

EVEN  
MORE

BOUNDLESS

bannerblue.org  
Supplemental  
Resources for  
the 2022 ELCA  
Youth Gathering

## Unit 2

We recommend that you set up additional time to take on this project rather than fitting it into the normal curriculum. Use this as a follow up, or however you like!

# Service Learning: Recycling and Religion

One of the first ways to help the planet that we learn as kids is how to recycle. But, reduce, reuse, and recycle aren't the only important "re" words. We also have redemption, resurrection, rescue, relief, renewal, religion, etc. We want you to help your congregation see that recycling isn't just something nice that you do if it's not too much trouble—recycling is an important faith practice.

### **What does Recycling have to do with Boundless Creation?**

We hope this one is pretty obvious. When God blesses Eve and Adam with "dominion" over the earth in Genesis 1, the Hebrew word used is the same word that the psalmists use to describe God's relationship with humanity. The God that we hope for—and witness in the person of Jesus—is the model for our relationship with creation. On the flip side of that logic, however we treat the earth is how we should expect God to treat us. Do you want to be an exploiter and exploited? Do you want to be caretaker and be taken care of? Through this lens, recycling definitely isn't just something nice that you do when it's convenient. Recycling is a way that you live out your faith and your relationship with God the creator. The recycling symbol can even be a religious symbol!

### **Here are some potential steps for this service learning project:**

- 1) Inform your church leadership that the youth will be taking a serious look at recycling.
- 2) Think together with your youth about all the "re" words of faith and how they connect to the "re" words of creation care. For example, what "re"s were involved with Jesus' story?
- 3) Have the youth inventory all the things that your church consumes on a weekly basis and how many of those things are handled sustainably. For example...
  - a. Are paper bulletins recycled? Could your service(s) go paperless?
  - b. Do you use reusable, recyclable, or compostable cups and plates or single use items?
- 4) Create recommendations for how to improve your church's recycling and sustainability efforts.

- 5) Use the Recycling + Religion template below to make faith-inspired signs for your recycling bins. Encourage youth to share this template with friends of other faith traditions too.

### **Who should be helping to lead this project?**

Your youth are your best leaders! Apart from youth, you should consider inviting your deacon or pastor, your property board committee chair, and the person who purchases your supplies.

### **How to get church leaders to say "Yes!" to the youth and to this project?**

Ask your leadership if it is worthwhile for your church to live in harmony with what God created. Ask the leadership if it is worthwhile for the youth to feel like they have been seen, heard, and can make a difference. It might be helpful to imagine how you would say yes to this project; something like, "Yes, but you will probably have to convince people this is important to you and they'll be worried about the cost, but you can inform people about how sustainability is actually cost saving, and the way that God intended for us to live!"



You can find a full-page printout of the template and hi-res versions of the re-Spirit, re-Creator, and re-Jesus examples online at [bannerblue.org/reart](http://bannerblue.org/reart)

