

Be Kind

TO NATURE!

Session 2



Caretakers of God's Creation

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



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 youth ages 8-11

What do you need?

- Bibles
- Journals
- Post-it Notes
- Creation Icons found at <https://www.uocyouth.org/caretakersofgodscreation>
- 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 Caretakers of God's Creation
Curriculum 2001 UOC Office of Youth Ministry &
Teenage Conference by
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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*.**

Have you ever heard the riddle, *What came first, the chicken or the egg?* This is the eternal, unanswerable riddle. Well we might ask, *What came first, man or the world he lives in?* **Stop and ask the group if they know.** This question is easily answered! God began His creation by first forming His angels, the heavens and the earth **At this point, read from Genesis 1:1-19 and use the creation icons as you read. Do not go to deeply into the icon because you will use it later.**

Our Lord devoted the first four days of His labor of love to creating the basis of His paradise and in doing so, providing the basis for all of our needs – the heavens, daylight and darkness, water, land, trees, seasons and so on. How would our lives be altered if any of these elements were not carefully provided for us? **Give time for them to answer.**

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" **Read from Gen. 1: 11-25 using the icon.**

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. **Stop here and ask the group if they know what an ecosystem is. Stop here and ask the group if they know what an ecosystem is. Take a moment and ask the group what they think about this so far.**

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?**

As God's creation developed He would approve each new element by deeming it 'good'. God has fashioned perfection and in His perfection formed an intertwined symbiotic environment. **Ask the group if they know what "symbiotic" means.** Each building block of this environment contains its own unique and important purpose. Therefore, as with any type of ecosystem, if one element of His creation was to be ruined or damaged they would all be affected. How lucky are we that God gave us such a complete and unspoiled world in which to live and care for? **Allow time for discuss and questions.**

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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Wrapping it Up!

Praxis: Break the group into four smaller groups if possible, if not work as one large group. Give each group one of the creation icons from the first four days of creation with the accompanying verses. Ask them to discuss how the icon depicts the verse. What else does the icon show? What don't they understand in the icon?

Bring them back into the large group. Have youth present their discussion and questions.

Taking it Home!: Have small copies of the icons for the youth to glue into their journals. Ask them to take time to journal about each icon and how they can be "kinder" to creation. Also ask them to spend time thinking about how they can strengthen their relationships with the people and communities – the "people" ecosystems around them.



Activities for the Month:

1. Visit a local planetarium. Prior to arriving read the Genesis verses for creation of the heavens and look at this icon. 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. Prior to arriving, read the Genesis verses for creation of the land and the plants. Look at the creation icon for this. 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.
3. 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 – strengthening their "people" ecosystems.
4. 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 use it through out the year at each of your session. You can find it downloadable here <https://www.stvladimirpgh.org/files/112620-akathist.pdf>