




Interfaith Action
SW Michigan Peace & Justice Collaborative

*Resource Guide for the
2023 Celebration of the Season of Creation*

(September 1 - October 4, 2023)

Prepared by Interfaith Action of SW Michigan

A. BULLETIN INSERTS:

(loosely adapted from 2023 Season of Creation Resource Guide)

WHAT IS THE SEASON OF CREATION?

In 1989, people of faith from around the world declared September 1st as a day of prayer for the care of creation. This “Season of Creation” (also known as Creation Time) is observed the five weeks between September 1st and October 4th, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi as commemorated by some Western traditions.

WHY DO WE CELEBRATE THE SEASON OF CREATION?

As people of faith from around the globe, we share a common role as caretakers of God’s creation. We see that our wellbeing is interwoven with its wellbeing. We rejoice in this opportunity to care for our common home, and every species who share it.

SEASON OF CREATION THEME FOR 2023:

This year, the theme is LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF CREATION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us have become familiar with the concept of being muted during virtual conversations. Often, people using a platform do not have the capacity to unmute themselves. Even more do not even have access to digital platforms, and so their voices are never heard.

Many voices are muted in public discourse around climate change and the ethics of Earth-keeping. These are the voices of those who suffer the impacts of climate change. These are the voices of those who hold generational wisdom about how to live gratefully within the limits of the land. These are the voices of a diminishing diversity of more-than-human species. It is the voice of the Earth.

The 2023 Season of Creation theme raises awareness of our need to listen to the voice of all creation.

During this liturgical Season of Creation, the interfaith family calls on every household and on society to repent and reshape our political, social and economic systems towards just, sustainable economies of life, which respect the life-giving ecological limits of our common home.

B. HOW CAN WE TRANSLATE OUR FAITH INTO ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION?

Consider distributing this environmental action framework each worship time during the 5 weeks.

Green Faith Action Framework

Personal Actions:

1. Create a green home: Arrange for a home energy audit - insulate, consider energy efficient appliances when you purchase, use LED light bulbs. Compost. Abstain from

eating meat two days a week. Use less water. Reuse and recycle. Reduce your consumption.

2. Create a green yard: Go natural outside - use organic gardening products. Reduce your lawn. Plant 2 trees or shrubs a year. Plant pollinator attracting plants.
3. Create a green community: Eat local, support local farmers. Drive less and when purchasing a vehicle consider a more fuel efficient vehicle. Help your congregation and your community go green. Participate in clean up work days.
4. Create a green world: Educate yourself about climate change and vote your faith to elect officials who address climate change. Say no to single use plastics. Pray for the protection of our common home, the earth - and pray for those whose lives are disrupted by the tragedy of climate change.

Faith Community Actions:

1. Replace light bulbs with LED or other energy saving bulbs
2. Recycle everything possible including:
 - a. alkaline batteries
 - b. paper, newspaper, cardboard, phone books
 - c. use both sides of paper when printing or copying
 - d. glass
 - e. aluminum cans, pie plates, and other food containers
 - f. plastic (check which numbers a place will take) including frozen food trays
 - g. junk mail
3. Make sure the furnace is tuned and air filters are replaced as needed.
4. Turn the hot water heater down.
5. Consider replacing old toilets with water conserving new toilets.
6. Have an energy audit done at your place of worship.
7. Use eco-friendly cleaning products.
8. Use recyclable paper or china for dinners & refreshments instead of plastic products.
9. Ban the use of rice or balloon releases at weddings and other celebrations.

10. Use low maintenance landscaping, including ground covers instead of grass where possible to reduce the need for lawn mowing.
11. Recycle ink cartridges.
12. Participate in a Green activity-- i.e. cleaning up a park, beach, or roadway.
13. Ask your faith leader to preach or teach at least once annually on the environment.
14. Make sure any new appliances are designated as energy efficient.

Policy Actions:

1. Support the MI Healthy Climate plan for statewide decarbonization by 2050 protecting residents, the environment and creating jobs. Support a MI plan for 28% reduction of greenhouse gases by 2025.
2. Promote use of recycling and renewable energy sources.
3. Plan for changing water levels and their impact on flooding and water availability.
4. Reduce and filter polluted water runoff.
5. Protect public and sacred lands and uphold indigenous people at the center of biodiversity protection.
6. Reinstate regulations that reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
7. Make environmental justice a central mission of the federal government and put green house gas-neutral and net zero emissions commitments.
8. Lead by example in the Paris Climate Accord by taking national action to limit warming to the 1.5 degree C target and put in place policy mechanisms to achieve this in a sustainable manner.
9. Invest in renewable and nature-friendly energy so as to achieve net-zero emissions as soon as possible.

C. HOW YOU CAN CELEBRATE THE 2023 SEASON OF CREATION?

View this link for a comprehensive 2023 Season of Creation Resource Guide:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/145WzDi32U8YdlyY9Peo1bn-aLqyi4cl6/view>

1. 2023 Season of Creation Prayer

Creator of All,

From your communion of love your Word went forth to create a symphony of life that sings your praise.

By your Holy Wisdom you made the Earth to bring forth a diversity of creatures who praise you in their being. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.

You called human beings to till and keep your garden. You placed us into right relationships with each creature so that we could listen to their voices, and learn how to safeguard the conditions for life. But we turn in on ourselves and away from our co-creatures.

We close our ears to the counsel of our fellow creatures. We fail to listen to the cries of the poor and the needs of the most vulnerable. We silence the voices of those who hold the traditions that teach us to care for the Earth. We close our ears to your creative, reconciling and sustaining Word that calls to us through the Scriptures.

We lament the loss of our fellow species and their habitats that will never speak again. We grieve the loss of human cultures, along with the lives and livelihoods that have been displaced or perished. Creation cries out as forests crackle, and animals alike flee the fires of injustice that we have lit by our unwillingness to listen.

In this Season of Creation, we pray that you would call to us, and that we would listen to the voice of all creation. Breathe upon us. Open our ears and move our hearts. Turn us from our inward gaze. Teach us to contemplate your creation, and listen for the voice of each creature declaring your glory. For “faith comes from hearing.”

Give us hearts to listen for the good news of your promise to renew the face of the Earth. Enlighten us with the grace to follow the Way of Christ as we learn to walk lightly upon this holy ground. Fill us with the hope to quench the fires of injustice with the light of your healing love that sustains our common home.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation. Amen.

2. A WEEKLY GUIDE FOR WORSHIP:

Week One - September 1/2/3: Place a Globe in the front of your worship space.

Worship bulletin announcement: This Sunday/Saturday/Friday we begin a five week Season of Creation. It's a time in our calendar when we pause to give thanks for the gift of Creation and also to commit to being responsible stewards of Creation. We have a globe in our worship space which reminds us of the earth, our common home.

Prayer for this Day: Creator of the universe, we confess that we have failed to be stewards of your holy creation. Forgive us. Inspire us to care for this planet, our common home. Amen.

Action for this week: Consider sending a contribution to an environmental organization.

Week Two - September 8/9/10: Place a Pitcher of Water in the front of your worship space.

Worship bulletin announcement: This Sunday/Saturday/Friday we begin our second week in our five week Season of Creation. It's a time in our calendar when we pause to give thanks for the gift of Creation and also to commit to being responsible stewards of Creation. We have a pitcher of water in our worship space which reminds us that water is essential to our life and the life of the planet.

Prayer for this Day: Creator of the waters of the earth, we confess that we have failed to keep our rivers, lakes and seas protected and clean. Forgive us. Inspire us to work to protect our Great Lakes, our rivers and streams, and our oceans. Amen.

Action for this week: Consider walking the beach, a river bank or a roadway and picking up trash.

Week Three - September 15/16/17: Place a Vase of Flowers in the front of your worship space.

Worship bulletin announcement: This Sunday/Saturday/Friday we begin our third week in our five week Season of Creation. It's a time in our calendar when we pause to give thanks for the gift of Creation and also to commit to being responsible stewards of Creation. We have a vase of flowers in our worship space which reminds us of the beauty of nature, a gift that is essential to our life and the life of the planet.

Prayer for this Day: Creator of the flowers of the fields, we confess that we have failed to preserve native plants and trees. Forgive us. Inspire us to work to protect our forests and our fields. Amen.

Action for this week: Consider planting a native shrub in your yard.

Week Four - September 22/23/24: Place a Bowl of Vegetables in the front of your worship space.

Worship bulletin announcement: This Sunday/Saturday/Friday we begin our fourth week in our five-week Season of Creation. It's a time in our calendar when we pause to give thanks for the gift of Creation and also to commit to being responsible stewards of Creation. We have a bowl of vegetables in our worship space which reminds us that our harvests are essential to our lives and that our lands must be protected for our life and the life of the planet.

Prayer for this Day: Creator of the produce of the earth, we confess that we have failed to preserve the biodiversity of our lands. Forgive us. Inspire us to work to ensure that harvests are bountiful and that the hungry are fed. Amen.

Action for this week: Consider using alternatives to herbicides in your garden.

Week Five - September 29/30/October /1: Place photos of birds and animals in the front of your worship space. Consider doing a blessing of animals during or after worship. Or consider having folks bring photos of their pets to display in the front of your worship space.

Worship bulletin announcement: This Sunday/Saturday/Friday we conclude our five week Season of Creation. It's a time in our calendar when we pause to give thanks for the gift of Creation and also to commit to being responsible stewards of Creation. We have photos of (pets, animals, birds) in our worship space which reminds us that we have a special relationship with the birds of the air and the animals of the earth - all essential to our life and the life of the planet.

Prayer for this Day: Creator of the birds of the air and the animals that bless our earth, we confess that we have neglected to ensure safe habitats for fish, birds and all creatures. Forgive us. Inspire us to work to ensure that all creatures survive and thrive in safe and unpolluted environments. Amen.

Action for this week: consider sending a donation to your local animal shelter.

3. PRAYERS FOR WORSHIP:

(loosely adapted from 2021 Season of Creation Resource Guide)

A. PRESIDER'S PRAYER FOR THE WORSHIP COMMUNITY:

Creator of All,

We are grateful that you created our planet to be a home for all. By your Holy Wisdom you made the Earth to bring forth a diversity of living beings that filled the soil, water and air. Each part of creation praises you in their being, and cares for one another from our place in the web of life.

We remember that you call human beings to keep your garden in ways that honor the dignity of each creature and conserve their place in the abundance of life on Earth.

But we know that our will to power pushes the planet beyond her limits. Our consumption is out of harmony with Earth's capacity to heal herself. Habitats are left barren or lost. Species are lost and systems fail. Human families are displaced by insecurity and conflict, migrating in search of peace. Animals flee fires, deforestation and famine, wandering in search of a new place to find a home to lay their young and live.

In this Season of Creation, enlighten us to respond to your covenant to care for our common home. Gladden our hearts to know that we participate with your Spirit to renew the face of your Earth, and safeguard a home for all. Amen.

B. RESPONSIVE PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY:

ONE: Whenever we join together, we should give thanks. So let us join our hearts and minds together and think of all creation and the Creator's gifts.

ALL: Loving God. We give our thanks.

O: Let us think of our Mother, the Earth, upon whom we walk and who supports us and nurtures life in all its forms. We think of the minerals, the fungi, and bacteria that give life to soil, bodies and systems. We pray we can learn to walk on Earth with more respect.

A: Loving God. We give our thanks.

O: Let us think of this community in which we gather, and for all of the animals and plants that call this place home.

A: Loving God. We give our thanks.

O: Let us think of the whole human family whose livelihood and well-being depends on the well-being of the Earth. We lift up all who are displaced from their homes.

A: Loving God. We give our thanks.

O: Let us turn our minds to the sacred waters of the world, the great oceans, aquifers, lakes, rivers and streams, the life that lives in the waters and those that give itself to be our food.

A: Loving God. We give our thanks.

O: Let us now turn our thoughts to the plant life of the Creator's world. That which is below ground; the roots and vegetables. That which puts just its head above the ground: the grasses, medicines, plants and bushes. All of the many kinds of good fruit the Creator has given us. And finally, the great trees of the forest that we know of as the "Standing Ones."

A: Loving God. We give our thanks.

O: Let us think of all our kindred animals, those that crawl, walk, swim and fly. We give thanks for those that provide food for us, those that sustain cycles in their work and living, those that provide companionship and beauty.

A: Loving God. We give our thanks.

O: Let us think of the birds of the air. The feathered ones that are the messengers between us and the Creator.

A: Loving God. We give our thanks.

O: Let us think of the relationships that sustain life in this beloved community; the agricultural lands, the vineyards, the lakes, the harvesters, the preparers of food. These relationships are gifts from the Creator and our sustenance.

A: Loving God. We give our thanks.

(Inspired by the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Prayer and passed through, among others, Archbishop Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop)

C. BENEDICTION OR FINAL BLESSING:

May God who established the dance of creation,
Who marvelled at the lilies of the field,
Who transforms chaos to order,

Lead us to transform our lives and our Congregation
To reflect God's glory in creation.
Amen.

D. ADDENDUM FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES:

For those Christian communities who use the Lord's Prayer, here's an alternative to consider for the Season of Creation:

We pray our common prayer that Christ taught us.
Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your beloved community of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.
Amen.

(Adapted from The New Zealand Book of Prayer | He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa. This version of the Lord's prayer was influenced by Maori theologians)