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Children's Stories: Care for God's Creation

1. Yes, God's Creation is Good by Carol Lena Miller

Supplies: fresh items from creation such as a flower, a leaf, a pine cone, a rock, a blade of grass; one or more magnifying glasses.

Tell children you are going to talk about things in God's creation today. Tell them you have brought a bit of creation into the church for them to examine. As you pull the items from a paper bag, allow them to use the magnifying glasses to look at them. Point out the details and the beauty. Be sure each child gets to look at a minimum of one item. Then, use the magnifier to look at the palm of a child's hand. Point out that God made each of us also!

Read from the Bible Genesis 1:31, "God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good." Ask the children to help you tell the story of creation. When you say "And God said..." at the end of each day, the children will say "It is good." Read the following:

In the beginning when God was creating the heavens and the earth, the whole universe was covered in darkness. Then God said, "Let there be light!" And there was light. God called the light Day and the darkness Night. That was on the first day. And God said, "It is good."

On the second day God made the sky. And God said, "It is good."

Then God gathered together all the waters of the earth, making the huge oceans, the lakes, and rivers. Dry land appeared, and out of the earth sprang up trees and plants, too many kinds to count. That was the third day. And God said, "It is good."

God said, "I need to separate the day from the night and the summer from the winter." So God made the sun and moon, the stars and the seasons, all on the fourth day. And God said, "It is good."

On the fifth day God said, "Let there be swarms of living creatures in the water and in the sky." And God filled the seas and the sky with all kinds of fish and birds and insects and reptiles. And God filled the land also with creatures, snakes, and bugs, dogs and armadillos, toads and hippopotamuses, and all other creatures. And God said, "It is good."

And on the sixth day God made human beings, women and men and girls and boys, and said, "Please take care of all the things I have created." And God said, "It is good." And on the seventh day, God rested from all the work of creation. Therefore the seventh day is a day of rest for all of the creation.

Tell children that each time they eat a meal or play with an animal or walk on the earth, remember that they are touching a part of God's good creation. It is our job to care for the creation, and keep it looking good!

2. Trash? Maybe, Maybe Not! by Carol Lena Miller

Supplies: a collection of trash from around the church. Pick up anything you can find and put it all in a large grocery bag. Try to get a selection of things that are both recycle-able and not (i.e., from outside, aluminum cans, cardboard, paper, plastic wrappers, etc. From inside, one-side used paper, a plastic grocery bag). You will also need a photograph of an oil spill, such as the Exxon Valdez accident or the more recent spill off the coast of Spain; perhaps a picture of an oil-slicked bird or duck.

Tell children you have a collection of valuable things in your bag. As you begin to pull them out one-by-one, ask children what they are worth. Are they trash? What else can be done with the item? Be sure to identify if the item should be a) used again b) recycled or c) placed in the trash. Then show them the photograph of the oil spill damage. Explain to the children about the accident, and ask the children if there is anything we can do about the damage of the oil spill. Tell them that sometimes we

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feel helpless when bad things happen to the earth so far away, but there is always something we can do right here in our home and in our community. Talk about what they can do locally (pick up trash, reuse, recycle).

Read Genesis 2:15 and pray with the children that we will all be good keepers of the earth.

3. Allison and the Caribou by David Radcliff

(photos of Allison and her village can be seen at the Brethren Witness page of Go to the Write for Life: Arctic Village page)

Supplies: a globe where you can locate Alaska and the Arctic Circle

Allison is nine years old, but her people have lived in her part of the world for 10,000 years. So have the caribou. Do you know what a caribou is? It's like a reindeer--except it doesn't fly. Caribou live in cold areas of the world--like Alaska, where Allison lives--and travel in great herds, sometimes thousands of animals at a time.

Allison and her people, the Gwich'in tribe, live above the Arctic Circle where it gets down to 60 degrees below zero in the winter. (Find the Arctic Circle on the globe.) In fact, they go for weeks without seeing the sun in the winter. In the summertime, there are days when the sun never goes down. But everyday, Allison's family and others in the village eat caribou meat. It's been the most important part of their diet for thousands of years. They also use other parts of the caribou to make clothing and tools.

In the spring, the caribou are on the move. They are on their way from their winter grazing lands to the far north--about as far as you can go without going right off the top of the world. They go up there to give birth to their babies. Why to they do this? Up there is a place called the coastal plain. It is a very large and very flat area. This is important for two reasons. This means the mother caribou can see a long ways and be on the lookout for bears that might be coming to try to catch the baby caribou. And because it is so flat, there is always a strong wind, and the wind helps keep the mosquitos off the caribou. Otherwise, every animal might have thousands of these insects on it--and that would be VERY uncomfortable--and even dangerous to the animal's health.

One other thing about this area is that it has lots of vegetation--bushesand grasses that the caribou eat to stay strong and healthy. And they'll soon need to be strong and healthy, because as soon as their calves are big enough, they start to travel south. They'll go hundreds of miles to the place where they'll stay during the winter.

That's where Allison and the Gwich'in people come in. When the caribou pass by her village in the spring or fall, the hunters go out to meet them. In fact, the whole village goes out to meet them--men, women, and children. Some are hunting, some are scouting for caribou, others are cooking the meals and taking care of the camp. When they go back to the village, however, they need to bring back enough meat to feed their families for the whole year. Even though they really need the meet, they never hunt for the mothers and calves, but only for other caribou.

But lately there's a problem. Bears and mosquitos and caribou aren't the only thing on the coastal plain. Underneath the plain there's also oil. And so people want to drill for the oil. Why is that? Yes, Americans use more oil that anybody else on earth. Every one of us will use about 18 barrels of this fuel every year. So we're always looking for more—no matter where it is.

Companies have already drilled for oil in just about all of the rest of the coastal plain of Alaska, but now they want to go to the last place left--where the caribou give birth to their babies. The people of Allison's village never go to hunt the caribou on the coastal plain—they see it as a very special place, and believe the caribou should be left alone there. Even if the people are very hungry, they won't go there. But the oil companies don't see it as a special place, just as another place to drill for oil. Allison and her family are worried that if this happens, it might upset the caribou. If it changes the way the caribou give birth, making them move to another place, or to a place where they are so protected against the bears, Allison and her family might not have enough caribou to eat. In fact, their whole life would change, because so much of what they do every day is connected to the caribou. When Allison

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and her family go to church, they give thanks to God for the caribou, and for the beautiful place they call home. And they thank God for people like the Church of the Brethren, who is working with the Gwich'in people to save the caribou and the way of life Allison and her people have lived for 10,000 years. But they are worried about what might happen to the caribou. Wouldn't you be? Is there anything we could do to help Allison not to be so worried?