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“Christian Education & Creation”  
Final Project  
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**CREATION & HEALING:**  
*Lessons for Faith-Based Disaster Recovery in Grades 9 through 12*

**LESSON 1: “CHAOS AND COSMOS” IN GENESIS 1**

**Objective:** To help youth (grades 9 -12) express the feelings they had on 9/11 and connect them with the biblical understanding of Creation as bringing order to “chaos” in Genesis 1.

**Outcome:** Students will be able to name the feelings they had on 9/11 and be confident that God wants to help us deal with the “chaos” of our lives and bring order to it.

**Part 1 -- Remembering 9/11:** Bring pictures, news articles and other materials to class that will help students remember the events of 9/11. Care must be taken here so as not to expose students to materials that are inappropriate (such as mangled bodies). Discuss some of the pictures and photos with the students in order to get them to think back to what those days were like in September 2001.

**Part 2 -- Activity:** Give each student a set of watercolors, paintbrush and sheet of paper. Now that the youth have been reminded of the Disaster, ask them to use the paints to reflect what their feelings were on 9/11. Give them lots of time to do this, and see what they come up with. When the students are finished, go around the circle and ask them to share their paintings. Ask why they chose the colors they did, and how the colors and any objects they painted express their feelings.

**Part 3 -- Scripture:** “*Chaos* and *cosmos* are Greek terms that are often used to understand the story of Creation in Genesis 1. From the chaotic nothingness (formless void), God creates the cosmos – the order – of an established universe. Each step gets more precise and detailed, forming a more sophisticated piece from the chaos of atoms and molecules.”<sup>1</sup>

Read Gen. 1:1 and say: “On 9/11 we all experienced *chaos*, a Greek term that means “confusion and disorder.” Since that time, God has been sweeping over us to help us recover. Please think about ways that this has been happening and we will discuss them in our next lesson.”

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from And It Was Good! Youth Ministry Planning Guide by the ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1995) p. 5.

## LESSON 2: GOD IS BRINGING ORDER TO CHAOS

**Objective:** To help youth understand God's the process of creative activity in Genesis 1 in light of the changes that have occurred at Ground Zero since 9/11.

**Outcome:** Students will be able to name some of the changes that they have seen taking place at Ground Zero and be confident that God is, indeed, bringing order to chaos.

**Part 1 – God's Creation as Drama:** Divide the students into groups. Assign one person the role of Narrator. The Narrator will read the story of Creation in Gen.1:1 – 2:1 and the students will act out the stages of creation as groups. Some will be fish, cattle, and so on, until the story finally ends with the creation of humankind and God's day of rest. The whole group will join in with the Narrator and say, "And it was good."

Reflect on what happens in Creation with the youth. Discuss how Creation begins with the "formless void" of chaos and how each creative act adds more complexity. Ask the students why they think God says, "And it was good." Say: "Indeed, God thinks it's good to bring order to chaos. And God has been working with us to do that in each of our lives since 9/11."

**Part 2 – Remembering the Rubble:** One of the most vivid memories people have of 9/11 is the dust and smoke coming off the rubble of the Twin Towers after they had collapsed. This activity is designed to help heal that memory.

Divide the students into groups of 5 or 6 and have them sit in a circle. Dump a pile of garbage in the middle of the circle and ask the youth to bring order to the chaos of the garbage rubble by making a garbage sculpture. Tell them to think in terms of the Creation story that we have just read and design a sculpture that illustrates how each thing God created was more complex as the one before. Let each group present their sculpture to the wider group.

**Part 3 – Activity:** Give each small group a picture of the rubble of the Twin Towers, a picture of Ground Zero as a big hole in the ground, and a picture of some of the proposed monuments for the site. Ask each group to discuss among themselves what has had to take place to get from the rubble, to the pit, to the new monument that will be built. Let them describe the recovery on their own terms. An adult leader will be present with each group to facilitate the discussion and be an engaged listener. Adults will report back after this lesson is over in order to help direct the next lesson.

**Part 4 – Scripture:** Read II Corinthians 5:17 "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" and say: "As Christians, we often talk about ourselves as being a New Creation in Jesus Christ. In today's lesson you all made something new out of something old in your garbage sculptures, just like in our city we are making something new out of something old. In our next lesson we will talk about God calls us to live as a new creation in Jesus Christ."

## LESSON 3: MOVING FORWARD AS A NEW CREATION

**Objective:** To help students see the difference between the way they felt on 9/11/01 and the way they feel now, in order to get a sense of the healing that has taken place in their lives.

**Outcome:** The students will become “ambassadors” of Christ’s ministry of healing and reconciliation in the world as they participate in a project of their own choosing.

**Part 1 – My Feelings Now:** Two years have passed since the horrendous events of 9/11/01. In Lesson 1, the students remembered what that day was like, and described through watercolor what they felt at that time. In Lesson 2, students dealt with the recovery process, and learned how God’s creative activity is bringing order to chaos at Ground Zero. In the same way, God’s creative activity in re-ordering all of our lives as Christians everyday.

Review the last two lessons with the students, paying special attention to the garbage sculptures that they made and the complex creative process that it illustrates in relation to the recovery at Ground Zero. From here, ask students, “What other changes have we seen in our City since 9/11? What changes have we seen in ourselves since 9/11?”

After the discussion, give the students the opportunity to name their feelings now as compared to 9/11/01. Do this by asking each student to make a new watercolor painting that illustrates how they feel now, especially after their learnings in the past two lessons.

Ask them to share their paintings, what colors they chose and the objects they painted. Ask them to put the first watercolor they painted and the second one side-by-side.

**Part 2 – Living as a New Creation:** II Corinthians tells that us that we become a New Creation through our relationship with Jesus Christ, since Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God through his life, death and resurrection. Jesus has paved the way for us to be in right relationship to God because in Christ we stand as forgiven sinners before our Creator. Since we are a New Creation, II Corinthians also calls us to live as “ambassadors for Christ” and carry this message of reconciliation to God through Christ into all the world.

Divide the students into groups and ask them to discuss ways in which they can be instruments of God’s healing and reconciliation to others who have been hurt by the events of 9/11/01. How can we as Christians be a part of the healing process through the ministry of reconciliation? Put their ideas on newsprint so that everyone can see them.

**Part 3 – Choosing a project:** Ask the students to vote on one project that they can do as a group in order to promote healing in the community as ambassadors of Christ. This will take some time and coordination, but the more responsibility the youth have in carrying it out themselves, the more they will learn and grow from it.

**Part 3 -- Closing Psalm:** Divide the students into two groups and have them read Psalm 104:24-35 responsively by whole verse. End with a prayer thanking God for making us a part of Creation, and ask God to help us bring order to the chaos of our world as instruments of healing and reconciliation.