

Creation Care Vision

IMAGINE THAT... Congregations everywhere understand caring for the earth as a key part of the Christian calling. Care of creation is named in congregations' mission and core values.

Don't forget to invite: pastors, elders/governing board, committee chairs, people in charge of church communications.

Step 1: Assemble your congregation's vision statement, mission statement, and descriptions of the roles of various committees. Print out what your congregation says about itself on your website or in brochures and fliers.

Step 2: Look through these documents. How and where is care of creation represented, if at all? If care of creation is represented, does your congregation resonate with this part of its vision? How is that evident?

Step 3: Rate your congregation's creation care vision from 0 to 5. A zero indicates no current activity or plan; a 5 represents that your congregation is fully engaged in a given task or planning.

Step 4: If creation care *is not* represented in your documents, consider these questions:

- Is there some aspect of caring for creation that is authentic to your congregation but remains unnamed?
- What kind of study and discernment process might address this? A series of sermons, a Christian Education class, a plan to rewrite a mission statement?
- Appendix 1 below contains examples of statements that embrace creation care in a variety of ways.

Step 5: If creation care *is* represented in your documents but not well integrated in congregational life, how might you change that? Discuss with the help of the other categories on this score sheet.

Other examples of Congregational Score Sheets:

- From the [Presbyterian Church USA](#)
- From [GreenFaith](#), an interfaith nonprofit that attempts to mobilize people of diverse religious backgrounds for environmental leadership.

Appendix 1

Creation Care Vision: Sample Documents

Below are examples of statements that include creation care:

A mission statement:

“Together, sharing all of Christ with all of creation.”

- Mennonite Mission Network

[Good News to the Whole Creation](#), an essay by Executive Director Stanley Green explains what this statement might mean.

A goal statement:

Mennonite Creation Care Network encourages the Church to:

- Claim its biblical and theological foundation regarding the care of God’s Creation.
- Discover the ties that link all created beings to each other and to God
- Confess the harm we have caused the natural world and our neighbors.
- Act faithfully to restore the earth.

Creation Care Covenants:

Example 1: [Green Chalice Covenant](#), Disciples Home Missions

As children of God and followers of Christ Jesus, we covenant to:

Worship God with all creation and pray for the healing of the earth.

Study the climate crisis and engage others in climate solutions.

Repent and forgive for the harm we have inflicted on the earth that sustains life.

Advocate for ecojustice public policies and witness by living sustainable lifestyles.

Rest in God’s good creation and invite others to delight in nature.

Example 2: This covenant was adopted by the Bethel College Mennonite Church, Newton, Kansas in September, 2002.

Creation Care Covenant

This covenant was adopted by the Bethel College Mennonite Congregation, Newton, Kansas September, 2002

God created the earth and all that is in it and declared it good. God's creation is marked by wondrous complexity, interdependence and beauty. Human beings are called by God to the task of stewardship - taking care of the earth respectfully for its own sake and so that present and future generations may live on it and enjoy its fruits. The gifts of creation and the responsibility of stewardship were given to all of humanity, so that all might have enough and no one would have more than is needed and God's justice would prevail.

In our pride and brokenness, all of humankind is in sin and separated from God. The earth has not been well cared for. The water and air and land are polluted with poisons which hurt people and all creation. Many species of animals and plants are endangered by the behavior of human beings and the rate of extinction of species has dramatically increased, eroding the diversity of life on earth.

We have not shared the fruits of creation justly. Some people live in luxury, taking more than they need, while others are desperately poor, especially people of color.

God, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, heals and reconciles humanity and all of creation to God. We are able to become new creations - the new comes and the old passes away.

God calls the church to participate in the redemption of individuals, all of humanity and creation. Ministries of environmental stewardship and environmental justice are significant in the mission of the church. Therefore we, the Bethel College Mennonite Church, affirm the importance of healing and defending creation to our mission. We promise to continue to be engaged in this ministry in the following ways:

Worship - In worship, we will celebrate God's grace and glory in creation and will declare that God calls us to participate in the redemption of the world by cherishing, protecting and restoring creation.

Learning and Teaching - We will seek opportunities for ourselves and our children to learn more about the wonders of creation, the threats posed by human beings to the survival of creation and the possibilities of our participating in God's redemption and justice.

Lifestyle - Our individual and congregation's lifestyles will respect and cherish creation. We will form habits of consuming, conserving and sharing that serve to protect and restore the environment. In particular, we will reuse and recycle as many materials as we can and seek ways of limiting our consumption of limited resources and minimizing our pollution of the environment.

Community, National and Global Involvement - In our community, the nation and the world, our congregation will witness to and participate in God's redemption of creation by supporting public efforts and policies which support vulnerable people and protect and restore God's creation. We seek to cooperate with other faith communities and secular institutions toward this goal.

Example 3: [Albuquerque Mennonite Church](#) has a covenant that members renew annually. See the excerpt below and highlighted statement.

Expressions of Faith

As Anabaptists, we strive to interpret and live the Scriptures faithfully with the help of the Holy Spirit and the wider Body of Christ. The following expressions are responses to our trust in Jesus Christ:

- Together we join to worship, discern, and participate in the business of the church.
- Together we affirm that close, personal relationships with one another are essential to the Christian life. We meet for study and nurture in small groups.
- Together we seek spiritual growth by such means as prayer, readings, meditation, Bible study, silence, and retreats.
- Together we build a community that is faithful, open-hearted and whole, welcoming and supporting one another with counsel and correction as love guides us.
- Together we work locally and globally for God's peace and justice through nonviolent, active love.
- Together we practice faithful stewardship of our time, treasure and talent, as a grateful response to God, encouraging one another to use our God-given gifts and abilities.
- Together we honor God, the Creator, by challenging one another and others to live as partners with the creation.
- Together we celebrate and learn from children as gifts of God, cherished individuals in our congregational life. We seek to model our faith in Jesus so that children may freely choose to follow him.

Appendix 2

Selected Statements from the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (1995)

From Article 5, Creation and Divine Providence

- We believe that God has created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and that God preserves and renews what has been made.
- We believe that the universe has been called into being as an expression of God's love and sovereign freedom alone.
- We acknowledge that God sustains creation in both continuity and change.
- We therefore are called to respect the natural order of creation and to entrust ourselves to God's care and keeping, whether in adversity or plenty.

From Article 6, The Creation and Calling of Human Beings

- God formed them from the dust of the earth and gave them a special dignity among all the works of creation. Human beings have been made for relationship with God, to live in peace with each other, and to take care of the rest of creation.
- As creatures according to the divine likeness, we have been made stewards to subdue and to care for creation out of reverence and honor for the Creator. As creatures made in the divine image, we have been blessed with the abilities to respond faithfully to God, to live in harmony with other human beings, and to engage in meaningful work and rest.

From Article 21, Christian Stewardship

- We believe that everything belongs to God, who calls us as the church to live as faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to us.
- As stewards of God's earth, we are called to care for the earth and to bring rest and renewal to the land and everything that lives on it.

From Article 22, Peace, Justice, and Nonresistance

- We believe that peace is the will of God. God created the world in peace, and God's peace is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace and the peace of the whole world.
- The peace God intends for humanity and creation was revealed most fully in Jesus Christ.
- As followers of Jesus, we participate in his ministry of peace and justice. He has called us to find our blessing in making peace and seeking justice.
- The biblical concept of peace embraces personal peace with God, peace in human relations, peace among nations, and peace with God's creation. (From Commentary #1)