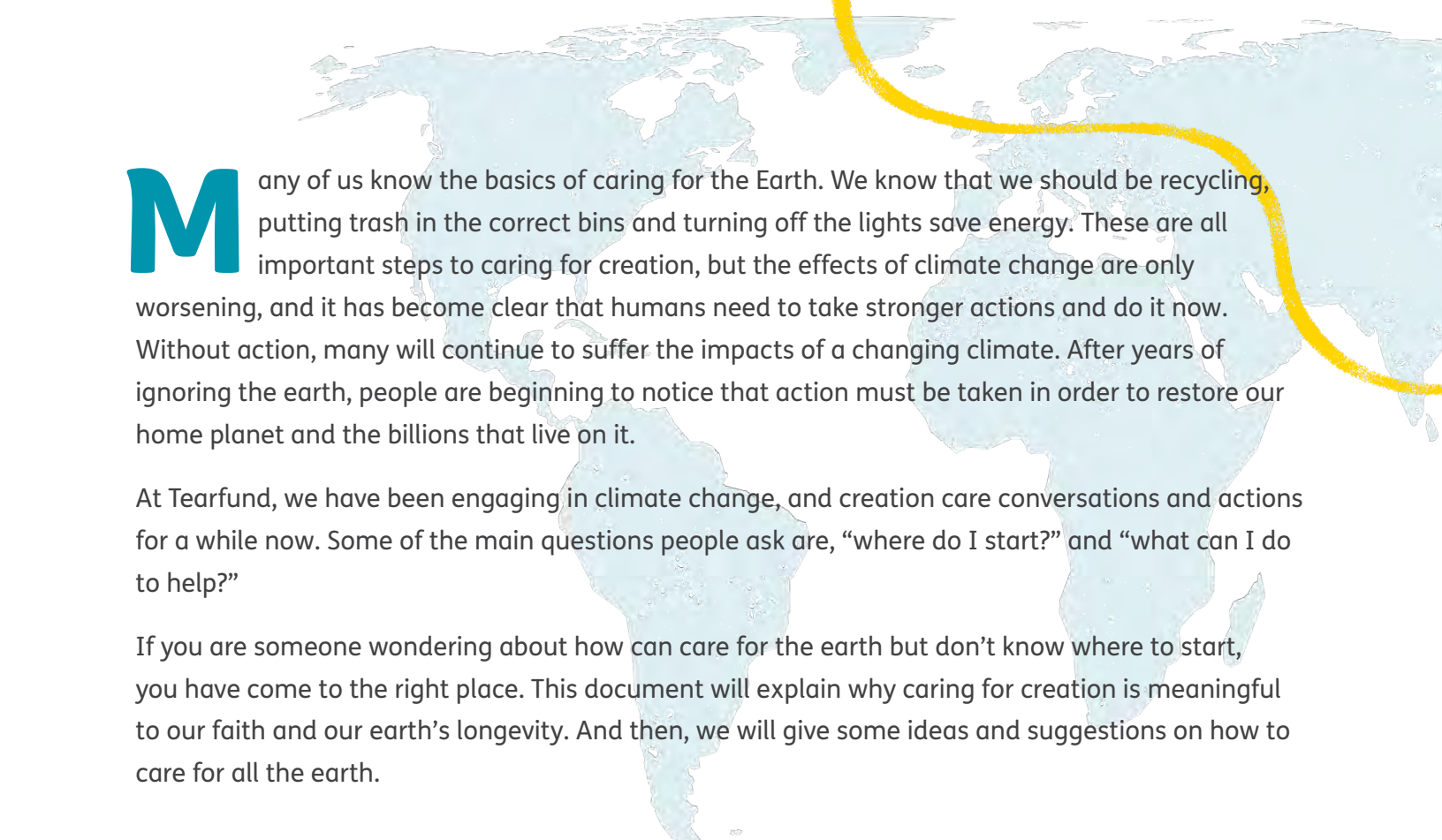


tearfund

Caring For All The Earth

A guide to caring for creation, one person
and one community at a time





Many of us know the basics of caring for the Earth. We know that we should be recycling, putting trash in the correct bins and turning off the lights save energy. These are all important steps to caring for creation, but the effects of climate change are only worsening, and it has become clear that humans need to take stronger actions and do it now. Without action, many will continue to suffer the impacts of a changing climate. After years of ignoring the earth, people are beginning to notice that action must be taken in order to restore our home planet and the billions that live on it.

At Tearfund, we have been engaging in climate change, and creation care conversations and actions for a while now. Some of the main questions people ask are, “where do I start?” and “what can I do to help?”

If you are someone wondering about how can care for the earth but don't know where to start, you have come to the right place. This document will explain why caring for creation is meaningful to our faith and our earth's longevity. And then, we will give some ideas and suggestions on how to care for all the earth.

Why Caring For All The Earth Matters

Undoubtedly, God has cared for and loved his creation from the beginning. He built it delicately, everything made with its own character and unique specification, yet all creation works together to create a complex ecosystem. Sadly, we have fallen into sin, and our sin has affected the treatment of this creation. Over time humans have abused the gift of creation, taking more than we needed and living in a society of greed. Although it is counter-cultural, Christians are called to live in a manner that cares for all creation and avoids using creation for capital gain. When we hurt creation, we are not only hurting the gift of creation but also damaging part of a reflection of who God is. As Christians, we must care for all the earth because Earth is a gift from God, and he has asked us to love and care for it.

How to Care For All The Earth

There is no shortage of blogs, websites, books, videos and other helpful media telling us how to care for the earth. Most of it is useful, but it can be overwhelming to know where to start. The next few pages will outline our suggestions on where to start your journey for what many call ‘creation care’ (actions focused on caring for creation). This is not a step-by-step guide or exact science; rather, we hope this sparks ideas and encouragement for your personal or group approach to caring for the creation around you.



Begin with Prayer

Prayer is one of the most important aspects of our faith, and we should pray for all situations, concerns, and pains. As you begin to consider what creation means to your faith and how you can create positive change, ask God to help you. God can guide our steps, actions and conversations, so ask that He will come alongside your journey and create even more change than you could imagine.

As Christians, we believe prayer has power and that it can move mountains. Pray often for the climate, that the Earth sees restoration and that those who are struggling and facing injustice from climate change are cared for and find justice. It may seem like such a small step, but prayer should be included in your daily actions towards helping heal the earth. If you need tips and ideas on praying for creation and the climate crisis, check out our [Praying For All The Earth Prayer Guide \(tearfund.ca/resources/praying-for-all-the-earth\)](https://tearfund.ca/resources/praying-for-all-the-earth).



Learn

Learning about climate change and creation care is an important step to caring for all creation. We encourage you to read, watch and listen to resources that speak about the current situation of the climate crisis. This will keep you updated on recent news surrounding the crisis and how you can pray for what is currently happening. As you learn more news around the climate crises, it can be hard to grasp and difficult to hear. We encourage you to find places of hope. One place we recommend finding hope is the Bible. The Bible speaks of a perfect and beautifully made creation, and although it is now damaged, it is still the same Earth and designed by the Creator God. Also, be encouraged that there will be restoration for all creation! Jesus came to restore all of creation, and He will not stop until all is restored!

As you begin learning, we encourage you to check out our For All The Earth campaign page (www.tearfund.ca/program/creation-care/). This page has content and media that will give you facts about the climate crisis, stories of those on the frontlines, and more ways you can help support those struggling from a changing climate.





Daily Choices

We can use our daily choices to care for the earth, and by doing so, we also care for our global neighbours living in poverty who are hit hardest by climate change. By making more sustainable everyday choices, we show that we value what God has given us and send a signal to others that caring for creation is important to our faith. One of the most effective ways to help end the climate crisis is by reducing our own climate emissions.

Although the science can be confusing, the methods to reduce our climate emissions are simple. Here are some suggestions on how to limit your climate emissions.



Travel

Fly less, or not at all. If you still have to fly, commit to taking fewer work flights by planning more events during your trip and not flying for holidays as often.

Drive less. Cut out one car ride a week and walk or cycle for shorter journeys. Some people even sell their extra car and take transit instead. Consider making a long-term plan to get an electric vehicle.



Home and Diet

Switch to renewable energy – or use less energy. Start by ensuring your electricity is from renewable sources. This can be hard in Canada, but you could consider getting solar panels on your home, stop using gas inside your home and find ways to reduce your energy usage. Adding insulation to your home, getting appliances that use less power and hanging your clothes on the line are great ways to save energy.

Eat more plant-based meals. Eating less meat and dairy will cut your carbon footprint (and will probably be better for your health too!) Try Meat-Free Monday, go vegan one day a week, or buy more locally sourced produce and when you do buy meat, buy it locally.

Cut food waste. Plan your meals, get creative with leftovers and assign a shelf in your fridge for food that needs to be eaten quickly. You'll be surprised with how much money you'll save!



Less is More

Buy less and cherish more. Review your buying habits by choosing to buy fewer but better-quality items that will last. Buying less, repairing instead of replacing, and living more simply could also save you money.

Reduce your garbage. Switch to a reusable coffee cup, carry a reusable water bottle, use a reusable straw, use soap and shampoo bars, and buy fruit and veggies without plastic bags. When you do buy plastics, make sure you either reuse them or recycle them.

Climate Stewards Calculator A Rocha Canada

(<https://arocha.ca/get-involved/climate-stewards-calculator/>)

Many of us do not know how much emissions we put into the environment. Thankfully our partner, A Rocha Canada, has a unique calculator to help us learn. This calculator totals your CO² levels that you have emitted through travel and household energy use. Using this calculator, you can become more aware of the environmental impacts your daily life has on the earth. We encourage you to use this calculator and then consider paying it forward to one of the many A Rocha projects that seek to help families and communities be better stewards of the earth that can not afford to live in an environmentally safe way.

We know what individuals can do to limit their emissions, but it is important to note that we do not often see direct results from our personal actions. But do not be discouraged; these actions matter not only to the earth's survival but to God who watches over us. One of the outcomes of changing the way you live is that people will notice and ask questions. You will then have the opportunity to tell these people why you are changing the ways you live and invite these people into your journey of caring for all the earth. The key to ending climate change is creating communities of people who care about the earth. It will take many large and small actions from millions worldwide to create positive change. It begins with you!

Thankfully, many of us have communities of faith. Churches are often great at becoming a catalyst for change. With that, in the final portion of this article, we will list some ways your church can become a helpful tool for caring for all the earth.



Caring for all the Earth, through the Church

In the past, the church has often forgotten about its responsibility to be good stewards of the earth. Thankfully many are now talking and caring for the deep connection humanity and creation have with one another. The church has a role to play in this deep connection, and now more than ever, it has the opportunity to preach and be a catalyst for change in many communities regarding climate change and creation care. This begins by starting the conversation.



Start the conversation

Churches are blessed to have networks and the ability to reach people. So the first step to inviting people into the journey of caring for the earth is by creating space to talk about climate change and creation care. Some suggestions for creating this space could look like the following:

- Dedicate a service to God's creation and speak about the damage it is facing. Preach a sermon on creation and include music that is about creation. We have a creation church talk prepared here (tearfund.ca/resources/creation-church-talk) for you, and we encourage you to use The Porter's Gate Climate Vigil Songs (www.climatevigil.org/album) as your worship music.
- We have a great video series with Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, Christianity and Climate Change (tearfund.ca/christianity-and-climate-change) and a **discussion guide** that would be great to share with small groups to start the conversation about creation and the climate crisis.
- Bring in a speaker to your church or small group that knows more about creation and faith and how we should respond. If you do not know someone, reach out to us at connect@tearfund.ca, and we will help you find a speaker.
- Make a resource center on your website or inside your main church building where people can learn more about creation and the climate crisis. (Feel free to check out our **resources** and use them in your resource center.)

These simple ideas are a place to start; we need to start caring for the earth and climate change by learning and having conversations about it.



Be a Leader

The church has the opportunity to be a leader and movement starter in many communities throughout Canada and the world. At Tearfund, we want to give some suggestions on the practical actions you can take to be a leader in climate action. Although the above steps about talking about climate change and creation are important, they need to be paired with actions. These are some actions your church should consider to become a leader in changing the world's climate crisis.

- Make the church building an example of how others should live and treat creation. Some examples the church could lead by are recycling and looking after waste properly, saving energy in unique ways (maybe consider renewable energy or having a service with the power off and doing things like using reusable coffee cups instead of paper or plastic).
- Be a leader by advocating for change and giving a voice to people globally struggling from the climate crisis. The best way to do this is to partner with organizations specifically working on climate adaptation. Organizations like Tearfund or A Rocha would be examples of partnerships that allow your church to learn and also advocate for the people suffering most from climate change.
- Come up with new ways your church can serve creation and help limit human effects on creation. This can be your classic group garbage clean-up day or something more intense like buying a plot of land for tree planting and creating gardens on this land. Do activities that others can join in on and helps the natural environment around your community.

These are just a few ideas to spark your thoughts on how your church could become a better example of how to live and care for creation. If you are looking for even more specific activities and ways your church could care for creation, check out A Rocha Canada resource page (<https://arocha.ca/get-involved/green-living-resources/#churches>). Here you will find many more resources for your church's journey into creation care!



As Christians, we are called to be leaders and change-makers. Climate change has been growing and creating more injustices every day. It is time for Christians and churches to unite and end our damaging impacts on God's creation. We want to become change-makers because we need to stop hurting a gift from God. We need to remember that as we hurt creation, we hurt other humans, other image-bearers of God. As you consider how you can change your lifestyle and your churches, know we are praying for you. We are here to help with your journey towards Caring For All The Earth; please reach out to us at connect@tearfund.ca and tell us how we can be praying for you and how we can help your journey toward caring for creation.

May God bless you and or your church as you seek to find his beauty, love, wisdom and grace in the wonderful creation He has gifted.



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the need is greatest*