

# 50 Creation Care Ideas for Your Church

As stewards of God's creation, it's important for us to take care of the earth and all its inhabitants.

This guide is designed to help churches of all sizes and backgrounds take practical steps towards caring for the earth and creation. Whether you're just starting to explore ways to act, or are already deeply committed to creation care, we hope that you will find new ideas that you can implement.

We believe that every small step we take towards creation care makes a difference, and we hope that this guide will inspire you to act in your own community. So, let's get started, and work together to create a more sustainable, just, and beautiful world for all of God's creatures.

## Worship & Discipleship

### GROUP

#### 1. Creation Care Sunday

Host a service focusing on the theology of creation care and how your church can be practically involved with caring for the living things in your community.

#### 2. Create a 24-hour prayer room

Dedicate a space for people to pray whenever they need to.

#### 3. Incorporate creation in worship

Worship is more than just singing songs. Worship can be expressed through art, liturgy, posture, and so much more. Consider hosting a creation art challenge or reading a liturgy focused on the creation story and our role in it today.

#### 4. Hold a worship service outside

What better way to appreciate creation (and save on heat, air conditioning, and electricity) than to meet outside! Jesus' most famous sermon was preached outside, take a note from the greatest preacher of all time and change it up sometime.

#### 5. Book a church retreat

Getting away from the hustle and bustle of life can be tough. Work with your church leadership to plan a weekend getaway for people to relax and reconnect with God and others. Bonus, incorporate other ideas from this list like a prayer walk or incorporating the story of creation into worship.

## 6. Invite a guest speaker

The topic of creation care reaches beyond enjoying nature. It extends into God's love for us, stewardship, and worship. Consider inviting a guest speaker to talk to your church about this topic. We have staff members who are gifted speakers and would love to talk to you about what a Creation Care Sunday could look like.

## GROUP OR PERSONAL

### 7. Prayer Walk

Set a time and invite people to join you for a prayer walk around your neighbourhood or local park. Thank God for the way He orchestrated everything so we can thrive. Pray for the people and other living things that all contribute to our ecosystem. Take your time and listen for what God wants to say to you.

### 8. Sing worship songs that talk about creation

Naturistic imagery and stories of creation are prevalent in worship music. A quick Google search will give you old hymns like, "This is My Father's World", to newer songs like, "So Will I". There are options out there for everyone!

### 9. Host a small group or Bible study on creation care

Right Now Media has several studies on creation care. But if videos aren't your thing then simply read Genesis 1-9 and talk about what God says about creation, and His covenants to us regarding creation.

## Personal Lifestyle

## FROM SIMPLE TO MOST CHALLENGING

### 10. Repair what is broken instead of buying new

Something older generations did really well was learning to mend, recycle, and reuse things. If you know how to sew, offer to teach a workshop at your church. If you are good with doing car maintenance teach someone else how so their vehicle lasts longer. There are many skills that can be used to extend the life of clothing, vehicles, technology, and other things.

### 11. Shop second hand clothes.

Over the past decade thrifting has made a come back! Vintage styles and wanting to save a few dollars have motivated people to shop second hand. Bonus, many churches have even started their own thrift stores to support local and global missions. Check out Missions Thrift Store across Canada and the proceeds will go back to the community.

## **12. Attend or host a clothing swap.**

Get some friends together, everyone brings a bag of clothes they no longer want and set up a “shopping” table. Students at Tyndale University organized a dress loan program where girls could bring in formal dresses they had worn before and trade with someone else for the end of year banquet. Everyone got their dresses back but got to wear something new to them for an evening.

## **13. Shift to more public transit.**

Public transit is improving each year, making it easier for Canadians to get where they need to be without a personal vehicle. Try taking public transit once a week, use the time to read your Bible, or listen to worship music since you don’t have to focus on driving!

## **14. Cycle to work.**

Living in Canada this one is only possible about half the year, but it is a great option! In the summer cycling to work can help you save some money on gas, give you exercise, and use less fossil fuels.

## **15. Buy high quality clothes that last longer.**

Fast fashion is a hot topic in recent years. Cheaply made, trendy clothing is quickly discarded due to being unable to mend cheap fabric. These clothes are also in the morally grey area in terms of labour conditions. High quality clothing may be more expensive but if you can afford it or find it in a thrift store, than it is worth it long term.

## **16. Buy clothes from more sustainable companies.**

This goes hand in hand with buying higher quality clothing. Look into companies that follow sustainable practices such as proper labour conditions, using recycled materials, offset their carbon footprint, give a portion of proceeds to environmental conservation, etc...

## **17. Take less air travel**

Travelling is fun and we live in an incredible country with lots of places to explore. Each province has plenty to offer people with all kinds of interests. When planning your next vacation consider places you can go to via car or train. Road tripping is a whole new adventure if you’re up for it! Some provinces even offer tax benefits for booking hotels, cottages, and campgrounds that are local to you.

## **18. Invest in an electric vehicle.**

Automobile manufacturers are starting to turn to electric vehicles, and the government is responding by widening the electric grid. Although electric vehicles aren’t feasible everywhere yet, they are coming. In the meantime, consider driving a hybrid!

## Facilities

### SIMPLE TO MOST CHALLENGING

#### 19. Replace disposable cups with mugs

With the rise of people working from home this one should be easy. Rather than going out for your morning coffee, make it at home and use your favourite mug! Some coffee shops will even let you bring your own reusable travel mug and give you a discount for doing so!

#### 20. Switch from single-use plastics to reusables

This option has become extremely popular in the past few years with people finding new ways to replace single use plastics. From recyclable bamboo utensils and metal straws to the elimination of plastic bags in place of reusable cloth ones. There are reusable replacements for almost every kitchen product at this point.

#### 21. Program your thermostat lower when no one is around and at night

Did you know the range of temperatures for optimal sleep is 17-19 degrees Celsius? Rather than blasting your heat at night, try turning it down a few degrees and see if you notice the change in your sleep and your electricity bills!

#### 22. Source sustainable food

There are lots of ways to eat sustainably. You can eat locally, plan meals based on ingredients that are in season, eat 1 vegetarian meal each week, or use the scraps for other things (ie. Make vegetable broth out of peelings). Get creative!

**Pro tip:** “healthy” and “environmentally sustainable” don’t always go hand in hand. For example, if you live in Northern Ontario and it is January, it could take a lot of fuel and packaging to get a crate of mangoes to you. Although it is healthy, it is not sustainable for the environment. Same goes for beef. Although eating beef can be good for you, it takes 660 gallons of water to produce a 1/3lb burger. That is a lot of resources used in just the production phase. This is why it is important to look into the sustainability practices of companies and farmers.

#### 23. Capture and store rainwater

Many avid gardeners have at least 1 rain bucket to collect water to feed their plants at a later date. This will save you money from using your hose and requires very little maintenance once installed.

#### 24. Set-up proper recycling practices

The official process of recycling has been around for a long time but not everyone knows the rules, paper vs. plastic is a constant debate. Make sure you check the packages when you buy them to see if they tell you where to go. Another one people often forget is to rinse your plastics before recycling. If you recycle an old peanut butter container with peanut butter still in it, it will attract bugs and creatures, and can’t be used again.

## **25. Go digital and print less paper**

Nearly everything can be done online now. You can do your taxes online, read anything, sign legal documents and even more!

## **26. Switch to electronic church communications**

Finding out what is going on at church has never been easier! Most churches have websites, social media pages, and weekly emails telling you about everything going on. This has also been a great way for non-church goers to check out what is going on with your congregation.

## **27. Make church property more natural**

This one is more about making people think about creation by having it around. Try using fresh flowers at Easter, decorate the trees in your parking lot at Christmas. Be intentional about highlighting the pieces of natural creation around you.

## **28. Change to LED lighting**

There are so many reasons to switch to LED lighting. For example, they last longer, require less maintenance, are safer, smaller, illuminate colour more, cheaper in the long run, and better for the environment.

## **29. Install automatic light timers**

Sometimes we don't realize how much electricity we're using daily. By putting your lights on automatic timers, you don't have to worry about remembering if everything is turned off at night or when you go away. Bonus, they may even keep burglars from breaking into your house at Christmas!

## **30. Install motion sensed taps and hand dryers**

Ever arrive on vacation and wonder if your tap is fully turned off? Having motion sensed taps and hand dryers are a great way to make sure that no water or air is wasted. This is especially good for public places like the church building or your work.

## **31. Upgrade insulation and windows**

This one requires a higher upfront cost but will save you thousands of dollars within the first few years. Better insulation and windows keep heat inside in the winter, and cool in the summer. Old insulation and windows were sometimes built with hazardous materials and often let heat and cool in when you don't want them.

## **32. Upgrade heating system**

Similarly, to upgrading insulation and windows, having an upgraded heating system requires less electricity for you to run, resulting in lower costs over time and less energy being spent in the meantime.

### **33. Install solar panels or wind turbines**

These are more options with higher upfront costs but incredible long-term results. In recent years the government has tried to make it more accessible for people to install solar panels by offering financial incentives. Make sure to check them out before crossing this option off your list!

## **Outreach and Community**

### **SIMPLE TO MOST CHALLENGING**

#### **34. Litter Pick-up**

This is an elementary school Earth Day classic! Take a garbage bag, pick an area, grab some friends, and start tidying. Another simpler option is to take a small bag with you when you walk your dog and pick up any trash you see along the way.

#### **35. Earth Hour**

For years on Earth Day, people have been encouraged to turn off all their electricity for 1 hour. Why not try doing an electronics free hour once a week? Plan something fun to do like go for a hike or to the park, or have a campfire in your backyard. Not a fan of the outdoors? Try lighting some candles inside and having a board game party or playing hide and seek in the dark!

#### **36. “Walk to church” Sunday**

This will be easier in the summer and if you don’t live too far from the building. If you live within a 30-minute walking distance, try walking once a month. Listen to some worship music or just pray and make it a time to prepare your heart for the service.

#### **37. Plan a church hike**

Meet at a trailhead and go for a hike. If there aren’t trails around you go to a park and have a picnic instead, be outside together and enjoy creation.

#### **38. Carbon Fast**

Your carbon footprint comes from a variety of things, travel, food, resource usage, technology, etc... Consider doing a “fast” where you choose to reduce your carbon footprint in a specific area. Make a calendar and try something new everyday for a week! For example: Meatless Monday, Transit Tuesday, Wasteless Wednesday, Turn down Temperature Thursdays, Fair Trade snacks Friday, Switch off lights Saturday, Save paper Sunday.

#### **39. Plastic Free Month**

Focusing more on one area, try going single use plastic free for a month. Does a month sound daunting? Start with a week and see how it goes! You may be surprised at how many other options there are.

#### **40. Set-up a car sharing scheme**

Carpooling is a great way to save money, fuel, and to build deeper relationships. Companies like Uber and Lyft have latched onto the concept of carpooling by offering ride-sharing options like Uberpool.

#### **41. Join a Conservation Group**

Almost every city has one now. Do a quick Google search, “conservation group [your city]” and something is sure to come up. This is a great place to start if you want to get more involved but aren’t sure how.

#### **42. Plant trees**

Check with your local conservation group and see if they are hosting any tree planting events. Make sure not to go tree planting on your own or at least do lots of research before going out to make sure you don’t bring in an invasive species.

#### **43. Invasive Species Removal**

Educate yourself on invasive species in your area. Find a local environmental group and see if they have any information. Organize a removal party!

#### **44. Screen a movie**

Choose an educational movie for people to start thinking about the effects of climate change around the world. A great one to start with is “The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind”, which is a true story based off a young man living in Malawi who was able to source wind energy to help relieve poverty in his community.

#### **45. Plant a church garden**

Gardens are a great way to spend time in creation, bring value to a plot of land, potentially provide food to people who need it, and bring people together. Community gardens have become more popular in recent years. They give church goers and community members a common interest and equal footing to get to know each other and to create something together.

#### **46. Share with other churches**

Many Evangelical churches in North America run camps in the summer. Each year everyone wants to do the same themed camps. What if we took turns with different themes and rotated the materials each year so there were different camps in different areas throughout the city. Or churches worked together to run larger camps with a greater supply of human, financial, and material resources available. Unity doesn’t just have to be with camps, be creative and see what other resources can be shared.

## Global Action

### 47. Learn about climate change in other countries

Education is where interest begins. Climate change is severely affecting people around the world, especially the poorest. In recent months people in Ethiopia and Kenya have been struggling with severe drought, resulting in high crop loss. But we are working to combat this through conservation agriculture and other training. There are more changes coming and the only way we can prevent and react is to be aware.

### 48. Partner with like-minded charities

A Rocha and Tearfund are both looking for people to be involved in our Creation Collective Movement. If you are interested in helping with events, being part of a network, or something else, reach out and let us know!

### 49. Engage with your local MP and elected representatives.

Look into which of your local politicians have an interest and are already acting on environmental issues. Reach out and see how you can be involved.

### 50. Advocate for change

- a. Fairer practices
- b. Carbon reduction
- c. Climate finance for poorer nations

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## About Tearfund Canada

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