



# SUSTAINING CREATION

## Sustaining Creation- *A journey of Faith for small groups*

### **Overview of the Series**

#### **Scriptural foundational basis for series:**

*"God saw everything that (God) had made, and indeed it was very good."* (Gen. 1:31);

*"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it"* Psalm 24:1);

*"All who believed were together and had all things in common..."*(Acts 2:44);

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."* (Luke 10:27)

#### **Segment 1: The Situation we find ourselves in**

Part A Video focus: Things have really, really changed

Part B Video focus: Some deadly serious risks are just ahead

#### **Segment 2: So what's stopping us?**

Part A Video focus: Old stories that are no longer true

Part B Video focus: Those pesky human behaviors that keep us from responding

#### **Segment 3: And yet there are reasons for hope**

Part A Video focus: Hope Arising out of New Technology & of International Goals

Part B: Video focus Hope arising out of ancient stories made new yet again

#### **Segment 4: God's Call**

Part A Video focus: So where is God calling us to go?

Part B Video focus: How do we get to where God is calling us to be?

**Principal Guide for the Journey: Rev. Dr. Terry Gallagher**

**Wisdom Sources we meet along the Way:**

**Shantha Ready Alonso, Exec. Director, Creation Justice Ministries**

**Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, Conference Minister, United Church of Christ**

**Pam Arifian, Director N.E. Regional Environmental Justice Center**

**Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt, Environmental Minister, United Church of Christ**

**Rev. Scott Oberle, Pastor, First Congregational UCC of Downers Grove**

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**Things have really, really changed**

**Focus:** *Creating an awareness of the current climate crisis situation across the globe.*

Scripture foundation: *And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God." (Luke 12:15-21)*

**Group Discussion:** Take a few minutes for all who wish to make observations and comments on the video segment that was just viewed.

- What new things did you learn?
- What touched you?
- What questions remain?
- Anything else to comment on?

**Next Explore these Action Items** from the "48 Steps to Living Sustainably" resource, spend some time reflecting upon and discussing which ones might you consider trying this week?

#4. Walk or bike to close by destinations. Good for the body & the soul.

#5. Adjust your driving habits to improve mileage. Easy on that gas pedal, fill tires, combine trips. Share a ride.

#7. Lower the temperature setting on your hot water tank. Wash laundry in cold water.

#8. Switch your electrical utility supplier to one that is sourced from wind or solar power.

#14. Call your Congress Rep. & say you believe Global Warming to be an issue significant enough to affect how you will vote.

#23. Change all home lighting to energy efficient lamps. Consider LED lamps.

**Suggestion for Future Discussions:** Stay current with what's happening in this rapidly changing Climate Crisis by adding a discussion of one relevant news story from a reliable source at each of your future group discussions. You can find relevant stories at any of the following sources: Inside Climate News; Eco Watch; Climate Nexus; Climate Action News



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### Some deadly serious risks are just ahead

**Focus:** *Creating an awareness of the urgency to respond to the climate crisis.*

Scripture foundation: *Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?" (Job 38:1-8).*

**Group Discussion:** Take a few minutes for all who wish to make observations and comments on the video segment that was just viewed.

- What new things did you learn?
- What touched you?
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- Anything else to comment on?
- Current Climate Crisis News?

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#2. Educate yourself on Global Warming via books & websites from the recommended list of resources.

#11 Tell Family, friends & neighbors why the Climate Crisis is an issue of real concern to you.

#12. Join a group which explores life sustainability issues. You will need to support one another's efforts. No local group? Start one.

#13. Support one of the groups that are advocates for a sustainable world such as Sierra, Earth Justice or NRDC. There is power in numbers.

#20. Use your Social Media Platforms and contacts to spread the critical message of sustainability.

#30. Write Congress monthly on the urgent need for Federal measures to reduce the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>.

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**Old stories that are no longer true --**

***Stories that block us from seeing & hearing the truth***

**Focus:** *The power of stories to inform & guide but also to block out & distract.*

Scripture foundation: *The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand. 'With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: 'You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn— and I would heal them.'* (Matthew 13:13-15)

**Group Discussion:** Take a few minutes for all who wish to make observations and comments on the video segment that was just viewed.

- What new things did you learn?
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**Next Explore these Action Items** from the “48 Steps to Living Sustainably” resource, spend some time reflecting upon and discussing which ones might you consider trying this week?

#1. Re-establish the ancient practice of Sabbath economics in your family's life. At this initial level keep it simple by avoiding purchasing anything on one specific day/week.

#10. Give up the disposable plastic water bottle habit and then move on to eliminate other disposable products.

#26. Consider whether to repair an item rather than replacing it with something new. Take an initial step away from our disposable consumer society.

#28. Change your personal economics to support local based business such as Community Co-operatives, community businesses, Credit Unions etc.

#34. Develop “eyes to see” and “ears to hear” so that you can understand the urgency of the Climate Crisis through the lived experiences of others.

#42. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle becomes a daily practice in your life. Special emphasis on the “Reduce” part which often gets skipped.

**Further Reading:** “The Faraway Nearby” - Rebecca Solnit





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## Sustaining Creation- A journey of Faith for small groups

### Those pesky human behaviors that keep us from responding

**Focus:** *Exploring why accepting new truths can be so difficult for us.*

Scripture foundation: *“When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Come now, let us argue it out, says the Lord” -Isaiah 1:15-18*

**Group Discussion:** Take a few minutes for all who wish to make observations and comments on the video segment that was just viewed.

- What new things did you learn?
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**Next Explore these Action Items** from the **“48 Steps to Living Sustainably”** resource, spend some time reflecting upon and discussing which ones might you consider trying this week?

#3. Go “meat-less” one day a week as meat has 10X the effect on the environment. (Meat-less Mondays?)

#6. Use Public Transportation when possible. Pressure your local Government to make it “Carbon Free”.

#16. Get involved, join Citizens Climate Lobby to actively Lobby for a Carbon Tax or join one of the groups such as 350.org that are working hard to get Colleges, Churches, etc. to divest from Fossil Fuel Companies.

#22. If you must travel by air then offset the pollution through tree planting. Contact A’ Roche or others non-profits to purchase.

#29. Begin a sharing cooperative with neighbors, church, club and/or family members. Does everyone really need all the same tools and garden equipment or can we share?

#33. Divest your savings and retirement accounts from Fossil Fuel stocks & mutual funds. If it’s immoral to destroy the earth, then it’s also immoral to profit from its destruction.

**Further Reading:** **“This Changes Everything” - Naomi Klein**



# SUSTAINING CREATION

Hand-Out for Segment 3, Part A:

## Sustaining Creation- A journey of Faith for small groups

### Hope Arising out of new Technology, increased Human Cooperation & the pursuit of International Goals

**Focus:** *Moving us from being locked in despair over current situation to hope fueled actions.*

*“Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” And he said, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!” (Mark 4:3-9)*

**Group Discussion:** Take a few minutes for all who wish to make observations and comments on the video segment that was just viewed.

- What new things did you learn?
- What touched you?
- What questions remain?
- Anything else to comment on?
- Current Climate Crisis News?

**Next Explore these Action Items** from the “48 Steps to Living Sustainably” resource, spend some time reflecting upon and discussing which ones might you consider trying this week?

#9. Change your home thermostat by 3 degrees, up in Summer & down in Winter.

#17. Skip the Christmas presents and help a poorer family save some energy this year through improving their home’s insulation or installing energy efficient lighting.

#18. Shop local Farm Markets, Food is healthier when it doesn’t travel thousands of miles.

#24. Install smart or programmable thermostats and timers on energy using devices throughout your home.

#25. Conduct an energy audit of your home and correct deficiencies. Seal those window and door leaks.

#39. Time to invest in high efficiency appliances, hot water, furnace and air conditioning systems.

**Further Reading:** “Our Only World” - Wendell Berry



# SUSTAINING CREATION

## Sustaining Creation- A journey of Faith for small groups

### Hope arising out of ancient stories made new yet again

**Focus:** *What are the “new” old stories that we must embrace to sustain Creation?*

Scripture foundation: *“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers” (Psalm 24:1-2)*

*“Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come before me.” But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.” (Jonah 1:1-3)*

**Group Discussion:** Take a few minutes for all who wish to make observations and comments on the video segment that was just viewed.

- What new things did you learn?
- What touched you?
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**Next Explore these Action Items** from the **“48 Steps to Living Sustainably”** resource, spend some time reflecting upon and discussing which ones might you consider trying this week?

#15. Actively pressure your local Government to install renewable systems such as public car charging stations.

#19. Add a second or even a third “meat-less” day to weekly schedule (Try again Tues., Fish Fridays?). Give up red meat entirely as it has triple the cost on earth resources.

#21. Time to trade in that gas guzzler for a car that gets 45+ mpg.

#27. Challenge your Faith Community to become a Center for Climate Justice. Be a visible sign of these 48 Action Steps.

#38. Actively work to reduce your family’s carbon footprint. Use carbon tracking tools available on-line.

#40. Install a source of renewable energy on your house i.e. Solar Panels, Solar Heater or sponsor someone’s installation.

**Further Reading:** **“Great Tide Rising: - Kathleen Dean Moore**



# SUSTAINING CREATION

Hand-Out for Segment 4, Part A:

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### So where is God calling us to go?

**Focus:** *What does a sustainable future look like? What are its values?*

Scripture foundation: *“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all as any had need.”* (Acts 2:44-45)

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”* (Luke 4:18-19)

**Group Discussion:** Take a few minutes for all who wish to make observations and comments on the video segment that was just viewed.

- What new things did you learn?
- What touched you?
- What questions remain?
- Anything else to comment on?
- Current Climate Crisis News?

**Next Explore these Action Items** from the **“48 Steps to Living Sustainably”** resource, spend some time reflecting upon and discussing which ones might you consider trying this week?

#31. Advocate for an economic pricing system that includes the total cost from production, consumption, impact on the environment and disposal.

#32. Recognize that this is an issue of Climate Justice as the world’s poor experience the first & worst of the terrible affects. So advocate for greater USA contributions to the UN based “Green Climate Fund”.

#35. Change diet to routinely eat more seasonally available local foods. Consider if becoming a vegetarian is a viable path for you.

#43. Start a Neighborhood Vegetable Garden and/or even better start a Community Solar farm.

#44. Supremacy of the Individual is a mistaken value of our society. Become a voice lifting up the needs of community over the wants of the individual.

#46. Democracy is not a spectator sport so periodically visit your Congress Reps. local offices with a message on the need to act now.

**Further Reading:** **“Eaarth”** - Bill McKibben



## Sustaining Creation- A journey of Faith for small groups

### How do we get to where God is calling us to be?

**Focus: Accepting the Call to live out the great commandment to Love.**

Scripture foundation: *Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise". (Luke 10:25-37)*

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#36. Accept the difficult truth that endless economic growth on our one planet is not possible. Our modern personal lifestyles must be constrained so as to live sustainably.

#37. Technology is rapidly improving so seriously consider an electric vehicle purchase.

#41. Time to consider downsizing your home? Do you really need all that space and the energy it requires?

#45. Live your life in such a way as if your kid's & grandkid's future depends on it because it actually does.

#47. Be a visible sign! Consider participating in Non-Violent Protests & Civil Disobedience direct actions.

#48. Understand that at its heart this is an issue which requires global political answers in response to a human induced global crisis. Support global efforts to strengthen & speed up the Paris Climate Accord.

**Further Reading: "The Truth About Stories" - Thomas King**