

Leave PEOPLE & THINGS BETTER THAN YOU FOUND THEM!



Caretakers of God's Creation

Consistory Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA



Session 3

What will students learn?

Objective: Youth will continue the creation story and how it relates to their lives. They will gain a better understanding of how we "care" for creation through our consumption effects creation and how fasting is a direct relation to this.

How long will it take & ages?

30 - 1 hour and youth ages 8-11



What do you need?

- Bibles
- Journals
- Post-it Notes
- Creation Icons found at <https://www.uocyouth.org/caretaker> sofsgodscreation
- White board



For Session Leader

Opening: Using the post-it notes, ask participants if they want to add any types of caretakers to their post-it note wall. Let them know that no answers are incorrect. Each session, they can add to the board. You can also watch the video from Orthodox Christian Kids <https://youtu.be/FasRgIcBROo>

Discussion: Use the text provided to begin the discussion. Allow time for questions. Take time to be acquainted with the text, so that you are not reading to your group but presenting!

Adapted for use from Caretakers of God's Creation
Curriculum 2001 UOC Office of Youth Ministry &
Teenage Conference by
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Session 3 – Youth ages 8 – 11

Discussion Starter: Once God created His house, He proceeded to fill that house. God's regenerative environment was prepared for the life that would inhabit it. Do you know what it means to regenerate? **Use the white board to write answers and then supply the definition: to regrow or be renewed or restored, especially after being damaged or lost** " Read Genesis 1:19 – 25 Perhaps allow one of the youth to read or take turns reading.

And there was evening and there was morning, a forth day. And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens.' So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature the moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' And there was evening and there was morning a fifth day. And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds; and it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. An God saw that it was good"(Genesis 1:19-25). **Take a moment to look at the creation icons associated with these passages.**

In God's eminent wisdom and beauty He created a world that could live in unity and harmony. What do you think happens when our world is not in harmony? **Allow time for discussion.**

We have just started the Nativity Fast, the forty-day fast before the feast of the Birth of our Lord in Bethlehem. **Take a moment and ask the participants if they know about the Nativity Fast. Can they name any other fasting periods during the year?** Some people think that fasting is old-fashioned, or unnecessary, or something so difficult that you'd have to be a superhero to actually do it. But if we think about it we see that following the Church's fasting rules makes us better caretakers of God's creation. How? **Give a moment for some answers from the youth.**

Food is our most personal way to associate with other life on the planet, and our food systems are the primary ways through which we create or destroy ecosystems. Do your remember from last time what an ecosystem is? Are we eating just to eat, without any knowledge of where our food came from or gratitude for the ecosystems that provide it? If so, we're contributing to ecological disaster. What do you think about that?

There are many ways we can be better caretakers with our food choices. Here are some ideas.

- We are able know about how food is produced and make efforts to eat local foods (**stop and ask if they can think of ways to "eat local" – use the white board to list**),
- Accept different and seasonal diets (**stop and ask them what they think this means – again use the white board to list ideas**),
- Eat thoughtfully and with gratitude (**ask them what they think this means – take notes**)

When we make a habit of being good caretakers with how we consume our food, we'll naturally favor food systems that are ecologically sustainable. When we limit our consumption of meat (as we are called to do during the four fasting periods of the year as well as most Wednesdays and Fridays) we eat lower on the food chain, which as we know is better for the environment. And we should do our best never to waste food. **Use the whiteboard to have student brainstorm ways to be more thoughtful about their food choices during fasting periods and non-fasting periods. Remind youth that they always discuss fasting with their parents before they would start on their own.**

t's even more important not to waste water. Many of us in wealthy countries expect to turn the tap and have clean water come out, sometimes from water sources that are miles away. This is a wonderful privilege. Each of us should be a fierce advocate for the cleanliness and sustainability of our water sources. If at all possible we should never drink or purchase bottled water, as the used bottles contribute to the hurting the environment and the water itself can be contaminated by chemicals which leach out from the plastic and are injurious to our health. If we must drink bottle water, remember to recycle and not just throw away your bottles!

Next month we will talk more about our responsibility toward all God's other creatures, the animals, and how we might be good caretakers of them.!



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Session 3 – Youth ages 8 – 11

Wrapping it Up!

Praxis: Allow the youth time with their journals to copy down anything you put on the white board during your discussion. Share the suggestions of "How we can leave things better during the Nativity Fast". Ask the groups to come up with other ways that they can keep the fast as Caretakers of God's Creation.

What can we do during this Nativity Fast to help the environment?

1. Follow the Church's fasting regulations; refrain from meat and dairy products entirely or in part; limit the amount that we eat; do not consume "junk" food; try to eat foods which have not had to be transported for long distances.
2. Do not drink or purchase bottled water(unless needed); do not waste water.
3. Don't take unnecessary trips in the family car; use public transportation when it is safe and available; try to avoid single-use plastics and all types of unnecessary packaging.
4. Limit our internet, e-mail, and smart-phone use; limit or completely avoid streaming movies or television shows; limit our use of social media to the absolute minimum.



Taking it Home!: Have small copies of the icons for this session for the youth to glue into their journals. Ask them to take time to journal about each icon and how they can be "leave creation better than they found it" Ask them to spend time thinking about how they can grow closer to God during the Nativity Fast. Provide materials for your families about the Nativity Fast. You can find several suggestions on our Pinterest Board <https://www.pinterest.com/uocofusa/oym-nativity-of-christ-fast-feast-ideas-for-famili/>

Activities for the Month:

1. In preparation of the Nativity of our Lord, discuss with the youth the importance of what they may have just learned concerning the creation of man and the birth of Christ. Advent/St. Phillip's Fast is a time of fasting, preparation and missions. If we are made in the image of God – how could we help our fellow man during this time of fasting? Ask the youth to brainstorm for charitable projects to take part in or initiate and in doing so reflecting the image of God. Provide the youth with possible suggestions such as donating time or items to a local youth hostile, elderly center or halfway house.
2. Perhaps help your youth organize a trip to visit your parish elderly/shut ins. You can bring them gift baskets with some essentials and treats. You could also contact a local elderly center or retirement home. You can make a visit to sing carols, bring treats, or just visit! Call ahead and ask what their residents are in need of.

Prayer: Finish the session in prayer. You could take sections of the Akathist Glory to God for All Things and us it through out the year at each of your session. You can find it downloadable here <https://www.stvladimirpgh.org/files/112620-akathist.pdf>