

Introduction

“Convicting” and also “encouraging” is how I describe this tremendous DVD resource for congregational study of creation care. I had a tendency to reduce language of creation care to bumper sticker slogans. *Earthbound* convicted me to hear God’s calling to care for creation in my life. *Earthbound* encouraged me to use biblical and theological language when I engage in and explore the timely issue of creation care. Cultivating the Christian practice of creation care involves a dynamic process of acting and reflecting. Nearly every participant in this study will have encountered practices of creation care some time in their life. Those practices may be as simple as learning early in life to turn off the lights when you leave the room or saving things for a potential second use. This DVD resource will encourage participants to reflect on the daily actions they take on behalf of creation and inspire participants to act as a witness to God’s love and care for the world.

This summer I taught in South Korea. When I arrived at my hotel room in Seoul on the first evening it was very warm. My host placed my hotel key card in an electronic holder by the entrance door, which “turned on” the electricity in the room. The air conditioner quickly cooled the room. When I left for breakfast the next morning, I removed my key to take it with me and the electricity in the room went out – thus saving energy and the expense of lighting or cooling a vacant room. My immediate thought was, “how inconvenient.” My second thought was, “how responsible.” I walked back into a slightly warm room later that morning convicted and encouraged by this practice of energy conservation. This time I responded with a simple prayer, “Thank you Almighty Creator, for the good stewards of this hotel who practice dominion of your kingdom here on earth.”

Earthbound informed my reaction to my hotel stay in South Korea. The course invites us to adopt a biblical and theological framework as earthbound inhabitants created and called to care for creation. Each episode of the DVD explores biblical, theological, and practical ways Christians are practicing care for God’s creation. The study guide which accompanies this DVD series has been created to encourage your responses and reactions to the material presented in

the DVD. In addition to the study guide, handouts have been created as congregational guides for living out what is explored in this series.

- Action Plan Form: Green Congregation Program
- Example: Minnesota Action Plan: Green Congregation Program
- Checklist for Green Congregations
- Covenant with Creation: Be An Earthkeeper

The **curriculum plan** for each session includes learning goals and preparation information for the facilitators. It is important for facilitators to review the learning goals and watch the video in advance so that facilitators can select appropriate questions and tailor the discussion to meet the needs of those who gather for the conversation. The formats are suggested and it is possible one activity may be useful for one context in a way that another might not. In all cases prayers and hymns are taken from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's worship resources, most frequently, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. If your congregation is not using these resources you may need to choose alternate prayers or hymns, or gain copyright information to make photocopies for the group. The facilitators' preparation information also reminds the facilitators to involve others by inviting one person to be the host while inviting another to provide refreshments.

This study guide offers three suggested formats for congregational use. The **sixty-minute format** might be useful for a Sunday morning or weekday evening adult Bible study class. In addition to viewing the video, this format includes a welcome and opening devotion, discussion questions and a closing for the session. The **ninety-minute format** might be useful in a small group setting in the church or in homes or for a weekday evening Bible study class. This format is similar to the sixty-minute format but adds an opportunity for Bible Study. The Bible Study could happen prior to watching the video. In this case the biblical study would prepare the participants for the theme of the session and provide a biblical experience to reflect upon during the video and respond to during the discussion questions which follow the video. A second option is to place the Bible Study after the discussion questions as an opportunity to reflect upon the biblical and theological points raised in the video. The ninety-minute format

also includes a reflection/action opportunity which invites participants to respond to the video in creative ways. Sometimes this activity needs extra supplies which are listed for the facilitators to prepare ahead of time.

The third suggested format is for **congregational leadership**. If a congregation's church council or a Christian Education team wanted to make this video series a part of their devotion prior to the meeting agenda this format suggests viewing the video followed with discussion questions tailored to the congregational leader. This format is highly recommended for those congregations interested in preparing leaders to facilitate a congregation-wide initiative such as establishing an action plan for a green congregation program.

Three Suggested Formats and Curriculum Plan

60 minute Study: Six Sessions*

- Welcoming and Opening Devotion (10 minutes)
- View Video (20-30 minutes)
- Discussion Questions (15-20 minutes)
- Closing (10 minutes)

90 minute Study: Six Sessions*

- Welcoming and Opening Devotion (10 minutes)
- *Optional Biblical Study (20 minutes)*
- View Video (20-30 minutes)
- Discussion Questions (15-20 minutes)
- *Optional Biblical Study (20 minutes)*
- *Reflection/Action (10 minutes)*
- Closing (10 minutes)

30-45 minute Committee Starters for Congregational Leadership: Six Sessions*

- View Video (20-30 minutes)
- Discussion Questions (15-20 minutes)

** Please note that every session can work by itself and participants do not have to be present at every session to contribute.*

Episode 1: Created/Called

God is madly in love with this world. God is the Creator and calls us to co-create, serving our neighbor in love. God is sovereign over all the earth and calls us to be kings and queens as well. God engages in our material experience most significantly in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, God is earthbound. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God has declared us justified, adopted, and gifted. Through Jesus, God grants new life and abundance of life. We are free *from* preoccupation with our relationship with God. We are free *for* engagement with community, neighbor, and taking care of the world. To *be* earthbound is our calling as created and justified children of God. To be earthbound is our vocation. This calls for celebration.

Learning Goals of Episode 1:

- To explore the goodness and brokenness of creation.
- To formulate a theological understanding that God is earthbound.
- To identify the justification and freedom we receive in Jesus Christ as distinct from our human preoccupation with God's judgment.
- To translate into image and words our calling to right relationships and care for creation.

Facilitator Preparations for Each Episode:

- Invite someone else to act as host for the group. The host might help secure an appropriate space (at the church or in their house), provide a map and directions, and arrange for refreshments.
- View episode 1 to prepare your understanding of the concepts and goals.
- Ensure the television/DVD player is working. Cue the DVD to the appropriate episode.
- Imagine the whole session (together with the host) and arrange the room for appropriate conversation in large and small groups. Bear in mind how you might tailor these sessions towards the abilities of all who wish to come.
- Creatively imagine ways to make the space you are in more comfortable for all participants. Consider some of the following options and/or add others: Bring tablecloths to add color. Add a candle to each table. Bring other decorative items from home. Display a cross somewhere prominent, fill a bowl with water and place it in the center of the room, bring a plant or flower arrangement, set out the communion wear, or set up a picture of galaxies or a photo of the earth on a easel to enhance the atmosphere of the room.
- In advance ask participants to bring a Bible with them; and have a few Bibles available.
- Provide hymnals for the opening & closing devotion or secure copyright permission to photocopy the hymn and prayers.
- Provide paper for reflection time. Have chalkboard or newsprint on hand to write down ideas that are offered during reflection time. (Don't forget to recycle!)

Facilitator Preparations Specific to This Episode:

- Secure copies of *Luther's Small Catechism*: Luther's explanation of the first article of the Apostle's Creed. Also found in the ELW.

Welcoming and Opening Devotion (10 minutes):

- Welcome all participants as they arrive.
- Gather in groups of three or four and share together why you are here.
- Stay in those groups and respond to the question: "What thought first comes to mind when you consider that human beings are earthbound?" After the small groups have shared with one another, invite participants to sum up their collective responses quickly for the whole group.
- Pray ELW pg. 81: Creation and new creation

"Sovereign of the universe, your first covenant of mercy was with every living creature. When your beloved Son came among us, the waters of the river welcomed him, the heavens opened to greet his arrival, the animals of the wilderness drew near as his companions. With all the world's people, may we who are washed into new life through baptism seek the way of your new creation, the way of justice and care, mercy and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**"

- Sing together ELW 771: *God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens.*

Optional Biblical Study (20-30 minutes)

- Read Psalm 8 to the whole group.
- Gather in groups of three or four. Work through the following questions Martin Luther might ask of a text:
 - o Step 1: "What did I learn as I listened?" and "What seems to be especially important given our relationship to creation right now?"
 - o Step 2: "In light of the passage read, what do I believe and confess about God and creation?"
- Convene together as a large group.
 - o Step 3: "For what do we give thanks today?"
 - o Step 4: "How is God calling us to care for creation?"
- Ask participants to share a prayer request that arose from the study. As participants share, write their responses on newsprint or a chalkboard. Save the prayer requests for the end of the session.

Create a concept map while watching the video

A concept map is a page with images and words placed on the page to help participants remember ideas/concepts and see them in relationship to one another. As the video is watched have each person write or draw key ideas or questions on a blank piece of paper. Place each new theme on the page in relationship with what is already on the page. Put related ideas next to each other or draw a line connecting them. Participants could use color or shapes to connect like ideas. (Put a box around one type of idea and a circle around a different type, or use a red for one type of idea and blue for another group of ideas.) Consider whether a theme or idea seems central, put those ideas toward the middle of the page, or if the idea seems not as important put it around the edge of the page. Some ideas may be connected to many others while others will stand alone. The critical point is not how beautiful the final page looks, but

rather that it captures what the participants felt was worth remembering. (Leaders, please encourage participants to try and capture their ideas and thoughts in some way. The episodes are filled with ideas and thoughts that participants will not want to lose when the reflection time begins.)

[View Video \(26:49 minutes\)](#)

Discussion Questions (15-20 minutes)

- *Reflection*

- Take two (2) minutes to reflect on the concept map you created as you watched the video. Where on your map do you see the goodness of creation? Where on your map do you see the brokenness of creation?
- God is committed to the abundant life of the earth and to the earth's creatures. God's commitment to life becomes clear in the presence of Jesus Christ on earth and in the presence of the Holy Spirit. What images and ideas come to mind when you consider God's commitment to abundant life?
- God is earthbound. How does this statement affirm what you believe about God? About the earth? How does this statement challenge what you believe about God? About the earth?
- The narrator asks: "How is it that we have been so slow to realize the injustice being inflicted on the earth by our behavior?" Has this realization come upon you slowly? Together as a large group or working in small groups:
 - Name the barriers that might prevent this realization.
 - Name the resources or experiences that enable this realization.
 - Name any callings to right relationship with the earth that arise from these realizations.
- Use the back of your concept map for this next task. Fold the paper in half. Title one column "judgment" and title the other column "justification." Invite participants to respond to the following questions by writing/journaling in silence:
 - What are some of the reasons why the judgment of God is needed?
 - What are some of the reasons that human beings are inclined towards judgmentalism?
 - What does justification (being made righteous) through Jesus Christ mean for you?
 - What do you hear for yourself in the following statement? "As a Christian justified by God's love you are free *from* preoccupation with your relationship with God and free *for* right relationship with your neighbors and the earth."

As time permits share your thoughts about the last statement with a partner or in a large group.

- *Reflection for Congregational Leadership*

- Write the following themes on newsprint or on a chalkboard: **justification**, **freedom**, **vocation**, and **earthbound**. Invite participants to walk around the room and write down synonyms or definitions for these theological themes on the newsprint or chalkboard. After defining the words ask participants to write down the ways people in your congregation experience these theological themes.
 - Consider formulating a sentence with some or all of these theological themes that will guide your congregation's calling to creation care. What is your congregation's environmental vocation?
- List the places and programs where your congregation is acting as a steward of God's creation.
 - What do you notice about your list?
 - What is missing from your list?

Optional Reflection/Action (10 minutes)

- Turn to pg. 1162 in the ELW. Reflect on Luther's explanation of the first article of the Creed found in Luther's Small Catechism:

"I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, etc..."

- Reflect together as a large group, with someone capturing the thoughts of the group on newsprint or on the chalkboard, on the ways Luther's explanation of the first article of the creed is still meaningful today.
- Give each participant a slip of paper. Invite each participant to propose an addition to Luther's explanation of the first article of the Creed. This addition could be a word, a phrase, or a sentence.
- Ask participants to share their proposal with one another in groups of three or four. If the groups have time, invite them to add their proposals to Luther's explanation.
- Gather together as a large group and share each group's proposed explanation.

Closing (5 minutes)

Lift up the prayer requests offered in the Optional Bible Study time. Or Pray ELW pg. 63: Stewardship of Creation.

"Merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature. Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**"

Episode 2: Here/There

God, the Creator, is in, with, and under all things. The God who is more than creation, dwells in creation, and gives life to all that is. God is earthbound. The presence of God in the material reality of the world is sacramental theology that binds both creation and incarnation together. God is at home on earth. Oftentimes because of persecution, Christians have looked to God for salvation from the brokenness of the earth and evils of humanity. Sometimes, the desire for God to rescue Christians from the earth has also meant that Christians do not engage neighbor or care for the earth. Jesus came for the salvation of the world. We are free *from* preoccupation with heavenly escapes. We are free *for* engagement with community, neighbor, and taking care of the world. To be earthbound is to be where God is -- here.

Learning Goals of Episode 2:

- To consider the theological relationship between God, human beings, and the earth.
- To distinguish between pantheism and panentheism.
- To deepen the meaning of incarnational and sacramental theology.

Facilitator Preparations for Each Episode:

- Invite someone else to act as host for the group. The host might help secure an appropriate space (at the church or in their house), provide a map and directions, and arrange for refreshments.
- View episode 2 to prepare your understanding of the concepts and goals.
- Ensure the television/DVD player is working. Cue the DVD to the appropriate episode.
- Imagine the whole session (together with the host) and arrange the room for appropriate conversation in large and small groups. Bear in mind how you might tailor these sessions towards the abilities of all who wish to come.
- Creatively imagine ways to make the space you are in more comfortable for all participants. Use these or other ideas: Bring tablecloths to add color. Add a candle to each table. Bring other decorative items from home. Display a cross somewhere prominent, fill a bowl with water and place it in the center of the room, bring a plant or flower arrangement, set out the communion wear, or set up a picture of galaxies or a photo of the earth on a easel to enhance the atmosphere of the room.
- In advance ask participants to bring a Bible with them; and have a few Bibles available.
- Provide hymnals for the opening & closing devotion or secure copyright permission to photocopy the hymn and prayers.
- Provide paper for reflection time. Have chalkboard or newsprint on hand to write down ideas that are offered during reflection time. (Don't forget to recycle!)

Facilitator Preparations Specific to This Episode:

- Creatively imagine ways to make the space you are in more comfortable for all participants. In addition to the other items used for the first session, set out two or three pots containing dirt. Also bring some napkins and spoons.
- Copy Episode 2 – Lyrics Handout.
- Visit the website for the ELCA's camping or outdoor ministry closest to your congregation and explore your congregation's relationship with this ministry. Consider

inviting someone who has participated in outdoor ministry or someone directly related to outdoor ministry to speak about his or her experience. You can search for outdoor ministries with this link: www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Ministry/Outdoor-Ministry.aspx

- Invite one or more members of an older generation to share their process of deliberation around an important creation care issue, particularly how they imagined future generations would respond to their decisions.

Welcoming and Opening Devotion (10 minutes):

- Welcome all participants as they arrive.
- Gather in groups of three or four and share together again why you are here.
- Stay in those groups and respond to the question: "What thoughts are still percolating or ruminating in you after last week's session?" After the small groups have shared with one another, invite participants to sum up their collective responses quickly for the whole group.
- Pray ELW pg. 44: Sunday, August 7-13 Year B

"Gracious God, your blessed Son came down from heaven to be the true bread that gives life to the world. Give us this bread always, that he may live in us and we in him, and that, strengthened by this food, we may live as his body in the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**"

- Sing together ELW 837: *Many and Great, O God (Wakantanka taku nitawa)*.

Optional Biblical Study (20-30 minutes)

- Read Psalm 148 to the whole group.
- Gather in groups of three or four. Work through the following questions that Martin Luther might ask of a text:
 - o Step 1: "What did I learn as I listened?" and "What seems to be especially important given our relationship to creation right now?"
 - o Step 2: "In light of the passage read, what do I believe and confess about God and creation?"
- Convene together as a large group.
 - o Step 3: "For what do we give thanks today?"
 - o Step 4: "How is God calling us to care for creation?"
- Ask participants to share a prayer request that arose from the study. As participants share, write their responses on newsprint or a chalkboard. Save the prayer requests for the end of the session.

Create a concept map while watching the video

A concept map is a page with images and words placed on the page to help participants remember ideas/concepts and see them in relationship to one another. As the video is watched have each person write or draw key ideas or questions on a blank piece of paper. Place each new theme on the page in relationship with what is already on the page. Put related

ideas next to each other or draw a line connecting them. Participants could use color or shapes to connect like ideas. (Put a box around one type of idea and a circle around a different type, or use a red for one type of idea and blue for another group of ideas.) Consider whether a theme or idea seems central, put those ideas toward the middle of the page, or if the idea seems not as important put it around the edge of the page. Some ideas may be connected to many others while others will stand alone. The critical point is not how beautiful the final page looks, but rather that it captures what the participants felt was worth remembering. (Leaders, please encourage participants to try and capture their ideas and thoughts in some way. The episodes are filled with ideas and thoughts that participants will not want to lose when the reflection time begins.)

[View Video \(24:43 minutes\)](#)

[Discussion Questions \(15-20 minutes\)](#)

- *Reflection*

- Take two (2) minutes to reflect on the concept map you created as you watched the video. Where does God show up most vividly on your map?
- Pass out the Episode 2 – Lyrics Handout. What might someone who resonates with the lyrics of “I can’t feel at home in this world anymore” believe about creation? What might someone who resonates with the lyrics of, “This is my Father’s world” believe about creation? In what ways do these different perspectives relate to God being earthbound?
- Invite participants to take a spoonful of dirt from the pots and place it on a napkin. The dirt is simply a reminder of the earth. On a chalkboard or newsprint write “pantheism” and “panentheism” and their definitions.
 - Define *pantheism* as: God is all things.
 - Define *panentheism* as: All is in God, God is in all. The God who is more than creation dwells in creation.
 - Keeping these definitions in mind, explore *panentheism* in the following sentences from this episode:
 - “God enters into our existence, especially in our suffering.”
 - “The sacraments are...material elements of the world carrying the presence of God.”
 - “Most of our modern American world does not believe in a theology of incarnation, but it deeply wants it. It wants to see that God is at the center of the soil that we walk on. Yet, that is what we hold as Christians. Remember that you are dust, and to dust you will return.”
 - Explore panentheism and incarnational theology in this Luther quote:
 - "God is present everywhere, but he does not wish that you grope for him everywhere. Grope rather where the Word is, and there you will lay hold of him in the right way." - Martin Luther, *The Sacrament - Against the Fanatics*, LW 36:342
- If you have invited someone who has participated in outdoor ministry, give him or her an opportunity to reflect on the video and on his or her experience with

outdoor ministry. Invite participants to reflect on the witness of outdoor ministry and its relationship with creation.

- *Reflection for Congregational Leadership*
 - o Write the following themes on newsprint or on a chalkboard: **restoration**, **panentheism**, **incarnation**, and **sacraments**. Invite participants to walk around the room and write down synonyms or definitions for these theological themes on the newsprint or chalkboard.
 - After defining the words invite participants to review the sentence created during the last session that will guide your congregation's calling to creation care. Gathering in small groups of 2 or 3, invite participants to formulate a different sentence in light of the theological themes in this episode.
 - If you have not already, consider formulating a sentence rooted in the theological themes of this episode that will guide your congregation's calling to creation care. What is your congregation's environmental vocation?
 - Convene together in a large group and share one another's sentences. Save each group's contribution to share during the next session.
 - o Earlier generations within your congregation may have made decisions that impact your congregation's creation care ministry today. Invite one or more members to share their process of deliberation around an important creation care issue, particularly how they imagined future generations would respond to their decisions.
 - o Create three creation care questions your congregational leadership will ask itself before it makes an important decision in the future. Within the question state clearly that God is present, incarnate, earthbound, and here.

Optional Reflection/Action (10 minutes)

- Invite participants to break into small groups and spend some time with your congregation's worship hymnal identifying incarnational and sacramental theology. The simplest way to find these hymns is to look in the indexes under "Incarnation," "Holy Baptism," and "Holy Communion."
- Are there favorite hymns and songs that your congregation loves to sing? Find one or two and look over the words in light of God's relationship with human beings and the earth.

Closing (5 minutes)

Sing together ELW 824: *This is My Father's World*

- If you are familiar with the tune, the lyrics are on the Episode 2 – Lyrics Handout.

Lift up the prayer requests offered in the Optional Bible Study time. Pray together *The Lord's Prayer*.

Episode 2 - Lyrics Handout

This is My Father's World"

This is my Father's world, and to my list'ning ears all nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres. This is my Father's world; I rest me in the thought of rocks and trees, of skies and seas; his hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father's world; the birds their carols raise; the morning light, the lily white, declare their maker's praise. This is my Father's world; he shines in all that's fair. In the rustling grass I hear him pass; he speaks to me ev'rywhere.

This is my Father's world; oh, let me not forget that, though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet. This is my Father's world; why should my heart be sad? The Lord is king, let heaven right; God reigns, let earth be glad!

"This World is Not My Home"

This world is not my home I'm just a passing through
My treasures and my hopes are all beyond the blue
Where many friends and kindred have gone on before
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore

Over in glory land there is no dying there
The saints are shouting victory there's singing everywhere
I hear the voice of them that I have heard before
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore

Oh lord you know I have no friend like you
If heaven's not my home oh lord what would I do
Angel's beckon me to heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore

Heaven's expecting me that's one I know
I fixed it up with Jesus a long time ago
He will take me through though I am weak and poor
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore

Oh I have a loving mother over in glory land
I don't expect to stop until I shake her hand
She's gone on before just waiting at heaven's door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore

Episode 3: Domination/Dominion

Our God who creates, shares the creative process. God calls the earth to bring forth life and God calls the creatures to bring forth life. A sovereign God invites human beings to exercise dominion by sharing in the creative process of bringing forth life on the earth. As created co-creators we are not called to wield power over creation, but to share power with the earth and its creatures in an interdependent, life furthering relationship.

Learning Goals of Episode 3:

- To compare the differences between dominion and domination.
- To consider multiple expressions of the sovereignty and dominion of the Triune God
- To give expression to the interdependence of the created order.
- To explore how earthbound creatures share in the life-furthering tasks of creation.

Facilitator Preparations for Each Episode:

- Invite someone else to act as host for the group. The host might help secure an appropriate space (at the church or in their house), provide a map and directions, and arrange for refreshments.
- View episode 3 to prepare your understanding of the concepts and goals.
- Ensure the television/DVD player is working. Cue the DVD to the appropriate episode.
- Imagine the whole session (together with the host) and arrange the room for appropriate conversation in large and small groups. Bear in mind how you might tailor these sessions towards the abilities of all who wish to come.
- Creatively imagine ways to make the space you are in more comfortable for all participants.
- In advance ask participants to bring a Bible with them; and have a few Bibles available.
- Provide hymnals for the opening & closing devotion or secure copyright permission to photocopy the hymn and prayers.
- Provide paper for reflection time. Have chalkboard or newsprint on hand to write down ideas that are offered during reflection time. (Don't forget to recycle!)

Facilitator Preparations Specific to This Episode:

- Collect recent newspapers and magazines for use in the reflection time.
- Invite a gardener in your congregation or community to describe the tasks of tending, tilling, weeding, mulching, potting, planting, sowing, etc. Ask the gardener to reflect upon the life-furthering tasks at hand.
- Familiarize yourself with the Environment and Energy section of the ELCA's website: www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Advocacy/Issues/Environment-and-Energy.aspx

Welcoming and Opening Devotion (10 minutes):

- Welcome all participants as they arrive.
- Gather in groups of three or four and respond to the question: "What thoughts are still percolating or ruminating in you after last week's session?" After the small groups have

shared with one another, invite participants to sum up their collective responses quickly for the whole group.

- Pray ELW pg. 80: Stewardship of natural resources

“Almighty God, in giving us dominion over things on earth, you made us coworkers in your creation. Give us wisdom and reverence to use the resources of nature so that no one may suffer from our abuse of them, and that generations yet to come may continue to praise you for your bounty; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**”

- Sing together ELW 842: *O Worship the King*.
- Or sing together *With One Voice 757: Creating God, Your Fingers Trace*.

Optional Biblical Study (20-30 minutes)

- Read Genesis 1:26 - 2:4 to the whole group.
- Gather in groups of three or four. Work through the following questions Martin Luther might ask of a text:
 - o Step 1: “What did I learn as I listened?” and “What seems to be especially important given our relationship to creation right now?”
 - o Step 2: “In light of the passage read, what do I believe and confess about God and creation?”
- Convene together as a large group.
 - o Step 3: “For what do we give thanks today?”
 - o Step 4: “How is God calling us to care for creation?”
- Ask participants to share a prayer request that arose from the study. As participants share, write their responses on newsprint or a chalkboard. Save the prayer requests for the end of the session.

Create a concept map while watching the video

A concept map is a page with images and words placed on the page to help participants remember ideas/concepts and see them in relationship to one another. As the video is watched have each person write or draw key ideas or questions on a blank piece of paper. Place each new theme on the page in relationship with what is already on the page. Put related ideas next to each other or draw a line connecting them. Participants could use color or shapes to connect like ideas. (Put a box around one type of idea and a circle around a different type, or use a red for one type of idea and blue for another group of ideas.) Consider whether a theme or idea seems central, put those ideas toward the middle of the page, or if the idea seems not as important put it around the edge of the page. Some ideas may be connected to many others while others will stand alone. The critical point is not how beautiful the final page looks, but rather that it captures what the participants felt was worth remembering. (Leaders, please encourage participants to try and capture their ideas and thoughts in some way. The episodes are filled with ideas and thoughts that participants will not want to lose when the reflection time begins.)

View Video (25:23 minutes)

Discussion Questions (15-20 minutes)

- *Reflection*

- Take two (2) minutes to reflect on the concept map you created as you watched the video. Where does God show up most vividly on your map?
- Pass out recent newspapers and news-related or creation-oriented magazines. Invite participants to spend time finding evidence or examples of domination or dominion. Ask participants to share what they found. How might we distinguish between domination and dominion of the earth in our every-day lives?
- Use the back of your concept map for this next task. Invite participants to respond to the following questions by writing/journaling in silence:
 - What are the characteristics of God's sovereignty?
 - What are the characteristics of Jesus as *Dominos*? What are the characteristics of Jesus' exercise of dominion?
 - What are the characteristics of the Holy Spirit's sustaining presence to further life abundantly?
 - Invite participants to sketch an image that depicts the Triune God's relationship with creation.
- In this episode we learn that ancient people would have heard God's call to dominion as liberation. The promise of dominion was empowerment for the ancients of the Iron Age who remained vulnerable to the natural world. How might dominion still be a liberating word among the large portions of earth's population that continue to remain vulnerable?
- If the ancients experienced dominion as liberation, perhaps modern people experience dominion as a deepening and developing interdependence with the natural world. What is the meaning of dominion for the populations on the earth that need to hear a word of interdependence with the natural world?
- Invite a gardener in your congregation or community to describe the tasks of tending, tilling, weeding, mulching, potting, planting, sowing, etc. Ask the gardener to reflect upon the life-furthering tasks at hand. Invite participants to consider the ways they "garden" in their vocations, even if they are not "gardening" per se.

- *Reflection for Congregational Leadership*

- Write the following themes on newsprint or on a chalkboard: **sovereignty**, **dominion**, **interdependence** or **relationality**, and **co-creators**. Invite participants to walk around the room and write down synonyms or definitions for these theological themes on the newsprint or chalkboard.
 - After defining each word invite participants to review the sentences created during the last session that will guide your congregation's calling to creation care. Gathering in small groups of 2 or 3, invite participants to formulate a different sentence in light of the theological themes in this episode.

- If you have not already, consider formulating a sentence rooted in the theological themes of this episode that will guide your congregation's calling to creation care. What is your congregation's environmental vocation?
- Convene together in a large group and share one another's sentences. Save each group's contribution to share during the next session.
- Review the minutes of the last few council or committee meetings in which your leaders participate. Which actions have been taken lately that share in the creative process which God initiates for bringing forth life on the earth?
- Prepare a creation care ministry audit. Where in your congregation's ministries do people learn about their vocation as co-creators?
- Imagine you are a guest in your church's building. Take a tour around the whole building, inside and outside. What might a guest notice about the energy use around the building? What evidence is there for the congregation's deepening and developing relationship of interdependence with the natural world?

Optional Reflection/Action (10 minutes)

- Consider moving outside for the reflection/action activity. Invite a gardener in your congregation or community to give a brief tour of the plants, flower, and trees surrounding the environment where you are meeting together. Invite participants to reflect upon the need for interdependence among all creation.
- The ELCA provides a wide variety of resources for caring for creation on their website. Explore the Environment and Energy section of the ELCA's website
 - www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Advocacy/Issues/Environment-and-Energy.aspx

As time and technology permit explore the environmental advocacy websites of some of the ELCA's full communion partners.

- United Church of Christ: www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries/
- Presbyterian Church, USA: gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/environment/
- Reformed Church in America: www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=1518
- The United Methodist Church: www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content.aspx?c=IwL4KnN1LtH&b=5065913&ct=6794177¬oc=1

Closing (5 minutes)

Lift up the prayer requests offered in the Optional Bible Study time. Pray ELW pg. 87: A prayer of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

“Make us worthy, Lord, to serve our fellow human beings throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them through our hands this day their daily bread, and by our understanding love, give peace and joy. **Amen.**”

Episode 4: Me/We

God created an interconnected universe of which the earth is a part. God's covenant is with a whole people – a whole community. In baptism we are woven into the body of Christ and the Holy Spirit gathers people together to be church. First and foremost from a biblical perspective, we are called to be a “we”; to love neighbor and serve the broader web of life to which we are connected as created beings. Science has similarly affirmed the interdependence of life. The planet sustains human life. Human beings are biosocial creatures. We are born to belonging. To affirm this interdependence counters the radical individualism and individual rights emphasized by the Western Enlightenment and so deeply embedded in the Western world. God calls us be interconnected in community, celebrating our connections and enhancing that to which we are connected.

Learning Goals of Episode 4:

- To explore the individualism fostered by the Western Enlightenment ideals of subject, personal, opinions, and choice.
- To distinguish our personal choices from our responsibility to serve the common good.
- To explore God's creation as an interconnected universe.
- To consider the theological language of covenant, community, and church, living in interdependency with the created order.

Facilitator Preparations for Each Episode:

- Invite someone else to act as host for the group. The host might help secure an appropriate space (at the church or in their house), provide a map and directions, and arrange for refreshments.
- In advance ask participants to bring a Bible with them; and have a few Bibles available.
- View episode 4 to prepare your understanding of the concepts and goals.
- Ensure the television/DVD player is working. Cue the DVD to the appropriate episode.
- Imagine the whole session (together with the host) and arrange the room for appropriate conversation in large and small groups. Bear in mind how you might tailor these sessions towards the abilities of all who wish to come.
- Creatively imagine ways to make the space you are in more comfortable for all participants.
- Provide hymnals for the opening & closing devotion or secure copyright permission to photocopy the hymn and prayers.
- Provide paper for reflection time. Have chalkboard or newsprint on hand to write down ideas that are offered during reflection time. (Don't forget to recycle!)

Facilitator Preparations Specific to This Episode:

- Copy Episode 4 – Discussion Questions Handout.
- Paints, paintbrushes, paper for painting or crayons, colored pencils, markers, and regular printing paper.

Welcoming and Opening Devotion (10 minutes):

- Welcome all participants as they arrive.
- Gather in groups of three or four and respond to the question: "What thoughts are still percolating or ruminating in you after last week's session?" After the small groups have shared with one another, invite participants to sum up their collective responses quickly for the whole group.
- Pray ELW pg. 25.

"Loving God, by tender words and covenant promise you have joined us to yourself forever, and you invite us to respond to your love with faithfulness. By your Spirit may we live with you and with one another in justice, mercy, and joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**"

- Sing together ELW 881: *Let All Things Now Living*.

Optional Biblical Study (20-30 minutes)

- Read Acts 2:37-47 to the whole group.
- Gather in groups of three or four. Work through the following questions Martin Luther might ask of a text:
 - o Step 1: "What did I learn as I listened?" and "What seems to be especially important given our relationship to creation right now?"
 - o Step 2: "In light of the passage read, what do I believe and confess about God and creation?"
- Convene together as a large group.
 - o Step 3: "For what do we give thanks today?"
 - o Step 4: "How is God calling us to care for creation?"
- Ask participants to share a prayer request that arose from the study. As participants share, write their responses on newsprint or a chalkboard. Save the prayer requests for the end of the session.

Create a concept map while watching the video

A concept map is a page with images and words placed on the page to help participants remember ideas/concepts and see them in relationship to one another. As the video is watched have each person write or draw key ideas or questions on a blank piece of paper. Place each new theme on the page in relationship with what is already on the page. Put related ideas next to each other or draw a line connecting them. Participants could use color or shapes to connect like ideas. (Put a box around one type of idea and a circle around a different type, or use a red for one type of idea and blue for another group of ideas.) Consider whether a theme or idea seems central, put those ideas toward the middle of the page, or if the idea seems not as important put it around the edge of the page. Some ideas may be connected to many others while others will stand alone. The critical point is not how beautiful the final page looks, but rather that it captures what the participants felt was worth remembering. (Leaders, please encourage participants to try and capture their ideas and thoughts in some way. The episodes

are filled with ideas and thoughts that participants will not want to lose when the reflection time begins.)

[View Video \(25:11 minutes\)](#)

Discussion Questions (15-20 minutes)

- *Reflection*

- Take two (2) minutes to reflect on the concept map you created as you watched the video. Where does God show up most vividly on your map?
- Pass out Episode 4 - Discussion Questions Handout. Staying within the same room, ask each participant to move their chairs as far away from each other as space permits. Invite participants to spend five minutes alone reflecting on the meaning of the concepts below in their daily life.
 - **Freedom:** How do you experience freedom daily?
 - **Self-Sufficiency:** How do you experience self-sufficiency daily?
 - **Individual Rights:** How do you experience individual rights daily?
 - **Personal Responsibility:** How do you experience personal responsibility daily?
 - Which concept is most important to you personally?
 - Why is this concept important?
- Return to the large group. On a newsprint or additional piece of paper react to the following questions:
 - What are the benefits of our freedoms, self-sufficiencies, individual rights, and personal responsibilities?
 - What are the dangers of our freedoms, self-sufficiencies, individual rights, and personal responsibilities?
- As a large group respond to the following quote from this episode.
 - “By nature, we are bio-social creatures. We are born to belonging. There isn’t anything that we do as individuals which doesn’t assume generations of knowledge. Furthermore, the planet has produced all of those materials for you. So what you do as an individual depends on geological processes, even cosmological processes about which you had absolutely nothing which to do. So, we are bio-social creatures to start with and yet we have this notion that somehow or another it all comes to focus in us; it’s all about me.”
- Write the following questions on two pieces of newsprint. Invite participants to gather in twos or threes and respond to the questions.
 - Why do people in the West believe they have the right to do whatever they want?
 - Why do people in the West believe they are entitled to their own personal opinion?

- Return to the large group. Gather the reflections of the large group on the newsprint.
 - Which responses connect with our responsibility to serve the common good? If none, why?
 - Which responses connect with the interdependency of the created order? If none, why?
 - Both theology and science agree that human beings are not individuals, first, but community first. The Bible's antidote to individualism is community. God's covenant is with a community. God sets about creating a community -- the called people, the people Israel. God calls together the people of the church. In baptism we are woven into a body. We are not singular.
 - Offer participants a variety of paints, crayons, markers, and colored pencils. Invite participants to depict an antidote to individualism. Once complete, invite participants to describe their antidote.

Reflection for Congregational Leadership

- Write the following themes on newsprint or on a chalkboard: **covenant, community, and church**. Invite participants to walk around the room and write down synonyms or definitions for these theological themes on the newsprint or chalkboard.
 - After defining the themes, invite participants to review the sentences created during the last session that will guide your congregation's calling to creation care. Gathering in small groups of 2 or 3, invite participants to formulate a different sentence in light of the theological themes in this episode.
 - If you have not already, consider formulating a sentence rooted in the theological themes of this episode that will guide your congregation's calling to creation care. What is your congregation's environmental vocation?
 - Convene together in a large group and share one another's sentences. Save each group's contribution to share during the next session.

Invite participants to gather in twos or threes and discuss when they feel most connected to God's covenant in your congregation or in their daily life. Provide each group with three sheets of paper and ask them to write down one response on each piece of paper.

- Gather in a large space with a clear floor. Ask participants to arrange all of their responses on the floor in a way that makes sense to them as a community.
- What do they notice about the responses? What is included? What is missing?
- Do they imagine that other members of the congregation feel connected to God's covenant in similar ways? What about newcomers?

Optional Reflection/Action (10 minutes)

- Read an excerpt from scientist and astronomer Carl Sagan's book, *A Pale Blue Dot*. Sagan's inspiration for this reflection comes from a picture taken of the earth by the Voyager I space flight in 1990. Sagan was the NASA commander of that flight. The excerpt can be found on numerous websites.
 - www.planetary.org/explore/topics/voyager/pale_blue_dot.html

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pale_Blue_Dot
- See also many videos that accompany Sagan reading the passage himself.
 - www.youtube.com/watch?v=p86BPM1GV8M&NR=1
 - www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pFwY2Tnehw
- Offer participants a variety of paints, crayons, markers, and colored pencils. Invite participants to create a picture inspired by this excerpt.

Closing (5 minutes)

Lift up the prayer requests offered in the Optional Bible Study time. Pray ELW pg. 26.

“Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**”

Episode 4 – Discussion Questions Handout

Spend three minutes alone reflecting on the meaning of these concepts below in your daily life.

Freedom

- How do you experience freedom daily?

Self-Sufficiency

- How do you experience self-sufficiency daily?

Individual Rights

- How do you experience individual rights daily?

Personal Responsibility

- How do you experience personal responsibility daily?

Which concept is most important to you personally?

Why is this concept important?

Return to the large group and share your response to the following question.

What are the benefits of our freedoms, self-sufficiencies, individual rights, and personal responsibilities? What are the dangers of our freedoms, self-sufficiencies, individual rights, and personal responsibilities?

Respond to the following quote from this episode:

“By nature, we are bio-social creatures. We are born to belonging. There isn’t anything that we do as individuals which doesn’t assume generations of knowledge. Furthermore, the planet has produced all of those materials for you. So what you do as an individual depends on geological processes, even cosmological processes about which you had absolutely nothing which to do. So, we are bio-social creatures to start with and yet we have this notion that somehow or another it all comes to focus in us; it’s all about me.”

Episode 5: Now/Forever

The Gospel has everything to do with life. We are called to hear and to be drawn into the overarching biblical story that announces God's cosmic and long-term determination for earth and earth's creatures to have abundant life. Our day-to-day actions are generally short term and oftentimes short sighted. This short-term view often leads to exploitation of the earth and those who labor. To rest is to resist immediate satisfaction and bear witness to God's story and promise that connects us to the generations that preceded our time on earth and the neighbors who will come after us. A long-term view of life on earth includes advocating for creation care, for Sabbath rest, and for future generations. Our earthbound God calls us to choose life.

Learning Goals of Episode 5:

- To hear the overarching biblical story and lean into life.
- To distinguish between a short-term and a long-term view of being earthbound.
- To confess our need for rest.
- To deepen our interconnectedness with generations past and generations to come.

Facilitator Preparations for Each Episode:

- Invite someone else to act as host for the group. The host might help secure an appropriate space (at the church or in their house), provide a map and directions, and arrange for refreshments.
- In advance ask participants to bring a Bible with them; and have a few Bibles available.
- View episode 5 to prepare your understanding of the concepts and goals.
- Ensure the television/DVD player is working. Cue the DVD to the appropriate episode.
- Imagine the whole session (together with the host) and arrange the room for appropriate conversation in large and small groups. Bear in mind how you might tailor these sessions towards the abilities of all who wish to come.
- Creatively imagine ways to make the space you are in more comfortable for all participants.
- Provide hymnals for the opening & closing devotion or secure copyright permission to photocopy the hymn and prayers.
- Provide paper for reflection time. Have chalkboard or newsprint on hand to write down ideas that are offered during reflection time. (Don't forget to recycle!)

Facilitator Preparations Specific to This Episode:

- Bring a variety of biblical timelines found in Bibles, Atlases, and Bible Dictionaries. Here is a trustworthy website: www.enterthebible.org/Bible.aspx?rid=900
- Photocopy or purchase enough copies of the ELCA Social Statement on the Environment for the optional reflection/action activity.
- Invite a member of your congregational care team and/or children's ministry team to share how your congregation cares for the oldest and youngest members.
- Consider inviting your county or state government representative to your meeting to address the important environmental legislative policies that are being debated in your area. If you are unable to secure a government representative, consider inviting a representative from your local Lutheran state policy office. See www.elca.org/Our-

[Faith-In-Action/Justice/Advocacy/Advocacy-Ministries/State-Offices/List-of-State-Offices.aspx](#) for a list of offices.

- Review the ELCA Social Statement on the Environment. (www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Environment.aspx)

Welcoming and Opening Devotion (10 minutes):

- Welcome all participants as they arrive.
- Gather in groups of three or four and share together why you are here.
- Stay in those groups and answer the question: “What thoughts are still percolating or ruminating in you after last week’s session?” After the small groups have shared with one another, invite participants to sum up their collective responses quickly for the whole group.
- Pray ELW pg. 38: Sunday, June 5-11 Year A

“O God, you are the source of life and the ground of our being. By the power of your Spirit bring healing to this wounded world, and raise us to new life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**”

- Sing together ELW 711: *O Day of Peace*.

Optional Biblical Study (20-30 minutes)

- Read Deuteronomy 30: (1-10) 11-20 to the whole group.
- Gather in groups of three or four. Work through the following questions Martin Luther might ask of a text:
 - o Step 1: “What did I learn as I listened?” and “What seems to be especially important given our relationship to creation right now?”
 - o Step 2: “In light of the passage read, what do I believe and confess about God and creation?”
- Convene together as a large group.
 - o Step 3: “For what do we give thanks today?”
 - o Step 4: “How is God calling us to care for creation?”
- Ask participants to share a prayer request that arose from the study. As participants share, write their responses on newsprint or a chalkboard. Save the prayer requests for the end of the session.

Create a concept map while watching the video

A concept map is a page with images and words placed on the page to help participants remember ideas/concepts and see them in relationship to one another. As the video is watched have each person write or draw key ideas or questions on a blank piece of paper. Place each new theme on the page in relationship with what is already on the page. Put related ideas next to each other or draw a line connecting them. Participants could use color or shapes to connect like ideas. (Put a box around one type of idea and a circle around a different type, or use a red for one type of idea and blue for another group of ideas.) Consider whether a theme or idea seems central, put those ideas toward the middle of the page, or if the idea seems not

as important put it around the edge of the page. Some ideas may be connected to many others while others will stand alone. The critical point is not how beautiful the final page looks, but rather that it captures what the participants felt was worth remembering. (Leaders, please encourage participants to try and capture their ideas and thoughts in some way. The episodes are filled with ideas and thoughts that participants will not want to lose when the reflection time begins.)

[View Video \(20:06 minutes\)](#)

Discussion Questions (15-20 minutes)

- *Reflection*

- Take two (2) minutes to reflect on the concept map you created as you watched the video. Where does God show up most vividly on your map?
- Display a variety of biblical timelines for participants to browse. Invite participants to spend time with these timelines noticing the important people, events, and places. What part does each event play in the overarching biblical story?
- Invite participants to draw their own timeline. Ask the following questions:
 - Where will you be in one hour?
 - Where will you be in twenty-four hours?
 - Where will you be in one year?
 - Where will you be in 10 years?
 - Who do you imagine will remember you in 100 years?
- How might your last response change in light of the image of God as quilter or seamstress? “Human beings and other creatures as well, have value, that what they do counts and makes a difference with regard to the shape not only of their present but also of their future. The new heaven and the new earth that God is about here, might be imaged in terms of a grand quilt in which all of us through the centuries have been at work on our little patches and God is weaving all these patches over time into the quilt. So what you and I do will make a difference with regard to the shape and looks of that quilt, finally.”
- “The earth will keep spinning without our intervention.” In what ways does your congregation observe the Sabbath? In what ways do Sabbath observances sustain and nourish life?
 - Luther writes in his explanation of the Third Commandment in the Large Catechism, “We observe [the Sabbath], first, because our bodies need them. Nature teaches and demands that the common people – menservants and maidservants who have gone about their work or trade all week long – should also return for a day to rest and be refreshed. Second and most important, we observe them so that people will have time and opportunity on such days of rest, which otherwise would not be available, to attend worship services, that is, so that they may assemble

to hear and discuss God's Word and then to offer praise, song, and prayer to God." (LC, 397)

- *Reflection for Congregational Leadership*
 - o Write the following themes on newsprint or on a chalkboard: **Sabbath rest, life and death, ancestors and descendants**. Invite participants to walk around the room and write down synonyms or definitions for these theological themes on the newsprint or chalkboard.
 - After defining the themes, review the sentences created during the last session that will guide your congregation's calling to creation care. Gathering in small groups of 2 or 3, invite participants to formulate a different sentence in light of the theological themes in this episode.
 - If you have not already, consider formulating a sentence rooted in the theological themes of this episode that will guide your congregation's calling to creation care. What is your congregation's environmental vocation?
 - Convene together in a large group and share one another's sentences. Save each group's contribution to share during the next session.
 - o Invite a member of your congregational care team and/or children's ministry team to share how your congregation cares for the oldest and youngest members. In what ways do the leaders of your congregation hear the stories of the oldest among you? In what ways do the leaders of your congregation attend to the life of the youngest in your midst?
 - o Consider inviting your county or state government representative to your meeting to address the important environmental legislative policies that are being debated in your area. If you are unable to secure a government representative, consider inviting a representative from your local Lutheran state policy office. See www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Advocacy/Advocacy-Ministries/State-Offices/List-of-State-Offices.aspx for a list of offices.

Optional Reflection/Action (10 minutes)

- Review the ELCA Social Statement on the Environment. (www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Environment.aspx)
 - o The prologue reads: "Christian concern for the environment is shaped by the Word of God spoken in creation, the Love of God hanging on a cross, the Breath of God daily renewing the face of the earth. We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are deeply concerned about the environment, locally and globally, as members of this church and as members of society. Even as we join the political, economic, and scientific discussion, we know care for the earth to be a profoundly spiritual matter. As Lutheran Christians, we confess that both our witness to God's goodness in creation and our acceptance of caregiving responsibility have often been weak and uncertain. This statement:

- offers a vision of God's intention for creation and for humanity as creation's caregivers;
- acknowledges humanity's separation from God and from the rest of creation as the central cause of the environmental crisis;
- recognizes the severity of the crisis; and
- expresses hope and heeds the call to justice and commitment.
- Guided by the witness of the Lutheran Seminary of Theology at Chicago in this episode, review particularly Part V – “The Commitments of the Church” and choose one action step to bring before the leadership of your congregation.
- Explore the following websites:
 - www.webofcreation.org/
 - www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/

Closing (5 minutes)

Lift up the prayer requests offered in the Optional Bible Study time. Pray ELW pg. 23.

“Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**”

Episode 6: Enough/Too Much

God daily and abundantly provides, protects, and preserves human beings out of pure divine goodness and mercy. The prophets called upon the people of Israel to reject self-indulgence and embrace God's provision for the whole community. Jesus consistently reminded his followers that happiness is not found in earthly possessions but in loving God and loving neighbor. With the potential for 9 billion people populating the earth in 2050, God is calling us to steward the resources of faith in ways that live in love of neighbor. Our earthbound vocation is to care for the earth as creatures living within a web of relationships – land, animals, and people.

Learning Goals of Episode 6:

- To hear the Good News that God provides abundantly.
- To distinguish the abundance of possessions and the abundance of communal sharing.
- To name ways that we can work with the rhythm of the created order.
- To imagine what abundant life for the whole world looks like.

Facilitator Preparations for Each Episode:

- Invite someone else to act as host for the group. The host might help secure an appropriate space (at the church or in their house), provide a map and directions, and arrange for refreshments.
- In advance ask participants to bring a Bible with them; and have a few Bibles available.
- View episode 6 to prepare your understanding of the concepts and goals.
- Ensure the television/DVD player is working. Cue the DVD to the appropriate episode.
- Imagine the whole session (together with the host) and arrange the room for appropriate conversation in large and small groups. Bear in mind how you might tailor these sessions towards the abilities of all who wish to come.
- Creatively imagine ways to make the space you are in more comfortable for all participants.
- Provide hymnals for the opening & closing devotion or secure copyright permission to photocopy the hymn and prayers.
- Provide paper for reflection time. Have chalkboard or newsprint on hand to write down ideas that are offered during reflection time. (Don't forget to recycle!)

Facilitator Preparations Specific to This Episode:

- Secure copies of *Luther's Small Catechism*: Luther's explanation of the first article of the Apostle's Creed. Also found in the ELW.
- Copy the template and example included in *Earthbound* for a congregational action plan for a Green Congregation Program.

Welcoming and Opening Devotion (10 minutes):

- Welcome all participants as they arrive.
- Gather in groups of three or four and share something for which you are thankful as you gather together for this last session. After the small groups have shared with one

another, invite participants to sum up their collective responses quickly for the whole group.

- Pray ELW pg. 81: Creation and new creation

“Sovereign of the universe, your first covenant of mercy was with every living creature. When your beloved Son came among us, the waters of the river welcomed him, the heavens opened to greet his arrival, the animals of the wilderness drew near as his companions. With all the world’s people, may we who are washed into new life through baptism seek the way of your new creation, the way of justice and care, mercy and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**”

- Sing together ELW 712: *Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service.*

Optional Biblical Study (20-30 minutes)

- Read Luke 12: 13-34 to the whole group.
- Gather in groups of three or four. Work through the following questions Martin Luther might ask of a text:
 - o Step 1: “What did I learn as I listened?” and “What seems to be especially important given our relationship to creation right now?”
 - o Step 2: “In light of the passage read, what do I believe and confess about God and creation?”
- Convene together as a large group.
 - o Step 3: “For what do we give thanks today?”
 - o Step 4: “How is God calling us to care for creation?”
- Ask participants to share a prayer request that arose from the study. As participants share, write their responses on newsprint or a chalkboard. Save the prayer requests for the end of the session.

Create a concept map while watching the video

A concept map is a page with images and words placed on the page to help participants remember ideas/concepts and see them in relationship to one another. As the video is watched have each person write or draw key ideas or questions on a blank piece of paper. Place each new theme on the page in relationship with what is already on the page. Put related ideas next to each other or draw a line connecting them. Participants could use color or shapes to connect like ideas. (Put a box around one type of idea and a circle around a different type, or use a red for one type of idea and blue for another group of ideas.) Consider whether a theme or idea seems central, put those ideas toward the middle of the page, or if the idea seems not as important put it around the edge of the page. Some ideas may be connected to many others while others will stand alone. The critical point is not how beautiful the final page looks, but rather that it captures what the participants felt was worth remembering. (Leaders, please encourage participants to try and capture their ideas and thoughts in some way. The episodes are filled with ideas and thoughts that participants will not want to lose when the reflection time begins.)

View Video (24:33 minutes)

Discussion Questions (15-20 minutes)

- *Reflection*

- Take two (2) minutes to reflect on the concept map you created as you watched the video. Where does God show up most vividly on your map?
- Provide each participant with a piece of paper. Beginning with the minute you woke up this morning, list everything you used or consumed before noon (12:00 p.m.) today. What do you notice about your list? Any surprises? Any revelations? Do you observe any evidence of stewardship of the earth and serving your neighbor in your morning pattern of consumption?
 - Consider the following quote from this episode: “Christians believe that the material world is good and that God provides what we need through the activity of the larger community, including the non-human community. Humans have created a new religion that is a distortion of this reality. It’s called consumerism -- consumption as human culture. It makes the wheels of our economy turn. But at what cost? At what point must we reassess what we need versus what we want?...We’ve made an idol out of consuming.”
 - What would an image of shalom look like where all of the earth’s creatures work with and not against the created order?
- *If you opted to do this activity in session 1, invite participants to try it again now in session 6.* Turn to pg. 1162 in the ELW. Reflect on Luther’s explanation of the first article of the Creed found in Luther’s Small Catechism: “I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, etc...”
 - Reflect together as a large group, with someone capturing the thoughts of the group on newsprint or on the chalkboard, on the ways Luther’s explanation of the first article of the creed is still meaningful today.
 - Give each participant a slip of paper. Invite each participant to propose an addition to Luther’s explanation of the first article of the Creed. This addition could be a word, a phrase, or a sentence.
 - Ask participants to share their proposal with one another in groups of three or four. If the groups have time, invite them to add their proposals to Luther’s explanation.
 - Gather together as a large group and share each group’s proposed explanation.
- God provides for the abundant life of all of creation. Our earthbound vocation is to care for the earth as creatures, within a web of relationships between the human and material world – land, animals, and people.
 - At the end of this study, in light of all you have encountered, how have you been encouraged to use your gifts and talents to be inventive, creative, and even playful to live out your earthbound vocation?

- *Reflection for Congregational Leadership*
 - o Write the following themes on newsprint or on a chalkboard: **abundance, stewardship, loving God and loving Neighbor, earthbound vocation**. Invite participants to walk around the room and write down synonyms or definitions for these theological themes on the newsprint or chalkboard.
 - After defining the themes, review the sentences created during the last session that will guide your congregation's calling to creation care. Gathering in small groups of 2 or 3, invite participants to formulate a different sentence in light of the theological themes in this episode.
 - If you have not already, consider formulating a sentence rooted in the theological themes of this episode that will guide your congregation's calling to creation care. What is your congregation's environmental vocation?
 - Convene together in a large group and re-read all of the sentences from past session and then share one another's sentences from today.
 - Invite participants to spend three minutes silently reflecting on all that has been composed throughout this study.
 - Identify two or three people who will use these sentences as inspiration to craft a theological framework for your congregation's creation care process.
 - o Using the template and example included in *Earthbound*, begin to brainstorm ideas for a congregational action plan for a Green Congregation Program. Consider all the areas of the congregation, worship, education, building and grounds, discipleship at home and at work, public ministry and public advocacy, and project your congregation might take up on behalf of your community or your city. Before you finish, identify four people within the congregation with passion, talent, and energy around creation care.

Optional Reflection/Action (10 minutes)

- Visit the U.S. Census Bureau for updated statistics on the world's population growth. www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/worldpopinfo.html
- Invite each participant to visit a local library or bookstore to find a book about the environment. (Try finding books at all reading levels). Share a review of the book in a congregation newsletter or bulletin announcement. Consider buying a book about creation for your church's library.
- Using the template and example included in *Earthbound*, begin to brainstorm ideas for a congregational action plan for a Green Congregation Program. Consider all the areas of the congregation, worship, education, building and grounds, discipleship at home and at work, public ministry and public advocacy, and imagine what project your congregation might take up on behalf of your community or your city. Before you finish, identify four people within the congregation with passion, talent, and energy around creation care.

Closing (5 minutes)

Lift up the prayer requests offered in the Optional Bible Study time. Pray ELW pg. 63: Stewardship of Creation.

“Merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature. Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**”