Creation Care
Catechism

The Lord’s Prayer
OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

What is this? With these words God wants to attract us, so that we come to believe that he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, as loving children ask their loving father.

Think! Calling God a Father “in heaven” was to clarify we weren’t talking to a birth parent. But it is also not trying to say God is distant since Father would imply a relationship as close as family.

Act! Go outside and notice the clouds or the stars. Feel the sunlight. Watch the phase of the moon. Pause in this prayer to look up from life’s busy paths. Then look down at the ground and see if you can find similar patterns nearer to you.

Create! Juha Tanhua takes photographs of what looks like stars and galaxies in the heavens above but are actually oil and gasoline spills in parking lots on the earth below. Take pictures of an oil or gas spill in a nearby parking lot. Then figure out how you could use things like peat moss, rice husks, wood fibers, fruit peels, cotton, wool, clay, ash, and various types of straw to soak up these chemicals and slow their entry into our water supply.
HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

*What is this?* It is true that God’s name is holy in itself, but we ask in this prayer that it may also become holy in and among us.

*How does this come about?* Whenever the word of God is taught clearly and purely and we, as God’s children, also live holy lives according to it. To this end help us, dear Father in heaven! However, whoever teaches and lives otherwise than the Word of God teaches, dishonors the name of God among us. Preserve us from this, heavenly Father!

*Think!* Luther encourages us to live holy lives in response to God’s holiness. How do you think God would define holy living amid creation? Read the following passages for ideas:

- Isaiah 5:8, 11:6-9, 24:3-6
- Hosea 2:18-19, 4:3
- Amos 5:8-12
- Micah 4:4, 6:8

*Act!* Adopt a new way of holy living by finding at least one new way to be mindful about conserving resources: Shut off lights. Recycle. Use less water. Pay attention to your actions as a spiritual discipline.

*Create!* Artist [Selva Aparicio](https://www.selvaaparicio.com) gathers discarded lettuce from his Chicago farmers market and makes stained glass windows out of them. Find a material that is carelessly thrown away frequently and create a ‘stained glass’ window to remember God’s holiness and our need to live holy lives by not wasting things.
YOUR KINGDOM COME

What is this? In fact, God’s kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us.

How does this come about? Whenever our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that through the Holy Spirit’s grace we believe God’s holy word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity.

Think! Notice again that the kingdom Luther talks about is not a distant heaven, but comes to us in how we live right now. Read Mark 4:30-32, where Jesus compares God’s kingdom to a mustard shrub in which we all rest. Where do you experience the nesting comfort of God’s promise?

Act! Since the parable talks of birds and plants, find and identify one around you. Learn the names of those creatures that reside in your own yard and around your home. Download an app that helps you identify birds by their song or colors.

Create! The Reading Nest was created by artist Mark Reigelman using 10,000 reclaimed boards from various industrial sites. Gather fallen branches or discarded materials and make a little nest to remember that God’s kingdom is a place where all can find rest.
**YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

*What is this?* In fact, God’s good and gracious will come about without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come about in and among us.

*How does this come about?* Whenever God breaks and hinders every evil scheme and will—as are present in the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh—that would not allow us to hallow God’s name and would prevent the coming of his kingdom, and instead whenever God strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in his word and in faith until the end of our lives. This is God’s good and gracious will.

*Think!* The prayer continues to remind us about this life on this earth. If flowers bloom to the glory of God, gurgling rapids sing God’s praises, and even rocks do what they’re supposed to do, how can you listen for God’s will for you to love all your creaturely neighbors on earth?

*Act!* Luther says God breaks us from the world, here not meaning the natural world but the things that get in the way of focusing on what God wants.

- Make a list of at least 3 ways your lifestyle gets in the way of God’s good for the earth.
- List at least 3 things of this world you’d like to pay better attention to.
- Finally, list 3 things to change for the culture of your church, community, or country.

*Create!* Ehsan Baharlou and his team mixed seeds into earthen building materials so that the walls of buildings would eventually sprout lush plant life. Try building a little house out of organic materials and imagine ways we could live on earth without doing damage to the earth.
GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

What is this? In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

What then does “daily bread” mean? Everything included in the necessity and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

Think! Luther lists things that all have an ecological impact just for us to survive each day.

- Where did your last meal come from?
- What resources went into producing it?
- Can you trace the origins of your food?

Act! Go one day per week without eating meat. If all Americans did it, it would be the same as taking one of every eight cars off the road! That’s 8 million cars. Read Michael Pollen’s book The Omnivore’s Dilemma or Food Rules to see how hard it is to trace where our food comes from.

Create! Yukiko Morita gathers leftover bread from nearby stores, treats them with a mildew-deterrent and then hollows them out to make room for an LED light. Check with local stores to see if there is any food that they tend to throw away regularly. What bright ideas might you come up with to reuse that food?
Forgive Us Our Sins, As We Forgive Those Who Sin Against Us

What is this? We ask in this prayer that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins nor deny these petitions on their account, for we are worthy of nothing for which we ask, nor have we earned it. Instead we ask that God would give us all things by grace, for we daily sin much and indeed deserve only punishment. So, on the other hand, we, too, truly want to forgive heartily and to do good gladly to those who sin against us.

Think! How do we balance pardoning and holding accountable environmental sins? Will seals forgive us our oil spills? Will ancient redwoods and Amazon rainforests forgive air pollution and deforestation? Will stream life and coral reefs forgive us for mountain top removal and burning coal? Will people of island nations forgive us for the flooding of their homes?

Act! As atonement for our corporate sins;

- plant a tree
- ride a bike
- collect trash or recycling in your neighborhood
- use less plastic

Create! Artist Yao Lu creates images of cliffs, waterfalls, and mountains. But when you look a bit closer you see that Lu has digitally combined images of landfills and urbanization with draped green mesh to mimic traditional Chinese landscapes. Create a piece of artwork from discarded material and use it as a reminder to pray for forgiveness for the things that we waste.
SAVE US FROM THE TIME OF TRIAL

What is this? It is true that God tempts no one, but we ask in this prayer that God would preserve and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins, and that, although we may be attacked by them, we may finally prevail and gain the victory.

Think! The media is saturated with messages of inexpensive happiness and consumerism aimed at children and adults. This corporate consumer myth is much of what got us into our current ecological crisis. How can you foster contentment with what you have and find ways to enjoy life in a more natural state with less?

Act! Don’t forget to get outside. While Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, we are rarely confronted with consumer temptations in nature. Shut off your screens at some point this week and go for a walk, or sit in a park and just enjoy the free gift of birds and trees and sky.

Create! Kathleen Ryan’s work questions the rampant consumerism and gluttony that persists in American culture. There are apps that can age a person’s face but what about the things we buy? Make an image of a trendy piece of merchandise and what it might look like after years of decay.
AND DELIVER US FROM EVIL

What is this? We ask in this prayer, as in a summary, that our Father in heaven may deliver us from all kinds of evil—affecting body or soul, property or reputation—and at last, when our final hour comes, may grant us a blessed end and take us by grace from this valley of tears to himself in heaven.

Think! In Luther’s summary we are in God’s care forever and ever. Even in this time of trial where we may fear irreversible harm, God is with us. How does God’s ongoing work for good in this world empower you and give you hope?

Act! Pray for God’s work to save the whole earth. Pray that you might be a part of that work by loving what God loves and saving what God saves.

Create! artist Kevin Peterson Offering hope in the face of climate catastrophe and economic collapse, Peterson’s oil paintings are deeply personal, sometimes reflecting his own son and daughter as subjects. Take or gather pictures of people whose environmental work inspires you.
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The Ten Commandments
The 1st Commandment: You shall have no other gods.

What is this? We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things.

Think! Read Matthew 5:45. Jesus makes a promise that God sends sun and rain to all things whether good or bad, worthy or unworthy, human or not human.

- How does this promise about the things we need in life help you love and trust God?
- What leads you away from this promise?
- What are other things you place your trust in?

Act! Give thanks for 5:45. Choose 5 categories related to creation and thank God for 9 things in each category. Weather could include; rain, sunshine, rainbows, etc. Use things you encounter in creation today as a way to remember that God as the source of everything. Trust that God is working forever to bless us all with what we need each day to live.

Create! Check out the kelp forest photography of Douglas Klug. Klug pays attention to changes in the ecosystem of kelp forests because they provide clues to the ocean’s health. When the kelp forests are healthy the animals and humans that rely on it as a food source are also healthy. The seaweed can be a food resource, it can provide shelter for various fish nurseries, and large areas of algae create carbon sinks that help sequester millions of pounds of carbon dioxide.

- Take a photo of light on a body of water, creek, or river.
- Use that photo as a visual reminder of God providing sun and rain to all creation.
The 2nd Commandment: You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.

*What is this?* We are to fear and love God, so that we do not curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name, but instead use that very name in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God.

*Think!* 2 billion people (1/3 of the planet) are Christian. What a huge difference our prayers could make in this place! Still, we often think “heaven is my home,” and trash this world.

- How does “heaven is my home” take God’s name in vain for this life?
- What are ways we harm creation when we don’t see it as our home?

*Act!* Say a prayer, calling on God’s presence to be with you today. Ask this same thing for five living things in creation around you today.

*Create!* So often we can see ourselves as separate from nature. [Artist Jonathan Hateley](#) reminds us that we are but one part of creation by casting bronze sculptures of dancers imprinted with elements from nature. Jonathan’s dancers greet the sun or leaning into the wind communing with creation and covered in foliage or lichen patterns.

- Find a pattern on your body and then find something in nature with a similar pattern.
- Cover yourself with leaves, mown grass, sticks, or another part of creation.
The 3rd Commandment: Remember the sabbath, and keep it holy.

What is this? We are to fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching or God’s Word, but instead keep that word holy and gladly hear and learn it.

Think! Read Leviticus 25:1-12. Not only humans need sabbath. Why does God want soil to also rest and “all inhabitants” of a place to have the chance to return?

Act! Learn about or visit a place that has been used and had a chance to rest – a vacant lot, a Superfund site (http://www.epa.gov/superfund). You can visit the Hegler Zinc site in Danville at 1 HEGELER LANE, DANVILLE, IL 61832.

Create! The Taipingshan National Forest Recreation Area is home to the Jianqing Historic Trail which follows abandoned railway lines once used for large logging operations. In northern Yilan it is now one of Taipei’s prized ecological destinations because of its lush vegetation and dewy environment that creates lots of mist and fog. Taiwanese photographer Masuki Rina documented the enchanting atmosphere as nature reclaims the area with moss covering wooden ballasts and various foliage sprouting up from nearly every inch of the railway lines.

- Find an abandoned lot or building and take a picture of nature growing in it.
- Use that photo as a reminder that creation needs rest too.
- Try guerilla gardening by planting flowers in those abandoned industrial places.
The 4th Commandment: Honor your father and your mother.

*What is this?* We are to fear and love God, so that we neither despise nor anger our parents and others in authority, but instead honor, serve, obey, love, and respect them.

*Think!* It doesn’t just take two parents, or even a village. Our lives are birthed and nurtured by this whole world. How would we treat Earth differently if we really honored her as our Mother?

*Act!* In his book *Listening for the heartbeat of God*, John Philip Newell writes this; “Just as an infant comes to know his mother through form and color, scent and sound, so we come to a knowledge of God through the universe.”

- Watch a nature documentary showing an animal being born or plant growing from seed.
- List the qualities of a good mother and compare it to what nature provides.

*Create!* Jess X. Snow painted a mural in Philadelphia showing two female figures, one young, and one old, both formed of rippling branches, leaves, flowers, and birds in flight. Jess calls this work; “A Daughter Migrates Toward The Mother Earth.” Jess sees her multi-disciplinary work as a way to explore topics of joy, survival, and our relationship to the Earth. Jess’ art seeks to do this by amplifying the voices of people who won’t be defined by borders, gender, color, and legislation. It is the way of Christ followers to lift up others whose voices aren’t being heard but we often neglect creation as it seeks to give birth to new life all around us.

- Read Romans 8:22 then find an aspect of creation that is yearning for new life.
- Write on the shell of an egg those parts of creation from earlier that yearn for new life.
The 5th Commandment: You shall not murder.

What is this? We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all life’s needs.

Think! Climate change is already causing what has been called the Sixth Great Extinction, greater than what killed the dinosaurs. Why might our destruction of biodiversity—of God’s great variety of creatures, from polar bears and coral reefs to dwarf crocodiles and others we haven’t even discovered—why might that be of concern?

Act! The impacts of burning fossil fuels is hurting our poorest human neighbors the worst. Go to www.lwr.org and search “climate” for stories of how Lutheran World Relief is working to help communities around the world mitigate and adapt amid changing weather patterns.

Create! Check out The Future Materials program which was created so artists and designers could respond sustainably to the climate crisis. The forum allows creatives from all over the world to share what unique local resources can be used for everyday objects.

- Take a pottery class and then actually use the bowl or cup you make daily.
- Visit Greener Goods in Champaign to see products made more sustainably.
The 6th Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

What is this? We are to fear and love God, so that we lead pure and decent lives in words and deed, and each of us loves and honors his or her spouse.

Think! From the last commandment about not harming a creature, this extends to not harming its closest relationships. We could think of it as a ripple effect through the ecosystem. Many orchids, for example, evolved to be pollinated by a single species of insect or bird. How might our world be different without bees to enable plants to reproduce?

Act! Author Michael Pollan says humans have historically eaten 80,000 species but today products of four (corn, soybeans, wheat, rice) amount to 2/3 of our calories.

- Buy an heirloom variety of a particular food you enjoy.
- Plant an heirloom variety from a seed bank in your garden.

Create! After visiting The German nonprofit VERN e.V., artist Uli Westphal became fascinated with the ways industrial farming was affecting the availability of certain crops. VERN e.V. cares for thousands of obscure and hard to find varieties of seeds and makes them available to everyone. Uli Westphal worries that synthetic biology and genetic engineering are outpacing our ability to react, debate, regulate, and even be aware of what is happening to our food supply not to mention the amount of corporate control over that produce.

- Check out the [photography of Uli Westphal](#).
- Choose a fruit or vegetable you enjoy and research how many varieties of it exist.
The 7th Commandment: You shall not steal.

What is this? We are to fear and love God, so that we neither take our neighbors’ money or property nor acquire them by using shoddy merchandise or crooked deals, but instead help them to improve and protect their property and income.

Think! If all 7.3 billion people of the planet consumed like Americans, we would need the resources of more than four planets to sustain us. Using or abusing in this way, how are we stealing the planet’s resources—and from whom?

Act! Do an online search for “environmental refugees” and learn about how climate change will cause millions of people to be without food, water, or homes.

- Open up your home to a refugee or refugee family.
Create! Spanish artist Pejac donated proceeds from his art to Sea-Watch, which helps thousands of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea. In order to draw attention to the refugee crisis he created an installation of a child wearing a life jacket on top of the Holy Cross Church in Berlin.

- Donate furniture or housewares to Immigrant Services of Champaign Urbana
- Send postcards to family and friends encouraging them to reduce their consumption.
The 8th Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

*What is this?* We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.

*Think!* In a polarizing political climate we may struggle to speak kindly. Media may want to frame global warming deniers against with self-righteous tree-huggers.

  - Ask someone else to share a story with you about an experience they had in nature.

*Act!* Become a defender of wildlife and an advocate for justice. Lobby your government officials to speak out against threats and speak up on behalf of creation, from children to polar bears to clean air. Or contact the media and ask that climate change be presented not with skeptics’ perspectives but according to the overwhelming scientific consensus.

*Create!* [Artist Stéphanie Kilgast](https://www.stephaniekilgast.com) created sculptures of women crying over a creation that is undergoing its 6th mass extinction. She also sculpts disposable containers overflowing with vibrant colored fungi, moss, and coral as a hopeful sign that creation covers our mistakes.

  - Collect trash found on the sidewalk and street and make art out of it.
The 9th Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.

What is this? We are to fear and love God, so that we do not try to trick our neighbors out of their inheritance or property or try to get it for ourselves by claiming to have a legal right to it and the like, but instead be of help and be of service to them in keeping what is theirs.

Think! According to the US Census, the average house was 1660 square feet in 1973 and 2519 square feet in 2008, more than 50% bigger. Why have we become accustomed to feeling we need so much more? What will it take for us to be content?

- Read Philippians 4:11-13

Act! Find ways to make your home simpler by downsizing and sell what you don’t need. Make your home more efficient by getting an energy audit.

Create! When hermit crabs outgrow their shells, they line up by size and swap homes. Tokyo-based artist Aki Inomata likes to create 3-D printed houses for these crustaceans to slip into!

- Visit a tiny home and contemplate how much space you really need.
- 3-D Print a model of your home as a reminder to live with a small impact.
The 10th Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

*What is this?* We are to fear and love God, so that we do not entice, force, or steal away from our neighbors their spouses, household workers, or livestock, but instead urge them to stay and fulfill their responsibilities to our neighbors.

*Think!* For most of 4 billion years, other creatures didn’t need to compete with us for what they needed to thrive. Now urban sprawl and extracting of resources changes habitats for the rest of creation. Agricultural land is drifting toward higher latitudes because of warming and a swath of plastics twice the size of Texas floats in the North Pacific Gyre.

*Act!* Fight deforestation by using shade-grown coffees. Look for the FSC label for sustainably harvested papers (www.fscus.org/). Plant trees from the Arbor Day Foundation (www.arborday.org/).

*Create!* South African photographer [Gideon Mendel](#) takes pictures of individuals and families in their homes and neighborhoods after they have been destroyed by floods or fires. Mendel states of his subjects; “They bear witness to the brutal reality that the poorest people on the planet almost always suffer the most from climate change.”

- Create a watercolor painting using Psalm 69:1-3 as your inspiration.
- Try cooking one meal this week over an open fire and without using electricity.
What then does God say about all these commandments?

*God says the following:* “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those that reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

*What is this?* God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore we are to fear his wrath and not disobey these commandments. However, God promises grace and every good thing to all those who keep these commandments. Therefore, we are also to love and trust him and gladly act according to his command.

*Think!* Even if we stopped adding CO2 immediately, today’s CO2 would still be affecting the climate for a hundred years. How does it feel that God would leave us to suffer the devastating consequences of our actions? What might God’s grace look like in those one hundred years.

*Act!* Reach out to [Faith In Place](http://www.faithinplace.org) and listen to the stories of people whose faith has informed their care for creation. Find ways to get involved with the work of Faith In Place.

*Create!* Asy Connelly and Emily McNeil began [The Tempestry Project](http://www.tempestryproject.org) as a way to combine their activism and their talent for knitting. The name is a blending of the words ‘tapestry’ and ‘temperature’ and their hope is to create visual temperature data that is easy to see and understand. God’s desire is not for us to feel hopeless, but to use the gifts we have been given to help create a better world for all of creation.

- What talents of yours could be used to call attention to an issue affecting creation?
- What can you make this week that will bring hope and healing to the earth?
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The Creed
The 1st Article, on Creation

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

What is this? I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property—along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.

Think! Read Job chapters 38-41, where God speaks of delighting in all of God’s creation, things seen and unseen. What are ways God the Father might be working to “preserve” and “protect” other creatures in this world that we don’t often think of?

Act! Listen as rivers clap their hands (Psalm 98:8) and trees sing for joy (1 Chronicles 16:33) at God’s goodness and steadfast love! Listen to Canticle of the Sun.

Create! Check out the collage work of artist Clare Börsch. What elements of created things does she leave out that are mentioned in the reading from Job above?

- Cut out nature scenes from magazines. Make a Creed Collage based on the 1st Article.
The 2nd Article, on Redemption

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father; and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

What is this? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

Think! Read Psalm 107:17-22. List the ways our health is tied to the health of the earth.

Act! Next time in worship at Confession and Forgiveness, confess the ways you have intentionally or unintentionally wounded creation. Then hear the word of forgiveness in Jesus’ name as your vocational call to go and live in right relationship with all of creation.

Create! The Qhatan tribe has a tradition said to descend from Ishmael, son of Abraham. The men create crowns of marigolds, jasmine, and other herbs for to ward off sickness.

- If you take medication find out what plants are used in them.
- Learn about the healing properties of 5 new plants this week.
The 3rd Article, on Sanctification

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

What is this? I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins—mine and those of all believers. On the last day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

Think! Read Genesis 1:1-5. The Spirit that moved over the waters is the Spirit who breathes new life into you, making you a new creation. When has the Spirit enlivened or inspired you?

Act! Take time out of your day to watch the wind blow waves across a lake or find some water to blow on with your own breath. This is the source of life, and God says it is good!

Create! Wind turbines are notoriously difficult to break down and often end up deteriorating in a landfill for 20 to 25 years. Other companies are using them to make maze-style playgrounds, pedestrian bridges, and panels for construction. One company in Denmark found a way to reuse old wind turbines as bike shelters.

- Find a once trendy item at a thrift store and creatively repurpose it.