

Be Kind

TO NATURE!



Caretakers of God's Creation

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



Session 2

What will students learn?

Objective: Youth will rediscover the Genesis telling of creation, contemplate their place within that story and the inter-connectedness within His creation. Youth will begin to understand their role as caretakers as Christians.

How long will it take & ages?

30 - 1 hour and teenagers

What do you need?

- Bibles
- Journals
- Post-it Notes
- Creation Icons
<https://www.uocyouth.org/caretakersofgodscreation>
- Social Eco-System Mapping Template
- 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.

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 Teenage Conference
Fr. Bohdan Hladio & Natalie Kapeluck

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Session 2 - Teens

Discussion Starter. Begin by saying, "Last month we discussed what a caretaker is and does. This month we'll talk a bit more about creation. **Take some time (a few minutes) to review *What is a Caretaker.***"

When we think about God's creation we often have "nature" in mind. "Nature" is a really interesting word. It comes from a Latin word, *natura*, and is related to a Greek word, *physis* (from which we get words like "physical" or "physics") as well as to an old English word, *kind*. Nature can mean "the physical world" or "creation," (If you have a white board - write these words on it so they can SEE the relation.) and it can also refer to the various characteristics or qualities of the different things that God has created. We read, for example, in the book of Genesis, that God created the grass, the herbs, the fruit trees, sea creatures, birds, cattle, creeping things, and the beasts of the earth all "according to their kind" (Gen. 1: 11-25). We also talk about "human nature."

God made everything "according to its kind," in other words, everything, whether it's animal, or vegetable, or mineral, has its own unique qualities and identity. There is a sameness (all dogs have four legs) as well as a difference (a dachshund's legs are much shorter than a Saint Bernard's) and a uniqueness (each dalmatian has a particular personality and specific markings).

Part of being a caretaker is being sensitive to the similarities and differences, to the specific and general characteristics of everything in the natural world. We can never take care of nature as a whole, we can only take care of one particular area or part or aspect of nature. We know that the Chesapeake bay ecosystem is different from the Puget sound ecosystem, and if we want to be responsible and effective caretakers of creation we might have to use very different strategies and activities to keep both of these different ecosystems healthy. **Take a moment and ask the group what they think about this so far.**

This is just as true when we think of our social ecosystems. **Stop here and ask the group if they know what an ecosystem is.** People, when they form communities or parishes, whether in schools or in cities, can suffer because their social ecosystem (the people, organizations, and society around them) has been polluted. While the natural environment can be polluted and poisoned by industrial waste, chemical or petroleum spills, irresponsible mining or farming practices, our social ecosystem can be polluted by hatred, intolerance, disrespect, contempt, and violence.

For Christians everything – people or pets or plains, mountains or mice or minerals, oceans or lakes, forests or streams – is a beautiful manifestation of God's love for us that we are called in turn to love as a response to God's love for us. To make a play on words, being "kind" to "nature" (whether animal, vegetable, mineral, or human) is just as much a Christian duty as praying, worshiping, helping the poor, fasting, and reading the bible. In many ways, an ecosystem is just another form of relationship. We are discovering what our right relationship is with creation is and should be. **Take a moment here to ask what the group feels about this. Do they think being "kind" to nature is the same as for a Christian as praying or going to Divine Liturgy or helping the poor?**

During this coming month we will read the very beginning of the book of Genesis, chapter one and the first three verses of chapter two (Gen. 1:1 – 2:3), and study the icons depicting these verses from St. Thomas Chapel at All Saints Camp. Think about all the things that God has created, how they are created, in what order they are created, their "nature," and especially about what it means that God created man and woman last, and gave them "dominion" over all the animals.

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.

What is A CARETAKER?



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Wrapping it Up!

Praxis: Break up into groups, if you have a large number of youth. With a small group maybe break into pairs or groups of three. With a very small group let them work together.

Pass out the social ecosystem worksheets. Ask each group to map out how the your parish fits into the social ecosystem. If you have time you can work on a larger version as the large group, looking at the church within the world.

Have the groups come together and share their work. Discuss how this relates to what they discussed to day as being kind to the world and being caretakers of God's creation. Ask the group to brainstorm ways they can strengthen their social eco-systems (relationships with creation).

Taking it Home!: In their journals, have the youth make their own social ecosystem map. Ask them to map out their social ecosystem and take some time journaling about how they can incorporate being 'kind' to God's creation within their personal ecosystem.

In the coming month, continue read the ascribed parts of Genesis. Take time to look at each of the provided creation icons from St. Thomas Chapel at All Saints Camp. Discuss the icon in relation to the biblical reading. What do they notice? What questions do they have? Have them journal about the section in the following ways:

- How can this apply to my life
- How can this apply to my relationship with God
- How can this apply to being a caretaker of God's creation

Either Pass out journals to your youth or have them

Additional Activities:

1. Visit a local planetarium. Discuss the beauty of God's heavens. Learn about the ranks of angels. Have the youth put together an informative display for the parish about the ranks of angels.
2. Visit your local botanic garden or conservatory. Refer back to the session where you discussed the "sameness" yet "difference" in creation. Take copies of the Creation Icons with you and see what similarities you may find.
2. Organize the youth to rake leaves for the elderly in the parish or your community. Discuss the need to take care of the earth and each other.
3. Proceed in helping the youth to build a terrarium. Using a large glass jar or bottle. Ask the youth what they think should be added to the terrarium. Have the youth observe the ecological changes that occur within the terrarium. Discuss ways the elements in the terrariums are interdependent. Keep the terrariums at the parish for future projects and discussion.

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>