

“For God so loved the world...”

• John 3:16a

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WORLD URBAN FORUM



WUF 13 PREFACE

An Invitation to Faithful Engagement with the SDGs

At the World Urban Forum 13, we gather amid one of the most significant urban transformations in human history. Cities are swelling, systems are straining, and the intertwined crises of inequality, displacement, ecological degradation, and social fragmentation press urgently upon our shared life. The UN-Habitat has convened this global forum not merely to diagnose these challenges, but to catalyze collaborative, imaginative, and actionable responses—embodied in the vision of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Yet for all their clarity and global consensus, the SDGs will not be realized through policy frameworks alone.

They will be lived—or not lived—within neighborhoods, communities, and relationships.

They will take root—or fail to take root—within the deepest layers of human meaning: our beliefs, our stories, our practices, and our shared visions of what it means to flourish.

This is where faith and spiritual traditions matter.

Globally, approximately 84% of people identify with a religious or spiritual tradition. This is not a peripheral statistic—it is a defining reality. It means that the vast majority of humanity interprets the world, makes decisions, and organizes communal life through spiritual and moral frameworks shaped by faith. These traditions carry ancient wisdom, moral imagination, and deeply embedded practices that form people toward compassion, justice, hospitality, and care for creation.

If the SDGs are to become more than aspirational targets—if they are to be embodied in the everyday lives of people—then they must resonate within these deeper currents of meaning.

They must be received not as external mandates, but as faithful expressions of what communities already hold sacred.

This study guide is offered in that spirit.

Presented as a gift from Faith for Cities, this resource is a modest but hopeful contribution to a much larger, shared endeavor: activating the SDGs from within the lived wisdom of religious and spiritual traditions.



Faith for Cities exists to empower cities to harness the positive influence of faith communities in addressing urban challenges—bringing a lens of faith and a spirit of collaboration to the work of urban transformation.

This guide embodies that vision by offering one concrete example of how a particular tradition—in this case, Christianity—might engage the SDGs not as an external agenda, but as a faithful outworking of its own deepest convictions.

It is important to name clearly: this is not *the* way to engage the SDGs.

It is *a* way.

A contextual, tradition-specific, and situated example.

Our hope is not that this guide will be adopted wholesale, but that it will inspire translation—encouraging Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Indigenous, and other spiritual communities to engage their own texts, practices, and theological imaginations in ways that animate the SDGs from within their particular traditions. The goal is not uniformity, but resonance. Not replication, but faithful improvisation.

For those within the Christian tradition, this guide frames the SDGs as deeply aligned with the Way of Jesus—a way marked by love of neighbor, care for the poor, reconciliation across difference, and the restoration of all creation. It invites participants to see the pursuit of ending poverty, seeking justice, cultivating peace, and stewarding the earth not as optional acts of charity, but as integral to discipleship—integral to what it means to participate in the flourishing life that God intends for all and everything.

For those from other traditions—or from no formal tradition at all—we offer this guide as an example of what becomes possible when global goals are rooted in local meaning, when shared frameworks are enlivened by lived wisdom, and when policy meets practice in the everyday lives of communities.

Because the future of our cities will not be shaped by strategies alone. It will be shaped by people. By communities. By the stories we believe about what is good, true, and possible. By the practices that form us toward—or away from—the common good.

The SDGs provide a vital shared framework for global cooperation. But their long-term sustainability depends on something deeper: their integration into the moral and spiritual imagination of communities around the world.

This is the work of translation. This is the work of embodiment. This is the work of faith.

So we invite you—wherever you are rooted, whatever tradition you inhabit—to receive this guide as both a resource and a provocation:

- A resource for engaging the SDGs in ways that are meaningful, practical, and grounded in lived experience.
- A provocation to imagine how your own tradition might speak, act, and organize in ways that contribute to flourishing for all and everything.

Take what is helpful.

Adapt what is needed.

Create what does not yet exist.

And above all, join others—in your city, your neighborhood, your networks—in the shared work of cultivating just, compassionate, and sustainable urban life.

The challenges before us are immense.

But so too is the collective wisdom, faith, and possibility present among us.

May this guide serve as one small offering toward that greater, shared future.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Dwight J. Friesen



INTRODUCTION

Toward a Shalomic Imagination for Our Time

We are living in a moment of profound unraveling—and possibility. Ecological systems groan under the weight of extraction. Economies generate immense wealth while entrenching devastating inequities. Communities fracture along lines of race, class, nation, and ideology. Many of our inherited religious forms struggle to speak with credibility in a world suspicious of power, yet hungry for meaning, belonging, and hope. This is not merely a political or cultural crisis; it is a deeply theological one. It raises urgent questions about who we believe God to be, what it means to be human, and how we are called to live together within the fragile, beautiful ecology of creation.

Into this moment, the United Nations articulated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—a global framework of shared commitments seeking to end poverty, reduce inequality, protect the planet, and ensure flourishing for all. For some, the SDGs are easily dismissed as a technocratic or political project, a “secular agenda” disconnected from the life of faith. Yet such dismissals often reveal more about our truncated theological imaginations than about the goals themselves.

This conversation guide begins with a different claim—one that is at once theological, prophetic, and deeply practical: the SDGs are among the most tangible, globally shared articulations of what the biblical vision of shalom can look like in our time. They are not the Kingdom of God. But they are, in many ways, a signpost—a set of coordinates that resonate with the longings, commands, and promises that pulse through the Christian Scriptures and the life of Jesus.

To say this is not to collapse the gospel into a policy framework. Rather, it is to insist that the gospel has always been embodied, social, and ecological. The God revealed in Jesus Christ does not remain distant from human suffering or the material conditions of life. As the prologue of the Gospel of John proclaims, “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). In Jesus—Immanuel, God with us—we encounter a God who enters into the very fabric of creation, affirming its goodness and binding divine life to human and ecological flourishing.

The well-known words of Gospel of John 3:16 remind us that “God so loved the world.” Not merely human souls, nor an abstract spiritual realm, but *the world*—the cosmos, the whole of creation. As New Testament scholar N. T. Wright insists, “the mission of God is not to snatch people away from earth to heaven, but to bring heaven to earth.”¹ This is the theological heartbeat that animates the SDGs: a vision of life in which the conditions for flourishing are extended to all people and to the earth itself.

The Kingdom of God as a Living Ecology of Shalom

When Jesus inaugurates his ministry in Gospel of Luke 4, Jesus announces good news to the poor, release to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed. This is not metaphorical language for a disembodied salvation; it is a declaration of material, social, and spiritual transformation. The Kin-dom of God is not an escape from the world but the renewal of it.

The Hebrew concept of *shalom* offers a rich theological lens here. Shalom is often translated as “peace,” but it is better understood as a dynamic, relational wholeness—an ecology of right relationships among God, humanity, and creation. As theologian Cornel West writes, “justice is what love looks like in public.”² Shalom, then, is not merely a feeling or an inner state; it is the social, economic, and ecological embodiment of God’s love.

The SDGs, read through this lens, begin to look less like a secular intrusion and more like a contemporary grammar for articulating shalom in a globalized world. Ending extreme poverty (SDG 1), ensuring access to clean water (SDG 6), promoting gender equality (SDG 5), addressing climate change (SDG 13)—these are not peripheral concerns to the gospel. They are precisely the kinds of realities that a God of justice and mercy attends to.

Liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez reminds us that “so you say you love the poor? Tell me, what are their names?”³ The SDGs, at their best, attempt to name and respond to the conditions that keep billions of God’s beloved from living into the fullness of life. They push us beyond abstract compassion into concrete action.

The Body of Christ & the Interdependence of All Things

The Apostle Paul’s image of the body in First Corinthians 12 offers another crucial theological anchor. “The body does not consist of one member but of many... The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you.’” This is not merely an ecclesial metaphor; it is an ontological claim about reality itself. We are constituted in and through relationships. Our flourishing is inseparable from the flourishing of others.

Paul intensifies this vision in Galatians 3:28: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” This is not a denial of difference, but a radical reconfiguration of belonging. It disrupts the hierarchies that divide and dehumanize, calling forth a community grounded in mutuality and dignity.

Womanist theologian Delores S. Williams insists that any theology worthy of the gospel must attend to the survival and quality of life of the most vulnerable.⁴ Similarly, Ada María Isasi-Díaz speaks of the *Kin-dom of God*—a vision of community rooted in justice, inclusion, and shared

life.⁵ These perspectives remind us that the measure of any social vision—whether ecclesial or global—is how it attends to those most at risk.

This is where the words of Jesus in Gospel of Matthew 25 land with prophetic force. “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink... just as you did it to one of the least of these... you did it to me.” Here, the presence of Christ is located not in abstract doctrine but in embodied acts of care. The hungry, the imprisoned, the stranger—these are not objects of charity; they are sites of divine encounter.

To engage the SDGs, then, is not simply to “do good.” It is to participate in a sacramental vision of reality in which the face of Christ is encountered in the lives of those most impacted by injustice. It is to take seriously the claim that our lives are bound together, and that the suffering of one is the concern of all.

Incarnation & the Practice of Faithful Presence

The doctrine of the Incarnation—God becoming flesh in Jesus—has profound implications for how we understand our own lives. If God meets us in the particularities of time, place, and body, then our calling is not to escape these realities but to inhabit them more deeply. As theologian Willie James Jennings writes, “God’s desire is to press life together—joining people, land, creatures, and Creator in a seamless communion.”⁶

This vision challenges the disembodied spirituality that has often characterized Western Christianity. It calls us back to a faith that is rooted in place, attentive to context, and committed to the well-being of our neighbors and ecosystems. It invites us to see our neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities as sites of divine activity.

The SDGs provide a framework for discerning how this faithful presence might take shape in our time. They help us ask concrete questions: What does it mean to love my neighbor in a world marked by global inequality? How do I participate in systems that either harm or heal the earth? What practices of solidarity, advocacy, and care might embody the love of Christ here and now?

As activist and scholar bell hooks reminds us, “love is a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust.”⁷ The SDGs, at their best, call us into this kind of love—not as sentiment, but as sustained, collective action.

A Prophetic Imagination for a Shared Future

The final chapters of the Christian Scriptures offer a vision that is both poetic and political. In Book of Revelation 21, John describes a new heaven and a new earth, where God dwells among humanity, where death and mourning are no more, and where the nations bring their glory into

a renewed city. This is not a vision of escape, but of transformation—the healing of creation marked by justice, beauty, and communion.

The SDGs echo this eschatological hope, not as a final fulfillment, but as a provisional, collective striving toward a more just and sustainable world. They remind us that the future is not predetermined; it is shaped by the choices we make together.

Yet this work requires more than technical solutions. It demands what philosopher Hannah Arendt called a “love of the world”—a willingness to take responsibility for the conditions of our shared life.⁸ It calls for what practical theologians might name a prophetic imagination—the capacity to see the world not only as it is, but as it could be under the reign of God.

Entering the Conversation

This small group guide is an invitation into that imagination. It is designed not merely to inform, but to form—to cultivate ways of seeing, being, and acting that align with the Way of Jesus. Each session engages a particular dimension of the SDGs, bringing it into conversation with Scripture, theology, and lived experience.

The goal is not to master the SDGs, nor to uncritically adopt them. Rather, it is to discern how the SDGs might serve as a resource for faithful living—how they might help us embody the love, justice, and mercy of God in our own contexts.

You are invited to bring your whole self into this process—your questions, your doubts, your experiences, your hopes. You are invited to listen deeply—to Scripture, to one another, to the voices of those on the margins, and to the quiet whisper of the Spirit.

Most of all, you are invited to imagine: What might it look like for you, in your body, in your place, within your relationships, to participate in God’s dream for the world?

This is not about replicating someone else’s calling. It is about attending to the particularity of your life as a site of divine invitation. As the Spirit moves, you may find yourself drawn into new practices of generosity, new commitments to justice, new forms of community. You may discover that the work of transformation begins not somewhere else, but right where you are.

The SDGs do not replace the gospel. But they may help us see Christ’s Good News more clearly. They may help us recover a lived of faith that is as wide as God’s love for the world and as concrete as a cup of water given in Jesus’ name.

And in that recovery, we may find ourselves drawn more deeply into the life of the One who came that all might have life—and have it abundantly.

Brief Group Study Overview

This nineteen session small group study series invites participants to explore how Christian discipleship intersects with global sustainability, justice, and community flourishing for all and everything. Each session combines Scripture reflection, discussion, practical engagement, and prayer. The first session serves as an introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals and the series, then there is a separate session for each of the 17 goals, and the bible study concludes with a final “next steps” session.

Usage Notes

- Each session can last 60–90 minutes.
- Adapt Scripture and practices to your group’s local contexts.
- Encourage journaling, reflection, and active engagement.
- Leaders are encouraged to foster safe, inclusive discussions.

Endnotes . Introduction

1. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 208.
2. Cornel West, *Democracy Matters* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 24.
3. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973), xxv.
4. Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 131.
5. Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 149.
6. Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 289.
7. bell hooks, *All About Love* (New York: William Morrow, 2000), 5.
8. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 247.



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme for this Orienting Session

Living Faithfully in a Changing World

Introducing the study series, SDGs, and the intersection of faith & global engagement

Opening Litany . “For the Healing of the World”

One: Creator of all, You spoke the cosmos into being—light, life, and love interwoven.

Many: **We remember that all creation is very good.**

One: Christ Jesus, You revealed the Divine Way of Shalom, restoring what empire distorts.

Many: **We long to walk in Your liberating Way.**

One: Spirit of Life, breathe in us the courage to join Your renewing work.

Many: **May our lives become instruments of Your healing and justice.**

One: Together, we commit ourselves to the flourishing of all people, all creatures, all creation.

Many: **For the glory of God and the good of the world. Amen.**

Introducing . Faith for the Flourishing of All

We are living through an age of seismic change—socially, ecologically, and spiritually. The certainties that once ordered our world are giving way to new questions about what it means to be human, to be faithful, and to belong within God’s creation. Amid this upheaval, the United Nations’ *Sustainable Development Goals* offer a global framework for pursuing the common good—seeking justice, equity, and ecological sustainability for all people and the planet.

For those of us seeking to follow in the Way of Jesus, these goals are not foreign to our faith; they echo Scripture’s deepest longings for Shalom—right relationship with God, neighbor, and creation. From the prophets to the Gospels, we hear a consistent invitation: to love God by loving what God loves, to act justly, to cultivate communities where all can flourish.

This study is an invitation to rediscover the biblical imagination that gave birth to that call. Across 19 sessions, we’ll explore how each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals can help us discern the contours of God’s dream for all of creation and challenge us to live as co-laborers in that redemptive work.

You are invited to bring your questions, hopes, and lived experience. Together we will listen—to Scripture, to one another, and to the Spirit still speaking in our time of planetary crisis and possibility.

Discussion Questions

1. When you hear the word sustainability, what images or emotions arise for you?
2. In what ways do you see faith communities contributing—or failing to contribute—to the flourishing of all life?
3. How might engaging global goals such as the SDGs deepen your understanding of discipleship in the Way of Jesus?
4. When you imagine what Jesus was envisioning as Jesus talked about the “Kin-dom of God” in contrast to the political, military, or religious “kingdoms” of Jesus’ day, what do you think God’s Kin-dom would be like?
5. How might your faith inform your engagement with global issues?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Colossians 1:15–20 .  . **All Creation Matters to Christ**

(Also [Genesis 1:26–31](#); [Micah 6:8](#))

Paul’s hymn in Colossians declares that Christ is the image of the invisible God, through whom and for whom all things were created, and in whom all things hold together. This is a cosmic vision of the Christ who reconciles all things—earthly and heavenly—into wholeness.

To follow Jesus, then, is to join the Divine work of reconciliation not only among humans but within the whole created order. The biblical narrative begins and ends with a world

where God dwells in peace with creation ([Genesis 1–2](#); [Revelation 21–22](#)). The SDGs, though secular in origin, offer one way of naming what such wholeness might look like in our time.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What might Colossians 1:15–20 reveal about the scope of Christ’s reconciling work?
2. How could this passage expand our understanding of salvation beyond the personal or individual?
3. In what ways do sense the SDGs reflect aspects of this “reconciliation of all things”?
4. What tensions might emerge when we bring together a secular global framework and a faith-based vision of Shalom?
5. What could it invite to say that the world’s flourishing and our faithfulness are bound together?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Spend time this week noticing where you see signs of God’s Shalom in your daily life—moments of justice, beauty, or renewal.
- **Community Engagement** . Learn about one local initiative working toward sustainability or justice in your area. Pray for those involved and consider ways your faith community might partner with them.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Each day, take a few moments outdoors to breathe and remember your interconnection with all creation. Let gratitude guide your awareness.

Closing Litany . “Sent into the World”

One: Christ, You are before all things, and in You all things hold together.

Many: **Send us to join Your work of reconciliation and renewal.**

One: Where creation groans, may we become midwives of new life.

Many: **Where injustice reigns, may we stand in solidarity and hope.**

One: Spirit of the Living God, guide our steps into the world You so love.

Many: **For the flourishing of all, we go in peace.**

One: God of life, empower us to act faithfully.

Many: **May our lives reflect Your justice and care. Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next week, we’ll explore *Goal 1: No Poverty*—and how Scripture envisions God’s economy of enough. We’ll reflect on Jesus’ proclamation of good news to the poor and what it means for communities of faith to practice economic justice in our neighborhoods.

Co-Commissioning Prayer

God of Creation and Reconciliation,
You invite us into Your unfolding story of renewal.
Open our hearts and imaginations to Your vision of Shalom—
where the hungry are fed, the earth is cherished,
and every creature lives in dignity.
Make us faithful stewards of Your dream,
co-laborers with Christ for the flourishing of all.
In the name of the One who makes all things new,

Amen.

Facilitator Notes . LIVING FAITHFULLY IN A CHANGING WORLD . Orienting Session

Theological Frame

- The session establishes the connection between following Jesus and engaging the world faithfully. Discipleship is not just personal piety; it calls for active participation in God's mission of justice, peace, and flourishing.
- Introduce the SDGs as a practical framework for embodying the Shalom of God in today's global context. This frames sustainable development not as a secular agenda, but as a moral and spiritual imperative rooted in Scripture.
- Emphasize that creation, human flourishing, and justice are inseparable. Christians are called to live in ways that honor the integrity of relationships—between God, neighbor, self, and creation.
- Highlight that engagement is communal as well as individual; the series invites participants to reflect, discuss, and act collectively.

Facilitating Discussion

- Begin by introducing the purpose, structure, and flow of the series. Emphasize that each session will explore one SDG through Scripture, discussion, and practical application.
- Encourage participants to come with curiosity, openness, and willingness to share personal insights. Create a safe, non-judgmental space for discussion.
- Ask participants to consider their current understanding of the SDGs and how faith intersects with social and environmental responsibility.
- Emphasize that the study is participatory—discussion questions, shared practices, and prayer exercises are central to the learning process.

Optional Extensions

- Encourage participants to begin a personal journal noting questions, insights, or areas of concern about God's mission in the world.
- Invite participants to list ways their local community intersects with the SDGs (health, education, environment, justice, etc.) as a baseline for reflection.
- Offer optional short readings on the intersection of faith and global engagement.
- Introduce a weekly spiritual practice of noticing God's presence in the natural and human-made world

Background Readings

- [Matthew 28:16–20](#) (The Great Commission and God's mission in the world)
- [Mark 12:30–31](#) (The Great Commandments)
- [Micah 6:6–8](#) (Justice, mercy, humility)
- [Psalm 24:1–2](#) (Stewardship of creation)
- [SDGs overview](#)
- Margaret Wheatley, [Turning to One Another](#) (Community, relational engagement)
- Wendell Berry, [The Art of the Commonplace](#) (Faithful living and stewardship)



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session One

Joining God's Economy of Enough SDG 1 . *No Poverty*

Opening Litany . "God's Table Has Room for All"

One: God of abundance, You formed a world overflowing with life and possibility.

Many: **We remember: there is enough for all when love orders our living.**

One: Christ Jesus, You came among us proclaiming good news to the poor.

Many: **Teach us to see as You see, to share as You shared.**

One: Spirit of generosity, unsettle our comfort and awaken our compassion.

Many: **Open our hands, that others may live.**

One: We gather as Your people, longing to join Your economy of enough.

Many: **For the healing of our neighbors, and the flourishing of Your world. Amen.**

Introduction to God's Economy of Enough

Poverty is not inevitable—it's a distortion of relationship. The biblical story opens with creation's generosity: a garden abundant with all that is needed for life. But from the earliest pages of Scripture, human greed and fear interrupt that abundance, leading to exploitation and exclusion.

Throughout the Bible, God continually calls the people back to a different economy—an *economy of enough*. From manna in the wilderness to the Jubilee laws of Leviticus, from

the prophets' cries for justice to the generosity of the early church in Acts, God's desire is clear: that none live in deprivation while others hoard in excess.

Jesus embodies this economy in His life and teaching. He blesses the poor, multiplies bread, and proclaims a kingdom where the last are first. His vision confronts both personal and systemic forms of poverty, calling us into communities where mutual care replaces competition.

The UN's first Sustainable Development Goal—No Poverty—echoes this divine longing. To engage this goal is not to adopt a secular agenda but to participate in God's mission of restoring right relationships: with our neighbors, our systems, and the land that sustains us.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. When you think of poverty, what images or stories come to mind—from your community or from Scripture?
2. How do you understand the relationship between personal generosity and structural justice?
3. What does “enough” mean for you—personally, economically, spiritually?
4. Where do you see poverty in your community?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Luke 4:16–21 .  . Jesus' Mission

(Also [Deuteronomy 15:7–11](#); [Acts 4:32–35](#))

In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus announces His mission with words from Isaiah:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because [God] has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.”

This is the manifesto of the Kingdom. Jesus proclaims not a private salvation but a social and cosmic liberation—a reordering of relationships grounded in God's justice and mercy. His good news is practical: debts forgiven, captives released, the oppressed set free.

To follow Jesus is to align our lives with that same Spirit-led mission. The church, then, is called not only to charity but to transformation—to participate in building systems where every person can live with dignity and sufficiency.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. How does Jesus' announcement in Luke 4 define His ministry's priorities?
2. What do you notice about who benefits when God's Spirit is at work?
3. In what ways might our current economic systems contradict the vision Jesus proclaims?
4. How might local congregations embody "good news to the poor" in tangible, systemic ways?
5. What does it mean for a faith community to measure success by shared flourishing rather than numerical growth or wealth?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Spend time this week reflecting on your relationship with money and possessions. Where might you hear an invitation to trust in God's sufficiency rather than scarcity?
- **Community Practice** . Partner with a local organization addressing poverty (food security, affordable housing, debt relief). Rather than serving as "helpers," seek to build mutual relationships grounded in respect and reciprocity.
- **Advocacy Action** . Research one policy initiative in your region that addresses economic inequality. Write a letter or make a call in support of just economic structures.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Pray daily using the words of [Proverbs 30:8–9](#):
"Give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with the food that I need."

Closing Litany . “Living the Economy of Enough”

One: God of justice and mercy, You hear the cry of the poor.

Many: **May we hear it too, and act in love.**

One: Christ, You set a table where all are fed and none are turned away.

Many: **Form us as generous stewards of Your feast.**

One: Spirit of abundance, teach us to live from gratitude, not fear.

Many: **Let our lives proclaim: there is enough for all.**

One: Send us now to embody Your good news in our streets and systems.

Many: **For the flourishing of all, we go in peace. Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

In our next gathering, we’ll explore *Goal 2: Zero Hunger*—and the deep biblical link between feeding the hungry and encountering the presence of Christ. We’ll look at the story of the feeding of the multitudes as a vision of God’s abundance and our shared responsibility to nourish one another and the earth itself.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of manna and mercy,

You provide enough for all when we learn to trust and to share.

Release us from the grip of scarcity and the fear that there is not enough.

Open our hearts and our hands,

that we might join You in creating a world where every life can flourish.

Through Jesus, the Bread of Life,

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Scripture portrays poverty not only as an economic condition but as a spiritual and relational reality. God's heart is with the marginalized, the oppressed, and those excluded from flourishing ([Psalm 82:3–4](#); [Isaiah 58:6–10](#)).
- Following Jesus means participating in God's mission to lift up the lowly, feed the hungry, and challenge systems that perpetuate inequality ([Luke 4:18–19](#); [Matthew 25:31–46](#)).
- Poverty impacts body, mind, and spirit. Christians are called to respond in ways that restore dignity, provide material support, and cultivate social structures that prevent suffering.
- Addressing poverty requires personal, communal, and systemic engagement. Faithful action engages charity, advocacy, and structural change together.

Facilitating Discussion

- Encourage participants to share their experiences with poverty—personally, within their family, or in their community—while maintaining sensitivity and confidentiality.
- Facilitate discussion on how biblical narratives of God's care for the poor relate to modern forms of economic and social exclusion.
- Ask participants to consider practical ways they can engage—through volunteering, advocacy, ethical consumerism, or congregation-based programs.
- Prompt conversation on how policy, institutions, and local communities either perpetuate or alleviate poverty. Encourage critical thinking about collective responsibility.

Background Readings

- **Biblical Texts:**
 - [Psalm 82:3–4](#) (Defend the weak and fatherless)
 - [Isaiah 58:6–10](#) (True fasting and care for the oppressed)
 - [Luke 4:18–19](#) (Jesus' mission to the poor)
 - [Matthew 25:31–46](#) (Care for the "least of these")
- **Theological Reflection:**
 - Gustavo Gutiérrez, [A Theology of Liberation](#) (poverty as a relational and spiritual issue)
 - Miroslav Volf, [Exclusion and Embrace](#) (justice, inclusion, and reconciliation)
- **SDG 1 Overview:** <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Two

Feeding the World God Loves

SDG 2 . *Zero Hunger*

Opening Litany . “You Give Them Something to Eat”

One: Creator of grain and grape, You fill the earth with the fruit of Your goodness.

Many: **We give thanks for Your abundance that sustains all life.**

One: Christ Jesus, You fed the multitudes with bread and compassion.

Many: **Teach us to trust in Your abundance and share in Your generosity.**

One: Spirit of Life, stir in us a hunger for justice and the courage to act.

Many: **May our tables become signs of Your kingdom where all are fed.**

One: Together we confess our complicity in systems that starve creation.

Many: **Transform our consumption, that we may live as stewards of Your feast. Amen.**

Introduction . The Table of God’s Abundance

Food is one of the most tangible expressions of God’s grace. From the manna in the wilderness to the bread and wine of the Eucharist, Scripture is filled with stories of divine provision and human response. Eating together is sacred—it is how creation participates in the ongoing gift of life.

Yet hunger persists. Not because the earth cannot produce enough, but because our systems of production and distribution are distorted by greed, waste, and inequality. The

UN's second Sustainable Development Goal—Zero Hunger—names a human calling: to ensure that every person and every creature has what they need to thrive.

In the Way of Jesus, feeding the hungry is never charity; it's a declaration of divine reality. Each shared meal becomes a small act of resistance to the myth of scarcity and a foretaste of the great banquet of God's Shalom.

When we share food, when we tend soil, when we advocate for equitable systems of agriculture and access, we participate in the reconciling work of Christ—turning the world's hunger into communion.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. Describe a time when sharing food became a moment of sacred connection for you.
2. How does the way we eat reflect—or distort—our spiritual and social values?
3. What might it mean for your faith community to be known as a “community of enough”?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

John 6:1–14 . . **Jesus Feeds the People**

(Also [*Isaiah 58:6–12*](#); [*Matthew 25:31–46*](#))

In the story of the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus transforms a scene of scarcity into a revelation of abundance. A child's small offering—five loaves and two fish—becomes enough for all. The miracle is not only material but communal: people are fed because someone was willing to share what they had.

This story invites us to imagine an economy shaped not by accumulation but by participation. God's abundance flows through open hands and hearts. Each act of sharing disrupts the logic of empire and reveals a different kind of power—the power of compassion that multiplies life.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What details in this story suggest that the “miracle” is as much social as it is supernatural?
2. How might this story challenge many people’s assumptions about scarcity and provision?
3. What role does the unnamed child play in revealing God’s abundance?
4. How might our local communities become places where the hungry are fed in body and spirit?
5. What practices could help us live as participants rather than consumers in God’s economy of grace?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Keep a food gratitude journal for a week. Record where your food comes from, who labored for it, and what systems made it possible. Offer a short prayer of thanks for each link in that chain.
- **Community Practice** . Organize or support a shared meal in your community—a potluck, food bank partnership, or neighborhood garden. Frame it as an act of communion and justice.
- **Advocacy Action** . Learn about local or global efforts addressing food insecurity and sustainable agriculture. Consider supporting regenerative farming or local food sovereignty movements.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Pray before meals with intentional awareness of the interconnected web of life that sustains you. Let gratitude become a practice of justice.

Closing Litany . “Bread for the World”

One: God of abundance, You feed the hungry and fill the earth with good things.

Many: **Teach us to share what You so freely give.**

One: Christ, You broke bread with strangers and called us friends.

Many: **Make our tables wide and our hospitality deep.**

One: Spirit of life, move through fields, waters, and kitchens with renewing grace.

Many: **May every creature have daily bread and every table be full.**

One: Send us to live as people of Your feast.

Many: **For the flourishing of all, we go in peace. Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we'll turn to *Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being*, exploring how the healing ministry of Jesus invites us into practices that promote holistic health—body, mind, and spirit—for individuals and communities alike.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of every meal and every hunger,
You have set a table in the midst of a world of need.
Where stomachs are empty, fill them.
Where hearts are closed, open them.
Where systems exploit, transform them.
May our lives become loaves in Your hands,
broken and shared for the life of the world.
Through Jesus, the Bread of Life.

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Hunger is both a symptom and a sign—symptom of systems that distort God’s intent, and sign of our dependence on one another and the earth.
- The Eucharistic imagination is central here: feeding the hungry is not separate from worship; it *is* worship.
- [John 6](#) invites participants to reimagine miracles not as divine interventions from beyond, but as awakenings to the abundance already among us when love organizes community.

Facilitating Discussion

- Encourage participants to share personal experiences of both physical and spiritual hunger.
- If conversation risks drifting toward guilt or overwhelm, redirect toward *participation and possibility*: What small actions embody God’s abundance?
- Draw attention to how this SDG connects globally (ending hunger, food security, sustainable agriculture) and locally (food deserts, community gardens, food waste).

Optional Extensions

- Share a simple meal as part of the session—bread and fruit, for example—and treat it as an act of communal worship.
- Invite participants to research and pray for one region of the world experiencing severe food insecurity.
- And be attentive to any in your group who are presently food insecure.
- Scripture: [Matthew 14:13–21](#); [Psalm 146:7–9](#)
- SDG 2 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal2>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Three

Healing as Participation in God's Wholeness

SDG 3 . Good Health & Wellbeing

Opening Litany . "Christ, Our Healer"

One: God of life, You breathed Spirit into dust and called us very good.

Many: **We praise You for the gift of life in all its fragility and wonder.**

One: Jesus, Healer of bodies and souls, You touched the sick and restored the excluded.

Many: **Teach us to see Your image in every wounded one.**

One: Spirit of renewal, move through our weariness and restore our hope.

Many: **Make us agents of Your healing love in a hurting world.**

One: Together we commit to the well-being of all people and creatures.

Many: **For Your glory and the flourishing of creation. Amen.**

Introduction . Health as Wholeness

In Scripture, "healing" is never just about physical recovery—it's about restoration to right relationship. The Hebrew word *shalom* and the Greek *sozo* both carry this larger sense: peace, salvation, wholeness.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus heals not only individual bodies but broken systems—crossing boundaries of purity, gender, ethnicity, and class. His healings reveal God's

dream for humanity: communities where no one is forgotten or cut off, where compassion becomes the measure of wellness.

The UN's third Sustainable Development Goal—Good Health and Well-Being—echoes this calling. It names the right of every person to live free from preventable disease, to access care, and to flourish in body and spirit. For followers of Jesus, this isn't optional. To join God's healing work means advocating for equitable health systems, tending our own well-being, and nurturing the vitality of our communities and planet.

To seek health in the Way of Jesus is to remember that our wholeness is intertwined—the healing of one is bound to the healing of all.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. When you think of “health,” what dimensions come to mind—physical, emotional, spiritual, communal?
2. How have you experienced Christ's healing presence—in yourself or through others?
3. What might a *healing community* look like in your context?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Mark 5:24–34 . . Healing Body & Community

(Also [Psalm 103:1–5](#); [Luke 10:25–37](#))

In Mark's Gospel, a woman who has suffered for twelve years dares to reach out and touch Jesus' cloak. Her courage interrupts the crowd, and Jesus stops—not to reprimand her, but to affirm her faith and restore her dignity.

This story centers a person excluded by purity laws and economic hardship. Her healing is both physical and social—she is seen, named, and re-welcomed into community. Jesus' compassion dismantles stigma and reweaves belonging.

To follow Him is to practice that same attentiveness—to notice the invisible suffering around us, to create conditions where healing can happen, and to challenge any system that profits from another's pain.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What strikes you about the woman's initiative and Jesus' response?
2. How does this story redefine power and holiness?
3. Where do you see modern parallels to her exclusion, and how might the church respond?
4. What does it mean for healing to be *relational* rather than only medical?
5. How can your community embody Christ's healing presence in practical, systemic ways?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Notice the rhythms that sustain your own well-being—sleep, movement, prayer, creativity, connection. What small adjustment could help you live more whole?
- **Community Practice** . Host a conversation or workshop about mental health, trauma, or spiritual care within your congregation. Create safe space for honest stories.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Support initiatives that expand access to healthcare, mental health resources, or clean environments. Advocate for those whose health is harmed by poverty, pollution, or neglect.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Engage in a daily prayer of body awareness—pause, breathe, and thank God for the life moving within you. Let gratitude be a form of healing.

Closing Litany . “Restorers of Life”

One: Christ our Healer, You touch our wounds with compassion.

Many: **Make us instruments of Your healing grace.**

One: Where pain persists and hope fades, breathe new life.

Many: **We join Your Spirit in renewing the earth.**

One: Teach us to care for our bodies and our neighbors as holy ground.

Many: **Send us as bearers of Your peace.**

One: Together we go, seeking the wholeness of all creation.

Many: **For the flourishing of all, we go in peace. Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we'll explore *Goal 4: Quality Education*, considering how learning and wisdom are sacred trusts. We'll look at how Jesus' growth in wisdom and favor points to a theology of lifelong learning that empowers both individuals and communities toward justice and creativity.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of wholeness and healing,
You formed us in Your image and called us very good.
Touch our weariness with Your compassion,
our fear with Your peace,
our systems with Your justice.
May we become a people through whom Your healing flows—
body, mind, and spirit renewed for the life of the world.
Through Christ our Healer.

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Health in Scripture is holistic—rooted in *shalom*, encompassing relationships with God, self, others, and creation.
- Jesus' healings are acts of liberation that challenge social stigma and systemic exclusion.
- The church's vocation includes both caring for the sick and confronting the conditions that make people sick.

Facilitating Discussion

- Invite participants to share experiences of healing—medical, emotional, relational—while emphasizing confidentiality and care.
- Encourage reflection on the communal dimensions of well-being: how does your church cultivate rhythms of rest, play, and support?
- Balance compassion with justice: healing involves both tending wounds and transforming what causes harm.

Optional Extensions

- Partner with a local health clinic, mental-health ministry, or addiction-recovery program.
- Offer a simple service of anointing with oil or laying on of hands as a tangible sign of shared prayer for healing.
- Include mindfulness or breathing exercises during the session as spiritual practices of embodiment.
- [Jeremiah 33:6](#); [Luke 4:18](#)
- SDG 3 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Four

Learning as Participation in God's Wisdom SDG 4 . *Quality Education*

Opening Litany . "Christ, Our Teacher"

One: God of wisdom, You spoke light into the world and called it good.

Many: **We praise You for minds that wonder and hearts that seek understanding.**

One: Jesus, Rabbi and Friend, You taught with stories and touched lives with truth.

Many: **Teach us to listen deeply, to question faithfully, and to learn with humility.**

One: Spirit of insight, stir in us curiosity and compassion.

Many: **Open our eyes to see learning as love in action.**

One: Together we commit ourselves to learning that liberates and heals.

Many: **For the sake of Your kingdom and the flourishing of all creation. Amen.**

Introduction . Education as Sacred Formation

In Scripture, learning is not simply about acquiring information; it is about becoming wise—learning how to live well in God's world. Wisdom in the biblical sense (Hebrew *hokmah*, Greek *sophia*) integrates knowing, doing, and being. It shapes character and community, aligning us with the grain of God's creation.

Jesus is called both *Teacher* and *Wisdom of God*. Jesus' pedagogy was relational, embodied, and subversive—he taught by walking with people, telling parables, and inviting lived response. The goal was always transformation, not just knowledge.

The UN's fourth Sustainable Development Goal—Quality Education—calls for inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Education opens pathways out of poverty, empowers gender equality, and equips communities to address every other global goal. For followers of Jesus, pursuing educational justice is an act of discipleship—because every person deserves the chance to grow into their God-given potential.

To learn in the Way of Jesus is to be ever-formed by love: learning not for dominance, but for discernment; not for privilege, but for participation in God's dream of Shalom.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. When you think of “education,” what comes to mind beyond classrooms and degrees?
2. Who has been a teacher or mentor who helped shape your understanding of God, yourself, or justice?
3. How might learning—formal or informal—become a spiritual practice in your life or community?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Luke 2:41–52 .  . Jesus, a Curious Learner

(Also [Proverbs 4:1–9](#); [Matthew 7:24–29](#))

In Luke's Gospel, we glimpse the young Jesus in the temple, sitting among teachers, listening and asking questions. Jesus is both learner and wisdom-bearer—rooted in his tradition, yet open to discovery. This passage reminds us that even the Incarnate One grew in wisdom, stature, and favor. Learning is not a sign of deficiency but of faithfulness.

Proverbs, too, portrays wisdom as a companion calling out in the streets, inviting all to grow in understanding. To heed her voice is to choose life. When Jesus later teaches about building one's house on rock, he continues that lineage—linking learning directly to practice. Education that does not translate into love and justice misses the mark.

To follow Christ the Teacher is to become lifelong learners of love—people willing to be taught by the poor, the earth, and the Spirit still speaking.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice about Jesus' posture of learning in Luke 2?
2. How does wisdom differ from knowledge in Scripture?
3. Who or what are the "teachers" in your life right now?
4. What might it mean for the church to be known as a learning community?
5. How does the pursuit of equitable education express God's justice?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Recall a moment when you learned something that changed how you see the world. What spiritual insight came with that learning? Where is God inviting you to keep growing?
- **Community Practice** . Host a "Stories of Learning" evening—invite people from varied ages and backgrounds to share what they've learned about faith, resilience, or justice.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Partner with local schools, literacy programs, or tutoring initiatives. Support global efforts to ensure every child—especially girls and marginalized students—has access to education.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Begin each day with a simple learner's prayer: *"Holy Wisdom, teach me today to see, to listen, to grow in love."* Let this prayer shape your openness throughout the day.

Closing Litany . "Bearers of Wisdom"

One: Christ our Teacher, You open hearts and minds to truth.

Many: **Make us learners of Your grace and agents of Your wisdom.**

One: Where ignorance breeds injustice, kindle curiosity and courage.

Many: **We join Your Spirit in teaching peace.**

One: Guide our learning to serve life and liberation.

Many: **Send us as seekers and storytellers of Your wisdom.**

One: Together we go, growing in grace and understanding.

Many: **For the flourishing of all, we go in peace. Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we'll explore *Goal 5: Gender Equality*—considering how the Way of Jesus calls us to mutuality and justice, dismantling hierarchies that distort God's image in humanity.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of truth and wisdom,
You teach through story, silence, and Spirit.
Open our minds to wonder, our hearts to compassion,
our hands to the work of teaching and learning that frees.
May our communities become schools of love
where all can grow into the fullness of life You intend.
Through Christ, our Teacher and our Wisdom.
Amen.

Theological Frame:

- In Scripture, wisdom integrates knowing, doing, and being—it is relational and embodied.
- Jesus models learning and teaching as mutual transformation.
- Christian education aims not merely to inform but to form people into love and justice.
- Be especially attentive to those in your gathering who have been denied access to quality education and to those who have never consider access an issue.

Facilitating Discussion:

- Encourage participants to share stories of learning or mentorship as sacred experiences.
- Highlight that “education” includes spiritual formation, cultural learning, and community wisdom.
- Link literacy, access, and educational justice to discipleship and empowerment.

Optional Extensions:

- Invite local educators, students, or activists to share about barriers to education and creative responses.
- Organize a book or Bible study exchange with another community to broaden perspectives.
- Include art, poetry, or storytelling as expressions of collective learning.
- SDG 4 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

Suggested Scriptures:

- [Luke 2:41–52](#)
- [Proverbs 4:1–9](#)
- [Matthew 7:24–29](#)
- [Colossians 3:16](#)



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Five

Created in the Image of God: Dignity, Mutuality, & Liberation
SDG 5 . Gender Equality

Opening Litany . “In the Image of God”

One: Creator of all, You formed humanity in Your likeness—diverse and wondrous.

Many: **We praise You for the beauty of every gender, every body, every life.**

One: Christ, our Liberator, You lifted women’s voices, welcomed their wisdom, and honored their faith.

Many: **Teach us to recognize and resist every pattern of domination and exclusion.**

One: Spirit of Justice, You move through daughters and sons, through prophets and dreamers alike.

Many: **Stir us to dismantle all that diminishes Your image in any person.**

One: Together we affirm the sacred worth of every gender and commit ourselves to the work of equality.

Many: **For the freedom of all, and the glory of God. Amen.**

Introduction: Equality as a Gospel Imperative

Scripture affirms that humanity is created in God’s image—maleness and femaleness, find its fullness in the Creator, reflecting divine likeness when difference relates together in love. The biblical vision is one of partnership, not hierarchy. Yet throughout history, patriarchal systems have distorted this design, confining people—especially women and gender-diverse persons—to roles of subservience or invisibility.

Jesus’ ministry consistently subverts those hierarchies. He learns from women (the Syrophenician mother), entrusts them with revelation (the Samaritan woman), and commissions them as the first witnesses to resurrection (Mary Magdalene). The Spirit poured out at Pentecost shatters barriers of gender, class, and status—“your sons and daughters will prophesy.”

The United Nations’ fifth Sustainable Development Goal—**Gender Equality**—echoes this scriptural truth: that no community can flourish while half its people are denied dignity, education, opportunity, or safety. Gender equality is not a secular agenda; it is a gospel calling toward mutual liberation.

To walk in the Way of Jesus is to join God’s ongoing work of freeing all creation from domination and restoring relationships of mutual respect, compassion, and shared power.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. Where have you seen or experienced the sacred image of God affirmed—or denied—on the basis of gender?
2. How do you understand Jesus’ relationship to women and gender norms in His time?
3. What would mutuality look like in your community’s leadership, worship, and relationships?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Luke 10:38–42 .  . **Jesus Subverts Cultural Gender Roles**

(Also [Genesis 1:26–27](#); [Galatians 3:26–29](#); [John 20:11–18](#))

In Luke’s Gospel, Mary takes the posture of a disciple—sitting at Jesus’ feet, learning as male disciples would. Martha, bearing the cultural expectations of her role, grows

frustrated. Jesus affirms Mary's choice, not to demean Martha's service, but to expand the vision of what discipleship can be.

Here, Jesus disrupts gendered boundaries around learning, authority, and presence. He welcomes women not as helpers to male ministry but as participants in the new creation He inaugurates. In His kingdom, dignity and calling are not determined by gender but by openness to God's Word.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What might Jesus' affirmation of Mary teach us about spiritual equality?
2. How does this story challenge traditional roles within many religious communities?
3. Where do you see parallels today between Martha's expectations and the cultural pressures placed on assigned gender roles?
4. What practices might help our community of faith and practice more fully reflect the mutuality of the gospel?
5. How can followers of Jesus embody gender justice in daily relationships, workplaces, and advocacy?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Identify messages about gender you've inherited—from church, family, culture. Which align with the image of God, and which need unlearning or healing?
- **Community Practice** . Host a dialogue or storytelling evening centering women's and gender-diverse voices in your congregation. Reflect on barriers to full participation and discern concrete steps toward equity in leadership and liturgy.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Partner with local or global organizations advancing gender equity—such as those addressing gender-based violence, education for girls, or equitable pay.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Pray daily this week for wisdom to see God's image in every person you encounter. Practice greeting each person (internally or aloud) as "beloved image-bearer."

Closing Litany . “Bearers of Sacred Image”

One: Christ, who sees and honors all, free us from the blindness of patriarchy.

Many: **Open our eyes to Your image shining in every face.**

One: Spirit of wisdom, empower us to speak truth and to listen deeply.

Many: **Make us communities of mutual respect and shared leadership.**

One: Together we commit to walk in equality, dignity, and love.

Many: **For the healing of creation and the freedom of all. Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we’ll explore **Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation**—reflecting on water as both sacred gift and human right. We’ll consider how Jesus’ offer of “living water” calls us to care for the sources of life upon which all creation depends.

Co-commissioning Prayer

Tri-une God of creation and equality,

You formed us in Your image and called us good.

Forgive the ways we have silenced, excluded, or diminished one another.

Renew in us Your vision of partnership and peace.

Empower us to build communities where all genders flourish in freedom and love.

Through Christ, who makes us one.

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Gender equality is rooted in the imago Dei—all persons equally bear God’s image.
- Jesus models mutuality, empowerment, and inclusion throughout His ministry.
- The Church’s calling is to reflect that divine mutuality in structure, voice, and mission.
- Be especially attentive to those in your group who have suffered and/or perpetuated gender inequities.

Facilitating Discussion

- Create space for sensitive sharing—acknowledge pain caused by gender-based injustice.
- Encourage participants to name both personal and systemic examples of inequality.
- Frame equality not as competition but as the restoration of divine intention.

Optional Extensions

- Invite a guest speaker or theologian specializing in feminist or womanist theology.
- Conduct a gender audit of church practices: preaching voices, leadership roles, language, imagery.
- Use inclusive language for God and people in worship as a spiritual discipline of equality.

Additional Readings

- [Genesis 2–3](#) (mutuality and distortion in creation)
- [Galatians 3:28](#) (“in Christ... no male and female”)
- Elizabeth Johnson, [*She Who Is*](#)
- Mercy Amba Oduyoye, [*Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*](#)
- SDG 5 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Six

Living Water: Stewarding the Sacred Flow of Life SDG 6 . *Clean Water & Sanitation*

Opening Litany . “Streams of Living Water”

One: Creator of rivers and rain, You carved life into the dust and called it good.

Many: **We praise You for water—source of cleansing, renewal, and joy.**

One: Christ, our Living Water, You met the Samaritan woman at the well and quenched her thirst with dignity.

Many: **Teach us to see water not as commodity, but as sacred gift.**

One: Spirit, who hovered over the waters of creation, flow through our hearts and heal what is parched within and around us.

Many: **Move us to protect the waters You have entrusted to our care.**

One: Together we commit ourselves to the renewal of the waters of the earth.

Many: **For the flourishing of all life, we give You thanks. Amen.**

Introduction . Water as Gift & Right

Water is at once the most ordinary and the most holy of elements. It births creation in Genesis, parts for deliverance in Exodus, and becomes the sign of new life in baptism. Throughout Scripture, water symbolizes God’s sustaining presence and abundant grace.

Yet today, this sacred element is imperiled. Nearly one in four people worldwide lack access to safely managed drinking water, and billions more lack adequate sanitation.

Pollution, privatization, and climate disruption threaten not only human health but the delicate ecosystems that sustain all life.

The United Nations' sixth Sustainable Development Goal—Clean Water and Sanitation—calls us to ensure availability and sustainable management of water for all. For followers of Jesus, this goal echoes the gospel's invitation to share living water freely, just as God's grace flows without boundary.

To participate in God's shalom means caring for the rivers and wells, the glaciers and rains, the pipes and policies that make life possible. Every act of stewardship—personal and systemic—is an act of worship.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. How does water shape your daily life—spiritually, physically, emotionally?
2. When have you experienced water as sacred?
3. What comes to mind when you think about water justice in your local or global context?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

John 4:5–15 . . Jesus Quenches Body, Soul, & Community

(Also [Exodus 17:1–7](#); [Isaiah 55:1–3](#); [Revelation 22:1–2](#))

In John's Gospel, Jesus meets a woman drawing water at midday—an outsider among outsiders. Their conversation crosses boundaries of ethnicity, gender, and religion. When Jesus offers her “living water,” He reveals both spiritual and material truth: that God's gift of life cannot be confined to one people, one place, or one kind of purity.

The woman becomes not just a recipient of grace but a bearer of it—returning to her community with the good news. This encounter transforms exclusion into belonging and scarcity into abundance. It teaches us that true worship, like true water, flows freely and sustains all who thirst.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you about Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman?
2. What might "living water" mean in the context of physical and spiritual thirst?
3. How does this story challenge systems that limit access—whether to water, justice, or belonging?
4. In what ways might our communities be called to share or protect water as an act of discipleship?
5. What would it look like for your church to be known as a "well of living water" in your neighborhood?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Notice your relationship with water this week—each drink, each shower, each rainfall. Practice gratitude for its presence, and awareness of its fragility.
- **Community Practice** . Conduct a "water audit" of your congregation or household. How is water used, wasted, or conserved? Brainstorm ways to reduce use or support sustainable practices (e.g., low-flow fixtures, native landscaping, reusable bottles).
- **Service or Advocacy** . Partner with organizations working to provide clean water and sanitation—locally or globally. Advocate for water justice policies that protect communities from pollution, overuse, or privatization.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Create a simple ritual of water blessing. As a group or family, gather around a bowl of clean water, give thanks for it, and pray for all whose water is unsafe or scarce.

Closing Litany . "Bearers of Living Water"

One: Christ, our Source and Sustainer, quench our thirst for justice.

Many: **Flow through us, that others may live.**

One: Where rivers run dry and wells are poisoned, renew the face of the earth.

Many: **Let Your mercy move like rain across the nations.**

One: Together we go, carrying the cup of Your compassion to all who thirst.
Many: **For the healing of creation, we go in peace. Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we'll explore **Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy**, reflecting on how light and power—both physical and spiritual—reveal God's desire for equitable and sustainable life for all.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of rivers and rain,
You call forth life from the waters of chaos.
Forgive us when we pollute, waste, or hoard what You freely give.
Renew our spirits and our watersheds alike.
May our stewardship reflect Your generosity,
and may all people and creatures drink deeply of Your living water.
Through Christ, the Wellspring of Life.

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Water is a sacred sign of God’s presence and provision.
- Jesus’ “living water” embodies both spiritual renewal and material justice.
- Christian discipleship includes ecological and infrastructural care for creation.

Facilitating Discussion

- Invite personal stories about the significance of water (baptism, travel, drought, etc.).
- Link theological reflection to concrete local issues: watershed protection, access to clean water, or indigenous water rights.
- Use the story of the Samaritan woman to model cross-boundary empathy and conversation.

Optional Extensions

- Host a “Blue Theology” or eco-theology study on water stewardship.
- Organize a river, beach, or lake cleanup as a communal act of worship.
- Partner with groups like [Living Waters for the World](#) or [WaterAid](#).

Additional Readings

- [Exodus 17:1–7](#) (water from the rock)
- [Isaiah 58:10–11](#) (the Lord will satisfy your thirst)
- [John 7:37–39](#) (streams of living water)
- Ched Myers, [Watershed Discipleship](#)
- Sallie McFague, [A New Climate for Theology](#)
- SDG 6 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal6>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Seven

Light for All: Participating in God’s Power to Renew SDG 7 . *Affordable & Clean Energy*

Opening Litany . “Light of the World”

One: Creator of sun and stars, You spoke light into being and called it good.

Many: **We praise You for light that warms, guides, and gives life.**

One: Christ, Light of the World, You illuminate our darkness and kindle hope where shadows fall.

Many: **Teach us to bear Your light with humility and joy.**

One: Spirit of Fire, You burn within and among us, stirring vision and courage.

Many: **Empower us to use energy wisely, that Your creation may thrive.**

One: Together we commit to live as children of light—sustained by Your power, sharing Your radiance.

Many: **For the healing of the world, we shine. Amen.**

Introduction . Light as Divine Gift & Human Responsibility

From the first words of Genesis—“Let there be light”—God’s creative energy pulses through the universe. Light is more than a metaphor for goodness or knowledge; it is the very medium by which life unfolds. Throughout Scripture, light symbolizes God’s self-revelation and our call to reflect that illumination into the world.

Yet energy, the material form of light, has become a site of deep injustice. Billions of people still lack access to affordable, reliable electricity, while excessive energy consumption drives ecological devastation and climate change. The benefits and burdens of modern energy systems are unequally shared—illuminating privilege for some while leaving others in literal and economic darkness.

The United Nations' seventh Sustainable Development Goal—Affordable and Clean Energy—seeks to ensure universal access to sustainable power. For followers of Jesus, this is more than a technological challenge—it is a spiritual calling to participate in God's renewing energy, transforming systems of extraction into networks of care.

To walk in the light of Christ is to live with awareness, restraint, and creativity—to harness the gifts of creation for the flourishing of all.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. What images or experiences come to mind when you hear the word “light”?
2. How do you see energy—literal or spiritual—being used or misused in our world today?
3. What might it mean to “live as children of light” in the context of energy justice?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Matthew 5:14–16 .  . “You Are the Light of the World”

(Also [Genesis 1:1–5](#); [John 1:1–9](#); [Philippians 2:12–16](#))

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount declares to ordinary people—fishermen, laborers, peasants under empire—“You are the light of the world.” It is not a call to self-importance but to visibility: to embody God's radiance in public, practical ways that bring warmth and guidance to others.

In this teaching, light is both gift and responsibility. To shine is to participate in divine energy—the creative and redemptive power that renews the world. The light of Christ is not hoarded or consumed; it is shared.

In an age of fossil fuels and energy inequity, this passage invites us to imagine energy itself as a form of communal vocation. How might we illuminate without depleting? How might our light—our technologies, economies, and daily choices—reflect the generosity of the Creator rather than the greed of empire?

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean that Jesus calls His followers “the light of the world”?
2. How does this passage challenge our culture’s relationship to consumption and energy use?
3. Where do you see God’s light breaking into systems of darkness today?
4. How might we as individuals or congregations reflect divine energy more sustainably?
5. What small actions could “let your light shine” in tangible, ecological ways?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Reflect on the forms of energy that sustain your life—electricity, fuel, food, relationships, Spirit. Where might you need to shift from draining to renewing sources of energy?
- **Community Practice** . Conduct an “energy audit” of your church or home. Identify ways to reduce energy waste, transition to renewables, or support community solar programs. Celebrate even small steps as acts of worship.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Support organizations advancing clean energy access for marginalized communities—especially in regions disproportionately impacted by energy poverty or pollution. Advocate for policies that promote renewable energy and just transitions for workers.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Spend an evening in candlelight—turn off all artificial lights, sit in quiet, and read [John 1:1–9](#). Pray for the Light that no darkness can overcome to renew your spirit and guide your action.

Closing Litany . “Children of Light”

One: Christ, Light of the World, shine in us and through us.

Many: **Illuminate our hearts with Your justice and compassion.**

One: Where creation groans under pollution and greed, ignite our courage to change.

Many: **May Your light expose what harms and reveal what heals.**

One: Together we go, radiant with Your love and resolve.

Many: **For the glory of God and the renewal of the earth. Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we'll explore *Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth*, reflecting on God's vision of meaningful labor, fair wages, and economies that serve life rather than exploit it.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of Light and Life,
You spoke light into being and filled creation with radiant energy.
Forgive our misuse of Your gifts and our indifference to those who live in energy poverty.
Renew our imagination for sustainable living—
that our light may shine without consuming,
our power may serve rather than exploit,
and our lives may reflect the brightness of Your love.
Through Christ, the true Light.

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Light and energy are divine gifts, not private possessions.
- Jesus’ “light of the world” teaching links visibility with responsibility.
- Clean, accessible energy aligns with God’s desire for justice and renewal.

Facilitating Discussion

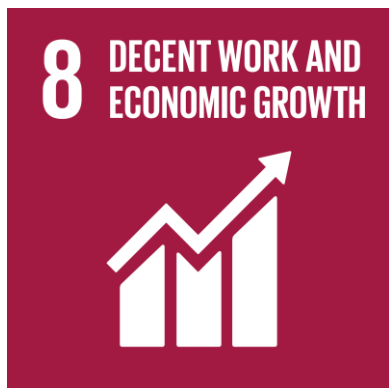
- Encourage participants to explore both metaphorical and material meanings of “light.”
- Discuss how energy use intersects with economic and environmental justice.
- Use visuals—like candles, solar lamps, or images of sunrise—to evoke contemplative awareness.

Optional Extensions

- Partner with local renewable energy initiatives or community solar projects.
- Invite a local environmental theologian or engineer to speak about faith and clean energy.
- Incorporate an “energy fast” day: limit electronics and reflect on simplicity as spiritual practice.

Additional Readings

- [Isaiah 58:6–12](#) (light breaking forth like dawn through justice)
- [John 8:12](#) (“I am the light of the world”)
- Wendell Berry, [The Gift of Good Land](#)
- Norman Wirzba, [From Nature to Creation](#)
- Pope Francis, [Laudato Si’](#), #s 172–180 (on energy and care for creation)
- SDG 7 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal7>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Eight

Work as Vocation: Laboring in the Economy of God SDG 8 . *Decent Work & Economic Growth*

Opening Litany . “Work of Our Hands”

One: Creator God, You shaped the world and called us to tend and cultivate it.

Many: **We thank You for the dignity of work and the joy of co-creating with You.**

One: Christ, Carpenter and Teacher, You labored among us, blessing the calloused hand and weary heart.

Many: **Teach us to see our labor—paid or unpaid—as participation in Your renewing work.**

One: Spirit of Wisdom, breathe integrity and compassion into all economies.

Many: **Inspire us to build systems that honor people over profit, community over consumption.**

One: Together we commit to seek meaningful work and just livelihoods for all.

Many: **For the sake of Your kingdom and the flourishing of the world. Amen.**

Introduction . The Sacredness of Labor

From the beginning, Scripture portrays work as sacred participation in God’s creative purpose. In Genesis, humanity is placed in the garden “to till it and keep it”—an invitation to steward, not exploit. Sabbath is then given as holy rhythm, reminding us that productivity does not define worth; rest and reverence do.

Yet in our modern economies, work has often been distorted into domination—where profit eclipses people and efficiency outweighs care. Economic systems designed for growth too often rely on exploitation: underpaid workers, environmental degradation, and widening inequality.


The United Nations' eighth Sustainable Development Goal—**Decent Work and Economic Growth**—calls for full and productive employment for all, with fair wages, safe conditions, and sustainable economic systems. For followers of Jesus, this vision resonates deeply with the biblical witness: that every person deserves work that sustains rather than depletes, empowers rather than enslaves.

To labor in the Way of Christ is to join God's ongoing creation—making, mending, and managing in ways that build community and restore justice. True prosperity, in God's economy, is measured not by accumulation but by shared well-being.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. How do you understand the connection between work and vocation?
2. Where have you experienced dignity in work—and where have you seen it denied?
3. What might a faithful, just economy look like in your community?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Matthew 20:1–16 .  . **The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard**
(Also [Genesis 2:15](#); [Deuteronomy 24:14–15](#); [James 5:1–6](#))

In this parable, Jesus upends economic logic. A landowner pays each worker the same wage, regardless of how many hours they labored. Those who worked longer grumble at the generosity, revealing how deeply the calculus of merit and scarcity shapes our assumptions about fairness.

Jesus isn't endorsing inefficiency; He's revealing the nature of divine economy—an economy rooted in grace, not merit; sufficiency, not scarcity. God's abundance unsettles our competitive hierarchies, inviting us to imagine labor and compensation not as transactional but as relational and communal.

This story invites reflection on how we assign value—to people, to time, to effort—and whether our systems mirror the generosity of God's vineyard.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What do you find most challenging or liberating about this parable?
2. How does God's economy differ from human economic systems?
3. Where do you see "vineyard workers" in today's society—those underpaid or unseen?
4. How might your community advocate for fair work and dignified livelihoods?
5. What spiritual practices help you resist defining worth by productivity?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Reflect on your own relationship with work—its joys, pressures, and boundaries. Where might God be inviting you to rest more deeply or labor more justly?
- **Community Practice** . Host a "vocation story night." Invite members to share about their work—paid, unpaid, caregiving, creative—and name where they sense God's presence or absence in it.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Support local efforts that promote fair wages, worker safety, and sustainable business practices. Partner with cooperatives, ethical trade groups, or small enterprises that value people and planet over profit.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Before beginning your daily work, pray:
"God of Creation, bless the work of my hands.
Let it serve love, justice, and beauty.
Let it join Your work of renewing all things."

Closing Litany . “Laborers in God’s Vineyard”

One: Christ, Worker and Teacher, bless the labor of our hands and hearts.

Many: **May our work serve Your purpose and reflect Your grace.**

One: Where people toil without fairness or rest, awaken our compassion.

Many: **Make us advocates for justice in every economy.**

One: Together we go as co-laborers in Your harvest of peace.

Many: **For the dignity of all and the glory of God. Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we’ll explore *Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure*, reflecting on how creativity and technology can serve the common good—building systems that connect, uplift, and sustain rather than divide or exploit.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of Work and Rest,

You labored to create and called it good.

Bless all who work—those in fields and factories, offices and homes, schools and streets.

Forgive the injustices that devalue Your image in workers and exploit the poor.

Renew our economies with generosity and fairness.

Let our labor join Yours in mending the world,

until all may work, rest, and rejoice in dignity.

Through Christ our Worker and Redeemer.

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Work is sacred participation in God’s creative purpose.
- God’s economy centers grace, not competition; justice, not exploitation.
- Sabbath reminds us that human worth transcends productivity.
- Be especially mindful of those in your group un/under employed.

Facilitating Discussion

- Invite participants to share diverse forms of labor—paid and unpaid.
- Discuss economic injustice not as abstract policy but lived reality.
- Encourage practical imagination: how might your community model God’s economy locally?

Optional Extensions

- Host a panel with workers, small business owners, and advocates on fair labor.
- Organize a “Sabbath retreat” exploring rest as resistance to overwork culture.
- Study Catholic Social Teaching or Protestant ethics on labor and economy.

Additional Readings

- [Micah 6:8](#) (Justice and humility in daily life)
- [Luke 4:16–21](#) (Jesus’ mission to the poor and oppressed)
- Dorothy Sayers, [Why Work?](#)
- Tricia Hersey, [Rest as Resistance](#)
- Walter Brueggemann, [Sabbath as Resistance](#)
- SDG 8 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Nine

Building for Belonging: Innovation in Service of Shalom SDG 9 . *Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure*

Opening Litany . “Builders of Hope”

One: Maker of all things, You fashioned the cosmos with creativity and care.

Many: **Teach us to build as You build—with justice, imagination, and love.**

One: Christ, the cornerstone of our common life,

Many: **Ground our work in Your peace and our progress in Your compassion.**

One: Spirit of Wisdom, inspire inventors, engineers, and dreamers to labor for the common good.

Many: **May all our innovation serve connection, not domination.**

One: Together we commit to create systems, structures, and spaces that sustain life.

Many: **For the flourishing of all people and the renewal of the earth. Amen.**

Introduction . **Building Systems that Serve Life**

Human beings are builders by nature. From the earliest cities to digital networks, we create structures—physical and social—that hold and shape our common life. These infrastructures can nurture flourishing, or they can entrench inequality. The question is not whether we build, but what—and for whom.

The ninth Sustainable Development Goal, **Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure**, envisions resilient systems that promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization,

foster innovation, and build infrastructure accessible to all. The challenge is profound: many global communities lack the roads, communication networks, energy systems, and technologies that make full participation in society possible. Others, particularly in the Global North, have built in ways that extract from the earth and marginalize the poor.

Faithful innovation requires a new imagination—one that aligns with the **shalom economy of God**. Scripture envisions this in multiple ways: as cities of refuge, networks of care, and even new creation itself. Isaiah foresaw a world where people “build houses and inhabit them,” where “they shall not labor in vain” (Isaiah 65:21–23). The Book of Acts shows the early Church sharing resources, innovating in community organization, and leveraging new forms of connection for the sake of love.

For followers of Jesus, building sustainable systems is not simply technological—it’s theological. It’s about designing ways of living that reflect God’s justice and care, reweaving the torn fabric of creation.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. How do you see innovation and technology shaping human life—for good or for harm?
2. What might “faithful innovation” look like in your community?
3. Where do you see infrastructure—roads, digital networks, or community systems—failing to serve everyone equally?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Acts 1:4-5 & 2:42–47 .  . **The Fellowship of Believers**

(Also [Isaiah 65:17–25](#); [Exodus 31:1–11](#); [Revelation 21:1–5](#))

The early followers of Jesus built a radically new social infrastructure. They began waiting in community and listening for the Holy Spirit to guide. They reimagined community around shared resources, common meals, and mutual care. Their innovation wasn’t technological but relational—it was a new social design patterned after divine generosity.

In Acts 2, we glimpse the Spirit’s blueprint for faithful infrastructure: worship that nourishes belonging, economies that eliminate want, and structures that hold generosity

as their foundation. This is what divine innovation looks like: not gadgets or profits, but communities that embody love’s architecture.

Exodus 31 offers another glimpse. Bezalel and Oholiab are filled with the Spirit of God—not to preach, but to design. Craft and creativity become holy callings, vital to the dwelling of God among the people. In our age of rapid technological change, this is a reminder that innovation can be sacred when it serves God’s dwelling among us.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What “infrastructure of belonging” does Acts 2 reveal?
2. How might we, like Bezalel and Oholiab, use creativity as a form of worship?
3. How do our modern systems—digital, economic, or social—either nurture or undermine community?
4. What would it look like to design infrastructure that reflects God’s care for all creation?
5. How can the Church model innovation that includes, uplifts, and heals?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Reflect on a structure or system in your life—a workplace, a church, a neighborhood. How might it better serve connection, equity, or sustainability?
- **Community Practice** . Map your community’s infrastructure. Where are the gaps? Who is left out of access to housing, transit, digital connection, or clean energy? Discuss one concrete way your group could advocate or partner for improvement.
- **Creative Engagement** . Host a “Faith & Innovation” night. Invite artists, engineers, or community organizers to share how their creativity expresses faith. Celebrate innovation as a spiritual vocation.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Partner with local or global efforts developing sustainable technologies—solar projects, digital inclusion, or circular economy initiatives. Seek ways to invest time or resources that promote equitable innovation.

Closing Litany . “Architects of Shalom”

One: God of Creation, You imagined a universe of beauty and complexity.

Many: **Inspire us to build with love and wisdom.**

One: Christ, cornerstone of the new humanity,

Many: **Ground our work in compassion and community.**

One: Spirit of Renewal, make our creativity a blessing to the world.

Many: **May our hands design what our hearts dream in faith.**

One: Grow in us a Shalomic imagination for all and everything,

Many: **We go now as builders of hope, artisans of peace, and stewards of the earth.
Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next session, we'll explore *Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities*, asking how the Gospel calls us to dismantle hierarchies and expand belonging, reflecting the radical inclusivity of God's kingdom.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of Innovation and Imagination,

You shaped the world with wonder and entrusted its care to our hands.

Forgive the ways we have built systems that harm and exclude.

Renew our vision that we might design for justice,

invent for love, and construct for the healing of Your world.

Make us faithful builders of the new creation You promise.

Through Christ our cornerstone, we pray.

Amen.

Theological Frame

- God is the original Creator and Innovator; all faithful design reflects divine creativity.
- Acts 2 models the infrastructure of the Spirit: shared life, equity, and belonging.
- Innovation must always be relational, not merely technical—serving the common good and creation’s wholeness.

Facilitating Discussion

- Help participants connect “infrastructure” with both physical (roads, energy, tech) and social (trust, equity, care) dimensions.
- Encourage creative imagination—this is a space to dream of alternative systems grounded in love.
- Highlight the vocational call of innovators, engineers, and artists as participants in God’s renewal.

Optional Extensions

- Visit a local innovation hub or sustainable design project.
- Discuss examples of “tech for good” initiatives or faith-based environmental design.
- Reflect on how digital community can both connect and alienate, and how faith can guide its use.

Background Readings

- [Isaiah 65:17–25](#) (God’s vision of just, sustainable community)
- [Exodus 31:1–11](#) (Spirit-filled creativity)
- [Acts 2:42–47](#) (Communal innovation)
- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, #s 101–114 (on technology and care for creation)
- Margaret Wheatley & Myron Kellner-Rogers, *A Simpler Way*
- SDG 9 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal9>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Ten

The Gospel of Belonging: Dismantling Hierarchies of Worth SDG 10 . *Reduced Inequalities*

Opening Litany . “All One in Christ”

One: God of all creation, You fashioned each person in Your image.

Many: **We praise You for the beauty of human diversity.**

One: Jesus, friend of the outcast and challenger of the powerful,

Many: **Teach us to see You in those the world overlooks.**

One: Spirit of unity, breathe new life into divided communities.

Many: **Break down walls of privilege, fear, and exclusion.**

One: Together we commit to a world where all belong,

Many: **For Your kingdom is justice and joy for every child of God. Amen.**

Introduction . **Inequality and the Kin-dom of God**

Inequality is not merely an economic issue—it’s a spiritual wound. It distorts God’s design for community, creating hierarchies of worth where there should be mutual dignity and care.

The tenth Sustainable Development Goal—Reduced Inequalities—calls the world to confront systems that privilege a few while marginalizing many. It names disparities of income, opportunity, and representation that persist both between and within nations.

For Christians, this goal resonates deeply with the biblical story of God’s leveling love—a God who “casts down the mighty and lifts up the lowly” (Luke 1:52).

Throughout Scripture, God sides with those who are excluded: the poor, the foreigner, the widow, the orphan. Jesus’ ministry amplifies this divine bias. He dines with tax collectors, welcomes children, empowers women, and centers those the dominant culture disregards. His table becomes a radical reordering of the world—a foretaste of the kingdom where all are fed, all are seen, and none are deemed expendable.

Reducing inequality, then, is not an optional act of charity; it is the very shape of discipleship. To follow Jesus is to live as though every person’s life is sacred—and to help dismantle whatever denies that truth.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. When you hear the word *inequality*, what kinds of disparities come to mind—economic, racial, gendered, global?
2. How does your faith shape how you view power and privilege?
3. Where do you see the church called to bridge divides and embody belonging?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Luke 14:7–14 . . **The Parable of the Banquet**

(Also [Luke 1:46–55](#); [Galatians 3:26–29](#); [James 2:1–9](#))

At a dinner party, Jesus notices how guests scramble for seats of honor. He tells a parable that subverts the whole system: the true host doesn’t exalt themselves but invites those who can’t repay.

This story exposes how inequality hides in our habits—who we invite, who we ignore, who we center. Jesus reframes the social order through hospitality that dissolves hierarchy. In God’s banquet, no one is more deserving; each is cherished simply because they exist.

Galatians 3 deepens this vision: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” The Gospel flattens dividing lines, not by erasing difference, but by honoring each person as indispensable to the whole.

To practice this is to become a community of *radical belonging*—a living protest against every system that assigns human value by wealth, race, gender, or status.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What social dynamics or power plays do you notice in Jesus' parable?
2. How might we practice hospitality that dismantles hierarchy rather than reinforces it?
3. Where do you see inequality—within your own community, or the wider world—mirrored in this story?
4. What does “there is no longer Jew or Greek...” mean in our context of deep divisions?
5. How can our congregations become tables of genuine inclusion and equity?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Reflect on where you hold privilege and where you experience marginalization. How might you use your influence to open space for others' flourishing?
- **Community Practice** . Host a “community audit” of your church's life: who is represented in leadership, liturgy, and decision-making? Who is absent or unheard? Commit to one step toward greater inclusion.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Partner with local organizations addressing systemic inequities—affordable housing, racial justice, disability access, or immigration support.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Spend time praying with the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–55). Listen for how Mary's song invites you to join God's work of lifting up the lowly.

Closing Litany . “One Body, Many Members”

One: Christ, You have broken down every dividing wall.

Many: **Make us one body, healed and whole.**

One: Where power isolates and wealth divides,

Many: **Gather us at Your table of grace.**

One: Teach us to celebrate difference as the artistry of creation.

Many: **May we honor each story as part of Yours.**

One: Send us forth as witnesses to Your radical welcome.

Many: **For all belong in Your kin-dom of love. Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we’ll explore *Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities*, reflecting on how God calls us to shape places of belonging—urban and rural alike—where neighbors and nature thrive together in safety, beauty, and care.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of the Great Reversal,
You scatter the proud and lift up the humble.
Where we cling to privilege, unsettle us.
Where we are unseen, remind us we are beloved.
Unmake the hierarchies we’ve inherited and built.
Teach us to live as citizens of Your kin-dom,
where every person has a place, and none are disposable.
Through Christ, who became poor for our sake,
Amen.

Theological Frame

- God's kingdom is a leveling love—lifting the lowly and challenging the powerful.
- Jesus' radical hospitality reorders community around belonging, not status.
- Reducing inequality is not political partisanship; it is spiritual fidelity.
- Be mindful of those in your group who experience inequities and those who assume power over others.

Facilitating Discussion

- Create safe space for honest reflection on privilege and exclusion.
- Encourage participants to name both personal and systemic forms of inequality.
- Link biblical imagination with practical justice—how worship and inclusion transform communities.

Optional Extensions

- Host a conversation with a local advocacy group on equity and inclusion.
- Reflect liturgically: who reads, preaches, leads, or sings in your community?
- Invite testimonies from voices often unheard within your church context.

Background Readings

- [Luke 1:46–55](#) (Mary's Magnificat)
- [Galatians 3:26–29](#) (Equality in Christ)
- [James 2:1–9](#) (Against favoritism)
- Desmond Tutu, [*No Future Without Forgiveness*](#)
- bell hooks, [*All About Love*](#)
- SDG 10 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal10>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Eleven

Places of Belonging: Building Neighborhoods of Shalom SDG 11 . *Sustainable Cities & Communities*

Opening Litany . “Dwelling Together in Peace”

One: God, You are our dwelling place in every generation.

Many: **From wilderness to city streets, You make a home among us.**

One: Christ, You walked dusty roads, sat in crowded homes, and blessed ordinary neighborhoods.

Many: **Teach us to see Your presence in the places we live and love.**

One: Spirit of Renewal, breathe life into our cities, our towns, and our countryside.

Many: **Where systems crumble, rebuild; where isolation reigns, reconnect.**

One: Together we commit to seek the flourishing of our neighborhoods and the healing of creation.

Many: **For the sake of the earth and the joy of all who dwell in it. Amen.**

Introduction . Place as a Sacred Trust

Every human being longs for home—a place to belong, to be safe, to grow, and to flourish. In Scripture, this longing for home runs from Eden to the New Jerusalem. God’s story is one of making space for life to dwell.

The eleventh Sustainable Development Goal—*Sustainable Cities and Communities*—calls us to build inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable places. Today, more than half of

humanity lives in cities, yet too many are forced into unsafe housing, pollution-choked neighborhoods, or displacement caused by economic and environmental pressures. Rural communities too face decline, loss of services, and environmental degradation.

The biblical imagination reminds us that how we shape our places matters to God. The prophets lamented cities built on injustice and celebrated visions of renewal: “They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit” (Isaiah 65:21). The Book of Revelation ends not with an escape from the world but with a **city redeemed**—a garden-city where God dwells among people, where the gates are open and the river of life flows through its streets.

For followers of Jesus, this means seeing place-making as holy work. To build sustainable communities is to participate in God’s ongoing creation—designing neighborhoods of justice, inclusion, and ecological harmony. Our task is not to flee the world, but to inhabit it well.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. What does “home” mean to you, and how has that shaped your understanding of God’s presence?
2. How does your local community reflect—or fail to reflect—justice, safety, and belonging?
3. What might a “Shalom neighborhood” look like where you live?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Jeremiah 29:4–7 . . Seek the Welfare of the City

(Also [Isaiah 65:17–25](#); [Psalm 122](#); [Revelation 21:1–5](#))

When Israel was exiled in Babylon, they longed to return home. Yet through Jeremiah, God instructs them to settle where they are: “*Build houses and live in them... seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*”

This passage reframes exile as invitation. Even in displacement, God calls the people to become stewards of place—to plant, to pray, to build community. The flourishing of God’s people is tied to the flourishing of the wider world, even among strangers.

Revelation 21 expands that hope: the holy city descends; heaven and earth meet. God’s dwelling place is not a temple but a city alive with light, where every tear is wiped away.

This is the destiny of creation—a sustainable, radiant, communal life shared in God’s presence.

The local church is meant to be a sign of that future now: a community that practices belonging, resists displacement, and builds for mutual flourishing.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean for you to “seek the welfare of the city” (or community) where you live?
2. How does Jeremiah’s call challenge ideas of withdrawal or nostalgia?
3. Where do you see the Spirit renewing your neighborhood’s life—socially, economically, ecologically?
4. How might Revelation’s vision of the “New Jerusalem” shape how Christians engage urban design, housing, or community development?
5. What small action could your congregation take to make your community more sustainable and just?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Walk or sit somewhere in your neighborhood—perhaps a park, street corner, or public space. Notice signs of beauty and of brokenness. Pray for God’s peace to dwell there, and listen for how you might contribute to its renewal.
- **Community Practice** . Map your congregation’s local footprint. Who are your neighbors? What are their needs and gifts? Consider ways your church can be a partner in affordable housing, public safety, green space, or food access.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Engage with local initiatives that promote sustainable development—urban gardens, community co-ops, housing justice, or climate resilience projects. Collaborate with city leaders and interfaith partners to reimagine your place together.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Each week, light a candle for your community. As you pray, imagine the light spreading through every street, home, and heart. Let this act anchor your hope for transformation.

Closing Litany . “The City of God”

One: God who dwells among us, You make the earth Your home.

Many: **Teach us to love our cities, our towns, our neighborhoods, as You do.**

One: Where walls divide and fear isolates,

Many: **Open gates of welcome and pathways of peace.**

One: Where creation groans under the weight of pollution and neglect,

Many: **Inspire us to rebuild with care, collaboration, and creativity.**

One: Send us as citizens of Your kingdom, builders unto your Shalom.

Many: **May our lives bear witness to Your dwelling among us. Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we’ll explore *Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production*, reflecting on how our habits of buying, using, and discarding can either harm or heal creation—and how simplicity and gratitude shape a more sustainable world.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of Every Place,

You pitch Your tent among us, inviting us to dwell in love.

Forgive our neglect of neighbor and our exploitation of the earth.

Help us build homes that shelter, systems that uplift,
and communities that reflect Your justice and joy.

May our cities become sanctuaries of Your presence,
where all creation finds rest and renewal.

Through Christ, who makes all things new.

Amen.

Theological Frame

- God’s story is place-based: from garden to city, divine presence transforms human dwelling.
- “Seeking the welfare of the city” ([Jeremiah 29](#)) calls God’s people to active engagement, not withdrawal.
- Sustainability is deeply spiritual—it’s about right relationship with people, land, and God.

Facilitating Discussion

- Invite participants to share stories of belonging, displacement, or neighborhood renewal.
- Encourage concrete connections between biblical vision and local realities (e.g., housing, transportation, access).
- Frame sustainability as both ecological and communal—justice and care must shape our cities.

Optional Extensions

- Host a neighborhood walk or “asset-mapping” exercise to identify local strengths and needs.
- Partner with a local community development organization.
- Include a contemplative prayer walk during the session, inviting participants to listen to the Spirit in their place.

Background Readings

- [Jeremiah 29:4–7](#) (Seek the welfare of the city)
- [Isaiah 65:17–25](#) (A new heaven and new earth)
- [Revelation 21:1–5](#) (The New Jerusalem)
- Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge*
- Shane Claiborne & Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers*
- SDG 11 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Twelve

Stewardship in Action: Living Simply and Sustainably SDG 12 . *Responsible Consumption & Production*

Opening Litany . “Gifts in Our Hands”

One: Creator of all, You entrusted the earth and all its resources to humanity.

Many: **Teach us to honor Your gifts with gratitude and care.**

One: Jesus, You shared bread and fish, blessing abundance and teaching generosity.

Many: **Show us how to consume wisely and share generously.**

One: Spirit of Wisdom, guide our choices, our purchases, and our actions.

Many: **May what we take and what we leave reflect Your justice and mercy.**

One: Together we commit to live lightly, produce thoughtfully, and steward all creation.

Many: **For the flourishing of every creature and the glory of God. Amen.**

Introduction . Consumption as Moral & Spiritual Practice

Every day, we make choices that shape the world. What we buy, what we throw away, and how we use resources ripple through communities and ecosystems far beyond our immediate sight. In a world of finite resources, our patterns of consumption have become both a moral and spiritual issue.

The twelfth Sustainable Development Goal—*Responsible Consumption and Production*—calls for sustainable management of natural resources and reduction of waste. It

challenges the world to rethink overconsumption, inequitable production systems, and the throwaway culture that harms the planet and the most vulnerable people.

Scripture repeatedly reminds us of the sacredness of creation and the responsibility of stewardship. In Genesis, humanity is tasked with “tilling and keeping” the garden—not exploiting it. Proverbs warns against greed and waste. Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand shows resourcefulness, gratitude, and sharing as paths to abundance. Paul exhorts the church to live simply and contentedly, not to be enslaved by possessions (1 Timothy 6:6–10).

Matthew 6:19–34 challenges us to reorient our priorities. Jesus contrasts earthly treasures, which are temporary and vulnerable, with heavenly treasures rooted in God’s kingdom. Worrying over material needs and hoarding resources distracts us from God’s mission and our call to justice and care.

Responsible consumption is not only about environmental stewardship—it is a spiritual practice. Choosing simplicity, generosity, and sustainability honors God, fosters equity, and nurtures the flourishing of creation.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. How might consumer culture shape a person’s values and priorities?
2. How could faith guide decisions about consumption, waste, and resource use?
3. Where do you see overconsumption or waste in your community, church, or household?
4. How might living simply and sustainably honor God and neighbor?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Matthew 6:19-34 .  . No Need to Worry

(Also [Genesis 1:28–31](#); [Proverbs 21:20](#); [1 Timothy 6:6–10](#))

Jesus teaches that life is about more than accumulation. Our worth is not measured by possessions, and our security does not come from wealth. Choosing generosity, justice, and sustainability aligns our lives with God’s priorities and protects creation. This passage encourages reflection on how consumption, production, and waste reflect our values and shape the world.

This teaching illustrates the principles of mindful stewardship. God’s provision, when stewarded wisely, is sufficient for all. In contrast, human systems often hoard or squander resources, leaving some in need while others overconsume. This portion of the Sermon on the Mount invites Followers of Jesus to practice simplicity, gratitude, and generosity, recognizing that how we produce, consume, and share directly affects human and ecological well-being.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What might earthly “treasures” look like in our modern context?
2. How does Jesus’ teaching challenge typical consumption habits?
3. What practical steps might help you, your household, or community “seek first God’s kingdom” in consumption choices?
4. How might our resource-use decisions impact the poor, marginalized, and the environment?
5. How can living simply and sustainably be an act of discipleship and witness?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Track your consumption for one week—food, energy, water, and goods. Pray over what you use, what you waste, and how you might live more lightly on the earth.
- **Community Practice** . Organize a waste audit or recycling initiative in your church or neighborhood. Promote reuse, repair, and creative sharing.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Support fair-trade, ethical production, and companies or initiatives that minimize environmental impact. Advocate for policies that reduce pollution, promote circular economies, and ensure equitable access to resources.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Practice a daily act of gratitude for creation. Before eating, using water, or purchasing something, pause to give thanks and commit to care for the source of the gift.

Closing Litany . “Stewards of Creation”

One: God of Abundance, You provide for all living things.

Many: **Teach us to use wisely, share generously, and waste nothing.**

One: Christ, You invite us to store treasures in heaven rather than on earth,

Many: **Inspire us to steward our gifts with care and justice.**

One: Spirit of Wisdom, guide our consumption and production.

Many: **May our choices honor God, neighbor, and creation.**

One: We go forth to live lightly, share fully, and steward all Your gifts.

Many: **Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we’ll explore *Goal 13: Climate Action*, reflecting on the urgent call to care for the planet as a matter of faith, justice, and discipleship, and considering how individual and collective action can respond to God’s call to protect creation.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of Abundance and Care,

You give us enough and call us to share.

Forgive our waste and our indifference to the needs of creation and neighbor.

Help us consume thoughtfully, produce justly, and steward Your gifts faithfully.

May our lives reflect Your wisdom and love in every choice we make.

Through Christ, the source of all life and provision,

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Creation is sacred and entrusted to human stewardship.
- Responsible consumption and production are expressions of discipleship and justice.
- Gratitude, sufficiency, and generosity are central spiritual disciplines.

Facilitating Discussion

- Invite participants to reflect honestly on personal and systemic consumption habits.
- Encourage practical solutions: reducing waste, repairing, reusing, and sharing resources.
- Link daily choices to broader systems of justice, equity, and ecological health.

Optional Extensions

- Host a “Repair Café” or swap event in the community.
- Create a “Waste-Free Challenge” for participants or households.
- Study environmental theology or the ethics of sustainability in Scripture.

Background Readings

- [Matthew 14:13–21](#) (Feeding the Five Thousand)
- [Genesis 1:28–31](#) (Stewardship of creation)
- [Proverbs 21:20](#) (Wisdom in provision)
- [1 Timothy 6:6–10](#) (Contentment and sufficiency)
- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, #s 203–221
- Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America*
- SDG 12 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal12>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Thirteen

Caring for Creation: Responding to God’s Call in a Changing World SDG 13 . *Climate Action*

Opening Litany . “Breath of Life, Breath of Care”

One: God of the heavens and the earth, You spoke and life emerged.

Many: **Teach us to honor the fragile beauty of Your creation.**

One: Christ, who calmed the storms and walked on the waters,

Many: **Show us how to navigate the crises of our time with courage and care.**

One: Spirit of Wisdom, move among us to awaken action and hope.

Many: **Inspire us to respond with urgency and creativity, for the sake of the earth and all who dwell upon it.**

One: Together we commit to protect, restore, and sustain the planet entrusted to us.

Many: **For the flourishing of creation and the glory of God. Amen.**

Introduction . Climate Care as Faithful Discipleship

Climate change is the defining ecological and social challenge of our era. Rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and shifting ecosystems threaten communities, economies, and the intricate web of life. These effects disproportionately impact the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable—the very people Jesus calls His friends.

The thirteenth Sustainable Development Goal—**Climate Action**—urges nations and communities to take urgent measures to combat climate change and its impacts. For

Christians, responding to climate change is not optional; it is a moral and spiritual calling. Scripture repeatedly connects human care—or neglect—for creation with human flourishing.

God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 9) emphasizes the sacredness of all living creatures. The Psalms praise the heavens, seas, and earth as declaring God's glory (Psalm 19). Jesus' parables often use natural imagery to reveal the kingdom, showing that creation and humanity are intertwined in God's plan.

Faithful climate action embodies discipleship: reducing harm, caring for the vulnerable, restoring ecosystems, and advocating for systemic change. It is about aligning our lifestyles, communities, and economies with the vision of God's shalom—a world where all creation thrives.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. How have you experienced the effects of climate change in your life or community?
2. In what ways do our personal and collective choices impact the earth?
3. How does Scripture inspire urgency and hope in addressing environmental crises?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Psalm 104 . . Praise for Creation

(Also [Genesis 9:8–17](#); [Matthew 6:25–34](#); [Romans 8:18–23](#))

Psalm 104 celebrates the intricate balance of creation: waters, forests, animals, and human beings all woven together under God's care. The psalmist marvels at God's wisdom and provision, reminding us that humans are not separate from this delicate network but integral participants.

Climate disruption threatens this balance, and our failure to act can unweave the interconnectedness God designed. Romans 8 emphasizes that creation itself groans for liberation, echoing the human call to act as co-laborers with God. Stewardship is not passive—it is active engagement with the rhythms and limits of the natural world.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What elements of Psalm 104 stand out as particularly relevant to today's climate crises?
2. How do we live faithfully as participants, rather than dominators, in creation?
3. How does the groaning of creation in Romans 8 shape our understanding of environmental justice?
4. What does it mean to align our lifestyles with the flourishing of all creation?
5. How can the Church model hope and action in the face of climate anxiety or despair?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Consider your carbon footprint, energy use, diet, and travel habits. What small changes could honor God and reduce harm?
- **Community Practice** . Organize a creation care project—tree planting, community clean-up, or local conservation efforts. Engage neighbors and youth to deepen shared responsibility.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Advocate for policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect ecosystems, and support climate-vulnerable communities. Partner with faith-based climate networks to amplify your impact.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Practice a “daily Sabbath for the earth”: a pause to reflect, pray, and act lightly on the planet. Include creation meditation, gratitude, and intercessory prayer for ecosystems under stress.

Closing Litany . “Custodians of Creation”

One: God of the skies and seas, we honor the life You sustain.

Many: **Teach us to care for every creature and every ecosystem.**

One: Christ, You walked the earth in solidarity with all living things,

Many: **Inspire us to act with courage and wisdom for the planet.**

One: Spirit of Renewal, empower our hands, hearts, and voices.

Many: **May our lives reflect Your care for creation, and our communities become signs of Your hope.**

One: Together we go as custodians of the earth, protecting what God has made.

Many: **Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next session, we'll explore *Goal 14: Life Below Water*, reflecting on God's call to protect oceans, rivers, and all aquatic life, considering how water sustains life, nourishes communities, and reflects divine creativity.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of the Seas and Skies,

You hold the waters, the winds, and all living creatures in Your care.

Forgive our neglect and greed, and teach us to act with courage, humility, and love.

May our choices, our advocacy, and our worship honor Your creation,

so that rivers, oceans, forests, and cities may flourish,

and all life may give praise to You.

Through Christ, who renews all things,

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Creation is sacred, interconnected, and entrusted to human care.
- Climate action is a moral and spiritual imperative, not optional activism.
- Scripture celebrates creation and calls humans to stewardship, justice, and hope.

Facilitating Discussion

- Encourage participants to name both fear and hope regarding climate change.
- Emphasize practical, faith-based responses at personal, congregational, and systemic levels.
- Highlight examples of faith communities engaging in creation care and climate advocacy.

Optional Extensions

- Organize a Creation Care Workshop with local environmental organizations.
- Host a sermon series or Bible study focused on ecological discipleship.
- Include contemplative practices in natural settings—gardens, parks, or rivers.

Background Readings

- [Genesis 9:8–17](#) (God's covenant with all living creatures)
- [Romans 8:18–23](#) (Creation groaning for liberation)
- [Matthew 6:25–34](#) (Trust and provision)
- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, #s 17–49
- Wendell Berry, *The Peace of Wild Things*
- SDG 13 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Fourteen

Oceans, Rivers, and Streams: God's Gift of Life in Water
SDG 14 . *Life Below Water*

Opening Litany . "The Deep Calls to Us"

One: God of the seas, rivers, and streams, You fill the world with living waters.

Many: **Teach us to honor, protect, and cherish all aquatic life.**

One: Christ, You walked on water, calmed storms, and fed the hungry by the shore,

Many: **Show us how to act as guardians of rivers, lakes, and oceans.**

One: Spirit of Renewal, move through the currents of our hearts,

Many: **Urge us to defend creation from harm, neglect, and greed.**

One: Together we commit to live responsibly, care for aquatic ecosystems, and protect the waters that sustain life.

Many: **For the flourishing of all creatures and the glory of God. Amen.**

Introduction . Water as Sacred Life

Water is the lifeblood of creation, sustaining every ecosystem, community, and human life. Yet our oceans, rivers, and lakes face pollution, overfishing, habitat loss, and climate-driven changes. The fourteenth Sustainable Development Goal—*Life Below Water*—calls for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources.

Scripture reveres water as sacred: the Spirit hovered over the waters at creation (Genesis 1:2), the flood both cleansed and renewed the earth (Genesis 6–9), and Jesus often teaches beside, upon, and through water—baptizing, healing, and blessing. Water is a sign of God’s life-giving presence and our responsibility to steward it faithfully.

To care for water is to care for life itself. Aquatic ecosystems support biodiversity, climate regulation, food security, and human communities. Protecting them is an act of justice, worship, and discipleship. For Christians, engaging SDG 14 means embracing our vocation as co-guardians of creation, advocating for sustainable practices, and educating others about the sacredness of water.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. How have water and aquatic environments shaped your experience of God or community?
2. Where do you see human activity harming rivers, lakes, or oceans in your region or globally?
3. How might faith communities embody care for life below water as part of discipleship?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Jonah 1:1–17 . . God’s Mercy and the Deep

(Also [Genesis 1:1–10](#); [Psalm 104:5–9](#); [John 21:1–14](#))

Jonah’s story begins in the depths of the sea—a place of danger, transformation, and God’s sovereign care. The waters are powerful, threatening, yet also a medium through which God’s mission unfolds. Jonah’s encounter reminds us that the health of aquatic life and systems is intertwined with human flourishing and divine purposes.

Psalm 104 celebrates God’s ordering of waters, showing life’s dependency on aquatic ecosystems. In John 21, Jesus appears by the sea, feeding and guiding His disciples, connecting human sustenance with the rhythm of aquatic life. These texts together underscore that caring for water is more than ecological—it is spiritual, ethical, and communal.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. How does the story of Jonah challenge or inspire you regarding human impact on water systems?
2. What do the Psalms teach us about God’s care for waters and creatures?
3. How is Jesus’ ministry by the sea an example of interconnectedness with creation?
4. In what ways can communities act to protect aquatic life locally and globally?
5. How does water stewardship relate to justice, particularly for communities dependent on healthy waters?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Examine your water use—bathing, cooking, cleaning, or consumption. Consider ways to reduce waste and protect water quality. Pray over each source you rely upon.
- **Community Practice** . Organize a local clean-up of a river, pond, or shoreline. Partner with environmental organizations to advocate for clean water initiatives.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Support policies and projects that prevent pollution, regulate fishing sustainably, and restore aquatic habitats. Educate your community about protecting water as a shared sacred resource.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Engage in a “Water Vigil”: spend time beside a local body of water in prayer, reflecting on God’s gift of life, the impact of human activity, and your role in restoration and protection.

Closing Litany . “Guardians of the Deep”

One: God of the waters, vast and life-giving,

Many: **Teach us to safeguard the seas, rivers, and streams.**

One: Christ, You bless, heal, and walk with us through the waters,

Many: **Inspire us to act with courage and responsibility.**

One: Spirit of Life, awaken our hearts to the cries of all living creatures,

Many: **May our stewardship honor You and protect creation’s diversity.**

One: Together we go as guardians of water, faithful and vigilant.
Many: **Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we'll explore *Goal 15: Life on Land*, reflecting on God's call to care for forests, deserts, mountains, and wildlife—recognizing that the health of terrestrial ecosystems is integral to the flourishing of all creation.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of Waters,
You formed the oceans, rivers, and lakes, sustaining every living thing.
Forgive our negligence and exploitation.
Teach us to act justly, protect life, and honor the sacredness of water.
May our communities, our choices, and our prayers restore balance and flourishing,
and may all life give praise to Your glory.
Through Christ, who brings life to all creation,

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Water is both physical and symbolic of God's life-giving presence.
- Stewardship of water is a moral, spiritual, and ecological responsibility.
- Protecting aquatic life is deeply connected to justice for vulnerable communities.

Facilitating Discussion

- Encourage participants to connect personal water use with global water crises.
- Highlight examples of faith communities engaging in water protection.
- Discuss equity and environmental justice issues, emphasizing care for those most affected by water scarcity or pollution.

Optional Extensions

- Organize field trips or virtual tours of local aquatic restoration projects.
- Engage with community or global water advocacy campaigns.
- Include reflective meditation or prayer by a body of water as a spiritual practice.

Background Readings

- [Psalm 104:5–9](#) (God's ordering of waters)
- [Genesis 1:1–10](#) (Creation of waters)
- [John 21:1–14](#) (Jesus and the Sea of Galilee)
- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, #s 27–42
- Sandra Postel, *The Last Oasis*
- SDG 14 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal14>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Fifteen

Guardians of Creation: Caring for Land, Forests, and Wildlife SDG 15 . *Life on Land*

Opening Litany . “The Earth Calls to Us”

One: God of hills, valleys, forests, and deserts, You formed the land with care.

Many: **Teach us to honor, protect, and restore Your creation.**

One: Christ, You walked among the fields and spoke in parables of seeds and harvest,

Many: **Show us how to act as stewards of all living creatures.**

One: Spirit of Renewal, awaken our hearts to the needs of the earth,

Many: **Move us to preserve forests, soil, and wildlife, and to live in harmony with creation.**

One: Together we commit to the flourishing of the land and all who dwell upon it.

Many: **For the glory of God and the well-being of all life. Amen.**

Introduction . The Sacredness of the Land

Land is more than property or resource; it is sacred, sustaining life, culture, and community. Human activity—deforestation, pollution, land degradation, and habitat loss—threatens biodiversity and the balance of ecosystems. The fifteenth Sustainable Development Goal—*Life on Land*—calls us to protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems.

Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the sacredness of the earth. From God walking in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2) to Jesus teaching through parables of seeds, soil, and harvest, the land is central to God’s story and God’s mission. Humanity is called not only to inhabit the land but to steward it: to nurture life, respect boundaries, and care for creatures with whom we share the earth.

This goal is a call to discipleship: to walk lightly, defend ecosystems, restore degraded lands, and honor the interconnected web of life. Protecting the land is an act of worship, justice, and love for neighbor.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. How has the land shaped your spiritual life or sense of God’s presence?
2. Where do you see destruction or carelessness harming ecosystems in your community or region?
3. How might faith communities actively participate in restoring and protecting the land?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Genesis 2:4–15 . . The Garden as Sacred Stewardship

(Also [Psalm 104:10–24](#); [Isaiah 55:12](#); [Matthew 13:1–23](#))

God places humanity in the garden “to work it and keep it,” emphasizing stewardship rather than domination. This calling connects care for land with human responsibility and flourishing. The garden is not only a place of sustenance but a space of partnership with God in sustaining life.

Psalm 104 celebrates the interconnectedness of rivers, forests, animals, and humans— all dependent on God’s care. Jesus’ parables, like the sower and the seeds, remind us that the health of the soil matters for the flourishing of life. These texts affirm that caring for terrestrial ecosystems is inseparable from following Christ faithfully.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What might it mean to “work and keep” the land in today’s context?
2. How does stewardship differ from exploitation in the biblical vision?

3. Where do you see opportunities for restoration and renewal in your local environment?
4. How might our community embody even more intentional care for biodiversity and ecosystems?
5. In what ways are human flourishing and land health inseparable in Scripture and practice?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Reflect on your daily use of land-related resources: paper, food, energy, and housing. How can you reduce harm and increase restoration in your habits?
- **Community Practice** . Partner with local environmental groups for tree planting, habitat restoration, or community gardening. Educate neighbors and congregations about sustainable land use.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Support policies and initiatives that protect forests, combat desertification, preserve wildlife, and promote sustainable agriculture. Advocate for ecological justice, particularly in regions affected by environmental degradation.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Practice walking meditation in a natural area, reflecting on God's presence in the soil, plants, and animals. Offer prayers for restoration and renewed human partnership with creation.

Closing Litany . "Caretakers of the Land"

One: God of hills, forests, and fields, You call us to nurture Your creation.

Many: **Teach us to protect, restore, and honor all life.**

One: Christ, You used seeds, soil, and harvest to teach about God's kingdom,

Many: **Inspire us to act with care and wisdom for the land.**

One: Spirit of Life, guide our stewardship, advocacy, and daily choices.

Many: **May our lives witness to Your renewal and flourishing for all creation.**

One: Together we go as caretakers of the land, faithful and vigilant.
Many: **Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next time, we'll explore *Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions*, reflecting on how God calls us to foster peace, confront injustice, and cultivate trustworthy, accountable communities, both locally and globally.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of Soil and Seed,
You have entrusted the land to humanity for care and flourishing.
Forgive our neglect, our greed, and our disregard for creatures and ecosystems.
Teach us to steward what You have made with justice, humility, and love.
May our actions, communities, and prayers restore the earth and honor Your creation.
Through Christ, who renews all life,

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Land is sacred and entrusted to humanity for stewardship, not exploitation.
- Caring for terrestrial ecosystems is both spiritual and ethical—central to discipleship.
- Protecting biodiversity and promoting sustainability is a justice issue, honoring God and neighbor.

Facilitating Discussion

- Encourage participants to share local experiences of environmental degradation or restoration.
- Highlight practical opportunities for churches to restore and care for land.
- Emphasize interdependence between human and ecological flourishing.

Optional Extensions

- Organize a “creation care day” with local ecological projects.
- Study biblical ecology and environmental theology with participants.
- Include contemplative practices in nature as spiritual formation.

Background Readings

- [Psalm 104:10–24](#) (God’s care for creation)
- [Isaiah 55:12](#) (Joyful flourishing of the earth)
- [Matthew 13:1–23](#) (Parable of the Sower)
- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, #s 33–42, 66–69
- Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*
- SDG 15 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal15>



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Sixteen

Living Peaceably: Faith, Justice, and Reconciliation

SDG 16 . *Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions*

Opening Litany . “God of Justice and Peace”

One: God of righteousness and mercy, You call us to peace and truth.

Many: **Teach us to love justice, defend the oppressed, and walk humbly with You.**

One: Christ, You challenge the powers of injustice, stand with the marginalized, and reconcile enemies,

Many: **Inspire us to pursue peace and integrity in all our relationships.**

One: Spirit of Wisdom, guide leaders, communities, and nations,

Many: **Build institutions that reflect Your justice, fairness, and compassion.**

One: Together we commit to work for peace, accountability, and flourishing communities.

Many: **For the glory of God and the well-being of all. Amen.**

Introduction . Justice, Peace, and Faithful Institutions

Peace is not merely the absence of conflict—it is the presence of justice, equity, and trustworthiness. SDG 16—*Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions*—calls for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, ensuring access to justice, and building accountable institutions.

Scripture calls God’s people to active peacemaking and ethical living. In Romans 12:17–21, Paul instructs believers to avoid vengeance, live peaceably with all, and overcome evil through goodness. Peace is not passive—it is an active pursuit rooted in justice, mercy, and humility. Prophets like Isaiah, Micah, and Amos denounce exploitation, corruption, and oppression, insisting that true worship is inseparable from faithful action (Micah 6:8; Amos 5:24). Jesus embodies God’s justice by confronting religious and social hierarchies, welcoming the excluded, and reconciling enemies.

Faithful institutions—whether governments, churches, schools, or local organizations—are essential to the flourishing of communities. They protect the vulnerable, uphold law and fairness, and create spaces where life can thrive. For Christians, engaging SDG 16 means advocating for justice, cultivating peace in our relationships, and modeling integrity and accountability in all spheres of life.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. How do you experience peace—or the lack of it—in your community, nation, or world?
2. Where do you see injustice or corruption impacting lives and creation?
3. How can faith communities model accountability, integrity, and restorative justice?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Romans 12:17-21 . . Overcoming Evil with Good

(Also [Isaiah 1:17](#); [Matthew 5:9](#); [Luke 4:18–19](#); [Micah 6:6-8](#))

Paul’s words emphasize that justice and peace are inseparable from faithful action and moral courage. Christians are called to resist evil without replicating it, to pursue reconciliation without ignoring wrongdoing, and to act responsibly to foster flourishing communities. Peace is a practice, a way of life that engages both personal ethics and social systems.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. How can we practically “live at peace with everyone” while still confronting injustice?

2. What might it look like to “overcome evil with good” in your personal life, in our neighborhood?
3. How might we as a group participate in building accountable institutions that reflect God’s justice?
4. Where do you see opportunities for reconciliation in your context—local, national, or global?
5. How does this passage guide you in navigating conflict, systemic injustice, or broken relationships?
6. In what ways can peacemaking be radical and practical in your relationships or community?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Reflect on your own biases, privileges, and opportunities to promote fairness and reconciliation.
- **Community Practice** . Organize or participate in restorative justice programs, conflict mediation, or community dialogue; or wonder together as a group how to adopt transparent, accountable practices in governance and resource management.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Support initiatives that combat corruption, protect human rights, and promote access to justice, while advocating for policies that strengthen rule of law, protect vulnerable populations, and build equitable institutions.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Engage in a “prayer walk” through your neighborhood, praying for peace, justice, and the integrity of local institutions, blessing all you encounter.

Closing Litany: “Workers for Peace and Justice”

One: God of justice and righteousness, You call us to act with courage and compassion.

Many: **Teach us to seek peace, uphold justice, and walk humbly with You.**

One: Christ, You reconciled enemies and defended the oppressed,

Many: **Inspire us to build communities & organizations marked by fairness and mercy.**

One: Spirit of Truth, guide our hearts, institutions, and relationships,

Many: **That integrity, accountability, and peace may flourish.**

One: Together we go, as faithful workers for justice and guardians of peace.

Many: **Amen.**

Preview of Next Session

Next session, we will explore *Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals*, considering how collaboration, shared resources, and mutual support are essential for achieving justice, flourishing, and sustainability in a complex, interconnected world.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of Justice, Peace, and Truth,
You call us to act with courage, integrity, and mercy.
Forgive our complicity in systems that oppress and harm.
Teach us to stand for the vulnerable, strengthen institutions that uphold life, and pursue peace in every relationship and community.
May our actions reflect Your kingdom, and may justice, mercy, and humility flourish in our hearts, our communities, and our world.
Through Christ, the Prince of Peace,
Amen.

Theological Frame

- Justice and peace are inseparable from worship and discipleship.
- Faithful institutions—local, national, and global—safeguard human dignity and enable flourishing.
- Christians are called to model integrity, accountability, and reconciliation in all spheres of life.

Facilitating Discussion

- Encourage participants to reflect on local and global issues of justice and peace.
- Highlight practical ways the Church can advocate for fairness and transparency.
- Emphasize relational, systemic, and spiritual dimensions of justice.

Optional Extensions

- Host workshops on restorative justice, conflict resolution, or ethical leadership.
- Encourage participation in civic engagement and policy advocacy.
- Integrate discussions of SDG 16 into sermons, small groups, or educational programs.

Background Readings

- [Micah 6:6–8](#) (Justice, mercy, humility)
- [Isaiah 1:17](#) (Defend the oppressed)
- [Matthew 5:9](#) (Blessed are the peacemakers)
- [Luke 4:18–19](#) (Jesus' mission of liberation)
- SDG 16 (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>)
- Desmond Tutu, [*No Future Without Forgiveness*](#)

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of Session Seventeen

Together in Christ: Building Faithful Partnerships SDG 17 . *Partnership For the Goals*

Opening Litany . “Bound Together in Love”

One: Triune God of all nations, You create diversity and unity in Your image.

Many: **Teach us to value cooperation, collaboration, and mutual respect.**

One: Christ, You broke down walls, welcomed strangers, and called disciples from many backgrounds,

Many: **Inspire us to work together across divides for the common good.**

One: Spirit of Community, guide our relationships, networks, and alliances.

Many: **May our partnerships reflect Your justice, mercy, and love.**

One: Together we commit to share resources, knowledge, and strength to fulfill God’s mission on earth.

Many: **For the flourishing of all and the glory of God. Amen.**

Introduction . The Power of Partnership

No single individual, organization, or nation can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals alone. SDG 17—*Partnerships for the Goals*—calls for global collaboration, multi-stakeholder engagement, and resource sharing. Faithful partnerships multiply impact, foster learning, and create accountability.

Scripture consistently affirms the power of partnership. The early Church in Acts shared resources, prayed together, and worked collaboratively to meet needs and spread the gospel (Acts 2:42–47). Paul frequently traveled with companions, relying on mutual encouragement and diverse gifts to advance God’s mission.

Partnerships reflect the relational nature of God—Father, Son, and Spirit living in perfect communion—and invite Christians to embody that relationality in social, economic, and environmental work. Working together with neighbors, communities, other faith groups, and institutions becomes an expression of discipleship, humility, and shared responsibility.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. Where have you experienced the power of partnerships in your life or community?
2. How can churches, faith groups, and civil society work together toward shared goals?
3. What barriers—practical, cultural, or spiritual—might hinder collaboration, and how can they be overcome?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Acts 2:42–47 . . Life Together in the Early Church

(Also [Ecclesiastes 4:9–12](#); [1 Corinthians 12:12–27](#); [Philippians 1:3–11](#))

The early Church shared life, resources, and prayer, demonstrating that collective action strengthens communities and spreads God’s kingdom. Cooperation was not only practical—it embodied God’s relational nature. Every member contributed gifts, and the community thrived as a whole.

Paul’s letters further highlight that God equips diverse members to serve the common good. Partnerships are most fruitful when each person’s gifts are recognized, shared, and multiplied in service of God’s mission.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. How does the early Church model partnership and shared responsibility?
2. What gifts or resources do you bring to partnerships, and how can they serve others?

3. How does collaboration reflect God's relational nature?
4. How might partnerships strengthen efforts to achieve sustainability and justice locally or globally?
5. In what ways can your congregation practice faithful partnerships in the coming year?

Practices for Engagement

- **Personal Reflection** . Identify people, groups, or organizations with whom you could collaborate for sustainability, justice, or community flourishing. Pray for discernment about how to partner effectively.
- **Community Practice:**
Host a community gathering or interfaith dialogue to identify shared challenges and opportunities. Create a plan for collaborative action, whether on a local environmental project, social service initiative, or educational program.
- **Service or Advocacy** . Support networks, coalitions, or campaigns that align with SDG priorities. Advocate for policies or funding that foster multi-stakeholder collaboration and resource sharing.
- **Spiritual Practice** . Each week, pray for one partner or collaborative effort, asking God to bless the work, the relationships, and the impact. Reflect on how working together can bear witness to God's kingdom.

Closing Litany . "Co-Creators of Shalom"

One: God of all creation, You call us into relationship and shared purpose.

Many: **Teach us to work together in humility, respect, and love.**

One: Christ, You formed community from diversity and called disciples into common mission,

Many: **Inspire us to build partnerships that bear fruit for justice and peace.**

One: Spirit of Collaboration, guide our hands, minds, and hearts,

Many: **That our collective efforts reflect Your wisdom, mercy, and glory.**

One: Together we go as co-creators, collaborators, and faithful partners.

Many: **Amen.**

Preview of Final Session

Next time, we'll conclude our series with a "*Next Steps*" session, reflecting on how the SDGs and the Way of Jesus intersect, how participants can sustain engagement, and how communities of faith can continue embodying God's vision for flourishing and justice in the world.

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of Unity and Diversity,

You knit the world together in relationship and call us to reflect Your communal love.

Forgive our isolation, our unwillingness to collaborate, and our neglect of shared responsibility.

Teach us to partner wisely, generously, and faithfully,

so that Your work of justice, peace, and flourishing may advance in our communities and across the globe.

Through Christ, our companion and guide,

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Partnership reflects God’s relational nature and the communal life of the Church.
- Collaboration is a spiritual practice that amplifies impact for justice, sustainability, and flourishing.
- Each person and group brings gifts that, when combined, serve the common good.

Facilitating Discussion

- Encourage participants to identify and celebrate existing partnerships.
- Discuss practical ways to overcome barriers to collaboration—communication, trust, and resources.
- Highlight examples of successful multi-stakeholder partnerships in faith-based and community contexts.

Optional Extensions

- Form inter-congregational or interfaith networks for action on sustainability, health, or education.
- Organize a partnership-building workshop for the church or community.
- Integrate prayers for global partnerships and collaborators into weekly worship or small groups.

Background Readings

- [Ecclesiastes 4:9–12](#) (Strength in partnership)
- [1 Corinthians 12:12–27](#) (Many members, one body)
- [Philippians 1:3–11](#) (Gratitude and shared mission)
- SDG 17 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>
- Eboo Patel, [Interfaith Leadership: A Primer](#)



FAITH FOR THE FLOURISHING OF ALL

Following Jesus into the SDGs

Theme of this Final Session

From Reflection to Action: Living the Way of Jesus in a Sustainable World
Next Steps & Sending Forth

Opening Litany . “Sent into the World”

One: God of all, You have called us to faithful living in every corner of creation.

Many: **Teach us to walk with courage, hope, and love.**

One: Christ, You sent us as neighbors, stewards, and peacemakers,

Many: **Inspire us to act boldly for justice, health, and flourishing.**

One: Spirit of Wisdom, guide our hearts and hands,

Many: **Help us discern how to live faithfully in a complex, interconnected world.**

One: Together we commit to embodying the lessons, values, and actions of this journey.

Many: **For the flourishing of all people, all creatures, and all creation. Amen.**

Introduction . Integrating Faith & the SDGs

Over the past sessions, we have explored the 17 Sustainable Development Goals through the lens of Scripture, prayer, and practical engagement. Each goal reflects a facet of God’s vision for a world where all creation thrives:

- No Poverty (SDG 1)
- No Hunger (SDG 2)
- Health and well-being (SDG 3)

- Quality education (SDG 4)
- Gender equality (SDG 5)
- Clean energy (SDG 7)
- Decent work (SDG 8)
- Innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9)
- Reduced inequalities (SDG 10)
- Sustainable cities (SDG 11)
- Responsible consumption (SDG 12)
- Climate action (SDG 13)
- Life below water (SDG 14)
- Life on land (SDG 15)
- Peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16)
- Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17)

As followers of Jesus, our faith calls us not only to understand these issues intellectually but to embody them in our lives. The Way of Jesus is one of active engagement: noticing the invisible suffering, speaking truth to power, restoring relationships, and stewarding the earth.

This session invites participants to reflect on their personal journey, discern next steps, and commit to ongoing action and formation.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. Which of the SDGs most resonate with you, and why?
2. How has your understanding of discipleship in the Way of Jesus grown through this series?
3. What might be some practical steps can you take personally, communally, and globally to embody these commitments even more fully?

Listening for God through Scripture in Community

Micah 6:6–8 . . Do Justice, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly

(Also [Matthew 25:31–46](#); [James 2:14–17](#); [Luke 10:25–37](#))

Micah reminds us that God does not desire empty rituals, but faithful living: doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. This captures the essence of the Way of Jesus in action: engagement with the world that is both spiritual and practical.

Jesus' parables and teachings similarly call for active participation in God's mission, attentive to the vulnerable, and faithful to God's vision of shalom. Each SDG can be seen as a practical outworking of these biblical imperatives in our global, communal, and local contexts.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. How does Micah 6:8 summarize what it means to live faithfully in today's world?
2. In what ways do the SDGs provide a framework for putting justice, mercy, and humility into action?
3. How can small, everyday actions become faithful participation in God's work?
4. How might your congregation, family, or community integrate these lessons into ongoing practice?
5. What new commitments or habits are you willing to adopt in the coming months?

Practices for Engagement

Personal Reflection

- Identify 1–3 concrete actions you can take in your daily life that align with the SDGs and your faith.
- Commit to a spiritual practice that sustains your awareness and compassion: prayer, journaling, reflection, or Sabbath rest.

Community Practice

- Meet with your small group, congregation, or community to identify shared goals. Plan a project or initiative that engages one or more SDGs collectively.

Service or Advocacy

- Select an area where you can serve locally or globally—partner with organizations, participate in campaigns, or advocate for policy change.
- Encourage others to join and multiply the impact of faithful action.

Spiritual Practice

- Create a “Discipleship Calendar” mapping actions, prayers, and reflection on SDG-related commitments over the coming year.
- Offer regular prayers for God’s guidance, courage, and wisdom in all efforts.

Closing Litany . “Sent to Flourish”

One: God of justice, mercy, and creation, You have equipped us for faithful living.

Many: **Send us into the world to act, serve, and steward with courage.**

One: Christ, You call us to participate in God’s work of restoration and wholeness,

Many: **Inspire us to notice, act, and love as You did.**

One: Spirit of life and wisdom, sustain our energy and hope,

Many: **That our communities may flourish and all creation may thrive.**

One: Together we go, committed to justice, mercy, and humility.

Many: **Amen.**

Co-commissioning Prayer

God of All,

You have walked with us through these sessions, opening our eyes to needs, calling us to act, and nurturing our hearts in faith.

Forgive us when we have been passive or indifferent.

Strengthen us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with You.

Guide our choices, our communities, and our partnerships,

so that the earth may flourish, the vulnerable may thrive, and Your kingdom may be revealed in every place.

Through Christ our Lord,

Amen.

Theological Frame

- Faithful living requires integration of spiritual reflection, ethical action, and communal participation.
- The SDGs provide a practical framework to live out biblical justice, mercy, and humility.
- Discipleship is ongoing: this series is a beginning, not an endpoint.

Facilitating Discussion

- Encourage participants to share commitments and next steps, creating accountability and inspiration.
- Emphasize small, sustainable practices alongside larger advocacy and community engagement.
- Celebrate the spiritual growth, insight, and courage participants have developed.

Optional Extensions

- Create a follow-up plan for accountability groups or continued SDG engagement.
- Organize a church-wide “Action Fair” showcasing initiatives linked to the SDGs.
- Encourage participants to mentor others, passing forward lessons learned.

Background Readings

- [Matthew 25:31–46](#) (Faithful action for the least of these)
- [James 2:14–17](#) (Faith with works)
- [Luke 10:25–37](#) (Good Samaritan and neighborly care)
- SDGs <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
- Margaret Wheatley, [Turning to One Another](#)



APPENDIX

A Case for Followers of Christ Engaging the SDGs

I am suggesting that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are not a political experiment or a secular distraction—they are a faithful, tangible way to live out the Kingdom of God here and now.

I know that phrases like “UN agenda” or “global goals” can raise red flags for some. Yet if we look through the lens of Jesus’ teaching, the SDGs echo our deepest commitments as followers of Christ: to love God, care for our neighbors, steward creation, and bear witness to God’s reign in our world.

Engaging these goals is not compromise—it is faithful action, a way the Spirit invites us to make God’s justice, mercy, and shalom real in our time.

The King-om of God Is Holistic

When Jesus preached, Jesus rarely spoke of souls going to heaven; rather Jesus spoke of the blind seeing, the lame walking, the good news proclaimed to the poor, release for the captives, and restoration for all ([Luke 4:18–19](#)).

The early church lived this reality: “*There was no needy person among them*” ([Acts 4:34–35](#)). God’s Shalom touches every part of life—physical, social, economic, ecological—so can our spiritual practice of following Jesus.

The SDGs capture a broad vision: ending poverty, ensuring health, protecting creation, advancing education, promoting justice, and fostering peace. If the God’s reign is more than “church-only,” more than saving souls, then we need practical tools and frameworks that help us participate in that Kingdom work. The SDGs provide one.

We Are Invited to Stewardship & Neighbor-Love

Scripture anchors our mission in two great commands: *Love God and love your neighbor as yourself* ([Matthew 22:37–40](#)). God entrusts the earth and its resources to our care ([Genesis 1:26–30](#); [Psalm 24:1](#)) and calls us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly ([Micah 6:8](#)).

“Stewardship” and “neighbor-love” are not separate tasks; they are woven together in the fabric of our faith. The SDGs—though framed in global policy terms—embody that same commitment:

ending poverty, hunger, and inequality; ensuring clean water and sanitation; protecting life on land and in the seas.

For followers of Jesus who care deeply about justice, human dignity, and creation care, these goals align with our vocation—not as ends in themselves, but as expressions of God's Shalom in a world longing for renewal.

Hope & Redemption: Where the SDGs Meet God's Shalom

Some religious people worry that the SDGs represent a “secular agenda” that might replace Christ. That’s a valid caution. But many Christian leaders already see the SDGs through the lens of the Kingdom.

The World Evangelical Alliance’s “Sustainability Center” released [*The Bible and the SDGs*](#), which observes that the goals “suggest a shalom-kingdom vision, while ignoring the King.”

No one should uncritically embrace a global government agenda. But we are wise to search for any and all pathways for joining God’s work in the world and partnering where our mission and the world’s aspirations overlap—human flourishing, justice, dignity, and peace.

Engaging the SDGs Reinforces, Not Dilutes, Gospel Identity

Does engaging the SDGs mean endorsing the UN, the world’s system, or a one-world government? No.

For those seeking to follow in the Way of Jesus our imaginations are rooted in the good news for all and everything as seen in Jesus Christ. Seeking first Christ and Christ's kin-dom suggests that any and all other agenda must be assessed through the degree to which they help one love God, and love their neighbor as themselves. The SDGs simply offer a framework for faithful action in our neighborhoods and nations.

Faith communities already contribute profoundly to justice, care, solidarity, healing, and dignity. Rather than inventing a new agenda, we can join what God is already doing—with eyes open, gospel-centered, and Christ-oriented.

Engagement as Witness & WITHness

When Christians feed the hungry, defend the oppressed, care for creation, and pursue peace, we don’t just display good ethics—we bear witness to our Triune God and we find ourselves in transformational relationship with the people Jesus was with.

For missionally minded followers of Jesus, the SDGs are a tool: not to dominate, but to serve. Addressing hunger (SDG 2) or education (SDG 4) declares that *the world matters—and God's grace matters for the world*. Caring for creation (SDGs 14–15) proclaims that redemption is cosmic, not merely individual.

And when we forge partnerships (SDG 17)—with churches, other faith communities, or public agencies—we embody Christ's reconciling mission in the world. And we feel in our community, and in our bodies the suffering others... After all we follow a God who revealed Godself as "Immanuel" (God is with us).

Faithful Presence

Let's be clear: engaging the SDGs does not replace the gospel. It's not salvation through policy, nor discipleship through bureaucracy.

As one Christian thinker cautions, "If we forget that the SDGs are only means, they will become a cruel joke." Our first loyalty remains to Jesus Christ, Scripture, and the mission of forming disciples in the Way.

The SDGs are tools—useful but limited. We must discern the Spirit's invitation in community, filtering, critiquing, and aligning these goals with God's dream revealed in Jesus and through Scripture. Christ is Leader of all—including development and justice.

Why It Matters Now

We live in a time of systemic change. The Western church wrestles with decline, dislocation, and shifting cultural ground. Followers of the Way of Jesus are invited to respond with courage, creativity, and compassion.

The world faces poverty, displacement, environmental strain, and injustice. The SDGs—crafted in 2015 as an international blueprint for peace and prosperity—offer a shared language for addressing these realities.

To ignore them is to retreat from one sphere of influence. To engage them as disciples is to declare that the Kin-dom of God is not passive—it acts, intervenes, suffers with, and restores.

A Dare to Faithful Participation

Let us not retreat into isolation, nor adopt any program uncritically. Let us engage the SDGs from within our faith convictions—wise, loving, and anchored in Christ, and led by the Spirit to love as the Shalom of God.

Ask yourself:

- Which goals might our church or community be uniquely gifted to address?
- Where can we pursue no poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), or life on land (SDG 15) in ways that reflect Divine grace and transformation?

Let us measure success not merely in statistics, but in lives changed, dignity restored, creation honored, and Christ glorified.

And so...

The Sustainable Development Goals may have emerged from a secular policy arena—but as disciples of Jesus, we can reclaim them as a useful articulation of God’s Shalom for all and everything.

We can enter this space as faithful Christ-followers, embodying neighbor-love, stewardship, justice, and hope. Let us join in God’s renewing work, not by abandoning our convictions but by deepening them; not by conforming to the world, but by transforming it in Jesus’ name.

The Kin-dom is at hand—and the SDGs offer one practical, hopeful framework for living it out.

May our loving Creator grant us wisdom, courage, and compassion to engage boldly, faithfully, and humbly—for God’s glory and the good of the world.

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