

SUMMER  
2015



The Whole  
World in  
Our Hands

The Families pages  
are adapted from  
Tapestry of Faith  
lifespan faith  
development  
programs.

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# Families

## WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH



Wind energy on the  
island of Samso, in Denmark.

STORY FOR ALL AGES

## GREEN LIKE THE WIND

By Julie Simon

**On a windy island in Denmark's North Sea lived a man named Soren Hermansen.** He farmed some land on Samso and played guitar in a band, but mostly he thought about the planet. On the island also lived fishermen and dentists, shopkeepers and ferry boat drivers, and of course children, who loved to fly kites on the beach.

The people of Samso were ordinary in many ways—especially when it came to thinking about energy. They drove cars that ran on gasoline. To power their lights they brought electricity by underground cable from the mainland. And during the long, cold nights of winter, they kept their homes warm with oil brought to Samso by giant tankers. All of Samso's energy had to be made somewhere off the island.

One day, thinking about energy on Samso became extraordinary! The government of Denmark chose the island for a national energy demonstration project. From that day



forward, Samso would try to create its energy right on the island—local, non-polluting energy—as much as possible.

Soren Hermansen became Samso's champion for green energy. At first, few believed it could be done. Many thought creating their own energy would cost too much money and take too much time out of their already busy days. They thought it would just be too hard and too much trouble. What could they do on such

a small island?

But Soren Hermansen did not give up. He knew his country had a long history of co-operative community projects. He asked all ages for big

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ideas and little ideas. What about riding bicycles instead of driving cars? What about collecting energy from the sun? How about using all the wind on our island?

One person put up a small, backyard wind turbine to make electricity for their home. Another invested money to build a much larger wind turbine. Then he sold the wind-powered electricity to the power company, which connected it to the homes on Samso. It was a good start.

Then one winter night, an icy storm shut off electricity on Samso. All the lights went out and everywhere was dark. Except the house with its own backyard wind turbine. After that, a lot more people on Samso got serious about local green energy.

Some people installed solar panels on their farms. Someone built a furnace that burned straw from the fields rather than oil. And someone invented a way to make tractor fuel from plants that grow on the island. Many pooled their money to build more big wind turbines. Today, Samso has 20. And people in Canada, Japan, the United States, and many other places want to hear from Soren Hermansen how it can be done.

*From the Tapestry of Faith program, World of Wonder*

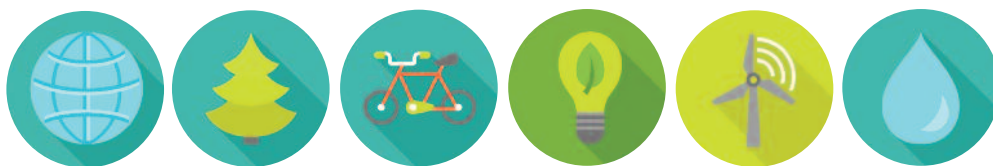
*We cannot continue to tug at the web of life without tearing a hole in the very fabric of our earthly existence, and eventually falling through that hole ourselves.*

Van Jones

## EXPLORING TOGETHER

**The climate change our species has caused on Earth is a problem so big it's hard to get our minds around. We cannot undo 300 years of pollution, nor can we unlearn how to use the earth's fossils to fuel cars, airplanes, and the electricity we depend on.**

**What can we do? For a start, we can learn about our local habitats and the interdependence of species where we live. We can recycle more and consume fossil fuel less. We can join with others to demand that our governments and the businesses we patronize take the problem seriously and support clean, renewable energy.**



### Habitat Maps

As a habitat's usual weather changes, every animal and plant, from the otter to the oak tree, is affected. Animals may no longer find the food they need when and where they expect it.

Eventually, many species will adapt to changed habitats or relocate to better, new ones so that balance is restored. However, our lifetimes will not be long enough for us to see these adaptations happen.

**Choose one animal that lives near you, perhaps a chipmunk, a black crow, or a striped bass.**



Explore why this habitat is right for them. First go outdoors to observe as much as you can. Then seek more information online.



**Take a large sheet of paper and draw your local habitat.**

Include every animal, plant, and landscape feature that interacts with the animal you chose.

Why is a wetland (or a mountaintop, a sea shore, or a meadow) its home?

What does the animal eat?

Where does it rest?

Where does it raise its young?

Does the animal have predators?

Where do humans belong on your habitat map?





## Climate Change Is Real. Ask a Witness.

If you are 10 years old, you have lived one decade—perhaps not enough time to have noticed effects of climate change. Find someone over 50. Ask about the extreme weather events and changes in local habitat they have witnessed. Depending on where they live, these are some signs they may have observed:

### Are you seeing more deer and wild turkeys in populated areas?

What may have caused them to wander from their normal habitat? Maybe the plants or insects they used to eat are disappearing.

### Are different birds, or fewer birds, showing up outside your window?

Do migrating birds appear at new times of year? Climate change forces animals to change their migratory patterns in order to find food.

### If you live in a rural area, are agricultural crops growing the way they used to?

Has the time of year for harvesting changed? What foods used to be grown here? What grows well here now?

### Someone older than 50 has witnessed positive changes as well.

They will remember a time when we threw away used batteries, worn car tires, and yesterday's newspaper as trash instead of recycling them. Ask what items they regularly recycle, and why.

**Do some research together:** What happens to items we recycle? How does recycling paper, plastic, or other items help conserve natural resources? How does it reduce pollution?

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## Fuel for Thought

### How much energy do we use each year?

97.5 quadrillion BTUs (British thermal units)\*

### Where does the energy we use come from?

### How do we use it?\*\*

#### Non-renewable sources

<b>Petroleum (Oil)</b>	supplies 40% of total U.S. energy consumption.
<b>Coal</b>	supplies 23%.
<b>Natural Gas</b>	supplies 22%.
<b>Nuclear Power Plants</b>	supply 8%.

#### Renewable energy sources

<b>Hydropower, Biomass Fuels, and Wind, Solar, and Geothermal Energy</b>	supply 7%.
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\* U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) (2013)

\*\* National Academies report based on EIA data (2006)



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## Be a Tree

Want a more personal relationship with trees? Act out this song by Betsy Rose, outdoors. Even better, search online to learn the simple tune first. The last line becomes the first line when you repeat.

### Standing like a tree

(stand straight and tall)

### With my roots dug down

(stomp each foot into ground with the words “dug” and “down”)

### My branches wide and open

(extend arms overhead and stretched out)

### Come down the rain

(wiggle fingers as if they are raindrops)

### Come down the sun

(hold arms overhead and connected as in a big sun)

### Come down the fruit to a heart that is open to be

(bring hands down slowly and cross over heart)

### Standing like a tree

(look up and straighten up)

Repeat three times.

*In Circle of Trees, a Tapestry of Faith program; used with permission.*

*Humans are no more or less important than anything else that lives. We certainly have no right to denude the Earth of life for our own ends.*

Paul Kingsnorth

## The Web of Life: Helping Children to Know Our Place

The reality of climate change presses us to teach children about their role in the interconnected web. We want them to feel linked to other species and to the natural landscape of their home place. We want to cultivate lifelong habits of respect and care of the earth. And we know our children will need resilience to adapt as the earth's habitats change.

But talking with children about global warming can be hard. Ecological imbalance can seem abstract, its consequences vague. And, to be honest, we want to protect our children from the helplessness or dread we adults may feel. What good will fear or panic do for them, our species, or our planet?

Most of our children—like us—live day to day without deep knowledge of the place they inhabit or the many forms of life that share it. Yet research from the American Indian Center of Chicago and the Menominee Reservation shows that Native children tend to develop, early in life, a sense of nature's interconnectedness. The classic, Western approach to biological science teaches young children to categorize forms of life; it sets humans apart, atop a hierarchy of species. However, as WBEZ's Gabriel Spitzer reported on the Menominee



research, Native American children “see the biological world in terms of relationships and connections—what psychologists call ‘systems level thinking.’”

The research suggests that for children to understand and respect the interconnectedness of all life, they must have personal, local experiences of biological relationships in nature's web. They need to observe how familiar species such as bees and trees, or cows and flies, interact. They need to discover how the nearby creek supports a diverse community of life if they are to understand what will happen if the creek floods or dries up.

Humans are not the only species in danger, but we are the ones capable of stabilizing climate change for us and all life. Taking care of our planet, our home, depends on us, and on our children.

■ How did your experiences with the natural world as a child affect your connection to nature?

■ How can you help young people view nature more holistically?

*Surely the earth can be saved by all the people who insist on love.*

Alice Walker

### FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

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### FIND OUT MORE

■ Explore habitats and interdependence using hands-on activities from these Tapestry of Faith programs: Circle of Trees, Creating Home, Gather the Spirit, and World of Wonder. Search “environment” or “earth.” [uua.org/tapestry](http://uua.org/tapestry)

■ *An Early Spring: An Ecologist and her Children Wake to a Warming World* by Amy Seidl, reflects on climate change through personal experience: walks in the woods, home gardening, and observation of local wildlife. For a story from across the globe, read “Students Fight Climate Change in India” on the website of Christian Aid ([christianaid.org.uk](http://christianaid.org.uk)).

■ *Not Your Typical Book About the Environment* by Elin Kelsey presents abundant, illustrated examples of technology, ingenuity, and resiliency that will allay young people's fears about climate change and suggest actions they can take.

■ Yes! magazine offers many hope-inspiring stories about adaptation to climate change, written for non-scientists. [yesmagazine.org](http://yesmagazine.org)

■ The Climate Stewards Education Project of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration offers thoughtful reflection and concrete suggestions. See “Talking to Children about Climate Change” and “Weather-Ready Nation.” [noaa.gov](http://noaa.gov)