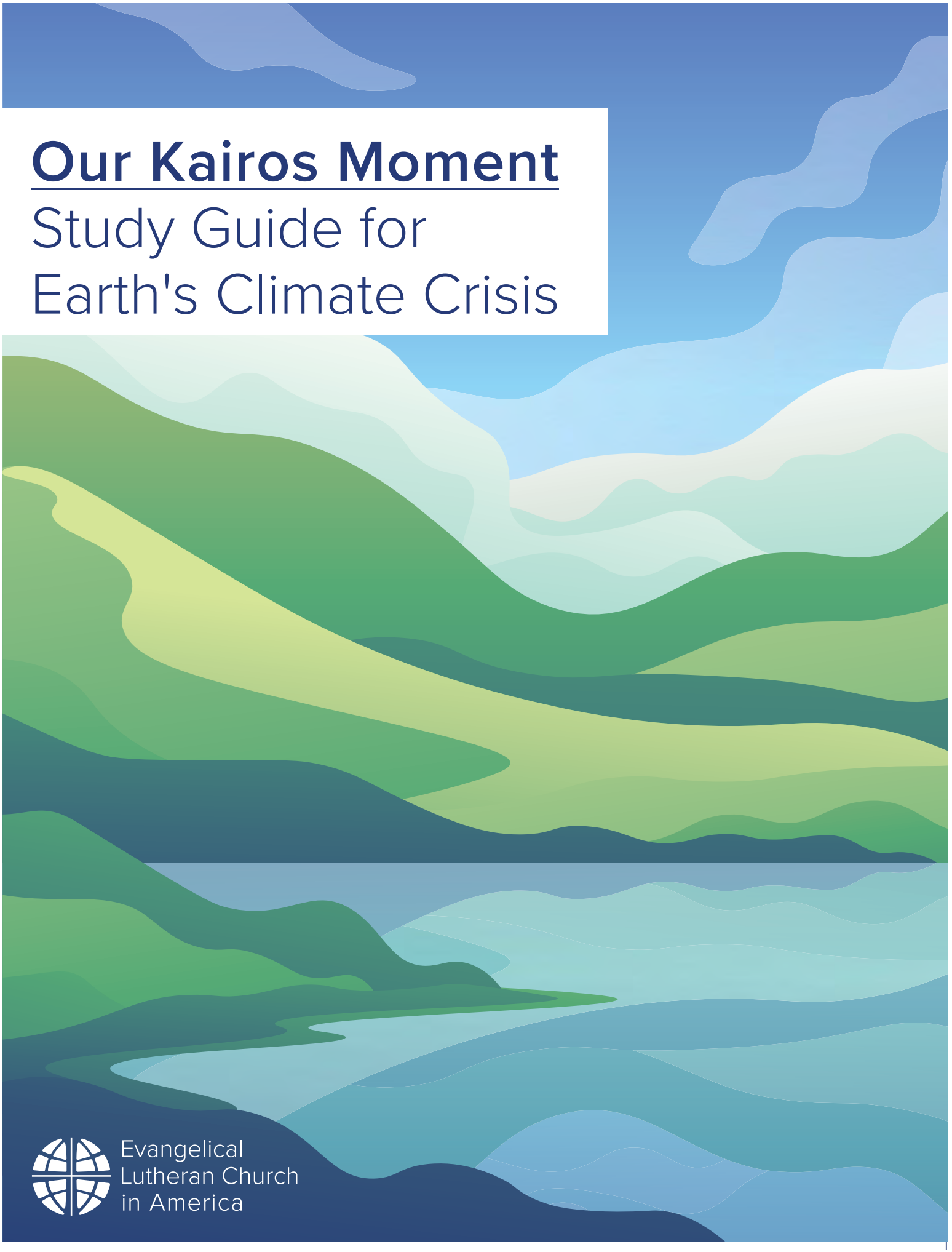
Our Kairos Moment

Study Guide for Earth's Climate Crisis



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Welcome

to "Our Kairos Moment," a study guide for the ELCA's social message "Earth's Climate Crisis." In this guide you will find four sessions designed to dig more deeply into major themes from the social message. Each session is intended for a 60-minute, small-group learning experience. The study guide works best when groups can use all four sessions, but each session can be used independently with minor adjustments.

Within each session you will find learning activities, Bible studies, ideas for prayer and lessons drawn from passages of the social message. The end of each session features "Make One Change," an activity that encourages and equips members of your group to do one thing on their own, between your meetings perhaps. The activities in "Make One Change" are simple opportunities to learn more about what we can do as people of faith to care for God's world. If you do all four sessions with your group, by the end you should have a display of all the "changes" your group made during your time together. This can be a tangible reminder of active hope.

SESSION THEMES AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of each session, participants will be able to:

SESSION 1

FINDING OUR PLACE IN CREATION

a. Describe the importance of God's creation as part of their own story and of God's story.
b. Compare "dominion" over nature to Christ-centered models of innovative stewardship.
c. Identify the effects of a broken relationship between humans and the land through the story of the U.S. Dust Bowl in the 1930s.

SESSION 2

CLIMATE CHANGE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

a. Describe the impact of a hotter climate on workers.
b. Identify ways Christians are called to care for others, especially vulnerable neighbors.
c. Discuss and define the principle of solidarity from the social message.

SESSION 3

THE FUTURE OF FARMING

a. Describe agricultural challenges of a changing climate, including the impact of drought.
b. Identify solutions farmers are using to adapt to these challenges.
c. Define climate anxiety and the ways faith calls the church to accompany neighbors through intergenerational justice.

SESSION 4

ACTIVE HOPE AND AGENTS OF CHANGE

a. Describe climate-related impacts on communities' understanding of "home."
b. Identify intersections between climate change and justice issues.
c. Identify steps worshiping communities can take toward a just transition for all.

The sessions will introduce key terms and focus on specific passages from "Earth's Climate Crisis." Before beginning, encourage all participants to read the social message in full, and have printed copies available. You can download electronic copies in English and Spanish here: **tinyurl.com/3c86kz3d**. You can order printed copies in English and Spanish here: **tinyurl.com/5bhcj5hx**.

NOTES FOR LEADERS

- The sessions here are designed for small groups and can be used, with some adjustments, both online and in-person.
- The sessions are written as a script for leaders. You can read directly from the text or adapt it to meet your group's needs.
- Each session begins with "Setting the Tone," an activity leaders can use to foster safe space, including through a group covenant. The appendix includes a sample covenant. Some of the topics in the sessions will generate strong feelings. Using a covenant can help build trust and a sense of safety for sharing strong reactions.
- Some sessions require printed pages from the study guide. Be sure to have these ready prior to the session. Each session will have a list of materials needed for your time together.
- Tech needs: Each session contains links to short videos. Some activities will involve participants in viewing videos on their phones or computers. If phones with internet access are not available, your group can also watch the videos together on a larger screen or on tablets. The length of each video is indicated in parentheses after the title.
- Each session has seven parts: an opening prayer, a "Setting the Tone" activity, an opening lesson, a Bible study, a social message lesson, a "Make One Change" activity and a closing prayer.
- The "Make One Change" activities invite participants to choose a preprinted card with an activity they can do in the days or weeks following the session. If you are doing the study guide as a series over multiple weeks, try to find a wall or board space where the cards can be displayed so that, at the end of your series, the group can see all the activities you already did during the study series.

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SESSION 1

FINDING OUR PLACE IN CREATION

Learning Objectives

In this session participants will:

a. Describe the importance of God's creation as part of their own story and of God's story.

b. Compare "dominion" over nature to Christ-centered models of innovative stewardship.

c. Identify the effects of a broken relationship between humans and the land through the story of the U.S. Dust Bowl in the 1930s.

Key Terms in This Session

Dominion

Shamar (Hebrew)

Weather

Climate

Materials Needed

- Copies of "Earth's Climate Crisis"
- Group covenant (see Appendix for sample)
- Printed pictures for opening activity (see Appendix)
- At least one Bible for every two participants
- Whiteboard or large paper

OPENING PRAYER

Creator God, all creation reveals the loving care with which you form and nurture the world and all that is in it. We give you thanks for the beautiful web of creation and for our calling to be stewards, sharing in your work so that all creation may flourish. Be present with us today as we learn more about one another and about the responsibilities to which you call us. In your name, we pray. Amen.

SETTING THE TONE

Following prayer, begin each session with a short activity to set the tone for respectful, loving conversation. The leader can read the script here or invite a participant to read it to the group.

Who We Are as Church Together

As the church, we are called to tell the story of God's loving action in the world. We are also called to love one another and to share each other's stories — to **celebrate** when another is lifted by joy, to **mourn** when another is burdened by grief or pain and to **serve** when another is in need. We are also called to discern together as a community when it comes to difficult issues or complex problems.

In our conversations, remember this statement from the social message on "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> We can agree on ends but disagree on means. Well-intentioned people can disagree about what constitutes the better part of moral action. We must deliberate and collaborate together because we cannot solve the problem individually or as a single institution. Moral deliberation and action together are essential to our identity as a church (p. 13).

Your group may want to consider posting a covenant to guide your conversations. See the appendix of this study guide for a sample covenant that can be posted or shared.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Our Stories

Display the pictures of nature from the Appendix where participants can see them. Invite participants to select one picture that brings to mind a story, memory or family tradition. Give them some time to reflect on the picture and collect their thoughts.

Invite each participant to share why they chose their picture and the story, memory or family tradition that the picture brings to their mind.

ASK

1. *How has God's creation been part of your history or your present?* (Allow time for everyone to share.)
2. *What memories or stories does the picture evoke for you?*

Stories of Hope and Fear

Holy Scripture is filled with stories of the power of God revealed through nature and natural events. Some stories provide hope; others witness to the fearsome power of nature. Read each set of verses below and reflect on how nature is portrayed. Does nonhuman nature evoke fear or hope in the Bible passage?

Invite participants to read the verses below from their Bibles. For groups larger than five, divide the participants into pairs and invite each pair to read one of the verses below. For the sake of time in smaller groups, you may also select a few of the verses below to read together.

Psalm 104 | Psalm 8 | Ezekiel 47:6-12 | Genesis 7:11-24 | Jonah 1:1-6 | Revelations 11:7-13

Gather the whole group together again and invite one person from each pair to share in their own words what the verses they read described.

ASK

1. *When have you experienced joy, hope, or wonder in nature?*
2. *When have you experienced fear or uncertainty in nature?* (Examples: Storms, drought, etc.)

In Holy Scripture nature is both life-giving and death-dealing. It provides nourishment for human beings, and it can be a sign of the love of God, as in the tree of healing in Ezekiel. Nature can also be experienced as a threat and reveal the disruption between human beings, nonhuman nature and God, as in stories of floods or earthquakes. Lutherans do not believe that God punishes sin through natural events. But when sin disturbs the harmony of relationships within creation, we experience God's creation as a threat to our well-being rather than as a sign of hope and promise.

BIBLE STUDY

Read together Genesis 1.

ASK

1. *What do you notice?*
2. *How does God relate to creation?*
3. *What is the role of humans?*

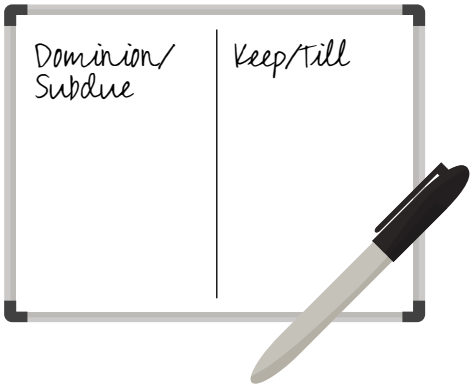
Read or invite someone to read Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2:15 from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition:

Genesis 1:26-28: [26]"Then God said, 'Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' [27]"So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female [God] created them. [28]"God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"

Genesis 2:15: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it."

The two stories use very different words to describe the vocation of human beings in creation. In Genesis 1 the words "dominion" and "subdue" are used. In Genesis 2, the Hebrew word is ***shamar***, which is translated as to "till" and to "keep."

On a whiteboard or large poster, create two columns. Write the words "Dominion/Subdue" as a heading on the left side. Write the words "Keep/Till" as a heading on the right side. Draw a line separating the two columns.



Read or invite a participant to read the following excerpts from "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> God creates human beings as interdependent with the whole creation and grants humans special responsibility as innovative stewards to contribute to the flourishing of creation. It is in this sense that the human species is created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27). The "imago dei" [i-MAHG-oh day] is the human vocation, our calling, to participate in what God is already doing for the earth — respecting and promoting the flourishing of creation. (p. 2)
>
> Both the Creator's model of dominion in Genesis and the example of our Lord Jesus teach us to serve others rather than dominate and degrade them. Created from the earth's dust (Genesis 2:7), human beings are given the responsibility to keep or care for the earth just as God keeps and cares for us (Numbers 6:24-26). The Hebrew word *shamar*, translated as "keep," means to protect and sustain Earth's life for future generations. (p. 3)

ASK

1. *What words from the social message are used to describe human beings' calling in creation? ("Respecting," "promoting," "protect," "sustain.") List these words under the heading "Keep/Till."*

ASK

1. *When you think of these two sets of terms — dominion/subdue and keep/till — what other words come to mind?* (List responses under each heading.)

Create another column on the whiteboard or poster, or use another sheet of poster paper. For the heading write "Jesus."

ASK

1. *When we think of how Jesus led and served other people, what words come to mind?* (List responses under the heading "Jesus.")

Invite the group to look at the first two columns, “Dominion/Subdue” and “Keep/Till.”

ASK

1. *Which set is closer to the model Jesus sets for us?*
2. *Thinking of our own stories from the opening activity, which approach might best describe our relationship to nature and creation?*

SOCIAL MESSAGE STUDY

On a screen that is visible to everyone, watch the video “History Brief: The Dust Bowl” (4:05), available at tinyurl.com/2htf7s9m. This video offers one example of the differences between approaches to land management based on the two models from the Bible study.

ASK

1. *What stood out to you in the video?*
2. *What were the natural causes of the Dust Bowl?*
3. *How did land management practices make the situation worse?*
4. *How did conservation techniques become part of the solution?*
5. *Were the practices before the Dust Bowl closer to “dominion/subdue” or “keep/till”? In what ways?*

Conservation practices such as those featured in the video are examples of what the social message calls “innovative stewardship.” They are ways of working with creation, including within the limits of creation, to help all creation — including human beings — thrive.

Read or invite a participant to read again the following section from page 2 of “Earth’s Climate Crisis”:

> God creates human beings as interdependent with the whole creation and grants humans special responsibility as innovative stewards to contribute to the flourishing of creation. It is in this sense that the human species is created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27). The “imago dei” [ee-MAHG-oh day] is the human vocation, our calling, to participate in what God is already doing for the earth — respecting and promoting the flourishing of creation.

ASK

1. *According to the study, what role do we play in God’s ongoing care of creation?*
2. *What comes to mind when you think of the terms “innovative” and “stewardship”?*

Read or invite someone to read the following section from page 3 of “Earth’s Climate Crisis”:

> Viewed from space, Earth’s atmosphere appears as a very thin and iridescent blue line around the circumference of the planet. Over billions of years, this miraculous shield has fostered a wondrous explosion of life on the land, in the sea, and in the air while also protecting life from dangerous forms of solar radiation.

This section of the social message introduces the idea of **interdependence**. Just as we depend on God and one another, we also depend on all creation, including the earth’s atmosphere, for our life. When interdependence is respected, all life works together so that all flourish — humans, animals, plants, air, water and more. Not only is all creation part of God’s story in Genesis, but we can find in Holy Scripture, too, stories of all creation being redeemed as part of God’s plan for the future. For example, when the Bible describes salvation, we encounter stories of dry land becoming fruitful (Isaiah 32:15-16), the wolf and the lamb lying down together (Isaiah 11:6-9) and rivers teeming with life (Ezekiel 47:9-12).

Read or invite someone to read the following section from pages 4-5 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> The combustion of fossil fuels has powered most of the global economy for over 200 years and has permitted remarkable advances in food production, medicine, transportation, and consumer goods. Today's crisis is that the concentration of carbon dioxide in Earth's atmosphere is now higher than at any other time in the last 3.6 million years. Not only are current global emissions of carbon dioxide increasing, but the rate of emission is also accelerating. The same is true for methane and nitrous oxide emissions. A sign of hope, however, is found in the decline of certain gases used in refrigeration … because of regulations that were imposed after the U.S. signed the Montreal Protocol to protect Earth's ozone layer. …
>
> The increasing concentrations of these greenhouse gases cause Earth to retain more and more heat from the sun, which has led to an increase in global warming and related climate change. … Earth's global surface temperature has increased by around 1.9 degrees Fahrenheit (1.1 degrees Celsius) since 1850.

The result of these atmospheric changes is a series of effects — melting ice, severe storms, rising sea levels, higher temperatures and unpredictable seasons — that we collectively call **climate change**. We might say, "Yesterday it was cold, so the climate can't be warming." How do we respond questions such as this?

Write on a board or poster the words "climate change" and "weather." "Weather" is the daily experiences we have of sun, rain, heat, cold and more. The weather can vary day to day or even hour to hour. "Climate change," on the other hand, is about trends over time. One way to think of the difference is this:

(Write on board under each term): *Weather is what we get. Climate is what we expect.*

The ELCA affirms that we are in a time of climate crisis. What we can expect, the climate, has changed, is changing and will continue to change, impacting ecosystems, public health and human livelihoods. But there are things we can do. This crisis is not a time for panic but for action. We will learn more about this crisis throughout the coming sessions and these actions we can take.

MAKE ONE CHANGE

For this activity invite the participants to consider **the printed cards on the next page** and to select one action they will take between the end of this session and the start of the next one.

CLOSING PRAYER

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, who in your self-emptying love gathered up and reconciled all creation to God the Father. Innumerable galaxies of the heavens worship you. Creatures that grace the earth rejoice in you. All those in the deepest seas bow to you in adoration. As with them we give you praise, grant that we may cherish the earth, our home, and live in harmony with this good creation, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, "Additional Prayers," "Creation," "Creation's Praise," p. 81).

MAKE ONE CHANGE

READ
Read the ELCA social message "Earth's Climate Crisis," available at tinyurl.com/3c86kz3d. As you read, reflect on what a kairos moment is. What does this moment mean for the church?

ICE CUBE TRAY GARDEN STARTER
This can be a great activity to do with children. Gather an old plastic ice cube tray, some soil and seeds from a local store. Fill the tray with soil and plant one seed in each cup. Place the tray in a sunny location and water the seeds a bit each day. As your seeds start to sprout, talk together about all the resources that are needed for plants to grow: organic matter in soil, water and sunlight. How does God's creation work together to create new life?

SHARE
Between now and the next session, post on social media the picture you chose for the opening activity. Share the story you told the group or a story from this week's session. If people comment, invite them to share their stories of experiences of God in nature and invite them to join your group for the next session.

LEARN
Visit the Environmental Protection Agency's website to learn some of the ways climate change will impact your state. Short guides for each state can be found at tinyurl.com/mr3pyyxd.

EXPERIMENT
This can be a great activity to do with children. You will need a sunny day and warm location. Place two outdoor thermometers outside to come up to temperature. Then, place one thermometer inside a clear glass or plastic jar and cover it with a lid or plastic wrap. For one hour, measure the differences in temperature between the thermometers. The difference helps explain the greenhouse effect of gases trapping heat inside our atmosphere. Learn more at kidminds.org/how-to-explain-the-greenhouse-effect-to-kids-with-printables/

REDUCE
For at least one week, consider reducing the amount you drive by 10%. What changes would you have to make? What changes would your community need to make to reduce the use of cars? What alternatives are already in place?

INVESTIGATE
What happens to the waste in your community? Is the trash placed in a local landfill, burned or shipped elsewhere? Reach out to your city office, waste management service or other local agency to investigate what happens to the trash that leaves your home. If you have a local recycling program, where do recyclables go?

PRAY
Read Genesis 1:1-2:9. In what ways are human beings called to be part of creation? In what ways are human beings called to care for creation? For one week remember in your prayers the ecosystems and nonhuman nature that God has created. Pray in thanksgiving for creation. Pray, too, for farmers, rangers, ranchers and all who work closely with the land.

Choose your own action and write it here.

Choose your own action and write it here.

SESSION 2

CLIMATE CHANGE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Learning Objectives

In this session participants will:

a. Describe the impact of a hotter climate on workers.

b. Identify ways Christians are called to care for others, especially vulnerable neighbors.

c. Discuss and define the principle of solidarity from the social message.

Key Terms in This Session

Heat stress

Solidarity

Intragenerational justice

Materials Needed

- Copies of "Earth's Climate Crisis"
- Group covenant
- Screen with audio for showing video
- At least one Bible for every two participants
- Whiteboard or large paper
- Printed copies or large screen to show graphs
- Copies of "Make One Change" cards

OPENING PRAYER

Creator God, all creation reveals the loving care with which you form and nurture the world and all that is in it. We give you thanks for the beautiful web of creation and for our calling to be stewards, sharing in your work so that all creation may flourish. Be present with us today as we learn more about one another and about the responsibilities to which you call us. In your name, we pray. Amen.

SETTING THE TONE

If your group agreed on a covenant in the first session, read the covenant again and remind the group of the commitments each of you has made to the others.

Invite someone to read aloud the following excerpt from page 9 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> "It is frightening and disheartening to learn that growing numbers of farm workers and livestock are dying from heat stress in the United States and around the world. Some of us work outdoors or know others who do, and we all rely on farmers who plant, cultivate, and harvest the food we take for granted. Some of us live in states along the southern U.S. border where rapidly growing numbers of desperate people seek safety and opportunity in our country as they flee the consequences of increasing ecological devastation in their countries of origin.
>
> In addition, some who need the income from fossil fuel extraction, or who work for companies that extract that fuel to power our economy, feel vilified or disregarded. They often feel this most strongly from those who argue urgently for a just transition to clean energy and rapid decreases in greenhouse gas emissions.
>
> Others who live next to oil refineries, coal-fired power plants, natural gas production and distribution facilities, plastic manufacturers, and freeways feel disregarded, disrespected, and ignored, even as they breathe in noxious emissions from these facilities.
>
> All around us are voices crying out for help and transformation.

ASK

1. *What voices do you hear represented?*
2. *What voices are "crying out"?*

Each of these voices reminds us that something is broken in our relationships with creation and each other. On page 9 of "Earth's Climate Crisis" is a short list of points of confession. Invite the participants to read these to themselves.

ASK

1. *Which point of the confession stands out to you?*

Read the last point of the confession: "As God's people we are called to confess … our dismissive disdain for those with whom we disagree" (p. 9). This is an important reminder for the people in the group to remember their love in Christ for each other as they learn together.

Read the following excerpt from page 13 of "Earth's Climate Crisis" as a commitment to one another:

> We can agree on ends but disagree on means. Well-intentioned people can disagree about what constitutes the better part of moral action. We must deliberate and collaborate together because we cannot solve the problem individually or as a single institution. Moral deliberation and action together are essential to our identity as a church.

OPENING ACTIVITY

If participants took one of the action cards from the previous session, invite them to share their card with the group, describe what they did or learned, and post the card somewhere visible. If you can, keep the cards posted in the same place throughout the weeks of this study.

Heat in the News

In this activity small groups or pairs of participants will watch several short videos and report back to the larger group about what they learned. If your group is smaller than six, or if there are not enough devices to watch the videos in small groups, watch the video from the Union of Concerned Scientists and one other video.

Divide the group into four smaller groups or pairs. Ensure that someone from each small group or pair has a mobile device or computer capable of showing online videos.

Assign each video below to a small group. The length of each video is in parentheses.

1. Union of Concerned Scientists, "Too Hot to Work," www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8LqcEhmxYU (2:37)
2. CBS New York, "Extreme Heat Prompts Push for Federal Safety Standards for Workers," www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cUCNkvngZE (2:06)
3. Associated Press, "Climate Change: Heat Waves Become More Intense," www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCycr_kBSbE (3:12)
4. Inside Edition, "UPS Driver Collapses at Front Door From Severe Heat," www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyLXDmNcJiE (2:53)

Union of Concerned Scientists	
CBS New York	
Associated Press	
Inside Edition	

Gather the group and invite each small group or pair to share the story of the video they watched. What did they hear? What did they see? Who was the focus of the video?

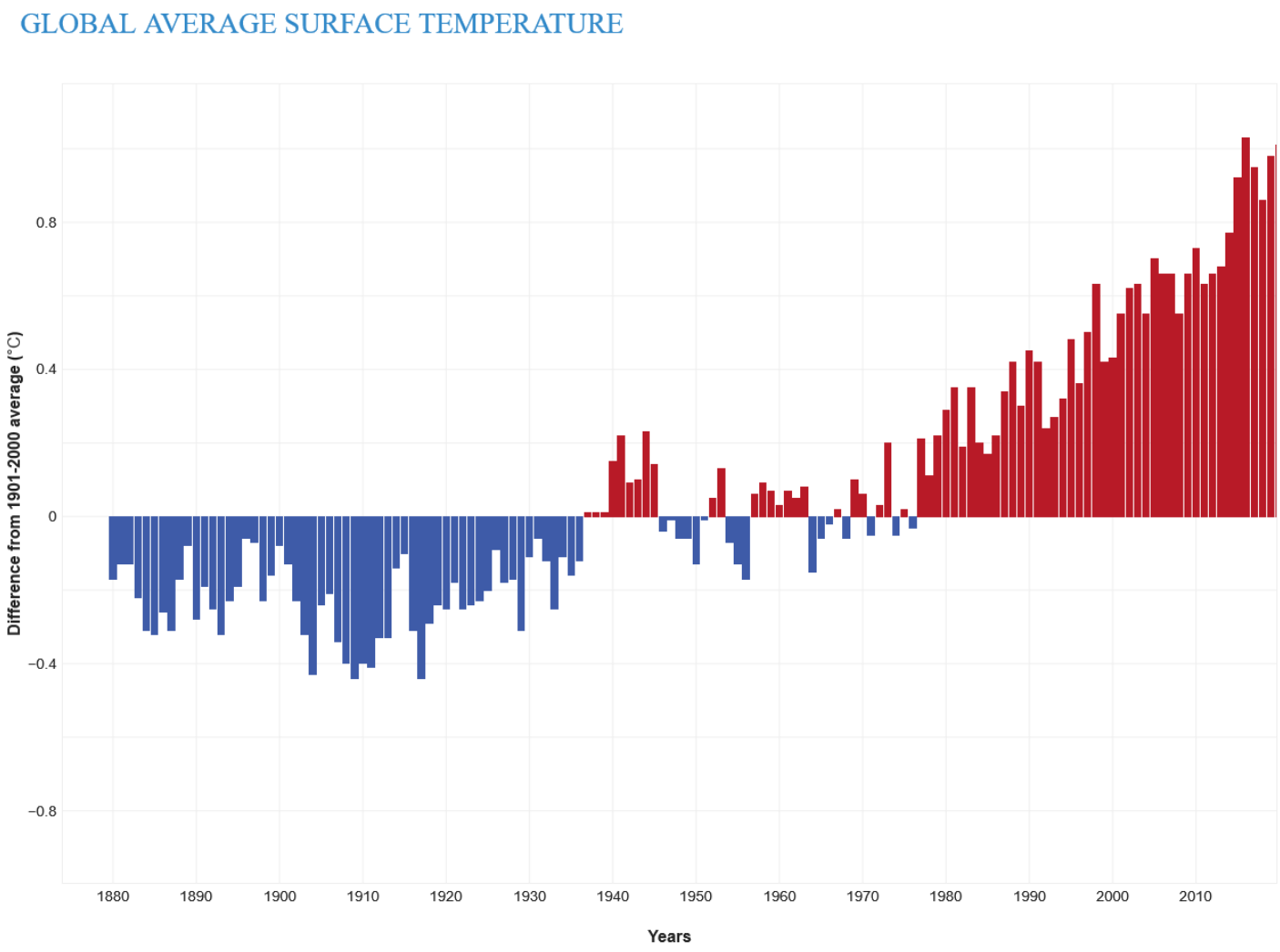
Facts About Rising Heat

If you have a screen available, show the graphs below and the graphs linked on the fact sheet below to the group.

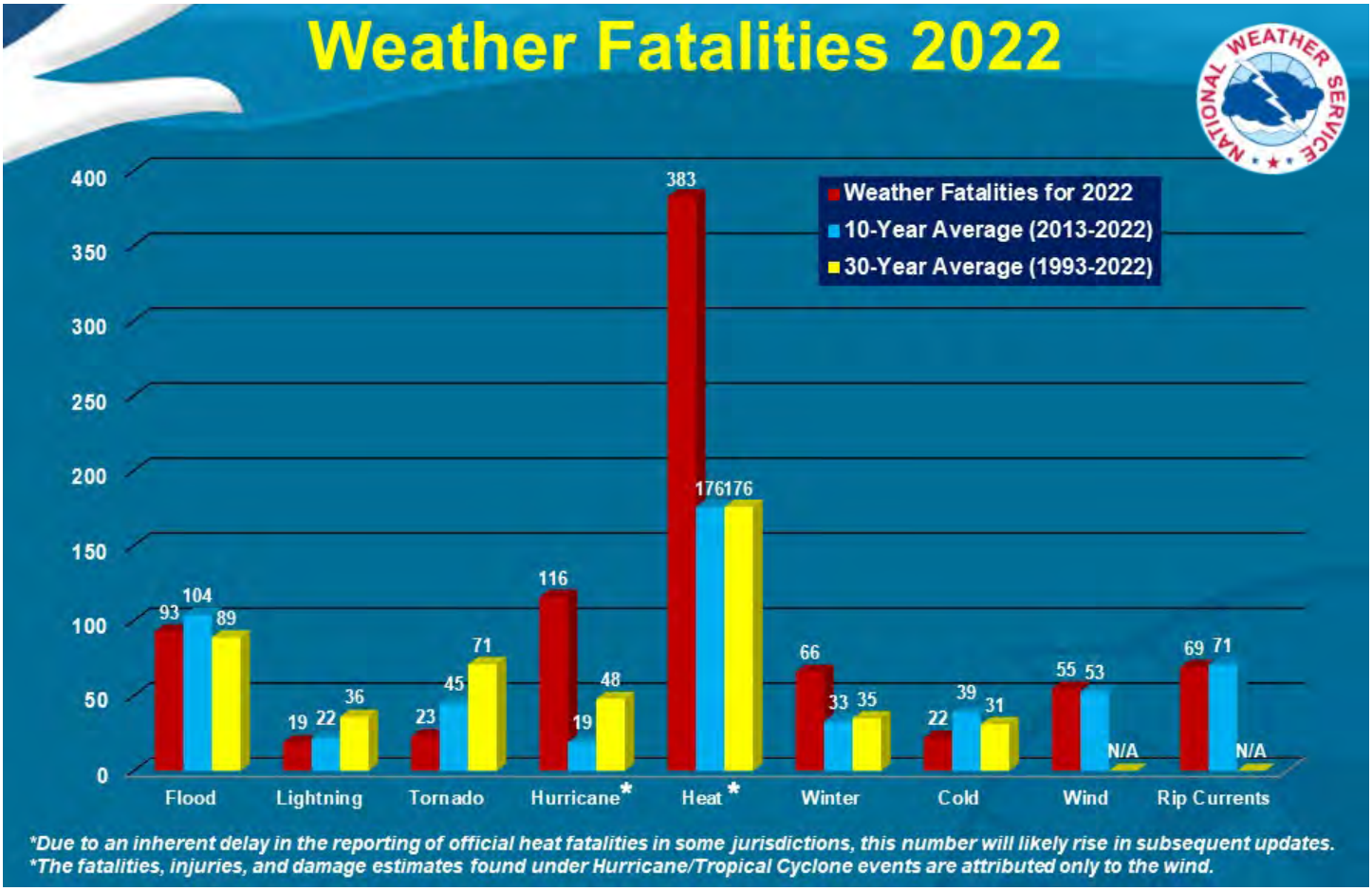
Read or invite someone to read this excerpt from page 6 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> The warmer temperatures that result from global warming also pose grave public health risks. This is especially true for those who suffer from the "heat island effect" in cities with few green spaces, those who can't afford air conditioning, those who work outdoors, or those who experience homelessness. The overwhelming majority of people who experience these negative health outcomes have low incomes and tend to be Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color.

Share the two graphs below. The first is included on page 5 of "Earth's Climate Crisis."



Yearly surface temperature from 1880-2023, compared to the 20th-century average (1901-2000). Blue bars indicate cooler-than-average years; red bars show warmer-than-average years. NOAA Climate.gov graph, based on data from the National Centers for Environmental Information. Updated versions of this graph can be found at tinyurl.com/55fxurnu.



Source: National Weather Service, "Weather Fatalities 2022" (United States only). Available at www.weather.gov/hazstat/.

ASK

1. *What do you notice in the two graphs? What might we expect for the rate of weather-related fatalities if heat continues to increase?*

Read or invite someone to read the facts below about heat.

Facts About Heat		
Between 2000 and 2016 the number of people exposed to heat waves globally increased by about 125 million (World Health Organization, 2018).	Heat waves in the United States are becoming more frequent and more intense (Environmental Protection Agency; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA]). Visit tinyurl.com/59w6fs95 to share graphs showing these increases. **Frequency:** Heat waves have increased from two per year in the 1960s to six per year in the 2010s and 2020s. **Length:** Heat waves in the U.S. are, on average, one day longer than in the 1960s. **Risk:** Heat wave seasons in the cities measured by the NOAA are 49 days longer than they were in the 1960s, increasing the risk of heat waves from less than 30 days to more than 70 days per year. **Intensity:** Heat waves in the cities measured were more intense in the 2020s than they were in the 1960s.	A 2008 study of Maricopa, Ariz., found that the risk of mortality increased 6% for each degree (Fahrenheit) that the heat index increased. (Link)

ASK

1. *Which facts about heat stand out to you?*
2. *Which groups of people are at the highest risk of health issues due to heat?* (Examples: Drivers, outdoor workers, farmers) (On a board or poster, write the groups that the participants name.)
3. *What effects might higher heat have on human health? Some examples to note include:*
    - *Hunger — Higher heat means food spoils more quickly. Livestock and crops are also threatened, which can create a lower supply and higher costs.*
    - *Heat stress — A series of conditions that can include cramping, dizziness, exhaustion and fainting.*
    - *Heat exhaustion — The body's response to loss of water and salt due to sweating. Symptoms can include headaches, nausea, thirst, dizziness and a rapid, weak pulse.*
    - *Heat stroke — The most serious of heat-related illnesses, heat stroke happens when the body can no longer regulate its temperature. Symptoms can include confusion, high body temperature, loss of consciousness and even death if not treated.*

BIBLE STUDY

Read or invite someone to read Luke 10:25-37 and Philippians 2:1-4.

ASK

1. *What do the readings communicate about caring for others?*
2. *How are people of faith called to care for neighbors?*
3. *How does your community already show care for others, especially neighbors who are not part of your worshiping community or congregation?*
4. *What other stories from the Bible depict God caring for human health?* (Examples: Stories of Jesus healing, God providing manna to Hebrews in the Exodus, God providing comfort to people who are distressed.)

SOCIAL MESSAGE STUDY

Solidarity

Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from page 11 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> **Four Moral Principles.** The 1993 ELCA social statement Caring for Creation identifies four moral principles to help us discern what justice requires in these three dimensions: participation, solidarity, sufficiency, and sustainability. These four principles, used across several ELCA social statements, are directly relevant to ethical discussions about the climate crisis.
>
> For example, the principle of *participation* stresses that all forms of life are important and that their interests must be heard and respected in decisions that affect their lives. At a minimum this means "our church may be a place where differing groups can be brought together, tough issues considered, and a common good pursued."
>
> The principle of *solidarity* highlights the kinship and interdependence of all forms of life and encourages support and assistance for those who suffer. Caring for Creation emphasizes that "this church will … be in solidarity with people who directly face environmental hazards from toxic materials, whether in industry, agriculture, or the home. We will insist on an equitable sharing of the costs of maintaining a healthy environment."
>
> The principle of *sufficiency* means "meeting the basic needs of all humanity and all creation." Insofar as the norm of sufficiency emphasizes fairness and repudiates wasteful and harmful consumption, it represents one dimension of distributive justice. "Sufficiency charges us to work with each other and the environment to meet needs without causing undue burdens elsewhere."
>
> Finally, the principle of *sustainability* values "the capacity of natural and social systems to survive and thrive together over the long term." Widespread poverty plaguing present generations is not just or sustainable; in addition, we must recognize that sustainability obviously requires "a larger scope of accountability to future generations."

On a whiteboard or large poster, write "Solidarity."

ASK

1. *What words or images come to mind when we think of solidarity?* (List each response on the board or poster.)
2. *When we think of the stories in the videos, what might solidarity look like in these situations?*
3. *How do the Bible readings demonstrate solidarity?*

In the social message one way to expand on solidarity is to think of intragenerational justice or how to fairly share the risks of climate change and the costs of adapting to or correcting environmental harms. (Refer to the list you made of groups that are most vulnerable to the health risks of higher heat.) Some people may be more vulnerable than others to the effects of climate change.

Intragenerational justice is different from intergenerational justice. Intragenerational justice is how costs and benefits are shared within a generation, that is, among people today. Intergenerational justice is about what is owed from one generation to the next, that is, between people today and future generations. We will learn more about intergenerational justice in Session 3.

As Christians, we are called to special concern for those who are most vulnerable. As human beings, we are called to act with justice. This means making sure that risks or costs are fairly distributed.

Responding to the "Climate Crisis"

Invite the group to turn to page 13 of "Earth's Climate Crisis." Find the paragraph labeled "A." This paragraph starts a section (pp. 13-17) that lists actions, priorities or principles the ELCA recommends, rejects, questions or challenges the church to pursue. Invite the group to go through the list and call out actions, priorities, principles or values that reflect the principle of solidarity or intragenerational justice. How does the item reflect solidarity or intragenerational justice?

Some examples to highlight:

- "Invite and engage all stakeholders to develop climate change solutions that are appropriate to their locale and adequate to the challenges we face" (p. 13).
- "Promote a **just transition** from fossil fuels to a clean-energy future that leaves no one behind" (p. 14).
- "Foster **restorative justice** by fully funding the United Nations Green Climate Fund and significant funds for U.S. victims of environmental injustice within 'frontline communities'" (p. 14).
- "[Reject beliefs, goals and policies that] disregard the intersectional nature of climate change and vilify those who work in the fossil fuel industry" (p. 15).
- "Join with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis" (p. 17).

You will have a chance to learn more about a just transition in Session 4.

Restorative justice holds accountable those entities, including developed nations and large industries, that are responsible for the greatest greenhouse gas emissions while directing increased resources to those communities that are most vulnerable to environmental harms. Often the communities most impacted by a changing climate have the least control over choices affecting their environment and health.

MAKE ONE CHANGE

For this activity invite the participants to consider **the printed cards on the next page** and to select one action they will take between the end of this session and the start of the next one.

CLOSING PRAYER

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, who in your self-emptying love gathered up and reconciled all creation to God the Father. Innumerable galaxies of the heavens worship you. Creatures that grace the earth rejoice in you. All those in the deepest seas bow to you in adoration. As with them we give you praise, grant that we may cherish the earth, our home, and live in harmony with this good creation, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, "Additional Prayers," "Creation," "Creation's Praise," p. 81).

MAKE ONE CHANGE

LEARN
Learn more about laws that protect workers in your state from environmental risks. Visit the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) website to view a map of legal heat protections by state: tinyurl.com/bdfa9p8n.

REDUCE
Household waste can be a source of emissions that are harmful to the environment. Think about your own household waste. How much trash do you usually produce each week? For one week try to reduce your waste by 10%. What changes would you need to make? What are the most significant sources of trash for your household?

MAP
Learn about facilities that provide shelter and safety during extreme weather in your community. In the hot summer months are there cooling stations available for people without air conditioning or without shelter? In the cold winter months are there warming stations for people without heat? What might be some ways you can share with neighbors in need information on facilities that are available?

PRAY
In your prayers this week remember to include workers, especially workers who face health risks due to the weather or air quality. Pray that God may inspire lawmakers, employers and other stakeholders to protect workers.

WRITE
What are the current laws protecting workers from weather extremes in your state or territory? Visit your state or local legislators' websites to learn their stance on workers' protections. What, if anything, do they include on their website?

CARE
If the weather is currently warm, consider offering delivery drivers, outdoor workers, postal employees and other workers bottles of water. While a bottle of water will not solve the large, complex problem of threats to workers' health, it can be an important step to showing care and providing much-needed water during a worker's shift.

MAKE
Higher temperatures can have wide-ranging impacts on land, water, soil and human health. Visit tinyurl.com/2b87m62z to learn how to make "Earth Toast" with children. This activity from Left Brain, Craft Brain is a fun, creative way to start a conversation about the effects of heat.

PROTECT
Knowing the warning signs of heat-related illnesses is important as temperatures and the risk of heat waves increase. Download an informational poster from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at tinyurl.com/4dhwa76v. In warmer months post information in your building, near food pantries or community centers, and elsewhere.

Choose your own action and write it here.

Choose your own action and write it here.

SESSION 3

THE FUTURE OF FARMING

Learning Objectives

In this session participants will:

a. Describe some of the agricultural challenges of a changing climate, including the impact of drought.

b. Identify solutions farmers are using to adapt to these challenges.

c. Define climate anxiety and the ways faith calls the church to accompany neighbors through intergenerational justice.

Key Terms in This Session

Climate anxiety

Sustainability

Intragenerational justice

Materials Needed

- Copies of "Earth's Climate Crisis"
- Group covenant (optional)
- Screen with audio for showing video
- At least one Bible for every two participants
- Whiteboard or large paper
- Printed copies or large screen to show graphs
- Copies of "Make One Change" cards

OPENING PRAYER

Creator God, all creation reveals the loving care with which you form and nurture the world and all that is in it. We give you thanks for the beautiful web of creation and for our calling to be stewards, sharing in your work so that all creation may flourish. Be present with us today as we learn more about one another and about the responsibilities to which you call us. In your name, we pray. Amen.

SETTING THE TONE

If your group agreed on a covenant in the first session, read the covenant again and remind the group of the commitments each of you has made to the others.

Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from page 13 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> We can agree on ends but disagree on means. Well-intentioned people can disagree about what constitutes the better part of moral action. We must deliberate and collaborate together because we cannot solve the problem individually or as a single institution. Moral deliberation and action together are essential to our identity as a church.

Read or invite someone to read the following points from pages 13 and 15 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> "A The ELCA calls upon individuals, agencies, organizations, corporations, and governments to pursue goals, set policies, and establish practices that:
>
> - Affirm the overwhelming scientific evidence that the current rise in emissions and related global warming has been caused by human activity.
> - Invite and engage all stakeholders to develop climate change solutions that are appropriate to their locale and adequate to the challenges we face" (p. 13).

> "B Likewise, this church rejects beliefs, goals, and policies that:
>
> - Foment political conflict through the distortion of scientific research and misrepresentation of the intentions of opponents.
> - Disregard the intersectional nature of climate change and vilify those who work in the fossil fuel industry rather than directing criticism toward those who have the power to change the systems and policies that limit or dictate our energy choices" (p. 15).

ASK

1. *What values do you hear in the quotes from the social message?*
2. *How might these values shape our action as church together?*

Read or invite someone to read the following paragraph:

> These agreements of the ELCA reflect some deep values of this church. First, our theology is a theology of the cross. The cross is an uncomfortable truth, or what St. Paul called "foolishness." Being theologians of the cross today means that we are committed to confronting the truth, even when it is uncomfortable or inconvenient. Second, Lutherans believe that scientific knowledge doesn't conflict with our beliefs about God. In fact, it allows us to more deeply appreciate how complex and wondrous God's creation is. Affirming what science is uncovering about our climate is one way of respecting the gifts of wisdom and reason that God has given human beings. And third, faith calls us to recognize that each person is created in God's image. We respect each other's dignity, are connected to one another through God and work together toward a common good, even if geographic distance or disagreement make us seem far apart.

OPENING ACTIVITY

If participants took one of the action cards from the previous session, invite them to share their card with the group, describe what they did or learned, and post the card somewhere visible. If you can, keep the cards posted in the same place throughout the weeks of this study.

On a screen with audio, choose one of the following two videos to watch:

- Columbus Dispatch, "Climate Change: How It Impacts Ohio Farmers," www.youtube.com/watch?v=38wUyX6jSI4 (3:57)
- The Nature Conservancy, "Farmers in a Changing Climate," www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdsvDWSye4Y (4:30)

ASK

List responses on a board or large poster:

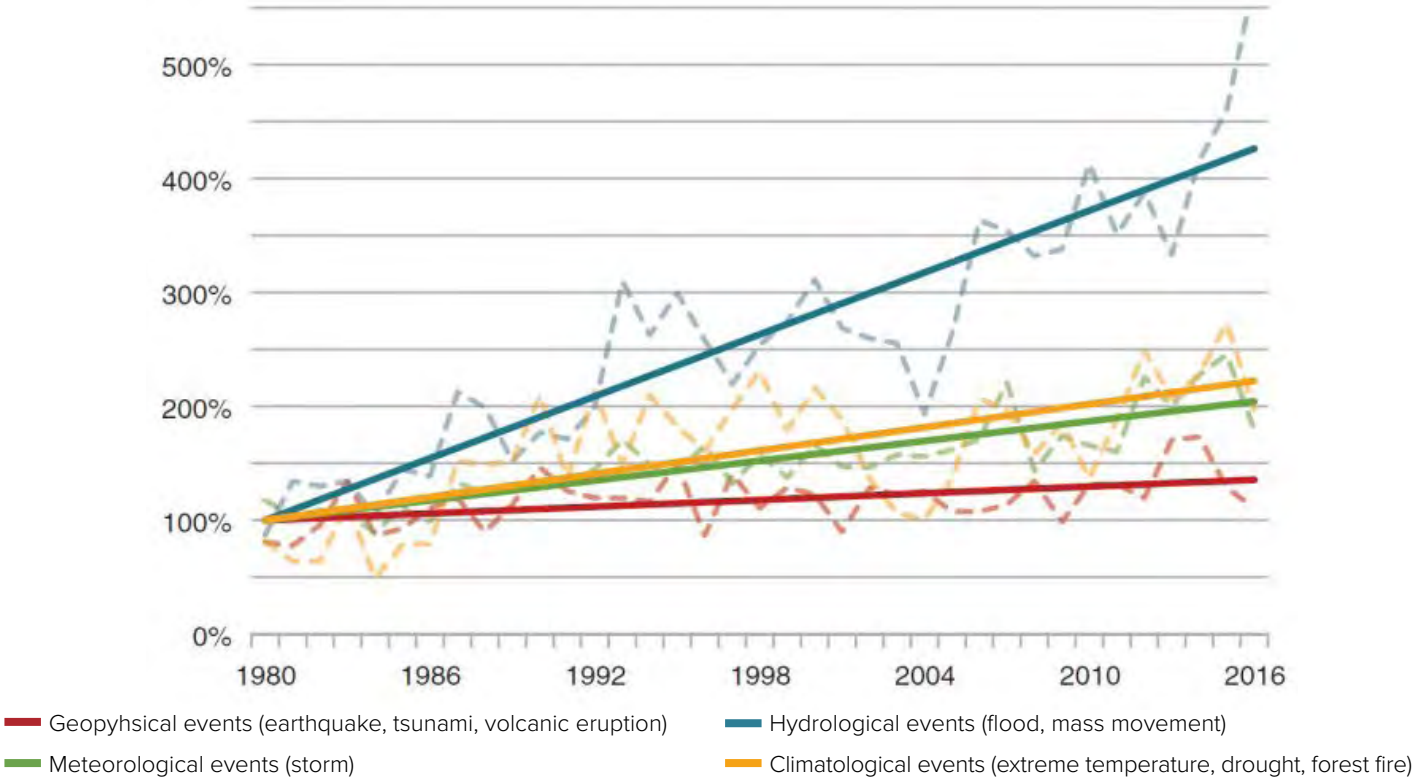
1. *What are some of the changes the farmers describe?*
2. *How do these changes make farming more challenging?*
3. *How would you describe the farmers' feelings about the future?*
4. *What does the future of farming look like for farming communities?*

Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from page 6 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

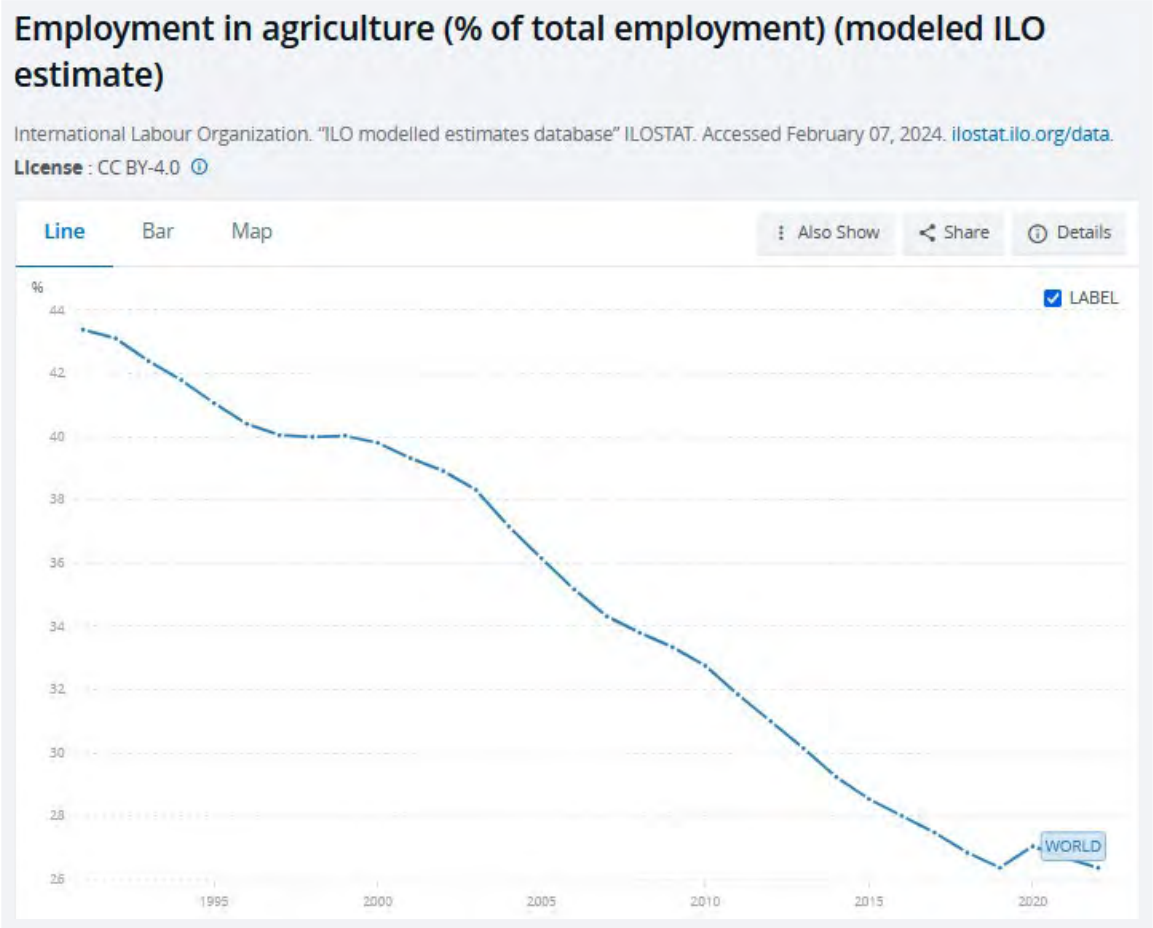
> This climate change also dramatically increases the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, hurricanes, and wildfires, with huge losses of life and property, reduced agricultural yields, and costly disruptions to society.

The earth is warming, as discussed in Session 2, so we often use the term "global warming" to describe the changes. But that term can make us look only at higher temperatures. The reality is that climate change refers to a lot of changes — higher temperatures, rising sea levels, changes in frost cycles, stronger rains, longer droughts and more. (Refer to the list of changes you wrote on the board after watching the videos.) The changes affect other food producers, including fishers, who witness fish migrating in search of cooler or cleaner waters. Share the two graphs on the next page.

1.) This first graph shows trends in the number of extreme weather events worldwide. Source: European Academies of Science Advisory Council (EASAC)



2.) Trends in people worldwide working in agriculture. Source: World Bank



ASK

1. *What do you see in the two graphs?*
2. *What might be some consequences of what they reveal?*
3. *What do the graphs communicate about the future?*

BIBLE STUDY

Read or invite someone to read 1 Kings 17:1-24.

In the story the woman has two encounters with Elijah that reveal her fear and anxiety. Read again verses 12 and 17.

ASK

1. *How did Elijah respond to the woman's fear and anxiety about the future?*
2. *Why might the woman still not trust Elijah, even after their first encounter?*
3. *What makes you anxious about the future?*
4. *What gives you hope for the future? Where do you find hope or strength?*

SOCIAL MESSAGE STUDY

Read or invite someone to read from page 16 of "Earth's Climate Crisis": "The ELCA *challenges all expressions of this church to* … provide pastoral care to those struggling with 'climate anxiety' and other related mental health concerns, especially our youngest people."

As a group, watch the video "Young Leaders — What Is Eco-Anxiety?" from the Scottish Wildlife Trust, available at tinyurl.com/433sbumu (3:11).

ASK

1. *What is climate anxiety or eco-anxiety?* (A feeling of fear, apprehension or worry about the future of the natural systems on our planet.)
2. *Where did we hear elements of climate anxiety in the farmers' stories earlier in this session?*
3. (If your group did Session 2): *Where did we hear elements of climate anxiety in the stories of workers facing increased heat?*
4. *What other worries about the future are tied to concerns about the environment?* (Examples: Concern about the economy, jobs, affordable housing.)

Climate Anxiety

Climate anxiety, or eco-anxiety, is "distress about climate change and its impacts on the landscape and human existence [that] can manifest as intrusive thoughts or feelings of distress about future disasters or the long-term future of human existence and the world, including one's own descendants." (tinyurl.com/4m3cw5vk)

Climate anxiety is real and increasingly common. A Yale University study found that about 7% of people in the U.S. experience at least mild climate change-related anxiety. Adults under age 42 are more likely to experience psychological distress related to climate change. (tinyurl.com/5n7rhesp)

Climate change anxiety is often connected to anxiety or feelings of distress about other factors impacting the future, including the availability of jobs, affordable housing and adequate, affordable health care.

Climate anxiety is not just "apocalyptic" fear about the future. It can also show up as a sense of grief for loss of traditions, familiar places or a sense of home. It can also arise from a feeling of powerlessness to effect change. (tinyurl.com/23jphtpe)

Three Thoughts About the Future

In at least three places "Earth's Climate Crisis" alludes to the duties we owe to future generations.

1. Intergenerational Justice

Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from pages 10-11 and discuss the questions below.

> What constitutes justice is not always self-evident, however. Figuring out what constitutes justice in the context of climate change is even more complicated because it involves at least three interlocking dimensions.
>
> First is the question of intragenerational justice. That is, how should society distribute fairly among present generations the burdens associated with reducing greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and grappling with the costly impacts of climate change (adaptation)? Second is the question of intergenerational justice. That is, how can we best respect and defend the interests of future generations of our and other species and the integrity of the ecological systems upon which life depends? Finally, there is the matter of intersectional justice. That is, how does climate justice intersect with historical injustices related to race, class, and gender? (pp. 10-11)

ASK

1. *Consider the woman in the Bible story. How much of her fear was because she had a child — a future generation — to worry about?*
2. *Look back at the terms the group listed for the future of farming or our own anxieties. How many deal with the fate of future generations?*
3. *What does intergenerational justice mean for us? How do we or can we seek justice for future generations?*

2. Sustainability

Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from page 11:

> Finally, the principle of sustainability values "the capacity of natural and social systems to survive and thrive together over the long term." Widespread poverty plaguing present generations is not just or sustainable; in addition, we must recognize that sustainability obviously requires "a larger scope of accountability to future generations."

Sustainability challenges us to think about how our needs can be met now and how future generations' needs can be met in the future. Sustainability also challenges us to think about the ways our needs as human beings are tied to the needs of the rest of our ecosystem. Fossil fuel use and production "has permitted remarkable advances in food production, medicine, transportation, and consumer goods" ("Earth's Climate Crisis," p. 4). However, fossil fuel use has also proved costly. For example, a coal-burning factory that creates jobs might also pollute the air in its surrounding community. So, while the jobs help residents earn income, air pollution increases the risk of illnesses such as asthma, especially in children, which in turn can lead to higher health care costs for treatment. A sustainable system would provide jobs and income while also protecting the environment and health of creation for the long term.

ASK

1. *What does sustainability mean?*
2. *How can sustainability be a form of intergenerational justice?*
3. *How does our faith call us to consider the needs of future generations?*

PLAY

Optional Short Videos on Air Pollution and Respiratory Health:

- Amy Hrdina and Jesse Kroll's short TED-Ed lesson "What's in the Air You Breathe?" at tinyurl.com/yss8srwp
- @Rubin_allergy TikTok on the health risks of pollution for children: tinyurl.com/yarwsf6r
- @ariellevking TikTok on environmental justice in New York's Asthma Alley: tinyurl.com/2eez74j3

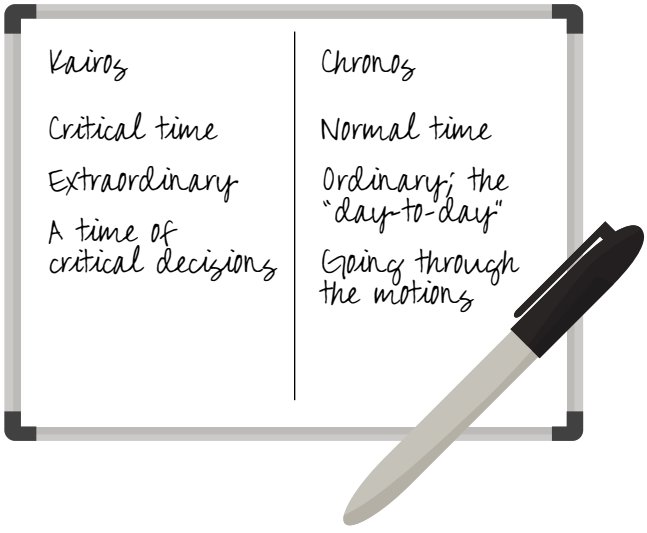
3. Kairos

Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from page 7 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), given the current rate of greenhouse gas emissions, the world will experience a global temperature rise of 2.7 degrees Celsius by the end of this century. Even if all the nations that signed the United Nations 2015 Paris Agreement follow through on their commitments, warming is still projected to reach 2.4 degrees Celsius. Recall that Earth has warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius (1.9 degrees Fahrenheit) since 1850; we face another 1.3 to 1.6 degrees Celsius (2.3-2.9 Fahrenheit) over the next seven decades, with warming projected to continue increasing at the end of the 21st century.
>
> Justifiably alarmed by this information, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres declared the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report a "code red for humanity." In a statement issued with the report he wrote: "The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable: greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk."
>
> From a standpoint of faith, it is reasonable to conclude that the climate crisis is, indeed, a kairos moment.

The fears, worries and concerns that we have heard in the videos from sessions 1-3 reflect that we are in a **kairos** *(KY-rohs)* moment.

On a whiteboard or large poster, create two columns. Title the column on the left "Kairos" and the column on the right "Chronos" *(CROW-nohs)* Then, list the differences under each heading.



Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from page 8 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> The ancient Greeks had two words for "time." *Chronos*, or regular time, referred to our usual sense of time as ordinary, quantitative, and sequential. *Kairos*, or critical time, in contrast, referred to an unusual moment that is extraordinary, qualitative, and decisive. In the Greek New Testament, authors use *kairos* "to emphasize a special moment of time when God visits [God's] people to offer them a unique opportunity for repentance and conversion, for change and decisive action. It is a time of judgment. It is a moment of truth, a crisis."
>
> In the New Testament the word *kairos* most often refers to a decisive moment when all were called to repent, believe in the gospel, and follow Jesus. In Christian theology, however, the concept is not confined to this salvific context. In other decisive moments, such as the Reformation period (1517-1580), Christians have used "kairos" to name God's urgent call for decisive action in history.

ASK

1. *What other differences between kairos and chronos might we list?* (Examples: Kairos moments are rare, while chronos is common time; in Kairos time, we cannot just go through the motions; even not deciding has consequences.)
2. *What are some moments of critical decision that you have experienced? These might be times when a decision had to be made about employment, the health care of a loved one, moving to a new area or other critical moments.*
3. *The ELCA has named the climate crisis as a kairos moment. How are people of faith called to respond to this time of critical decision?*
4. *One of the ways people of faith respond to the future is with an "active hope." What steps were the farmers in the videos taking to be actively hopeful in the face of significant challenges? How are the same people impacted by the problems of climate change also part of the solution?* (See sidebar for video suggestions.)

Farmers face serious consequences of climate change, but they are also important agents of change in protecting the environment. Many farmers have adopted methods of farming that protect the soil, air and water for future generations. The short videos below showcase ways farmers are planting the seeds of long-term sustainability. As time allows, share one or more videos in your group. How are farmers part of the solution to the climate crisis?

PBS NewsHour, "How Farmers Are Using Cover Crops to Absorb Carbon Emissions" (4:12), **tinyurl.com/463jesap**

World Bank, "No-till Agriculture Prevents Soil Erosion" (3:04), **tinyurl.com/yaxunmv4**

Illinois Farm Families, "A Climate Change Solution: Carbon Sequestration" (3:26), **tinyurl.com/y9jm4avh**

SBN Detroit, "Urban Farming in Detroit: Cultivating Community, Sustainability and Regeneration" (9:16), **tinyurl.com/mst544ft**

Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from page 18 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> We believe God yearns and strives for Earth's ecological well-being, and we trust that "God's faithfulness alone sustains the Church and renews our faith, hope, and love." As God's people we address the climate crisis with active hope rather than paralyzing despair. "Captured by hope, we proclaim that God has made peace with all things through the blood of the cross (Colossians 1:15-20), and that the Spirit of God, 'the giver of life,' renews the face of the earth."

MAKE ONE CHANGE

For this activity invite the participants to consider **the printed cards on the next page** and to select one action they will take between the end of this session and the start of the next one.

CLOSING PRAYER

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, who in your self-emptying love gathered up and reconciled all creation to God the Father. Innumerable galaxies of the heavens worship you. Creatures that grace the earth rejoice in you. All those in the deepest seas bow to you in adoration. As with them we give you praise, grant that we may cherish the earth, our home, and live in harmony with this good creation, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, "Additional Prayers," "Creation," "Creation's Praise," p. 81).

MAKE ONE CHANGE

READ

Read the ELCA's 1993 social statement Caring for Creation (12 pages), available at tinyurl.com/2fcbjyfk. What are some of the reasons people of faith are called to care for creation? What are some of the actions the ELCA suggests taking?

WATCH

Watch the videos on air pollution and respiratory health listed below. What are some of the links between pollution and conditions such as asthma? What are some of the facts Arielle King cites as examples of environmental racism?

TED-Ed, "What's in the Air You Breathe?" at tinyurl.com/yss8srwp

@Rubin_allergy on the health risks of pollution for children: tinyurl.com/yarwsf6r

@ariellevking on environmental justice: tinyurl.com/2eez74j3

CARE

Learn more about climate anxiety. Read Rebecca Randall's article for Grist on spiritual care and climate anxiety at tinyurl.com/bddap534. Look over the climate anxiety sidebar on page 21. How might your congregation provide pastoral or spiritual care for people experiencing climate anxiety?

CHANGE

Challenge yourself and your household to avoid buying convenience-packaged fruits and vegetables between now and the next session. Convenience packaging, such as plastic tubs of berries, selected lettuce or peppers in plastic bags and pre-weighed bags of cherries or oranges, contribute both to plastic use and food waste, two drivers of climate change. Learn more at tinyurl.com/3u4n3zc4.

PRAY

This week, pray for farmers and food producers experiencing the impacts of climate change. Pray for their safety and their livelihoods and give thanks for the ways they are working in active hope for the future.

LEARN

The ELCA's Corporate Social Responsibility work provides investment screens, issue papers and purchasing guides based on the ELCA's social teachings. These resources provide guidance to ensure that money is spent in ways that align with ethical values. Visit tinyurl.com/3uty896a and check out some of the issue papers or screens related to the environment.

WORSHIP

With just one more session left in this study guide, talk with leaders, volunteers or staff in your worshiping community. Are there worship services already planned that focus on Earth Day, creation care or the environment? If not, talk together about planning a worship service focused on creation care. Visit Lutherans Restoring Creation at tinyurl.com/mr6w7ybb for some ideas.

TOUR

Take a virtual tour of Malawi through the link at tinyurl.com/5y3mspjj. This virtual tour will introduce you to projects of the Evangelical Lutheran Development Service of Malawi and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi. Look for ways the projects and the communities were impacted by Tropical Cyclone Freddy in 2023. Look, too, for ways that the communities in Malawi have adapted to climate change and continue toward the future with active hope.

SHARE

On social media, in your community's newsletter or even in a temple talk during worship, share stories or learnings from your time using this study guide. Invite others to think about their own relationships to God and creation. Are there people interested in starting a creation care team or doing another study on creation care?

Choose your own action and write it here.

SESSION 4

ACTIVE HOPE AND AGENTS OF CHANGE

Learning Objectives

In this session participants will:

a. Describe some of the climate-related impacts on communities' understanding of "home."

b. Identify intersections between climate change and justice issues.

c. Identify steps worshiping communities can take toward a just transition for all.

Key Terms in This Session

Climate refugees

Participation

Intersectional justice

Just transition

Materials Needed

- Copies of "Earth's Climate Crisis"
- Group covenant (optional)
- Screen with audio for showing video
- At least one Bible for every two participants
- Whiteboard or large papers

OPENING PRAYER

Creator God, all creation reveals the loving care with which you form and nurture the world and all that is in it. We give you thanks for the beautiful web of creation and for our calling to be stewards, sharing in your work so that all creation may flourish. Be present with us today as we learn more about one another and about the responsibilities to which you call us. In your name, we pray. Amen.

SETTING THE TONE

If your group agreed on a covenant in the first session, read the covenant again and remind the group of the commitments each of you has made to the others.

Remind the group of the discussion of a "kairos moment" from Session 3. In a kairos moment we are required to take decisive action. Read or invite someone to read the following quote from the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., from page 17 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. … Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words, Too late.

Read or invite someone to read this excerpt from page 15 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> "B. Likewise, this church *rejects beliefs, goals, and policies that* … adopt a self-serving or defeatist perspective since these perpetuate the unjust status quo and avoid moral responsibility for climate change."

The quote from King reminds us that there are times when we must act. The ELCA has identified now as one of those times, a kairos moment when decisive action must be taken to address the climate crisis. In previous sessions we learned from stories of people impacted by changes in the climate. In this session we remember King's challenge of the "fierce urgency of now" and the ELCA's rejection of perspectives that accept defeat. The challenges are urgent, but there is much that can be done.

OPENING ACTIVITY

If participants took one of the action cards from the previous session, invite them to share their card with the group, describe what they did or learned, and post the card somewhere visible. Since this is the last session, invite the group to review the activities they did. What were the most meaningful? What did they learn?

On a board or large poster, write the key terms for this session: "climate refugee," "intersectional justice," "just transition" and "participation."

Divide the participants into pairs and invite them to discuss with one another the questions below. After enough time for each partner to share, invite them to return to the large group and report on what they discussed.

Small-group questions:

- What is "home" for you?
- Have you ever moved? What was that experience like?
- How does where you are shape who you are? How are we affected by the land, community and ecosystem where we live?

Read the definition of climate refugees from Cambridge English Dictionary: 'Someone who is forced to leave their home country or area because climate change has made it impossible for them to live or work there."

Climate migration is happening around the world, including in the United States, though some communities are at higher risk of needing to leave their homes. Often, the threat comes from water — either too much, in the case of flooding or rising seas, or too little, in the case of extended drought.

ASK

1. *Where do we find stories of people fleeing natural disasters in the Bible?* (Examples: Noah and the flood, Abram going to Egypt to escape famine in Genesis 12, Ruth and her family migrating between Moab and Judah due to famine.)

Many of the stories of climate-related migration in the Bible concern water. Water in the Bible is often a symbol of death. The flood in Noah's time took the lives of countless people and animals, for example. Yet water in the Bible is also a symbol of life and hope. The waters of baptism welcome us into new life (Romans 6:3-4). Jesus promises living water (John 7:37-39). Ezekiel is shown a vision of a river of life that provides for all (Ezekiel 47).

Have a screen ready to share the video below.

For people who live in coastal regions, water is a powerful reality and often a threat to lives and homes. Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from pages 5-6 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> Ice sheets in the Arctic and on Greenland are melting at an accelerating rate. At the same time, glaciers are melting and retreating almost everywhere around the world, which jeopardizes drinking water sources for nearly two billion people.
>
> This increase in freshwater melting, combined with the expansion of seawater due to warmer temperatures, is also raising global sea levels at an accelerating rate. These rising seas imperil one billion people who live less than 10 meters above current high tide lines, and this will likely produce millions of climate refugees.

ASK

1. *What are some of the reasons the social message gives for seas rising?* (Examples: Glaciers melting, seas expanding.)
2. *How do fossil fuel emissions contribute to these rising seas?* (Examples: Contribute to warmer temperatures, which cause glacial melting and warm-water expansion in seas.)

Together, watch the video "Voices From a Vanishing Island" from the New Orleans Times-Picayune at tinyurl.com/3aaxxbs8 (3:10).

ASK

1. *What do you hear and see in the video?*
2. *How did the people feel about leaving?*
3. *How might their sense of "home" be changed by their experiences?*

Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from pages 9-10 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> As God's people, we are called to confess:
>
> - Our failure to consider the interests of future generations.
> - Our disregard for the victims of environmental justice.
> - Our insufficient concern for the welfare of other species facing extinction.
> - Our personal complicity through high-carbon lifestyles.
> - Our dismissive disdain for those with whom we disagree.

The ELCA teaches that, though sin has personal dimensions, "sin is … also collective or communal. Sinful humans create structures, organizations, and societies that perpetuate sin, sometimes unintentionally."

ASK

1. *How do we collectively benefit from fossil fuel use?* (Examples: Jobs, cars and transportation, cheaper manufacturing, etc.)
2. *What are some of the costs of fossil fuel use?*
3. *Think of the videos we have watched in the previous sessions. Who pays the majority of the costs or faces the highest risks?*

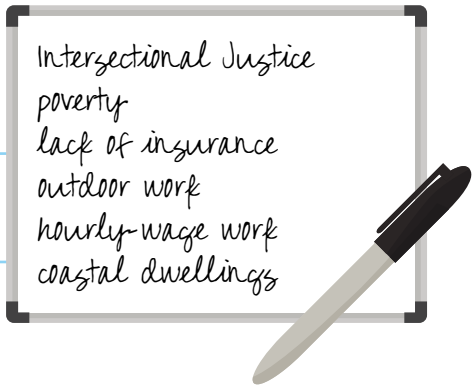
On a board or large poster, write the words “intersectional justice.”

One of the three forms of justice that the ELCA lifts up in the social message is **intersectional justice**. Intersectional justice describes how the unequal distribution of climate risks intersects with other inequalities, such as racism, sexism or classism. Share the facts below with the group.

Intersectional Justice and Climate

- Coastal dwellers are more at risk from rising seas and land erosion. In the United States coastal dwellers tend to earn lower incomes and are disproportionately people of color. In 2017, 94.7 million people in the U.S. lived in coastline regions. Over 52% of them were people of color, even though only 39.3% of people in the U.S. as a whole are people of color (U.S. Census Bureau, tinyurl.com/mrxuxyx2).
- People with incomes below the poverty threshold in the U.S. and worldwide are less likely to have resilient housing. They are also less likely to have flood insurance yet more likely to live in flood zones than people with higher incomes. (Federal Emergency Management Administration, tinyurl.com/msrcxkpv).
- Globally, people with incomes below the poverty threshold are more likely to work in climate-dependent industries such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. This increases the risk to their livelihoods in a disproportionate way (International Monetary Fund, tinyurl.com/2p9vyjy8).
- In the United States people with incomes below the poverty threshold are more likely to work outdoors in industries such as construction and farming. This increases risks to their health and safety through excessive heat and air pollution. This also increases the risk that they may lose wages due to extreme storms, since they are more likely to be paid hourly wages than salaries. At the same time they are less likely to be able to afford health insurance. (tinyurl.com/yxc3me4k)

On the board, under the heading “Intersectional Justice,” write the following terms: “poverty,” “lack of insurance,” “outdoor work,” “hourly-wage work” and “coastal dwellings.”



ASK

1. *How does each of these intersect with the others and increase the risks from climate change?*

Disparities in wages, affordability of insurance, job types and geography intersect to put some people at higher risk than others, both in the U.S. and around the world. Seeking intersectional justice means looking at the ways to address lack of access to resilient homes, reliable wages, workplace safety and affordable insurance. That might mean creating subsidies for building resilient homes, protecting workers’ rights to water and rest breaks, or providing low-cost insurance for flooding or other disasters.

BIBLE STUDY

Read or invite someone to read John 1:43-46.

ASK

1. *How do you think people in Jesus' time viewed Nazareth?*
2. *What was Philip's response to Nathaniel's view of Nazareth?*

Nazareth is mentioned in the Bible only in relation to Jesus. No battles occurred there. No major historical events happened before Jesus' birth. The town isn't even mentioned before it is named in the gospels. Archaeological discoveries and historical analysis suggest that the reason Nazareth is not mentioned is because it was rather small, insignificant and remote from larger cities. It wasn't the kind of place people paid much attention to.

Read or invite someone to read John 6:41-42.

The people did not expect Jesus or Nazareth to be very important. They certainly did not expect to find God at work in either of them. Jesus, like the town he came from, seemed insignificant. He wasn't descended from royalty, and his parents were common people. Yet both Jesus and Nazareth would come to play monumentally important roles in history.

ASK

1. *In what ways do our assumptions or prejudgments make us like Nathaniel?*
2. *In what ways does our faith help us recognize God at work, as did Philip?*

Together, watch this video (10:03) from the Rev. Anna Silco and ELCA Young Adult Ministry describing the community in Shishmaref, Alaska, **tinyurl.com/mvjjekzy**. Shishmaref is a city on Sarichef Island. Warming seas and a lack of ice are causing the island to erode, threatening the homes of residents of Shishmaref.

ASK

1. *What did the documentarian expect to find in Shishmaref? What did he find?*
2. *What are some of the traditions that might help the community face climate-related challenges?*
3. *How does our perspective change when we focus on the ways God is at work through people rather than just on the challenges they face?*
4. *How might viewing places such as Shishmaref or Isle de Jean Charles through Philip's perspective ("Come and see") be different from viewing them through Nathaniel's perspective ("Can anything good come out of Nazareth?")?*

A key step in approaching the future with active hope is recognizing the many ways that God is at work. Rather than view workers, farmers or communities at risk as merely victims, active hope invites us to recognize God at work. To be active in our hope is to proclaim, "Come and see!"

SOCIAL MESSAGE STUDY

Read or invite someone to read the following excerpts from "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> [T]he principle of participation stresses that all forms of life are important and that their interests must be heard and respected in decisions that affect their lives. At a minimum this means "our church may be a place where differing groups can be brought together, tough issues considered, and a common good pursued" (p. 11).
>
> The principle of *participation* authorizes this church's advocacy — speaking alongside and with those who are marginalized — including for creation itself, since it has no voice in the halls of power. This happens when "members speak out individually or as part of activist groups. It also includes the public witness coordinated by the advocacy offices of the ELCA or of Lutheran partner nongovernmental organizations." Members of our church have a moral obligation to be engaged in setting the direction of our country as we live out our vocation to care for God's creation (p. 13).

ASK

1. *What does participation mean?*
2. *Why would it be important for the people in places such as Shishmaref or Isle de Jean Charles to be part of the solution?*
3. *What can we learn by recognizing God at work among our neighbors, including neighbors threatened by climate change?*

Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from pages 13-14 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> A. The ELCA calls upon individuals, agencies, organizations, corporations, and governments *to pursue goals, set policies, and establish practices that…* Promote a just transition from fossil fuels to a clean-energy future that leaves no one behind, through public investments in economic development and job retraining programs.

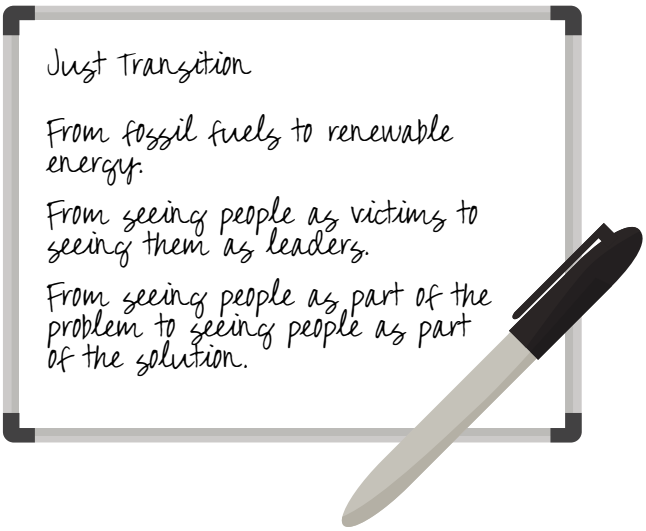
Fossil fuel use pervades our lives. It is how we get from place to place. It is how we heat our homes and cook our food. It creates jobs in energy, agriculture, manufacturing, mining and a host of other industries.

But the consequences of fossil fuel use also threaten the health and safety of people all over the world, including those same workers (such as the farmers, drivers and construction workers whose stories were shared in earlier sessions). Pollution and climate change also threaten the health of people who don't benefit from those industries and people who don't have access to electricity, transportation or jobs created by fossil fuels.

On board or large poster, write the heading "Just Transition."

A just transition represents at least three shifts (write each under the heading):

- From fossil fuels to renewable energy.
- From seeing people as victims to seeing them as leaders.
- From seeing people as part of the problem to seeing people as part of the solution.



Together, watch the video "What Is a Just Energy Transition?" from UNDP Climate (1:28) at tinyurl.com/5j9bkkr5.

ASK

1. *What elements of a just transition did you hear named in the video?* (Write responses on board or poster.)
2. *How might a just transition respond to people's fears or concerns about change?*

Read or invite someone to read the following excerpt from page 18 of "Earth's Climate Crisis":

> We believe God yearns and strives for Earth's ecological well-being, and we trust that "God's faithfulness alone sustains the Church and renews our faith, hope, and love." As God's people we address the climate crisis with active hope rather than paralyzing despair. "Captured by hope, we proclaim that God has made peace with all things through the blood of the cross (Colossians 1:15-20), and that the Spirit of God, 'the giver of life,' renews the face of the earth."

For people of faith, a just transition also signals another shift. (Write on board or poster: "From fear to hope.")

PLAY

If time allows, watch one or more of the following Youth Climate Stories from "Our Climate, Our Future," an online interactive video series:

- "Permian Climate Bomb in Texas" (3:48), tinyurl.com/y6u7ksf7.
- "Regenerative Agriculture in Illinois" (4:05), tinyurl.com/4mvhfddt.
- "Climate Action in Ohio" (2:51), tinyurl.com/47d74w8w.

MAKE ONE CHANGE

Divide the participants into groups or pairs and invite each group or pair to review Section D (pp. 16-17) of "Earth's Climate Crisis." As they review the points in the section, ask them to consider which of the actions their worshiping community might be willing to take. Some suggestions include:

Sign a congregational commitment with Lutherans Restoring Creation. Learn more at tinyurl.com/3354bm5r.	
Become a "cool congregation" through Interfaith Power and Light. Learn more at tinyurl.com/45342hmt.	
Set up a pastoral concerns team to minister and care for people in your community affected by heat, cold or other weather extremes.	
Host a screening of a documentary film such as Kiss the Ground (kissthegroundmovie.com/).	
Attend a congregational climate care training through Creation Justice Ministries. Learn more at www.creationjustice.org/careforclimate.html.	
Host a learning event with a local expert to learn about your community's ecosystem.	
Learn about environmental policies through ELCA Witness in Society (ELCA.org/advocacy).	
Host a worship service on creation or creation care. For ideas visit tinyurl.com/mr6w7ybb.	
With your worshiping community's financial leadership, learn about your community's current investments. Which investments support environmentally harmful industries or companies?	
Share the stories and learnings from your time together on your worshiping community's social media accounts or in newsletters. Talk with worship leaders about the possibility of sharing reflections as short talks during worship services.	
If your worshiping community has space, post the pictures from Session 1 and invite each participant to write a short paragraph reflecting on the picture they chose and what they have learned during your time together.	

CLOSING PRAYER

Use the prayer below or invite each participant to offer their own prayer petition.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, who in your self-emptying love gathered up and reconciled all creation to God the Father. Innumerable galaxies of the heavens worship you. Creatures that grace the earth rejoice in you. All those in the deepest seas bow to you in adoration. As with them we give you praise, grant that we may cherish the earth, our home, and live in harmony with this good creation, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, "Additional Prayers," "Creation," "Creation's Praise," p. 81).

APPENDIX

SAMPLE GROUP COVENANT

In order to promote a healthy and faith-filled discussion, we covenant together that:

We will be honest and transparent about what we are feeling and not minimize the feelings of others. Whenever possible, we will use “I” language, through which we will show we are speaking for ourselves and not assuming the thoughts of others.

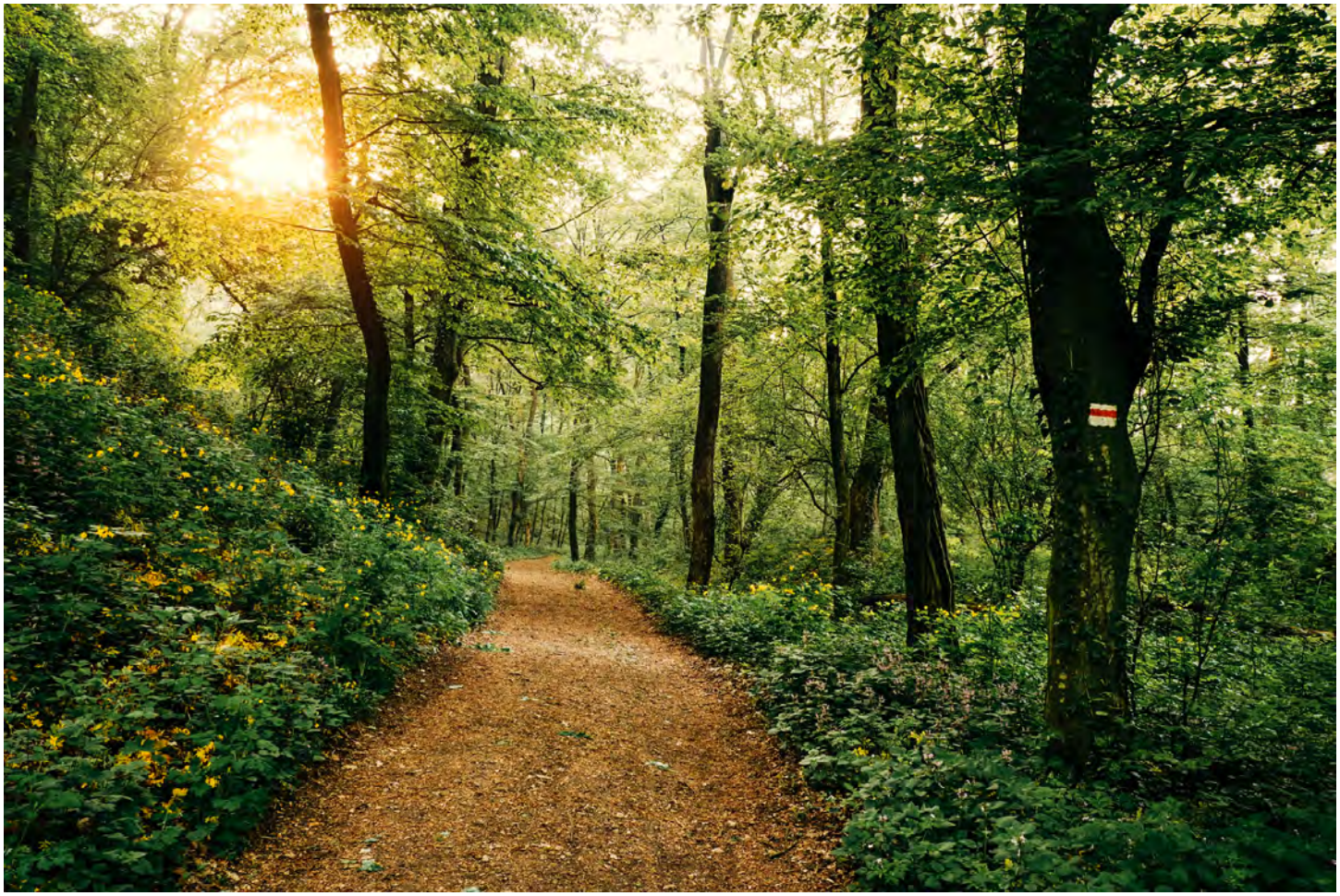
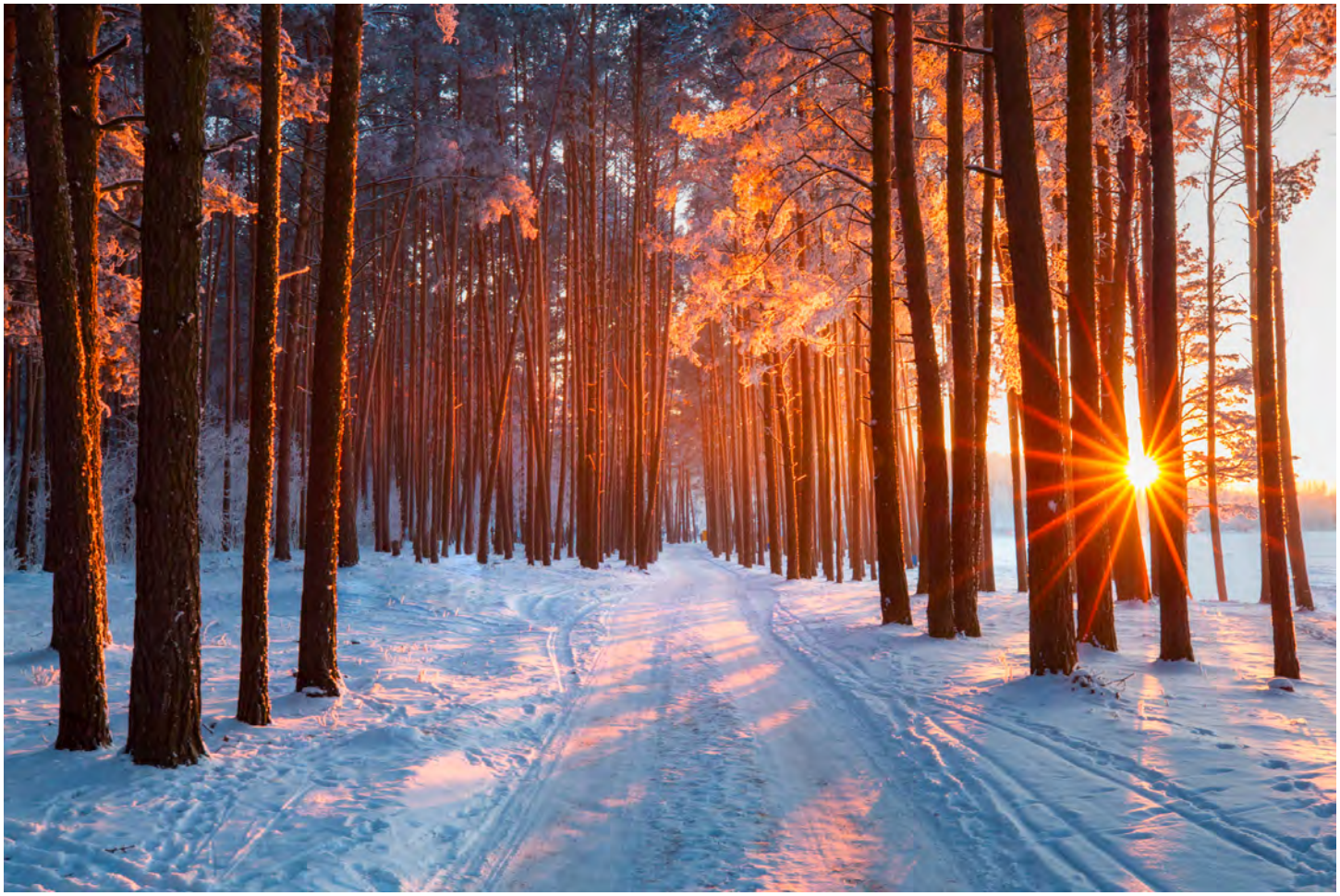
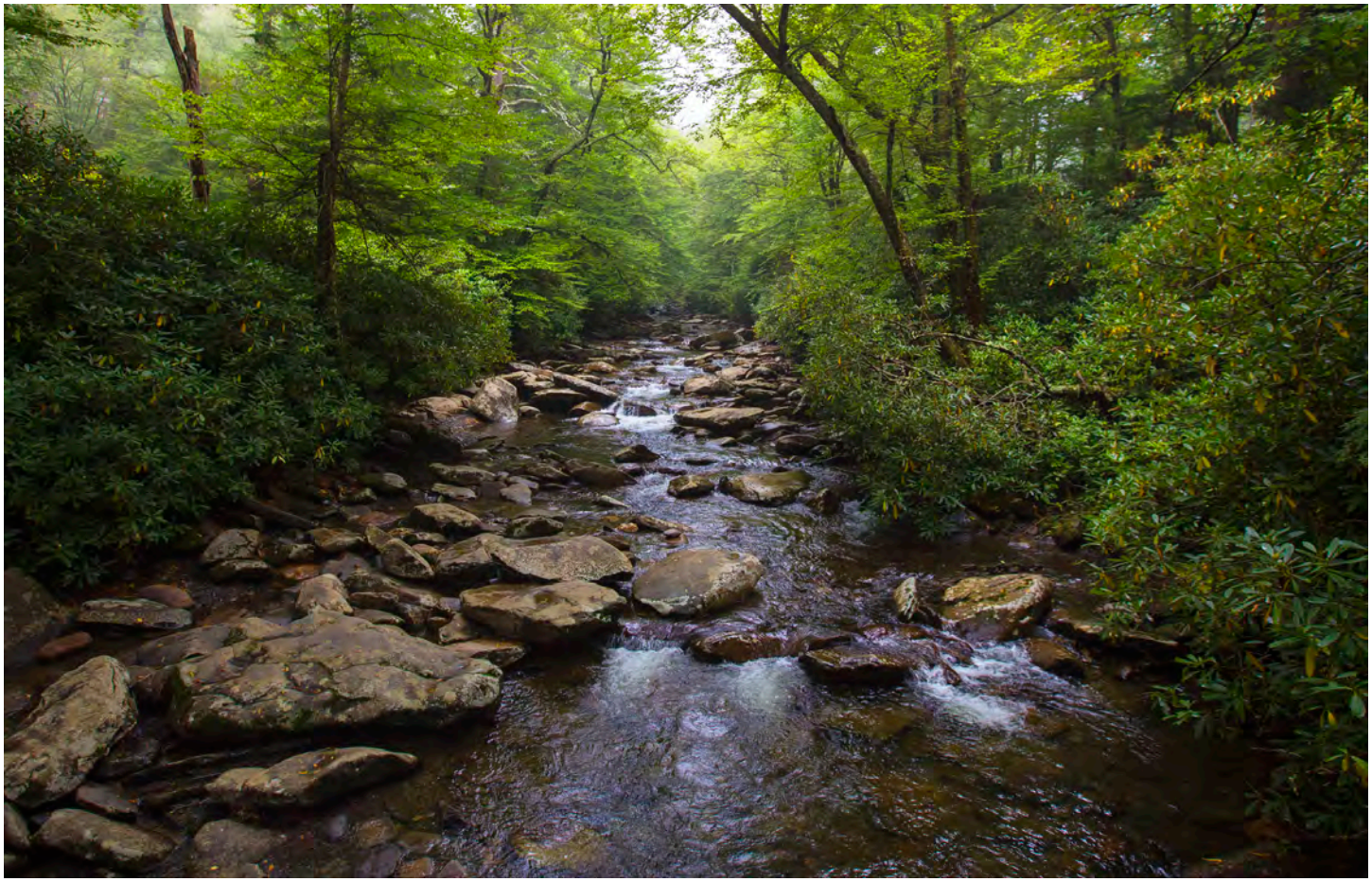
We will ask clarifying questions when we are feeling reactive or defensive.

We will prioritize the perspectives of people directly affected by a particular issue and affirm that intense emotions such as anger or fear are appropriate responses to suffering.

We acknowledge that healthy, faith-filled discussions do not mean that we all must agree. We agree to seek understanding of one another rather than agreement when there are differences in perspectives and opinions.

We will seek to interpret each person’s actions and words in the best possible light.

We will seek greater understanding of questions and points of disagreement through both careful listening and study between sessions.

SESSION 1: OPENING ACTIVITY PICTURES

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