

Planning a *Mindful Living* Gathering

Clean air, water, and soil are gifts from God that keep us and the entire interdependent web of God's precious Creation healthy and thriving. When toxic chemicals contaminate these gifts or our bodies, they contribute to poor environmental health for humankind and the rest of Creation. Over the last ten years, new science has emerged that links low-dose exposure of toxic chemicals to health conditions including cancer, obesity, infertility, and autism. Many of these toxic chemicals are found, surprisingly, in everyday products such as plastic, baby bottles, furniture, personal care products, and some children's toys.

We invite you and your faith community to host a two-hour Mindful Living Gathering to learn more about environmental health and toxics. This guide will prepare you to conduct a Mindful Living Gathering to present valuable information to your faith community and prepare them to act at home, at church, and in communities to improve the health of our bodies and all of Creation.

A Mindful Living Gathering at your church or in your home is also an opportunity to come together, witness, and respond in your church and community to environmental health issues. During the two-hour gathering, participants will have the opportunity to learn about environmental health, explore theological connections to the issue, and learn about chemicals of concern. Participants will also discover how toxic chemicals impact our lifestyle choices, and brainstorm ideas for living lives that are more healthy and spirit-filled. As a host, you can help facilitate a successful gathering by setting concrete expectations for yourself and by following the steps in this guide.

STEP 1 PICK A DATE AND TIME FOR YOUR EVENT

- Touch base with your church and church leadership team about availability and interest.
- Think about when your friends and neighbors are most available.
- Decide if you want to ask a friend or neighbor to be a co-host with you.
- Find a suitable location and make sure it is available for the date and time you want.
- Let NCC Eco-Justice staff know your plans so that we can help support the event. Contact the NCC Eco-Justice Program at 202-544-2350 or info@ncecejustice.org.

STEP 2 SET UP AGENDA/FORMAT FOR YOUR GATHERING

- See the sample agenda. Feel free to use this agenda or modify it to meet the parameters of your time, space, and group.

STEP 3 INVITE YOUR GUESTS

- Make a guest list. You should invite three times as many people as you want to show up. Think first of inviting those in your church community, and other churches in your area. Then, consider inviting neighbors, coworkers, and friends from clubs, organizations or the community around your church—this is a great opportunity for witness and outreach! You'll quickly have a long list.
- Make the announcement at your church—whether from the pulpit, in the bulletin, on an announcement screen, or in the church newsletter.
- Send an email or snail-mail invitation to your guest list four to eight weeks before the party date. Using www.evite.com is another option. It is an online invitation program where you can design the invitation and email it to your contacts.
- If you are working with a youth group, consider using some of the tips in the campus organizing section on page 3 such as posting to Facebook or sending a mass text message.

STEP 4 FOLLOW-UP INVITATION

- Call your guests to invite them personally—nothing works better than personal communication! Do this within one week of sending out the invitations. Ask a friend, family member, or co-host to help with the calls.
- Keep an RSVP list going, and update it as people reply. Also keep track of friends who can't make it to the gathering but are interested in learning more.
- A personal email reminder to your invitees is also a great touch and will turn more people out to your gathering.

STEP 5 PREP THE GATHERING

- Decide if you want to serve snacks or beverages. In addition to the materials from us found in this guide, you'll need:
 - A copy of the *Mindful Living: Human Health, Pollution, and Toxics* resource (available by download at www.ncecejustice.org/resources.html or in hard copy by emailing info@ncecejustice.org)
 - *Caring for Children* video (if you choose to show it, email info@ncecejustice.org for a copy) and the companion study guide found in the appendix.
 - Sign-in sheet (found in the appendix)
 - Pens (for sign-in sheet)

- Appropriate worship materials (sample prayers and songs found in the appendix and online at www.nccecojustice.org/hymns.html)
- Appropriate materials for introduction activity (See point one on the sample agenda and the list of possible activities to introduce each participant in the detailed agenda on page 6).
- Copies of the list of items for the Toxic Scavenger Hunt (found in the appendix) if you break into groups.
- Enlist a friend or five to help you out the night of the party. Roles include:
 - Working the sign-in table to make sure everyone signs in
 - Setting up the meeting room
 - Leading the opening and/or closing prayer
 - Serving refreshments
 - Providing props for explaining the chemicals
 - Test out all your video or DVD equipment, if needed, to make sure it is ready to go!

STEP 6 TIME TO GATHER

- Arrive early.
- Set up the room to meet the needs of your gathering.
- Make sure to include a welcome table with resources for further study or the NCC flyer on resources for congregations found in the appendix.
- Welcome your guests and thank them for coming.
- Make sure everyone signs in with legible and complete contact information.
- Follow your agenda (included in this kit).
- Open in prayer. Option to sing a song (See prayer and song suggestions at the end of the guide)
- Have fun!

STEP 7 MINDFUL LIVING GATHERING FOLLOW-UP

- Thank your guests for coming with an email, handwritten note, or phone call
- Thank your helpers and volunteers
- Someone from the NCC Eco-Justice program will call you to see how your event went. Or, you can contact us directly at 202-544-2350 or info@ncecojustice.org.
- Help us record how successful your event was by mailing, emailing, or faxing the sign-in sheets to:
National Council of Churches USA
Eco-Justice Programs
110 Maryland Ave NE, Suite 108
Washington, DC 20002
Fax: 202-543-1297
Email: info@ncecojustice.org

If you're a student organizing an event on campus... you'll also want to do the following things:

- Book a room on campus**
- Send the event announcement out on every campus and community listserv you can think of—organizations, clubs, academic departments, etc. Also post something on your Facebook page or another social networking site you are on.**
- Hang flyers around campus**
- The day of the event, and a few days before, “table” outside a high-traffic area and pass out small flyers about the event to increase visibility and momentum**
- Consider sending a mass blast of text messages to your friends.**
- Make sure the event is included in your campus newspaper's calendar**

Mindful Living Gathering Timeline and Checklist

TIP: tear this out and put it on your fridge

Get started eight to ten weeks before the gathering

- Set a date and time for your gathering:

_____, _____, 200____ a.m./p.m. to _____ a.m./p.m.

- Set a goal for attendance. Invite 3 times as many people as you want to come:

_____ x 3 = _____
(# of people you want to come) (# of people you should invite)

- Build your guest list. Think about:

- Church Members Family
- Other faith communities/groups Friends
- Neighbors Coworkers/Colleague
- Members of local clubs and organizations

- Check with your church. See what the buildings availability is, and touch base with the pastor and relevant committees to get them all involved

Four to Eight weeks before the gathering

- Mail/Email the invitation to your guest list.
- Announce the event in church—on Sunday, in the bulletin, and in the church newsletter.
- Touch base with the Council's Environmental Health Initiative for resources and suggestions info@ncecojustice.org or 202-544-2350

Three weeks before the gathering

- Call your guests. Nothing works better than a personal invitation. When you call, emphasize why this is important to you and why you want them to come. You can start building your RSVP list by asking, "Can I count on you to come?"

Two weeks or 10 days before the gathering

- Send a reminder email to your entire guest list.
- Let the NCC Eco-Justice Program know how many guests you're expecting.

Three days before the gathering

- Call all your guests to confirm their attendance and get them excited about the gathering. This can be just a quick reminder, or a message on their voicemail.
- Make sure you've got all the food you want to serve (snacks, beverages, etc.) and a place to serve it.
- Gather together any handouts you need (prayers, flyers, discussion questions).
- If you show the movie, double-check that the DVD is ready to go.
- Review the agenda for the gathering.
- Make sure your helpers know their assignments and are ready.

Day of the gathering

- Set up a welcome table with nametags, sign-in sheets, and a few pens. Consider using the NCC resources page included in the appendix as a handout for those that want to learn more about eco-justice issues..
- Arrive early so that you have plenty of time set up, greet guests that may arrive early, and attend to anything you may have forgotten in the process.
- Arrange the room to your liking.
- Set up the food/refreshment table.
- Welcome your guests!
- Follow the agenda.

After the event

- Thank your guests for coming with an email, hand-written note, or phone call.
- Mail sign-in sheets to the National Council of Churches, Eco-Justice Programs, 110 Maryland Ave NE, Suite 108, Washington, DC 20002.

Tips for success

- 1. Personally invite your guests. Email is a great tool for getting the word out, but a phone-call or in-person invitation really makes a difference.**
- 2. Leave yourself plenty of time. Make sure you have plenty of time for planning, promoting, and putting together the details of your gathering.**
- 3. Engage. Make sure you take the time to engage your guests in the issue—bring them into discussion, and use the time for fellowship.**
- 4. Worship! Remember, you are there to celebrate God and God's Creation.**

Sample Agenda

(1.5-2 hour event)

Welcome (25 minutes)

Defining environmental health and faith connections (20 minutes)

Review some of the toxic chemicals of concern (20 minutes)

Moving Forward (20 minutes)

I. WELCOME (25 minutes)

Materials

- Name tags
- Prayers or songs for opening (See suggestions below and in the appendix)
- Copy of the agenda, perhaps prewritten on a blackboard or on a flip chart
- Consider purchasing non-toxic markers if you use a white board. *Materials for the introductions activity you choose below (Materials are listed with each introductory activity.)*

Ask your guests to sign in, write a name tag, and grab a refreshment if you are providing them. When ready to start, welcome everyone and invite people to take a seat or stand in a circle for prayer. Open with the Call to Worship or the Prayer of the People (see the back appendix on prayers and songs). You may also choose to sing a song.

Next, introduce yourself. Thank everyone for coming. Review the purpose for the gathering. A sample introduction might be, “Hi my name is _____. Thank you for coming out this evening to learn more about toxic chemicals in our everyday lives. Many of you may have heard news stories about lead found in children’s toys and toxic chemicals in baby bottles. We are going learn more about these and other chemicals of concern. We’ll consider why this is a matter of faith and what we can do protect God’s Earth and the most vulnerable among us.”

Next, review the agenda with the group. For example, “We will start with introductions. Then we will show a fifteen minute film called *Caring for Children, Caring for Creation*. Next we will take time to discuss the film and the content as a matter of faith. Then we will have a “Toxic Scavenger Hunt” to learn about some of the chemicals of concern. Lastly, we will discuss what we can do to address this problem.”

Take time to do a round of introductions (10-15 minutes). Here are some possible ideas for introductions:

What were you doing that year?

Materials: A penny for everyone in the group

Hand everyone in the group a penny. Ask each person to introduce him or herself (name, congregation, town) and one thing they were doing during the year that is on the penny.

What called you to join this gathering?

Gather everybody in a circle. Ask each person to introduce him or herself (name, congregation, town) and describe in a sentence one reason he or she came to this event.

Healthy choices

Gather everybody in a circle. Ask each person to introduce him or herself (name, congregation, town) and state one healthy choice she or he has made in the last year.

Environmental Health Collage

Materials

- Old magazines
- scissors
- tape (optional)

Ahead of time, gather a few sections from a magazine, and some tape and scissors if so desired.

Ask everyone to look through the magazines and find something that evokes the words, “environment,” “health,” or “environmental health.” After five minutes, gather everyone back together. Ask people to share their names, where they are from, their selected picture and why they chose their picture.

II. DEFINING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND FAITH CONNECTIONS (30 minutes)

Option 1

Materials

- *Caring for Children, Caring for Creation* video
- Copies of the study guide that accompanies the video
- Bible

Show the movie *Caring for Children, Caring for Creation* (16 minutes). After the movie, turn to the movie discussion guide in this manual. If you have multiple groups, you may want to make a few photocopies of the discussion guide. Otherwise, you can do this as a group activity. Use the discussion guide to facilitate the group in dissecting and exploring the lessons of the movie and our Christian call to care for children and Creation.

Option 2 (Bible Study)

Materials

- Copies of the Bible or
- Printed copies of Scripture passages that you would like to use in this activity.

Ask the group what they think environmental health is (possible ideas: health of Creation—water, air, land, plants, animals, insects, healthy environment to live, play, and work). (2 minutes)

Explain who are the most vulnerable to pollution and toxics (5 minutes)

Children and the fetus Children’s bodies are still developing and toxics can effect mental and cognitive development, physical development (such as size and lung capacity), and reproductive development later in life (early childhood puberty, sperm quality, infertility, abnormal cognitive or reproductive development).

Women Women tend to have more fat cells than men and some toxic chemicals are stored in our fat cells. Some products that are specifically targeted towards women such as makeup and hair products can contain toxic chemicals (see the flyer *Made in the Image of God: A Campaign for Safe Cosmetics* for more information; found at www.nccc-justice.org/Cosmetics-FINAL.pdf).

Communities of color and low income communities These communities often face a “double burden.” They are exposed to chemicals in products, and some products are marketed specifically to these communities. Also toxic industries tend to locate adjacent to low-income communities and communities of color, increasing the likelihood of poor air, water, or soil quality. In fact, the United Church of Christ’s *Waste and Toxic Race* report (1987 and 2007) found that race, more than class was a defining factor in determining where industry located toxic waste sites.

Workers in chemical or industrial facilities

People who work in these facilities are exposed to chemicals on a daily basis and have greater potential for exposure and the corresponding health risks.

Assign people into pairs. Ask them to pick (or assign to each pair) one of the following Bible passages to discuss and consider what it means for environmental health (1 Corinthians 6:19; Mark 12:28-31 or Leviticus 19:18; Ezekiel 47:12; Genesis 2:15). If working with a Jewish community, use the Old Testament references above.

Bring the group back together after 5-10 minutes and ask the group to report on what lessons they learned from the Scripture. (5 minutes)

III. REVIEW SOME TOXIC CHEMICALS OF CONCERN

(20-25 minutes)

Materials

- Flip chart
- White board or blackboard
- Copies of the Toxic Scavenger Hunt worksheet (enough for each group)
- A copy of the Toxic Fact Sheet (for the leader’s use)

Toxic Scavenger Hunt

This is an opportunity for the group to learn about some specific chemicals of concern that are present in all of our homes and churches. Review the “Scavenger Hunt” sheet and the *Mindful Living* resource (available for download at www.ncccjustice.org) beforehand. Read the fact sheet on toxic chemicals beforehand or the *Mindful Living* guide. Some of the words are scientific and difficult to pronounce. Pronunciation guides are provided for your use. Writing

the words on a flipchart, wipe board, or chalkboard will aid those who are visual learners and will give people a second chance to digest the word. Consider doing the scavenger hunt on your own ahead of time in your home or church to become familiar with the location and toxic chemicals that can be found. When leading this activity, split the group into smaller groups or pairs and send them off to seek out the items on the scavenge sheet. Ask participants to cross off the items they find as they tour the house or facility. Allow ten minutes for the search process.

While the groups are out searching for objects, draw on the flip chart or board columns to match those on the Toxic Fact Sheet. Only fill in the chemical names for now.

Bring the group back together after ten or 15 minutes. Spend ten minutes discussing what people found. As people report objects they found, write them down in the appropriate row on the board. For each row, explain the corresponding chemical and its health impacts. Also explain what the safer alternatives are. (e.g., if a group finds an aluminum can, write this down in the row with Bisphenol-a. Then, talk about the health impacts of Bisphenol-a and other products that contain Bisphenol-a. Finally, highlight some of the alternatives to Bisphenol-a or ways to avoid exposure to Bisphenol-a. After going through all the objects found, also ask the following questions to the group: Were you surprised at what you found? Were the substances that you found in locations where they could be encountered by children? How did you feel at the end of the exercise? If you find that participants ask you questions that you do not know the answer to, let the participants know that you will try contact the NCC Eco-Justice Program and someone in the environmental health initiative will help you find the answers.

IV. MOVING FORWARD (20 minutes)

Materials

- Flip Chart
- A non-toxic marker

Explain to the group that there is hope and that there are things we can do in our homes and congregations, and as public witnesses in our broader community and country. Ask participants to brainstorm possible actions they can take in their homes, congregations, and communities. Approach each environment differently with a separate piece of paper from the flip chart. Following is a list of possible activities. These are repeated from page 11 in the *Mindful Living* resource guide:

Ideas for individual action

- Avoid pesticide exposure by consuming organic fruits and vegetables whenever possible. Non-organic produce lowest in pesticides include onions, avocados, frozen sweet corn, pineapples, mangos, asparagus, frozen sweet peas, kiwi fruit, bananas, cabbage, broccoli, and papaya.
- Avoid eating fish such as tuna, swordfish, grouper, and halibut that contain high levels of mercury. Instead, eat seafood with the lowest mercury content such as Mid-Atlantic blue crab, croaker, summer flounder, haddock, farmed trout, and wild Pacific salmon. The Monterey Bay Aquarium offers pocket-sized fish guides specific to each region of the United States (www.mbayaq.org/cr/cr_seafoodwatch/download.aspx).
- Minimize packaged food including microwave popcorn and fast foods, which can contain PFCs.
- Many personal care products contain toxic chemicals, which we then apply right onto our skin. Buy fragrance-free products and avoid products with hydroquinone, lead, mercury, alpha and beta hydroxyl acids, parabens, tirethanolamine, iodopropynly butycarbamate, and triclosan. Visit www.ncccojustice.org/cosmetics.html or www.safecosmetics.org to learn more.
- Use cast iron or stainless steel instead of non-stick cookware.
- Avoid items that have been treated for water, stain, or dirt repellency, or fire resistance such as some furniture, carpets, and clothing. Instead, buy products with natural fibers such as cotton or wool, which are naturally fire resistant.
- Research your local water utility's Consumer Confidence Report for high levels of toxic. Consider purchasing a water filtration system to reduce harmful contaminants.
- Avoid microwaving food in plastic.
- Choose non-toxic cleaning products or make your own from ingredients such as vinegar, lemon juice, and baking soda. Avoid the use of chlorine bleach.
- Avoid tracking in pesticides and toxic chemicals by taking off your shoes at the door.
- Choose play areas not made with CCA (chromated copper arsenate) pressure-treated wood.
- Avoid using pesticides in your home, on your lawn or garden, yourself, or pets. Do not use sunscreen with the pesticide DEET or other insect repellent. In your garden, use disease and pest resistant plants, improve your soil health, increase the health of your plants by adding compost, and reduce stress on plants by using mulch.

- Buy toys and teethingers that are phthalate free.
- Avoid clear, hard, #7 plastic baby and drink bottles, and aluminum cans. These products are coated with Bisphenol-A. Instead, look for #5, #2, or #4 plastic, or stainless steel containers. See the plastics guide from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy for more information: www.agobservatory.org/library.cfm?refid=77083.
- Perform a lifestyle audit. Assess your exposure to toxic chemicals and make choices to reduce it. Perhaps try the scavenger hunt in your own home as one way to understand better your exposures in your home environment or visit GreenFaith for a more detailed audit visit www.greenfaith.org/stewardship/toxics.html

Ideas for congregational actions

- Switch to green cleaning products.
- Switch to a carpet free of flame retardants.
- Avoid serving sodas and other beverages in aluminum cans.
- Consider becoming a fragrance-free facility in order to be inclusive of those who are chemically sensitive to artificial fragrances.
- Host a congregational gathering to inform others about environmental health issues and encourage them to join in the effort to eliminate toxic chemicals from our bodies and environment.
- Make sure any church playground equipment is not made with pressure treated wood.
- See tips above or *Mindful Living* guide pages 9, 10, and 12. for more ideas
- Replace styrofoam coffee cups with reusable mugs and glasses.
- Avoid glues made with formaldehyde in church building projects.

Ideas for community action

- Promote an educational forum on environmental health at your church and invite the larger community to attend.
- Contact the NCC's environmental health staff to learn about what local or federal legislation you or your congregation could lift up that would protect children and other vulnerable populations from toxic chemicals.
- Conduct a letter writing or letters to the editor campaign to ask for a comprehensive chemicals policy.
- Contact the NCC's environmental health program for further ideas.

V. JOIN THE NETWORK (5 minutes)

Invite your guests to join the NCC Eco-Justice Program network. The network provides access to all our resources, and keeps you all up to date with everything that is happening with environmental health. It also addresses other eco-justice issues such as climate change, including what congregations across the country are doing.

VI. HANDOUTS

Share the optional handouts found in the appendix.

VII. CONCLUSION/SOCIALIZING

Close in prayer or with the "Assurance of Pardon" or "Sending Forth" found on page 10 of the *Mindful Living* resource. Invite people to mingle and socialize after the event.

Contact us:

National Council of Churches
Eco-Justice Programs
110 Maryland Avenue, NE Suite 108
<mailto:info@ncecojustice.org>
info@ncecojustice.org
202-544-2350

Appendix

TOXIC FACT SHEET

| Chemical | Object Found | What's It In? | Health Effects | Alternatives |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Bisphenol-a | Aluminum can, Clear, hard, plastic drink bottle, or baby bottle | Found in clear hard plastic baby bottles, water bottles and jugs, aluminum cans, infant formula cans | Obesity, type 2 diabetes, breast cancer, prostate cancer, early puberty in girls (all in animal tests) | avoid canned food and sodas; use stainless steel; and look for plastics #1 (PETE), #5, #2, and #4 |
| Dioxins | Beef or cheese product | dairy and meat products with high fat content, PVC piping, vinyl | Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma | See PVC section, avoid high intake of fatty foods. |
| Formaldehyde | Synthetic wood | Can be found in some synthetic woods, resins, dyes, and plastics | Cancer, respiratory illness, asthma | Soft wood plywood, soy-based adhesives, mdi or pva resins |
| Lead | Lead pipe, old paint | Can be found in paint in old houses, in some children's toys and jewelry, batteries, pipes, and PVC | Fertility challenges, cognitive impairment, developmental delay, and chronic renal disease | Wooden or cloth toys, use pure silver, gold or stainless steel jewelry, avoid PVC |
| Perflourochemical | Teflon pan, Goretex clothing or shoes | Teflon® pans, Goretex® clothing, Scotchgard® (Note: Goretex and Scotchguard are harmful in the manufacturing process) | The CDC calls it a likely human carcinogen (cancerous). Studies have found it can release gases linked to pet bird deaths and human illnesses ¹ | Stainless steel pans, nylon fabric |
| Phthalates | Soap, lotion, or detergent with word "fragrance," plastic bottle with #1 or letters "PP" | Perfumes, scented soaps, lotions, and detergents, nail polish, saran wrap, #1 PP bottles, and some baby teethers and plastic, bendable toys. | Early puberty in girls, damage to male reproductive organs, testicular cancer, obesity, and infertility. | Unscented products or ones that say phthalate free, wood or cloth toys |
| Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) | Shower curtain, garden hose, plastic baby bed | Shower curtains, piping (white plastic), siding, garden hoses, flooring, some bags and toys, plastic baby beds. | Respiratory illness (such as asthma), reproductive damage | PVC-free pipes, cotton or fabric shower curtain and table cloth, wood siding, nylon, wooden toys, cotton beds, polyurethane bed covers. |
| ammonia | Cleaning product with ammonia or Diethanolamine | Cleaning products | Eye irritant | Baking soda and vinegar, borax |
| Diethanolamine | Cleaning product with ammonia or Diethanolamine | Cleaning products | Suspected carcinogen in CA, eye and respiratory irritant | Baking soda and vinegar, borax |
| Parabens | Nail polish, hand/body lotion | Makeup, lotion, soap | Suspected hormone disruptor | Look for paraben-free lotion, soap, makeup, and nail polish |

¹Houlihan, Jane, Kris Thayer, and Jennifer Klein. "Canaries in the Kitchen: Teflon Toxicosis." Washington, DC: Environmental Working Group, 2003.

TOXIC SCAVENGER HUNT WORKSHEET

Lead pipe

Teflon Pan

Goretex clothing/shoes

Old paint

Shower curtain

Garden hose

Plastic baby bed

Soap, lotion, or detergent with word "fragrance"

#1 plastic bottle with letters "PP" or bottle only with "PP" code

Nail polish

Cheese

Beef

Clear, plastic drink or baby bottle

Aluminum can

Cleaning product with ammonia or Diethanolamine

Synthetic Wood

TOXIC CHEMICAL ALPHABET SOUP

Bisphenol-a (BPA): The Centers for Disease Control found BPA in 92 percent of the U.S. population. This chemical is commonly found in hard, clear plastic #7 bottles and bottles labeled with “PC”, tableware, bike helmets, aluminum cans, and dental sealants. Bisphenol-a has been known to cause cancer, hormonal changes, changes in menstruation patterns, accelerated or delayed puberty, obesity and type II diabetes, and cardio vascular disease in animal studies. Avoid BPA by using stainless steel drinking bottles or #5 plastic baby bottles. Also limit canned foods.

Dioxins: Dioxin is a group of chlorinated chemicals found in the pulp, paper, and PVC (polyvinyl chloride) plastic manufacturing industries. It also comes from the incineration of chlorine-containing materials. Exposure to dioxins occurs mostly by consuming fatty food, especially meat and dairy products, and the use of polyvinyl chloride (PVC or vinyl) products. Associated health effects include immune suppression and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma and other forms of cancer.

Formaldehyde: Formaldehyde is used as a disinfectant and can be found in synthetic resins, wood, dyes, and plastics products. Sources of formaldehyde include building materials, wood products, fuel-burning appliances, adhesives, and paints. Associated health effects include infertility, respiratory illnesses such as asthma., and is a suspected carcinogen.

Lead: Lead is used in building construction, paints, batteries, pipes, and other metals. It has also been found in children’s toys. Although lead has been phased out of paint and gasoline, lead still poses a significant threat to individuals, especially children and pregnant women who come in contact with lead paint in old houses. Associated health effects of lead exposure include fertility problems, cognitive impairment, developmental delay, and chronic renal disease.

Mercury: The main sources of mercury include coal-fired power plants, waste incinerators, and industrial boilers with exposure coming primarily through the consumption of fish once mercury leaves the atmosphere and enters waterways. Associated health effects of mercury exposure include birth defects, heart disease, nervous system disorders, and mental retardation. Women of child-bearing years, in particular, should avoid consuming fish, such as swordfish, tuna, and king mackerel, that contain high levels of mercury.

Perfluorochemicals (PFCs): PFCs are used for non-stick products and stain- and water-repelling substances under brand names such as Teflon (harmful while cooking), Gore-tex and Scotch-Guard (both harmful during the manufacturing process). They are considered by scientists to be among the most hazardous contaminants ever produced. PFCs are found in the blood of more than 90 percent of the U.S. population, and have been linked to cancer and birth defects. In 2006, the eight largest users and producers of PFOA, a kind of PFC the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated a likely human carcinogen, signed an agreement with the EPA to eliminate PFOA pollution by 2015. To avoid PFCs, use stainless steel or cast iron pans.

Phthalates: Phthalates are synthetic chemical substances used to make plastics, like PVC (vinyl), more flexible and enable personal care products and detergents to hold scent. They are found in toothbrushes, automobile parts, toys, personal care products, and food packaging. The health effects of phthalate exposure include birth defects, hormonal changes, early puberty, and infertility. Exposure to phthalates can be reduced by avoiding microwaving food in plastic containers or wraps, and by buying unscented products. In 2008, the U.S. government temporarily banned phthalates in children’s toys.

Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers (PBDEs): These are bromine-based chemicals used as flame retardants that can be found in household products such as computers, televisions, mobile phones, furniture, and textiles. While this chemical additive offers protection from fire, these chemicals persist in the environment and can be found in breast milk, passing from mother to infant. The health effects of PBDEs include thyroid cancer, developmental delays, and hearing loss. Many leading companies are finding innovative ways to reduce the flammability of their products without using PBDEs. Cotton and wool are both naturally fire resistant

Ammonia: A severe eye and respiratory irritant that can cause intense burning pain, chemical burns, cataracts, and corneal damage. It can also cause kidney and liver damage. Reacts with bleach to form poisonous chlorine gas. Found in a wide range of cleaning products.

Diethanolamine (DEA: Die ethanol amine): Listed as a suspected carcinogen by the State of California, this chemical is a skin and respiratory toxicant and is used in a wide range of household cleaning products.

Sodium lauryl (or laureth) sulfate: A lathering agent and known skin irritant. Enhances the allergic response to other toxins and allergens. Can react with other ingredients to form cancer-causing nitrosamines. Found in a wide range of cleaning products.

14 PERSONAL ACTIONS

1. Avoid pesticide exposure by consuming organic fruits and vegetables whenever possible. Non-organic produce lowest in pesticides include onions, avocados, frozen sweet corn, pineapples, mangos, asparagus, frozen sweet peas, kiwi fruit, bananas, cabbage, broccoli, and papaya.
2. Avoid eating fish such as tuna, swordfish, grouper, and halibut that contain high levels of mercury. Instead, eat seafood with the lowest mercury content such as Mid-Atlantic blue crab, croaker, summer flounder, haddock, farmed trout, and wild Pacific salmon.
3. Minimize packaged food including microwave popcorn and fast foods, which can contain PFCs.
4. Many personal care products contain toxic chemicals, which we then apply right onto our skin. Buy fragrance-free products and avoid products with hydroquinone, lead, mercury, alpha and beta hydroxyl acids, parabens, tirethanolamine, iodopropynyl butylcarbamate, and triclosan (found in antibacterial soaps). Visit www.safecosmetics.org to learn more.
5. Use cast iron instead of non-stick cookware.
6. Avoid items that have been treated for water, stain, or dirt repellency, or fire resistance such as some furniture, carpets, and clothing. Instead, buy products with natural fibers such as cotton or wool, which are naturally fire resistant.
7. Research your local water utility's Consumer Confidence Report for high levels of toxics. Consider purchasing a water filtration system to reduce harmful contaminants.
8. Avoid microwaving food in plastic.
9. Choose non-toxic cleaning products or make your own from ingredients such as vinegar, lemon juice, and baking soda. Avoid the use of chlorine bleach.
10. Avoid tracking in pesticides and toxic chemicals by taking off your shoes at the door.
11. Choose play areas not made with CCA (chromated copper arsenate) pressure-treated wood.
12. Avoid using pesticides in your home, on your lawn or garden, yourself, or pets. Do not use sunscreen with the pesticide DEET or other insect repellent. In your garden, use disease and pest resistant plants, improve your soil health, increase the health of your plants by adding compost, and reduce stress on plants by using mulch.
13. Buy toys and teethingers that are phthalate free.
14. Avoid #7 plastic baby and drink bottles, and aluminum cans. These products are coated with Bisphenol-A. Look for #2, #4, or #5 plastic, or stainless steel containers.

STUDY GUIDE CARING FOR CHILDREN, CARING FOR CREATION

Please use this study guide following the film to move the discussion forward. Depending on the size of the group, the questions below can either be discussed as one big group, or considered in smaller groups that come together at the end. Begin by reading the Discussion Leader section aloud. Follow the film with the questions and the conclusion. Feel free to adapt this guide for your own group.

Discussion Leader

(Read aloud to group)

There are over 82,000 synthetic chemicals registered for use in the United States. Many of these chemicals are used in everyday household items, emulsifiers, automotive products, agricultural processes, food processing, and other industries. Today, these chemicals contribute to an unprecedented incidence of illness. We can practice sacred living by limiting our consumption of these products. We can also encourage businesses to replace toxic chemicals with safer alternatives. These efforts will not only protect Creation but improve the health of all people, especially children, pregnant women, industrial workers, communities of color, and low-income communities. This is part of our call to be stewards of Creation and care for our neighbor.

Questions

Read these scripture passages below

- Q What do each of them mean?
- Q What living examples of this scripture do you see in the movie?

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

(Genesis 1:27)

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body” *(1 Corinthians 6:19-20)*

- Q How do you think the environment is affecting our health and our children’s health?
- Q Did you gain any insights from the video?
- Q As people of faith, what do we bring to this public debate that is unique and compelling?
- Q What is the message that Christianity brings to bear on the issue of public health that makes it stand apart from other arguments?

Discussion Leader Conclusion

(Read aloud)

Every day we make choices about our daily living – from which transportation we use or what household cleaning products we choose, to our selection of lawn care products. We tend to think of these as individual decisions concerning only us, but we are affecting all of Creation. What impact will our actions today have on those who come after us? How will they influence those around us? What bearing will they have on our own lives? Are they helping to purify the body and spirit of Creation? If we are able to discipline ourselves to regularly ask these questions and respond to them with the intention that comes from loving God first (Luke 10:27), then our work as stewards will ensure that all of Creation can experience the spirit of God flowing with each breath.

CLEANING TO PROTECT CREATION AND HUMAN HEALTH

Safe and Unsafe Ingredients in Cleaning Products

Some Ingredients to Avoid

Ammonia: A severe eye and respiratory irritant that can cause intense burning pain, chemical burns, cataracts, and corneal damage. It can also cause kidney and liver damage. Reacts with bleach to form poisonous chlorine gas. Found in a wide range of cleaning products.

Diethanolamine (DEA): Listed as a suspected carcinogen by the State of California, this chemical is a skin and respiratory toxicant. Used in a wide range of household cleaning products.

Monoethanolamine (MEA): May cause liver, kidney, reproductive damage, and depression of the central nervous system. Inhaling high concentrations can cause dizziness/coma. Can be absorbed through the skin. A skin and eye

irritant. Found in many cleaning products, including oven cleaners, tub and tile cleaners, laundry pre-soaks, floor strippers, and carpet cleaners.

Sodium hypochlorite (bleach): A corrosive chemical, eye, skin, and respiratory irritant, as well as a sensitizer. It is especially hazardous to people with heart conditions or asthma. May be fatal if swallowed. It may be a neurotoxin and toxic to the liver. Found in many household cleaners.

Sodium lauryl sulfate: A lathering agent and known skin irritant. Enhances the allergic response to other toxics and allergens. Can react with other ingredients to form cancer-causing nitrosamines. Found in a wide range of cleaning products.

RECIPES FOR HOMEMADE NONTOXIC CLEANING PRODUCTS

All-purpose cleaner: Mix 1/2 cup vinegar and 1/4 cup baking soda (or 2 teaspoons borax) into 1/2 gallon (2 liters) water. Store and keep. Use for removal of water-deposit stains on shower-stall panels, bathroom chrome fixtures, windows, bathroom mirrors, etc.

Disinfectant: Mix 1/2 cup borax into 1 gallon hot water to disinfect and deodorize.

Drain cleaner: To open clogs, try a plunger first. Or try a plumber's snake or a "ZIP-IT." If these don't work, pour 1/2 cup baking soda down drain, add 1/2 cup white vinegar, and cover the drain. After 15 minutes, pour hot water to clear residue. Do not use this method after trying a commercial drain opener; the vinegar can react with the drain opener to create dangerous fumes.

Floor cleaner and polish: Add 1 cup vinegar to a pail of warm water. For vinyl or linoleum flooring, add a capful of baby oil to the water. For wood floors, add 1/4 cup liquid castile soap and 1 cup vinegar to 8 liters warm water. For

brick/stone tiles, use 1 cup white vinegar in 1 gallon water and rinse with water.

Scouring powder: Combine 1 cup baking soda, 1 cup borax, and 1 cup regular salt.

Toilet bowl cleaner: Pour 1 cup borax and 1/4 cup vinegar into toilet, let sit overnight before scrubbing.

Window and glass cleaner: To avoid streaks wash windows when not sunny. Create a half-and-half mixture of water and vinegar or lemon juice in a spray bottle. Wipe surface clean with newspaper.

Laundry products: Soap, rather than detergent, is an effective cleaner for natural fabrics, leaving items softer than detergent will. A cup of vinegar added to the wash can help keep colors bright. One-half to three-quarters cup baking soda will leave clothes soft and fresh smelling. Silks and wools may be hand washed with mild soap or a protein shampoo, down or feathers with mild soap or baking soda. DO NOT USE CHLORINE BLEACH.

ECO-JUSTICE HYMNS

For more hymns, visit www.nccecojustice.org/hymns.html

CREATING GOD, YOU FORMED THE EARTH

Creating God, you formed the Earth
and saw that it was good.
You took the risk to give us birth,
provided us with food.
Made in the image of yourself,
you trusted us to build
a world of beauty, peace, and health
where all could be fulfilled.

Forgiving God, we own we're slow
to grow in faith and trust.
Through narrow, selfish eyes we lose
the vision Christ showed us.
Free us to open our closed hearts
to welcome now your light.
Convert our wills to lean upon
your spirit's power, not might.

Redeeming God, through you alone
can we true peace restore.
You trust us still to live your love
as your son did before.
You wait for us to work anew
that captives gain release.
Call us to turn swords into plows,
and with our lives plant peace!

Text by Edith Sinclair Downing
Topics: Creation, Forgiveness, Peace
Sources: Psalm 130:4; John: 1:12;
Luke 1:68; Luke 4:18; Mt: 5:9
Possible tune: KINGSFOLD
(2008 by Wayne Leupold
Editions, Inc.)

CREATION NOW IS CRYING

Creation now is crying
for us to do our share
in changing selfish lifestyles
to show we truly care.
You call us, God, to witness
your love for humankind,
yet we still fail to follow
with heart and soul and mind.

Your son showed us the pathway,
and promised to provide
the strength we need to trust him
to be our faithful guide.
Help us be new creations,
and work to bring to birth
the hope that all who follow
will serve a brave new Earth!

Text by Edith Sinclair Downing
Topic: Care of the Earth
Sources: Psalm 24:1; John 8: 31.32
Possible tune; LLANGLOFFAN
(2008, Wayne Leupold Editions, Inc.
Environmental Health Prayers

ECO-JUSTICE PRAYERS

PSALM 139 (NRSV)

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you
discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down, and are
acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know
it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand
upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that
I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from
your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in
Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest
limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand
shall hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light
around me become night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright
as the day, for darkness is as light to you.
For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me
together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being
made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the
earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book
were written all the days that were formed for me, when
none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast
is the sum of them!
I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come
to the end—I am still with you.
O that you would kill the wicked, O God, and that the
bloodthirsty would depart from me—those who speak
of you maliciously, and lift themselves up against you
for evil!

Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I
not loathe those who rise up against you?
I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies.
Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know
my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the
way everlasting.

PSALM 85 (The Message)

God, you smiled on your good Earth!
You brought good times back to Jacob!
You lifted the cloud of guilt from your people,
you put their sins far out of sight.
You took back your sin-provoked threats,
you cooled your hot, righteous anger.
Help us again, God of our help;
don't hold a grudge against us forever.
You aren't going to keep this up, are you?
scowling and angry, year after year?
Why not help us make a fresh start—a resurrection life?
Then your people will laugh and sing!
Show us how much you love us, God!
Give us the salvation we need!
I can't wait to hear what he'll say.
God's about to pronounce his people well,
The holy people he loves so much,
so they'll never again live like fools.
See how close his salvation is to those who fear him?
Our country is home base for Glory!
Love and Truth meet in the street,
Right Living and Whole Living embrace and kiss!
Truth sprouts green from the ground,
Right Living pours down from the skies!
Oh yes! God gives Goodness and Beauty;
our land responds with Bounty and Blessing.
Right Living strides out before him,
and clears a path for his passage.

RESOURCES

All of our NCC Eco-Justice resources are located at www.nccecojustice.org Join our network to download all of the wonderful resources or order free hard copies by filling out this sheet and sending it to the address on the back.

Climate and Church: How Global Climate Change Will Impact Core Church Ministries. Many understand the devastating impacts that climate change will have on human communities around the world, but few understand the impacts that climate change will have on core church ministries such as refugee resettlement, feeding the hungry, and disaster relief. This report outlines how these core church ministries will be impacted. I want a copy! _____

The Poverty of Climate Change (2008): Addressing climate change is a justice issue. Celebrate Earth Day Sunday on April 20th by recognizing the interconnectedness of poverty and climate change through worship, adult study, and youth activities. I want a copy! _____

Mindful Living: Human Health, Pollution, and Toxics. The Bible teaches us to treat our bodies as temples to God and to protect creation. Today, contaminants found in our homes and outdoors can cause health damage ranging from asthma to cancer, especially in vulnerable populations such as children, women, communities of color, low-income communities, and creation. This education and worship guide gives us the tools and the hope to maintain the sanctity of our bodily temples and ensure the health of creation. Includes sermon starters, youth and adult study ideas, personal actions, and a bulletin insert. I want a copy! _____

Environmental Racism: An Ecumenical Study Guide. In the U.S., and around the world, people of color disproportionately live and work in unhealthy, polluted communities that threaten their quality of life. As Christians, we are called to work for justice for all of God's people and creation—and we must respond. This guide explores the definitions of environmental racism and defines a set of justice principles from which people of faith can restore broken relationships with creation and God's people. This guide provides activities for personal and congregational reflection, study and action. I want a copy! _____
<http://www.nccecojustice.org/ed2007bounce.html>

Our Daily Bread: Harvesters of Hope and Gardeners of Eden. This resource explores the need to put the Spirit of God back into the life-giving acts of producing and consuming food by acknowledging the brokenness of current food policies, practices, and habits. Includes background information, sermon starters, ideas for youth and adult study, suggestions for action and advocacy, sample liturgies, and a bulletin insert. I want a copy! _____

At the Lord's Table: Everyday Thanksgiving. Eat mindfully—mindful of the farmers and rural communities, the rich soil and clean water, and God's plentiful provision—without which our tables would be empty. Doing so instills thanksgiving and calls us to right relationships with all of creation. Explore and celebrate the blessing of every bite with this guide for study, worship, and action. I want a copy! _____

Sacred Food: Sunday School and Group Activities for Youth. Food is not merely fuel for our bodies. It is nourishment for our bodies and our souls. When we consider food as more than a commodity, as a miraculous result of the mingling of sun, rain, soil, and seed, we are swept into the deep mysteries of life and begin to recognize and appreciate the interdependence of all of God's creation. These lessons are intended for use in Sunday School classroom or as youth group activities. I want a copy! _____

Out of the Wilderness: Building Christian Faith and Keeping God's Creation. The wilderness is deeply woven into Christianity and other faith traditions. They were central to the spiritual journeys of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. This new resource will help us in our modern day efforts to reflect peacefully and reconnect with the Creator through study, worship and congregational action. I want a copy! _____

Opening the Letter: A Congregational Guide to God's Earth is Sacred. Teaching about God's Creation can be exciting and enriching. This theological resource can be used with adult education classes to teach about the principles in the 2004 ecumenical environmental statement, God's Earth is Sacred. This guide uses hands on learning, reflection and scripture to explore these principles and the mysteries of creation. I want a copy! _____

Building A Firm Foundation: A practical, creation friendly guide to building and maintaining houses of worship with energy efficient technologies and sustainable building techniques. I want a copy! _____

Bottom Line Ministries that Matter: Congregational Stewardship with Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy Technologies. This report finds that churches can save between \$8,000-\$17,000 a year by investing in energy efficient technologies. Find out how. I want a copy! _____

Water Stewards: A Toolkit for Congregational Care of Local Watersheds and Stewards of the Bay: A Toolkit for Congregations in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Water as sacred to Christians is demonstrated over 500 times in the Bible from the moment God parted the waters to create the sky and our blessed waterways to the holy sacrament of Baptism. This guide assists congregations to become good water stewards. It also provides an interactive adult education curriculum and worship materials for further study and action. If you are in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, order the specific Chesapeake version. I want a copy of Water Stewards! _____ I want the Chesapeake Bay version! _____

Earth Day Resources

Each year the NCC produces a new resource special to Earth Day to assist churches in an Earth Day worship service (the Sunday nearest April 22nd), as well as for education and action activities. While produced for Earth Day, these resources can be used any season. Order your copy today!

The Poverty of Climate Change (2008)

I want a copy! _____

Just Climate: study guide for adult Christian Education:

This hands-on resource dvelves into climate justice issues and provides interactive activities for participants to better understand the cause and impacts of climate change.

I want a copy! _____

Our Daily Bread: Harvesters of Hope and Gardeners of Eden (2007) I want a copy! _____

Through the Eye of the Hurricane: Rebuilding Just Communities in the Gulf Coast (2006)

I want a copy! _____

Sacred Oceans and Seas (2005) I want a copy! _____

Air (2004) I want a copy! _____

Send me the above copies!

Name

Congregation

Address

City, State, Zip

Email

I am including a tax deductible donation of \$_____ to support the production of future NCC Eco-Justice materials. **Send to:** National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, 110 Maryland Avenue, NE, Suite 108, Washington, DC 20002