

# ENVIRONMENT WORKSHOP

An SCM Workshop

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

The aim of this SCM workshop is to explore the theme of Environment through the concept of life in all its fullness, the story of Creation, and our visions for a sustainable world. The workshop will take at least 80 minutes if you are using all the activities.

You'll need a ball of string or wool, a piece of flipchart paper and pens, pens/pencils and scrap paper for each group, small pieces of card for each person. You will also need to have the Bible study questions for each group.

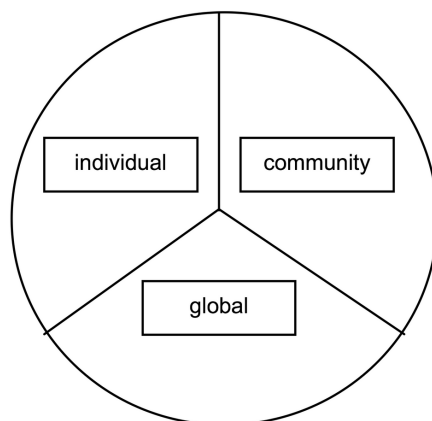
## INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

This is a simple game to illustrate interconnectedness. Sitting in a circle, ask someone to take the ball of string or wool and keep hold of one end of it. They should then throw the ball to someone else and mention something that connects them to that person e.g. we study on the same course, we both have an interest in campaigning, we cooked the food for tonight's meeting.

The next person keeps hold of the string and throws the ball to someone else – creating a 'web' of connections. If there are new people in the group then ask questions to establish connections – make sure people don't feel left out. Keep going until everyone has hold of the wool. You can stop here and ask people to drop the wool, or you can "re-wind" and do the steps backwards with the group trying to remember what the connections were.

## ASK THE QUESTION(S) (10-15 MINUTES)

Explain that during the workshop we will be exploring the concept of life in all its fullness, the story of Creation, and our visions for a sustainable world. Draw the following diagram onto a big piece of paper, with the three sections divided into individual, community, global.



Display or read John 10:10 in various translations.

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (NRSV)

Ask the group to call out answers to the following questions:

- What do you think ‘life in all its fullness’ means at the levels of the individual, community and global in terms of the environment?

Examples might be: Individual (access to basic necessities like shelter/water/food, emotional and spiritual well-being, sense of connection to the land), Community (co-operative ways of working, equal distribution of resources, green spaces for people to meet, good public transport systems), Global (healthy population levels of species, sustainable/renewable energy, ethical global food production and distribution).

- What prevents ‘life in all its fullness’ at the different levels? (write answers in a different colour)

Examples might be: Individual (fear, threat to life, feeling disconnected, consumerism), Community (conflict over resources, pollution, short-sighted politics), Global (climate change, extinction of species, over-consumption of natural resources).

Ask each person in turn to introduce themselves and relate one good thing, and one bad thing that has happened to them recently or in the past (preferably nothing too personal or too serious). One of these should be true and the other one false. The rest of the group has to guess which statement is true and which is false. Consider prizes for those who make the most correct guesses, or for the best liars.

## EXPLORE THE ISSUE(S) (20 MINUTES)

Split into small groups and read together Genesis 1- 2:3. Suggest that the groups read the passage first as a meditation followed by some silence, and then read it again before discussing the questions below:

God saw that it was good. This is a repeated phrase throughout the creation story.

- When have you been aware of the goodness of creation? Both of humanity and the rest of the natural world?

Let us make humankind in our image. Look at Genesis 1:26-31.

- What do you understand by the idea of being made in the image of God? How can we express this in our relation to creation and the environment?

Sabbath. Look at Genesis 2:1-3. The seventh day is also known as the Sabbath, or in the Jewish tradition the Shabbat. In the Torah, the Shabbat is as much a cessation from exploitation as about rest and reflection: “Six days shall you accomplish your activities, and on the seventh day you shall stop, so that your ox and donkey can rest, and the son of your servant and the stranger can recover their soul.” (Shemot 23:12)

- What does the concept of Sabbath/Shabbat mean to you?
- How might the concept of Sabbath/Shabbat relate to our stewardship of the earth?

## INVITE THE RESPONSE (35 MINUTES)

Creating a sustainable world brings together the three interdependent realms that we looked at earlier – (1) personal and spiritual flourishing, (2) flourishing communities and societies, and (3) a flourishing natural world. Neglect one and the others suffer.

Split into different small groups (3 – 4 people) and ask each group to find an informal consensus for their vision for a sustainable world. They should try to include the three realms of personal/spiritual, interpersonal/communal and global/natural world.

They can use different media to express their vision e.g. poetry, drawing, writing, drama. The following points might help guide the activity:

- In your group aim to come to a broad agreement on a vision for a sustainable world
- What are the pathways towards attaining your visions?
- What needs to happen in your own lives, in the life of our society, and in the life of the government, to bring about the changes you want to see?

After 30 minutes come back into one large group and share the different group visions. Are the visions diverse? Are they compatible? Are there tensions between them? Are the tensions inevitable? Can the tensions be constructive?

## CLOSING THE SESSION (5 MINUTES)

Bring the session to the end by asking everyone to write a commitment or prayer on a small piece of card and to keep it in their wallet, Bible or bag to remind them of their response to God's creation.

Finish with a time of open prayer or read the following meditation:

*We are here as individuals, as whole within ourselves as each tiny cell of which we are made. We stand alone, independent. As individuals we have everything we need to survive. We are separate from the world, and yet cannot disconnect ourselves from it. We are inextricably linked to every person and living thing around us. We breathe the same air, walk the same earth, are warmed by the same sun and guided by the same moon.*

*(pause)*

*Each of us a member of a community; a university, workplace, church, household. Just as many grains of sand come from one rock, we are members of the one body, and all owe our being to the one creator. Each*

*of us different, each of us unique, but connected, interlinked, supported by  
and supporting others.*

*God within each of us,  
allow us to see that we are individuals and yet also members of a  
worldwide community*

*May we be able to combine these two identities without compromising  
either.*

*Give us the gift of understanding, that we might see the threads connecting  
us with the world around us. Amen.*

*(written by Sarah Armstrong)*

## **FUTURE DISCUSSIONS AND MORE RESOURCES**

If your group is interested in exploring this theme further, then you could try some of these topics for further discussions or invite a speaker. Get in touch with the SCM office if you need any help or resources ([scm@movement.org.uk](mailto:scm@movement.org.uk)).

- *Invite a speaker from Friends of the Earth [www.foe.org.uk](http://www.foe.org.uk), Christian Ecology Link [www.christian-ecology.org.uk](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk) or Camp for Climate Action [www.climatecamp.org.uk](http://www.climatecamp.org.uk).*
- *Go for a walk or pilgrimage as a group to appreciate God's creation, intersperse your walk with prayers, poetry and readings.*
- *Use Christian Ecology Link's Eco-Cell resources to explore discipleship and the environment.*
- *Soil and Soul by Alistair McIntosh*
- *Christianity, climate change and sustainable living by Nick Spencer & Robert White*
- *A Handbook in Theology and Ecology by Celia Deane-Drummond*
- *Climate and Christ: the Prophetic Alternative by Edward P Echlin*