

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## *Faith Formation*

### 2. Engage Children & Youth in Climate Justice

“I have learned you are never too small to make a difference.”

—Greta Thunberg, Teen Climate Activist

**Recommendation:** Initiate and invest in programs that connect, educate, and support children and youth on climate justice and on our responsibility as Christians to care for Creation.

**Background:** Youth have consistently led the charge for climate justice, holding world leaders accountable and taking to the streets to demand immediate changes for the benefit of the environment. In the Diocese of Olympia, children and teens can set a powerful example for their congregations.

But acute awareness of climate crisis at such a young age comes at a cost. Talitha Amadea Aho, author of *In Deep Water: Spiritual Care for Young People in a Climate Crisis*, observes that “the young people of today do not remember stability. They see the world through crisis-colored glasses. Climate change is creating a spiritual emergency that is hitting their generation harder than any other.”

Although the church can play a role in forming future leaders and empowering children and youth in the arena of climate justice, it can also be a safe place to share concerns and to unpack anxiety—through prayer and other spiritual practices, through collective activism, and through opportunities for conversation that directly address the despair and mourning that are normal responses to a world in the midst of an existential crisis.

### **Taking Action:**

- **Get Outdoors**

- Cultivate a love of the outdoors by creating opportunities for children to get outside in order to appreciate the beauty of the Pacific Northwest.
- Consider youth pilgrimage models like the Youth Wilderness Pilgrimages led by the Rev. Bill Harper or the [Diocesan Youth Creation Care Pilgrimage](#).
- Offer scholarships for children to go to [Camp Huston](#).
- Build or enhance the playground on your church property so children have their own dedicated outdoor space.

- **Provide Leadership Opportunities**

- Support and shine light on children who want to help “green” your congregation. At Grace, Bainbridge Island, a nine-year-old spearheaded a drive to put recycling bins and trash cans in each room of the church. A high school student built and mounted an owl house onto one of the large trees on the property and then explained her project at the lectern on Sunday during announcements.

- Send youth (and adults) who want to make a difference to the [Online Climate Reality Training](#) led by Al Gore and a team of world-renowned scientists, activists, innovators, and more.
- Invite youth to be members of your Green Team.
- **Use “Green” Curricula.** These are just a few examples. Go to the [Diocesan Resource Center](#) for more ideas:
  - [Abundant Life Garden Project](#) is an interactive, scripture-based children’s faith formation program developed to share the work of Episcopal Relief & Development. It's free to download.
  - [Earth Our Garden Home: Creation Care Lessons for Children](#) combines scripture, games and activities, prayers, and even ideas for snacks “to reflect your community’s focus on wellness, healing and good stewardship.”
  - [Green Church: Caretakers of God’s Creation: A Six-Week Study for Kids](#) helps children experience what it means to be good stewards of God’s creation with Bible stories and some small group time for discussing ways to take action.
  - [In Deep Water: Spiritual Care for Young People in a Climate Crisis](#) helps to keep young people at the center of your community. Whether you are a peer or a caring adult, *In Deep Water* will show you how to offer ecologically informed spiritual care for youth.
  - [ReNew: The Green VBS](#) is an environmentally focused VBS program from Sparkhouse.
  - [What’s So Amazing About Polar Bears? Teaching Kids to Care for Creation](#) offers six lessons that include craft ideas and companion picture book recommendations.
  - [Wild Faith: A Creation Care Curriculum for Youth](#) provides ideas for crafts, publicity materials and service projects but also six full liturgies for creation care.

- [Wild Wonder](#) is camp curriculum that helps parents and churches get kids outside and spark their imaginations as they learn about God and explore the world around them.

**Results:** By supporting a connection to nature, by providing safe space for sharing concerns, and by nurturing emerging congregational and community leader roles, the church equips children and youth to address the climate crisis with hope and resilience.