A Guide for Screening and Using the Documentary

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ABOUT THE FILM

Renewal is the first feature-length documentary film to capture the vitality and diversity of today’s religious-environmental activists. From within their Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Muslim traditions, Americans are becoming caretakers of the Earth. With great courage, these women, men and children are re-examining what it means to be human and how we live on this planet.

Offering a profound message of hope, Renewal captures individuals and communities driven by the deepest source of inspiration - their religious and spiritual commitment – to become stewards of our planet. Their stories of combating global warming and the devastation of mountaintop removal, of promoting food security, environmental justice, recycling, land preservation, and of teaching love and respect for life on Earth are the heart of Renewal.

Renewal is a powerful tool for everyone concerned about addressing the current environmental crisis. While painting an honest picture of how much work will be needed to stem the tide of environmental devastation, the documentary’s compelling characters and stories inspire the vision and commitment that addressing these challenges will require.

Film Credits

Produced and Directed by
Marty Ostrow and Terry Kay Rockefeller

Edited by
Peter Rhodes

Director of Photography
John Baynard

Music by
Sheldon Mirowitz

Nature Photography by
Dan Kowalski

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We were inspired to make Renewal by the countless Americans who are answering a spiritual call to confront the enormous challenges of environmental degradation. For many, faith has inspired action. Across the nation, grassroots environmental initiatives are making a difference and offering hope. Earth is being reclaimed as people’s spiritual experience is deepened and revitalized.

America’s great movements for social transformation – the abolition of slavery; promotion of civil rights and immigrant rights; support for the poor and homeless – have all included the commitment of people of faith. And, today’s religious-environmental movement is poised to have a similar significant impact.

When so many news headlines proclaim the ways that religions divide people, the heroes of our documentary truly celebrate the potential for multi-faith action to unify our communities and the world. The religious-environmental movement grows as people from diverse traditions come together and work to build a sustainable future. Renewal is their story"

— Marty Ostrow and Terry Kay Rockefeller

This Guide has been created to help religious leaders, environmental activists, and all concerned individuals screen and use Renewal in order to:

- engage people of faith in organized and individual environmental action.
- foster interfaith dialogue and action about environmental stewardship.
- break down barriers between secular environmentalists and people of faith.

The Guide offers practical advice on planning a screening or a series of screenings in your community. It contains suggestions for follow-up discussion and offers practical action steps that you can take to get involved in the growing religious-environmental movement. You will find resources to learn more about existing religious-environmental organizations and specific environmental issues, as well as links to tools and materials that you can use in your house of worship or other community setting to deepen and sustain your commitment to this vital work.
The 90-minute documentary is designed for theatrical and community screenings, and for broadcast, yet each of Renewal’s eight stories also stands on its own. From the DVD Main Menu you can choose to play the entire 90-minute documentary, or you can select any individual story. The individual stories are slightly longer than the versions in the full documentary and contain additional scenes and information.

Before you announce and promote your screening, view the DVD and decide if you want to show the entire 90-minute documentary or one or more individual stories. Take into consideration:

- How much time you will have. (Timings for individual stories are listed below in this Guide.)
- Who will be attending the screening.
- What their interests, environmental concerns, and religious affiliations are.
- Whether you will meet only once, or have a series of meetings to screen and discuss the film.
- What you want to have happen after the screening: will you have a discussion, initiate an action, or make plans for future work?

Decide who is absolutely vital to have at your screening of Renewal – perhaps your clergy, particularly active members of your congregation, or an existing environmental issues group. Check on what are good dates and times for them.

Publicize the screening in as many ways as possible – bulletins, posters, emails, your congregation’s calendar of events, websites, the local newspaper, radio, announcements at worship services, etc. Try to announce the screening several weeks in advance.

Be sure that someone brings the DVD. The DVD that will be used for the screening should be one that has been viewed already. (Do not open a new DVD and pop it into the player. In the extremely rare instance that a DVD has been manufactured with a problem, you want to learn that ahead of time.)

Test the DVD on the system you are going to be using. You don’t want any last-minute surprises like finding out that an old video system cannot read the DVD, or that you have picture but no sound, etc.

“Renewal is an inspiring look into how people of diverse faith traditions are organizing, teaching, and joining together to celebrate and protect the environment. Without being at all preachy, each of the eight discrete segments of the film provides a window onto a different part of this growing and critically important movement.”

David Atcheson
Hazel Wolf Environmental Film Festival

Getting The Word Out

Screening Logistics
I watched this film with admiration and hope millions of others will have the chance to see it. You will be stirred to discover people of different faiths who are engaged in an exhilarating stewardship of the earth that offers our best chance to yet save creation.

Bill Moyers

Discussion Tips

Be certain that the projection or screening system is working properly, that the volume can be turned up to a point where people can comfortably hear it, that the image is bright and big enough to be seen by everyone in the room.

Also be sure that someone knows where the light switches are, so the room can be darkened once the screening begins.

These are all common sense steps but if someone doesn’t take responsibility for them you run the risk of a potentially embarrassing situation.

Try to get the discussion going by calling on someone who seems to be enthusiastic about the film.

Make sure everyone who wants to speak gets an opportunity to be heard.

Anticipate any difficult issues that may arise, such as comparing religions unfavorably, or other comments that could be sensitive for some members of the audience.

If you are showing the film to an audience of people you don’t know, invite people in the audience, who may already be doing local religious-environmental work, to introduce themselves and to very briefly describe the focus of their efforts.

You may want to ask one member of your community or clergy to be prepared to wrap-up the discussion with a specific message or proposal; or you may choose to leave next steps up to members of the audience.

Remember, the DVD offers many flexible ways to use Renewal. You can watch the entire 90-minute documentary or any of its eight component stories as a short individual film.

By choosing the individual stories that are most relevant for your audience, you can create a customized screening program.

Please note, the individual stories include extra material and therefore run a little longer than the versions in the full documentary.

In the following pages of this Guide you will find descriptions of Renewal’s individual stories and their running times, along with suggested discussion topics, actions steps, and resources for follow-up activities.

Customize Your Screening
A Crime Against Creation

Evangelicals bear witness to mountaintop removal and the destruction of Appalachia (11:20 min)

In the mountains of Kentucky and West Virginia today’s mining practices are literally removing the tops of mountains to extract coal to feed American power plants and our nation’s hunger for electricity. The natural environment is being decimated, while burning the coal fuels global warming. Evangelical Christians join an interfaith tour to bear witness to this devastation and begin organizing against the practices that are destroying the land, polluting the waters, and endangering the lives of the people of Appalachia.

Activities:

While there is no substitute for witnessing the devastation of mountaintop removal in person, you can study the extent of the transformation of the landscape on Google Earth. Log on to: http://earth.google.com/ and look at these zip codes 41250 and 25654. Try to study the extent of the area that has been affected. Search for other areas of mountaintop removal.

Learn if your local electricity provider uses coal from mountaintop removal at: http://ilovemountains.org/

As a group, study and bear witness to an environmental problem where you live; then organize an event where you issue and sign a covenant.

Discussion:

Does what you see in this story make you think differently about the religious concepts of greed and sin?

Idolatry, the worship of false gods, is condemned in the Bible. How do you understand the concept of idolatry as it relates to our dependence on large coal companies and the consumption of vast amounts of fossil fuels?

What does it mean for religious people to “bear witness”?

In the Bible, Genesis, Chapter 1, we read, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” Does this passage shape your understanding of responsibility to protect the land or to be a steward of creation?

Does this story of mountaintop removal make you think in new ways about scriptural passages from your own tradition?

Resources:

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth is a community of people taking action for social and environmental justice. http://www.kftc.org/

Christians for the Mountains is an initiative to summon faithful Christians to act responsibly on behalf of God’s creation. http://www.christiansforthemountains.org/

Kilowatt Ours, is a film and an outreach project that inspires people to conserve energy and choose renewable power. http://www.kilowattours.org/
Going Green

GreenFaith in New Jersey helps congregations take the first steps to environmental action (14:20 min)

The interfaith coalition, GreenFaith, helps New Jersey houses of worship make their buildings more environmentally sound and members of their congregations more spiritually in tune with stewardship of creation. From workshops that invite people to explore their personal impact on the environment, to implementing recycling and composting, on up to the installation of solar panels, congregations in New Jersey are making remarkable strides. As GreenFaith’s Executive Director says, “The hardest thing about taking action is sometimes just taking the first step.”

Activities:
Organize a group of people to take the Ecological Footprint Quiz at: http://www.earthday.net/footprint/index.

Do a waste-audit at your house of worship or in your own home.

Have your house of worship examined for energy consumption and possible savings.

See if there is an Interfaith Power and Light chapter in your state. If so, they can work with your congregation to help it “go green.”

Arrange a nature field trip for children in your congregation and talk with them about the deep feelings they experience when being outdoors.

Discussion:
Should environmental stewardship be an integral part of the religious practice at your house of worship?

How might environmental action at your house of worship strengthen members’ commitment to your religious community and its practices?

Might it inspire new discussion and relations between the youth and the adults of the community?

Do you have a personal story to share about experiencing God or the presence of the divine in the natural world?

Resources:
Learn more about GreenFaith at www.greenfaith.org

In addition to its work in New Jersey, GreenFaith also offers a Fellowship Program for religious leaders and a green Certification Program for religious people and congregations anywhere in the U.S.

Both GreenFaith and Interfaith Power and Light offer excellent information about solar and other forms of alternative energy, energy offsets, tips about composting, recycling, waste audits, energy audits and more. www.theregenerationproject.org
Food for Faith

In Chicago, with its growing and diverse Muslim community, the interfaith organization Faith in Place has supported the development of Taqwa, a project that supplies organic meat to Muslims and everyone else who wants to support sustainable farming. This chicken, beef, and lamb is “Eco-Halal.” The animals are humanely raised, fed an organic diet, and slaughtered in accordance with Islamic law. During the holy month of Ramadan, Taqwa members extend their tradition of charity to insure that poor communities can also eat this healthy and environmentally friendly meat.

Muslim tradition and charity forge bonds between urban communities and sustainable farms in Illinois (14:50 min)

Activities:
Visit your local farmers’ market and learn more about local organically and humanely raised meat, dairy, eggs and produce.
Organize an interfaith gathering around a holiday or a seasonal event that concerns food and learn about each others’ prayers, rituals, and blessings.
Eco-consciousness is relatively new in the American Muslim community. For those of you who are Muslim, talk to your Imam about becoming engaged, or forming a green group within your religious community.

Discussion:
Many religious traditions have dietary practices or laws. How do you decide what it is moral or ethical to eat?
How can food be a prayer?
What happens when people of different religious traditions invite one another to share their religious holidays?
Imam Abdullah A. Madyun at Masjid al-Hassan talks about the refreshing connection between simultaneously fasting for Ramadan while being able to feed people who don’t have enough to eat. Do you see this work as a religious or spiritual practice?

Resources:
Faith in Place is the multi-faith religious-environmental organization in Chicago that helped to organize Taqwa. http://www.faithinplace.org/

There is a tradition of eco-kosher or eco-kashrut in the Jewish tradition that re-examines traditional dietary laws in terms of present-day environmental and social justice concerns. You can learn more at: http://www.shalomctr.org/node/1284 and http://home.earthlink.net/~ecorebbe/id14.html
Ancient Roots

The Teva Learning Center and Adamah in Connecticut bring environmental education together with Jewish tradition (17:30 min)

Two programs, based in rural Connecticut, offer unique opportunities for Jewish environmental education. At the Teva Learning Center, elementary school children encounter the natural world as they explore the woods, learn where their food comes from, and take responsibility for waste. At Adamah, a three-month environmental leadership training program, a small community of twenty-somethings engage in organic farming, sustainable living, and contemplative spiritual practice. Together they are renewing the ecological wisdom inherent in Judaism and building a genuine commitment to tikkun olam, healing the world.

Activities

Plan a prayer ritual that members of your congregation can conduct outdoors.

Weigh your food waste at your house of worship, or at home with your family, and try to reduce the waste over time.

Visit a local organic farm, purchase some of your food locally and organically, join a CSA, or plant an organic garden and grow your own vegetables.

Hold a Tu Bishevat seder to celebrate the New Year for the trees. For those who are not Jewish, consider holidays from your own religious tradition that can be celebrated to honor the natural world.

Resources:

To learn more about the Teva Learning Center and explore their educational resources, visit http://tevalearningcenter.org/

The Teva Seminar, is an annual four day experiential program that offers adults – of all faiths – the tools to facilitate environmental education. http://www.jrf.org/teva-seminar

For information about other Jewish environmental education programs and agricultural communities you might join, look into Kayam Farms in Baltimore http://www.pearlstonecenter.org/kayam.html, the Jewish Farm School in PA (with partner farms around the country) http://www.jewishfarmschool.org/, and the Adamah Jewish Environmental Fellowship http://isabellafreedman.org/adamah/intro

Discussion:

What do you think about the ethics and spiritual dangers of waste?

If consuming certain foods is considered unethical (or non-Kosher), what about consuming too much of certain products like gas or electricity?

What does Rabbi Fred Dobb mean when he talks about “giving things up for the right reasons”?

In what ways do some Jewish holidays reflect the presence of the natural world? If you are not Jewish, what holidays from your tradition strongly honor the earth, the seasons, and the natural world?
Compassion in Action

Green Sangha, a Buddhist community in northern California, leads a campaign to save trees (11:10 min)

Buddhists in the San Francisco Bay area are working to save trees by encouraging greater use of recycled paper, especially by major magazine publishers. Their organization, Green Sangha, combines meditation and environmental education to promote non-confrontational forms of action emphasizing the interconnectedness of everyone and everything on the planet.

Activities:
- Explore the variety of meditation techniques. Many can be easily adapted to any faith tradition.
- Buy recycled paper products for you home or house of worship.
- Visit a recycling center. Discuss ways to support and increase recycling in your community.
- Find out if the magazines and periodicals you read and subscribe to are printed on recycled paper. If not, write to the publishers and encourage them to switch.

Resources:
- To learn more about Green Sangha’s spiritually engaged environmental action visit: http://www.greensangha.org/
- The Buddhist tradition has produced a practice called “Deep Ecology.” Learn more at: http://www.joannamacy.net/html/deep.html
- Learn about options for making environmentally and economically wise choices about paper at: http://www.conservatree.com/

Discussion:
- Does how the Buddhist environmental activists in this story talk about the interconnectedness of all people, make you think differently about how to approach people whose environmental practices you disagree with?
- People and the natural world are also interconnected over time – does this make you think differently about how people, societies and environments can change?
- Do you think there are spiritual values to be found in recycling?
- What role can meditation play in preparing people to confront environmental challenges?
Eco-Justice

The Holy Spirit inspires a battle against industrial contamination in small-town Mississippi (11:30 min)

Along the coast of Mississippi, pollution from chemical and petroleum industries has for decades caused elevated levels of disease – nervous disorders, asthma and cancer in African-American and other poor communities. Then the flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina made these medical problems even worse. Now, through their churches, citizens are finding inspiration to conduct their own health surveys, to demand accountability from industry, and to insist on action by government officials.

Activities:
Learn about eco-justice issues in your own neighborhood, community or region.

If a body of water is known to be contaminated in your area, be certain municipal signs are posted that warn people not to eat fish and wildlife from those waters.

Have your house of worship contact health authorities in your region to let them know you are concerned about the well-being of community members who may live close to industrial and toxic waste sites.

Form a coalition with your local authorities to combat local industrial contamination and monitor community health.

Discussion:
What does justice or environmental justice mean to you?

What moral responsibilities do we have for “the least among us”?

What are your feelings about the calling from the Holy Spirit that Reverend Young experienced?

Should clergy play a role as community and political leaders?

How can religious traditions inspire and support long-term struggles for economic and political justice?

Do you believe religion offers people the courage to speak out?

Is eco-justice an essential component of social justice?

Resources:
The Environmental Justice Resource Center (EJRC) at Clark Atlanta University serves as a research, policy, and information clearinghouse on issues related to race and environmental justice.
http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/about.htm

Night Fire by Ronnie Greene recounts the story of retired school teacher Margie Richard’s ultimate victory against oil refinery giant Shell, in a ten year struggle to reclaim her Louisiana town from the ravages of industrial contamination.

Eco-Justice Ministries helps churches answer the call to care for creation, by developing ministries that work toward social justice and environmental sustainability.
http://www.eco-justice.org/
Sacred Celebration

Catholics and Native Americans embrace religious ritual in a struggle to protect New Mexico’s land and water (9:30 min)

The remaining historic farmland in the South Valley of Albuquerque, New Mexico is being rapidly devoured by commercial and residential development. Under the leadership of Franciscan Sister Joan Brown, this community of Hispanics, Native Americans, and Anglos is fighting back. During the festival of San Ysidro, patron saint of agriculture, they gather to consecrate the land that nourishes them and bless the waters that help the crops grow. Religious ritual and sacred celebration become a seedbed for their effective environmental action.

Discussion:
Albino Garcia calls water the “blood of Mother Earth.” How do you feel about this?
What value do you see in holding a sacred reverence for land and water?
Should people be concerned about vanishing local agriculture?
How does participation in religious ritual help to reinvigorate faith?
How might rituals observed out of doors in nature have a different impact?
How can ritual strengthen a community’s commitment to address environmental challenges?

Resources:
Cultural historian Thomas Berry has inspired religious and secular environmentalists with his thinking about humans’ connectedness to the universe. Two of his seminal books are The Dream of the Earth, and The Great Work. A DVD, Thomas Berry Speaks is available at: http://finecut.org/thomasberry.htm

The Ecumenical Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Bartholomew, was the first major Christian leader to put the environment at the top of his agenda, calling environmental pollution a ‘sin.’ His ship borne symposia on seas and rivers have brought together scientists and diverse clergy, the media and environmentalists to find solutions to the growing crises of the planet’s water systems. http://www.rsesymposia.org/index.php

Learn more about St. Ysidro and Maria de la Cabesa, the husband-wife patron saints of agriculture: http://www.ncrlc.com/isidoreandmaria.html

Activities:
Consider how your religious community or house of worship practices rituals. Plan some of your observances to take place out-of-doors in nature.
Think about different holidays in your religious tradition as opportunities to celebrate creation and explore extending holiday prayer and rituals to the out-of-doors.
Use local environmental issues that impact your community, as opportunities to build interfaith relationships that can strengthen your struggle.
Interfaith Power and Light

Across America people of all faiths mount a religious response to global warming (9:25 min)

While much of the religious-environmental movement is local, Interfaith Power and Light (IPL), with over two dozen state affiliates, has grown to national proportions. The affiliates help people of faith reduce their use of fossil fuels and increase their reliance on renewable energy in all aspects of their lives. At their annual gathering in Washington, DC, IPL leaders lobby Congress for legislative reforms to promote American energy policies that reduce pollution and reverse climate change.

Discussion:
Should you discuss and try to take action about global warming in your house of worship?

Should clergy and people of faith try to influence our elected officials and leaders?

How can the work of individual religious-environmental activists be shaped into a national or global movement?

Activities:
Organize replacing incandescent light bulbs with low-energy CFLs at your house of worship or at another building in your community.

Swap out the bulbs in your home as well!

Visit your state or national representatives to share your concerns about today’s environmental crisis.

Consider purchasing some or all of your electricity from renewable energy sources. (See Resources below.)

Resources:
Link to the national organization Interfaith Power and Light (IPL), and its individual state chapters at:
http://www.theregenerationproject.org/

Learn about reducing your carbon footprint and switching to non-fossil fuel electricity now, at:
Many of the stories in Renewal examine related themes and issues. You may want to plan a series of events using different stories from the documentary, grouping them according to themes and issues of particular interest to your congregation or community. Here are just some suggestions about themes and issues you can explore, and the different stories that look at them.

**Interfaith Activity**
- Food for Faith
- Sacred Celebration
- Interfaith Power and Light

**Ritual, Prayer and Worship Out-of-doors**
- Going Green
- Ancient Roots
- Sacred Celebration

**Taking Action, Making a Commitment**
- Going Green
- Ancient Roots
- Eco-Justice
- Interfaith Power and Light

**Eco-Justice as an Issue of Social Justice**
- A Crime Against Creation
- Eco-Justice

**Organizing in Your Community/Taking Political Action**
- Compassion in Action
- Eco-Justice
- Interfaith Power and Light

**Intergenerational Activity**
- Going Green
- Ancient Roots
- Sacred Celebration
The Renewal website www.renewalproject.net has information on how the documentary is being used in communities across America as well as an extensive section with on-line and published resources about:

- religious-environmental organizations
- making environmental stewardship part of your religious practice
- greening your house of worship

Here are just a few organizations and programs to explore:

**National Programs and Projects:**

- [http://fore.research.yale.edu](http://fore.research.yale.edu) The Forum on Religion and Ecology promotes environmental discourse and activism on the environment by sponsoring conferences, research and online discussion.

- [www.nrpe.org](http://www.nrpe.org) The National Religious Partnership for the Environment is an alliance of major faith groups and denominations across the spectrum of Jewish and Christian organizations.

- [www.nccecojustice.org](http://www.nccecojustice.org) The Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches facilitates efforts by national bodies of the Protestant and Orthodox denominations to work together to protect and restore God's creation.

- [www.creationcare.org](http://www.creationcare.org) The Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) is a ministry initiated by World Vision and Evangelicals for Social Action as part of a growing movement to respond faithfully to the biblical mandate for stewardship of God's creation.

- [www.coejl.org](http://www.coejl.org) The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) engages Jewish institutions and individuals in bringing the moral passion of Jewish tradition and social action to environmental stewardship.

- [www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/ejp](http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/ejp) The United States Catholic Conference Environmental Justice Program calls Catholics to a deeper respect for God's creation and engages parishes in activities that address environmental problems, particularly as they affect the poor.

- [www.webofcreation.org/GreenSeminary](http://www.webofcreation.org/GreenSeminary) The Green Seminary Initiative fosters an ethic of ecological care for God's Creation by providing theological education for a sustainable future.

- [www.bvpf.org](http://www.bvpf.org) The Buddhist Peace Fellowship is a national organization with state chapters that works to encourage Buddhists to engage in progressive social change.

- [www.ausable.org](http://www.ausable.org) Au Sable Institute for Environmental Studies works to integrate knowledge of the Creation with biblical principles to bring the Christian community and the general public a better understanding of stewardship of God's creation.

- [www.ncrlc.com](http://www.ncrlc.com) The National Catholic Rural Life Conference is a membership organization grounded in a spiritual tradition that brings together the Church, care of community and care of creation.
The Regeneration Project and Interfaith Power and Light (IPL) lead communities of faith to a deeper understanding of stewardship of creation. The IPL program mobilizes religious communities to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation.

The Interfaith Climate Change Network’s goal is to pursue justice for the poor and to protect all life on Earth by taking action to address global climate change.

The North American Coalition for Christianity and Ecology works to engage the many strands of Christian tradition in the work of healing the damaged Earth.

National denominational organizations:

Canfei Nesharim seeks to educate those in the Orthodox Jewish community about the relationship between Judaism and modern environmental issues and to promote dialogue about the Torah mandated responsibility to protect the environment.

The Lutheran Earthkeeping Network of the Synods is a network of synod-level groups devoted to the task of Earthkeeping in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

Presbyterians for Restoring Creation is a grassroots organization that works to help the church fulfill its environmental policies and educate its members about eco-justice.

Quaker Earthcare Witness is a spiritually-centered movement of Quakers and like-minded people seeking to integrate concern for the environment with Friends’ long-standing testimonies for simplicity, integrity, peace, and equality.

The Unitarian Universalist Ministry for the Earth provides environmental education and resources to help address environmental concerns on both personal and institutional levels.

Regional projects with national reach:

Green Muslims in the District is a network of Muslims in the Washington, D.C. area helping Muslim communities implement sustainable and eco-conscious ways of living.

GreenFaith engages people of all spiritual backgrounds to deepen their relationship with nature and restore the environment for future generations. Its Certification Program helps congregations everywhere go green.

Earth Ministry engages individuals and congregations in deepening relationships with all of God’s creation in ways that promote simplified living, environmental stewardship, and understanding creation as a revelation of God.

Eco-Justice Ministries is an independent, ecumenical agency that helps churches answer the call to care for all of God’s creation, and to develop ministries that are faithful and effective in promoting social justice and environmental sustainability.