

Greening Church Culture:

A Guide to Adult Christian Environmental Education and Formation Curricula

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Introduction

When this project was first conceived, we intended to do a broad survey of many church oriented, environmental education curricula in order to provide a basic, “consumer reports” type guide for Christian education and formation leaders. The rationale was that despite the great resource lists of curricula, offered by groups such as [Earth Ministry](#) and [NCC Eco-Justice](#), there was little in-depth guidance to assist church leaders in choosing the best curricula among the myriad available. However, soon after we received our grant, from the Richard S. Reynolds Foundation, we discovered that another group, [Eco-Justice Ministries](#), had already done a very similar project.

Thus, we evolved our intention: to take the effort of curricula assessment and guidance and add to it a new level of selectivity, evaluation and recommendation. In our project, we 1) narrowed the focus to the “best” 5, adult curricula, 2) analyzed each one through a uniform process employed by the same 3 people – representing eco-theology/worldview, general adult Christian formation, and secular sustainability consulting viewpoints, 3) created a more comparison-facilitating report format, 4) gave more consulting advice as to how curricula could be used in the church setting, and 5) offered up suggestions for directions in future curricula development. We hope the result is a complement to the great work of Eco-Justice Ministries, as well as that of Earth Ministry, NCC Eco-Justice, and other like organizations, such that Christian leaders are further empowered to green both their church culture and that of the world around them.

Finally, many thanks and commendations to all the developers and consultants who have worked so hard to bring forth offerings for green education in churches. The fruits of your pioneering vision and efforts are impressive and urgently needed all over the country. We hope that our work facilitates an even more widespread engagement with yours.

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Full Curricula Titles (in alphabetical order) and Sources

- 1) [**Awakening to God's Call to Earthkeeping**](#) by Kim Winchell, ELCA Diaconal Minister. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, North/West Lower Michigan Synod, 2006.
- 2) [**Northwest Earth Institute Discussion Courses**](#) (as a package), NWEI, Portland, Oregon:

Reconnecting with Earth, 2009.

Globalization and its Critics, 2004.

Choices for Sustainable Living, 2009.

Healthy Children, Healthy Planet, 2006.

Global Warming: Changing Course, 2008.

Menu for the Future, 2008.

Voluntary Simplicity, 2008.

Sustainable Systems at Work, 2010.
- 3) [**Opening the Letter: A Congregational Guide to "God's Earth is Sacred"**](#) by Tanya Barnett in consultation with the Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches USA. National Council of Churches USA, Washington, D.C., 2005. (Go down to "**General Eco-Justice Resources**" heading to download.)
- 4) [**To Serve and Guard the Earth: God's Creation Story and Our Environmental Concerns**](#) by Beth Bojarski, Diocesan Youth Director for the Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky. Church Publishing/Morehouse, 2010.
- 5) [**To Serve Christ in all Creation**](#) by Lynn Fulkerson, Barbara Putnam, and Grace Burson, Committee on the Environment, Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, and Paul Lipke and Beth Turner of Sustainable Step New England. Episcopal Church USA, Province I and Church Missions Publishing Company, Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, 2003.

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Curricula Guide Table of Numeric Scores	Awakening to God's Call to Earthkeeping	Northwest Earth Institute Discussion Courses	Opening the Letter: A Congregational Guide to "God's Earth is Sacred"	To Serve and Guard the Earth: God's Creation Story and Our Environmental Concerns	To Serve Christ in all Creation
General Information					
Duration	4 weeks	6 weeks	4 weeks	6 weeks	5 weeks
Suggested Meeting Length	1.5 hours	1 hour	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	1.5 hours
Type of Leader	Lay/non-expert	Lay/non-expert	Lay/non-expert	Lay/non-expert	Lay/non-expert
Leader's Guide	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Participant's Guide	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Content Categories					
Story and Vision	3	3	2	2	2
Theology and Worldview	3	3	3	2	3+
Values and Ethics	3	4	4	3	4
Science	2+	4	2+	2+	4
Lifestyle and Consumer Behavior	2	4	2	2+	4
Business Practices	1	4	1	1	2+
Economic and Political Systems	1	4	2	2	3
Population Control	1	2	1	2	2
Small Group Functionality					
Logistics	3	4	3	4	4
Leader's Guide (quality)	2	4	4	4	3
Participant's Guide (quality)	2+	4	2	3	3
Meeting Flow	2	3	3+	4	3
Core Small Group Principles					
Prayer and Worship	4	NA	4	3	4
Formation	4	4	3	4	4
Community	2	4	4	4	3
Outreach	4	3	4	4	4

Scoring Scale:	1 = poor	2 = fair	3 = good	4 = excellent
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Exposition of Scores

Click on the links below to jump to each of the expository reports:

[Report on “Awakening to God’s Call to Earthkeeping”](#)

[Report on Northwest Earth Institute Discussion Courses for Cultural Change](#)

[Report on “Opening the Letter: A Congregational Guide to God’s Earth is Sacred”](#)

[Report on “To Serve and Guard the Earth”](#)

[Report on “To Serve Christ in all Creation”](#)

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Expository Report on *Awakening to God's Call to Earthkeeping*

Story and Vision – 3

- Reference to multiple aspects of the Christian story, such as creation's original goodness, its defilement by sin, the prophetic call to justice, redemption through Christ, and vision of abundant life for all, peaceable kingdom if statutes kept, and judgment for "those who destroy the earth"
- No cohesive narrative presented – relationship logic of, or process between, creation, fall and redemption is not clearly elaborated

Theology and Worldview – 3

- Called as "image of God" to earthkeeping (dominion), justice, love of neighbor, praise of creation
- Covenant between God and Noah is with all creation
- Humans have broken covenant in sin, which is arrogance, greed, neglect of justice, and worship of false idols
- Humans must repent and in Christ find forgiveness and reconciliation of right relationship with all creation, looking toward peaceable kingdom
- Jesus and Paul say good news is for all of creation
- Lacks overt reference to cohesive narrative
- Does not offer a concrete process of repentance and reconciliation in Christ
- Lacks theological grounding for political action

Values and Ethics – 3

- Justice – right, "mutually sustainable relationships" with neighbors and creation
- Need lamentation of and repentance for abuse and exploitation of earth/people
- Need healing
- Simple living – indicts consumerism lifestyle
- Care for least of these
- Way of the prophet – condemn broken covenant and worship of false idols
- Creation itself valued for itself
- Prayer in and relationship with nature
- All depend on creation, so can't love neighbor if hurting creation – interrelationship of all and of poverty and ecological issues
- Sabbath
- Lacks a tough and overt ethical demand for structural sin change within economic and political systems

Science – 2+

- Majority of scientific references occur in the Leader Tips and appendix Resources section, not in the participant group sections.
- P. 6, Leader Tips – brief note that the study guide "utilizes the common modern scientific understanding" regarding the age of earth and universe.
- P.7 – Leader Tips – minor mentions of bioregions and ecology.

- P. 7-8 – Leader Tips - a list of “universe statistics” to set the context of our place in this immense space and time. Highly-regarded mathematical cosmologist/scientist/author Dr. Brian Swimme is noted as the source for this data.
- P. 10 – participants are told that both scientists and spiritual teachers testify that the natural world sustains humans in psychological ways
- P. 25 – brief mention of the Endangered Species Act
- P. 36 – Leader Tips – recommendation of a summary of the United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment as a good source for material on ecological concerns.
- P. 33, 41 – brief mentions of global warming
- P 49-50 – Resource section – several references to scientific sources for additional information including the Union of Concerned Scientists, *The Blue Planet*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, World Watch Institute, Natural Resources Defense Council, Green Facts, *The Whole Shebang*, and *The Universe Story*.

Lifestyle and Consumer Behavior – 2+

- Other than some very basic lifestyle change tips and a denouncing of “unsustainable consumerism,” most of the personal behavior references occur in the Leader Tips and appendix Resources section, not in the participant group sections.
- P. 25 – Leader Tips – recommendation to show the video *Affluenza*, a PBS program on the high social and environmental costs of over-consumption and materialism.
- P. 33 – a mention of shopping malls in a negative context
- P. 38-9 – Leader Tips – ideas for implementation include starting congregational green teams, alternate giving practices at Christmas, and implementing energy audits at church facilities.
- P. 41 – list of standard lifestyle change and advocacy tips that can address environmental problems.
- P. 43 – mention that the “unsustainable consumerism of industrialized countries uses the largest share of the world’s resources, and creates the highest proportion of wastes.”
- P 49 – Resource section – several references to lifestyle sources for additional information including The Regeneration Project and *Affluenza*.

Business Practices – 1

- But for a single reference to “jobs” as they relate to congregant influence, mentions of business are absent from this text.
- P.41 – “jobs” are mentioned almost in passing in the solitary paragraph that mentions business in the curriculum: “we each have certain ‘spheres of influence,’ within the context of our homes, communities, jobs, or churches. There is something that YOU are uniquely positioned to do...What is creation looking for from *you*?”
- P. 50 – Resource section – strong recommendation of the *Greening Congregations Handbook*.

Economic and Political Systems – 1

- Collective sin and levels of engagement are somewhat recognized
- Systemic/structural sin not engaged/analyzed

Population Control – 1

- Not addressed

Logistics – 3

- Helpful tips on publicity and how to start groups

Leaders' Guide Quality – 2

- Extensive leaders' guide packed with information
- Guide not very intuitive; not clearly laid out.
- Meeting agenda is in the participants' handout, so the leader will need to flip between two guides.

Participants' Guide Quality – 2+

- Participants have meeting agenda, but they do not have a lot of information the leader has in that guide.
- Weak, but does give suggestions for other materials

Meeting Flow – 2

- This curriculum has many parts/activities each meeting
- Each week has a different set of activities
- Seems complicated and disjointed
- Has a lot of supplemental activities that could overwhelm people or inhibit flow of the meeting.

Core Small Group Principles

Prayer/worship – 4

Formation – 4

- This is a formation-focused curriculum
- Focuses on transformation
- Includes ways to expand formation

Community – 2

- Doesn't include many community-building activities such as, questions that allow group members to reflect on how this topic intersects with their own experiences

Outreach – 4

- Fourth week focuses on "what's next" and how participants will respond to any new understandings they have discovered.

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Expository Report on Northwest Earth Institute Discussion Courses for Cultural Change

Story and Vision – 3

- Demonstrates deep understanding of the important issue of a foundational, cosmology story in a culture
- Offers a critique of the traditional Genesis narrative and its cultural assumptions
- “Universe Story” of Deep Ecology is a coherent, scientific and general spiritual story of the whole universe as an interconnected, mutually emerging web of life in process, moving toward greater complexity, consciousness, compassion, and harmony
- Currently, we are in the “Great Turning,” which tells of a transition from industrial growth society to life-sustaining societies
- Narrative connects with worldview and ethics
- Translation of broad universe story into transformed traditional religious story and practice is important

Theology and Worldview – 3

- Deep Ecology paradigmatic worldview, which is consistent with much of progressive Christian theology, is that all is an interconnected web of life, all inter-dependent on cyclical processes of nature
- Nature, as opposed to Bible, is the primary revelation
- Humans are an expression of Earth, which is an expression of the Universe, which can be viewed as an expression of Divinity
- Earth and all life of Earth is the bigger self of humans
- Humans as self-reflexive consciousness of the Universe
- Primary problem and root of evil is discontinuity between human and all else – solution is harmonious continuity
- Current culture and society as destructive of life
- Present human state is one of addiction, but break out through deep meditation, prayer, and process of transformation
- Humans called to form new cultures and societies in light of a consciousness that goes against any old ideas of being separate from nature or from deep inherent communion with all that is
- Called to create sustainable communities
- Salvation through enlightenment to interconnectedness of all life and right action that follows (very Buddhist)
- Though mentions possible Divinity, lacks account of ultimate origin/source beyond scientific description, i.e. God, and poses no relationship with God per se in salvation

Values and Ethics – 4

- Way beyond ethics of stewardship or even moral rules – new ontology of being human
- Recognition of self as also alive Earth, so “self-interest” includes Earth and all in Earth community – ethics of coalescing action toward earth harmony and deep self interest
- “Comprehensive compassion” for all in Earth community
- Poverty and ecology all inter-related problems

- Questioning of all current paradigms of thinking and acting – especially industrial growth and materialistic lifestyles
- Inherent value of human and nonhuman life – no instrumental attitude toward other life forms and earth, even if using them for needs
- Diversity of life – no human right to reduce diversity, biological or cultural
- Critique of mass media culture
- Child protection
- Simple living and anti-consumerism
- Meaningful work
- Vegetarianism
- Wholly consistent with the best of Christian ethics
- Plenty of practical connections with theory and directives for specific ethical action at individual and systemic levels

Science – 4

- While sound science is referenced throughout the course, Session 2, “Ecological Principles,” in particular, does an excellent job building the foundation where basic ecology and human impact meet. For more on the specifics of climate science, participants could use NWEI’s “Global Warming: Changing Course” curriculum.
- P. 27-40 – Session 2 – “Ecological Principles” – Articles by William Rees (population ecology), Paula and Anne Erlich (biologists), Colin Beavan (No Impact Man), Janine Benyus (biologist and biomimicry expert), and others. Referenced data from Center for Environment and Population, World Wildlife Fund’s “Living Planet Report,” The Natural Step, and others. Recommended resources include books by David Cook, Tim Flannery, Gretchen Daily and Fritjof Capra.

Lifestyle and Consumer Behavior – 4

- Sessions 3-5 are devoted to consumption habits at the individual and community level. “Buying” explores consumption patterns. “Food” helps readers consider the relationship between eating and sustainable living. “Communities” introduces participants to innovative solutions for groups wanting to move toward sustainability together. NWEI also has additional, complete courses that address lifestyle: “Menu for the Future” and “Voluntary Simplicity.”
- P. 41-86 – Session 3-5 – “Buying,” “Food,” “Communities” - Articles by Michael Pollan, Barbara Kingsolver, the Rodale Institute, Bill McKibben, and others. Referenced data from Redefining Progress, the Environmental Working Group, and others. Recommended resources include writings by Juliet Schor, Julia Butterfly Hill, the National Green Pages, Marion Nestle, the Rocky Mountain Institute, and others.

Business Practices – 4

- Session 6, “Business and Economy,” is devoted entirely to governmental policies, economic systems, and the concepts of “growth and development.” For more on the specifics of taking an existing business and making it “green” or initiating a sustainable business of any size, participants could use NWEI’s “Sustainable Systems at Work” curriculum.
- P. 87-102 – Session 6 – “Business and Economy” – Articles by Lester Brown (environmental analyst of Worldwatch Institute/Earth Policy Institute), Donella Meadows

(systems analyst/farmer), John Ehrenfeld (MIT/International Society for Industrial Ecology), William McDonough and Michael Braungart (architects/designers), Van Jones (attorney/green businessman) and others. Referenced data from Robert F. Kennedy, *Redefining Progress: The Nature of Economics*, and others. Recommended resources include writings from Stacy Mitchell, Michael H. Shuman, the Social Investment Forum, and *Natural Capitalism* by Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins and L. Hunter Lovins.

Economic and Political Systems – 4

- “Our present political economy, dependent on accelerating consumption of resources, is inimical to life” (Joanna Macy).
- Critique of macro forces such as WTO policy, tax structures and incentives, and profit imperative of corporations
- Political policies and economic, technological, and ideological structures must deeply change
- Earth Charter principles and guidelines in all corporate and government policy
- Recommendations of many specific policy measures, such as carbon taxes, renewable energy investment, watershed protection, bans on toxics
- System change activism via nonviolent means
- Better than a lot of full books, this combination of courses is a very comprehensive indictment of cultural, economic, and political systems and their necessary transformations

Population – 2

- Frequent mention of need to decrease and control population as part of systemic adjustment
- Decrease in human population is necessary for flourishing of human and nonhuman life
- No serious engagement with this issue or its solutions, women’s issues, etc.

Logistics – 4

- Provided excellent and thorough how-to information for starting small groups

Leaders’ Guide Quality – 4

- Lists leaders’ responsibilities
- Gives plenty of questions to discuss during meeting
- Meetings flow well one to another

Participants’ Guide Quality – 4

- Participants use the same guide as the leader

Meeting Flow – 3

- Curriculum provides three activities – Opening, Circle Question and discussion questions
- Faith-based organizations would need to create a space for prayer
- There may be too much good information to discuss in one hour.

Core Small Group Principles

Prayer/Worship – N/A

- As this is not a faith-based curriculum, leaders of this group would need to develop their own prayer/worship rituals for their group.

Formation – 4

- Essays to read for each meeting.
- Long lists of suggested further reading provided

Community – 4

- Opening provides time each week for one participant to share something personal about the topic each week.
- Gathering questions provided (called Circle Questions that frame the day's discussion)
- Circle Questions promote self-analysis of life-style and motivations
- Have suggestions in the introductory material for further community-building activities, but these suggestions are not built into the curriculum.

Outreach – 3

- Have a section called "Putting it into practice" with helpful tips
- No expectation to undertake these as a group

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Expository Report on *Opening the Letter: A Congregational Guide to “God’s Earth is Sacred”*

Story and Vision – 2

- Criticizes “false gospel” of salvation for humans only
- Criticizes secular “story” that humans can master Earth
- “True gospel” is “God so loved the cosmos”
- Vision that God will liberate and reconcile all of creation in Christ; justice and peace will reign and all creation will sing
- Less Bible reference emphasis than others
- No overt narrative given and out of order references to Christian narrative
- Could have done so much more with contrasts between false, secular and true gospels, which would have grounded the ethics section more strongly

Theology and Worldview – 3

- Creation is intrinsically good and sacred – God’s glory is in creation
- Originally called to serve and preserve creation
- Ecological destruction is sin – harm of God’s creation and other humans
- Now called to forging socially just and ecological sustainable community
- Through the cross God comes to heal, liberate, and restore right relationships with all creation
- God will reconcile all of creation
- No narrative integration
- Weak on theological basis for political action

Values and Ethics – 4

- Note inadequate church response thus far
- Creation care
- Eco/social Justice – right relationships with people and earth leading to flourishing
- Earth community as a whole and compassion among all
- Environmental human rights
- Fairness to future generations
- Bio-responsibility
- Humility
- Ecological limits
- Simple living, moderation and sharing
- Earth care as central moral imperative of our time – entwine with all other ministries of church
- Confession of abuse and exploitation of earth and people
- Process of repentance, re-affirm faith, and engagement of a new practice journey guided by ethical norms
- Personal, church, community/business and political levels of action
- Clarity that values/ethics apply to personal and systemic levels

Science – 2+

- The plea to actively avoid the sin of ecological destruction is based on a variety of broad, scientific facts but makes no reference to the source material, though the few references to science sources in the actual curricula are reputable.
- From “God’s Earth is Sacred” – the clergy and lay theologians writing the letter make clear their belief that humans are causing species extinction, biodiversity destruction, climate change, deforestation, wetland loss, disease spread, and contamination of water, air, land and life itself.
- The second paragraph clearly states that science is a driver in their position: “It is painfully clear from the verifiable testimony of the world’s scientists that our (the church’s) response has been inadequate to the scale and pace of Earth’s degradation.”
- The authors make particular note of the special responsibility that falls on US citizens due to our inordinate production of global warming emissions and consumption of resources.
- P.9 – “Preparing for Session Two” – Participants are urged to study a summary of the United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, a well-regarded and comprehensive scientific study on the connections between human well-being and environmental change.
- P. 16 – the Union of Concerned Scientists and Worldwatch Institute are both recommended as additional sources of valid information.

Lifestyle and Consumer Behavior – 2

- The letter makes it clear that Americans consume too much and some of the exercises in the course urge participants to self-evaluate and make changes in consumptive behavior.
- P. 1 – the introductory letter to the curriculum refers to our society as “consumer-oriented.”
- P. 23 – the facilitator’s guide encourages the building of participant-driven “Creation-Care Ideas” which could include use of non-toxic household cleaners or CFL bulbs for lighting, both consumer activities.
- P. 27 – participants are urged to create annual plans that bring their “Creation-Care Priorities” to life. These priorities are not dictated in the text (participants are prompted to create their own priorities) but would pertain to both individuals/households and the church community and would involve changing personal and group consumer habits.

Business Practices – 1

- Other than mild implications that the church can change its business practices, the guide is void of material related to specific ways to practice business sustainability.
- Bill McKibben, highly regarded sustainability author and activist, helped draft the “God’s Earth is Sacred” letter. His writings, especially Deep Economy, often concern themselves with how our business practices can impact the planet and communities. However, business practices, of either the church itself or parishioners in their work lives, are largely absent from this curriculum.

Economic and Political Systems – 2

- Economic justice is needed for ecological integrity

- Political action is needed for common good serving government policies
- Needs far more in terms of analysis and demonstration of clear connections in reality contexts between ethics, actions, and effects
- No serious action items here

Population – 1

- Not engaged

Logistics – 3

- Assumes pre-existing groups will use this curriculum (bible studies or prayer groups)
- Does not give information on how to begin a group from scratch
- Does give instructions on how to use the curriculum

Leaders' Guide Quality – 4

- Suggests that facilitating role can be rotated. I do not agree with this philosophy, but understand their desire to maintain horizontal relationships within the group. I suggest having one person lead all five sessions.
- Includes suggested ground rules for the group that will aid with accomplishing the goals of the curriculum. Consistent leadership will help the group maintain this set of rules.
- Includes helpful notes at the beginning of each session for materials to collect.
- Very clear instructions on how to lead group through the curriculum.

Participants' Guide Quality – 2

- Participants receive only text of their readings
- Do not receive the weekly agenda and do not know how the group activities will flow
- This will make shared leadership more difficult (although, I do not believe sharing facilitator roles is ideal).

Meeting Flow – 3+

- This curriculum should provide a balanced flow to the meeting.
- Depending on number of participants, there might be too many activities.
- Curriculum suggests that the meeting might last 1 hour, but I strongly suggest allotting 1.5 hours for this curriculum.

Core Small Group Principles

Prayer/Worship – 4

- Prayers/scripture readings provided

Formation – 3

- Letter is primary formational tool, but curriculum does recommend further resources to investigate.

Community – 4

- Contemplative nature of curriculum, sharing questions, and discussion will all contribute to community-building

Outreach – 4

- There is an outward motion to this curriculum, and the fourth week is dedicated to future action.

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Expository Report on *To Serve and Guard the Earth: God's Creation Story and our Environmental Concerns*

Story and Vision – 2

- Strong, conscious assertion of the need for Christians to ground in Biblical story in terms of who we are as part of earth community and in terms of connection as community – a commendable assertion
- Foregrounds *Genesis* narrative
- References Jesus' care ministry and example
- Lacks real inclusion of fall, Jesus' prophetic ministry toward the "kingdom of God," redemption through the cross, and the vision of salvation

Theology and Worldview – 2

- Genesis 7 day creation foundational theme
- All creation is good
- Humans are of earth just like all creatures
- "Dominion" as care and cultivation and critique of "stewardship" to move away from vertical relationship and to mutually interdependent relationship
- Human vocation is to serve and guard earth – give like God, rather than only take
- Humans called to care for "least of these" and "Love of neighbor" in all creatures
- Sin is commoditization of nature in materialist/consumer society
- Ignorance is a major cause of sin
- Need repentance and life change
- Critique of hierarchical view of creation and advocacy for immanence of God in universe/earth
- New cosmology of earth as subject in relationship, i.e. McFague's eco-theology, which is a commendable inclusion
- Genesis heavy and lacks kingdom, cross, and redemption theology
- No real theological basis for political action
- No narrative integration beyond Genesis

Values and Ethics – 3

- Simple living
- Jesus' "lordship" as service
- "Righteousness" as humble life in relation to soil
- Poor most affected by eco-crisis
- Grassroots education and action needed
- Creation as good and sacramental – care for it in itself
- Must shift to mutual, interdependent relationships among all creatures
- Care for "least of these"
- Leopold and "land ethic"
- Overconsumption and greed are huge problems
- Temperance and self-restraint
- Justice and peace – environmental damage is a cause of poverty and war

- Weak connections between ethics and concrete analysis or action, especially at the systemic level

Economic and Political Systems – 2

- Notes that problems are systemic in consumerism and globalization, but largely says solution is individual simple living in resistance to materialism
- Does mention capitalistic economic system as a problem, especially issue of obsessive profit making, but no analysis or suggestion regarding action here
- Small indirect suggestion to engage in eco-justice at the political level

Population – 2

- Acknowledges overpopulation is a problem
- Offers theological basis for balance between command of multiplying and other ethics such as temperance and self-restraint

Science – 2+

- The topics featured are good (energy consumption, air pollution, climate change, deforestation, etc.) and the author makes clear that humans are responsible for the negative impacts on our biosphere. However, elaborated connections between concrete science and human activity, as well as source references, are minimal.
- Session 1 – P. 4 – the Environmental Concerns section focuses on Energy Consumption and Light Pollution. As with most of the course, the science is mentioned broadly with few, if any, specific source references. NASA is referenced here.
- Session 2 – P. 3-4 – the Environmental concerns section focuses on potable water, air pollution and climate change. USGS is referenced here.
- Session 3 – P. 3-4 – the Environmental concerns section focuses on deforestation, industrialization and waste management.
- Session 4 – P. 4-5 – the Environmental concerns section focuses on habitat destruction and species extinction. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is referenced here.
- Session 5 – P. 5-6 – the Environmental concerns section focuses on consumption and greed, human disparity and overpopulation.

Lifestyle and Consumer Behavior – 2+

- Each session concludes with a “What Can You Do?” section (following the “Environmental Concerns” section) that lists suggested, effective actions for individuals or groups. The suggestions are “baby steps,” though, compared to the more significant changes that are required and that are suggested in some other curricula.
- Session 1 – P. 5-6 – the “What Can You Do?” section lists various energy-saving tips and light-pollution reduction tips.
- Session 2 – auxiliary poem “Re-Brand Us” makes specific note of consumerism vs. God’s mark.
- Session 2 – P. 5-6 – the “What Can You Do?” section has tips related to “Environmental Concerns.”
- Session 3 – P. 3 – notes that our industrialization society tells us “bigger is better” and that managing waste is a challenge due to our over-consumption as a culture.
- Session 4 – P. 5 – encouragement to self-educate on local ecosystems

- Session 5 – auxiliary poem “We are Takers” addresses greed and justice issues
- Session 5 – P. 6-7 – call to “get mindful” and a focus on consumption in the “Environmental Concerns” section. Quotations: “Living simply in this society is hard work – it is countercultural.” “One can have too much of a good thing.”
- Session 6 – P. 3-4 – notes our society is too fast-paced and focuses on “being content with life” and resting more.

Business Practices – 1

- While there are some minor references to what individuals can accomplish outside the church and home in the “Author’s Introduction,” there is nothing in the participants’ sections about addressing sustainable practices in the workplace.

Logistics – 4

- Has coordinator/facilitator guide
- Includes helpful information on group dynamics, personality types, and tips on leading discussions
- Includes information on how to prepare for each meeting both logistically and formationally.
- Includes helpful Teaching Tips handout.

Leaders’ Guide Quality – 4

- Do not need to be an expert to lead this group, but you should be someone who is passionate about the eco-crisis and feels comfortable doing a little teaching both about the bible and about the environmental situation.
- Step-by-step instructions for each meeting
- This is not a “just read it” curriculum. Leader’s should have a bit of foundational knowledge to lead.
- Although this is an introductory curriculum to the subject of the eco-crisis, it does require that the leader be somewhat knowledgeable about the subject.

Participants’ Guide Quality – 3

- Provides information on the week’s scripture passages and environmental concerns that participants can read before each session (brief homework).
- Does not provide the participants with a weekly agenda (i.e., first we pray, then discuss scripture, etc.)

Meeting Flow – 4

- There is a balance to these meetings; the sessions move easily from one activity to the next.

Core Small Group Principles

Prayer/Worship – 3

- Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer Provided

Formation – 4

Community – 4

- Weekly check-in
- Asks people to reflect on changes they made during the week.

Outreach – 4

- Gives a list of things participants can do individually
- Challenges participants to begin to think how their individual choices affect the planet

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Expository Report on *To Serve Christ in all Creation*

Story and Vision – 2

- Significant, but scattered, Biblical references and story allusions
- Vision of seeking Creator's kingdom, hope for new heaven and earth in which righteousness dwells
- No coherent story articulation
- Little directly on fall/sin per se

Theology and Worldview – 3+

- Glory of God in creation, which is good and not a commodity, and is to praise God
- Genesis calling to be caretakers of creation
- See "dominion" in light of Incarnation and Jesus' use of power
- Biblical covenant between God and all creation
- Baptismal Covenant call to serve Christ in all creation
- All life is a web
- Christ redeems all creation
- "Love neighbor" – all creation is stripped and beaten like victim in Good Samaritan story
- Trinitarian faith: trust creator God, share Christ's and creation's crucifixion, faith in Holy Spirit and resurrection
- Creation care is God's mission to restore all people and creation to unity with God in Christ
- Lacks strong "kingdom theology," but connects theology to action at individual and systemic levels
- Would like to see more on cross and transformation
- No narrative integration

Values and Ethics – 4

- Connect poor and ecology – ecological stability and justice as basis for economic/social justice for poor
- Gives scientific and social science information of connections between wealthy human consumption and effects on poor through things like deforestation and global warming
- Honor of sacred creation
- Interdependence of humans and ecology
- Repentance of greed and waste
- Simple living
- Conservation and limits within land ethic
- Jubilee
- Prophetic witness even to church itself is needed
- Sustainable waste and consumer habits – key areas for change are spelled out
- Self-awareness of true needs vs consumer quick fixes
- Details on consumer impacts and more ethical choices

Science – 4

- This curriculum does an excellent job of providing detailed, reputable, contextualized scientific evidence of humanity's role in ecosystem strain and collapse.
- The Pastoral Letter - P. 1 — the authors make clear that human activities have created various environmental challenges such as fishery collapse, loss of land, smog, acid rain, mercury poisoning, sprawl, pesticide prevalence, and species extinction. Climate change is given particular focus here and the only malady listed with a specific scientific reference from the New England Regional Assessment Group and the US Global Change Research Program.
- Session One - P. 7 – brief mention of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions
- Session One - P. 8 – brief mention of the importance of healthy ecosystems and biological laws
- Session Two – P. 4-5 – reading assignment by highly-regarded mathematical cosmologist/scientist/author Dr. Brian Swimme.
- Session Two – P. 6 – reading assignment references Dr. Brian Swimme and introduces the concept of humans and the “humansphere” as the “Fifth Force” shaping the earth beyond the original forces of geology, air, water and pre-human biology. Also poses the concept that we may be entering a new life epoch beyond the Paleozoic, Mesozoic and Cenozoic – the Ecozoic.
- Session Two – P. 7 – discussion of biodiversity and ecosystem loss in terms of human population, human consumption, technology acceleration, and economic systems.
- Session Two – P. 8 – a discussion of “systems thinking” that helps participants make connections between seemingly disparate effects of various, expanding human activities.
- Session Two – P. 9 – an overview of sustainability that discusses over-population, ecosystem decline, industrial system waste, and scientific laws (includes references to source material from The Natural Step and Sustainable Step New England).
- Session Two – P. 11 – brief mention of industrial ecology and biomimicry
- Session Two – P. 13 – Supplemental Material – inclusion of the Statement of the 1987 Au Sable Forum, which references modern science and the materialistic growth economy.
- Session Three – P. 1 – this entire section focuses on Climate Change, Consumer Choices and Environmental Justice.
- Session Three – Climate Change – P. 1-10 – this ten-page section introduces participants to climate change and utilizes information from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the National Academy of Sciences, ClimateChanging.org, Negative Population Growth the National Energy Project (UK), the US EPA, and others.
- Session Three – Environmental Justice – P. 1-5 – this five-page section introduces participants to the science and research behind environmental justice issues and utilizes information from the World Resources Institute, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Stanford University, World Resources, US EPA, National Academy of Sciences, and others.

Lifestyle and Consumer Behavior – 4

- This curriculum does an excellent job of providing detailed, actionable, contextualized lifestyle and consumer behavior guidance toward implementing lower impact, more simple lives at the individual, household and church level.

- The Pastoral Letter - P. 2 - in a section devoted to church environmental commitment the authors call for repentance of “greed and waste, and to see simplicity of life.”
- Session Two – P. 2 – half of this discussion section is devoted to lifestyle and consumerism, following on the Pastoral Letter’s call for simplicity. The guide is designed to build discussion around outward simplicity and inner riches, where and how our money is spent, and the difficulties of choosing meaning over comfort.
- Session Two – P. 7 – in the context of broader human activity, over-consumption is presented as a major part of the biodiversity loss equation.
- Session Two – P. 8 – a clear listing of “the most harmful consumer activities” as concluded by the Union of Concerned Scientists.
- Session Two – P. 9 – a mention of consumption as it relates to basic scientific laws.
- Session Two – P. 10-1 – in-depth, clear tactics for meeting basic human needs without accumulation of more “stuff.”
- Session Three – P. 1 – this entire section focuses on Climate Change, Consumer Choices and Environmental Justice.
- Session Three – P. 2 – this entire Discussion section focuses on consumption and conservation.
- Session Three – Consumer Choices – P. 1-6 – this six-page section gives participants specific context for and approaches to mindful individual actions. By focusing on transportation, food and household choices, the guide provides facts and solutions for changing consumption habits.
- Session Three – Environmental Justice – P. 1-5 - this five-page section introduces participants to the links between environmental justice issues and over-consumption.
- Session Four – P. 4-7 – this section presents best practices and success stories of churches which have incorporated sustainable practices. It also contains a simple environmental audit guide so parishes can measure progress toward goals.

Business Practices – 2+

- This curriculum does a good job of making clear the broad impact of community and organizational practices toward a less wasteful society. It does a fair job of offering up steps and guidance toward that end.
- The Pastoral Letter - P. 2 — in a section devoted to church environmental commitment the authors note that “through participation in community, public policy, and business decision-making” the church has not only individual opportunities toward environmental justice, but corporate responsibilities as well.
- Session Two – P. 2 – half of this discussion section is devoted to the “economic causes of environmental abuse” and makes specific mention of the role households, communities, workplaces, and church parishes play in caring for creation.
- Session Two – P. 7 – economic systems and policies (and their current disruptions on an unprecedented scale) are discussed in terms of their role in contributing to inequity and environmental damage.
- Session Two – P. 10-1 – this section on strategic questions focuses on “creation-conscious practices,” many of which are business-related: reducing/changing work-related travel, green-building, workplace systems that use less and re-use more, corporate accountability, ethical governance – and the powerful impact of organizations.
- Section Four – P. 1 – reference to the Pastoral Letter’s call for corporate practices for environmental stewardship.

Economic and Political Systems – 3

- Public policy as significant opportunity for stewardship practice of justice
- Economy identified as one of the causes of environmental abuse and related poverty
- Indicts the “materialistic growth economy”
- Questions absolute property rights
- Precedent of church confronting slavery
- Shows “chain of activities” that are all part of the economy – pieces that are invisible to consumers
- Offers lots of questions about the “roots of social and economic problems” but does not give strong analysis and indictment of particular economic systems and function

Population – 2

- Questions mandate to “multiply” at this point in history
- Have to also consider care for other species
- No real engagement here

Logistics – 4

- Has coordinator/facilitator guide
- Helpful how-to-start-a-group tips provided
- Goals of the curriculum stated clearly

Leaders’ Guide Quality – 3

- Suggests that facilitating role can be rotated. I do not agree with this philosophy, but understand their desire to maintain horizontal relationships within the group. I suggest having one person lead all five sessions.
- Includes suggested ground rules for the group that will aid with accomplishing the goals of the curriculum. Consistent leadership will help the group maintain this set of rules.
- There are supplemental materials and additional topics to be discussed but it is not clear exactly when and what should be discussed.
- It is unclear when to discuss some of the supplemental materials. Facilitator will need to have read and planned carefully.

Participants’ Guide Quality – 3

- Participants use the same guide as the leader. I think this improves group cohesion and promotes horizontal relationships.

Meeting Flow – 3

- I like the balanced flow of this curriculum.
- There is time for prayer, community building, and discussion.
- There are more topics and information in supplemental materials that are possible to discuss each week. This can lead to participants feeling saturated and overwhelmed.

Core Small Group Principles

Prayer/Worship – 4

- Prayers and litanies provided

Formation – 4

- Incorporates the following formation tools: A Pastoral Letter from a group of bishops; biblical and theological reflection opportunities; information on climate change and sustainability; and practical advice on how to make home and church more sustainable.
- See my colleagues' analysis on formation and science to determine the quality of these tools.

Community – 3

- Strong focus on grounding opinions and observations to personal experience.

Outreach – 4

- Session four focuses on what the group can do to make changes in their lives and in the way their parish church operates.

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Methods

Disclaimer

It is important to note that in no way do our choices mean that there are not other good curricula out there or that we have been exhaustive in our search. Further, these reviews were conducted by lay leaders and consultants with specialized knowledge and experience in these topics, but not by PhD level academics or ordained clergy. Further, we want to be up front about the fact that we are theologically and ideologically progressive, meaning that we are critical of various aspects of our culture and society that we see as destructive to God's creation and that, therefore, need changing. This stance certainly has influenced our choices of curricula and our methods of evaluation.

“Best” 5 Curricula Chosen

In picking the “best” 5, adult curricula from Earth Ministry and NCC Eco-Justice lists and word of mouth, we aimed for some denominational and secular diversity and also chose based on the following criteria:

- Professionalism of content presentation – aesthetics, organization of material, and writing style
- Intellectual and professional credentials among curricula producers and consultants
- Comprehensiveness of material: blend of theology/worldview, science, multiple eco-issues, and action items
- Timely date of publication – as recent as possible
- Ease of access and use

Evaluation Categories

The **content evaluation categories** were derived from the well substantiated viewⁱ that eco-crisis stems from a whole complex of cultural elements, from theology to macro-economics to individual consumer behavior, and more. Thus, addressing the problem means addressing these various aspects of culture – providing important information, emphasizing the positive aspects of existing cultural modes or constructively criticizing them, and persuasively proposing new alternatives and actions. We examined how well the curricula addressed culture change by considering which cultural elements they engaged and how effectively such engagement was undertaken and communicated, including strength of argument. Engagement strength was rated on a scale of 1-4, 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=excellent.

Content Categories

- Story and Vision – overt expression of collective narrative and future goals or hopes
- Theology and Worldview – view of ultimate reality and fundamental human identity, place, and vocation; root of what is wrong and how to change it
- Values and Ethics – ideals and priorities, virtuous action principles
- Science – ecology, climatology, health, etc. information
- Lifestyle and Consumer Behavior – individual or church
- Business Practices – internal or external
- Economic and Political Systems – large scale market practices and laws
- Population Control – limiting size of humanity (personal or systemic)

The **small group evaluation categories** stem from the professional experience of the reviewer, who has examined numerous Christian Education/Formation curricula, led a variety of groups, and has seen which types of curricula formats work well to facilitate spiritual growth and transformation in the church setting. These categories were similarly rated on a scale of 1-4, 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=excellent.

Small Group Categories

- Logistics
- Leader's Guide quality
- Participants' Guide quality
- Meeting flow
- Core Small Group principles
 - Prayer and Worship
 - Formation
 - Community
 - Outreach

Evaluation Process and Standards

All three reviewers took each curriculum and examined it with respect to particular category standards, some of which overlap but are still distinctive, in order to answer the question "How well did this curriculum engage and/or communicate about this category?" The process then yielded numeric scores for the table report and further explanatory comments for the expository report.

Story and Vision – A minimum for Christian curricula is a grounding in the *Genesis* story, and score increases as a curriculum articulates and reveals relevancy of other major aspects of the overall Christian narrative, including Creation, Fall, Covenant, Exodus, Law, Prophets, Incarnation, Jesus' Ministry, Kingdom Inauguration, Cross and Resurrection, Spirit and Church, and Revelation. A perfect score would reflect a consciously overt, comprehensive, cohesive, narrative articulation that inherently and authentically addresses culture change toward eco-justice. NWEI was evaluated based on "The Universe Story" as a parallel to *Genesis*, history, and future vision.

Theology/Worldview – A minimum for Christian curricula is "earth as sacred creation," "care for creation" and mandate for good stewardship from *Genesis*, and score increases as a curriculum incorporates more OT and NT bases for eco-sustainability at multiple levels as core to reality, vocation, and salvation. NWEI was evaluated based on articulation of Deep Ecology as a worldview and faith. A perfect curriculum would make numerous, strong theological arguments and connect them to cohesive narrative, description of sin, Christology, salvation process, and vision of a redeemed world.

Values and Ethics – A minimum for any curriculum is some version of earth's value as inherently good, and score increases with the addition of more values and ethical virtues/behaviors that shift cultural norms toward mutual relationship, transform inner being, and celebrate innovative action at various levels of culture and society. Clear linkage between values and ethical ideals with concrete actions and processes also improves score.

Science – At the minimum the curriculum must make a clear, causal connection between damage to the ecosphere and human activity. Scores increase as specific examples of environmental challenges are presented alongside timely, relevant, well-researched data from valid, trusted scientific sources. Scores continue to improve as the material is expounded upon, further contextualized and well-referenced.

Lifestyle and Consumer Behavior – At the minimum a curriculum must clearly show the long-term impact made on ecosystems from daily human consumption choices – especially those in wealthier countries. Scores increase as specific examples of negative lifestyle behaviors are listed alongside the correlating damages they cause and the increasingly substantive changes that can be made to lower the footprint.

Business Practices – At the minimum a curriculum must make clear that while individual actions are essential for improving the environmental and social challenges our planet faces, it is systemic change at the business and organizational level that will usher in far-reaching improvements. Scores increase as specific examples of sustainable business practices are provided and participants are encouraged to take their personal sustainability practices beyond the home and church and into the workplace and corporate policy.

Political and Economic Systems – A minimum for any curriculum is an acknowledgement of the systemic dimension of ecological problems, and score increases with advancement into systemic analysis, especially with ethical linkage, and concrete suggestions for engagement with large-scale transformation.

Population Control – A minimum for any curriculum is an acknowledgement that overpopulation is a part of the ecological problem, and score increases with additional analysis, discussion of theological and ethical dimensions, and suggestions for concrete action.

Logistics – Did the curriculum offer helpful tips for starting groups and leading them through the small group process?

Leaders' Guide Quality – How easy would it be for an untrained lay-person to pick this up and lead a group?

Participants' Guide Quality – Are participants given enough information to make them feel safe and cognizant of how the meeting will flow?

Meeting Flow – Do each of the meetings follow a similar format? How many activities are participants asked to accomplish in 1 – 1.5 hours? Is there a balance of prayer, sharing, learning and doing? Will the meeting seem choppy or will the various activities seamlessly fit together?

Core Small Group Principles – Small groups should accomplish four things: build community, formation, prayer/worship, and outreach. Different activities in the meeting will accomplish these goals. For example, sharing questions at the beginning build community. And discussions of our own lifestyles and what changes we can make at home and at church might inspire outreach.

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Using the Curricula in Synergy

It is important to understand that each curriculum is good, that it has strengths and weaknesses, and that each one would be the “best” choice for different church populations at different times. For example, Episcopalians and others who lean toward sacramental spirituality, and who already have some awareness of eco-issues, would do well with *To Serve Christ in all Creation*. It is also very comprehensive from a science standpoint and is the only one that does not necessarily require supplementation for basic sustainability information, though additional NWEI courses are natural next steps. For those of any denomination who are very new to the issues or are somewhat conservative, *To Serve and Guard the Earth* would be less overwhelming or obviously challenging, but still quite good at initiating green change. It could be followed by any of the other three Christian curricula for additional theology and/or by NWEI courses for additional science, consciousness raising, and action suggestions.

Awakening to God’s Call to Earthkeeping has a particularly prophetic, Evangelical flavor, which really engages a passionate theology for action, but definitely requires NWEI course supplementation for more science, culture analysis, and action. *Opening the Letter* is especially appropriate for mainline Protestants and others who want to ground in Christian eco-ethics and theology and then move on to NWEI’s *Choices for Sustainable Living* to round out concrete understanding of the issues and action steps.

Following grounding in Christian eco-theology and general sustainability concepts, we suggest that leaders continue to encourage deeper study of and reflection on the other, more specific topic offerings from Northwest Earth Institute. Further, NWEI’s *Reconnecting with Earth* is an extremely interesting companion to Christian eco-theology in that course participants can consider the parallels with Deep Ecology, as well as the contrasts with some traditional Christian theology. Engagement with Deep Ecology is not necessarily recommended for those who are very new to eco-issues or pluralism, however, because they may experience the radical equality of humans with all creatures as too big a leap from “dominion” and “stewardship.” Better to encourage “caring for creation” first and later move into issues of real paradigm shift.

Finally, we suggest that when groups are ready to undertake sustained action in their churches, they follow the guidance offered in Earth Ministry’s [Greening Congregations Handbook](#) and/or ask for consulting assistance from [Earth Ministry](#) or [Green Faith](#). Utilizing these resources will ensure that groups do not unnecessarily waste effort “reinventing the wheel” when others have already identified some of the best practices and priorities.

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Vision for Curricula Content Innovation

We were pleased to discover that there are so many good eco-educational materials out there to employ in adult Christian formation. We are also excited to see that so many have moved beyond the simple, *Genesis* only, “care for creation” theology and begun to really connect environmental ideas and action with other core aspects of the faith such as the prophetic justice tradition, gospel oriented discipleship, and the ultimate faith promise of reconciliation of all creation. However, there is still much work to be done.

- One of the next steps in the Church’s process of engagement with eco-crisis should be congregation education to raise consciousness about the nature of culture as a whole, its elements, and the fact that we both are shaped by and shape it, for good or ill. In particular, the Church must remember and recognize that Israel originally and later the early Christians were consciously undertaking an innovative, challenging, counter-cultural creation; a creativity which must continue today.

But before more invention can occur, de-construction – the critical analysis and often transforming or discarding – of traditional and/or dominant cultural ideas, stories, and practices must be done. Christians must better understand the dominant, corporation oriented, media/consumer culture in which we live, the ways in which Church culture is enmeshed with the dominant culture, and the ways in which that enmeshment runs counter to the original cultural values and principles of Israel and the Jesus movement, which are naturally congruent with eco-sustainability.

- Rooted in an understanding of culture – especially our current dominant one – and ready to engage in alternative cultural creation, Christians particularly need to put significant energy toward innovation and improvement in the crucial Story and Vision dimension.ⁱⁱ While it may be unfashionable in an age so taken with postmodern deconstruction of oppressive narratives (which, as stated above, is very important work), progressive Christians nonetheless need to re-claim the core Christian narrative and re-invent a strong, but humble, assertion of a story that can unify and inspire disciples of Jesus Christ to truly and collectively take up the cross for the sake of the whole earth community. Indeed, mainstream and progressive churches have the capacity to counter destructive narratives with life giving words that offer a powerful, magnetic sense of alternative cultural identity, vision and mission. But first, people must re-member a cohesive, solidarity narrative,ⁱⁱⁱ teach it, and engage its ongoing telling through particular individual and congregation stories.
- A renewed, emboldened, cohesive articulation of the prophetic Christian story naturally leads to a theological grounding for specifically systemic and non-partisan political action in the corporate and legislative realms of society. Jesus was political and the Jesus movement was nonviolent, collective activism in part. Hence, claims that systemic actions are not good expressions of Christian discipleship are usually tied to other dominant, status quo interests. Curricula that do a good job of linking our core story of cultural evolution toward justice for all creation with a concrete analysis of problematic systemic realities, (such as legal corporate priority of profit and WTO rules), and an empowered path of collective action, (such as boy/buy-cotts and informed, “kingdom values” voting), will be most helpful.
- Finally, much more is needed to address the issue of overpopulation from a Christian perspective. For example, the amount of war, poverty and starvation, harm to women,

and ecological damage that comes from human overpopulation is morally and physically horrendous. It is absurd that we should deny people freely chosen and safe drugs, simple mechanisms, and medical procedures to limit reproduction because it somehow tampers with God's will in "nature," while we use all sorts of drugs, mechanisms, and medical procedures to "un-naturally" prolong life. Rather, actions that are genuinely "good news" for the poor and planetary life in general, in the best harmony with individual situations as possible, should be understood as God's will. At this point, the only moral absolute seems to be that an absolutist "pro-life" stance is leading to planetary and human death. Moral ambiguity, therefore, is generally the norm, so sensitive, enlightened curricula are needed to help Christians faithfully explore and debate this issue within the larger context of commitments to justice and eco-sustainability.

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Bios of Project Developers

Rebecca Hall has worked at St. David's Episcopal Church as the Small Group Program Director since 2007 and has been a small group leader for the church since 2004. As creator of the church's Small Group Ministry and a member of the Adult Christian Formation Commission she is charged with reviewing each curriculum that is used in the church. In addition, Ms. Hall is a resource to other churches, consulting with other small group ministry leaders and leading workshops at conferences. Prior to her work at St. David's Hall served as Executive Director at two social service nonprofits. She earned her BA in International studies at the University of Missouri.

Ms. Hall was responsible for evaluation and reporting in the General Information, Small Group Functionality, and Core Small Group Principles Categories.

Elizabeth Freese is a founding partner of Deep Conversion Communications. Through many years of academic study of cultural dynamics and theology, environmental activist and public relations work, and personal lifestyle change, she has gleaned significant wisdom that she now shares in her writing, teaching, and consulting endeavors. Freese holds a BA in Sociology from Columbia University, a MA in Environmental Communication from the U of AR, and a MA in Religion, with a focus on Christianity and Eco-Crisis, from the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest.

Ms. Freese was responsible for evaluation and reporting in the Story and Vision, Theology and Worldview, Values and Ethics, Economic and Political Systems, and Population Control Categories. She also wrote the Introduction, Methods, Using Curricula in Synergy, and Vision for Content Innovation in Curricula sections of this report.

Talley Summerlin is a founding partner of Deep Conversion Communications and is also a consultant with Green Canary Sustainability Consulting and an Account Supervisor with EnviroMedia. He has nine years of sustainability experience in the corporate world, where he developed and managed environmental programs, communications, and events for major brands such as Dell and Whole Foods Market. With Seventh Generation he coordinated WeeGeneration.com, a major interactive web initiative benefiting Healthy Child Healthy World. Currently he manages various public health campaigns and sustainability initiatives for government and corporate clients. Summerlin earned his BA in Communication at Trinity University and his MA in English at the U of AR.

Mr. Summerlin was responsible for evaluation and reporting in the Science, Lifestyle and Consumer Behavior, and Business Practices Categories.

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ⁱ Numerous experts in the fields of Ethics, Theology, Business and Organizational Development, Economics, Earth Science, and Cultural History all agree that comprehensive culture change must occur to avert further eco-crisis. See Bibliography for a reference list.

ⁱⁱ Renowned cultural and religious studies scholar, Thomas Berry, in *The Great Work* and other writings is emphatic about the need for narrative evolution as part of the cultural transition to eco-sustainability and justice. While many, including the writers of this Guide, pay due respect to the necessity of postmodern deconstruction and suspicion of “master narratives,” which may be oppressive, Berry’s assertion is nonetheless echoed by many scholars in various fields – especially those that focus on practical human

function. Thus, one reason story is so important is succinctly put by Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley in *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*. They state, “The stories we tell... order experience, construct meaning and build community... Human experience is structured in time and narrative;... [so], the narrative framework is a human necessity.” Ethicist Larry Rasmussen in *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* explains that “religious cosmologies tend to rest at the foundation of cultural structures... Without cosmologies... we literally would not know what to do.” Ethicist Stanley Hauerwas elaborates in *The Peaceable Kingdom*, “Christian ethics begins by calling our attention to a narrative that tells of God’s dealing with creation.” Ethical convictions, then, are ultimately grounded in and derived from that narrative, which trains our worldview, identity, and values. It is therefore important for any social movement that seeks to inspire solidarity and to “transform perceptions of reality and society” to do so “through narratives” as noted by Charles Stewart, et. al. in *Persuasion and Social Movements*. (See bibliography for citation information.)

ⁱⁱⁱ Our story must discuss how our societal dysfunction is representative of the fall and how it differs from original creation, how our people, by God’s grace, undertook an Exodus from the exploitive systems of Egypt and were called to form a just society (which would inherently be far more eco-friendly), how counter-cultural prophets are speaking God’s word in the tradition of Isaiah when they condemn injustice and eco-destruction, how the reign of God that Jesus proclaimed was/is a profound challenge to the socio-cultural dynamics of empire and resembles in principle the vision of Deep Ecology, how Jesus went all the way to the cross in his love of a new way for humanity, and how Christ’s resurrection and the promise of Revelation can instill in us a passion and a courage to seriously convert to a nonviolent, but radical, discipleship that will transform and reconcile both us and the world. Without this story, we are weak and divided and prone to live the destructive narratives. But with it, we can regenerate a church capable of social change in the tradition of St. Francis and Martin Luther and Martin Luther King Jr.

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