

God's Creation, Our Responsibility

Genesis 2:8-15

21, 22 June 2025

SES, E1

Candid Responses to the Sermon Title

- “We should not waste anything. Especially food!”
- “I agree! We should be responsible stewards of the resources God has given us and care for creation.”
- “What is the point? Every time you use a reusable container it’s just a drop in the ocean. Nothing we do as individuals is going to make a difference. You know the world is going to end, right?”
- “Individual actions won’t/can’t do anything to reverse this trajectory.”
- “It’s important. I just don’t want to think about it—it’s not like I need one more thing to feel guilty about.”

God's Creation, Our Responsibility

The mission of God; *missio Dei*

Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*

- *mission* refers to “God’s redemptive, historical initiative on behalf of His creation,”
- the plural term *missions* entails “all the specific and varied ways in which the church crosses cultural boundaries to reflect the life of the triune God” (p. 59).
- *missio Dei* defines the Father as the initiator, the Son as the embodiment, and the Spirit as energizer.
- the church stands *within* the *missio dei* and only secondarily as an entity which itself sends.

(X) The Church of God has a mission in the world.

(✓) The God of mission has a Church in the world.

Romans 12:1-2; Psalm 95:7b-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.^[b] ² Do not be conformed to this world,^[c] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.^[d]

Today, if you hear his voice,
⁸ do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,

Tim Dearborn, “Beyond Duty”

- We often focus on the question: “What must we do to obey the Great Commission, make disciples of all nations and hasten the return of our Lord?”
- This is the wrong beginning point, for it locks us into a human-centered perspective.
- If we begin with the human-centered orientation, we continually feel constrained by insufficient resources—and the tasks are far greater than we can possibly fulfil.

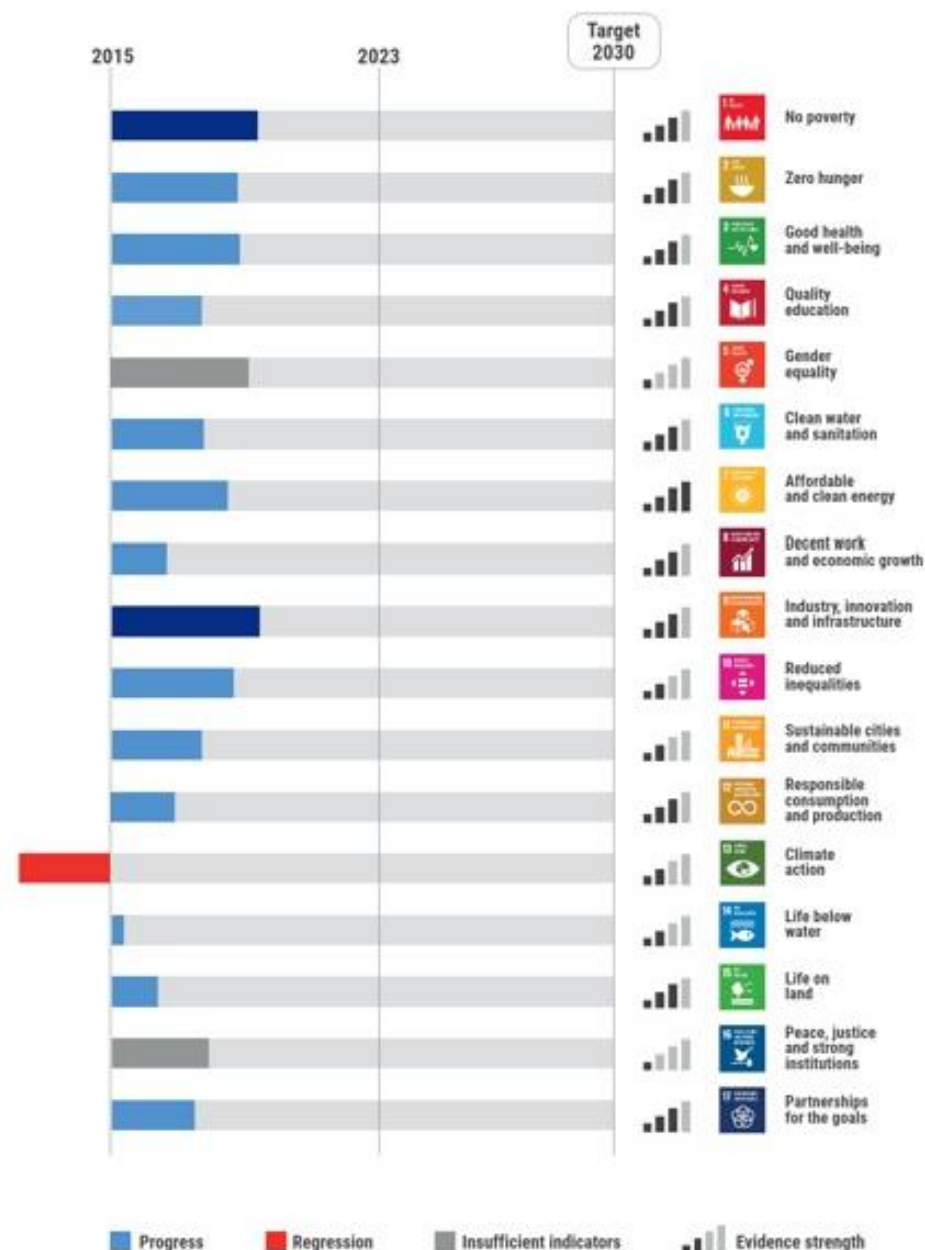
17 SDG Progress

Figure 1.1 Estimated year to achieve the SDGs at the current pace in Asia and the Pacific, 2017–2021



- In 2017, the estimated year to achieve the SDGs was 2052, and by 2021, the estimated year had increased to 2065
- Only 11% of the measurable targets are on track to be achieved by 2030.

Figure 1.2 Snapshot of regional progress



<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/>

Multiple interacting choices and actions can shift development pathways towards sustainability

Conditions that enable individual and collective actions

- Inclusive governance
- Diverse knowledges and values
- Finance and innovation
- Integration across sectors and time scales
- Ecosystem stewardship
- Synergies between climate and development actions
- Behavioural change supported by policy, infrastructure and socio-cultural factors

Conditions that constrain individual and collective actions

- Poverty, inequity and injustice
- Economic, institutional, social and capacity barriers
- Siloed responses
- Lack of finance, and barriers to finance and technology
- Tradeoffs with SDGs

Outcomes characterising development pathways

Low emissions
System transitions
Transformation
Low climate risk
Equity and justice
SDG achievement

High emissions
Entrenched systems
Adaptation limits
Maladaptation
Increasing climate risk
Reduced options for development
Ecosystem degradation

Illustrative 'shock' that disrupts development

Tim Dearborn, “Beyond Duty”

- Biblical priorities reflected again and again in Scripture ask us to begin instead with these questions:
 1. Who is the triune God?
 2. What is God doing in the world?
 3. How are we to participate with God in his redemptive purposes?
- Missions is ultimately not a human response to human need. The Church’s involvement in mission is its privileged participation in the actions of the triune God.

Modified from Tim Dearborn...

- The mission of caring for creation does not begin with our human effort.
- The Church's involvement in caring for creation is its privileged participation in the actions of the triune God.

1. Who is the triune God?

- The Pentateuch shows **God's intentions for his creation** by describing what the world was like when he first created man and woman in the garden of Eden.
- The English title "Genesis" comes from the Greek translation of the Pentateuch and means "origin".
- The Hebrew title is translated, "In the Beginning," using the first phrase in the book.
- Genesis presents a record of history (actual events) but does not function as a scientific textbook.
- Context of the ancient Near East: in Mesopotamian mythological narratives, e.g., the gods created humans merely to carry out work *for them*.

Both Vertical and Horizontal Relationships are depicted in the Bible

Vertical—Man's relationship in relation to God

- Genesis 1:26-27, 28-29

Horizontal—Man's relationship in relation to the rest of creation

- Genesis 2:8-15
- Genesis 2:7; 1:20, 24
- Genesis 1:29-30

Our vertical role as appointed by God needs to be understood and lived out within the frame of our horizontal relationship with our fellow creatures.

Genesis 1:26-27

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man^[h] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

Dominion in a biblical context

*Humans represent **within** creation God's rule over his creation.*

Genesis 1:28-29

- ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and **subdue** it, and **have dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹ And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

Dominion in a biblical context

Genesis 1:31

- And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 2:1-3

- Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ²And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

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in the image of God he created him;
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Deuteronomy 17:14-20

¹⁴ “When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ ¹⁵ you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. ¹⁶ Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ ¹⁷ And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

¹⁸ “And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by^[c] the Levitical priests. ¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, ²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

Dominion in a biblical context

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1. Who is the triune God?

- He is the one true God, the universal Creator of heaven and earth, who made mankind to know and love him.
- He is a good God, who made a good world, and appointed man's role in that world—giving him a good purpose, work that would lead to flourishing.
- God's intentions for his creation are depicted in both horizontal and vertical relationships. Our vertical role as appointed by God needs to be understood and lived out within the frame of our horizontal relationship with our fellow creatures.
- Hence, the dominion that God specially delegates to man is best understood as human authority **within** creation, not **over** it.

Genesis 3:1-5

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You^[a] shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis 3:17-19

¹⁷ And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,

‘You shall not eat of it,’

cursed is the ground because of you;

¹⁸ in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”

WISDOM FROM OSWALD

There is nothing, naturally speaking, that makes us lose heart quicker than decay—the decay of bodily beauty, of natural life, of friendship, of associations, all these things make a man lose heart; but Paul says when we are trusting in Jesus Christ these things do not find us discouraged, light comes through them.

The Place of Help

Romans 8:19-23

¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

2. What is God doing in the world?

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

- ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Colossians 1:19-20

- ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Ephesians 1:10

- as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

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What is God doing in the world?

- (a) He is restoring the creation order, which includes relationships.

“It is vital for Christians today to recover a lively sense of their creatureliness.” – Richard Bauckham

Scripture Passage for today: Genesis 2:8-15

⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

Genesis 2:7

- then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

We see the closeness of relationship between man and land very clearly in Hebrew:

- “the man”, the *adam* = אָדָם
- “the ground”, the *adamah* = אֲדָמָה

Solidarity with other/fellow creatures:

Gen. 1:20: And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds^[g] fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.”

Gen. 1:24: And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so.



Saint Francis of Assisi

- His life was striking for his delight in the companionship of animals and his loving care for animals.
- It was said that he preached to the birds, released rabbits from traps, tamed a ravenous wolf ("Brother Wolf"), rescued lambs from the slaughter, and saved fish.
- The touching story of a donkey was told where it wept when Saint Francis was on his deathbed.

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Our Rooftop (edible) Garden, Overnight CPG



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¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

Genesis 2:4-7

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

5 When no bush of the field^[a] was yet in the land^[b] and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist^[c] was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— ⁷ then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.



Re-wilding?
Perhaps nature is better off left alone
by itself...

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What is God doing in the world?

- (b) He is renewing creation.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.^[b] The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Revelation 21:5a

And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

Romans 8:19-23

¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Could this be what creation renewal looks like?



URBAN
GARDENING
MOVEMENTS



SMALL-SCALE,
FAMILY-RUN,
ORGANIC FARMS



ECOSYSTEM
RESTORATION



BIOPHILIC CITIES



EARTHKEEPER
COMMUNITIES

2. What is God doing in the world?

- God sent Jesus to bring about salvation through new creation; the way Jesus accomplishes this is through the cross.
- (a) He is restoring and healing broken relationships—this is his ministry of reconciliation.
 - Relationships are made healthy again both vertically as well as horizontally
- (b) He is making all things new by his blood and through the resurrection.
- Jesus' action to renew creation invites the participation of humanity—because we are united in him.

3. How are we to participate with God in his redemptive purposes? (Concluding Point)

We continue what God is doing:

- (a) By making space for the Holy Spirit to grow and flourish his work of cultivating our relationship with nature.
- (b) To renew creation by giving ourselves to God's gardening work.

3. How are we to participate with God in his redemptive purposes? (Concluding Point)

We continue what God is doing:

(a) By making space for the Holy Spirit to grow and flourish his work of cultivating our relationship with nature.

(b) To renew creation by giving ourselves to God's gardening work.

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

Chapter 5: The Discipline of Study | Section on: Study of Nonverbal ‘Books’

- Nature is an easy place to begin, for the created order has many things to teach us.
- A story is told of a rabbi who went to a pond every day at dawn to learn ‘the song with which the frogs praise God’.
- In our study of nature: pay attention, observe them carefully and prayerfully—reverently. Contemplate.
- “... make friends with the flowers and the trees and the little creatures that creep upon the earth”
- **If we love the creation, we will learn from it.** You will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day.
- The goal of this study is God, the Creator. From his design we know the designer himself.

The long walk is about attentiveness, about receiving each moment as a gift, and listening to the sermons creation is preaching to us.

- Adam McHugh

The great Irish teacher John Scotus Eriugena taught that God speaks to us through two books. One is the little book, he says, the book of scripture, physically little. The other is the big book, the book of creation, vast as the universe... Eriugena invites us to listen to the two books in stereo, to listen to the strains of the human heart in scripture and to discern within them the sound of God and to listen to the murmurings and thunders of creation and to know within them the music of God's Being. To listen to the one without the other is to only half listen. To listen to scripture without creation is to lose the cosmic vastness of the song. To listen to creation without scripture is to lose the personal intimacy of the voice... In the Celtic world, both texts are read in the company of Christ.

- John Philip Newell

Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology*

- Is not the biblical God an ‘inefficient’ and ‘slow’ God because he is the God of the covenant relationship motivated by love? He walks forty years (!) in the wilderness with his people, speaks through [...] three generations of the united monarchy, twenty kings of Judah and nineteen kings of Israel, exile and restoration, diaspora, and so on.
- The image of **the crucified Christ (‘nailed down’—the ultimate symbol of immobility, the ‘maximum slowness’)** is an intensification of the forty years wandering in the wilderness.
- Can this ‘immobile’ inefficient Christ speak to ‘mobile-efficient’ Singaporeans?
- To realise that the biblical God is ‘slow and inefficient’ in the midst of Singapore life—is this ‘salvation today’?

We participate with God in his redemptive purposes...

(b) To renew creation by giving ourselves to God's gardening work.

Testimony

- For this final action-response, in the interest of time, I just want to encourage us to spend time learning at farms or in gardens.
- When I needed a deep refreshing midway in my career, God somehow led me to spend about four months at an organic farm in Laos, in one of its poorest districts, and one month at a seedbank in the north of Thailand. It was part of an upland holistic development project and for both stints I stayed with missionaries.
- Without going into too much detail I will just say that spending all that time immersed in observing the slow rhythms of plant growth, weeding by hand, planting and sorting seeds, clearing small plots of land for crop rotation, etc. really helped to give me rest and rejuvenation, as well as a whole new perspective on how life could be lived.

- Most importantly I learned about the deep connection that human beings share with the ground: As I lived with organic farmers for a time I learned about how important it was to extend the lifespan of the land by not damaging and degrading it with chemical fertilisers, chemical pesticides, and monocultures. Healthy land leads to longer-term healthy produce and longer livelihoods for farmers. Large scale chemical farming systems are actually extremely unjust—not only to the land but to the farmers as well. **Caring for the environment also includes caring for people—especially the poor. (there is a strong social dimension!)**
- Let me end with these photographs of the tiny organic edible garden we started after I returned to school from Laos. They are evidence that gardens flourish with the careful tending of man, and that gardens are spaces of healing for people.
- One thing I miss very much about my time in school are the times I spent in the garden with my students, listening to their stories about how much they enjoy and learn while spending time there working and keeping it.







3. How are we to participate with God in his redemptive purposes? (Concluding Point)

We continue what God is doing:

- (a) By making space for the Holy Spirit to grow and flourish his work of cultivating our relationship with nature.
- (b) To renew creation by giving ourselves to God's gardening work.

Humanity within the community of creation

“The Bible fully recognises the extent to which nature is a living whole to which human beings along with other creatures belong, sharing the earth with other creatures of God, participating, for good or ill, in the interconnectedness of the whole.”

“It depicts the world as a shared home for the many kinds of living creatures, each with its God-given place.”





A Blade of Grass

- by Brian Patten

You ask for a poem. / I offer you a blade of
grass. / You say it is not good enough. / You
ask for a poem.

I say this blade of grass will do. / It has dressed
itself in frost, / It is more immediate / Than any
image of my making.

[...]

You ask for a poem. / And so I write you a
tragedy about / How a blade of grass /
Becomes more and more difficult to offer,

And about how as you grow older / A blade of
grass / Becomes more difficult to accept.



Not your usual cleanup! 🧹

This is a contemplative cleanup, beginning with guided reflection to prepare ourselves and pray for the restoration of the ocean before heading out to serve the community and restore our coastlines together! 🌊



CONTEMPLATIVE CLEANUP @CHANGI BEACH

28
June
2025

Saturday, 3:30 - 6:00 pm
Changi Beach

All are welcome – bring a friend!

Gloves and bags provided – come dressed to get a little sandy

No payment needed, but a suggested love gift of \$15/pax will help cover costs.

Register here

bg.st/CleanUp



BGST Community Event – Contemplative Cleanup @ Changi Beach

We're partnering with Our Father's World this June for a meaningful afternoon of Creation Care!

Not your usual cleanup! 🧹 This is a contemplative cleanup, beginning with guided reflection to prepare ourselves and pray for the restoration of the ocean before heading out to serve the community and restore our coastlines together! 🌊



Changi Beach



Saturday, 28 June 2025



3.30–6.00PM

Let's come together to care for God's creation and be a quiet witness to our community.



All are welcome – bring a friend!

Gloves and bags provided – come dressed to get a little sandy 😊



No payment needed, but a suggested love gift of \$15/pax will help cover costs.



RSVP here: bg.st/CleanUp

Reflective Nature Walk – be part of a pilot project!

Date: **5 July 2025, Saturday** [ALL PLACES
ALREADY FILLED!]

Your participation will contribute to future potential nature walks that SJSM would be able to organise and conduct! 😊

This is a special experience designed for a parent (or an adult) and 1-2 children to participate together!

Visit this link to find out more and/or register.

- <https://www.tixtree.com/e/small-but-mighty-a-family-exploration-botanic-gardens-39b4537d3633>

Small but Mighty



A Family Exploration @ Botanic Gardens

Come learn, explore and reflect with your child on what it means to care for God's creation!

FREEBIES:

Take home a copy of a children's book by award-winning authors and a camera with SD card for future exploration and play!



Missions Fellowship Tea: Upcoming Talk!

- Date: **23 August 2025, Saturday**
- In a changing world, how should Christians respond? Is there a biblical basis for Christians to care for creation, or is it mere distraction? Does the rest of creation have a place in the mission of God?
- Come explore the answers to these questions and how Christians can respond to the world today.

Organised in collaboration with Our Father's World 😊



Be inspired, informed, and equipped in caring for God's creation



CREATION CARE CONFERENCE 2025

on Earth as it is in Heaven

12 Sep 2025, Fri

7.30pm - 9.30pm

(Registration from 6.30pm)

13 Sep 2025, Sat

9.00am - 6.00pm

(Registration from 8.30am)

Faith Methodist Church and
Queenstown Chinese Methodist Church

400 Commonwealth Drive, S149604

KEYNOTE



Rev Dr Edwin Tay
Principal,
Trinity Theological College

PLENARIES

Dr Justin Joon | Singapore Bible College
Rev Manik Corea | Singapore Centre for Global Missions
Dr Benjamin Grandey | Climate Physicist
Mr Michael Leong | Catholic Architectural Guild

And more!

BREAKOUTS

Facilitated by over 20 speakers across ministry and private practice

- #1 From Waste to Worship: Transforming Our Habits for His Glory
- #2 From Pulpit to Planet: Inspiring Action for God's Creation
- #3 From Local to Global: Living Out Christ Through Creation Care
- #4 Daily Bread, Daily Choices: The Intersection of Faith, Food, and Fellowship
- #5 One Body, One Earth: Inclusive Approaches to Creation Care
- #6 Care in Crisis: Justice and Hope in a Groaning World

BOOTHS

Learn about the various organisations and partners in the creation care space, and how you can be part of it too!



Register now at
bit.ly/cc25signup
or scan the QR code above.
Early-bird 25% off ends
22 June 2025!

Organised by:



Supported by:



Official venue partners:



Official media partners:



Early Bird offer ends on 22 June!

- Date: **12-13 September 2025, Friday-Saturday**
- Organised by Our Father's World, a registered non-profit organisation whose mission is: **To inspire and equip the Church to love and care for God's creation**
- The conference is designed to equip Christians with a theological understanding of creation care, empower them to love and care for creation, and connect like-minded believers to effect change together
- Register using the furnished link or QR code



Note: Telegram Channels function to broadcast messages and information; communication is largely one-way. However, comments can be made in discussion group chats within the channel.

Join our SJSM Caring for Creation Telegram Channel!

- If you want to be part of a community who would like to be kept in touch with about creation care, **do join!**
- Receive announcements about creation care activities.
- Receive articles/readings about creation care and periodic updates about creation care-related news.

Response Song: This is My Father's World

1. This is my Father's world,
And to my list'ning ears,
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world,
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and
seas;
His hand the wonders wrought.



Response Song: This is My Father's World

2. This is my Father's world,
The birds their carols raise;
The morning light, the lily white
Declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world,
He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him
pass,
He speaks to me ev'rywhere.

3. This is my Father's world,
O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft
so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world,
The battle is not done;
Jesus who died shall be satisfied,
And earth and heav'n be one.