



The earth  
is the Lord's,  
and its fullness,  
the world and all  
who dwell therein.

*Psalms 23 (24):1*

## Lesson Plans for 2009-2010 Creative Festivals

### Grades Preschool - K

#### GOAL:

*To teach the theme to the children so that they will be able to express their understanding of it through drawings, poetry, essays, and photography.*

#### BACKGROUND

This year's theme comes from the Psalms, and is reiterated throughout the Bible, both Old and New Testament. The wonder of creation is seen in the Old Testament Psalms, and in the miracle accounts, such as the calming of the sea, in the New Testament. The theme has at least two dimensions, one dealing with the majesty of God, and the second with our response to God the Creator.

**Majesty.** The grandeur of creation attests to the majesty of God, as does the theme itself, "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness . . ." It is different than saying, "all things were made by God."

Within the theme is hidden some theology, namely, that God stands apart from, and above creation. We take this for granted. The Israelites who accepted the Ten Commandments may not have. The cultures that surrounded them at the time held traditional stories of creation in which battles between the gods resulted in creation. Or that an aspect of creation, such as the waters, was the consequence of the death of a god who then fell to earth. Creation had no hold on God. Rather, God was the master of all, the possessor of all, because He was the Creator of all. When Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples were given a major clue as to His identity—only God has power over nature.

It is our faith as well, stated in the Nicene Creed, "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." The Pantocrator, or "Ruler of All," is a good icon for teaching this

concept as it evokes the majesty of God especially if placed, as it traditionally is, in the center dome of the church.

**Our Response to Creation.** The second dimension involves our response to God's majesty, and God's creation. If you take a look at Genesis, the first book in the Bible, you will see that there are two creation accounts, in chapters one and two. (Those who compiled the written Bible knew of at least two oral traditions of the story of creation. They both hold truth. We are most familiar with the first, "creation in seven days.") In the first account we read that the human person is made in the image and likeness of God, and in the second God made man from the clay of the earth and breathed in his nostrils. The human person was thus made both matter and spirit—connected to the created order, and connected to God through being made in His image. It is the role of the human person to care for (steward) creation and all that lives within creation; and also, to intercede for creation before God.

*Stewardship.* We were given dominion over all things; we are the crown jewel of God's creation. All of creation is meant for man to use, not abuse, to tend to and to keep. God's creation is His, but He has given it to us as a gift to sustain us and especially for us to sustain. If we eat only what we need and replenish what we have used, all people will have food to eat; if we keep our water clean and don't waste it, everyone will have water to drink. This is also a reminder to us that we are meant to serve others and not ourselves, just as Christ came to ". . .

serve and not be served . . .” Mark 10:45. Christ is our example; stewardship is the task.

When we celebrate Divine Liturgy, we offer bread and wine, that it might become the Body and Blood of Christ. We do this in imitation of Jesus at the Last Supper, who took bread and offered it, blessed and broke it; and likewise took wine, offered, blessed and shared it. In this way, Jesus gave back to God from the produce of the land. *To offer back to God is to acknowledge that the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.* When we say grace we are to remember this, and we thank God for letting us use what He has provided. Actually, when we bless anything, we are offering back to God and acknowledging that nothing is truly ours—all belongs to Him. This is also the basis for tithing.

One explanation of Adam’s sin is that the material world blocked his vision of God—he failed to look through the material to the spiritual. How much moreso is our vision of God blocked today! The saints all got it right. They knew to see through the material world to God. They knew that if one did so, the whole world *revealed* God. This is called the “incarnational” worldview, and following from the worldview is praying at all times.

With the incarnational worldview, it becomes easy to see the earth as the Lord’s. It becomes easy to offer it back to God before partaking of it. When we offer it back to God in thanksgiving, He blesses it, and makes it a vehicle of grace—a way of drawing us into closer union with Him. This is the basic pattern of the Eucharist (Greek for “thanksgiving”) we celebrate in the Divine Liturgy. This offering-

thanksgiving pattern can be ours each day, and every day can draw us closer into union with the Creator.

## **Recommended Reading/Listening/Projects:**

- Ecology & God’s Creation, Parts 1 & 2, Fr. John Chryssavgis, Orthodox Christian Network podcasts, <http://www.myocn.net/>
- The Earth is the Lord’s: Caring for God’s Creation; a 5- part Study Unit from Education & Community Life Ministries; OCA, 1995 ([www.orthodoxed.org](http://www.orthodoxed.org))
- *Animals & Man: A State of Blessedness*, Joanne Stefanatos, DVM, Light-n-Life
- *Celebrate the Earth*; Dorrie Papademetriou; SVS Press
- *Keeping the Garden* by Fr. John Oliver, <http://www.antiochian.org/node/19202>
- *Christian Ecology: An Orthodox Christian View* by Fr. Gregory Lazarus Murphy, The Word Magazine, March 2004, pgs. 5-9, <http://www.antiochian.org/node/19464>
- <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/earthday/>
- *The Goodness of God’s Creation*, by Fr. Philip LeMasters, Regina Press; podcast on Come Receive the Light, <http://www.myocn.net/>
- <http://Orth-Transfiguration.org/>



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**Objective:**

Students will be able to:

- State that God created all things, and that the earth belongs to Him.
- Explain what it means to care for the earth
- Thank God for all things.

**Time:**45 minutes

**Materials:**

- Children’s Bible OR Story about God creating the world
- Theme Icon (provided)
- Pantocrator Icon (provided)
- Magazine or calendar photos showing the grandeur of creation, the produce of the land, and a meal
- Garden tools, pet food or a pet brush

For Optional Activities

- *Celebrate The Earth (Psalm 104)* by Dorrie Papademetriou
- Small planting pot; potting soil; seeds
- Real fruit and/or vegetables and/or seeds from them; i.e. avocado seeds, pumpkin seeds, etc.
- Recyclable food containers or household items

**THE LESSON PLAN:**

**Opening**

Gather children around the icon corner for the opening prayer. Say the theme verse. Have them say with you, “the earth is the Lord’s.”

**Introduction**

Sitting with the children, tell them today’s lesson is about the world, and about the one who created the world. Show them nature photos from magazines and ask if they know who created each item. Ask them to list all the things that God has created. Make sure there are pictures of fruits and vegetables.

**Content**

Hold up a photo of a meal. Ask,

- Who gave us the food we eat; where does it come from.
- What do we say when someone gives us something.
- What do we say to God before we eat

Hold up a photo of a majestic scene. Ask,

- Who created, or made the earth?
- When you make something, does it belong to you?

- God made the earth, so it belongs to Him. We say “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness therein,” which means “everything that is on the earth.”
- Are we on the earth? Are we the Lord’s?
- What is your favorite place to be—the mountains, oceans . . . There are so many beautiful places, we say “thank you,” to God for the wonderful world. We can say “thank you” whenever we want, like when we see a pretty leaf. We can also say “Praise God!” when something is wonderful.

Bring the gardening and/or pet items in front of you.

- God gave the people of the earth a special job. Can you guess what it is?
- God wants us to help care for the world He made.
- How can you take care of plants?
- How can you take care of animals?
- When we care for the world, we are called “good stewards.”

Let’s review.

- Who made all things?
- Because God made the earth, what do we say about the earth . . . the earth is . . . ? (the Lord’s).
- What is one way we help care for the earth?
- When we eat, or when we see anything beautiful what should we say to God? (“Thank you,” or “Praise God.”)

## Choice of Activities

**Activity 1** It is wonderful how God made plants so that they can keep making new little plants. Show them an avocado cut in half and it’s seed. Take the seed and stick 4 toothpicks into each side (pointy side of seed facing upward) and place it in a glass of water (or plastic cup) resting the toothpicks on the edge of the cup to keep it from sinking (half of the seed is in the water and half out of it) and put it at a window. Overtime, they can see the root break through the seed and a sprout will arise. Then it can be planted in dirt (potted or in the ground if in a temperate climate) and start an avocado tree.

Explain to them that it will take time for the seed to root, just like it took time for God to create the world. But with care the seed will grow into a tree and provide more food for us to eat and to share with others. This is our way of giving thanks to God for all He has given us. Talk about how the plants need water and sunlight to grow. You can also plant a seed and not take care to water it; maybe put trash around it, etc. to show how neglect and pollution (dirty water and no sunlight) damage the natural world.

**Activity 2** Have the children bring in clean, but usable food containers. By using recycled food containers, i.e. egg-cartons, margarine tubs, etc. list the many ways these items can be re-used in our homes, schools or places of work for other things. Use these items to make a Thank You gift/card to God.

**Activity 3** Read Psalm 104 from *Celebrate the Earth* by Dorrie Papademetriou. Emphasize that all of creation sings praises of thanksgiving to God for all He does for us.

## Closing

Take a walk with the children and have each child find at least one reason to say “thank you” to God. Recite the Psalm 24: 1-3.