

## Everyone Belongs in Nature: Equitable Access to Green Spaces

There are well-established links between access to green spaces and people's physical and mental health, as well as their general sense of belonging. Across the U.S., however, residents in low-income areas and communities of color have far fewer opportunities to enjoy quality green spaces, resulting in reduced well-being.



- In the U.S., 74% of communities of color live in nature-deprived spaces, about three times more than white communities ([Center for American Progress](#)).
- Children raised with the least exposure to green space had up to a 55% greater risk of developing a mental health disorder (2019 peer-reviewed study in [PNAS](#)).
- Regular physical activity reduces the likelihood of heart disease, colon cancer, hypertension, obesity, and premature death, while improving physical functioning, muscle strength, and the respiratory, endocrine, and cardiovascular systems ([Trust For Public Land](#), [World Health Organization](#)).

Inequitable access to green spaces is a serious problem. But we can take steps to bridge the nature gap, ensuring that ALL people feel welcome in nature and enjoy the physical, mental, and social benefits of being outside. People of faith can play a unique role in connecting their neighbors with green spaces as a way to deepen our connection with creation and Creator.

### What role might your church or community group play in ensuring equitable access to green spaces for all? See some potential actions below.



- Lead a hike, picnic, litter cleanup, or other outdoor event for your neighbors who have less access to green spaces, possibly in collaboration with a local state park or environmental nonprofit.
  - A Rocha USA's [Picnics en el Arroyo program](#) in Austin is a great example!
- Use the ["10-Minute Walk"](#) website to educate your community on the best practices for attaining equitable access to green space in your area.
  - Join their [Park Equity Communities of Practice](#) network, which offers online resources, workshops, webinars, and inter-city discussion.
  - Reach out to your city leaders about the [Park Equity Accelerator](#) program, which supports cities in taking social, financial, and political steps toward equitable green space access.
  - Check out their [Community Engagement](#) resource for a deep dive into relevant strategies.
- Explore training and resources from the [Center for Spirituality in Nature](#) on how to integrate faith practices into your outdoor events.
- Connect with the [Hispanic Access Foundation](#) and explore their [Research Library](#) to find resources for Latinx advocacy and environmental protection.