

## Getting Your Youth Group Started with Eco-Justice Ministry

When Jesus said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me,” (Luke 18:16) he wasn’t just being kind and generous with his time. He went on to say, “Truly, I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” Young people have a precious wisdom and insight that become less accessible to us as we get older. This is part of why young people have an essential role to play in helping churches and families to take better care of God’s Creation. Moreover, these are the people who will inherit the Earth as we move on from it, and have the task of furthering the Kingdom. Your youth ministries for Eco-Justice should reflect both the confidence and value of young people. It should give them a sense of their responsibility toward God’s Creation, and empower them to remake their world as a harmonious expression of divine love.

### Book and World

Issues of protecting God’s Creation are found both in the Bible and in the world that is all around the youth. Interactive Bible studies (such as hosting it in a park or by a lake) can reinforce the message the pages are sending, and get young people instantly involved in the well being of the world around them. Click [here](#) for more theological background.

### Keep Them Active

Youth love hands-on projects, and they have plenty of energy! We have included lots of activities that involve physical doing and investigating. It is important to balance new understanding of the plight of the world with positive steps to help to heal it. Changing light bulbs, bicycling to church, sorting trash, building a composter, and doing a toxics scavenger hunt are all good hands-on activities for youth. Click [here](#) for more ideas.



### Learn One, Do One, Teach One.

This is a simple method for incorporating new knowledge. Youth can **Learn** about compact fluorescent bulbs, **Do** a few bulb changes, and then **Teach** someone else why and how to do this. It is even better if the recipient of that teaching is an adult in your church or in that child’s family. There is no better way to increase the ecological awareness of your congregation on the whole than to have the kids lead the way!

### Include Prayer

As people of faith, we believe that prayer is effective. It reminds us who we are and *whose* we are. It brings the community together. A heartfelt prayer of gratitude for the beauty and bounty of the Creation, an intercessory prayer on behalf of a planet in peril, a strengthening prayer for those who would follow the simple teachings of Christ are all appropriate as part of the



work of Eco-justice. Here is another place where youth can lead the way—their prayers might surprise you with their authenticity and sincerity! Additionally, prayer can serve to instill the value of communication with God as part of being a part of God’s Creation. Click [here](#) for some sample prayers.

### **Introduce them to Advocacy**

Jesus’ decision to enter Jerusalem riding a donkey was a political act. Gandhi’s march to the sea was a political act. Martin Luther King was very clear that the lunch counter sit-ins in Memphis and the bus boycotts in Montgomery were political acts motivated by Christian love. Our collective decision making process needs the voices of young people, who after all will inherit the world we leave to them. Issues of Creation care can serve as an excellent introduction as to how to become politically involved, and give young people ownership of the society in which they live. They need to be heard, and they need to develop the skills that will enable them to advocate for a different future. Contact with city, state and national representatives can be educational for youth and for the representatives. Set up a visit if you can, and have the youth sponsor a letter writing campaign in your church for an issue that they have researched and talked about. Click [here](#) for more tips for advocacy.

### **Give Them a Voice**

Assemble your youth group and look over our [ACTIVITIES](#) page together. Let the kids have a say in choosing their project. They will feel empowered by getting to make the choice, and when they choose an issue that is truly interesting to them, their energy can move mountains!