



Grevillea flower. Credit: David Conser

ECO JUSTICE GROUP TOOLKIT

TERM 3 2021

A resource to support leaders of ecological justice groups in schools.

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Blue Mountains, NSW Credit: Bernard Holland

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INTRODUCTION



Welcome to Catholic Earthcare Australia's Toolkit for Social Justice Leaders. This resource is to support your work with coordinating the ecological justice action groups in your school. Each session is designed to be short as we know many school groups meet in their lunchbreak.

The focus for Term 3 is the **Season of Creation (1 September – 4 October)**.

We encourage all schools to take action to care for our common home through the Season of Creation. During your first session for Term 3, students, with support from their teachers, decide what action they would like to take. We encourage students to work on their action plan each week in the lead up to the Season of Creation.

In addition to the Season of Creation action and celebration, we have provided sessions that are aligned with specific ecological justice dates and we encourage you to use the sessions in a way/order that best suits your needs.

Take Action through the Season of Creation!

Catholic Earthcare Australia are encouraging all schools and parishes to take action during the Season of Creation and to inspire others by sharing these actions on social media using the hashtag **#act4ourcommonhome**

We hope to bring all the actions together from across Australia to celebrate the Church in action on the Catholic Earthcare Day of Action.

Catholic Identity

An active and effective social and ecological justice group can contribute to the Catholic identity of your school by:

- giving prominence to the Gospel and person of Jesus Christ, as well as the Catholic Social Teaching principles;
- being committed to the Christian vision of the dignity of each human person;
- giving value and meaning to life, by encouraging students to aspire not to have more, but to BE more;
- challenging students to understand and make sense of the world we live in;
- enabling and empowering students to take action for a more just and fair world with direction, meaning, purpose and hope.

CATHOLIC EARTHCARE AUSTRALIA

A PROGRAM OF CARITAS AUSTRALIA



About Catholic Earthcare Australia (CEA)

Catholic Earthcare Australia was first established in 2002 by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. It aims to promote an understanding among people that creation is sacred and endangered and must be protected and preserved for present and future generations.

Catholic Earthcare was incorporated into Caritas Australia in 2018 to create synergies between agencies that service the 'cry of the earth' and 'cry of the poor'.

There are currently three programs: a school program, a parish and a youth program.

Our school program aims to transform hearts and minds and enhance the Catholic identity of schools. There are 5 levels of accreditation with a star awarded for each level on a certificate. Professional support and resources are available.

Find out more and register to become a Catholic Earthcare School at:

<https://catholicearthcare.org.au/earthcare-certified-schools-program/>

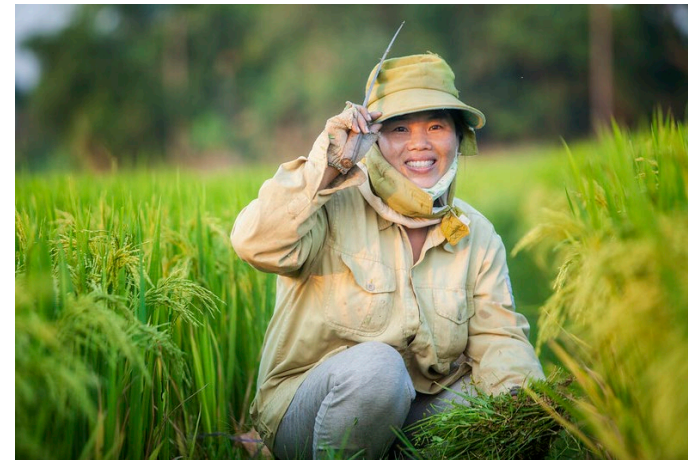


About Caritas Australia

Caritas Australia assists marginalised communities to end poverty, uphold dignity and promote justice.

Caritas Australia works in partnership in 18 countries around the world, as well as with First Australian communities. Caritas Australia provides various training programs; for example, how to grow food in a sustainable way, giving access to clean water, ways to produce an ongoing income and much more.

Learn more using the ["Introduction to Caritas Australia"](#) PowerPoint.



Harvesting rice in Vietnam. Credit: Nguyen Minh Duc/ Caritas Australia

PRAYER



God of all Creation

You gave us a world of gifts to share with all our brothers and sisters; soils, plants, animals, water, air and more.

Transform our hearts and minds to care for our common home.

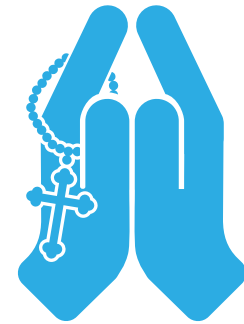
Let us see and feel your presence in our sacred land and be in wonder and awe.

Remind us of the dignity of all living things and to tread lightly on this earth.

Be with us as we take action and seek environmental justice for all.

We give you thanks and praise for all of Creation.

Amen



“When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship in union with them.”

Pope Francis, Laudato Si' #87

SESSION 1: SEASON OF CREATION ACTION PLAN



About the Season of Creation

The Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together. During the Season of Creation, we join our sisters and brothers in the ecumenical family in prayer and action for our common home.

The season starts 1 September, the Day of Prayer for Creation, and ends 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology beloved by many Christian denominations. The Season of Creation was first celebrated by the ecumenical churches around the world for many years with Pope Francis making the Roman Catholic Church's warm welcoming of the season official in 2015.

Throughout the month-long celebration, the world's 2.2 billion Christians come together to care for our common home.

ACTIVITY – Plan how your group/school can take care of our common home during the Season of Creation.

Use Caritas Australia's [Social Justice Action Planner](#) to help you plan an effective action.

Some ideas: creating a garden with a particular purpose such as attracting birds, reducing the organic waste produced by the school, reducing the use of single use plastic, saving water or energy. The options are endless!

SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTION PLANNER

Planning your action

1. Think
What are the focus or your campaign?
What is the need/problem?

2. Learn
What facts and figures do you need?
What does the issue look like? Can you identify someone who is affected by the issue?

3. Tools
Think about the kind of "tools" you need, such as, whether they are people, skills, materials, or other resources you need.

4. Contacts and partnerships
Who are you going to talk to?
Who are you going to work with?
Who are you going to ask for help?

5. Set a date
When will you measure the progress?
When will you need resources?
When do you need to report?

Justice begins with us!
What personal action will you take?
How will you help others?

Reflect on faith and action:
What Caritas Australia activity will you do?
How will you measure the success of your action?

ACTION PLAN

WHAT WILL BE YOUR ACTION?	WHAT TASKS NEED TO BE DONE?	WHY IS THIS A GOOD IDEA?	WHO WILL DO IT?	WHAT DATE IS IT DUE?
FUNDRAISING ACTION \$				
AMBASSADOR ACTION 👥				
SOLIDARITY ACTION 🌍				
JUSTICE ACTION ⚖️				

Make sure you work on your action each week in the lead up to the Season of Creation

SESSION 2: PLASTIC WASTE



Single use plastic is used to make disposable containers, cups, cutlery, bags, water bottles, packaging materials etc. Plastic is made from petrochemicals i.e. fossil fuels which we will eventually run out of and can be harmful to the environment.

Watch this [video](#)



Reducing the amount of single use plastic in your life is one of the easiest changes you can make!

Do you really need a plastic straw to enable you to drink or could you say no to balloons for your next party?

What changes could you make at school or at home to reduce your use of single use plastic?

Act: Take the challenge to not use single use plastic for the rest of July.

Plastic free July <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>



Don't forget to do some work on your Season of Creation project!

SESSION 3: TREES



1st August is National Tree day

(National Tree planting day for schools is the 30 July)

Why are trees so important?

Trees provide various habitats for insects, birds, reptiles, mammals and minibeasts, their leaves and fruit provide food, places to lay eggs and hide from predators, they absorb our greenhouse gases and store carbon, provide oxygen and more!

Research What is Australia's national tree?

What is the difference between an Australian native and an indigenous tree?

Discuss Why it is important to plant indigenous plants?

(They are suited to the soil, temperature, moisture levels in your area and provide food and habitat for indigenous animals in your area.)

Act Ask a local business to donate some indigenous trees and plants to plant in your school grounds.

Get your group planting and involved in National Tree planting day for schools on the 30 July. <https://treeday.planetark.org/get-involved/schools>

Did you know it takes approximately 100 years for a tree to form a hollow?

Hollows provide homes for many big animals, such as possums and parrots, and small animals like insects and spiders.

What can you learn from this fact? We need to look after old trees, even if they are dead!

SESSION 4: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



The 9 August is the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Prepare an acknowledgement to the First Peoples' nation and group where your school or home is located. Use your acknowledgement at your roll call and school assemblies.

This is an example to help you.

We acknowledge our First Nations people and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Their deep spiritual connection to country and respect for the natural environment has ensured the preservation of our natural environment for thousands of years.



Credit Richard Wainwright



Learn more about how Indigenous peoples around the world are taking care of our common home and their family and community.

[Watch](#) Tati's story

Case study and learning activities can be downloaded [here](#).



Don't forget to do some work on your Season of Creation project!

SESSION 5: FAIRTRADE



The 6-19 August is Fairtrade Fortnight

Activity

Divide your justice group into 4 groups and ask them to find out if we grow cocoa beans, tea, coffee and cotton in Australia? Assign one product to each group to research.

Ask students to think about and complete these questions using this sentence starter

Have you ever thought about

- Where these products come from?
- What is the environmental impact of growing and transporting these products? How does this relate to Catholic Social Teaching?
- Are the growers paid a fair price? How does this relate to Catholic Social Teaching?
- What are their working conditions like? How does this relate to Catholic Social Teaching?
- Who makes the clothes you buy and where does the cotton used come from? How does this relate to Catholic Social Teaching?

Act

Share what you have learnt with others by creating posters to display around the school and presenting at a whole school assembly. Raise awareness wherever you can!

Ask your teachers if they have fairtrade coffee and tea in the staffroom. [Slavery-free resources](#) are available from the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools.

Write to your local member of Parliament explaining what you have learnt and ask about their policies on fairtrade.



Don't forget to do some work on your Season of Creation project!

SESSION 6: WATER



Did you know?

Australia is the driest continent in the world where people live on a permanent basis.

Our climate is becoming warmer and drier, we are receiving less rainfall and experiencing more severe weather like high winds, floods and cyclones. [Source: CSIRO](#)



Activities

- Take the [Water Quiz](#)
- Learn about water scarcity around the world with this [Water Fact Sheet](#)
- Audit how much water your school is using. Download an audit tool [here](#).
- Brainstorm how your school can reduce the amount of water they are using.
- Raise awareness at school on where water is being wasted and how water usage can be reduced. Do a presentation at a school assembly, create posters and display them around the school. Write an article for your school newsletter or a post for the school's website or social media channels.
- [Watch this video](#) on how Caritas Australia is supporting Thandolwayo and her community to access clean water.



Thandolwayo collecting water, Zimbabwe.
Credit Richard Wainwright

SESSION 7: ENERGY



The 16 September is the [International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer](#)

Activities

- Calculate your carbon footprint at home using the [UN Carbon Footprint Calculator](#). Then reduce your carbon emissions by making transport, household and lifestyle changes.
- Could you change the way you get to school to use less energy? You might like to organise a Walk/Ride/Scoot/Skate to School Day as part of your Season of Creation activities. [Click here](#) for supporting resources.
- What behaviours could you change at school and at home to reduce the amount of energy you use?
- When you shop, could you buy items that have less packaging, are organic and locally grown?
- Can you visit a bulk food supplier where you take your own containers and then re-use/recycle the containers?

“there is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions”

Pope Francis, Laudato Si’ 211



SESSION 8: SEASON OF CREATION



Time to finalise and deliver your Season of Creation action/project



The Season of Creation is a very special time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation.

Activity: Contemplation of Creation

This activity is a basic form of meditation and research shows that meditation in nature slows our heart rate, focuses our mind and benefits our health and wellbeing. [Source](#)

It is important to choose a natural, relatively large area where you can still see/hear your students for this contemplation. It also helps to have good weather! If you have a natural area near your school such as a beach or park, use this space. You are going to ask students to contemplate nature for a few minutes in a private space.

Take your group outside to the most beautiful, natural part of your school grounds where it is not too noisy. Ask students to amble around slowly, enjoy nature and choose a spot that takes their interest.

Come back together to explain the activity, then ask students to move to their individual, private spot but where they can still see a teacher. (Students need to be apart to have a private experience, but close enough for supervision.)

Ask them to sit or stand in silence for a few moments and notice everything natural around them. Can you see anything moving? Close your eyes and feel the warmth of the sun or the coolness of the breeze. Listen to the natural sounds, what do you hear? What do you smell? Feel something natural, that is safe to feel; leaf, bark etc.

Discussion

- How do you feel after spending a few quiet minutes in nature? (relaxed, renewed, energised?)
- What was beautiful or amazing that you saw?
- Where do all these living and non-living things come from?
- Did you feel the presence of God in nature?
- Are we connected to nature?
- How do humans depend on nature?



Season of Creation Prayer Service

Caritas Australia has created a simple prayer service for the Season of Creation, for primary school students.

Download [here](#).



SESSION 9: FOOD WASTE



29 September is the UN International Day of Awareness on Food Loss and Waste Reduction

Take the [Food Quiz](#)



Activity: How do our food choices impact our common home?

We clear large areas of native bushland to make space to grow crops and raise animals which we use as food. Removing these plants and animals removes habitat and forces them to live elsewhere. As the population of the world increases, we clear more and more land.

1. For each of these statements, list some of the environmental impacts that might occur

- Pesticides are often used on plants to remove animals that feed or lay their eggs on them.
- Chemicals are added to soil to make crops grow quicker and to get a bigger harvest.
- Certain food plants like rice need a lot of water to grow.
- Foods are processed in factories.
- Our food is transported from farms to cities which uses fuel. Some of the food we eat comes from overseas.
- Packaging of food uses plastic and some materials that can't be recycled.
- We cook our food using gas and electricity.



Did you know? In Australia, we throw away 300 kg's of food per person each year! [Source](#)

2. For each statement, can you think of ways we could reduce the impact on our natural environment by making different choices?

Learn more about [Food Insecurity in Our World](#).

SESSION 10: REFLECT AND CELEBRATE



Take time to reflect and celebrate the learning and actions achieved in Term 3.

What information/learning has stood out the most? What was their favourite activity?

What worked well? What would they do differently next time?

What would students like to learn about or take action on next term?



Celebrate

We must be positive and hopeful about the future of the environment. In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis says we should **"Sing as we Go"**

Listen to Gen Verde's song called ["Turn Around"](#)

Discuss:

- What do you think influenced this group to write this song?
- Why do you think they called it "Turn Around"?
- What is the main message of the song?
- How did it make you feel?



Pray – use the prayer on page 5.



Write a song

Write a song for your ecological justice group – start simply by writing down some words, then think of a key message you would like listeners to take from your song, turn the words into lines or lyrics.

Then just start tapping a tune with a pencil on the desk to try and work out how the lines could fit into a tune. You might be lucky enough to have musical instruments you can experiment with.

If you have some talented musicians in the group, you could go further and write a song for your group.

This could be performed at a special liturgy for the Season of Creation or at a whole school assembly.



Share your great work on your school's social media channels using **#act4ourcommonhome**



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THANK YOU!



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