In the Beginning
A Video Curriculum Exploring the Catechism of Creation

Facilitator Guide

*In the Beginning* is a video curriculum that examines science and faith through the lens of leading ordained scientists in The Episcopal Church. This four-week program provides a platform to delve into *A Catechism of Creation*, a document that explores The Episcopal Church’s understanding of creation as it applies to the origins of the universe, evolution, and care for the natural environment.

Developed by the Committee on Science, Technology and Faith, the *Catechism of Creation* is written in a question-and-answer format, similar to the Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Part I builds upon the Bible’s basic doctrine of creation. Part II outlines the modern scientific worldview, including the Big Bang and the evolution of life. Part III presents the biblical roots for environmental care. Each section’s bibliography encourages further study of science, technology, and Christian faith.

In the eleven videos, Episcopal clergy who are trained as scientists or environmentalists discuss aspects of the theology of creation, creation and science, and creation care. Speakers include former presiding bishop and oceanographer, the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori; the bishop of Rhode Island and physicist, the Rt. Rev. Nicholas Knisely; evolutionary biologist, the Rev. Lucas Mix; microbiologist, the Rev. Alistair So; and environmentalist, the Rev. Stephanie Johnson. The videos are three to six minutes in duration, and each should be followed by discussion.

We recommend showing the *Catechism of Creation* videos over four consecutive weeks. *The Catechism of Creation* and the list of resources provided at the end of this guide are available for those who wish to delve more deeply into the subjects raised in the videos.
1. Planning and Generating Interest

*In the Beginning: A Video Curriculum Exploring the Catechism of Creation* can be offered at any time in the year. We suggest offering this program as a four-week course, reserving a Sunday for each segment and then a final Sunday to allow for additional discussion. The *Catechism of Creation* is divided into three segments: the Theology of Creation, Creation and Science, and Caring for Creation.

Here are some descriptions of each program that can be used in bulletins, newsletters, or other forms of advertising.

**To announce the program:**

How can faith and science coexist? Come and learn with *In the Beginning*, a four-week program that examines science and faith through the lens of leading ordained scientists in the The Episcopal Church. This video-based curriculum provides a platform to delve into *A Catechism of Creation*, a document that explores The Episcopal Church’s understanding of creation as it applies to the origins of the universe, evolution, and care for the natural environment.

Presenters include former Presiding Bishop and oceanographer, Katharine Jefferts Schori; the Bishop of Rhode Island and physicist, Nicholas Knisely; evolutionary biologist, the Rev. Lucas Mix; microbiologist, the Rev. Alistair So; and environmentalist, the Rev. Stephanie Johnson.

[Provide meeting dates and times here]

**For each session:**

- **The Theology of Creation.** Explore the relationship of science and Christianity with ordained scientists in The Episcopal Church. These experts discuss the biblical creation stories, how God creates, and how God relates to creation in videos based on the Episcopal Church’s Catechism of Creation.

- **Creation and Science.** Explore the relationship of science and Christianity with ordained scientists in The Episcopal Church. These experts discuss religion and science, the origins of the universe, and evolution in videos based on the Episcopal Church’s Catechism of Creation.

- **Caring for Creation.** Explore the relationship of Christianity and the environment with ordained scientists in The Episcopal Church. These experts discuss Christian responsibility for the environment in videos based on the Episcopal Church’s Catechism of Creation.
2. Preparations

You should read the Catechism of Creation thoroughly before presenting. The videos are intended to generate interest in the Catechism of Creation, which contains more detail than the videos. You can download the Catechism of Creation from http://episcopalscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/CreationCatechism.pdf

You should have several printed copies of the Catechism of Creation available. Some parish members will want a hard copy.

- Find a meeting place that is comfortable and has good sight lines to a projector screen. In most cases, the videos are shown from a projector connected to a laptop computer. [Note that Mac computers generally require a special cable that will connect from a dvi port on the computer to a vga connection on the cable from the projector.]

- The video files are very large. If the wireless connection is high-speed, then the videos can be watched directly from the YouTube channel at http://tinyurl.com/h2l2ux5. (Check this the week before the first class.) If not, the videos can be downloaded from this link: http://tinyurl.com/IntheBeginningVideos.

- Check the volume of the video through the computer, projector, and speakers. If possible, have external speakers rather than rely on the small speaker in the projector or computer—the computer speakers can make the sound from the videos difficult to hear and subject to distortion.

- Depending on the amount of discussion, you should be able to watch and discuss three videos in a forty-five-minute adult education session. The videos are three-to-five minutes each, and you should allow for ten minutes of discussion after each video. It’s okay if discussion runs a little long—that is why you reserved the fourth Sunday.

Presenting the Videos

Questions to stimulate discussion. Use these if discussion lags. It is always better though to address the interests and questions of the group first. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. They are intended to generate reflection and conversation.

- Class 1: The Theology of Creation
  - Video 1: Biblical Creation Stories. What do references to creation in Genesis, Job, Psalms, and Isaiah tell us as a whole? Or, do they tell us different things?
  - Video 2: How God Creates. What are the implications of a transcendent God—a God that creates out of nothing?
  - Video 3: How God Relates to Creation. Do you think that God has a continuing role in creation? If so, in what ways?
• Class 2: Creation and Science
  ■ Video 4: *Does the Bible Teach Science?* Do you think science and religion are separate activities or are they somehow related? How so?
  ■ Video 5: *Cosmology.* How does the current understanding of the origins of the universe change your conception of God?
  ■ Video 6: *Evolution.* How does your understanding of evolution affect your understanding of how God works in the world?
  ■ Video 7: *Biblical Literalism, Spirituality, and Evolution.* How do we understand the authority of the Bible when reading Genesis? Do literal understandings help or hinder us? What is the role of allegory?

• Class 3: Caring for Creation
  ■ Video 8: *The Christian Responsibility for Creation.* What is our responsibility to creation in view of the biblical idea of a new creation?
  ■ Video 9: *The State of Creation Today.* What role, if any, has Christianity played in environmental desecration? What role can it play in calling us to relationship and preservation?
  ■ Video 10: *How Should Christians Respond?* What are things that you think we should do as a parish for the environment? What will you do as an individual?

• Class 4
  ■ Finish any videos. Continue discussion. You might develop as a class an activity or mission project that deals directly with care for creation. These could include starting a recycling program in the church or community, hosting a clean-up day, or launching a letter-writing campaign or advocacy for an issue in your area.
  ◆ For those who wish to engage in individual study, a resource list is provided below. Many of the readings would also be useful for group study or a Bible study program.

3. Resources

The Episcopal Church’s Network for Science, Technology, and Faith has a helpful website with additional resources, including a PDF of the *Catechism of Creation.*

http://episcopalscience.org/resources/catechism-creation/

The videos can be downloaded at http://tinyurl.com/IntheBeginningVideos or viewed on the YouTube channel at http://tinyurl.com/h2l2ux5

*Lent is Not Rocket Science,* published by Forward Movement, is an excellent resource with daily meditations connecting science and faith. It is written by one of the leaders of this curriculum, Bishop Nick Knisely, and is available at www.forwardmovement.org.
Session 1: Biblical Creation Stories

The Holy Bible
(New Revised Standard Version)

Old Testament and Apocrypha


God: Creator and Redeemer: Isaiah 40-43; Isaiah 45:12, 15-18, 21-23; Psalms 33; 74:12-23; 77; 136

Wisdom: Proverbs 8; Sirach 24:1-7; Wisdom 7:7-8:1

New Testament

Christ the Creator: 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:9-23; Hebrews 1:1-13; Psalms 102:25-27; 110:1; John 1:1-14

Christ and the New Creation: Romans 8:18-25; 2 Peter 1:1-8; Revelation 4:11; 21-22:5

The Book of Common Prayer

Biblical Studies


Theological Studies


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**Session 2: Creation and Science**

**Evolution and Theology of an Evolving Creation**

American Association for the Advancement of Science: Dialogue on Science, Ethics and Religion:http://www.aaas.org/spp/dser/.


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**Christians in Science (UK):** http://www.cis.org.uk/.


National Center for Science Education: http://www.natcenscied.org/.


On Young Earth Creationism and “Intelligent Design”

Access Research Network: http://www.arn.org/ [Intelligent Design Movement].

Answers in Genesis: http://www.answersingenesis.org/home.aspx [Young Earth Creationism].


Institute for Creation Research: http://www.icr.org/ [Young Earth Creationism].


Van Till, Howard J., “E Coli at the No Free Lunchroom: Bacterial Flagella and Dembski’s Case for Intelligent Design” (http://www.counterbalance.net/id-hvt/index-frame.html).

Session 3: Caring for Creation


Earth Ministry: http://www.earthministry.org/.


*Episcopal Ecological Network: Caring for God's Creation, Called to be Stewards: http://eenonline.org/.

Evangelical Environmental Network and Creation Care Magazine: http://www.creationcare.org/.


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Resources marked with an asterisk indicate Anglican/Episcopal writers or websites.