



A time for celebration and care



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## Children's activities

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### Warm up games

#### Pass the Squeeze

Sit in a circle, holding hands. One person begins by squeezing the hand of the person to their left. The next person then "passes the squeeze" onto the next person and so on until the squeeze is passed all round the circle. This can then be timed to see how quickly the squeeze can be passed around the group. Remind the children that, just like the squeeze, our actions in the world can be felt by the living things around us e.g. how we take care of our environment.

#### Fruit Basket

Sit in a circle and allocate one of four fruits to each person e.g. apple, banana, cherry, orange. Call out a fruit name and all the children of that fruit have to swap seats. If "fruit basket" is called, then all the children have to swap seats. There are so many different fruits for us to eat – ask the children to suggest fruit names to play the game again.

#### Scavenger Hunt:

Take the children out into the garden or a park. In groups of two or three, the children can collect natural objects in a scavenger hunt e.g. a certain type of leaf, a particular coloured stone, a nut, a type of seed such as sycamore wings, a dandelion or daisy. Remind the children about not disturbing habitats or damaging wildlife.

#### Matchbox Hunt

Organise as above but, this time, ask the children to fill a matchbox with as many natural objects as they can fit. The winning team will have the most objects.

#### Under the Branches

Children run around with one or two people chasing. When a person is caught, they have to stand still with their arms outstretched until someone goes underneath their arm "branches" and releases them.

### Focus on Biodiversity / Poster design

Introduce the term "biodiversity" as the variety of life on earth. How many different plants and animals do they think there are? No one knows for sure the exact number although scientists think there are between 10 and 30 million different species.

Ask the children why we need plants and animals. Scribe their answers on a "thought shower" using a large sheet of paper, a flip chart or smart board. Answers may include food, medicines, materials such as rubber and oil, ecological services such as oxygen, water, and nutrients for fertile soil, as well as the cultural and aesthetic value of the natural world e.g. inspiration in music and art, leisure activities, observing and enjoying nature. [continued over page]



## Focus on Biodiversity / Poster design (continued)

Although God placed humans in charge of all living things, many of the choices we make mean that biodiversity i.e. the range of living things, is decreasing. Discuss, "What actions may affect biodiversity?" Main threats to biodiversity are loss of habitat e.g. through forest clearing, over-exploitation for food e.g. over fishing areas of the sea, pollution, climate change and introducing invasive species that take over a habitat and kill off native species.

Invite the children to close their eyes and picture their favourite place in the world. Now think of one thing each one of us could do to take care of this world e.g. recycling, wasting less water, switching off electrical appliances instead of leaving on stand by, not dropping litter etc. Even the small changes we all make can make a difference.

*Pray: Thank you, God, for this beautiful world and everything in it. Help us all to take care of the living things, plants and animals, entrusted to our care. Amen*

In pairs or individually, ask the children to produce posters, either showing small changes we could all make to care for our world, or celebrating the world's biodiversity. Put these posters up around the church or building.

## Other activities for one session

### Make a green colour strip

Take the children out to collect as many different green leaves as possible or provide these for them. Put a strip of double sided sticky tape on a piece of white card and arrange the leaves (or parts of the leaves if too big) in colour order from lightest green through to darkest green onto the tape. This gives a colour strip showing something of the diversity of plants in the local environment.

### Leaf collage

Draw a large leaf shape on an A4 piece of paper. Fill the leaf shape with as many different leaves found in the local environment glued on using PVA glue as a collage of plant diversity.

### Psalm of praise

Read Psalm 8 to the children. Using a large sheet of paper, create a "thought shower" of things in the natural world that the children would like to give thanks to God for. These might include favourite places, animals, food etc. Then, scribe the children's Psalm of praise beginning and ending with, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" And including the children's suggestions in the main body of the "Psalm". Read the joint piece of work together.

### Story Board

Read the story of creation from Genesis 1 to the group. You may prefer to use a children's version of the Bible or *The Message* for this. Provide an A3 piece of paper divided into six squares to the children, to work on in pairs or individually. Ask the children to draw the creation story in each of the boxes to represent the six days of creation, reminding them that the seventh day was a day of rest.

### Creation Cube

Read the story of creation from Genesis 1 to the group. You may prefer to use a children's version of the Bible or *The Message* for this. Provide the children with a cube net (template) on A4 card. On each face of the cube, draw one of the six days of creation. Cut out and make up the cube. Each toss of the cube will remind the children of a different aspect of the creation story.

### Flower collage pen pots

Provide the children with pictures of flowers from gardening magazines or seed catalogues etc and a cardboard cup. Use PVA glue to cover the cup with the flower pictures, which can then be used as a pen holder. As the children make the flower collage pen pots, discuss the diversity of plants in the world.

## Other activities for one session (continued)

### Wildlife garden

Use a corner of the garden, a window box or large plant pot to sow some wildflower seeds for the children to create and care for their own wildlife garden. Talk about the importance of providing the right environment for bees and other wildlife, how we depend on bees for pollination, the importance of supporting native species etc.

### Creation composition

Listen to the story of creation. Either make musical instruments out of junk modelling or use percussion instruments to produce a soundtrack for each aspect of the creation story. Reread the story with the children playing their soundtrack composition. This could then be recorded or videoed for the children to listen to or watch.



## Activities for more than one week

### Grow Your Own

Use a corner of the garden, a window box or large plant pot to sow some vegetables or fruit. Over the weeks, discuss with the children the factors needed for healthy growth of plants. Also talk about the problems of over farming, use of pesticides, Fair Trade, transporting crops from overseas etc.

### Food Diary

Ask the children to keep a diary of all the food they eat over the course of a week. Share some of these food diaries. Which plants and animals do we get our food from? E.g. wheat for bread, cocoa for chocolate etc. Highlight the fact that approximately 80% of our food supply comes from about 20 kinds of plants. Why could this be a problem? Discuss the potential of using a wider range of plants as a source of food, instead of so heavily relying on a few sources. Talk about how this may reduce the need for over farming and intensive farming, growing crops artificially, modifying crops.

### Habitats

One of the dangers facing biodiversity is the destruction of habitats. Research using the library or internet how to make wildlife habitats for our gardens, balconies, window boxes etc. For example: bird houses, ladybird and beetle habitats are simple and cheap to produce.

### Compost

We rely on the diversity of plants and animals as well as micro organisms to provide nutrients for fertile soils. Make a compost bin, recycling organic waste and using in gardening projects such as the wildlife garden or grow-your-own vegetable plot. Commercially produced compost bins or wormeries are reasonably cheap and easy to set up.

### Minibeast hunt

In the garden, local park or green area, go on a minibeast hunt. Keep a record of all the minibeasts observed by drawing or photographing them. Make a montage of the pictures, showing the diversity of creatures seen in the local environment.

### Creation Frieze

On a large piece of frieze paper (wall paper or lining paper could be used), make a frieze depicting the creation story using paint, coloured pens or collage. The same activity could be done on a large piece of fabric either sewing or gluing collage materials and pieces of fabric.

### Creation dance

Choose a piece of instrumental music for groups of children to devise a dance, depicting the creation story. The children may decide to narrate the story to accompany the dance or simply present the story through movement. This could then be videoed or performed for an audience of parents, other children etc.

### Creation News

Ask the children to imagine that they were reporting on the events of creation for a newspaper or TV broadcast. They could work in pairs to produce a newspaper report by hand or using the computer. They could also video their news broadcast, maybe interviewing Adam and Eve.