

Intergenerational Retreat: Connecting with God's Creation

RETREAT MODULE INTRODUCTION

Dear Retreat Leader:

Thank you for your willingness to serve as a leader for this retreat at a camp and conference center. The hope and prayer is that this retreat module will provide an enriching experience for all participants as well as you and your leadership team. This module will provide the tools for you and other congregational leaders to put this retreat into action. It is designed to equip you and your team to host and lead a retreat at any of the amazing camp and conference centers for a wonderful retreat experience.

Purpose

The intent of this retreat module is for you as a congregational leader to have a tool that equips you and a team for retreat leadership. A variety of opportunities to explore and discover God's word in community abound at a camp and conference center. Without a lot of time and effort this module provides a model for a retreat that is flexible and can be adapted to your group.

Why Retreat

A retreat refreshes and revitalizes, taking us out of the daily grind of our normal lives and provides an enjoyable breathtaking experience. Retreats are important for our minds, bodies and souls. They provide a restful setting, experiences in the out-of-doors, time exploring God's Word, and activity that engages us in community - rekindling and deepening relationships with one another and with God.

Why Retreat at a Camp & Conference Center

The setting of a camp and conference center enhances the experience of God spiritually, mentally, and physically. The center lets us step away and encounter a place of wonder and discovery, rest and renewal. It opens up an opportunity for individuals and groups to be outdoors connecting with one another, creation, and the Creator.

Shared Leadership

Team leadership is ideal, spreading out the work load and sharing in the ministry. There is joy in hearing different voices and in equipping others to serve alongside one another. The community that is built can overflow into other ministries as well as into other retreats in the future. This model envisions the inclusion of members of a team with varying gifts.

Flexibility is the Key

Be flexible throughout your retreat, giving the Holy Spirit space to enter into the retreat experience and community being built. Activities are designed for both inside and outside (weather permitting) with opportunities to spend quality time in the environment of the camp and conference center especially outdoors.

What You Will Find

Here is what you will find in the module to assist in planning your retreat:

- List of supplies/resources
- Sample schedules
- Song suggestions
- Additional resources
- Options like adapting for various sized groups
- Spaces of free time to just relax or participate in some of the activities provided at the camp and conference center
- Scripture readings are provided for convenience - leaders may use other biblical versions and/or invite participants to bring their own Bibles

Planning a Retreat

1. Create a team to help plan, administer and lead the retreat:
 - Make reservations at the camp and conference center
 - Develop a registration form and process
 - Arrange travel for leadership and participants
 - Design a schedule with gatherings, activities, meals, and rest
 - Gather supplies needed
 - Consider any safety concerns especially for your group at this location
 - Invite leaders to assist before, during and after the retreat

2. Get the Word Out:

They say that the average person needs to hear and/or see something 7 times before it is ingrained in their memory. That means you need to share the invitation for your retreat in as many places as you can, in as many forms as you can.

- Identify your audience by determining who should be invited to participate
- Work backwards from your retreat date to calculate required deadlines for invitations, registrations, and advertisement prior to the retreat
- Use newsletters, flyers, bulletin inserts, bulletin boards to get the word out
- Include an informational flyer with the registration form
- Use email notices, social media and websites to advertise
- Follow-up as registration dates get close with reminders to register
- Confirm registrations and include a what to bring list
- Build excitement as you send a reminder closer to the retreat date

3. Retreat Schedule:

Begin with one of the provided sample schedules and adjust it to best meet the needs of your group. Don't forget to include meals and free time so there is rest in the midst of activities.

4. Evaluation:

Follow-up after the retreat, with a paper, electronic, or verbal evaluation. Ask what was most meaningful, least meaningful, what might be changed for a next retreat. This will provide you with an overall sense of how the retreat was received, as well as notes for any future events.

Use of Space

- Inside & outside – take advantage of the outside space as well as the various activities provided at the camp and conference center
- Safe space for your retreat – both physically in your location as well as for the conversations, interactions and experiences
- Worship space – remember that worship is a central part of our community; keep familiar rhythms while at the same time introducing new ways of worshipping in a different setting
- Small groups – create a safe and welcoming space for sharing; invite all voices to be heard; instill respect for various opinions to be voiced and heard

- Special needs – consider what hearing, sight, mobility etc. needs exists in your group; be inclusive with all of your spaces and adapt activities as needed

Gathering in Community

- Gather in circles when possible – around a table, standing or sitting, circles provide a sense of community; we can see one another's faces, listen to and hear one another better
- Music – select songs that are easy to sing, and have word sheets or music sheets available; introduce new songs by teaching them and listening to the music before singing.

Provide Hospitality

Hospitality is important for all participants to have a comfortable and grace-filled experience. Consider what simple things will make people feel welcome and comfortable.

- Hospitality area – provide water/beverages and snacks; find out whether the camp and conference center can provide this or whether you will need to bring them
- Locations – provide maps and information on where everything is located; consider a tour or scavenger hunt for your group to learn where to find locations for the retreat; good signage and clear directions can make a big difference
- Get acquainted – everyone may not know everyone else, so assume that you need name tags and activities to get to know one another
- Safety – bring first aid kits, safety equipment and instructions for any special activities
- Schedule – make copies available for those who wish to have a printed schedule of the retreat with meeting locations and times.
- Greeters – these welcoming faces are necessary for anyone who is unable to attend the entire retreat and coming for only part of it; be sure to have someone who will greet them and help them get settled in when they do arrive; also be sure to welcome them into the group and fill them in on what you are doing as they join the retreat in progress
- Participation – encourage everyone to fully participate and to share concerns with leadership if they are not comfortable with certain activities; most activities can be adapted to meet the needs of your group
- Be aware – there may need to be some adjustments made to include those with mobility, dietary, hearing, etc., for your particular group; ask the

questions during planning in order to address these to the best of your ability

Openings & Closings

The strength of your retreat is often determined by how you start and finish. Open strong with an organized plan for the retreat, including opportunities for everyone to get acquainted/re-acquainted and to build community.

Closing strong can wrap up the experiences of the retreat and encourage participants to take home what they have discovered to share with others. Shape your closing with a summary of the experiences you have shared and leave space for goodbyes.

Above all, have an amazing, fun-filled and God-filled experience playing in creation, exploring God's word, enjoying activities, sharing experiences and building community in the beauty of your camp and conference center.

Blessings on your retreat experience!

Biblical and Theological Introduction

This intergenerational retreat is designed for all ages and stages to explore and discover connections with God’s creation, while strengthening connections with others gathered for this retreat. Within the camp and conference center setting, time will be spent engaging in activities and conversations that present the importance of all of our connections – with God, one another, the world we live in. The hope is that all will leave this experience with closer connections and an understanding of how we are caretakers of God’s creation.

Potential Uses

Leadership is encouraged to shape the retreat to fit your needs. Activities are laid out as a two night retreat; for example Friday night, full day Saturday, half-day on Sunday. Other sample schedules are provided for shorter retreats in Appendix A. An optional mission project is included in Appendix G, to plug in to supplement your retreat or to use during your worship experience. The hope is that together you will play, worship, and converse together as you explore and discover your connection with God, creation, others.

Explore the Bible Story

Sharing God’s Story is designed to be a place of sharing the Bible story alongside interactive storytelling that engages all ages and stages with wondering and pondering questions which can be used as a whole group, small groups of mixed generations or within family groups. The intent is to engage and explore God’s word and connect scripture to the activities and experiences of the retreat.

Retreat Schedule Alternatives

The following retreat is designed to include a partial day, followed by a full day, and concluding with a half day. For example: Friday night/Saturday/Sunday Morning

You can customize your retreat depending on your schedule.

Alternative A: ONE FULL/ ONE PARTIAL DAY RETREAT

For example, Saturday all day & Sunday half day

Full Day

Activity # 1 – Connect with One Another

Activity # 2 – Web of Creation

Activity # 5 - Sharing God’s Story – In the Beginning - Part 2

Activity # 6 - Mindfulness Walk
Activity # 8 - Sharing God's Story – God the Creator & Provider
Activity # 7 - Project – For the Birds
Lunch
Free Time for activities or rest
Activity # 9 - Sharing God's Story – Caretakers & Earth-keepers
Activity # 10 - Litter Walk
Activity # 11 - Planting Trash
Dinner
Activity # 12 - Campfire & Story

Partial Day

Activity # 4 - Morning Movement & Prayer
Activity # 13 - Worship Experience & Closing

Alternative B: ONE PARTIAL DAY/ONE FULL DAY RETREAT

For example, Friday evening & Saturday all day

Partial Day (2-3 Hours)

Activity # 1 – Connect with One Another
Activity # 2 – Web of Creation
Activity # 5 - Sharing God's Story – In the Beginning - Part 2
Activity # 12 - Campfire & Story

Full Day

Activity # 4 - Morning Movement & Prayer
Breakfast
Activity # 6 - Mindfulness Walk
Activity # 8 - Sharing God's Story – God the Creator & Provider
Activity # 7 - Project – For the Birds
Lunch
Activity # 9 - Sharing God's Story – Caretakers & Earth-keepers
Activity # 10 - Litter Walk
Activity # 11 - Planting Trash
Before or after Dinner (as time allows)
Activity # 13 - Worship Experience & Closing

Recommended Personnel and Supplies

Personnel

- Readers-throughout the retreat there are a variety of opportunities for various voices to share in the reading of prayers, litanies, and scripts. Asking for volunteers early will allow time for practice and comfort with their responsibility.
- Storyteller- the script for the Activity #5-Sharing God's Story requires preparation and storytelling skills to be most effective. Recruiting someone for the role before the retreat and supplying them with the script and story cards is essential.
- Musician or music leader to provide music leadership throughout the retreat

Connect with One Another (Activity #1)

- Large index cards (8" x 5") or half sheets of white construction/cardstock paper – (1 per person) to make large name tags
- Hole punch
- Yarn or string (24"+ in length – long enough to hang safely around someone's neck)
- Marker
- List of suggested creation cards from Appendix B

Web of Creation (Activity #2)

- Large name tags with names of creation used in the "Connect with One Another" activity. May need to add cards for a larger variety, so there is good representation of creation (see Appendix B).
- Large ball of string or yarn, enough for each person in your group to hold on to and stretch back and forth across a circle like a giant spider web

Note: the string web will be cut up into 12" pieces for a later activity at the Closing

Sharing God's Story – Part 1 (Activity #3)

- Bible or copy of Scripture Passage from Genesis 1:1-10
- Volunteer Reader
- Optional Campfire and copies of selected songs to sing together

Morning Movement and Prayer

- Script in Appendix C
- One or two people who have read and practiced the words and movements to the script
- An open space with level ground (inside or outside)

Sharing God's Story –Part 2 (Activity #5)

- Space with an open circle
- Script in Appendix D
- Storytelling pictures – ahead of time find or prepare creation story pictures – 8" x 11" so they can be seen. Calendar pages are great, pictures from Sunday school lessons or magazines cut out and pasted on to construction paper work well too.
 - Day 1 = Sheet of dark construction paper for the darkness, sheet of yellow construction paper for the light.
 - Day 2 = Sheet of blue construction paper or full page of water for the waters of the earth.
 - Day 3 = Picture of dry land with lots of plants and trees and a bit of blue sky.
 - Day 4 = Two pictures side by side or even attached – one of the bright shining sun and one with the moon and stars.
 - Day 5 = Two pictures side by side or attached – one of birds flying in the sky and one of water with fish and swimming animals.
 - Day 6 = Picture of creatures with legs and humans together on the dry land.
 - Day 7 = If you can find one – a picture with sun, water, land, plants, birds, fish, land creatures and humans together (if not just skip this one).

Mindfulness Walk (Activity #6)

- Outdoor path where there is some variety of creation-easy path for all ages and stages to navigate; depending on group size you might need to break up into manageable groups of 12-20 and offer a couple walks or use the options below to have smaller groups look for different things at the same time
- Optional: card size pieces of colored paper to match creation colors (paint chip cards from the store work great too) – yellow, green, red, orange, brown, pink, purple, white; a set of colors for each person or family group.

For the Birds- three options (Activity #7)

- Tables or a work surface outside works best
- Pinecone (or graham cracker) Feeders:
 - pinecones, or graham crackers
 - peanut butter or lard (Crisco-if there are any concerns regarding peanut allergies)
 - birdseed
 - cotton string (biodegrades and can be safe nesting material) – 6-12” each
 - scissors
 - cookie sheets or trays for birdseed
 - spoons–1 per person
 - large carpet needle, ice pick or awl (for graham crackers) – Used to make holes ahead of time for string to be put through top for hanging.
- Cereal chains:
 - cereal rings [Cheerios, Fruit Loops] – Needs a hole so string can be pulled through it, making a chain.
 - cotton string – 20” long
 - small pieces of tape
- Fruit slices:
 - fruit slices – oranges or apples (cored), sliced into ¼” disks
 - cotton string – 6-10” long
 - zip locking bags for taking feeders home – 1 per feeder

Sharing God’s Story (Activity #8)

- Reader to share the Psalm, reading slowly and pausing after each verse, so the volunteers can move with props as they interpret the story
- 4-6 volunteers to help act out parts of the story as the reader shares the Psalm verse by verse; youth might be willing to participate if invited ahead of time and given a chance to read through the Psalm and choose actions to fit
- Large flat bed sheet or piece of fabric as a prop
- Storytelling pictures from earlier in the retreat for the days of creation
- Sheet of butcher paper or large easel tablet
- Solored markers

Sharing God’s Story (Activity #9)

- “Dear Children of the Earth” by Schim Schimmel. Book purchased, loaned or share the youtube video of the author sharing the story at - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ4c0X1rMH4&t=18s>

- Equipment to share the youtube video
- Bible or copy of Job 12:7-10

Litter Walk (Activity #10)

- Set-up – “plant” litter items along the path ahead of time; everything should be seen from the path.
- Bag to collect all the items (ideally a reusable fabric bag)
- List of items “planted” – helps to hide them in list order
- Variety of assorted litter such as:

piece of paper	toilet paper tube	piece of cardboard
plastic lid	styrofoam cup	orange peel/apple core
glass bottle	string	sandwich bag
aluminum can	small cardboard box	plastic six-pack holder
gum	small plastic container	styrofoam packing
wrapper/foil	sock or fabric	peanuts

Planting Trash (Activity #11)

- Outdoor table or work space recommended;
- “Paper” cups (not styrofoam or plastic) – 1 per person
- Litter items (can be from your “Litter Walk”) – 1 per person
- Cut smaller sections from the larger items from your walk, to include:

wadded up piece of paper	string	piece of cardboard
gum wrapper/foil	sticky note	orange peel
rope	small paper cup	styrofoam packing
toilet paper tube	fabric	peanuts
	photograph	sandwich bag

- Planting soil
- Permanent markers
- Scissors or utility knife to cut litter items
- Appendix E “Litter Will Last” information printed out on cardstock and cut up into cards – 1 per family unit

Campfire Story (Activity #12)

- Audio from youtube for the “1855 Letter from Chief Seattle to President Franklin Pierce”, to share at the campfire: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gv1BDTWQsj0>
- Equipment to play the audio from YouTube
- Printed words for “The Whole Wide World is in God’s Hands” from Appendix F

Worship Experience and Closing (Activity #13)

- Outdoor worship space is ideal but this can be adapted for inside
- Prayers and litanies provided or others of your own choosing
- Song sheets or books for the songs you select to sing
- Creation mural needs:
 - Piece of butcher paper – 3-6 ft. long depending on the size of your group
 - Colored markers
 - Cut out pictures of creation (Sunday School materials, magazines, calendars)
 - Glue sticks
 - Rocks or something to weigh down the four corners of the paper
- Small sticks (no thicker than a pencil) collected ahead of time, broken into approximately 2” sections and 4” sections. Each person will need one 2” and one 4” stick
- String kept from the “Web of Creation” activity (have extras on hand, just in case)
- Supplies for Mission Project if you choose to add it in, found in Appendix G

Day 1

1. Connect With One Another (Activity #1)

Goal: To begin the retreat getting acquainted/ reacquainted as you introduce the theme. Experience the connections between all the forms of life in creation and how they are all linked and dependent upon one another. Have conversation on what impacts those on the web.

Resources: large index cards (8" x 5") or half sheets of white construction/ cardstock paper – (1 per person) to make large name tags; hole punch; yarn or string (24"+ in length – long enough to hang safely around someone's neck); marker; list of suggested creation cards from Appendix B

- a) Using the categories of creation you have selected based on your group size, invite the common categories to find each other, (example: the plants all find one another, the animals all find one another) until you have several groups around your space.
- b) In a circle, invite each group to connect with one another by sharing their name and then answer a question, sharing in their group. Encourage all to participate including young children.
- c) What is your favorite ice cream?
- d) Share names again and answer the next question and so on. Share names as often as is needed for your group.
- e) What is your favorite plant, tree or flower?
- f) What is your favorite bird, fish or animal?
- g) After the groups have had time to answer all three questions, invite the groups to form one group in a circle. Invite them to go around the circle, share their name and any answer they heard that surprised them the most or that they liked the most from any of the 3 questions.
- h) Keep the creation name tags handy for the "Web of Creation" activity.

2. Web of Creation (Activity #2)

Goal: To visualize the interconnectedness of all creation.

Resources: Large name tags with names of creation used in the "Connect With One Another" activity. May need to add cards for a larger variety, so there is good representation of creation (see Appendix B); Large ball of string or yarn, enough for each person in your group to hold on to and stretch back and forth across a circle like a giant spider web; couple pair of scissors

Note: String web will be cut up into 12" pieces for a later activity at Closing

- a) Form a large circle inside or outside with every participant having a large name tag around their neck. Young children can share a card with an adult or have adults assist them.
- b) Invite everyone to consider the assigned role in creation that is on their card. Think about what food and shelter they need to survive, and who/ what might depend on them for survival.
- c) Invite someone to begin, holding on tightly to the loose end of the ball of string. Look around the circle and ask: what part of creation are you connected to?
- d) Now toss the ball of string to that member of the web of creation, being sure to hold onto your end of the string, forming a link between you both.
 - To the one now holding the ball of string, ask: what part of creation are you connected to? Have them toss the ball to that participant, and so on, making sure everyone holds on to the string before tossing the ball onward. A web will start to develop in the middle of the circle. Continue until every participant is connected to the web, only taking one turn holding onto the string.
- e) Here are some examples of connections based on the suggested list, if the group needs help:
 - Birds, bats, and insects pollinate plants, so they can grow.
 - Birds live in trees.
 - Bears eat fish and fruit, and sometimes climb trees for safety or rest.
 - Reptiles like snakes eat birds' eggs and crawl in the grass.
 - Birds, fish, frogs, and salamanders eat insects.
 - Large mammals like deer and moose will eat bark and lower branches of trees
- f) As time allows, have conversation around the importance of connection. When one part of the web is impacted, the others on either end of the string are impacted. **Sample questions:**
 - **If there was a forest fire and all of the trees and plants burned up, how does that impact the web of creation?**
 - **If we pollute the lake or river, who does that affect first?**
 - **If there is a drought or flood, what happens to the web?**
 - **If a species becomes endangered or extinct, how does that impact the web?**
 - **What does it feel like to know you rely on someone else in this web? What does it feel like knowing someone else is relying on you?**
- g) Demonstrate these impacts. Tell everyone to hold onto their string tightly. With a participant's permission, place your hands on their shoulders and gently pull them back away from the circle. Ask: When one member of creation is stressed, what happens to everyone else?

- h) Another way to demonstrate the impact on creation is to invite one member of the web to drop their string completely, or use scissors to cut them out of the web. **Ask: How does that affect the whole web of creation?**
- i) Conclude with a reminder that all of creation is connected, including humankind. When one part of creation suffers, we all suffer. When one part of creation thrives, we all are healthier. Say: We are all in this together. We are all connected in God's creation!
- j) As a reminder of our connection with all of God's creation, cut at least 12" pieces from the "web" for each person. Encourage them to wrap it around their wrist as a bracelet, put it in a pocket but keep it as a reminder of our connections. Let them know that they will use their part of the "web" in the Closing, so try save it until then.

3. Sharing God's Story: In the Beginning-Part 1 (Activity #3)

Goal: To provide an initial introduction to the story of creation using the evening elements of night, stars and moon.

Resources: Dimly lit space inside or around a campfire; scripture reader for Genesis 1:1-10.

- a) **Ask: Where do we find the story of God creating the world?**
(In Genesis the first book of the Bible which means "the beginning")
- b) Invite everyone to hear God's creation story for the first days of creating and to listen for the opening words, what happened each "day" and what was created? Share just the beginning of the creation story from Genesis 1:1-10 as an introduction.

Genesis 1:1-10 (NRSV)

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the

second day. And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together God called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

c) Wondering & Pondering:

- **Ask: What are the opening words of this reading of God’s creation story?** “In the beginning when God created.” (Some translations = “God created”). Share that the opening words of the Bible are “In the beginning”, reminding us that before God created there was nothing, a formless void of darkness. Also that “In the beginning, God...”, reminds us that while the earth was a formless void of darkness, God existed. And “In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth”; God was the beginning and then created the heavens and the earth; then swept over the face of the waters (or the “Spirit of God” as in some translations) to create more.
- **Ask: What happened in the first days of God’s creation story and what was created?**

1st Day – *God said “Let there be light”.*

God separated the light from darkness.

God called the light day, and the darkness night.

There was evening and morning, the first day.

2nd Day – *God said “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters to separate them. God made the dome and separated the waters under and above the dome. God called the dome sky, there was evening and morning, the second day.*

Next – *God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered in one place. Let the dry land appear. God called the dry land earth, and the gathered waters God called seas.*

d) **Close by saying: In the beginning, God. In the beginning God created. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. All that God created was good, even from the beginning. These are just the first “days” or “stages” of God’s creation story as a reminder of how our amazing world began in God’s beginning. This retreat we will experience in many ways how we are connected with all that God created. And it was good!**

e) If outside or able to move outside, pause to take in the lights of the night and/or join around a campfire.

f) Optional campfire activities:

- campfire snacks (ex: s’mores, banana boats, roasted marshmallows)
- star gazing

- singing and/or story sharing
- g) Evening prayer- These may be left in participant rooms or shared at the closing of the campfire.

Creator God,

*Wherever I look with my eyes, around this earth or up to the sky above,
I see you in the stars, on the land and in the waters of the land. In every
breath and sound, a blade of grass, a simple flower, I see and hear your
holy name, Creator God. Amen.*

Day Two

1. Morning Movement & Prayer (Activity #4)

Goal: Morning Prayer with movement for all ages and stages as a way to review God's creation story to begin the new day

Resources: Script for the "Morning Movement and Prayer" in Appendix C; Inside or outside but helpful to be on level ground. Participants can be standing or sitting with room to spread out for movements.

- a) Invite your group to join you in prayer with movement and motions. First, teach the basic movements and motions encouraging everyone to do stretches that are comfortable and not do anything that hurts or is uncomfortable.

2. Sharing God's Story – In the Beginning - Part 2 (Activity #5)

Goal: Share the whole story of God's creation from Genesis 1, which reviews the first couple days and then shares all 6 days of creation

Resources: Inside or outside - in a circle, campfire circle outside is great; Script and story cards listed in Appendix D; Storyteller

Instead of reading the scripture from Genesis 1:1-27, the story will be told using the script in Appendix D. Can be shared in front of or in the center of a group depending on what works best. Participants do need to be able to see the storyteller.

Note: This storytelling model is adapted from "Godly Play" by Jerome Berryman. If you are familiar with "Godly Play" you may have a storyteller in your midst to invite to share God's story.

3. Mindfulness Walk (Activity # 6)

Goal: Use the senses to connect with and experience the creation around us. Practice mindfulness, use listening skills, look for various colors and observe the variety of creation. Encourage awareness of the creation around us in our own backyards, parks, schoolyards, and in the environments we encounter daily.

Resources: Outside on a marked path where there is some variety of creation; Select the path for an easy walk with some variety of creation (plants, signs of

animals, etc.); Optional- have a set of card size pieces of colored paper to match creation colors (paint chip cards from the store work great too) – yellow, green, red, orange, brown, pink, purple, and/or white for each person or family group.

- a) Share that for the first part of the nature walk, everyone is invited to be mindful of all the colors of creation we can see. Encourage everyone to look closely as you walk slowly, to see all the different colors and shades of color that are all around. Remind them that we are not picking anything or even touching, we are just using our eyes to see. As you walk along, for every different color of creation you see, put up a finger on your hand to help count the variety of colors. If you choose, hand out the packets of color cards to help match, and use your fingers to count.
- b) Walk a ways until you see that most participants have seen at least 5 different colors. Invite them to share or even point out some of the different colors nearby, that they saw.

Ask:

- **Did someone see something that no one else did?**
 - **Is it close so everyone can see it?**
 - **Was there a color that you saw lots of different shades of? (Seasons tend to have a quantity of colors in wildflowers, like yellows and whites in the Spring)**
 - **What was the most plentiful color? (green or brown depending on the season)**
- c) **Say: We can discover a lot of creation around us simply by using our sense of sight to be mindful of God’s creation around us and the wide variety of color.**
 - d) Share that for the next part of the walk, everyone is invited to be mindful of all the sounds of creation that are heard. Remind the group that there are also human-made sounds on the trail, but that for today we are tuning those out. Also ask everyone to concentrate on listening and not talking so that everyone can listen well. As we walk along, for every new creation sound you hear, put up a finger on your hand to help count the variety of sounds. Try not to count the exact same bird tweet or cricket noise more than once. Use both hands if you need to.
 - e) Walk a distance, until you see that most have heard at least 5 sounds. Invite them to share what different creation sounds they heard.

Ask:

- **Did someone hear something others did not? (wind blowing, small insect?)**
 - **Were there creation sounds that most everyone heard?**
- f) **Say: We can discover a lot of creation around us simply by using our sense of hearing to be mindful of God’s creation around us.**

- g) Share that for the last part of the walk we are going to be nature detectives that listen and look for wildlife and signs of animals, birds, reptiles and insects. Suggest that “signs” of wildlife means evidence of creatures making their homes (nests, holes, dens, caves), beds (deer smash down the grasses where they lay down), feed (trees where bears, deer or elk have scratched or bitten off bark) or have been (scat or droppings, footprints or trails). Remind everyone that we are not using our sense of touch, we are only looking and listening.
- h) For this part of the walk invite them to show the rest of the group what they have found so everyone gets to be a detective and discover what creature it might be. (If available, field guides will help to identify wildlife, especially scat)
- i) Walk for a distance to discover more wildlife or until you either finish the path or loop back to the beginning. Review together the variety of wildlife you discovered or found signs of.

Ask:

- **Were you surprised by anything you discovered?**
- **Do you think something lives along this path that you didn’t find signs of?**

Say: We discovered all kinds of creation around us by being mindful of God’s creation using our senses and being nature detectives connecting with everything around us.

Other options:

- Finger up for every different kind of wildflower or tree that they see.
- Walk the same section of path first listening, then looking, then discovering signs. **Ask: How did focusing on a different way of being mindful, change what you experienced?**
- Create a scavenger hunt with specific items to look for on the path by listing them. You can give different groups or families different things to look and listen for.

Note: Be mindful of what in the area is poisonous (plants and animals) just in case someone does touch something.

4. Project - the Birds (Activity # 7)

Goal: For intergenerational groups to make a variety of natural bird feeders as a way to care for creation. These model the use of natural products, including cotton string so they will not adversely impact the environment. You may want to invite participants to make two, leaving one at the center hanging in a tree (check with staff) and another to take home.

Resources: Recommend outside tables or work surfaces; zip locking bags for taking feeders home – 1 per feeder; purchase supplies based on whether you want participants to make a certain feeder or all three.

Share that by providing natural bird feeders you are doing your small part to take care of God's creatures. Especially in the winter, when seeds are harder to find from plants and the lard helps give birds warmth. The cotton string will biodegrade and become part of creation and can also be nesting material in the Spring.

Say: God invites us all to be caretakers or earth-keepers of the amazing creation we are connected to.

Pinecone (or graham cracker) Feeders:

Resources: pinecones, or graham crackers, peanut butter or lard (Crisco-if there are any concerns regarding peanut allergies), birdseed; cotton string (biodegrades and can be safe nesting material) – 6-12" each; scissors; cookie sheets or trays for birdseed; 1 spoon per person; large carpet needle, ice pick or awl (to make hole in graham crackers)

- a) Tie a piece of cotton string onto the top of the pinecone or string it through the hole made on the top of the graham cracker. Make a loop at the end so it can be hung on a tree branch.
- b) Use a spoon to spread peanut butter or lard on the pinecone or on both sides of the graham cracker.
- c) Roll the pinecone or dip the graham cracker into the pan of birdseed, pressing the seed in with your fingers.
- d) Hang the feeder on a tree branch for the birds to enjoy and/or place the feeder in the bag to take home and hang later.

Cereal Chain:

Resources: cereal rings [Cheerios, Fruit Loops]; 20" length of cotton string per person; small pieces of tape

- a) Tie one piece of cereal with a knot onto one end of your string, this is your anchor piece to keep all the cereal on the string. Wrap a small piece of masking tape around the other end of the string, to help keep it from unraveling.
- b) Thread pieces of cereal onto your string, sliding them over the taped end until you have a chain of cereal. Stop when you have 4-6" of string left for hanging.
- c) Tie off the string to the last piece of cereal with a knot so the cereal doesn't come off with the remaining 4-6" of string to tie to a tree branch.

Fruit Slices:

Resources: oranges or cored apple slices (1/4" disks); 6-10" length of cotton string per person

- a) Using either or both oranges and apples, feed one end of your cotton string through the center of the apple slice or through a small triangle of your orange slice. Tie it off with a knot.
 - b) Using the other end of the string, hang your feeder on a tree branch
- Option: Apple slices can be spread with peanut butter/lard and rolled in birdseed too, just make your slices thick (1/4") so they don't break easily.

5. Sharing God's Story - God the Creator & Provider (Activity # 8)

Goal: To identify with the psalmist who recognizes the splendor of God's creation.

Resources: Reader; 4-6 volunteer actors; large bed sheet or piece of fabric as a prop; creation storytelling pictures from earlier in the retreat; sheet of butcher paper or large easel tablet; colored markers

- a) **Say: This Psalm is known as a hymn or a song to God the Creator. Singing praises and giving glory to God the Creator for all that has been created. It paints a picture of creation that parallels the order of the Genesis story. It connects humans to all that is created on this earth from the sky above, to the sea below, to the land, and to all the creatures living on it.**
- b) As the reader shares Psalm 104 (slowly), volunteers help tell the story by acting out the parts through movement and the use of the fabric. This is done silently with only the reader sharing the words of the Psalm. Encourage your storytellers to have fun with it and just be creative. For example:
 - "wrapped in light" = sheet wrapped around someone like a blanket
 - "stretch out the heavens like a tent" = stretch the sheet out then peak it like a tent
 - "clouds...wind" = bunch up the sheet like clouds, make it wave & flow like the wind

Note: If you can't find willing volunteers, have the reader pause after a few verses and ask your group what they picture when they hear the verses of this beautiful song. Let them describe the images in their minds as they hear the words describe God's creation.

Psalm 104:1-25 NRSV - "God the Creator and Provider"

Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment. You

stretch out the heavens like a tent, you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind, you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers. You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken. You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight. They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys to the place that you appointed for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth. You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst. By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart. The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that God planted. In them the birds build their nests; the stork has its home in the fir trees. The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the coney. You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in their dens. People go out to their work and to their labor until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great.

c) Wondering & Pondering:

- **Ask: I wonder what names for creation you heard in this song of praise?**
- Invite someone to write down all the names of creation the group heard. If you need to, look back at the scripture reading. Note: A coney or hyrax is like a hedgehog, large body with short legs.
- **Say: Look at this list, what a variety of creation on this planet we call earth.**
- Now, using the storytelling pictures of the 6 days of creation ask the questions below then use a colored marker to indicate on what day God created it.
 - **What on this list or in Psalm 104 was part of day 1 in God's creation story?**

- Using a colored marker indicate those things on the list with a #1
- **What on this list or in Psalm 104 was part of day 2 of God’s creation story?**
- Using a different colored marker indicate those things on the list with a #2
- Continue asking and marking creation on the list with the day that God created it. (Day 3 = mark with a #3, and so on through day 6.)
- **Is there mention of the seventh day and God resting?**
- Share how this Psalm, this song of praise for God the Creator and Provider echoes or parallels the Genesis story that we have explored earlier. Invite them to ponder. **Ask: This Psalm sings praises to God our Creator, what other ways can we thank God for all the amazing parts of creation in our world that we are connected to?**
- Time permitting, you can have more conversation or just leave the question out there for them to ponder on.
- Close your time together by using verses 24 and 25 as a prayer of thanksgiving.

6. Sharing God’s Story - Caretakers & Earth-keepers (Activity # 9)

Goal: Explore Job’s questions to his friends in Job 12:7-10, that encourage us to consider the value of animals, birds, plants and fish. Recognize that God takes care of all things, large and small and entrusts humans to be the caretakers for all of creation.

Resources: equipment to share the YouTube video; “Dear Children of the Earth” by Schim Schimmel. Book purchased, loaned or share the YouTube video of the author sharing the story at - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ4c0X1rMH4&t=18s>

- a) Share the scripture reading from Job 12:7-10, reading it slowly with pauses.

Job 12:7-10 NRSV:

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? In God’s hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.

- b) Invite your group to ponder this reading for a moment, then reflect on the questions, before sharing their answers. Depending on your group size you might invite small groups to ponder the questions then report back to the whole group.

Ask:

- If we ask the animals, what will they teach us?
 - If we ask the birds of the air, what will they tell us?
 - If we ask the plants of the earth, what will they teach us?
 - If we ask the fish of the sea, what will they declare to us?
 - Who among us knows that the hand of the Lord has done this?
 - Encourage a loud and committed response of “I know!!!!”
- c) Share “Dear Children of the Earth” by Schim Schimmel – either by reading the book or sharing the youtube reading by the author, Schim Schimmel at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ4c0X1rMH4>
- d) Wondering & Pondering:
Ask these questions of the whole group or break into small groups, then invite each group to share with the whole group.
- What do you think is the biggest, most important thing you can do to help the earth?
 - What do you think the earth needs from us more than anything else in the world?
 - Who will you tell that the earth is our home and we need to love the earth and care for the earth?
- e) Close with prayer using verse 10 and lifting up some of the caretaking, earth-keeping ideas that were just shared.
“In God’s hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.”

7. Litter Walk (Activity # 10)

Goal: Discovering what is natural and human-made as well as what can be recycled, reused, reduced as we serve as caretakers and earth-keepers.

Resources: “planted” litter items along a path; depending on your group size, decide how many items to “plant” along the path; you might also make the first items on the path easy to spot, and then harder to find as you go; everything should be visible from the path; litter (see suggestions in Supply List); bag to collect all the items (ideally a reusable fabric bag); list of items “planted” – helps to hide them in list order.

- a) Take your group to the entrance of your path and explain that you will be taking another nature walk, except that this time we are searching for things that do not belong in creation. Look for things that a machine makes or is human-made, sometimes what we would call trash or litter. When we see something we think doesn’t belong just stop and point to it. The whole group will come and see what it is before we pick it up. A person can only locate one item so that everyone has an opportunity to find litter. Extra

bonus points for finding something that wasn't "planted" but is litter.

Note: If you are having younger children do the finding, share that with the group and have adults give hints if kids walk past an item.

- b) Walk along until the first item is spotted. Make sure everyone sees it before it is picked up and placed in the bag (leave items if another group is searching after you). At each stop, ask:
 - **What is this item made of?**
 - **Can it biodegrade or become part of God's creation naturally again? (Most cannot with the exception of the small paper items.)**
- c) Continue walking, spotting items, everyone seeing them, answering the questions and collecting it in the bag. When you have located all the items that were "planted" find a central spot outside or inside where you can spread out all the things you found that do not belong in God's creation.
- d) Time permitting, you can sort them together as wood based, plastics, glass, metal etc. and have conversation about what can be reused or recycled.
- e) **Say: Our job as humans is to be God's earth-keepers and do our part to take care of all of creation. Remember, when pollution, litter, or trash impact a part of the creation web, everything connected to it is impacted. We need to do our part as the two-legged creatures to be God's caretakers and keep items like we found on our walk from finding their way into the natural parts of God's Creation.**
- f) **Ask: How can we be earth-keepers? How can we do our part?**

Note: Keep these items to be used for another activity, "Planting Trash". Please recycle or reuse any items not used.

8. Planting Trash (Activity # 11)

Goal: Continue the conversation of our connection to God's creation and our role as caretakers or earth-keepers. Recycling and reusing as well as not littering and polluting can make a big difference. Discover how long it takes for many items of "trash" to biodegrade or breakdown or become part of the earth again.

Resources: Recommended outdoor table or work space; 1 paper cup per person; 1 litter items per person; planting soil; permanent markers; 1 information card from Appendix E "Litter Will Last" per family unit.

- a) **Say: Remember the items we found on our "Litter Walk" and how some were made from natural items? Now we are going to discover how long some of these items take to become natural parts of God's Creation again. Over time they can be composted or biodegrade into the soil.**

- b) On the outside of the paper cup write the name of the “trash” that you are going to plant. Then guess how long in weeks, months or years it will take for the “trash” to biodegrade or compost. Write your guess on the cup.
- c) Invite everyone to pour a little bit of soil into their paper cups, add their “trash”, tearing off a small piece, then cover with soil until the cup is mostly full. Now that you have planted your “trash” you need to water it and put it in a sunny window just like you would a growing plant. Both help the composting or biodegrading process.
- d) Hand out the information card, “Litter Will Last” to each family group and encourage them to find the approximate time it takes for their “trash” to biodegrade. For some items they will need to guess and make an estimate based on what is on the list.

Hints:

- Sticky note has added glue so will take longer than just paper.
 - Gum wrapper foil is part paper, but will take much longer than paper to break down the foil.
 - While some packing peanuts look like styrofoam, many are made of cornstarch and dissolve in water or biodegrade quicker than paper.
 - Plastic coated paper takes longer than just paper, same with a photo.
 - Thicker plastic takes much longer than a plastic bag, but both take forever.
 - **Ask: Was your guess close?**
- e) Encourage your group to take their “planted trash” home, put it in a sunny space, water it and see how long it takes to disappear or biodegrade. Explain that is why we took out the items that take many years to biodegrade or never do.
 - f) Close with a reminder that God created us as caretakers and our job is to help take care of the creation God gifted us. Recycling and reusing items is key to preserving our planet. Materials that take a long time to biodegrade should be limited and repurposed whenever possible so that we can do our part to protect God’s gift of creation.

Note: Please recycle any leftover “trash” from all of these activities to model responsible creation care.

9. Campfire & Story (Activity # 12)

Goal: Voicing the connections experienced and what stands out to be taken home and put into action.

Resources: Printed words for “The Whole Wide World is in God’s Hands” (Appendix F); equipment to play the audio from YouTube; Audio from YouTube for

the “1855 Letter from Chief Seattle to President Franklin Pierce”, to share at the campfire: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gV1BDTWQsj0>

- a) Share the audio for the 1855 Letter from Chief Seattle.
- b) Wondering & Pondering
 - What caught your attention as you heard this message from Chief Seattle?
 - What did you hear that connects with our time here on this retreat?
- c) Say: A well known part of Chief Seattle’s speech is this:
“This we know: All things are connected like the blood that unites us. We did not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand of it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.....Preserve the land and the air and the rivers for your children’s children and love it as we have loved it.”
- d) Say: We did not weave the web of life, God did. We and all of creation are merely a strand of it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves and all of creation. God has created us to be part of all of creation and to be the caretakers, earth-keepers of the created world we are all connected to, the web of creation.
- e) Sing: “The Whole Wide World is in God’s Hands” - Appendix F. Modified verses to the familiar song “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” a traditional African-American Spiritual first published in 1927. Feel free to invite the group to create their own verses as well as add hand motions.
- f) Close the campfire with prayer:

Creator God,

Thank you for the great web of creation of which we are merely a strand of. Guide us to be the caretakers and earth-keepers you want us to be. Help us remember that when we hurt a strand of the web, we hurt ourselves and You too. Let us celebrate the connection we have with all of creation, each other and You, God with all your amazing love. Amen.

Day 3

Worship Experience & Closing (Activity # 13)

Goal: Gathering together to celebrate the retreat time, praise our Creator God, and close the time together in an interactive worship experience for all ages and stages.

Resources: outdoor worship space is ideal but this can be adapted for inside; prayers and litanies provided or select your own; song sheets or books for the songs you select to sing

- a) Gather for this worship experience in a comfortable setting and encourage all ages to participate in sharing the readings. Create an experience using any or all of the resources below, or add your own. Create an “Order of Worship” that fits your group, keeping some elements that they are already comfortable with.
- b) Musical Call to Worship: (choose one)
 - “The Whole Wide World is in God’s Hands” – Appendix F
 - “Morning Has Broken” – hymnal; Text: Eleanor Farjeon, Music: Gaelic melody
 - “For the Beauty of the Earth” – hymnal; Text: Folliott Sandford Pierpoint, Music: Conrad Kocher
- c) Opening Prayer:

Creator God, we gather together, your people, one people, your family, all bound together with the woven web that binds all of creation together, fashioned from your love. Brothers and sisters, one family in fellowship, with You, its Heavenly Creator. May this be a time of joy, a time for growing, a time for strengthening, a time for loving. Let us worship our Creator God, together this day in the name of Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. Amen.
- d) Optional songs:
 - “All Creatures of Our God and King” or “The Canticle of the Sun” – hymnal
Text: Francis of Assisi, Music: Geistilche Kirchengesang
 - “All Things Bright and Beautiful” – hymnal; Text: Cecil Frances Alexander, Music: English Melody
 - “God of the Sparrow” – hymnal; Text: Jaroslav J. Vajda, Music: Carl F. Schalk
- e) Creation Mural:

Resources: mural butcher paper; colored markers; pictures of creation (Sunday School materials, magazines, calendars); glue sticks; weights for the corners of the paper; 1 two inch stick per person; 1 four inch stick per

person; string kept from the “Web of Creation” activity (have extras on hand, just in case); optional: supplies for the mission project if you choose to include it (Appendix G)

Invite all ages to be a part of creating a mural of God’s story of creation connecting the days one by one into one continuous picture of creation. Draw on the butcher paper, color in tracings and/or paste on pictures. Invite anyone to work on the mural as you continue to worship as well as during a reading from Genesis 1. Note: Take the mural home as a reminder of this retreat and the connection to God’s creation.

f) Prayer:

In the beginning Lord, before your Spirit moved over the waters, the earth was formless and empty. Then, you declared ‘Let there be light’, and out of the darkness we began to see hope, like a shimmering ray of love breaking through the clouds. In the beginning, Lord, when we saw you in the light, we were no longer afraid. You held out your hand, and invited us to be one with you. In the beginning, Lord, you made us a part of your creation, loved, wanted, needed, family. In the light of your presence, God, we lift up our hearts that others might glimpse your reflection there and be drawn into the light of your sunrise, the brightness of your amazing love. Amen.

g) Optional Mission Project

If you choose, a suggested activity is “Gifts of the Heart Kits” in Appendix G

h) Offering of Ourselves:

Say: Throughout this retreat we have had conversation about our role as caregivers of God’s creation. Let us offer ourselves as we share the ways we commit ourselves to serving God as caregivers & earth-keepers.

- Invite members of your group to name a way, to serve as an earth-keeper, once they return home. Encourage all ages and stages to share.
- Lift up a prayer of thanksgiving for all the gifts, talents and commitments given to God and dedicate those gifts. Give thanks for the amazing world that was created for each and every one of us. Thanks for everyone doing their part even if it seems small. Our offerings together make a big difference for God’s creation.

i) Interactive Litany of Creation

Invite everyone to join in this Litany of Creation by together in one voice saying:

We join with the creation and with each other.

As they say these words invite them to join hands with one another.

Invite different voices to read the petitions that follow and encourage the group to create their own motions to represent the words as they hear them.

Joining hands each time will help signal the unison statement.

We join with the creation and with each other. *(Join hands with one another)*

To bring new life to the land that we call home.

To restore the waters of the streams, rivers, oceans and seas.

To refresh the air, that we breathe, and that lifts the wings of all bird.

We join with creation and with each other. *(Join hands with one another)*

To renew the forests, filled with trees and wildlife.

To care for the plants, wildflowers, cacti, bushes and grasses.

To protect the creatures, large and small, two legged and more.

We join with creation and with each other. *(Join hands with one another)*

To celebrate the seas.

To rejoice in the sunlight.

To sing the song of the stars.

We join with creation and with each other. *(Join hands with one another)*

To build the human community.

To promote justice and peace.

To remember our children, and our children's children.

We join with creation and with each other. *(Join hands with one another)*

We join together as many and diverse expressions of one loving Creator, for the healing of the earth and the renewal of all life.

We join with creation and with each other. *(Join hands with one another)*

j) Commission:

Say: We are sent out from this place to be caretakers and earth-keepers for all of God's Creation. May we always remember how important our connection is to God and the web of creation God created.

k) Closing:

Resources: 2" and 4" thin sticks per person; piece of string from Web of Creation per person

Everyone needs the string from the "Web of Creation" that was cut from the web we created (have some extras for anyone missing one) and two sticks (one 2" and one 4")

- **Say: Remember when we began this retreat and created the “Web of Creation”? We discovered how connected all of creation is to each other and how important that connection is. We also discovered how connected we are to one another as we connect with our Creator, and to everything God created. When we think about our connection with God we also think about our connection with Jesus and with the Spirit. A symbol of that connection is the cross.**
- Invite everyone to form a circle holding their string and two sticks. Working together in at least groups of two; lay the short stick on top of the longer stick to form a cross. Tie one end of the string with a knot where the sticks meet (helps to have one person hold and another tie).
- Holding the 2 sticks in the shape of the cross with the string knotted where the sticks meet, invite participants to think about some of the connections experienced on this retreat. As persons share, invite everyone to loop the string around the two sticks, tying them together forming an “x” in the center of the cross. Make an “x” loop each time someone shares a connection. Keep inviting sharing even when everyone has used up most of their string, allowing all to share that wish.
- **Say: Lots of connections were made during this retreat, and we hope we continue to make connections with others, God, and God’s creation even after we leave this place.**
- Invite everyone to tie off their string by knotting it around the sticks one last time.
- **Say: These crosses are a reminder of our time together on this retreat and of all the connections we made and experienced.**
- Close as they lift up their crosses of connection, hearing once again the words of Chief Seattle:
“This we know: All things are connected like the blood that unites us. We did not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.”

**May we always remember that we are merely a strand of God’s web of creation, connected together, and God says “It is very good!”
Amen.**

l) Sending:

We are sent out to be connectors;

connecting with one another, making new connections.

connecting with creation, connecting with God our Creator.

connecting with God's Son, Jesus Christ.

connecting with the Spirit who moved upon the earth in the very beginning and moves among us now.

Alleluia, Amen!

Appendix A

Sample Schedules for shorter retreats

ONE FULL/ ONE PARTIAL DAY

For example, Saturday all day & Sunday half day

Full Day

Activity # 1 – Connect with One Another

Activity # 2 – Web of Creation

Activity # 5 - Sharing God's Story – In the Beginning - Part 2

Activity # 6 - Mindfulness Walk

Activity # 8 - Sharing God's Story – God the Creator & Provider

Activity # 7 - Project – For the Birds

Lunch

Free Time for activities or rest

Activity # 9 - Sharing God's Story – Caretakers & Earth-keepers

Activity # 10 - Litter Walk

Activity # 11 - Planting Trash

Dinner

Activity # 12 - Campfire & Story

Partial Day (2-3 hours)

Activity # 4 - Morning Movement & Prayer

Activity # 13 - Worship Experience & Closing

ONE PARTIAL DAY/ONE FULL DAY

For example, Friday evening & Saturday all day

Partial Day (2-3 hours):

Activity # 1 – Connect with One Another

Activity # 2 – Web of Creation

Activity # 5 - Sharing God's Story – In the Beginning - Part 2

Activity # 12 - Campfire & Story

Full Day

Activity # 4 - Morning Movement & Prayer

Breakfast

Activity # 6 - Mindfulness Walk

Activity # 8 - Sharing God's Story – God the Creator & Provider

Activity # 7 - Project – For the Birds

Lunch

Activity # 9 - Sharing God's Story – Caretakers & Earth-keepers

Activity # 10 - Litter Walk

Activity # 11 - Planting Trash

Before or after Dinner (as time allows)

Activity # 13 - Worship Experience & Closing

Appendix B

Creation Cards

For Activity # 1-“Connecting to One Another” & Activity # 2-“Web of Creation”

Make oversized name tags of creation ahead of time:

1. Punch two holes at the top of the longest side of the card, near the short sides.
2. Thread yarn or string through both holes and knot there, long enough to make a safe loop for hanging around one’s neck.
3. Write names of plants, trees, reptiles, insects, birds, large and small animals on the cards large enough to see around a circle (see the suggested list below). Depending on the size of your group, chose as many categories of creation that allows for groups of 6-10 with common connections. (Example: 6 kinds of plants, 6 kinds of trees, 6 kinds of birds, 6 kinds of animals, 6 kinds of insects = 30 name tags) Young children can be paired up with an adult or given the same category so they stay with a family member.

Suggested List for Creation Cards:

- Need enough (6-10) from each category for small groups to form in “Connecting to One Another” activity.
- Use a variety from each group for the “Web of Creation” activity, to represent all categories of creation below. You’ll need one card per person for both activities.
- Feel free to add species of creation that are found in your area.

TREES/BUSHES:

oak tree
cottonwood
blue spruce
evergreen
juniper
crabapple tree
maple tree
scrub oak
sagebrush
aspen/Birch

REPTILES:

garter snake
toad
turtle
rattlesnake
tree frog
tortoise
lizard
rock lizard
iguana
salamander

LARGE ANIMALS:

bear
coyote
mountain lion
deer
elk
moose
bobcat
antelope
mountain goat
rocky mountain sheep

ANIMAL/FISH:

cottontail rabbit
catfish
jack rabbit
squirrel
ground squirrel
chipmunk
trout
skunk
raccoon
mouse

BIRDS:

blue jay
cardinal
robin
ptarmigan
eagle
finch
hawk
grosbeak
hummingbird
sparrow

INSECTS:

dragonfly
mosquito
grasshopper
wasp
moth
bumble bee
beetle
spider
horse fly
butterfly

PLANTS:

indian paintbrush
rye grass
sunflower
bluebell
poppy
cactus
prairie grass
daisy
wild rose
black-eyed susan

Appendix C

Script For Activity # 4- Morning Movement & Prayer

Bold = what you say

Italics = your movements

**In the beginning God created.
In the beginning God saw that it was good.**

Hands by your side, feet flat on the ground about shoulder-width apart. Raise your hands to chest height with palms together in a position of prayer hands. Breathe in, breathing in the goodness of creation and life. As you breathe out, breathe out any worries or stresses. Feel grounded and centered.

God said, “Let there be light”

Raise your hands, above your head in an arc then wave them back and forth as light shining above your head. Let the light grow bigger and bigger by moving your hands and arms out then slowly down to your sides.

God saw that it was good

Hands by your side, feet flat on the ground about shoulder-width apart. Raise your hands to chest height with palms together in a position of prayer hands. Breathe in, breathing in the goodness of creation and life. As you breathe out, breathe out any worries or stresses. Feel grounded and centered.

God said, “Let there be a dome between the waters, one called sky and the other seas”

Move your arms together in front of the body to form a dome or a half circle. Move your arms up into the air with palms open and turned up toward the sky and move up and down motioning toward the sky (like you are pushing something up to the sky)

Move your arms down to waist high and motion one hand like waves of the seas.

God saw that it was good

Hands by your side, feet flat on the ground about shoulder-width apart. Raise your hands with palms together in a position of prayer hands. Breathe in the goodness of creation and life. Breathe out any worries or stresses. Feel grounded and centered.

God said, “Let there be land called the earth”

With palms down and waist high, move hands up and down like you are patting the dry ground. With both hands in front of you make a large circle with your hands for the earth.

God saw that it was good

Hands by your side, feet flat on the ground. Raise your hands in a position of prayer hands. Breathe in the goodness of creation and breathe out worries. Feel grounded and centered.

God said, “Let there be plants and trees”

With your hands in front of your body open your fingers from closed fists like flowers bursting open. With hands above your head, sway like a tree in the breeze.

God saw that it was good

Hands by your side, feet flat on the ground, raise your hands in a position of prayer. Breathe in the goodness of creation and breathe out worries, feel grounded & centered.

God said, “Let there be sun, moon and stars”

Raise your hands, above your head in an arc forming a circle for the sun above your head. Let the light grow bigger and bigger by enlarging your circle then slowly lower your arms to your sides.

Using one arm above your head form half a circle for the moon, making it bigger and bigger then slowly lower your arm to your side.

Place both arms up at head height and open and close your fingers like blinking stars.

God saw that it was good

Hands by your side, feet flat on the ground, raise your hands in a position of prayer. Breathe in and out, feel grounded and centered.

God said, “Let there be living creatures in the sea and the air”

Use one hand to make the wave motion again and then put palms together for a fish and “swim” out in front of you.

Both arms to your sides with hands out as wings and “fly” like a bird.

God saw that it was good

Hands by your side, feet flat on the ground, raise your hands in a position of prayer. Breathe in & out, feel grounded and centered.

God said, “Let there be creatures of all kinds”

Bend over at the waist with arms hanging down like a four-legged animal. Let there be free choice and let movement be any animal motion they choose.

God saw that it was good

Hands by your side, feet flat on the ground, raise your hands in a position of prayer. Breathe in the goodness of creation and breathe out worries, feel grounded and centered.

God said, “Let there be humankind made in God’s image”

Stand or sit upright with both hands pointing at you.

God saw that it was very good

Hands by your side, feet flat on the ground, raise your hands in a position of prayer. Breathe in and out, feel grounded and centered.

Note: To shorten this activity, simply leave out some of the “God said it was good” and only center following a couple movements. Encourage all to have fun with the creation story and stretching movements and not worry about getting all the motions exact.

Appendix D

Storytelling Script For Activity #5- In the Beginning (Part 2)

Resources: Storytelling pictures – ahead of time find or prepare creation story pictures – 8” x 11” so they can be seen. Calendar pages are great, pictures from Sunday school lessons or magazines cut out and pasted on to construction paper work well too.

- Day 1 = Sheet of dark construction paper for the darkness, sheet of yellow construction paper for the light.
- Day 2 = Sheet of blue construction paper or full page of water for the waters of the earth.
- Day 3 = Picture of dry land with lots of plants and trees and a bit of blue sky.
- Day 4 = Two pictures side by side or even attached – one of the bright shining sun and one with the moon and stars.
- Day 5 = Two pictures side by side or attached – one of birds flying in the sky and one of water with fish and swimming animals.
- Day 6 = Picture of creatures with legs and humans together on the dry land.
- Day 7 = If you can find one – a picture with sun, water, land, plants, birds, fish, land creatures and humans together (if not just skip this one).

Using the space in front of you, the story pictures will be laid out as you share God’s creation story. Place the pictures moving right to left so that the story unfolds with the story pictures you have created. Keep the pictures behind you or turned over, out of sight as much as possible as you tell the story. Slowly tell the story as you reveal and unfold the pictures with the hand motions that catch the attention of all ages. The key is to be deliberate and slow paced in sharing the story.

Italics = your movements for storytelling

Bold = what you say

Move your hand slowly across the area in front of you (no pictures) to show “nothing” moving from your right to left smoothing out the area in one slow sweep.

In the beginning.....In the beginning there was.....Well in the beginning there wasn’t very much. In the beginning there was.....nothing.

Place the Yellow-Light paper down at the far right of your space and then lay the Dark paper down right next to it. Move your hand vertically across the papers dividing the light and the dark. Move your hand across the yellow as you speak of that gift. When you mention the light and the dark, point to each as you share.

...Then on the first day God gave us the gift of light. So now there was not just darkness, but there was light and dark.

Now I don't mean just this or that light, like just the light in a light bulb or in the car lights at night. I mean all of the light that is light.....

God gave us the gift of the light that all light comes from.

As you say, "It is good", place your hand flat on the picture like a blessing. This is probably the most important movement in the whole storytelling. Put it back and pause for a moment, then begin the next day.

When God saw the light, God said, "It is good." And that was the end of the first day.

Place Day 2-Water to your left, next to the first day.

On the second day God gave us the gift of water. Now I don't mean just the water that we drink or wash with. I don't even mean just the water in the lake, rivers, or oceans. Not even just the water that comes down from the sky in rain or snow. I mean all of the water that is water. God gave us the gift of all the water that is water. This is the water that all the rest of the water comes from.

Move your hand vertically across the picture of water to divide the waters, then trace a thin arc with your finger to show the dome.

Picture a dome like an arc in between all the waters. God put the dome between the waters above and the waters below.

Touch the picture with your hand like a blessing, sit back and pause for a moment.

When God saw the water, God said, "It is good." And that was the end of the second day.

Take Day 3 – Land, sky and plants picture and lay it to your left, next to day 2.

Place your hand vertically on the picture as you say “divided” between the sky and land.

Move your hand to “uncover” the dry land and point to the “green and growing things.”

On the third day God gave us the gift of the dry land. God divided the water and the dry land, and gave us the dry land and the green and growing things.

Touch the picture with your hand like a blessing, sit back and pause for a moment.

When God saw the dry land and the green and growing things, God said, “It is good.” And that was the end of the third day.

Take Day 4 – Sun, moon and stars picture and place it to your left, next to day 3.

On the fourth day God gave us the gift of the day and the night. God gave us a way to count our days.

Point to the lights as you share about them.

God gave us the great light that rules the day, the sun, and the lights that rule the night, the moon and the stars.

Touch the picture with your hand like a blessing, sit back and pause for a moment.

When God saw the day and the night, our way to keep time, God said, “It is good.” And that was the end of the fourth day.

Take Day 5 – Creatures of Air and Sea picture and place it to your left next to Day 4

As you mention the flying creatures and swimming ones, touch them with your finger.

On the fifth day God gave us the gift of all the creatures that fly in the air. Not just the birds but all the creatures that fly. God also gave us the gift of all the creatures that swim in the water. All of them.

Touch the picture with your hand like a blessing, sit back and pause for a moment.

When God saw all of the creatures that fly and all of the creatures that swim, God said, “It is good.” And that was the end of the fifth day.

Take Day 6 – Add the humans and legged creatures picture and place it to your left next to the Day 5 picture.

Touch the creatures with your finger as you name them.

On the sixth day God gave us the gift of all the creatures that walk upon the earth, the creatures that walk with two legs, like you and me, and all the creatures that walk with many legs.

Touch the picture with your hand like a blessing as you say “It is very good”, sit back and pause for a moment.

When God saw the creatures that walk with two legs and the creatures that walk with many legs, God said, “It is very good”. And that was the end of the sixth day.

If you have a Day 7 – Add the picture with all of creation, placing it last, next to all the other pictures. If not, just use your hand to sweep over Day 1 – Day 6 and rest it at the end of the pictures.

When you say “all the other days” sweep your hand across days 1-7.

On the seventh day God rested and gave us the gift of a day to rest.....and to remember the great gifts of all the other days.

Touch the last picture with your hand like a blessing.

And God said, “It was very good”.

Pause for a moment, leaving your hand on the last picture.

Look down at the pictures to ponder for a moment and rest.

Slowly look up at your group and gently ask the first Pondering & Wondering Question

Wondering and Pondering:

No need for discussion, no right or wrong answers. Just ponder and wonder together.

Say and invite responses:

- I wonder which one of these days you like the best?
- I wonder which day is the most important.
- I wonder if we can leave out any one of these days and still have the story.
- I wonder how we might thank God for all these wonderful gifts.

Appendix E – “Planting Trash” Information Cards For Activity # 11

LITTER WILL LAST

Paper	2-4 weeks
Cotton string/Rope	5-8 months
Cardboard	3-6 months
Orange peel	Up to 2 years
Sock or fabric	1-5 years
Wooden stake	10-13 years
Plastic bag	10-20 years
Tin can	50 years
Aluminum cans/tabs	80-100 years
Plastic six-pack holder	100 years
Glass bottle	1,000,000 years
Styrofoam	Undetermined
Plastic bottle	Indefinitely

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Glass bottle	1,000,000 years
Styrofoam	Undetermined
Plastic bottle	Indefinitely

Appendix F

Lyrics For Activity #12-“The Whole Wide World is in God’s Hands” Song

Sung to the familiar African American Spiritual tune of “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”, found in many hymnals, author unknown.

Print out words on individual sheets or print on a large sheet of paper

The whole wide world, is in God’s hands.
The whole wide world, is in God’s hands.
The whole wide world, is in God’s hands.
The whole world’s in God’s hands.

The sun and moon, are in God’s hands. (repeat 3 times)
The whole world’s in God’s hands.

The night and the day, are in God’s hands. (repeat 3 times)
The whole world’s in God’s hands.

The land and the oceans, are in God’s hands. (repeat 3 times)
The whole world’s in God’s hands.

The trees and the plants, are in God’s hands. (repeat 3 times)
The whole world’s in God’s hands.

The rivers and streams, are in God’s hands. (repeat 3 times)
The whole world’s in God’s hands.

The birds and the fish, are in God’s hands. (repeat 3 times)
The whole world’s in God’s hands.

The insects and the reptiles, are in God’s hands. (repeat 3 times)
The whole world’s in God’s hands.

The creatures and humans, are in God’s hands. (repeat 3 times)
The land and the oceans, are in God’s hands. (repeat 3 times)
The whole world’s in God’s hands.

Appendix G

Optional Mission Project For Activity # 13- Connecting with Others

Working together to create Gifts of the Heart Kits (School Supplies or Hygiene Kits) for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) - pda.pcusa.org. Connect with others around the world by assembling kits for children or families recovering from disasters.

Resources:

Ahead of time collect items or invite retreat participants to bring them for the event. Covering the \$2.00 cost per bag is very important to support the distribution of the Kits to those in need. Can be collected before the retreat or during the Worship Experience.

Supplies for Hygiene Kits:

- 1 --- one gallon plastic bag with a zipper closure
- 1 — hand towel (approximately 16" x 28", no fingertip or bath towels)
- 1 — washcloth
- 1 — wide-tooth comb (remove from package)
- 1 — nail clipper (UPDATE: nail clippers with metal files or emery boards attached are now accepted; remove from package)
- 1 — bar of soap (bath size in wrapper)
- 1 — toothbrush (in original packaging)
- 10 — Band-Aids® or other adhesive bandage strips

Please do not add toothpaste, which has an extended expiration date. It will be added to international Hygiene Kits just prior to shipment. Seal all items in a one-gallon plastic bag with a zipper closure.

Supplies for School Kits:

- 1 — pair of blunt scissors (rounded tip)
- 3 — 70-count spiral notebooks or tape-bound pads of 8" x 10 1/2" ruled paper or pads with 200-210 sheets of ruled paper. Do not include loose filler paper.
- 1 — 30-centimeter ruler (12")
- 1 — hand-held pencil sharpener
- 6 — new pencils with erasers
- 1 — large eraser
- 1 — box of 24 crayons
- 1 — cloth bag, 12" x 14" to 14" x 17" finished size cotton cloth bag with cloth handles; pattern available at pda.pcusa.org. (Please, do not use reusable shopping bags or backpacks.) Pack all items in the cloth bag.

Instructions

1. Working together, put the kits together filling them with the items listed above. Hygiene Kits are sealed in a gallon zip locking plastic bag and the School Supply Kit is enclosed in a cloth bag. Keep track of how many kits you complete so you can celebrate and share that information with others in your congregation.
2. Following the retreat pack and send the “Gift of the Heart” Kits:
 - Complete Kits should be packed in boxes with only one type of kit in each box. However, if you are shipping a small number of different kinds of kits, they can be combined in one box.
 - Clearly mark the outside of the box with the contents.
 - Complete the mailing form (found at pda.pcusa.org) and place it inside the top of your box before sealing it. This will provide the name and address of your group sending the kits for the CWS receiving site, and it gives information about how to share your story with PDA.
 - Secure the boxes with packing tape.

Ship all kits prepaid to one of the following:

Ferncliff Disaster Assistance Center	OR	Church World Service
1720 Ferncliff Road		Brethren Service Center Annex
Little Rock, AR 72223		601 Main Street
(501) 821-3063 or (866) 732-6121		New Windsor, MD 21776-0188
		(410) 635-8794

Information regarding PDA “Gifts of the Heart Kits” is available at pda.pcusa.org

Appendix H

Resources

“Big Momma Makes the World” written by Phyllis Root
Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury
ISBN 0-7636-1132-8 Candlewick Press

“Children of the Earth.....Remember” by Schim Schimmel
ISBN 1-55971-640-1 NorthWood Press

“The Family of Earth” by Schim Schimmel
ISBN 1-55971-790-4 NorthWood Press

“Grandad’s Prayers of the Earth” written by Douglas Wood
Illustrated by P.J. Lynch
ISBN 0-7636-0660-x Candlewick Press

“He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” by Kadir Nelson
ISBN 978-0-8037-2850-9 Dial Books for Young Readers

“Mr. and Mrs. God in the Creation Kitchen” written by Nancy Wood,
Illustrated by Timothy Basil Ering
ISBN 076361258-8 Candlewick Press

“When the World Was New” written by L.J. Sattgast
Illustrated by Steve Bjorkman
ISBN 0-310-70127-9

About the Author

Sandy Safford resides in Colorado where she lives out her passions for the outdoors and faith formation ministry. She has served 8 years as a Commissioned Lay Pastor and Educator in a small rural congregation. For over 20 years she has served as a volunteer at Highlands Presbyterian Camp and Retreat Center. With a degree in environmental education and training in Christian education, writing a Retreat Module has been a joyful opportunity for both passions to blend together.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CAMP
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Presbyterian Mission
**Office of Christian
Formation**

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pcusa.org/formation