



Merry Lea

*Environmental Learning Center
of Goshen College*

Creation Care: A Brethren Perspective

Written by Jamie McBride

DESIGNED FOR:

Church of the Brethren Adults Sunday School or Wednesday Night Meetings

SUMMARY OF CURRICULUM

This curriculum is a five-session creation care curriculum designed to be used by Church of the Brethren Adults to dig into why Christians, specifically members of the Church of the Brethren, should care for the environment. Each session has a different focus. Session one focuses on stories in the Old Testament that point towards caring for the environment. The second session focuses on the New Testament, including how Jesus interacted with nature and its presence in his ministry. Session three focuses on the Church of the Brethren and similar traditions in other Anabaptist groups about simple living and peace and how we can apply those traditions in current times. Session four focuses on Climate Change, including official Statements the Church of the Brethren has made and other Climate Change facts. The fifth session focuses on resources the Church of the Brethren already has collected on their official website and other Christian and non-Christian religious groups we can work with to take care of the environment.

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Curriculum Background and Purpose

Who is the Church of the Brethren?

The Church of the Brethren is one of the three historical peace churches along with the Mennonites and Quakers. The Brethren have both Anabaptist and Pietist roots which affects how they approach theology. They do not have creeds and are a believer's church. Instead of creeds they use the New Testament and other sources to guide their traditions instead. These traditions include Baptisms and Love Feast. They also traditionally are very focused on serving others and following Jesus's example.

Why this curriculum?

This curriculum is the result of a year-long project created by Jamie McBride while she was pursuing her Master of Arts in Environmental Education. She had a desire to explore creation care from a specifically Church of the Brethren perspective and wanted to use that information to make something that could be used by the denomination. Since not everyone in the Church of the Brethren thinks of the environment as something that they are called to protect and care about, this curriculum is created to show how the Church of the Brethren tradition does support taking care of creation for more than just helping other humans. There have been other resources made by the Church of the Brethren, but Jamie had a want to synthesis this information as well as add some of her own thoughts about the topic from an environmental, Brethren perspective. It is meant to be an introduction to this material. This curriculum was partially inspired by the curriculum created by the Mennonite Creation Care Network, Every Creature Singing: Embracing the Good News for Planet Earth.

Materials Needed

- Notebooks or something to write on
- Pens, Pencils, or other writing utensils
- Printed out Bible verses or Bibles for reading verses session 1
- Printed out Bible verses of Bibles for reading verses session 2
- A whiteboard, chalkboard, or large sheet of paper and writing utensil.
- Guessing game sheet
- Other Brethren Environmental Recommendations List
- Qr Code sheets
- Access to cellphones, laptops, or other electronics that can access the internet.
- Optional: Projector or Television Screen

Session 1: Biblical Evidence in Genesis

Time required: 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

- **Notebooks or something to write on**
- **Pens, Pencils, or other writing utensils**
- **Printed out Bible verses or Bibles for reading verses**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to do the following:

- **Explain that God created and cares for all of creation.**
- **Examine biblical understandings of for God creating humans to care for creation.**
- **Understand stewardship's important role in taking care of creation.**
- **Defend how humans are part of nature and depend on the rest of nature for survival, so we should care for nature from a religious and scientific perspective.**
- **Assemble their own Brethren, environmental interpretations of select verses.**

Introduction (5-10 minutes)

- Explain that over five lessons, the participants will learn why we should care about the environment, or creation, according to Christian tradition, especially Brethren and Anabaptist traditions; the text in the Bible itself; and scientific facts. The curriculum will also draw directly from Annual Conference Statements and other official Brethren documents. The participants will also learn some of the ways they can care for the environment. This curriculum aims to introduce basic themes on creation care from a Brethren perspective and to present issues for further conversation and study.
- Explain that this first session is going to focus on Genesis using a Brethren, environmental perspective to examine them for why we as humans should care for the creation. Ask participants they and other people think about the idea of creation and the relationship between humanity and creation? What stories have you heard related to or think could be relevant to caring for creation?

Genesis (30-50 minutes)

1. Start the next part by explaining that they will read parts of Genesis. Explain that they will be broken into smaller groups, and each group will be given a group of verses to read from Genesis (attached at the bottom of the page). After reading the verse as a group, they will discuss what stood out to them while looking at it from a Brethren and environmental perspective. What is meant by this is drawing from the Church of the Brethren traditions, such as listening to the will of God through the scriptures and keeping in mind our service-focused, peaceful traditions while focusing on what they say about creation.¹ Examples could include what God told humans to do in the Garden of Eden or what God says about creation. Make paper available for writing down ideas, as some people find that helpful. It also might be helpful to go through one of the text first as a group to model what they are to do. (15-25 minutes)
2. After they are finished discussing, the group will come back together. Each group will have someone read the verses to the group and then discuss what they talked about during their breakout groups. As needed, bring up some of these other points/questions below if they are not addressed or to supplement what was said. Also, allow time for them to respond to each other's ideas and maybe add ideas they came up with as well (15-25 minutes)
 - a. In Genesis 1, it is mentioned humans were created in God's image and given commands to subdue the earth and rule over, or in some translations, have dominion over, all other animals (Gen 1: 26-28). What are some ways "created in God's image" and "dominion" have been understood? Some answers could be the following:
 - i. Humans have complete control to do what they want to with the land and everything that lives on the earth and are superior due to being made in God's image.
 - ii. As people created in God's image, we are supposed to serve as a stand-in for God, serving creation in God's stead.
 - iii. Dominion can also be seen as instead of being able to do with nature whatever we want instead of being put in charge to protect and care for nature. This is present in many other scriptures' use of the word dominion.²
 - iv. It can be understood that us caring for creation goes back to what being created in God's image means.
 - b. In Genesis 2, Adam is brought into the picture. In this story, it is mentioned that God put Adam in the Garden of Eden to care for the garden and work the land within it (Gen 2: 15). It is fair to assume that Eve helped Adam with this duty as it mentions Eve was to be a helper of Adam's. When taking both what Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 have to say, it seems to suggest while humans do have authority and power over the rest of creation, they should use this power to take care of creation, not abuse it.³ This also aligns with Brethren traditions of service as Brethren are called to use resources, talents, and their status that was given to them by God to help and serve others, which includes creation, instead of only themselves

¹ Church of the Brethren. (n.d.) *Beliefs*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/about/beliefs/>

² Bouma-Prediger, S. (2001). Is Christianity to Blame? In *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision For Creation Care*. Baker Academic, pp. 74-75.

³ The writer was introduced to this idea at her time at Bethany Seminary from a professor.

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in a way that imitates Jesus as Jesus used his authority and power to help and serve instead of destruction.⁴

- c. There is proof that God cares for all of creation. When Noah and his family leave the Ark, God makes a covenant not only with Noah's family but with all of creation that God will never destroy all life again on the earth.⁵ When God created each part of creation, God called it good. Both of these point toward God caring for all creation.

Stewardship and Dependence (5-10 minutes)

1. What we talked about in Genesis aligns with the idea of stewardship that is very prevalent in the Brethren tradition. Ask if they know what is meant by stewardship in this context. (To be a steward is to be responsible for the property and affairs of someone else.) This applies to us with the many gifts God has given us to use while we are on earth, including natural resources, thus caring for creation. Official Annual Conference statements of the Church of the Brethren have acknowledged that part of stewardship includes caring for the environment, all of creation.⁶
2. It is also clear from what we discussed that humans are part of creation and, thus, depend on other parts of creation for survival. Part of this is being in a sustainable relationship with each other, the rest of creation, and God.⁷ This aligns with the scientifically proven reality that humans are dependent on the ecosystems around us for survival. This is another reason we should care for the environment.

Reflection Questions (10-20 minutes)

These questions are intended for use at the end of the lesson. They can be printed out for participants to write on but can also be used in a discussion format. If there is no time to go over these questions, they can take them home, return with them for the next session, and discuss them at the beginning.

1. What were some of the interpretations that stuck out to you during the session? Were they new to you, or were they interpretations you had heard before?
2. What are your thoughts on observing these stories from an environmental and Brethren perspective? Have you done something similar to this before? Would you consider doing it again with other parts of the Bible?
3. What do you think about the connection to stewardship and dependence on the rest of creation in this context?

⁴ Church of the Brethren. (n.d.) *Beliefs*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/about/beliefs/>; Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. (1985). *Christian Stewardship, Responsible Freedom: 1985 Church of the Brethren Statement*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1985-christian-stewardship/>

⁵ Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. (1991). *Creation: Called to Care: 1991 Church of the Brethren Statement*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1991-creation-called-to-care/>

⁶ Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. (1985). *Christian Stewardship, Responsible Freedom: 1985 Church of the Brethren Statement*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1985-christian-stewardship/>

⁷ Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. (1991). *Creation: Called to Care: 1991 Church of the Brethren Statement*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1991-creation-called-to-care/>

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Scripture

Genesis 1:24-31 (NRSVue)

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind and the cattle of every kind and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

²⁷ So God created humans in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." ²⁹ God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 2:8-9, 15-22 (NRSVue)

⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." ¹⁹ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all cattle and to the birds of the air and to every animal of the field, but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Genesis 9:8-17 (NRSVue)

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.^[a] ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹²God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Session 2: The New Testament and Jesus

Time required: 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Printed out Bible verses of Bibles for reading verses

LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to do the following:

- Explain the importance to the Church of the Brethren that members follow Jesus's example and that the Brethren "have no creed but the New Testament."
- Understand that the New Testament is focused on more than just humans.
- Examine what it means that Jesus did much of his teaching outside and traveled on foot outdoors.
- Recognize that Jesus's most profound spiritual moments, such as the 40 days in the wilderness and Jesus's Transfiguration were when Jesus was emersed in the natural world.
- Much of what Jesus talks about in parables and other teachings includes nature.
- Analyze what it means for everything to be created with, in, and through Jesus and that God reconciles all things through Jesus.

OTHER INFORMATION FOR THIS LESSON:

Ideally, you will want to do some, if not all, of this lesson outside. Depending on the weather, you might want to warn people ahead of time that you will be heading outside.

Introduction/Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- Allow time at the beginning of the session to reflect on the last session, including reflection questions if not addressed last session.
- Briefly remind the participants that last session, you talked about evidence in Genesis from an environmental, Brethren view. Talk about some of the major points while allowing others to share some of what they remember from the last session.
- Mention that today's focus will be on Brethren understanding of the importance of following Jesus's example and the idea that the Brethren "have no creed but the New Testament." It will also focus on Jesus's connection to nature as well as how parts of the New Testament focus on more than just humans.

Brethren Beliefs (5-10 minutes)

1. When describing what Brethren believe, sometimes people will mention that Brethren "have no creed but the New Testament." Ask if others have heard this phrase before. This is acknowledged in multiple versions of the Brethren's Card, a card created to help explain what the Brethren believe. The last revision was approved by Annual Conference in 1923.⁸ This acknowledges the importance of the New Testament in shaping Brethren beliefs and practices.
2. Jesus is an integral part of the New Testament, and another Brethren emphasis is that people are to follow Jesus's example. We are to imitate Jesus's teachings and actions. These involve serving and loving others. Some of the ways Brethren have shown this is through our quick response to natural disasters and many of the programs that were started by Brethren, such as Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) and Heifer International, formerly Heifer Project. What other projects or organizations can you think of that the Brethren have created/used to serve others?

Ways of Understanding the New Testament (5-10 minutes)

1. Mention that people understand the New Testament, in different ways. Ask what some people in the group understand to be the main focus of the New Testament and Jesus's actions and/or other views they have heard others mention.
2. Some of the following can be mentioned:
 - a. It is common for people to think that the New Testament is only focused on humans, but it is more than that.⁹
 - b. Mention that a common way of understanding the New Testament is that Jesus's actions, such as preaching, teaching, healing the sick, being crucified, and rising from the dead primarily pertain to humans as well. Some go so far as to say that the primary goal is to save human souls, and what happens to the earth does not matter.¹⁰

⁸ Brown, D.W. (2005). *Another Way of Believing: A Brethren Theology*. Brethren Press, pp.7-11.

⁹ Schrock, J.H. (2014). *Every Creature Singing: Embracing the Good News for Planet Earth*. Mennonite Creation Care Network. <https://www.mennocreationcare.org/every-creature-singing/>, Session 2 2-1.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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- c. Other people use the New Testament as a tool to work on issues such as climate change or peacemaking, focusing entirely on the here and now and ignoring parts that do not support or aid their cause.¹¹
 - d. Some acknowledge that the New Testament cares about more than just humans. It is also concerned with all parts of creation.
 - e. Some acknowledge that humans were more immersed in the created world during the time of the New Testament. This context is assumed and can be lost on modern audiences.
3. But what we need to acknowledge is that none of these views or anyone's understanding is the entire gospel. It is hard to fully grasp the whole gospel, but we can start to make strides in the right direction.

Jesus the Hiker (15-30 minutes)¹² (If the weather is nice enough, I encourage this part to be outside. You could alternatively walk around the church inside if the weather is not great.)

1. Mention you are going to go outside. Have everyone follow you either to a designated spot and teach there, teach while walking around outside, or do a combination of both.
2. One thing that is often overlooked is Jesus the Hiker. Jesus traveled mainly on foot, so he experienced the natural world daily. He often slept outside on his way to places. Jesus did much of his teaching outside in nature. He walked and taught along lakeshores. He even recruited some of the disciples along a lakeshore. He went into the wilderness for 40 days and had a spiritual experience. He went to remote places to pray and to refresh himself. He climbed up a mountain to the sight of the Transfiguration. He walked through fields.
3. Many of Jesus's parables and other teachings were often centered on the natural world. Some of these parables include the mustard seed, the barren fig tree, and the vineyard with workers. He also uses the examples of God caring for ravens, wildflowers, and grasses (Luke 12:24-29). This one also enforces the idea that God cares for all of creation, including humans. Ask them if there are other parables that fit this pattern that they would like to mention.
4. As Brethren are supposed to model ourselves after Jesus, nature seems an important part of Jesus's experiences and teaching. (You can stay out or head back in after this.)

Jesus the Center of Creation (5-10 minutes)¹³

1. Jesus as Christ is understood as the center of all creation. Jesus is the creator, the first of creation, as well as the redeemer. Everything is created with, in, and through Christ, and through Jesus, everything is held together. Just as humans are renewed and reconciled through Jesus, creation is as well.
2. Do you agree with this? What does this mean to you?

New Testament Scripture Relating to all Creation (10-15 minutes)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The base ideas of this comes from Every Creature Sings Session 2 2-2 thought 2-3 but is expanded on in different ways.

¹³ Schrock, J.H. (2014). *Every Creature Singing: Embracing the Good News for Planet Earth*. Mennonite Creation Care Network. <https://www.mennocreationcare.org/every-creature-singing/>, Session 2 2-3 and 2-4.

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1. As we focused on last week, there are verses in the New Testament that point towards God caring for all of creation and point towards all of creation being redeemed, not just humans.
2. One verse is John 3:16. Most people know the verse, so have everyone say the verse together.
 - John 3:16 (NRSVue) “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” Ask what they notice about this verse that relates to caring for all creation. (This verse does not just say humans, it says God loves the world and that Jesus was given for the whole world, not just humans.)
3. Another group of verses that we will note is Romans 8:18-25. Read the verses yourself or have others read them.

Romans 8:18-25

¹⁸I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, ²⁰for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor, ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

(Creation is included in the waiting for the redemption that is yet to come based on this verse.)

4. As Brethren, we should take seriously what is revealed in the New Testament, which makes it clear that the rest of creation is important too.

Challenge

Encourage the participants in the next week to spend some time in nature while spending some personal time with God and/or reflecting on what we discussed in this session. They can do this by observing nature, meditating in nature, going for a walk or hike, reading the Bible in nature, or just being in nature. Tell them to come back with this experience next week.

Session 3: Living as a Christian: Striving for Peace and Simple Living

Time required: 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

- **Something large to brainstorm on and something such as a marker to write ideas down with. Things that could be used include a whiteboard, chalkboard, or large sheet of paper.**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to do the following:

- **Describe Brethren and other Anabaptist groups' tradition of simply living.**
- **Analyze how the Brethren have changed in their actions in current times compared to the past.**
- **Explain that Shalom means more than just the English word for peace.**
- **Interpret what living simply can mean today.**
- **Assemble ideas of what simple living and being a peace church means in a modern Brethren context and how it could be beneficial to our goal of minimizing our negative impacts on nature.**

Introduction/Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- Allow time at the beginning of the session to reflect on the last session, including time to reflect on the time they spent in nature.
- The previous sessions have laid the groundwork for why we should care about the environment and creation as a whole based on Brethren traditions and what is in the Bible (New and Old Testament). Tell the participants they will discuss some of the Brethren and other Anabaptist traditional ways of living and what we can do in our daily lives to help the environment, adapting these traditions to our current time of living.

Traditional Brethren and Anabaptist Living (20-30 minutes)

1. As mentioned in previous sessions, the Brethren and other Anabaptist traditions are rooted in stewardship. Another important tradition that Brethren and other Anabaptist groups like the Mennonites have traditionally embraced is simple living. How do you understand what it means to live simply? Living simply could include how it has been thought of in the past or how you personally see it today. As needed, here are some ideas for responses.
 - a. Living within your means.
 - b. Having what you need to survive.
 - c. Buying only what you need.
 - d. Not living extravagantly.
 - e. Simple dress.
 - f. Farming/living off the land is something that Brethren and other Anabaptist groups often did in the past.¹⁴
 - g. Avoiding “worldly” things
 - h. They focused on gaining spiritual riches by giving their lives and wealth to God’s service.¹⁵
2. How might some of these practices have minimized the early Brethren’s impact on the environment? Some ideas include the following:
 - a. They might have impacted less land because they lived within their means, meaning they likely did not have extravagant houses.
 - b. They had less possession, meaning fewer materials are mined from the Earth.
 - c. Farming is a lot of work, so they did less travel.
3. Some offshoot groups have continued these traditions, such as the Amish for Mennonites and Old German Baptist Brethren for the Church of the Brethren.¹⁶ What are the ways they have continued to not conform to the world?
 - a. These groups continue to not conform to the world, mainly staying in their local community, farming the land, wearing simple clothing, and limiting their access to things such as the internet and cell phones.
4. The Church of the Brethren is also one of the three historic peace churches, along with the Mennonites and Quakers. This can be extended to Shalom, which, while traditionally translated as the English word peace, includes much more. Ask them if they have any ideas of what Shalom can include.
 - a. It includes harmonious relationships, non-anxious presence, peace with God, peace as God’s blessing, prosperity, righteousness and justice, safety, the absence of war and violence, well-being, wholeness, to die in peace, good and favorable, and friendship.¹⁷
5. Make sure to mention that this extended meaning of peace is something that Brethren should consider in their understanding of what it means to be a peace church and to include both humans and other parts of creation in these ideas.

¹⁴ Kline, D. (2000). God’s Spirit and a Theology for Living. In C. Redekop (Ed.), *Creation & the Environment: An Anabaptist Perspective on a Sustainable World*. (pp 61-69). The Johns Hopkins University Press.

¹⁵ Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. (1996). *Simple Life: 1996 Church of the Brethren Statement*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1996-simple-life/>

¹⁶ Gordon, R. J. (2020). *Brethren Groups*. Church of the Brethren Network. <https://www.cob-net.org/docs/groups.htm>

¹⁷ Leiter, D.A. (2007). *Neglected Voices: Peace in the Old Testament* [Kindle edition]. Herald Press.

Current Brethren and Anabaptist living (5-10 minutes)

1. The Church of the Brethren has changed how they live in the modern day. Ask what some of the ways the Brethren's lifestyle has changed in recent times. Make sure to mention the following and allow others to voice their views.
 - a. The Church of the Brethren and other Anabaptists have left farms and the land, ceasing to be people of the Earth as they have been in the past. Some have started to exploit nature instead of nurturing it.¹⁸
 - b. The Church of the Brethren has strayed from simple living, with more Brethren finding themselves much wealthier than their counterparts in the past. It is also important to acknowledge that taxes we pay in the United States go towards violence in the form of paying for current, past, and future wars. These destroy life and global resources, including natural resources and creation.
 - c. Much of our lives are spent producing, consuming, and working towards possession and prestige instead of giving ourselves time to know ourselves, interacting with others, and interacting with God.¹⁹
 - d. We are consuming more than our fair share, impacting others negatively. Our current state of living cannot be sustained and is destroying the environment.
 - e. The gap between the rich and poor in Brethren circles has increased.²⁰
 - f. The Brethren are finding themselves in privileged seats, unlike the Brethren who fled Germany to the United States for religious freedom. Ask if there is anything anyone else would like to add about the current state of the Church of the Brethren.

Simple Living Today (30-40 minutes)

1. Brainstorming Activity
 - a. As a group, brainstorm what simple living and being a peace church means in our modern context, especially in ways that affect the environment. As the leader, you will write these ideas on the whiteboard, chalkboard, large sheet of paper, or however you are doing this brainstorming.
 - b. Here are some ideas to help get the participants thinking if needed.
 - i. You could minimize the use of your car by carpooling with others.
 - ii. If you live close enough to work, walk or bike instead.
 - iii. Minimize the amount you drive your car by doing as much as you reasonably can in one trip.
 - iv. If you are going to eat out, bring a reusable container for leftovers instead of using a takeout box.
 - v. Try to buy food locally to minimize the resources used to get the food to you.
 - vi. Don't upgrade to the newest version of technology, such as the latest phone, if your current one works fine.
 - vii. Instead of buying new clothes, buy clothes from a thrift shop

¹⁸ Kline, D. (2000). God's Spirit and a Theology for Living. In C. Redekop (Ed.), *Creation & the Environment: An Anabaptist Perspective on a Sustainable World*. (pp 61-69). The Johns Hopkins University Press.

¹⁹ Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. (1980). *Christian Lifestyle: 1980 Church of the Brethren Statement*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1980-christian-lifestyle/>

²⁰ Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. (1996). *Simple Life: 1996 Church of the Brethren Statement*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1996-simple-life/>

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- viii. Repurpose old items
- ix. Avoid Impulse buying
- x. Buy locally
- xi. Carpool

Challenge

Challenge participants to continue to ponder what it means to be living simply as a member of the Church of the Brethren in today's society and encourage them to try to implement what they brainstormed into their everyday lives.

Session 4: Climate Change and its Impact on Others

Time required: 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

- **Guessing game sheet**
- **Other Brethren Environmental Recommendations List**
- **Pens, Pencils, or other writing utensils**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to do the following:

- **Understand that the Church of the Brethren has made statements and resolutions acknowledging Climate Change in the past.**
- **Examine how Climate Change affects not only nature but has a profound effect on other humans, especially the poor.**
- **Evaluate how Jesus shows us that we need to care for other humans, especially the poor, and that caring for other humans involves trying to minimize climate change.**

Introduction/Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- Allow for time to reflect on simple living and if they did anything this last week or if they thought of anything else.
- Remind them that the last three sessions were about biblical resources and Brethren traditions that support caring for the environment.
- Explain that during this session, the participants will be learning about the official stances of the church on climate change by looking at official Church of the Brethren documents as well as other scientific supporting information. They will also learn some suggested changes that the Church of the Brethren and others suggest being made to mitigate or adapt to climate change.

Official Stance of the Church of the Brethren (5-10 minutes)

1. Ask if they are aware of official stances of the Church of the Brethren on climate change and action that can be taken. If so, allow them to mention what they know. You should make sure to mention the following ones and that they are the resources that are being drawn from today:
 - a. Two General Board Resolutions on Global Warming and Climate Change
 - b. The 1991 Annual Conference Statement *Creation: Called to Care*
 - c. The 2018 Annual Conference Statement *Creation Care*
 - d. *A Study Resource on Climate Change for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Query on Climate Change* was made in response to a 2010 Annual Conference query.

Activity: Guessing game (40-60 minutes)

1. Explain that next, we will look at facts and quotes present in these statements as well as other information about climate change. Let them know some of the statements are older. You will hand out the attached guessing game worksheet to everyone in the group. You will instruct people from the group to read out the statements one at a time. You will get volunteers or choose different people to read each statement. After the person reads out the information, members of the group will vote whether they think this information or quote is from a Brethren statement or resolution or not. Once they have decided this, you will tell them if they are correct. You will then discuss the statement as a group, adding the extra information not in the statements you handed out as needed and allowing them to talk about the information. Below is the answer key with the additional information you can mention. If you do not get through all of them, you can quickly tell them which are Brethren statements and which are not. The **words in red** are the extra information you can share. **B** means it is in Brethren official documents, and **O** means it is not.
 1. **B** Climate change majorly affects the poor. **Specifically, the poor are especially affected by increased carriers, or vectors, of diseases.²¹ It is also noted to affect people in poverty the most and makes it harder to escape poverty.²² Jesus told us to take care of others, especially the poor, and often help people meet their physical needs before their spiritual needs.²³ If the poor are being affected by climate change, we should work to prevent climate change which is affecting their physical needs. (Church of the Brethren Study Resources on Climate Change & Creation Care: 2018 Annual Conference Statement)**

²¹ Church of the Brethren. (n.d.) *A Study Resource on Climate Change for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Query on Climate Change*. <https://www.brethren.org/peacebuilding/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2021/11/climate-change-study-resource.pdf>, pp. 2.

²² Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. (2018). *Creation Care: 2018 Church of the Brethren Statement*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2018-creation-care/>

²³ Church of the Brethren. (n.d.) *A Study Resource on Climate Change for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Query on Climate Change*. <https://www.brethren.org/peacebuilding/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2021/11/climate-change-study-resource.pdf>, pp. 6

2. O As the Earth warms, more ice melts around the Earth. The melting of ice causes less solar energy, or sunlight, from being reflected back into space which could cause the Earth to warm more. This is known as albedo.²⁴ (UCAR Center For Science Education)
3. B The Earth's average temperature is warming. This is causing heat waves that have killed thousands and affected agriculture, increasing food prices and the chance of forest fires.²⁵ It is attributed to human activities releasing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. While there is natural variability in year-to-year and decade-to-decade weather, the average temperature is still trending warmer.²⁶ (Church of the Brethren Study Resources on Climate Change)
4. B The severity of storms has increased in frequency and severity, and sea levels are rising. It also contributes to violent conflicts worldwide, with the frequency and severity increase of wildfires, floods, storms, and droughts making vital resources scarce.²⁷ (Church of the Brethren Study Resources on Climate Change)
5. O "Humans can adapt to climate change by reducing their vulnerability to its impacts. Actions such as moving to higher ground to avoid rising sea levels, planting new crops that will thrive under new climate conditions, or using new building technologies represent adaptation strategies."²⁸ (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)
6. B Climate change has caused other parts of creation to adapt or die. This includes seeking out new food resources and changing migration patterns.²⁹ (Church of the Brethren Study Resources on Climate Change)
7. B "Humans societies must learn to draw on energy sources in ways that do not damage the capacity of the Earth to meet the needs of current or future generations[.]"³⁰ (Church of the Brethren General Board Statement Resolution on Global Warming/Climate Change 2001)
8. B Climate change and burning fossil fuels directly impact people's health. This is especially true for those who are very old, very young, and living in poverty. Premature deaths are happening in the United States, with Tens of thousands of Americans dying prematurely each year from respiratory

²⁴ UCAR Center For Science Education. (n.d.) *Albedo and Climate*. <https://scied.ucar.edu/learning-zone/how-climate-works/albedo-and-climate#:~:text=But%2C%20when%20warming%20causes%20snow,as%20the%20ice%20Dalbedo%20feedback>.

²⁵ Church of the Brethren. (n.d.) *A Study Resource on Climate Change for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Query on Climate Change*. <https://www.brethren.org/peacebuilding/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2021/11/climate-change-study-resource.pdf>, pp. 2.

²⁶ Church of the Brethren. (n.d.) *A Study Resource on Climate Change for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Query on Climate Change*. <https://www.brethren.org/peacebuilding/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2021/11/climate-change-study-resource.pdf>, pp. 3.

²⁷ Church of the Brethren. (n.d.) *A Study Resource on Climate Change for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Query on Climate Change*. <https://www.brethren.org/peacebuilding/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2021/11/climate-change-study-resource.pdf>, pp. 2.; Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. (2018). *Creation Care: 2018 Church of the Brethren Statement*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2018-creation-care/>

²⁸ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (n.d). *GP f Strategies of human adaptation to climate change*. Climate.gov <https://www.climate.gov/teaching/literacy/gp-f-strategies-human-adaptation-climate-change#:~:text=Humans%20can%20adapt%20to%20climate,buiding%20technologies%20represent%20adaptation%20strategies>.

²⁹ Church of the Brethren. (n.d.) *A Study Resource on Climate Change for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Query on Climate Change*. <https://www.brethren.org/peacebuilding/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2021/11/climate-change-study-resource.pdf>, pp. 2.

³⁰ Church of the Brethren General Board. (2001, March 10-13). *Resolution on Global Warming/Climate Change*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/mmb/statements/>

and cardiovascular diseases due to air pollution. “Globally, premature deaths number in the millions. Poor air quality also leads to infant mortality, low birth weights, asthma, and cancer.”³¹ (Creation Care: 2018 Annual Conference Statement)

9. O The average global precipitation over land has increased. Specifically, since 1950 it has likely increased with it increasing at a faster rate since the 1980s.³² (IPCC Summary on Climate Change for Policymaker 2021)
10. B “The generation and use of energy must be determined primarily by the needs of all people for a good quality of life, placing priority on appropriate and accessible energy for the world’s poor[.]”³³ (Church of the Brethren General Board Statement Resolution on Global Warming/Climate Change 2001)
11. O As our climate continues to change, it is possible that some of the currents that are driven by changes in the ocean temperature and saltiness will slow down or stop, which could have negative effects on different places around the world.³⁴ This is called thermohaline circulation; these currents are sometimes called the “global conveyor belt.”³⁵ People seem to be the most worried about the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, or AMOC, which warms various parts of the globe, carries nutrients that ocean life needs to survive, and appears to be weakening.³⁶ (IPCC Summary on Climate Change for Policymaker 2021 & National Ocean Service)
12. O “Mitigating climate change is about reducing the release of greenhouse gas emissions that are warming our planet. Mitigation strategies include retrofitting buildings to make them more energy efficient; adopting renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and small hydro; helping cities develop

³¹ Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. (2018). *Creation Care: 2018 Church of the Brethren Statement*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2018-creation-care/>

³² IPCC. (2021). Summary for Policymakers. In V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S.L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M.I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J.B.R. Matthews, T.K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, & B. Zhou (eds.), *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (pp. 3–32). Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781009157896.001. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM.pdf, pp. 4.

³³ Church of the Brethren General Board. (2001, March 10-13). *Resolution on Global Warming/Climate Change*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/mmb/statements/>

³⁴ IPCC. (2021). Summary for Policymakers. In V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S.L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M.I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J.B.R. Matthews, T.K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, & B. Zhou (eds.), *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (pp. 3–32). Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781009157896.001. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM.pdf, pp. 27;

National Ocean Service. (2023, January 20). *What is the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)?* <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/amoc.html>

³⁵ National Ocean Service. (2023, January 20). *What is the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)?* <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/amoc.html>; National Ocean Service. (n.d.) *What is the global ocean conveyor belt?* <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/conveyor.html>

³⁶ National Ocean Service. (2023, January 20). *What is the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)?* <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/amoc.html>; National Ocean Service. (n.d.) *What is the global ocean conveyor belt?* <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/conveyor.html>; IPCC. (2021). Summary for Policymakers. In V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S.L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M.I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J.B.R. Matthews, T.K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, & B. Zhou (eds.), *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (pp. 3–32). Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781009157896.001. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM.pdf, pp. 27.

more sustainable transport such as bus rapid transit, electric vehicles, and biofuels; and promoting more sustainable uses of land and forests.”³⁷ (Global Environment Facility)

13. **B** [Brethren congregations are to reaffirm our belief] “[t]hat we are called by God to live in harmony with all of creation, and that our covenantal relationship to care for the creation requires us to be aware of present and impending threats to our environment and to take action to preserve the integrity of creation.”³⁸ This seems to refer to what we sometimes call stewardship. (Church of the Brethren General Board Statement Resolution on Global Warming and Atmospheric Degradation 1991)
14. **O** While poor communities contribute significantly less to climate change than richer communities, climate change impacts them the most.³⁹ (Celia Deane-Drummond’s Book Eco-Theology)

Other Brethren Environmental Recommendations (5-10 minutes)

1. There are other recommendations in these documents for actions to take. Two of these are the 1991 Resolution on Global Warming and Atmospheric Degradation and the 2018 Creation Care Annual Conference Statement. If you have time, allow the participants to rank what is most important to least important on these lists. Here are some of them from the 1991 Resolution on Global Warming and Atmospheric Degradation:
 - Increasing awareness of the negative ecological consequences of continuing reliance on fossil fuels, and by expanding ongoing educational efforts that lead to action;
 - Encouraging the building and renovating of our homes and church facilities and camp buildings to be energy efficient and initiating new programs of energy conservation and awareness, including alternatives to fossil fuels;
 - Using public transportation, carpooling, and telephone conferencing in order to reduce fossil fuel consumption;
 - Becoming ecologically aware consumers by using diets and products that consume less energy in production, transportation, packaging, and use;
 - Devoting maximum effort to the separation and recycling of household goods, while also reducing waste and toxic materials;
 - Encouraging office energy audits and recycling programs (particularly paper and paper products).
2. The 2018 Creation Care Annual Conference Statement recommends the following:
 - Install or purchase renewable energy.
 - Host educational community events about topics such as weatherization, renewable energy, or climate change. These events may provide both a useful service and serve as community outreach.

³⁷ Global Environment Facility. (n.d.). *Climate Change Mitigation*. <https://www.thegef.org/what-we-do/topics/climate-change-mitigation>

³⁸ Church of the Brethren General Board. (1991, October 21). *Resolution on Global Warming and Atmospheric Degradation*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/mmb/statements/>

³⁹ Deane-Drummond, C. (2008). Trends in Ecology and Environment. In *Eco-Theology*. Longman & Todd LTD.

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- Take part in community action to increase renewable energy use or increase efficiency (e.g., weatherization).
- Invest in energy efficiency projects for church facilities.
- Advocate for local, state, and federal actions to increase efficiency and use of renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting the most vulnerable.
- Educate and build awareness in the congregation over the long term.
- Publicize congregational actions to demonstrate that this is a moral and faith issue, not a political debate.
- Consider how congregations' financial investments impact climate change.
- Carefully and prayerfully consider energy use and how it may be reduced.
- Choose to live simply. Remember that personal fulfillment doesn't come from consuming more.

Challenge

Encourage the participants if they have time and have the desire to look over the four Brethren documents you mentioned earlier. These are at the bottom of the printout sheet to help people find them more easily.

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1. Climate change majorly affects the poor.
2. As the Earth warms, more ice melts around the Earth. The melting of ice causes less solar energy, or sunlight, from being reflected back into space which could cause the Earth to warm more.
3. The Earth's average temperature is warming.
4. The severity of storms has increased in frequency and severity, and sea levels are rising.
5. "Humans can adapt to climate change by reducing their vulnerability to its impacts. Actions such as moving to higher ground to avoid rising sea levels, planting new crops that will thrive under new climate conditions, or using new building technologies represent adaptation strategies."
6. Climate change has caused other parts of creation to adapt or die.
7. "Humans societies must learn to draw on energy sources in ways that do not damage the capacity of the Earth to meet the needs of current or future generations[.]"
8. Climate change and burning fossil fuels directly impact people's health.
9. The average global precipitation over land has increased.
10. "The generation and use of energy must be determined primarily by the needs of all people for a good quality of life, placing priority on appropriate and accessible energy for the world's poor[.]"
11. As our climate continues to change, it is possible that some of the currents that are driven by changes in the ocean temperature and saltiness will slow down or stop, which could have negative effects on different places around the world.
12. "Mitigating climate change is about reducing the release of greenhouse gas emissions that are warming our planet. Mitigation strategies include retrofitting buildings to make them more energy efficient; adopting renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and small hydro; helping cities develop more sustainable transport such as bus rapid transit, electric vehicles, and biofuels; and promoting more sustainable uses of land and forests."
13. [Brethren congregations are to reaffirm our belief] "[t]hat we are called by God to live in harmony with all of creation, and that our covenantal relationship to care for the creation requires us to be aware of present and impending threats to our environment and to take action to preserve the integrity of creation."
14. While poor communities contribute significantly less to climate change than richer communities, climate change impacts them the most.

Brethren Resources:

A Study Resource on Climate Change for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Query on Climate Change. <https://www.brethren.org/peacebuilding/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2021/11/climate-change-study-resource.pdf>

Creation Care: 2018 Church of the Brethren Statement. <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2018-creation-care/>

General Board Resolutions. <https://www.brethren.org/mmb/statements/>

1991 Resolution on Global Warming and Atmospheric Degradation:

- Increasing awareness of the negative ecological consequences of continuing reliance on fossil fuels, and by expanding ongoing educational efforts that lead to action;
- Encouraging the building and renovating of our homes and church facilities and camp buildings to be energy efficient and initiating new programs of energy conservation and awareness, including alternatives to fossil fuels;
- Using public transportation, carpooling, and telephone conferencing in order to reduce fossil fuel consumption;
- Becoming ecologically aware consumers by using diets and products that consume less energy in production, transportation, packaging, and use;
- Devoting maximum effort to the separation and recycling of household goods, while also reducing waste and toxic materials;
- Encouraging office energy audits and recycling programs (particularly paper and paper products).

2018 Creation Care Annual Conference Statement recommends the following:

- Install or purchase renewable energy.
- Host educational community events about topics such as weatherization, renewable energy, or climate change. These events may provide both a useful service and serve as community outreach.
- Take part in community action to increase renewable energy use or increase efficiency (e.g., weatherization).
- Invest in energy efficiency projects for church facilities.
- Advocate for local, state, and federal actions to increase efficiency and use of renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting the most vulnerable.
- Educate and build awareness in the congregation over the long term.
- Publicize congregational actions to demonstrate that this is a moral and faith issue, not a political debate.
- Consider how congregations' financial investments impact climate change.
- Carefully and prayerfully consider energy use and how it may be reduced.
- Choose to live simply. Remember that personal fulfillment doesn't come from consuming more.



A Study Resource on Climate Change for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Query on Climate Change



Creation Care: 2018 Church of the Brethren Statement.



General Board Resolutions

Session 5: Working Together with Others to Save God's Creation

Time required: 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

- **Qr Code sheet**
- **Access to cellphones, laptops, or other electronics that can access the internet**
- **Something to record findings on, such as a whiteboard, piece of paper, etc., and something to write with.**
- **If you have access to a projector or television screen you can project on, this could also be helpful while discussing the websites for a visual.**
- **Pens, Pencils, or other writing utensils**
- **Notebooks or something to write on**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to do the following:

- **Acknowledge Brethren resources that are currently available.**
- **Recognize that we need the help of others outside of Brethren circles to take care of nature.**
- **Describe why we cannot only do it by ourselves and how we must work with other Christian denominations and religious groups.**
- **Compare what people from other denominations and religions believe to our own traditions and find similarities that we can draw from to work together to protect God's creation.**

- **Investigate local, nationwide, and/or worldwide websites/resources of other denominations/religions or interfaith groups that we could look into teaming up with.**

Introduction (5-10 minutes)

- Allow brief time for people to share if they dug further into Brethren official documents.
- In previous sessions, we discussed how we, as Brethren, can approach our traditions and the Bible in a way that supports taking care of creation and official statements about climate change from the Church of the Brethren. It is great that we can draw from our tradition and work as individuals and a denomination to care for creation. However, just us working towards this goal in our own circles is not enough.
- The Brethren reach can only extend so far, and our resources are limited. A way to extend our reach and help more of the environment and people are teaming up with others outside of the denomination. While we will be exploring resources the denomination has compiled as resources for the denomination to use, we will also be exploring information provided by the denomination and other resources about other religious groups we can work with. Hand out and explain that the Qr codes are linked to the websites we will be talking about today. Note that they are labeled and show how to use Qr codes to people who do not know how as needed. Explain that they can look at the websites as we talk about them using these codes if they want. You can help direct people to websites later during an activity we will be doing later.

Brethren Resources (5-10 minutes)

1. To start, we need to acknowledge resources the Church of the Brethren has already pulled together, Brethren and otherwise, that the church can draw from. The specific resource we will be looking at was created by the Creation Care Study Committee that was formed as the result of an Annual Conference query in the mid-2010s. Mention it is the first Qr code. This webpage's purpose is to have resources that were "carefully selected to contain reliable and accurate information, maintain a non-partisan viewpoint, and not conflict with Brethren values."⁴⁰
2. This website includes multiple resources. These include faith resources, financial information, information about renewable energy, ways to increase energy efficiency, and comprehensive resources. It even includes some other Christian denominations and interfaith groups we can work with.

Other Christian Denominations/Groups (5-10 minutes)

1. One group mentioned on the Brethren resource is the Mennonite Creation Care Network or MCCN. Ask if anyone has heard of the Mennonite Creation Care Network or what they think this group does. MCCN is affiliated with the Mennonite Church USA and the Mennonite Church Canada. As you likely know, Brethren are often compared to Mennonites as we share many common values. This group mainly focuses on the Mennonite community but welcomes people who want to be part of a faith-based network of people caring for creation.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Creation Care Study Committee. (n.d.). *Answering Christ's Call to love our neighbors*. Church of the Brethren. <https://www.brethren.org/peacebuilding/creationcare/>

⁴¹ Mennonite Creation Care Network. (n.d). *Bridging Cross and Creation: Get To Know Us*. <https://www.mennocreationcare.org/about/goals/>

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2. Another Christian group not mentioned on the Church of the Brethren website is the Evangelical Environmental Network or EEN. Ask if anyone has heard of this group. The EEN mission is to mobilize, educate, and inspire “Christians in their efforts to care for God’s creation, to be faithful stewards of God’s provision, to get involved in regions of the United States and the world impacted by pollution, and to advocate for actions and policies that honor God and protect the environment.” They draw from Biblical teachings to “tend the garden” and the desire to follow and be faithful to Jesus.⁴² This understanding seems to align with some of what we talked about in previous sessions about the Bible and following Jesus’s example.

What Groups are Currently Out There and What You Can Do (35-50 minutes)

1. Still, we need to push to work with people beyond other Christians. We must work with or learn from people from other religions, such as Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus.
2. There are interfaith organizations already working on this, such as Interfaith Power & Light. This is one of the organizations mentioned on the creation care website that is a national program.⁴³ There are also more local groups, such as Faith in Place, which focus on Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin.⁴⁴ Ask if there are other groups people are familiar with in the area like this.
3. Activity: Browsing the Internet for Resources (10-20 minutes)
 - a. They will need to get out their electronics if they have not been using them already. Explain that they will now be time to look into the groups and webpages we discussed or other similar groups. These could be interfaith groups that our congregation could join or other religious groups that we could team up with. They can be local, national, or international. While doing this, look for similarities to our traditions and beliefs that we can draw from to help make it easier to work together. You can do this yourself or in groups of two or three as desired. Feel free to look into the ones that you have Qr code links to but feel free to expand beyond that as well. Mention we did not cover all of the Qr code links and that some are for a jumping-off point beyond what we discussed.⁴⁵
 - b. After searching for a while, everyone can share their findings and discuss them with the whole group. You can also have the group share their findings as they go if you want to take that approach.

Challenge

Encourage participants to continue looking into other groups they can team up with to help take care of creation individually and possibly continue exploring this as a group.

⁴² Evangelical Environmental Network (n.d.). *Mission & History*. <https://creationcare.org/who-we-are/mission.html>

⁴³ Interfaith Power & Light. (n.d.). *About Interfaith Power & Light*. <https://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/about/>

⁴⁴ Faith in Place. (n.d.). About Us. <https://www.faithinplace.org/who-we-are>
<https://blessedtomorrow.org/>

⁴⁵ Blessed Tomorrow. (n.d.). *About Blessed Tomorrow*. <https://blessedtomorrow.org/about-blessed-tomorrow/>; Unitarian Universalist Office. (n.d.). *Climate & Environmental Justice*. <https://www.uua.org/environment>



Brethren Creation Care Study Committee Resource



Mennonite Creation Care Network



Evangelical Environmental Network



Faith In Place



Interfaith Power & Light



Unitarian Universalist Association



Blessed Tomorrow

References & Additional Resources

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