Stewards of the Earth

And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. Genesis 6:19-20

God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Genesis 9:12-13

Introduction

Our Earth is amazing! It’s awe-inspiring! And it was created out of love by God who declared that everything made on earth, in the waters, and in the sky is good. How wonderful for us that we get to spend our lives discovering the beauty of the Creation. We can learn about the many different plants and animals, meet all sorts of interesting people, and enjoy tasty food grown thanks to all of the various parts of Creation working together so that we may eat. The only thing God asks for in return is that we put God first in our lives, that we are grateful for God’s gifts, and that we take good care of them. If we care for the Creation, God says that we will be cared for, too. What a deal!! Yet it is sometimes hard to respect these gifts. We are tempted to use more than we need, or to pollute, or otherwise make poor choices. One thing that can help us be good stewards of the Earth is to remember that when we do make good environmental choices, we are letting God know that we love God and appreciate all God has done for us. We love the Earth!!

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Interfaith Prayer Praising Creation

Teacher: Let us praise God for the wondrous works of Creation.
Children: For all these gifts, we praise God's name together.

Teacher: God has placed us on this earth to dress it and keep it.
Children: For all these gifts, we praise God's name together.

Teacher: For the common soil which nourishes and sustains all life;
Children: We raise our hymn of grateful praise.

Teacher: For the life giving rain to water the earth and bestow life on all beings;
Children: We raise our hymn of grateful praise.

Teacher: For the wonders of the plants and the animals in our world;
Children: Let all the people praise you, O God.

Teacher: For the diverse people who touch each life with love;
Children: Let all the people praise you, O God.

Teacher: God has filled the air with sound and harmony;
Children: We shout and sing together for joy. AMEN
All Things Bright and Beautiful

All things bright and beautiful
All creatures great and small
All things wise and wonderful
The Lord God made them all

Each little flower that opens
Each little bird that sings
God made their glowing colors
God made their tiny wings

God made the deer and rabbits
The squirrels brown and gray
The fishes in the rivers
The butterflies so gay

And all the dogs and horses
The friendly cows and sheep
God giveth us the flowers
And animals to keep

To hear the melody for this song, visit YouTube, All Things Bright and Beautiful.

Written by Cecil Francis Alexander, 1848; Music by W.R. Waghorne, 1906
Corn Prints for Placemats

Time Needed: 45 minutes

Materials:
- Corn on the cob (fresh, uncooked with husks removed, one per child)
- Non-toxic paint
- Paintbrushes
- White construction paper
- Contact paper
- Magazines

**Remove the corn from the cob beforehand. Save the husks for the cornhusk doll craft (see pages D-5 and D-6). The cob can then be used for this activity.

Instructions:
1. Ask the children to paint the corn kernels any way they want to and then roll the corncob over a piece of paper.
2. When the children are satisfied with what they have done, put the paper aside to dry and make another one.
3. Use more than one ear of corn or use one ear and wash it between paper changes if you want a fresh start.
4. This is a fun and messy craft so cover the workspace with newspaper, etc. and let the children clean their hands before starting again.

Note: Once used, the ear of corn is not edible. Wash the corn with water (no soap) to remove as much of the non-toxic paint as possible and compost it!

When the paint dries, the paper will make a nice background for a placemat. Ask the children to cut out pictures from a magazine and glue them to the textured paper. When the glue dries, cover with contact paper to make a placemat.
## Corn Husk Dolls

**Time Needed:** 1 hour

**Materials:**
1. Corn husks (dried)
2. Twine

These dolls are based on Penobscot Dolls illustrated by Frank G. Speck in the mid-1900s. You will need the husks from one or two ears of corn for a 6" doll. Soak cornhusks (that have been thoroughly dried beforehand) for 10 minutes in warm water.

1. Cut cob, remove husks and save “hair”. Dry everything in the sun for 1-3 days.
2. Soak 10 minutes before using husks. Cut thin ends off.
4a. Peal leaves around to form head. Hair should sprout up in the middle.
4b. Tie neck area tightly.

*(continued on next page)*
5. Braid three strips of a leaf into a six-inch piece for the arms.

6. Braid two more lengths in the same way to use later for the two legs.

7. Put arms under neck. Insert rolled leaf to fill out and form body. Tie waist area.

8. Insert legs and secure by tying two leaves front to back, then trim excess below waist.

9. Wrap and tie one or two strips around top of legs to form hips.

Lesson plan provided by Native American Technology and Art: [http://www.nativetech.org/cornhusk/corndoll.html](http://www.nativetech.org/cornhusk/corndoll.html)
Crop Rotation Game #1 (5-7 Year Olds)

Time Needed: 15 minutes

Instructions:
1. Pass out crop pictures to each student (see pages D-8).
2. Explain that the crops for this year have been planted in a circle on the floor. The spots where each of the cards are represent where each crop was planted on the farm last year. Since this farm is practicing sustainable crop rotation techniques, no crop can be planted in the same place the next year, because that would deplete the quality of the soil.
3. Play musical chairs but with the added rule that they can’t return to the spot that has their crop.
Crop Rotation Game #2 (8-11 Year Olds)

Designed for 16 students. Adjust game accordingly for fewer or more children.

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials:
- Red, yellow, green, and blue plastic bead necklaces - four of each color
- Recycled cardboard (cereal boxes, pasta boxes, etc.) cut into 4-inch by 4-inch squares
- Markers
- Single hole punch
- Yarn

Instructions:
1. Divide students into four groups of four students, to represent four types of crops: corn, squash, rice, and beans. Each child should make a nametag with their crop type, using the cardboard and markers. The hole punch and yarn can be used to hang the nametags.
2. This game involves a farm, split into four fields (four distinct areas of the room). All four fields have all four types of nutrients (yellow, green, red, and blue plastic necklaces - one of each color). Ask all the corn to go to field 1, wheat to field 2, soy to field 3, rice to field 4. Ask the crops to “plant” themselves by sitting on the ground and placing their hands in a prayer position in front of their hearts. Then the sun comes out and the crops begin to grow - the children can begin to stand up slowly - taking up nutrients as they grow.
3. Corn must take blue nutrients, squash must take red nutrients, rice must take green nutrients, and beans must take yellow nutrients.
4. There should be enough nutrients for everyone on the first round. Announce the next planting season and explain that the old nutrients have been used up (collect the necklaces from the fields). Ask the crops to replant themselves and begin to grow. This time they won’t be able to grow because there won’t be enough nutrients. Let the crops whither and die (students dramatically fall over or act this out how they want to).
5. Start over with a mix of crop types in each field. Play again allowing each child to take the nutrients they need for the growing season and replenish the soil each season. Explain that the presence of crop diversity allows the nutrients to return to the soil. No one should whither and die the second time around with the better farm design!
Baked Eggplant Chips

Makes 10 servings.

**Time Needed:** 15 minutes

**Ingredients:**
- 2 medium eggplants, washed and sliced into 1/4 inch circles
- Olive oil
- Salt

**Instructions:**
1. Wash eggplant and slice into thin circles.
2. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
3. Place eggplant on a large metal baking tray and brush both sides of the eggplant with olive oil. Sprinkle with salt.
4. Bake for 10-20 minutes, flipping the circles over once. They should be crispy and very brown when they are finished.

**COMPLETE THE MEAL:**
Serve with 100% whole grain crackers and white bean and rosemary spread (see page D-11 for recipe).

*Photo used by permission from Sam Schiebold, [Low Carbon Diet blog](http://www.lowcarbondiet.com).*
White Bean and Rosemary Spread

Makes 10 servings.

Time Needed: 15 minutes

Ingredients:
- 2 cups cooked white beans or 1 19-ounce can of beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 Tbps. Olive oil
- 2 tsp. balsamic vinegar
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp. fresh minced rosemary (or 1 tsp. dried rosemary)
- 1/3 cup finely chopped celery
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Few pinches fresh red pepper flakes (optional)

Instructions:
1. Put all of the beans into a bowl, and mash about half of them with a fork.
2. Add the olive oil, vinegar, garlic, rosemary, and celery and toss well.
3. Season with salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes, if using.
4. Let stand, covered, for about 30 minutes before serving.
5. Taste for seasoning and adjust if necessary.
6. If refrigerated, let come to cool room temperature before serving.

COMPLETE THE MEAL:
Serve with 100% whole grain crackers and eggplant chips (see page D-10 for recipe).
Three Sisters' Garden

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials:
- Paper and crayons/colored pencils
- Toothpicks with pictures of corn cobs (see next page)
- Green string for beans
- Twigs or toothpicks for poles/stakes
- Green pipe cleaners with yellow beads for squash
- Green floral foam blocks cut into 1-inch thick slabs (one per student)

Instructions:
1. Read the legend of the three sisters and the section “Who were these three sisters?” (See below). Define the words biodiversity and nutrition if necessary.

Definitions:
- **Biodiversity**: Many types of plants or animals working together in nature.
- **Nutritious Foods**: Foods such as vegetables that contain vitamins and minerals that help our bodies to be healthy.

2. Pass out paper and crayons or colored pencils to allow each student to design their garden.
3. Pass out planter blocks for the gardens.
4. Provide the rest of the materials in the middle of each group and allow the students to design their three sisters' garden in whatever way they like. Remind the students to use all three types of plants so that their soil will be healthy and their diet will be nutritionally complete.
5. The corn cobs can be colored and assembled by the students if there is enough time.
6. The squash should be along the ground, while the beans can be wound around the corn or other stakes to represent how they grow in real life.

Legend of The Three Sisters:
A long time ago there were three sisters who lived together in a field. These sisters were quite different from one another in their size and way of dressing. The little sister was so young that she could only crawl at first, and she was dressed in green.

The second sister wore a bright yellow dress, and she had a way of running off by herself when the sun shone and the soft wind blew in her face.

The third was the eldest sister, standing always very straight and tall above the other sisters and trying to protect them. She wore a pale green shawl, and she had long, yellow hair that tossed about her head in the breeze.

(continued on next page)
**Three Sisters’ Garden** (continued)

There was one way the sisters were all alike, though. They loved each other dearly, and they always stayed together. This made them very strong.

One day a stranger came to the field of the Three Sisters - a Mohawk boy. He talked to the birds and other animals. This caught the attention of the Three Sisters. Late that summer, the youngest and smallest sister disappeared. Her sisters were sad. Again the Mohawk boy came to the field to gather reeds at the water’s edge. The two sisters who were left watched his moccasin trail, and that night the second sister - the one in the yellow dress - disappeared as well.

Now the Elder Sister was the only one left. She continued to stand tall in her field. When the Mohawk boy saw that she missed her sisters, he brought them all back together and they became stronger together, again.

**Who were the Three Sisters?**

**Corn** is the oldest sister, protecting the others and wearing a pale green shawl. She stands tall in the center.

**Squash** is the second sister, dressed in yellow. She grows over the mound, protecting her sisters from weeds and shades the soil from the sun with her leaves, keeping it cool and moist.

**Beans** are the third sister, running off by herself when the sun shone. She climbs through squash and then up corn to bind all together as she reaches for the sun. Beans help keep the soil fertile by converting the sun’s energy into nitrogen filled nodules that grow on its roots. As beans grow they use the stored nitrogen as food.

Together on one mound or hill, these Three Sisters provide nutrients to the soil and nutrients to the people. When separated, they are no longer complete and so the soil and people are nutrient-deprived. By protecting the Three Sisters and keeping them together, we are protecting biodiversity.
Black Bean Salad

Makes 10 servings.

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Ingredients:
- 2 ½ cup black beans
- 1 ¾ cup corn, fresh, frozen or canned
- 1 ¼ cup green peppers
- 1 ¼ cup red peppers
- 5 tbsp chopped onions
- 5 tbsp salsa
- 1 tbsp parsley, optional
- 1 tsp of ground cumin, optional
- 5 tbsp shredded Monterey or cheddar cheese, optional

Instructions:
1. Combine black beans, corn, green peppers, red peppers, and onions in a bowl.
2. For the dressing, combine the salsa, parsley, and cumin if using.
3. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss lightly to combine.
4. Sprinkle cheese on top, if using.

COMPLETE THE MEAL:
Serve with tortilla chips, fresh carrot sticks, orange or mango slices, and 1 cup of milk or milk alternative.
Respect for the Web of Life

Time Needed: 45 minutes

Materials:
- Ball of yarn
- Name tags

Instructions:
1. Explain to children how we have been talking about different parts of creation and exploring them in the garden (if you have one). Ask the children to name some of the parts of creation that we have already learned about. Collect responses like: plants, animals, fruit, vegetables, insects, sun, rain, clouds, water, soil, worms, and anything else the children can name. What about humans? Are humans a part of creation?

2. To further explore how we are a part of creation, we will explore the idea of ecosystems. Define ecosystem for the children: a system made up of a community of animals, plants, and bacteria interrelated together with its physical and chemical environments. Use a local ecosystem as an example, and ask children to identify parts of that ecosystem. (For example, a garden ecosystem would include plants, flowers, insects, soil, etc.). Assign each child an item from the list you created and write it or ask them to write it on a name tag and put the name tags on.

3. Have the group stand in a circle and choose one person to stand in the middle. Give that child the ball of yarn and ask that individual to say her/his “name” (what’s on her/his nametag) and then name another aspect of the ecosystem upon which s/he depends for survival. For example, a bird may depend on a worm or fresh water, while corn might depend on the sun or soil, and soil may depend on clean water and nutrients. The child then tosses the ball of yarn to the other child who represents that part of creation, holding on to the end of the string. Repeat the process until each person is holding a piece of the yarn. Once the yarn comes to either water or sun, the individual playing that part should then toss the yarn to an organism s/he supports. Some people may get the ball of yarn more than once.

(continued on next page)
Respect for the Web of Life (continued)

Once each person is holding a piece of the yarn, invite the group to look at the web as a whole. Remind the children that it represents interdependence. Then state a human-made change in the environment such as polluted waterways or deforestation. Any individual representing an organism potentially overcome by that change drops the piece of yarn and exits the circle or sits down. Any organism relying on the affected organism will also be influenced and should drop the yarn and sit down. Eventually nearly all organisms are affected.

Invite the group to reflect on what the web looks like now. What happens when there is a change to the ecosystem? What responsibility do people have to care for the created world and not harm it? What can we do to prevent some organisms from going extinct? Why should we care if other species survive or not?

Used with permission from the National Council of Churches (NCC) Eco-Justice Program: http://nccecojustice.org/resources/
Storytime

The Earth and I by Frank Asch

This story celebrates friendship that one child has with the Earth. They play together, listen to each other, and nourish each other. But when the Earth is sad, the child is sad—so he finds a way to make his friend, the Earth, happy.

Wangari’s Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa
by Jeanette Winter

As a young girl growing up in Kenya, Wangari was surrounded by trees. But years later when she returns home, she is shocked to see whole forests being cut down, and she knows that soon all the trees will be destroyed. So Wangari decides to do something—and starts by planting nine seedlings in her own backyard. And as they grow, so do her plans. . . .

This true story of Wangari Maathai, environmentalist and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, is a shining example of how one woman’s passion, vision, and determination inspired great change.
How Do Plants Grow?

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials:
- Cutouts (see pages D-20 to D-24)
- Construction Paper
- Scissors
- Crayons
- Glue

Instructions:
1. Ask the children what sorts of things a tomato plant needs to grow.
   (Answer: sunlight, water, air, soil, etc.)
2. Provide the students with the above materials and instruct them to make a model of these components.
3. Discuss more specifically the roles of sunlight, water, soil, clean air, and humans in plant growth.

Optional extension:
If you have garden grown tomatoes, do a taste test activity with garden tomatoes and grocery store tomatoes. Blindfolding the children before they taste the two types of tomatoes is best. Ask the participants to hypothesize which variety they will like better. Ask why the tomatoes taste, look, smell, and feel different.