred, including the ground beneath our feet.

Here the practice of Grounding is to experience a deeper connection to the Earth through physical contact, mindfulness, and spiritual connection.

Find a spot outside where you can comfortably take off your shoes and walk or stand barefoot. Ideally this would be on dirt or grass but sidewalks and patios will do in a pinch.

Stand or walk slowly for three to five minutes. Attune your awareness to what you are feeling through your feet.

What physical sensations are present?

What energy do you sense emanating from the ground into your body?

Be mindful of the contact points with your feet and the earth. What kind of connections are you experiencing?

Conclude your time with a prayer of gratitude for the energy of creation present in this experience of sacred or holy ground.

5-4-3-2-1

This is a particularly good practice to engage families with young children.

Select a spot outside or near a window or doorway. Use your five senses in your chosen spot to identify sights, sounds, and textures as gifts from the Earth.

5 Things You Can See: What gifts from the Earth can you see from your spot?

4 Things You Can Touch: What different textures might you touch, rough bark, smooth stone, loose dirt?

3 Things You Can Hear: What sounds can you hear that are from the plants, animals, wind, and water?

2 Things You Can Smell: What smells can you identify as part of our sacred creation, flowers, rain puddles, dust, grass, animals, leaves?

1 Thing You Can Taste – without actually ingesting anything, what do you think wind tastes like, or rain, snow, grass, dirt, berries?

Offer a prayer of gratitude for all the ways we can experience God's created world.

Create a Nature Altar

Invite participants to walk gently on the land, noticing what draws their attention.

Collect small natural items (fallen leaves, stones, feathers, seed pods) *without harming living plants*.

Choose a central place outdoors or indoors as an altar space.

Arrange items with intention (e.g., in a circle, spiral, or simple cluster).

As each person places their item, they may name what captured their attention or what they sense as they reflect on the item, perhaps a brief prayer of gratitude, or hope for creation.

Use the altar throughout the time together or during the retreat as a visual prayer space; dismantle at the end, returning items to the earth.

Communion with Creation

Gather outdoors with simple food (bread, fruit, nuts) and drink (juice or water).

Begin with silence, attuning to the natural setting.

Read or speak words that honor creation as God's gift (e.g., blessing the soil, sun, and water that nurtured the food).

Break bread together, inviting mindful chewing, tasting, and gratitude.

Option: include a Eucharistic prayer if your community practices it.

Close with a blessing: "As this food becomes part of us, may we live in harmony with all creation."

Nature Journaling

Provide notebooks/sketchbooks and pens/pencils.

Invite participants to find a quiet spot outdoors.

Begin with grounding: notice the temperature, light, sounds, textures.

Suggested prompts:

What do you see that you usually overlook?

If this tree/rock/cloud could speak, what would it say?

Draw one thing that captures your attention and annotate with words.

What does it mean to be in healthy or righteous relationship with this place?

Allow 30–45 minutes.

Gather together. Invite participants to share excerpts from the experience (this is always optional).

Poetry of Place

Begin with 5–10 minutes of stillness in a chosen spot outdoors.

Invite participants to let words, phrases, or images arise.

Prompt: *If this land could speak, what poem would it whisper?*

Encourage short, simple lines rather than polished “literary” writing.

Allow silence for writing (20–30 minutes).

Option: gather to read poems aloud, creating a chorus of voices honoring the location, flora, fauna, and spirit of this place.

Poetry of Place

Begin with 5–10 minutes of stillness outdoors.

Invite participants to think about where they come from...what aspect of creation comes to mind as important to where you are from? A kind of tree, a bird, insect, or animal. What is the terrain like? The weather, the outdoor activities?

Prompt participants to write short simple sentences to describe who they are as a person from that place. Example:

I am from the tall evergreen trees

The rivers that birth the salmon,

The low hanging clouds,

And the tall volcanoes crusted in glaciers and blanketed in snow.

Gather in a circle and invite participants to share what they have written.

Photography as Prayer

Encourage participants to carry a phone/camera as if it were a prayer book.

Begin with centering: “Look not for the perfect picture but for what invites your attention.”

Walk slowly, pausing to frame images of beauty, shadow, pattern, or surprise.

Invite at least 5 photos taken in prayerful awareness.

End with a sharing circle where each person shows one image and briefly names why it feels sacred.

Blessing of the Waters

Gather at a stream, river, lake, pond, even a faucet or simple bowl of water.

Begin in silence, listening to the sound of water.

Read aloud a blessing or scripture about living water.

Example: [Ezekiel 47:9](#) *Common English Bible*

Wherever the river flows, every **living** thing that moves will thrive. There will be great schools of fish, because when these **waters** enter the sea, it will be fresh. Wherever the river flows, everything will live.

John 4:10 *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

Invite each person to touch the water, tracing a cross, circle, or heart on their forehead or hand.

Speak gratitude: for rain, rivers, oceans, clean drinking water.

Send the blessing outward by cupping water and letting it fall back, symbolizing prayer flowing to the world.

Walk with Reverence

Begin in a circle: Explain the intention of walking in silence and holding the space you inhabit with gratitude and reverence.

Walk together in silence for a set distance or time.

Encourage awareness of breath, sound, and the feel of the ground beneath the feet.

At a midpoint, pause for a reading or prayer.

Example: Quote from St. John of the Cross, 16th-century monk

I was sad one day and went for a walk;
I sat in a field.
A rabbit noticed my condition and came near.
It often does not take more than that to help at times,
to just be close to creatures who are so full of knowing,
so full of love that they don't chat,
they just gaze with their marvelous understanding.

Walk back in silence or open to quiet conversation if appropriate.

Close with a reflection circle: “What did you notice? What noticed you?”

Creation Companions

Ask participants to gather their journal and pen or pencil.

Walk to a quiet spot outside.

Invite participants to let their eyes and hearts be drawn to one being: a tree, flower, insect, bird.

Sit or stand near it quietly for 15–20 minutes.

Observe details: color, texture, movement, sound.

Ask inwardly: *What might this being teach me about God, life, or resilience?*

Journal or sketch any insights.

Optional sharing: Share about “your companion” with the group.

Night Sky Gazing

On a clear evening, silently gather outdoors after the sun has set and stars have appeared. Take blankets or chairs to sit or recline on.

Lead the group in several deep breaths, as their eyes adjust to the darkness.

Invite all to lie down or sit comfortably, looking upward.

Invite participants to look for constellations, notice the moon phases, see the stars peek around the clouds.

Offer silence or a short reading. Example: Psalm 8:3-9 NRSVue

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are humans that you are mindful of them,
mortals <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm 8&version=NRSVUE> that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than
God <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm 8&version=NRSVUE>
and crowned them with glory and honor.
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Encourage participants to rest in awe and spaciousness, without need for words.
Close with a whispered blessing or song.

Peace of the Wild Things

With journals and something to write with take a short walk outdoors and form a circle.

Read the poem “The Peace of Wild Things” by Wendell Berry. www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk

We are going to spend some time in the peace of a wild thing.

Invite participants to find a place to sit or stand comfortably. Allow your eyes, ears, or nose to be guided to one natural object, sound, or smell.

In your journal sketch or describe the individual nature object.

Now create a list of 20 words to describe your object.

Ask yourself, what does this object contribute? In what ways is this object connected to other parts of nature? How is it connected to me? Write your reflections in your journal.

After 10 minutes, gather back together in a group.

Ask each person to select three words from their list that describe their object.

- Write each word on a post-it note or small piece of paper. To save paper, this activity could be done on a chalkboard or whiteboard.
- If this is a large group, divide into small groups of 5 or 6
- Go around the circle sharing about your object, then place your three words in the middle of the circle.
- Working together as a group, use your collective words to write a group poem about the sacredness of creation. Share poems with the larger group.

Wisdom of the Water

Sit quietly and comfortably on a beach, river's edge or lakeshore and gaze out at the water. If you're not near a body of water, close your eyes and allow your mind to take you there. Take several deep breaths and inhale the marine air. What do you smell? What do you hear? Notice the rise and fall of the waves, the sound of moving water, the ripple of the shallows. Remaining still, allow yourself to be immersed in this rhythm.

Then, look at the sand, creek side or shore. Notice the objects deposited there by water, wind, and current. Take note of the objects the tide or current returns to the sea. Use this wisdom of the water to contemplate the ebb and flow of your own life: What treasures and experiences have come to you? What have you let go over time?

After 20 minutes, gather as a group and share any insights or reflections that have come to you.

Sacredness of Creation Missional Practices

Missional Practices are actions we can take to heal, restore, and preserve our natural environment. While Wild Spirituality practices reconnect us in the created world, these Missional Practices are steps we can take to fulfill our call as part of God's sacred creation.

The earth, lovingly created as an environment for life to flourish, shudders in distress because creation's natural and living systems are becoming exhausted from carrying the burden of human greed and conflict. Humankind must awaken from its illusion of independence and unrestrained consumption without lasting consequences.

Let the educational and community development endeavors of the church equip people of all ages to carry the ethics of Christ's peace into all arenas of life. Prepare new generations of disciples to bring fresh vision to bear on the perplexing problems of

poverty, disease, war, and environmental deterioration. Their contributions will be multiplied if their hearts are focused on God's will for creation.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:4b-c

Plant Trees From Your Desk

By Miriam Erickson

The articles for these Missional Practices were written by the young adults of Germany and Norway as a series of articles for the German Community of Christ newsletter.

Introduction

Most of us are informed about how crucial it is that everyone makes their contribution to environmental protection. Hopefully, after reading some of the articles in our monthly German newsletter, we can all be better informed on how important it is to change or adapt our lifestyle and habits in order to promote the well-being of our planet.

Article

Sometimes the task of doing something for the environment seems too big to us. I would like to show you how you can make a positive contribution to the environment from the comfort of your own home and without additional time, effort or financial burden!

Let me introduce to you: Ecosia - the search engine that plants trees.

Ecosia was founded in December 2009 with the clear goal of promoting environmental protection using corporate profits. Here's how they do it: After covering operational costs, 20% of profits are invested in renewable energy and regenerative agriculture, while the remaining 80% is used to plant and protect trees. Ecosia is always guided by current findings on endangered species, bird migration corridors and ecological crisis areas to target its financial support where it is most urgently needed.

So that's how Ecosia works. How can you support it? The answer is simple: open Ecosia.org and enter all your search queries there instead of typing them into your usual search engine. In addition to some search results, you may see a green leaf or a dark smoking factory, which makes it clear whether the respective website is environmentally friendly or not. In addition, an individual counter appears in the top right corner of each search, showing the total of trees you have already planted through your use of Ecosia. Next to this counter is a news button that offers regular updates on current projects and is accessible to all interested parties.

To date, Ecosia has planted **over 200,000,000 trees** in 35 countries. I cordially invite you to join this initiative and plant trees with me from your desk by integrating Ecosia into your daily internet search.

Missional Practice: Support Reforestation

- **Educate and Participate**
- To date, Ecosia.org has planted **over 200,000,000 trees** in 35 countries. We can plant trees by integrating Ecosia into our daily internet search.
- [Arborday.org](https://arborday.org) is an organization that has worked with schools and businesses to replenish forests and aid reforestation. Take time to learn more about them and see how you might participate in this important work.

Protecting Water for a Stable Climate: The facts speak for themselves

by Philipp Wagner

Water is not only vital, but also an important factor in stabilizing our climate. Because of the current challenges of climate change, it is important to protect our water resources. Here are some impressive facts and figures that illustrate why this protection is so urgently needed:

Changes in the water cycle: Climate change is changing the water cycle worldwide. The intensity and frequency of droughts and heavy rainfall are increasing, leading to water shortages in some regions and flooding in others.

Endangerment of the water supply: About 1.8 billion people worldwide have no access to clean drinking water. The pollution of water sources by industrial waste, agrochemicals and plastic waste further exacerbates this problem. Every year, about 829,000 people die from diseases directly attributable to unclean water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices.

Biodiversity loss: Bodies of water and wetlands are habitats for countless plant and animal species. The pollution and destruction of these ecosystems leads to the loss of biodiversity and endangers the balance of nature. For example, pollution of the German Oder river caused a mass fish die-off in the summer of 2022. Based on the available data, the IGB (Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries) estimates that up to 1,000 tons of fish died in the Oder river in 2022, and that more than half of all fish fell victim to the Oder river disaster.

In the face of these alarming facts, it is essential to take measures to protect our water. Each of us can contribute, whether by reducing our water consumption, avoiding plastic waste, or supporting ecosystem restoration initiatives. The protection of water is not only a question of environmental protection, but also a question of our own future and of future generations. Let's act together to conserve our water resources and thus make an important contribution to the fight against climate change.

Sources for this article:

Triple Threat: How disease, climate risks, and unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene create a deadly combination for children. New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2023. www.bmu.de. (accessed February 15, 2024).

Missional Practice: Protect Water

- Reduce non-necessary water consumption.
- Reduce the use of plastics in your home and work.
- Educate yourself about projects and organizations that work to restore water sources such as:
 - o Water.org: Co-founded by Matt Damon and Gary White, it uses innovative solutions like Water Credit to provide access to safe water and sanitation.
 - o Water Well Trust: A 501(c)(3) organization that provides clean water to families in rural America, primarily through building wells.

Less Meat Helps You, the Animals and the Whole World: Why a meat-free diet can make you and all of us (more) happy.

By Anastasia Zhuravel and Frieder Eccarius

One thing up front: Frieder likes to eat meat. He can hardly say no to a well-grilled steak or a chicken that has stewed on a skewer in its own juice.

But is it good for him to eat meat every day? By no means. It depends on the quantity. Anyone who, like Frieder, eats meat almost every day will soon notice that they gain weight, breathing becomes more difficult, fitness slowly dwindles, and fatigue and passivity are the consequences. At some point, your health suffers and it's time to seek medical help.

For a while now, Frieder has changed his eating habits and now eats meat only a few times a week. He feels much better, his fitness has improved and his belly has become smaller. As a next step, he wants to give up meat altogether and see how he feels about it. Maybe a vegan phase will follow for both of us. But not only Frieder's well-being plays a role here, we can all take steps to improve our own well-being and that of the planet.

Meat production takes up large resources from our planet. A kilo (about 2 lbs.) of steak causes twenty times more greenhouse gases than a kilo of vegetables. The production of this kilo of steak consumes about 20,000 liters of clean drinking water. We must reduce greenhouse gases so that our planet does not heat up further.

How much and what meat we buy determines how animals are raised, how resources are consumed, and how much we contribute to global warming. The meat industry is a burden on the climate. This does not mean that we all must become vegetarian or vegan - but the motto should be: *eat less and better quality*. If we all consume less and consume sustainably produced meat, it will benefit the animals, contribute to both climate protection and the preservation of the biodiversity of our earth.

The Influence of the Meat Industry on the Climate

by Daniel Erickson

Maybe you've heard the statement: "I'm a vegetarian to protect the climate" and wondered what that means. As a rule, such people avoid mass meat producers, as they produce disproportionately large amounts of greenhouse gases.

Ruminants, such as cows, produce about 24% of all greenhouse gases worldwide, because cows emit methane when chewing. The amount of methane emitted by a cow in a year is about as harmful to the environment as 18,000 kilometers driven by car. In addition to the direct environmental pollution through the animals, there are also the effects of meat transport. The majority of the meat consumed in Germany comes from other countries, such as Brazil and the USA.

In addition, meat production requires an enormous area for the grazing of the animals and the associated feed production. As a result, about 350 football fields of rainforest are cut down every year to grow new nutrient-rich fields for fodder, create grazing areas and keep up with increasing meat consumption. This area applies exclusively to the meat production that supplies Germany.

Meat production is also a glutton in the water sector. Just to cover German meat consumption, 4-8.5 trillion liters (that's 12 zeros behind the 4! Or 1.057 trillion US liquid gallons) are used annually.

In the end, it comes down to a simple logic: If the grain used for livestock farming were simply used to feed people, you could generate seven times as many calories of food from it. A cow, for example, is fed grain for several years to create relatively little meat mass. The soy and grain in animal feed could very well be used to feed humans.

Of course, you don't have to give up meat completely, and that's not the point of it at all. Each animal species is important for its own biosphere, but the majority of the meat consumed in Germany still comes from mass production. At the moment, Germans simply consume a huge amount of meat, and this has been proven to be a massive contribution to climate change.

There are simple ways to help. For example, you can reduce meat in your meals to one or two times per week. A bonus of lowering meat consumption is you might also save a little money.

Missional Practice: Reduce Meat Consumption

- Reduce meat consumption to two or three days a week
- Learn where and how your meat is produced. Choose meat that is grown ethically, locally, and organically.
- Learn about and support farmers using soil restoration practices to produce animal feed like soilhealthinstitute.org

The Problem of the Packaging Industry

by Anna Maria Jeske Kristiansen

Food packaging is a major environmental problem. Almost all purchased food is packaged in human-made materials, most often glass, metal, paper or plastic. Unfortunately, most packaging is only intended for single use. While plastic is difficult to recycle or decompose, it is also one of the packaging materials we produce the most of, about 380 million tons every year. Most of the plastic cannot bio-decompose, and either ends up in landfills, where it takes several hundred years to decompose, or it is broken down into smaller pieces called microplastics. Because microplastics are so small, they can be easily transported by wind or water. Large plastic parts also spread easily. Animals can mistake it for food or get caught in it. Dead animals are often found with stomachs full of plastic. It has become such a big problem that the UN Oceans Chief, Lisa Svensson, has declared plastic pollution in the oceans a planetary crisis.

The production of food packaging alone is a major problem. Many resources such as energy, water, chemicals and minerals are consumed. In addition, greenhouse gases, heavy metals, wastewater and sludge are often produced, which contain toxic pollutants.

Sources for this article:

- plasticoceans.org
- www.bbc.com
- foodprint.org

Missional Practice: Reduce and Recycle Food Packaging

- Recycle at home and support recycling in your schools, workplaces, and communities
- Take your own reusable bags when you go shopping
- When shopping, reach for products that are not packaged in plastic, or are not packaged for single use

Fast Fashion: The Fashion Industry's Hidden Environmental Cost

by Philipp Wagner

Fast fashion has become an indispensable part of our wardrobes. Clothing chains are constantly tempting customers with new collections at low prices, which means that we are buying clothes more and more often – and disposing of them just as quickly. But what many people don't know is that behind these supposed bargains hides a high price for the environment.

The fashion industry is one of the most pollution causing industries in the world. A large part of clothing is produced with a high use of water, chemicals and energy. About 2,700 liters (approximately 710 gallons) of water are needed to produce a single cotton T-shirt – this corresponds to the drinking water needs of a person for two and a half years. The synthetic fabrics used, such as polyester, are also made of plastic and release microplastics with each wash, which enter the waters and cause damage. Working conditions in textile factories, especially in developing countries, are also often miserable. Workers earn a fraction of the fair wage, work in dangerous conditions and are often exposed to the toxic chemicals used in production.

By consuming more consciously and choosing against the throwaway mentality of fast fashion, we can help reduce the environmental impact and support better working conditions in the fashion industry. Every little step counts – and often starts in your own wardrobe.

Missional Practice: Better Fashion Choices

- **Quality over quantity:** It's better to buy less, but high-quality and durable clothing. Timeless pieces last longer and can be combined in many ways.
- **Second-hand and vintage:** Buying second-hand clothing saves resources and prevents wearable clothing from ending up in the trash.
- **Repair and upcycle clothes:** Instead of throwing away a broken piece of clothing immediately, it's worth repairing it or changing it creatively. A hole can be sewn, a faded T-shirt can be dyed.
- **Support sustainable fashion:** When buying, look for labels that produce fairly and environmentally friendly. Brands that rely on sustainable materials and produce under fair conditions are often a bit more expensive, but also more ethically justifiable.

Earth Hour by Anna Maria Jeske Kristiansen

Since 2007, "Earth Hour" has been a symbolic marker for millions of people. Earth Hour is where the lights are turned off for one hour to call attention to how our energy use negatively impacts the climate. The nature conservation organization WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) started this campaign, and its goal is to raise awareness of the climate problem. Currently, not only individuals, but also companies, public buildings, and municipal sights observe Earth Hour. Turning off the lights is meant as a symbolic act to show that people around the world are standing together to stop climate change. "Earth Hour" as a public action always takes place on the last Saturday in March between 8:30 and 9:30 p.m., but you can also do it yourself at any time.

Every year, my family and I mark this day by turning off all lights and electrical appliances for an hour. During this hour, we always light a lot of candles to make it cozy. We often play board games and have a good time together. There are also many other ways to spend this hour, for example you can go out on the balcony to admire the starry sky with or without a telescope. Another option is to take a walk in the neighborhood or in nature. You can also use this

opportunity to meditate or simply spend time with someone you love. I highly recommend taking part in it, either on this day or on another day that fits your schedule.

There are many ways to observe Earth Hour, but the most important thing is to remember why we are doing this. We only have this one planet and although it seems like a small thing, it is nice to know that we stand together and share a common hope for the future.

Missional Practice: Turn Off the Lights

- Once a month, turn off all lights and electrical appliances for an hour. During this time, light candles and play games, share about your day, or take a walk. It is a small step, but we can encourage others to join us in a Turn Off the Lights Hour in our neighborhoods and communities. In this way we share support for each other in healthy environmental practices.
- Ride a bike or walk for short trips to the store, to work, or school.
- Switch to LED lightbulbs and turn off electrical appliances when not in use.
- Try public transportation. Look up your area's bus or train schedule. Spend a day riding different routes to learn more about what is available. Invite a friend or go as a family. Make it an adventure.