

SEASON OF CREATION



EDUCATION AND ACTION GUIDE



This Education and Action Guide provides reflective elements and suggested activities around the three themes: Biodiversity, Wetlands, and Energy to inspire you throughout the Season of Creation 2023.

BIODIVERSITY

As the Office of the Auditor General of Canada states, "There are approximately 80,000 species in Canada, including mammals, birds, fish, plants, amphibians, reptiles, and insects. Caribou, polar bears,



beavers, and loons are among the most iconic species on Canadian coins. Canada has more than 300 species that are found nowhere else"¹.

Atlantic cod, bison, and monarch butterflies are species at risk. The Atlantic salmon has completely disappeared from Lake Ontario despite efforts to reintroduce it. Other species, although still of concern or threatened, have seen their populations increase, such as the swift fox and the sea otter. Humpback whales, peregrine falcons and trumpeter swans have seen their numbers continue to increase and are no longer on the endangered species list. Their recovery is due either to the banning of certain products, hunting restrictions, or the implementation of recovery programs.

Since 1978, Canada has listed 17 species as being at risk. In July 2022, the number is 841². As the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada points out, this number covers only a small fraction of the species counted in Canada to date. It includes, in alphabetical order, amphibians, arthropods, birds, freshwater fish, marine fish, lichens, marine mammals, terrestrial mammals, mollusks, mosses, reptiles, and vascular plants.

Why is biodiversity so important? "A diverse mix of genes, species and ecosystems makes human survival possible," says the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

Many municipalities, companies, and industries have made commitments to protect and not harm biodiversity. Many citizen groups and faith communities are taking action. Protecting and restoring biodiversity is the concern of all people, including faith communities.

It is therefore important and necessary to act in your local environment and community!

For more information: <https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca>

¹https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/oth_202210_e_44128.html

²https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/oth_202210_e_44128.html

REFLECT

"We are called to join God's ongoing work to redeem and restore all of creation through radical, decisive, and faith-consistent action."

- Faith Call to Action for the UN Summit on Biodiversity 2020



ACTION/ GET INVOLVED

Here are several ideas for activities and actions for Season of Creation 2023 and throughout the year.

- ✓ As a family, or as a faith community, make a list of plant and animal species that you are fond of and explain why.
- ✓ Organize an exhibition or video montage of photos taken in your local environment that promote biodiversity. Mobilize the youth of your community to take photos, edit them and present them to the community.
- ✓ Each week, place a different plant or flower in the lobby of your church and highlight any additional information about the species, so that your faith community can learn more about the importance of biodiversity.
- ✓ Organize an outing for your church community to visit some locations that are high in biodiversity and focus on preservation. Botanical gardens, nature centers, local forests, and even community gardens.
- ✓ May 22 is International Biodiversity Day. In this week of May, organize a free seed and plant exchange, for the garden or houseplants for your community. Advertise the week after Easter.

WETLANDS

Did you know that 25% of the world's wetlands are in Canada? Did you know that February 2nd is World Wetlands Day? Contrary to popular belief, wetlands are not a space to be filled in and converted for profitable human activity, we must make every effort not to view wetlands as a useless space to be filled. Fortunately, the unique role of wetlands is finally gaining popularity in the media and with the public. Created over thousands of years, wetlands are a defense system that stabilize the water cycle and protects us humans from floods, droughts, as well as water and air pollution. Wetlands are also a perfect habitat for many species of wildlife, providing shelter and food sources.



As Ducks Unlimited Canada points out, "Canada's wetlands are diverse and take the form of marshes, bogs, fens, swamps and open water. They are found on the prairies, in the boreal forest, on the coast, and even on the tundra. Each one of them keeps our communities healthy and safe. »³

Several wetland maps are available. Here is one for all of Canada :

<https://www.natureconservancy.ca/>. As Nature Conservancy of Canada states; "Aboriginal peoples are increasingly being listened to and recognized as conservation decision-makers and land stewards⁴. The following map illustrates First Nations projects: <https://ncc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/>.

Here are some media headlines that illustrate wetland conservation efforts.

Study confirms wetlands around Saint John Harbour provide benefits to people and wildlife.

<https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/where-we-work/new-brunswick/news/study-wetlands-saint-john.html>

Wild wetland wonders.

<https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/where-we-work/saskatchewan/our-work/wild-wetland-wonders.html>

Manitoba community transforms obsolete lagoon into a healthy wetland.

<https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/manitoba-community-transforms-obsolete-lagoon-into-a-healthy-wetland-1.6258029>

³ <https://www.ducks.ca/our-work/wetlands/>

⁴ <https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/what-we-do/indigenous-conservation/>



REFLECT

"The scorching earth shall be turned into a pool, and the thirsty land into overflowing waters." Isaiah 35:7

"I will make the desert a pool..."
Isaiah 41:18

ACTION/GET INVOLVED

Here are several ideas for activities and actions to take during Season of Creation 2023 and throughout the year.

- ✓ As a family or faith community, identify the wetlands in your area and take time to understand and appreciate their important role in the environment. Become aware of biblical excerpts about God's plan for His creation, especially about wetlands.
- ✓ Visit a local wetland and take pictures of the small insects, birds and other small animals that live there. Pick a sample of different grasses and flowers that you find. Take the time to give thanks for this diversity, observe and smell the various plants before drying them upside down. Make a mobile and hang it in an area where people gather and can experience this local diversity.
- ✓ Organize a display or video of photos of various wetlands in your area or across Canada, noting their importance and their role in sustaining God's creation.

- ✓ Organize an outing for your faith community to visit a wetland, be sure to include directions and a time when a member of your green team will be there. When planning, be sure to take the weather into consideration as well as accessibility for the participants (such as strollers, canes, and wheelchairs). Publicize your tour experience with a photo montage, video, or article in your parish or diocesan bulletin.
- ✓ Invite a speaker, in person or video conference, to talk about the critical role that wetlands play in our ecosystem and/or their experience advocating to protect a threatened wetland.
- ✓ Pledge to support an organization whose mission is to protect wetlands. Learn from them and help them fundraise to achieve their goals.
- ✓ Thank the Creator for the wetlands in the common prayer.



ENERGY

The Green Churches Network offers a series of actions that faith groups can take to save energy in church buildings:

- ✓ Put small reminders on light switches and turn them off when no one is in the room.
- ✓ Make full use of natural light by keeping windows clean.
- ✓ Use fans to mix the air and not let all the warm air settle on the ceiling.
- ✓ Replace regular light bulbs with LEDs.
- ✓ Insulate pipes and ducts.
- ✓ Add programmed lights to turn off automatically at sunrise and turn on at sunset (if needed).
- ✓ Install plastic wrap on all windows in the winter to help minimize cold entry.
- ✓ Install light fixtures with motion detectors (e.g., bathrooms).
- ✓ Install programmable thermostats. Your electric company may offer rebates.
- ✓ Improve insulation in the church, i.e. Bottom of the doors, caulking, foam insulation.
- ✓ Install radiant floors for frequently used rooms.
- ✓ See if your utility company has developed an energy efficiency program or grants for your church.

REFLECT

"The United Church of Canada as a whole has committed to an ambitious goal of reducing its carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2030."

- 44th General Council



ACTION/GET INVOLVED

Here are some ideas for Season of Creation 2023 and throughout the year:



Within your faith community, express your relationship to the light, sun, wind, and energy. Then take the time to read some excerpts from the Bible about light, wind and energy and share what is common and what is different. Of course, God's people's relationship with the sun and wind is similar to ours: both blessings and causes of misfortune and disaster.



Illustrate each of the Bible passages below with either pictures or drawings from the youth in your community. Prepare a display to make these passages better known.

"God said, 'Let there be light. And the light was. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day' and the darkness 'night'. There was evening and there was morning: the first day". Genesis 1:3-5

"What is brighter than the sun?" Sirach 17:31

"The sun has its tent on the horizon of the seas..." Psalm 19:5

"Yours is the day, Yours is the night, the laws of light and of the sun." Psalm 74:16

***"From where the light comes, from where it spreads,
and from where the east wind sweeps over the earth?" Job 38:24***

***"How sweet is the light, and how good it is to see the sun with our eyes!
Even after many years, let a man know how to enjoy them all; but let him
keep in mind the dark days: for the future nothing is certain." Ecclesiastes 11:7***

***"He sends the light, and it goes away;
If he calls it back, it trembles and obeys.
The stars began to shine, joyful,
and each one at his post watches over the night.
He calls to them; they answer him: "Here we are!
What joy for them to shine for their Creator!
He is our God,
Nothing can compare to him. Baruch 3:33***

***"Praise him, sun and moon,
praise him, all you stars of light..." Psalm 148:3***

- ✓ As a family or faith community, take the time to understand and appreciate the indispensable role of churches in the use of clean, renewable energy.
- ✓ Invite a member of a faith community to share their experience of converting a place of worship to renewable energy, either in person or video conference.
- ✓ Evaluate and discuss how your faith community uses energy and how it can improve its efficiency, explore renewable energy options. Make an action plan for the next 5 years with annual goals and objectives.

