

# Listen to the Voice of the... Oceans!

## Awareness

Build awareness in your community about the oceans by recognizing that:

- Oceans are one of God's most vital contributions to Creation;
- 680 million people worldwide live on coastal waterfront; (1)
- Canada borders three oceans: the Atlantic, the Arctic, and the Pacific;
- Oceans play a central role in regulating the Earth's climate; (2)
- Oceans have absorbed more than 90% of the heat trapped by humanity's greenhouse gas emissions; (3)
- Oceans are becoming more acidic due to increased atmospheric CO2 emissions; (4)
- Rising sea levels have significant climate change impacts. (5)



(1) [One Waterfront 2019](#)

(2) [Ocean and climate change IUCN](#)

(3) [climate change relates to oceans | WWF](#)


(4) [Ocean acidification | IUCN](#)

(5) [Ocean and climate change | IUCN](#)

## Listen

On World Oceans Day 2016, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew issued a message that states that we are called upon to serve as stewards of one of God's most precious gifts: the Oceans! He emphasizes how crucial it is to respect and protect "this unique source of nurture and biodiversity" as he pulls inspiration from Revelation 7:3 "Hurt not the earth, neither the seas nor the trees." ([Bartholomew for World Oceans Day 2016](#))

When we don't live near an ocean, we feel distant and think our actions are insignificant. However, our actions and our lifestyles influence ocean health, including factors such as sewage and wastewater, chemical discharges, waste production, and shopping habits. Caring for Creation can be reflected in all our activities and habits.



**Saving the planet begins with acting in the watershed where everything is connected, humans and creation.**

Faith communities and individuals have sought to deepen connections to creation, ecological justice, and reconciliation with Indigenous communities. The United Church presented a document in 2017 titled: "Reconciliation in the Watershed: Reflections for Creation Time", which presents a very inspiring perspective of the notion of watershed discipleship as well as reconciliation within the watershed. ([The United Church of Canada](#))

### What is a watershed?

A watershed is an area that drains all precipitation received as a runoff or base flow (groundwater sources) into a particular river or set of rivers.(1)

- Government of Canada

There are five major watersheds identified in North America. Every person in North America lives in one of these main watersheds which drain into the Atlantic Ocean, Hudson Bay, the Arctic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, or the Gulf of Mexico/Caribbean Sea. We are called upon as Christians to care for Creation from wherever we are, wherever we live. All our actions and our inactions have an impact on our local and global watershed as all of Creation is connected in an intricate balanced system.

Plastic products by the billions have found their way into the oceans, forming giant plastic continents like the one discovered in 1997 in the Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and California, also known as ‘the Great Pacific Garbage Patch’ ([Ocean Cleanup](#)). This environmental concern has been documented by several organizations who are raising awareness on how marine animals and birds are dying from ingesting plastic products. When plastic breaks down into smaller pieces called microplastics, they become more easily ingested by fish and thus, microplastics have successfully entered the food chain.

Unfortunately, out of the three tonnes of plastic thrown away by Canadians each year, only 9 % of it is actually recycled ([Canada.ca](#)). As consumers, we must reduce at the source and avoid single use plastics as much as possible. Many organizations have taken the initiative to educate the public by raising awareness and pressuring governments.



(1) <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/dc639a40-8893-11e0-96ca-6cf049291510>



## Get Inspired

Be inspired by these biblical passages:



God called the dry land “earth,” and the basin of water he called “sea.” God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:10

Now I, like a stream from a river,  
and like water channeling into a  
garden— I said, “I will water my plants,  
I will drench my flower beds.”  
Then suddenly this stream of mine became a  
river, and this river of mine became a sea.

Sirach 24:30-31

How varied are your works, LORD!  
In wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.  
There is the sea, great and wide!  
It teems with countless beings,  
living things both large and small.

Psalms 104:24-25

**Hurt not the earth,  
neither the seas nor the  
trees**

Revelation 7:3

## Take Action

Faith community's can locate their watershed basin on this map provided by the Government of Canada Map: [Canada's Watersheds - Open Government Portal](#)

The World Wildlife Federation (WWF) has a very user-friendly interactive watershed map of Canada available on their website here: [Watershed Reports | WWF Canada](#)

Identify the flora and fauna in your watershed, learn about the different forest types, the rare plants, the animals, and the different communities that all live in the same watershed as you. Find ways to take positive action towards supporting them. Every action we take has an impact on our watershed from what plants we plant, which trees we harvest, the garbage we dispose of, and the wastewater that we dump.

Your faith community can become closer to the ocean by collaborating with a coastal faith community. Sharing and supporting each other to learn more and improve awareness about ocean health. Your community can also partner with organizations that work to preserve the oceans.

Recognize and bring awareness to September 21<sup>st</sup> as International Coastal Clean Up Day and September 30<sup>th</sup> as World Maritime Day.

### Initiative

Recycled plastic bags are used to help the homeless:

Faith Baptist Church members in Sydney Nova Scotia are recycling plastic grocery bags into sleeping mats to help the homeless, CBC reported in February 2018. This initiative keeps both these bags out of the landfill while helping the less fortunate. Each mat takes about 250 bags and 10 hours of work! ([Congregation recycles plastic bags - CBC](#))

## Communicate

Here are some ideas you can use to help communicate your concerns about the oceans to your faith community:

- Set up a kiosk at the entrance to the hall or church where your community gathers. Display the important role oceans have on the health of the planet, how the ocean affects the human population who live and work on the coast, and how the ocean is a unique habitat for the biodiversity of species. Invite youth groups to help create artwork and special messages about the importance of oceans.
- Use social media and your church bulletin to communicate your concerns about the health of the oceans and their unique role in the health of the planet.
- Use the poster included in this Season of Creation toolkit in your newsletter, on social media, and throughout your church where your community gathers, like the kitchen, the hall, the bathroom etc.
- Invite a guest speaker to share their experiences or messages about the importance of God's gift of the ocean, and to share initiatives that combat its deterioration due to human activity and the upset of the balance of Creation. This can be someone from an indigenous community, a member of a faith community living near the ocean, or an oceanographer specialist.
- Host an online or in-person conference to explore reconciliation in the watershed with someone involved in this movement. See also our resources page on this topic.



## Resources

New Hope for the Oceans: Engaging Faith-Based Communities in Marine Conservation

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2017.00062/full>

Kairos: Watershed Discipleship Workshop

<https://www.kairoscanada.org/product/watershed-discipleship-workshop>

Watershed Discipleship, the creation waits...

<https://watersheddiscipleship.org/author/chedmyers/>

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**Watch videos on the Green Churches Network YouTube channel:**

[Églises Vertes - YouTube](#)

Video My watershed / Mon bassin versant



From a water  
source to Atlantic



Ocean