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An invitation to participate in a *Letter of the Faithful*:

WELCOME TO YOUR GUIDE TO PARTICIPATING IN
FOR THE LOVE OF CREATION'S *LETTER OF THE FAITHFUL* PROJECT.



FOR THE **LOVE**
OF **CREATION**



For the Love of Creation wants to hear how your faith speaks to the climate crisis our world is facing. This initiative comes from the position that caring for the Earth and protecting it is both a moral and a spiritual imperative. Everyone in Canada and across the world must respond to that imperative in their own way.

Local contexts and experiences shape how we talk about our faith. The *Letter of the Faithful* project will share a collection of “theologies” that emerge as Canadians respond faithfully in their contexts to climate change by using this guide.

*The **Letter of the Faithful** project is led by the For the Love of Creation theology working group. You are invited to contribute to the project by using this guide to reflect together in a small group. We believe that theological reflection in small groups is the best means to fulfill the mandate of the theology working group: “creating a space for collaborative responsive theology, exploring our relationship with the Creator and creation, and encouraging theologically grounded and relevant dialogue about climate justice and global warming.”*

The group you meet with does not have to come to complete consensus; what is important is that you listen respectfully to each other, commit to struggling with the issues together, and explore how responding to these issues can be part of faithful witness and living.

We ask you to name (but not necessarily agree on) themes that emerge from your conversation. A final step will be to share those themes with us using an online report form. The theology working group will gather all the contributions into a *Letter of the Faithful*. This *Letter of the Faithful* will be published for all as part of the **For the Love of Creation** initiative.

Why not just provide a theology?

At its best, theology is like a living system and midwife both, helping give birth to creative human responses to God and God’s love. It sets out helpful structures on which to build responses to questions like “what is love in the context of ecological degradation? What is justice in a time of climate change? How should we care for the Earth?” Developing theologies (in the plural) of ecological love, care, and justice for creation is a means of finding multiple ways to faithfully express the call, as Christians see it, to live justly and sustainably within God’s creation. Engaging in the process for this *Letter of the Faithful* can allow Christians to really engage with their faith and see how it can shape commitment, lives, practice action etc. As there are many people, with many different backgrounds and many different life experiences—all made God’s image, all trying to faithfully respond to the call to live justly in creation—there will be multiple ways that responses come into being.

How do we build a theology of ecological love, care, and justice for creation?

In building the theologies we are calling for here, we are not, of course, starting from scratch. Much theological study has already been done, over centuries, on what faithful care of creation, justice, love, and faithful worship look like, and we encourage you to draw on those theological resources in your tradition and elsewhere that are already available. The following process is intended to stir reflection on how each one of us understands the relationship between God, human persons, and earth. A diversity of views is welcome.



The Process

1. Gather a small group of people (no more than 8) to meet for 1-2 hours.
2. Invite everyone to read this guide ahead of your gathering.
3. Open your group gathering by offering a land acknowledgement and sharing a moment of prayer.

A useful resource for those unfamiliar with the indigenous territory where they are located is: <https://native-land.ca/>

4. Go around the circle and share two stories each: one about your experience in creation that brings you joy, and one that brings you pain. Consider what the stories you shared ask of you and what they ask of us?
5. Once everyone in the group has shared their stories, have the following questions read aloud for the group:
 - a) Based on what has been shared, how is the Creator's wisdom revealed in Creation? What can other creatures teach us?
 - b) Are there key stories, scripture passages, or teachings from your faith tradition that have taught you something about the value of all of creation and the relationship between humans and other living beings?
 - c) In the context of climate change, what do you fear, and where do you see possibility or hope?
6. Invite those gathered to respond to these questions considering the stories they have just shared with each other. Ensure that everyone gets to speak at least once.
7. Before your gathering ends, make sure to share the link to the *Letter of the Faithful* report form with anyone who wants to contribute to the development of the Letter of the Faithful. Alternatively, your group may choose one person to complete the form on its behalf.
8. Conclude your gathering with a short time of quiet contemplation and a concluding prayer.

A SUGGESTED OPENING PRAYER:

Creator God

We come before you in a time of crisis

We know that much of your creation struggles

We begin to see and acknowledge the changes around us

We search for the causes and the cures and the collaborative ways we can commit to care for creation

We want to do what's right

But we don't always know what that is,

Or agree how best to do it.

Help us learn what we must, listening to the diverse voices of creation itself

Help us understand and love what you have loved and called "very good"

Enliven that understanding, we ask, to allow ourselves to be moved to act as we should and to halt actions that harm

Guide us as we try to discern how best to truly hear each other as well as creation

And heed your Call

We ask for forgiveness where we have taken too much or cared too little for hearts willing to listen and change and will to follow through

May the knowledge of your presence and the assurance of your love

Shape our time here and always

We pray in your name,

Amen.



A SUGGESTED CLOSING PRAYER:

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Amen.

Making your contribution to the *Letter of the Faithful*

Once your gathering has taken place, please use the following link to make your contribution to the *Letter of the Faithful*:

<https://forms.gle/1iR7Nzw3DU98DY517>

You are encouraged to complete the form as soon as possible after your gathering has taken place, while the spirit of the conversation is still fresh. The open-ended questions the form includes will ask you to take some time to step back and reflect on what you heard and whether there are key insights you could summarize.

While we ask that you complete the form as a facilitator, you may also invite any participant to also complete the form if they wish as well. There can be multiple form entries for the same gathering.

We thank you for your contribution and hope that your gathering was an enriching one. Theological conversations like these are an important way to deepen our love of creation and the place that it holds within our faith. Thank-you for joining us in this project!

To keep updated on the progress of the *Letter of the Faithful*, please visit www.fortheloveofcreation.ca/theology