

KICKstart

PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Bees, BEARS, & Butterflies

A program for older children by Bethe Benjamin Cameron

THIS WORKSHOP WILL help children explore what human actions are doing to nature and to the creatures: honey bees, polar bears, and monarch butterflies. It can be used within a Sunday school, vacation Bible school, or as an intergenerational event.

GOALS

- to help children understand what is happening to creation
- to explore what we can learn from the creatures
- to engage our families, churches, and communities to take action to help heal the creatures of our Earth

PREPARATION

- Have chairs arranged in a circle.
- Put up pictures of honey bees, polar bears, and monarch butterflies.
- Set up tables and chairs or have floor space ready for activities.
- Arrange for someone to lead a song from *Voices United* in the opening.
- Gather materials for the activities in the modules.

GATHERING (5 minutes)

Welcome each person to the circle. Offer each a name tag shaped either as a honey bee, polar bear, or monarch butterfly (classroomclipart.com is a great source of images). The participants will be grouped by their name tags for activities.

OPENING (5 minutes)

Explain how the groups will be exploring what our actions as humans are doing to honey bees, polar bears, and monarch butterflies in Canada.

Sing “God of the Sparrow,” *Voices United* #229.

Prayer

**God of creation, we come this day
to hear your voice
as it echoes through creation
and the creatures of our land.
Give us eyes to see,
ears to hear,
hands to act
in helping heal your creation. Amen.**

OPENING ACTIVITY (10 minutes)

Materials: large ball of wool

Follow the Web of Connection game instructions found at manyvoices.org/blog/resource/web-of-connection-game. The ball of wool is tossed around the circle to create a web. As you look at the web on the floor, reiterate how what we do affects others. Point out how this is what is happening with climate change. Acknowledge that changes and damage are being caused by humans, not animals and plants.

Engage one, two, or three of the following modules as time allows. For all activities, break into three groups (divide further if numbers are large). Move to the tables or workspace. *(Each module can be 10 to 20 minutes, depending on how many activities are done.)*

MODULE ONE

Honey Bees

Problem: Bees are dying. Worker bees are disappearing (Colony Collapse Disorder). The causes are pesticides, disease, and destruction of habitat. Entire bee colonies are dying off. The worker bees are disappearing, and all that remains is a queen and a few nurse bees that tend to the juvenile bees. Without bees, there is no pollination for many fruits, vegetables, and berries. These plants need pollination to reproduce.

Prophecy: The bees are sounding an alarm to all of creation. The message they offer is that with their food security in peril, soon our human food security will be in peril as well. Their disappearance is a call for humans to change our ways. Because of a lack of food and increased pesticide use, bees are dying by the thousands in Canada. Bees have a right to a healthy environment that contains much nectar and pollen.

Promise: If there were more food and safe places to live, the bees could survive the pesticides and disease. We can offer hope and promise to the bees by planting flowers and shrubs that give them more food. We cannot pull dandelions in the spring that are food for bees and attract them to an area. We can encourage beekeepers, who provide safe living spaces for the bees. If we used fewer pesticides, it would help the bees. We can work for an environment where the bees can live and pollinate the plants, which in turn give us good food too.

Activities

1. **Materials:** large piece of newsprint or poster board attached to a wall, markers or crayons

Consider the ideas to help the bees mentioned above, and brainstorm more ideas of what can be done to help the honey bees.

- Create a graffiti board, writing down all the ideas.
- Offer a prayer of all the ideas, and ask for God's help in showing us how we can help the bees.

2. **Materials:** soil, seeds or seedlings, spoons or trowels, Popsicle sticks

Explore creating a garden that attracts bees. Go to

davidsuzuki.org and search for “bee-friendly garden.” Plant seeds or seedlings that attract bees, such as crocus, primrose, sunflower, cosmos, sedum, oregano, lavender, columbine, snapdragon, or squash.

- Offer each person a peat moss cup and a small amount of soil to place seeds or seedlings in pots and water lightly. On a popsicle stick, write a promise for the bees of how you will take care of them. Put the popsicle stick in the pot.

MODULE TWO

Polar Bears

Problem: The ice caps are the polar bear's home. The ice caps are melting because of global warming, and the polar bear population is greatly declining. They need the ice to live and to hunt.

Prophecy: The polar bears are at the top of their food chain. If they disappear, the ecosystem that many other creatures and plants live in collapses. The polar bears have a right to live in the cold and to thrive. The polar bears are telling us that global warming is real and will change our world forever if we don't do something soon.

Promise: We can pledge to help the polar bears by doing our part to help prevent further global warming.

Activity

1. **Materials:** poster board or newsprint, small piece of card stock paper, crayons, markers, pencils

Brainstorm what can be done to help the polar bears. What promise or pledge can the group make to the polar bears? Some suggestions:

- Help prevent global warming by turning down the thermostat, unplugging electronics when not in use, and conserving water.
- Bike and walk more, and drive less.
- Plant a tree that can absorb carbon dioxide, which is a large cause of greenhouse gases.
- Buy food locally and cut down greenhouse gases that are created in transporting food long distances.
- Use less energy and switch to cleaner energy sources.
- Write a letter to local politicians about climate justice and global warming and how we are harming the polar bears.
- Check out the following website for more information on polar bears: wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/arctic/wildlife/polar_bear/wwf_polar_bears

As a group, decide who will work on the pledges and promises the group suggested. Spend time creating the pledges the group came up with, and write them on a poster. Decorate with lots of polar bears. If time allows, create individual cards for each participant to take home.

MODULE THREE

Monarch Butterflies

Problem: Monarch butterflies travel 2,000 to 5,000 km from Canada to Mexico for their winter migration. It is one of

the longest migrations of all known insects. They hibernate and winter in Mexico. The monarch butterflies' migration is greatly being disrupted by

- lack of the butterflies' food, milkweed, which is being destroyed by herbicides because humans consider it a weed
- illegal logging, which destroys the butterflies' homes
- climate change, which affects the weather and in turn, the butterflies

Prophecy: The butterflies are telling us that they can't live the way they have for millions of years. Their migration and life cycles are being disrupted by the actions of humans.

Promise: We can change this. By working to stop illegal logging and not destroying milkweed as well as working to control climate change, we can restore the monarch butterfly population. We can find out more about planting milkweed to feed the butterflies. For a video, go to YouTube.com and search "Growing Milkweed for Monarch Butterflies."

Activities

1. Discuss the possibility of purchasing butterfly larvae and caring for them as a group. Once the butterflies are ready, have a release event at the church. This will take planning and coordination, as the weather has to be warm enough to release them in late spring or early summer. One place to buy butterfly larvae to hatch and release is boreal.com/store/catalog/product.jsp?catalog_number=875652.
2. Become more engaged in the life cycle and migration of the monarch butterfly by following their flight on the website learner.org/jnorth.
3. **Materials:** patterns to cut leaves out of paper (search for leaf patterns online, such as on Pinterest), markers, crayons, pencils

Discuss how it is important *not* to rake up all our leaves in the fall. Decomposing leaves can benefit the environment. Leaves create a mini-ecosystem, which butterfly are part of. The butterfly pupae that are laid on the leaves become food for birds in the spring as caterpillars and the butterflies that hatch add to the population and add beauty to our yards. If raking is a necessity, consider raking some leaves into the garden and leaving them there until spring.

Cut out leaves and write on them a reason for not raking all the leaves in the fall. The group can make a collage on a bulletin board, or children can take the leaf home and put it on their fridge as a reminder of how leaves help the butterflies.

4. **Materials:** branch, bucket of sand, gauze or cheesecloth cut in strips, pencils or crayons, small pieces of paper Find a branch outside that is dead, brown, and down. Place it in a bucket of sand so it is secure and stands up. Ask the group to write or draw a prayer for the monarch butterfly on a piece of paper. Roll the paper up and wrap it in gauze. Use small pieces of gauze or cheesecloth to tie the "cocoon" on the branches of the tree. Wonder about how you can help God answer this prayer by doing something

to help the butterflies. Place the butterfly prayer tree in a prominent place in your worship space. Encourage conversation about it, and invite others to add their butterfly prayers as well.

OPTIONAL

Here is an extra/alternative activity for any module.

Express Our Connectedness

Materials: paint or markers; large, plain, light-coloured sheet or newsprint

Play the songs suggested in this workshop, or choose your own. Lay a large, plain, light or white sheet on the floor. As the music plays, invite the participants to paint their prayers, promises, or the prophecies of the creatures they connected with today.

Look at the sheet or newsprint when completed, and make connections among the drawings, words, and artwork. Draw lines connecting creatures, activities, and prayers.

CLOSING (10 minutes)

Ask each group to bring forward one of their promises from the activities.

Sing or listen to *What a Wonderful World* by Louis Armstrong or *O Great Earth* by Linnea Good or from *More Voices: #135, "Called by Earth and Sky" or #37, "Each Blade of Grass."*

Offer a prayer.

God of creation, we pray for the creatures in our care.

Show us how we can carry out the promises we made today.

Give us courage to stand up for the creatures whose message we have heard today. Help us to follow in Christ's way, caring for those who need our help. Amen.

With joy and delight, **the Rev. Beth Benjamin Cameron** serves the O'Leary West Cape Pastoral Charge in P.E.I.

