

THE CREATION. A LESSON PLAN TO CHAPTER 1 OF THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLES

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1 Short Overview

1.1 Target Group

Children/Teenager	8-13 Years Can also be adapted to other age groups
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1.2 General Conditions

Duration	About 90 min
Group Size	8 – 32 persons
Recommended number of facilitators	At least 2
Room/ Location	Group Room at Church

1.3 Notes on content

Categorization of the chapters of the Social Principles	Chapter 1: The Natural World (to start with, the first section contains the references)
Guiding concept	The participants develop a feeling for God's Creation, tackle the Creation story, work out creatively the individual Creation days, and develop a consciousness for the protection of the Creation.
Method(s) used	Creation puzzle, Leporello, Creation walk
Preparation time:	About 30 minutes
Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading of the creation story in the Bible – seven days?! • Creation puzzle – what happened when? • Creation walk to Psalm 104 • Creation Leporello – what did God create at what time? How do I perceive it? • Discussion in reference to the Social Principles • What does that mean for me tangibly? • End: Creation and responsibility
List of materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bibles • Leporello sheets • Creation Puzzle sheets • Pens • A copy of Psalm 104

- Excerpt from the Social Principles as a poster / pattern

2 Looking deeper into the content with the participants/ Introduction to the topic

2.1 What meaning does the topic have for the people and their living environment?

We live in God's world. Day by day we encounter the miracles of his Creation. But how often do we really take pause? Marvel at everything God has created? How often do we realize that the Creator of the world and of the universe has created this for us? And do we take the next step and commit ourselves to this world? Do we acknowledge the mission of protecting the Creation and do we take it seriously? Can we create a consciousness for this in our groups? Can we pave the way for an "attitude of protection"?

In the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, the natural world is on top of the list. We live in and with it. Different aspects are mentioned: "Water, air, land, mineral resources, energy reserves, plants, animals and outer space are supposed to be respected and protected because they belong to God's creation and not only because they are useful for humanity."¹ Only by reading the first section do we realize how diverse our scope of duties is. And how diverse God's Creation is.

Certainly one can think about how the Creation of the world and the big bang theory fit together. But this is not the theme of this lesson plan. Instead, we're tasked with developing a loving and respectful attitude towards the Creation of our God. And I think that this topic is familiar, especially among our children and youth groups, but not so much in connection with the Social Principles, the position of our church and personal gateway to God's Creation.

„The whole Earth is God's good Creation, and as such, has its own value.“ To pave the way for such an understanding is the guiding concept of this lesson plan. Topics such as the protection of the Creation, the animal kingdom, resources, responsibility for the world's climate or food justice fall into this category. These issues can probably also be discussed in a group – but after paving the way to awareness and perception of the diversity of the Creation.

2.2 What kind of Bible references are there?

„In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth“ (Gen 1:1). This is how the story of God and his people begins. At the beginning of the Bible is the creation of our world, and here begins the great love story of God with us. He creates a world which offers everything what a human being needs to live and to survive – for us. He creates a living environment for us that suits us perfectly. And each day ends with „And God saw it was good“. With this remains an open question: today, is still everything that good in the world we live in?

But we don't only read about God's great works in the beginning. For example, Psalm 104 tells us in a beautiful way how great and marvelous God's works are. This passage can also be utilized in this lesson.

„Right at the beginning there are passages about the good Creation (Gen 1 und 2) and the one actually lived (Gen 3) to show the contrast between them and speak of the brokenness of the experienced world. In addition to these very popular passages, there are many more Creation stories in the biblical canon: Psalm 104 sings praises to God who keeps and cares for the parts of the Creation that seem completely hidden and foreign. Job, on the other hand, protests against this creation because he experiences it as horrible. The one praying in Psalm 8 is amazed at the status of humankind in the Creation. Proverbs 8:22-31 shows the role of wisdom before and during the Creation. Paul describes in the apocalyptic text Romans 8:18-22 that the Creation is in labor, that he expects liberation and rebirth. John's prologue (John 1:1-18) alludes to the first passages of Genesis and to the Proverbs 8 by giving the divine logos the function of the mediator of Creation, as in the wisdom writings of Sophia. The New Testament and with it the Christian Bible ends with the hope of a new Creation (Revelation 21-22), which is then, like Genesis 1 - 2 at the beginning, characterized by successful relationships between humankind and God, among humankind and between humankind and every other creature.“²

Therefore the guiding concept is as follows: If our children and youth say, "I see that it is good – and I want to make efforts for this Creation", or at least ultimately adhere to it themselves, then we have paved the way for good behavior towards God's Creation.

2.3 Meaning for real life of the target group – decisions regarding implementation in practice

Unfortunately, deliberately spending time in nature, playing outside and simultaneously developing a

¹ From the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church

² <https://www.bibelwerk.de/Materialpool.12795.html/Material+zu+biblischen+Themen.34195.html>

consciousness for God's creation isn't part of the everyday life of our children and youth. How important it is that we lead them into this natural world. We obviously can't achieve this in only one hour. But we can take initial small and important steps with them. The first step is awareness of God's Creation around them. So in the next step they can create a consciousness for its protection – this is our intended goal. "To gain experience with the elements soil, air, water, fire, with warmth, cold, wind and rain, with smells, texture of the ground, lighting conditions, animal and plant species – to become aware of the magnificence and diversity of Creation manifestations."³ First, we have to create a basis of knowledge and experience in order to then go into the personal analysis.

„Only on the foundation of real nature experiences there is an emotional basis which can evoke mindfulness, appreciation and awareness of the preciousness of God's Creation. The children and young adults experience themselves as a part of the richness surrounding them, of a richness in which every human being has his unique place.“⁴

Therefore, there is the possibility of adding a "Creation Walk" with Psalm 104 to this course plan.

3 Course Plan – detailed Plan

1	<p>Reading the Creation story We read the creation story together. The group is intended to develop a consciousness for the individual days of Creation. The story may be well-known but it helps to read it again thoroughly. Also, the second Creation story can be read and compared to the first one.</p> <p>The following questions can help:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Did you understand everything? Is anything still unclear? 2) Which Creation day do you find the most interesting? Why? 3) What do you think: Why did God create the world? 4) Pick a sentence you like in particular. Explain to us why you find it so special.
2	<p>Creation Puzzle The puzzle can be made as immersion into the Creation story. It can be copied for every participant or can be designed as a common action.</p> <p>The individual squares are to be cut out. The Creation days are open and the corresponding actions of God are put beside them. Afterwards, the corresponding parts are glued together.</p> <p>Now we have an overview of the different Creation days.</p>
3	<p>Creation Walk To vary the social form, a Creation walk can be added at this point. The Participants are intended to develop a consciousness for God's Creation and to find their personal gateway to it.</p> <p>The participants go in pairs. While walking, they can perform tasks and answer questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Walk for 4 minutes. What can you see? What do you notice? Can you see everything God has created? 2) What do you like in particular? Discuss with your partner. 3) What didn't you notice as much? 4) Where do you see a threat to God's Creation? Where wasn't it protected as much or where wasn't it treated well? 5) What can we do differently? Where can you take up God's mission to protect Creation?
4	<p>Creation Leporello The participants can make their own Leporello (folding book) alone or with their walk partner. It's another overview of the individual Creation days. Pictures can be drawn about the individual days – what does God create when? Afterwards the Leporello is folded and a discussion can be started:</p> <p>What did God create at what time?</p>

³ http://www.rpi-loccum.de/material/ru-in-der-grundschule/sek1_emrich

⁴ http://www.rpi-loccum.de/material/ru-in-der-grundschule/sek1_emrich

	<p>How do we take on our mission to protect God's Creation? Where do you think are we doing things that God doesn't want us to do?</p>
5	<p>Discussion on the Social Principles</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Discuss excerpt from the Social Principles with the group (At this point, more can be brought in from the Social Principles) 2) Introduction: What are the Social Principles of the UMC? 3) What does that mean for us as a group? How do we feel about the fact that our church has these principles? What does that mean for our group? 4) What do the principles mean to me personally? <p>The group leader has to decide at this point how to go deeper with this discussion. Each is familiar with their own group, and knows to what extent the participants contemplate or can apply to their own living environment. At this point, it is possible that a little more preparation is needed.</p>
6	<p>What does this mean to me concretely?</p> <p>As another step, a sheet can be filled out with the group. Sometimes it is easier as a participant to fill out the sheet alone, and to enter into a discussion afterwards.</p> <p>Depending on the group, there can be a discussion of the link between the Creation story and the Social Principles and how their realization can look in personal everyday life.</p> <p>This discussion is only recommended for ages 11-13.</p>
7	<p>Conclusion: Creation and Responsibility</p> <p>The entire Creation belongs to the Lord. We are responsible for the way we use and abuse it. We want to make an effort for a more ecologically and sustainability-based treatment of God's Creation to achieve a higher life quality for everyone.</p> <p>The following closing questions can be discussed at this point:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What did we do today? 2) What can I take with me today from the Creation texts? 3) What in God's Creation has become important to me? 4) How can I translate the mission of protection and responsibility into action? 5) How can we as group translate the Social Principles into action? 6) What can I take with me into my everyday life? <p>At the end, the Creation story can be read to the group as a kind of „fantasy journey“. The participants can reflect on the last 90 minutes and find their personal behavior toward it.</p>

Additional material in separate document „Okt2017_Arbeitsblätter_zu_Schöpfung.pdf“

Additional information: The template for the detailed Creation Walk is available here (in German):
http://www.rpi-loccum.de/material/ru-in-der-grundschule/sek1_emrich