

LUTHERAN OUTDOOR MINISTRIES CENTER
Oregon, Illinois

WHAT DID NOAH DO ABOUT TRASH?
A Theology of Garbage
A Two Night Retreat

Bethany Lutheran Church
Batavia, Illinois
October 16-18, 1992

EXPECTATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Experience several worship opportunities, including Sunday Eucharist.
2. Bible study to reflect on stewardship of creation and practical things Christians can do to be care for the earth.
3. Consider the simple and hard decisions regarding human impact on the earth and how Christians can support each other.
4. Work on a plan of action and make a commitment to it.
5. Have group recreation and free time.

	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
M O R N I N G		8:15 Breakfast 9:00 Devotions "Mosquitoes" BS/LE's "Who Shut the Door?" "Cycles and Streams"	8:15 Breakfast 9:00 BS/LE "Creation Together" Eucharist "Sauntering Service"
A F T E R N O O N		12:15 Lunch Aft. BS/LE "Image of God Revisited" Apple Pressing 5:30 Supper	12:15 Dinner Aft. Departure
E V E N I N G	7:00 Arrival & Settle In Get Acquainted Contract "What Did Noah Do about Trash?" Devotions Snacks	6:30 BS/LE's "Roots of the Problem" "Jesus, the Re-con-cycler" Devotions Snacks	

DETAILS

FRIDAY

Materials

GET ACQUAINTED	Each person selects an animal they thought was on the ark, the one that to them would be the more or most interesting, and why. Also give name.	
CONTRACT	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discuss Expectations2. Review Schedule3. Give House Rules	Schedule for each person
INTRODUCTORY SONG	Sing "Rise and Shine." People may like to do actions. Interrupt at end of song with, "What do you mean, "Everything was hunky dory?"	Song Sheet
DISCUSSION	Ask: How do you visualize all these critters in an enclosed vessel and what life would be like? (Where does the word "head" come from naval parlance?)	
REVIEW "THE FLOOD"	The Revis' piece. (Stoat = Weasel) If necessary tell people the Noah story found in Genesis 5:32-9:28.	Song Sheet Bible
ORGANIZE INTO SMALL GROUPS	Participants organize into three groups: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Organize according to the animals selected earlier.2. Each group should have related animals in some way and be the same size.3. Do it without talking.	
IN SMALL GROUPS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Individuals discuss their reasons why they joined the particular group. THEN2. Discuss what they think Noah did with trash.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. What trash did Noah have?b. What did he do about it?	
LARGE GROUP SHARING AND DISCUSSION	Report back to large group. Write responses on newsprint. Items that should be mentioned are: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Biodegradable packaging (precycling)2. Limited population3. Recycling4. Bioregionalism. (Live within means of system.)5. Fuel6. In reality: probably threw trash overboard.	Newsprint Board Masking Tape Magic Marker

Materials

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute work sheet (one per group) and read off the following questions for each of the columns. Give time to fill in each one and allow people to talk about their responses.

Four Column Work Sheet

Imagine you are going through your wastebasket picking each item from it.

Column 1 - List everything you would find.

Column 2 - Review the list in Column 1 and list beside each item why it was thrown away.

Column 3 - Review Columns 1 and 2 and indicate what will become of each item in the trash.

Column 4 - Review the three columns and discuss what you might have done differently.

LARGE GROUP REPORT BACK

Ask people to share items in each column. (Make notes on newsprint.) Newsprint, etc.

1. Why do we throw things away?

Necessity	Community expectations
Convenience	Education
Comfort	Fun
Sanitation	Sacred
Health	Given to a person
Protection	No reason at all
Appearance	Communication
Unwanted	Spoiled/dirty
Fear	Outlived usefulness
Hide things from others	
Indifference (don't really care)	
No trust in others	
Help space be sacred	
Unacceptable to culture	
Shame	

2. What will become of items in trash?

3. What might you do differently?

SMALL GROUPS DISCUSSION

Distribute Garbage Can with percentages with the following questions on the back. Ask the small groups to ponder answers to these questions.

Garbage Can Sheets with Questions on back

1. What does your trash and how you deal with it say about you?

2. Does it tell anything about what is important to you?

3. What does your trash and your dealing with it say about what you believe about the world?

4. Does it say anything about what you believe about God or what your God is like?

Materials

REPORT BACK TO LARGE GROUP	Discuss: 1. What kind of answers were given? 2. Was there anything revealing about what was said? 3. Were you comfortable or uncomfortable about what you heard and said?	
BIBLE STUDY OF MATTHEW 19:16-26	A. Read Matthew 19:16-26 and answer the following questions: 1. Why did the rich man grieve? 2. What did the man cherish? 3. Who or what, would you say, is this man's god? B. Remind people that a person's god is: 1. What one puts first. 2. What one cherishes. 3. What one lives for. 4. What one relies upon for fulfillment.	Bibles
PARALLELING REASONS FOR ITEMS DIS- CARDED AND PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE	Ask participants to reflect on the reasons people use for discarding things and what they say about themselves, the world, and God. Is there any connection between that list and this passage of scripture?	
10 JUDGMENTS	Share with the group the ten observations. Distribute piece.	"10 Judgments" Sheets
DEVOTIONS "LISTEN TO THE EARTH"	1. Teach "Listen to the Earth" 2. Intersperse with the following readings with the song. 3. Assign a passage to each person in group. Psalms 19:1-4, 24:1-2, 29:3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 42, 49, 66:1-4, 84:1-4, 100:1-3	Bibles
INTRODUCTION OF THEOLOGY OF GARBAGE CHART	Distribute copies of Chart and explain they can work on this in their personal/free time. The answers do occur elsewhere. They might find it challenging.	"Theology of Garbage" Chart

SATURDAY

MORNING

DEVOTIONS
"THE
MOSQUITO IS
ONE OF GOD'S
ANSWERS TO
PRAYER"

A. Preparation

1. Ask participants to write down on paper a prayer that concludes with, "All this God does."
2. The participants will respond: "Out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy."

Paper
Pencils

B. Order

1. Opening Song - Psalm 104
2. Show a jar with a captured mosquito. Announce that this mosquito is one of God's answers to prayer.
3. A dialogue with the assembly.
 - a. Does God answer prayer? How?
 - b. For what do we often pray?
 - c. Why do we pray?
 - d. How do you think this mosquito is an answer to prayer? (Don't push for an answer unless someone clearly states the answer. Keep them in suspense.)
4. Do the litany.
5. Answer 3d above (Now push for an answer.)
 - a. The mosquito is food for fish and birds.
 - b. It makes possible entertainment and employment.
 - c. It is in the food chain.
6. Share with the assembly the words of Jesus about prayer.
 - a. Read Matthew 6:5-15.
 - b. Ask the group what they heard (more than likely the Lord's Prayer).
 - c. Did they hear from vs. 8, "Your Father knows what you need before you ask?"
7. Homily: build on vs. 8.
 - a. God's answer to prayer has been in the development stage for a long time.
 - b. God's providence in part is His ongoing creating.
 - c. Give other examples.
8. Closing Prayer - Prepared Litanies
9. Closing Song - Select something

Song Sheet
Mosquito in jar

Bibles

Song Book

BIBLE STUDY

"WHO SHUT
THE DOOR TO
THE ARK?
WHY?"

A. Introduce discussion by talking about what happens when a door is shut.

1. Assign groups to think about various doors that are closed and why: prisons, houses, lockers, cars, etc.
2. Discuss with the entire group what shutting doors means in each instance.

Materials

- B. Imagine the ark. If necessary remind the group of its shape and dimensions.
1. Guess/speculate
 - a. What type of door would the ark have?
 - b. How was the door shut? Who shut the door?
 2. Read Genesis 7:11-16. Bible
 - a. What does the passage say about who shut the door?
 - b. What do the participants think the author meant by saying this? (Review some of the door shutting reasons given earlier.)
- C. What do you think God preserved in the ark?
1. Do "What Would You Put in the Ark"
 - a. Go on a hike
 - b. Give each group a shoe box to fill with items they would put on the ark (real and symbolic) 3 shoe boxes
 - c. Each group keep box and information to themselves
 - d. Find a place to stop and share contents of boxes
 2. Discuss and clarify what was being preserved:
 - a. The different organisms of God's creation
 - o Note that a small percentage of organisms exist today compared to what has existed since the beginning of time. (4% is estimate)
 - o We know a small percentage of the organisms that do exist today. The Rain Forest is an example of this.
 - b. The way organisms interact. (The natural systems cannot exist outside of the species themselves.)
- D. The story of the Flood in part reminds the reader that God preserves what God creates. That includes organisms and the way organisms work together. (Note information in Extinction.) Book on
Extinction
- E. A way to describe the way organisms work together is called "cycles."
1. Do one or more of the following activities to review the meaning of cycles.
 - a. Examine a rotten log
 - b. Describe water cycle
 - c. Describe air cycle
 2. Tell the story of the nutrient cycle Copy of "The
Nutrient
Cycle"

Materials

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| F. There are many things that exist that do not fit into cycles. | Copy of "Length of Time to Decompose" |
| 1. Name materials that cannot be returned to the natural cycle | |
| 2. Distribute piece regarding length of time for materials to decompose | |
| G. Introduce concept of Cycles and Streams | Cycles and Stream |
| 1. Show poster | Stream Poster |
| 2. Distribute cycles and stream handout | "Cycle and Stream" Handout |
| 3. Ask each small group to review the items they found in the trash and list them under the categories of cycles and streams (see 4 column work sheet) | |
| 4. How would the participants respond? | |
| a. Share insights | |
| b. Draw conclusions | |
| H. Introduce the idea that God intends for the creation to deal with itself responsibly. | |
| 1. Read Romans 12:9-12 and understand the passage. | Bible |
| a. It deals with how people shall care for each other in Christian community. | |
| b. The participants try to explain each verse: | |
| Vs. 9 Love should be real, not phony. Hate that which destroys. Hang on to the good. | |
| Vs. 10 Love with a sense of mutualism. Compete with one another in showing honor. | |
| Vs. 11 Be enthusiastic and offer your best | |
| Vs. 12 Be caring with others as they struggle. | |
| Vs. 13 Help others who are faithful. Be open to strangers. | |
| 2. Imagine that this passage is addressed to all of creation. What is it saying? | |
| a. In the natural world is there "false" love? | |
| o Is there love? | |
| o Give some examples - | |
| • Parents caring for young | |
| • Workers serving queens | |
| b. What do non-human species consider good? | |
| o The ability to survive | |
| o The ability to procreate | |

- c. What is evil in the non-human world?
 - o Hard to define because what in one sense might be considered evil could be good in another sense.
 - o For example, the incidence of and necessity of predators consuming prey.
- d. Do non-human creatures understand not living their lives out to the fullest?
 - o Can they be lazy?
 - o Do they know their abilities and use them?
- e. To rejoice in hope and to persevere in prayer are human qualities.
- f. Do non-humans suffer? More accurately, do they feel? sense?
 - o An area for speculation
 - o Scientists talk about an organism such as a root system sensing other root systems.
- g. Do non-human species contribute to the welfare of others? How?
 - o Think of cycles
 - o What is role of an organism in a cycle?
- h. Are non-humans hospitable to aliens?
 - o Here is room for a discussion on adaptation.
 - o Is it the species that are foreigners to the environment or is the environment foreign to the species? It seems that it is the species that adapt. However, does the environment adapt as well. The notion of Gaia would suggest a "yes."
- I. Conclude by summarizing the difference between cycles and streams.

BIBLE STUDY
"THE IMAGE
OF GOD
REVISITED"

- A. Pass out the paper to each person. Ask one person to be "God" and one other to be "person". Ask the others to choose an animal, a vegetable, a mineral, or a heavenly body. Make sure there is at least one in each category. Each person puts down his/her selection on the paper.
- B. The participants are then asked to hold their paper in front of them and mill around without talking. Each person is to set oneself in the proper relationship with all the others in the group according to what is on the respective card. They are to keep moving until they are satisfied with where they stand.
- C. Once everyone has stopped moving ask the

3 x 5 cards
Pencils

participants to put their paper on the ground and step back. Ask participants why they located themselves where they did. If the group does not agree with where a person has located oneself the card can be moved. Try to let the group shape the order of the cards that best demonstrates how the group envisions humankind's relationship with God and the rest of the world. Help the group arrive at a decision. Do not force your agenda on them as the leader.

- D. For the next part of the exercise ask the participants to pick up their cards. Read Psalm 8 to them twice. Ask them to listen carefully. Tell them before you read the Psalm that when you are through reading the second time they are to mill around and try to relate themselves to each other in the way that best describes what Psalm 8 says. Again, no talking while milling.
- E. Allow the group to mill and locate themselves. When finished ask the participants to put down their paper. Talk about the location of their papers. If the participants want to move the papers, let them. The leader may also need to do some adjusting. Focus on humankind's role in relationship to God and to the rest of the world.
- F. Lastly, ask the participants, "What are humankind's responsibilities according to the Psalmist?" When they have finished making comments, summarize what they have done and said.

Bible

BIBLE STUDY
"THE ROOTS
OF THE
PROBLEM"

- A. Read Exodus 20:1-17. Participants will easily recognize this passage as the Ten Commandments.
- B. Divide into three sub-groups. Assign one group vss. 3-7, another group gets vss. 8-11, and the third group has vss. 12-17. Spread the groups out physically, with the leader standing in the center. Read vss. 1-2 yourself, then vss. 3-7 by the first group read in unison, followed by the second and third groups. This choral reading lends freshness to a familiar passage.
- C. Play "Three on a Couch"
 - 1. Play the game as directed the first time.
 - 2. Before starting the second round, secretly give instructions to one or two participants not to follow the game rules.
 - 3. After the second round is finished, process what happened:

Bibles

Two 3' X 3'
sheets of
newsprint
for each
sub-group
(3)

Two marking
pens for
each sub-
group

Paper

Pencils

- a. Was someone excluded?
 - b. Could someone have gotten hurt?
 - c. What reactions did people have?
- D. Explore the participant's attitudes to the Commandments. Ask participants to share what these verses mean to them.
 1. Are they important? Why?
 2. Most will express the notion that these Commandments point out how we should live.
 3. Are the Commandments intended
 - a. To separate the good from the bad?
 - b. Or for us to live inclusively with the world?
- E. Do an environmental activity that illustrates how humans have caused environmental damage.
 1. Generate a list of problems
 2. Ask each group to rank
 - a. Each person list on paper
 - b. Discuss in small group
- F. Discover with the participants how the Commandments relate to stewardship of Creation. Small groups read their assigned passages and ask them if they discover anything that suggests ways to care for the Earth, its people, and its God.
 1. Vs. 3 - A caution not to confuse our gods of greed, prosperity, and buying with the real Lord God.
 2. Vs. 4 - A caution not to make a god out of nature.
 3. Vs. 5 - Our mishandling of natural resources surely extends to the third and fourth generations.
 4. Vss. 8-11 - Resting from work and labor restores both the land and the people. The Sabbath has close connections with Shalom, that is, peace and wholeness with God. The Sabbath also connects with Creation.
 5. Vss. 12-16 - These define the basics of just relationships between people. Underlying all these Commandments we find a strong current of respect for others, life, marriage, property, and good name. What a difference it would make if we truly respected the integrity of Third World nations! There are some considerations regarding the natural environment that can be drawn from these verses, too.

Newsprint
Magi Marker
Paper
Pencils

- a. Although we assume that the Command-

ments in these verses pertain to relationships with people, those in vss. 13, 14, and 15 do not specifically say so. Consider especially some of the implications of vss. 13 and 15.

b. Vs. 13 - We kill other things by our everyday behavior -

0 What do we do intentionally?

0 What do we do unintentionally?

0 Does what we do affect only the present?

0 What do we do to harm the future?

c. Vs. 15 - Are we not stealing our resources from other people and natural habitats when we take from them what we need without regard for their needs for living? In a sense, we are also stealing from future generations by our careless consumption now.

6. Vs. 17 - Speaking out against coveting, this verse suggests a whole new way of relating economic classes and nations. We often think of the poor coveting what the rich have. But, in reality, the rich also covet the poor people's possessions, and, since the poor lack power, the rich usually get what they want. For instance, when a multi-national sugar company covets a plantation in Central America, it usually achieves its ends by making an "offer no one can refuse," often through financial power-plays and political manipulation.

G. Develop "Commandments for Creation". Each group work on "Ten Commandments for Creation," listing things we can do to exercise good stewardship (caretaking) of Creation.

Paper
Pencils

1. As the group works on this list, encourage them to think of God's role as the starting point for all subsequent Commandments, "I am the Lord your God, therefore . . ."

2. When the "new commandments" are done, ask participants to share with others or make a poster.

GAME BREAK

Play "Elephant" or "Indy 500"

BIBLE STUDY
"JESUS, THE
RE-CON-
CYCLER"

A. Write the word "Reconcycler" in big letters on the newsprint. Ask the participants to break down the word. Let the participants play with the parts of the word.

Bibles
Newsprint
Marker for
leader

B. Have the participants define the words "recy-

- cling" and "reconciling". How are these ideas similar? Dissimilar?
- C. Now ask the participants what recycling and reconciling have to do with Christ. Read Colossians 1:15-20 to find out who Jesus is according to Paul. Pay special attention to vs. 20. God decided to reconcile ("to bring ... back to Himself"; "made peace" - TEV) all things to Himself and to each other.
- D. Turn to Genesis 1:27 and have participants compare it to Colossians 1:15- 20. Ask participants what image of God means to Christians. Guide them to understand that being in the "image of God" is to be an imitator of Christ. Luther puts it, "Little Christs".
- E. Read Mark 4:35-41
1. What authority and power does Jesus have?
 2. Can the participants think of other stories that demonstrate Jesus' power and authority? (Healings of all kinds.)
 3. Reconciling is the process of healing (the mending of broken relationships).
- F. Read II Corinthians 5:17-21 and answer the question: What is expected of us?

DEVOTIONS
"WATER CON-
FESSION AND
ABSOLUTION"

1. Distribute Devotional
2. Select Participants to read passages.
3. Include some songs, e.g. "Passed Through the Waters."

Devotional
Sheet -
"Water
Confession
and
Absolution"
Song Sheet

SUNDAY

BIBLE STUDY
"CREATION
TOGETHER"

- A. Read Ephesians 1:3-14
- B. Ask the participants to identify in the passage all the things God has done for humans. Some possible answers are:
1. Blessed with every Spiritual blessing
 2. Chosen us to be His children before the world was made
 3. Chosen to be holy and blameless before Him
 4. In Christ He has set us free (sins are forgiven)
 5. Made known to us His secret plan
 6. We are chosen to be His people in unison with Christ
 7. God put His stamp of ownership on us by giving the Holy Spirit

- C. Introduce the two key points about this pas-

sage. (Take only a minute or two to do so.)

1. Vss. 9 & 10 - God's secret plan? (To bring all Creation together.) How will this happen? (Noting from the earlier portion of the passage, it is done in Christ.)
 2. Vs. 4 - Where do people fit in? (God chooses us - Christians - to be in "union" with Christ and therefore work to restore all Creation to union with Christ.)
- D. Have the participants think out loud about this question: "If God's plan is to bring all Creation together and that we participate in this activity with Christ, what then are we to do?"
1. They can talk about various concerns, especially the protection or restoration of habitats for the good of the world.
 2. Continue delving into this issue by having the participants give some examples of how they can (and why they should) be active in restoring habitats.
- E. Once a list is generated ask the participants to look at vss. 13 & 14.
1. What has happened to Christians that can give them the assurance they are on the right track?
 2. The answer is that Christians hear the word of truth and are sealed with the Holy Spirit.
- F. In order for people to have commitment to something, they must "trust" in it. Often that trust is so strong that people will risk what is commonly considered "safe" and hold to their ideals. This capacity is given to the Christian as a gift of the Holy Spirit. For example, we can "risk" a lifestyle of commitment to God (and from that, caring for the Earth and its habitats) because we will believe that God will care for us without earthly trinkets of fulfillment (see Matt. 6).
- G. Each person write on paper one commitment they would make as a result of this study.

EUCCHARIST
"SAUNTERING
SERVICE"

- A. Bring the group to the center of an area. Blindfold everyone.
- B. Say the Invocation: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Blindfolds

- C. The group stands in a small circle. The

Materials

- leader spins each person around several times so he/she loses his/her orientation.
- D. Instruct the participants to remain silent, and on the leader's cue they are to walk until the leader says, "Stop." (Let the group go no more than 20' from the center of the area.) Instruct individuals to sit down.
 - E. While blindfolded, instruct the participants to individually find "something" for which they can praise God. They will need to do this by discovering by touching what is in the area.
 - F. Once they have found something, they are to return to the center of the area by following the leader's voice. Ask the participants to hold hands and walk in a circle for at least two revolutions.
 - G. The participants sit down and remove their blindfolds.
 - 1. Share the "something" each person found and explain reasons for praising God.
 - 2. Read aloud together Psalm 19:1-6
 - 3. Offer a prayer.
 - H. Ask the participants to find the spot where they sat when blindfolded. When each person locates his/her spot he/she is to shout "Halleluia!"
 - I. Return to group and share "commitments" as an offering.
 - J. Follow with the Eucharist.

Bread & Wine
Chalice & Paten