

Lesson Plans that Work

Easter People: Faith Practice and Climate Justice

Lesson Plans for Young Adults

SERIES OVERVIEW

Background and Goal: This lesson is part of a series of seven lessons originally written for Easter season 2021. Before you begin, you might want to know:

- The curriculum assumes that young adults are familiar with the basic facts about climate change: *it is real, it is human-caused, it is a long-range consequence of the industrial revolution (when society began to burn fossil fuels), the impacts are serious and those impacts unjustly fall on the poorest and most vulnerable.* If you are not sure that everyone is familiar with these facts, include review of them in your opening sessions. Here are some resources you can use:
 - A short, engaging video about the basics of climate change: (4:37)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOht6qmuG-k>
 - Short BBC video about churches and climate (also in Lesson Three), including the quote “It becomes ever clearer that climate change is the greatest challenge that we and future generations face” - Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Justin Welby (2:59)
<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/science-environment-56001191>
 - A video from a leading climate activist making connections between the pandemic and climate change: (4:36)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfd9FE0Intc>
 - Analysis about young adults and climate advocacy: article from April 28, 2020
<https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/young-adults-climate-activism/>
 - General information about how climate is perceived today: article from June 29, 2020
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/29/most-americans-say-climate-change-impacts-their-community-but-effects-vary-by-region-2/>
 - An excellent TED talk about climate justice and racial justice: (9:32)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EklpeOlr0NI>
- The climate crisis is experienced as an existential issue for some young adults. Their older adulthood will be shaped by the challenges of the earth’s changing climate unless policymakers and people make significant change.
- Young adults may be angry that older adults who have had decades to address the climate crisis have largely failed to do so. They may wonder why the church has failed along with other institutions. It can be helpful to share how the Episcopal Church has worked on climate in the past (also in Lesson Four). Examples:
 - General Convention resolution of 1973 https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=1973-B106
 - General Convention resolution of 2006: https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2006-C018
 - General Convention resolution of 2018:

https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2018-A011

- Churchwide resources currently available:
<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/>

- Young adults are independent learners and creatives. The goal of this series is to provide resources to support their growth in love of God and neighbor according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, that they may use their gifts and skills inspired by the Holy Spirit for the healing of the world.

A Note to Leaders: In the Nicene Creed we say “We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.” We don’t say that we believe in a perfect church or that its leaders have all the answers. As you are bold to teach and facilitate, you are practicing your own faith that God continues to breathe life into a holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

A Note on Scripture: This curriculum is largely a Bible study. Christians need to understand the Bible and see how it connects to today’s issues. This is part of the path of discipleship. When people read the Bible for themselves, their growing Biblical literacy is a gift to the whole church. They also need to reflect on Scripture’s meaning and consider the tradition they inherit.

As you begin, it is helpful to examine the lens through which you see Scripture. As the author, this is how I see Scripture: The older stories (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament) reveal both God and the indigenous wisdom of the ancient people of Israel. This is rooted in a specific place and a specific people. The newer stories (Christian Scriptures/New Testament) reveal God to all humanity. They are centered on the person of Jesus Christ and the meaning of his life, death and resurrection. Jesus Christ was born in and to the people of Israel. He is both a bridge person from God to humanity and a bridge person from Israel to all tribes and nations.

Scripture is sacred story in which we find ourselves and discover what it means to be human. We need the wisdom of Scripture and the facts of science both for life today. There are many places to learn the science of climate change. In church, we need to teach the wisdom of Scripture.

Overarching Theme: *As disciples of Jesus Christ, we seek truth and practice faith.*

The truth is that climate change is real, human-caused, destructive to people and places, and a long-range unintended consequence of the industrial revolution. Its impacts are being experienced already - causing unjust harm to peoples around the globe. Nations who historically contributed least to climate change are the most directly affected and the most vulnerable.

Our faith is that God has conquered sin and death through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As members of his body we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to act as witnesses of God’s power in the world. Practicing faith means seeking a way of life that brings healing to planet and people. We do this individually and collectively as disciples.

A note on leading young adults: Young adults' lives are all over the map. As you facilitate these lessons, you won't be "teaching" as much as you will be "facilitating conversation." Take time to get to know each other, build community, and learn each others' assumptions, contexts, and backgrounds. Hopefully this series builds on pre-existing relationships. If you're gathering a group for the first time using these lessons, linger on the "Beginning" questions to get to know each other. The relationships you develop will matter just as much the content you reflect on.

Lesson planning: As you plan your time, be aware that the lessons provide central content for a Scripture study along with questions for discussion and an optional related activity. If you are still getting to know each other, and people are not comfortable to have long conversations as a caring community, you might want to be ready with to present some additional material from the resources above in "Background and Goal" in case your conversations don't flow smoothly.

A pandemic note: Each lesson following assumes a central "prayer table." If you are leading these lessons via Zoom or another conferencing platform, gather the items listed and show them to participants online.

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