

St Mary's Eco Church, Lambeth



Eco-focused Bible storytelling and creative resources for children aged 0-9

by Sharon Moughtin, Vicar of St Mary's Eco Church & the author of Diddy Disciples

It's important that we all understand the challenges presented to us by climate change and our changing environment. Explore the importance of environmental issues with children up to the age of 8, including babies and toddlers, with our age-appropriate resources.

Please feel free to adapt any of our resources in response to your particular setting. Learning how to adapt is going to be a key skill for all of us!

This story also appears in *Diddy Disciples: Book 1*. Due to the importance of environmental issues in today's world, this version has been updated to include words like 'planet' and 'human' that even the youngest children will hear around them. It also explores God's command to 'care for the world' in more depth with options to include if a number of adults (such as parents/carers) are present.

This is my garden: look after it!

Genesis 2.4–15 (this story is also available in *Diddy Disciples Book 1* along with the poem of Genesis 1)

Song: 'There was a garden long ago'. Words © Sharon Moughtin

Tune: 'There was a princess long ago' (traditional)



In our story today, God plants the world
like we plant a garden or park.
It's a story from the very first pages of the Bible.
Let's tell our story together.

In the beginning there was a garden.
Let's look around our garden!
Lead the children in looking right and left around an imaginary garden.

In this garden, there were no trees, no plants, no grass!
Just mud! Let's squelch our feet in the mud.
Lead the children in squelching feet in imaginary mud.
Freeze!

The garden was called Eden, which means 'misty place' because it was full of mist!
Can you show me misty?
Lead the children in waving hands in the air.
Misty means there's lots of tiny bits of water in the air.
The water is making the mud very, very muddy!

Shall we sing a song about our garden of Eden?
Let's squelch in the mud as we sing.

**There was a garden long ago,
long ago, long ago.
There was a garden long ago.
Long ago!**

In this story, we're going to be God the Maker.
Let's stand up tall and be God!
When all the children are standing up tall . . .

God bent down.
Lead the children in kneeling down . . .
God took a handful of mud.
Lead the children in miming taking a handful of mud . . .
And God made it into a shape.
Let's make our mud into a shape.
God made the mud into a human, a person!
Shall we make our mud into a human as well?

Lead the children in miming shaping the mud as you sing.
**God took some mud and made a human,
made a human, made a human.
God took some mud and made a human,
made a human!**

Then God, very gently, held the human.
Lead the children in holding an imaginary tiny human in your cupped hands.
And puffed wind into the human's nose.
After three, shall we blow wind very gently into our human's nose?
1, 2, 3 . . . *Blow.*
The human got up!
Lead the children in showing the human's legs with their fingers.
And walked around!

Walk the 'finger human' around on your other arm, up over your shoulders and head and down your body as you sing.

**The human got up and walked around,
walked around, walked around!
The human got up and walked around,
walked around!**

Next, God did some planting.
God dug. Let's dig together like God.
Lead the children in digging with an imaginary spade.
And God planted plants.
Let's kneel down and plant like God.
Lead the group in kneeling down and miming planting.

I wonder what colours and flowers and trees will be in your garden?
Let's be a flower or tree growing from the ground.
Let's curl up into a little ball like a seed.
Lead the children in curling up into a ball.

First, we need to put our roots down.
Let's show our roots with our fingers.
Lead the children in wiggling fingers.

We need to let our roots grow down deep.
Lead the children in wiggling fingers down.

Then after three, let a little shoot pop up.
1, 2, 3 . . . Pop!
Poke your hands up over your head like a little shoot.

Then start to grow up tall.
Gradually stand up, swaying like a growing stalk.
Taller and taller onto our tiptoes . . .
Reach up with pointy hands and on tiptoes.

Let's turn our faces up towards the sun!
Then let our leaves or branches spread out wide.
Arms stretch slowly outwards.

Let's do that again as we sing.

Lead the children in miming the movements from seed to plant as you sing.

**Then God planted the trees and flowers,
trees and flowers, trees and flowers.**

**Then God planted the trees and flowers,
trees and flowers.**

Look at our beautiful garden!
Look at all those beautiful colours!
And smell! *Breathe in deeply*
Smell those beautiful flowers!

God put the human in the garden to look after it.

Let's be God again!

Let's hold the garden in one of our hands
with the little human in it.

Lead the children in holding the imaginary garden and human in the palm of your hand.

Then God spoke to the human!

God said two things to the human. *Hold up two fingers*

Can you show me one? *Lead the group in holding up one finger*

Number one, God said:

'This is my garden! Work with it! *Point to imaginary garden in hand*

If appropriate (if parents/carers are present):

And the original Hebrew says 'serve it!'¹

How have we changed 'serve the garden' into 'let the garden serve us'!

Extraordinary!

So number one, God says:

'This is my garden! Work for it! *Point to imaginary garden in hand*

Or, if we're being generous to the human, 'work WITH it!'

Working with a garden means watching what the garden does
then helping that happen even better!

Let's sing to the human and point to our garden.

Lead the group in singing and pointing to the imaginary garden in your cupped hand

'This is my garden! Work with it!

Work with it! Work with it!

'This is my garden! Work with it!

Work with it!'

¹ The Hebrew word is 'ebed', which in other contexts always means 'servant' or 'slave' as a noun or 'to serve' as a verb.

And number two....

Can you show me two fingers? *Lead the group in holding up two fingers*

Number two, God said:

'This is my garden! *Point to imaginary garden in hand*

Watch over it! Look after it! *Point to finger human*

If appropriate (if parents/carers are present):

And in the original Hebrew, the word for 'watch over'
is the word 'keep'.

It can mean to observe the garden – to watch how it grows – what works and what doesn't.

And also to 'keep safe': to safeguard it – which is the fifth mark of mission in the Church!²

Let's sing 'This is my garden, look after it!' and point to our garden.

Lead the group in singing and pointing to the imaginary garden in your cupped hand

'This is my garden! Look after it!

Look after it! Look after it!

'This is my garden! Look after it!

Look after it!'

Let's sit down for a moment.

When the group is ready:

The story of God planting the garden is in the Bible.

When we're telling the story the garden looks tiny. *Point to your cupped hand.*

And the human looks tiny.

Show the little finger human standing in your cupped hand

But that's because we're being God!

Everything looks tiny to God!

But let me tell you a secret.

Whisper: The garden in our song is the whole world, our planet!

Move arms upwards and outwards.

Normal voice: The tiny human *Show the little finger human*

is as tall as me! *Stand up as leader*

Much taller than you! *Sit down again.*

God made the whole world, our planet!

In our song, who does God ask to care for the planet?

One: to work with it. *Show one finger*

Two: to look after it? To keep it safe? *Show two fingers*

Accept responses from the children.

God still asks humans to care for this planet.

That means it's our job, too

² <https://anglicanfocus.org.au/2020/04/20/the-five-marks-of-mission-five-to-strive-to-safeguard-the-integrity-of-creation-and-sustain-and-renew-the-life-of-the-earth/>

If appropriate, give a short example that would be relevant to your group. For example:

Either: How can we care for our planet?
We can grow things!
We can learn how to work with the soil!
How to watch what happens!
Has anyone here grown a plant?
That's helping to look after God's planet.
Who'd like to do some planting like God?
We can do that after *we finish our story*.

Or: How can we care for our planet
We can 'recycle' things.
That means use things again instead of throwing them away.

If appropriate:
We're going to tell a story about God and rubbish next time! It's important!

Let's not fill this planet with lots of rubbish!
Let's 'recycle' and use things for something different.
Show a box of recyclable materials that look interesting.
Like these!
Who'd like to make something new out of these?

If you will be providing recyclable materials as a Creative Response:
We can do that after *we finish our story*.

Let's sing our song one more time.
This time, let's be God and sing it to each other.
Let's sing, 'This is my planet! Work with it!'
Then 'This is my planet! Look after it!'
And as we sing, let's point to the place around us:
our part of the planet.
Then point to each other. *Point to three children, one by one*
And let's not forget to point to ourselves too! *Point to self*
What will WE do to look after this beautiful planet that God has made?

This is my planet! *Point around you* **Work with it!** *Point at three children*
Work with it! *Point at three children.* **Work with it!** *Point at three children*
This is my planet *Point around you* **Work with it!** *Point at yourself three times*
Work with it! *Point round the circle at everyone*

This is my planet! *Point around you* **Look after it!** *Point at three children*
Look after it! *Point at three children.* **Look after it!** *Point at three children*
This is my planet *Point around you* **Look after it!** *Point at yourself three times*
Look after it! *Point round the circle at everyone*