

Lesson Plans that Work

Faith Practice and Climate Justice

Lesson Plans for Young Adults: Lesson Four

Theme: My place on earth is part of God's Creation.

Background: Climate justice affects the whole planet and all peoples. That includes us, where we live. Different parts of the world are affected differently, but all parts of the world and all peoples are changed by rising temperatures. There are also opportunities to make a difference for climate justice right here where we live. Learning our place in Creation, loving our place in Creation, talking about climate issues and doing climate justice projects together at church and home are ways to practice faith.

Supplies Needed: You will need a prayer table, a candle, a prayerbook, and Bibles for each participant. If you are in person, and planning to go outside to pray, a bell or something similar (loud but peaceful) to regather people would be helpful. Also, if you are in person, see if you can access more than one device to use for the ten minutes of online research (especially if people don't have data/phones/wifi). If you are gathering a young adult group for the first time, and meeting in person, get blank nametags for people to fill out with name and pronouns.

Before: Prepare your prayer table. Open the prayerbook to p. 828, "For the Future of the Human Race," and place it on the table open to this page.

Beginning: Gather around the prayer table. Begin with any opening routine your group usually uses. If you are a new group, start with the basics: welcome new people, assure people that this is a safe space to be honest and also to pass if you aren't comfortable speaking, tell them that you expect a variety of backgrounds and experiences and we're here to learn with and from each other. Invite people to share highs and lows from the past week. Ask if anyone has ever spent overnight outside. Have they watched a whole sunrise or sunset? What is different about watching the sunrise or sunset instead of turning on a light?

Opening Prayer: Light your candle and pray:

O God our heavenly Father, you have blessed us and given us dominion over all the earth: Increase our reverence before the mystery of life; and give us new insight into your purposes for the human race, and new wisdom and determination in making provision for its future in accordance with your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Tell the story: If you have not yet, or if some people are new, share the "Note on Scripture" in the curriculum overview. Also, share the background above. Make sure people understand that the Bible is an outdoor book - it was recorded by people who lived outdoors far more than we do. Then invite everyone to open their Bibles to Psalm 104:14-24.

Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 104:14-15. Summarize what it teaches:

- The food of all beings comes from the earth, which is not our creation.

- We need food to survive, so we need the earth to be healthy enough to produce it.

Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 104:16-18. Summarize what it teaches:

- Every creature on earth has a home and a habitat that it depends on.
- God has created cycles and systems that we belong to, and so do all beings.

Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 104:19-24. Summarize what it teaches:

- The world around us, its cycles and seasons, teach us about God's being and power.
- This whole world, including us, belongs to God; this is why we worship and serve God.

Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 104:27-31. Summarize what it teaches:

- Humans are mortal beings, but God is eternal. We worship God to know eternity today.
- Seeking right relationship with God means seeking right relationship with Creation.

Invite everyone to turn to Psalm 24. To conclude the Bible study portion, invite someone to read aloud Psalm 24:1-2. Summarize:

- The Bible teaches that the earth belongs to God, not to us.
- The earth includes this actual place where we live. Learning and loving our place is part of tending the earth, having the breath of God within us.

Reflection Activity: Assign out questions to individuals, and use any available technology to seek answers to these questions:

- What watershed do we live in? (<https://mywaterway.epa.gov/>)
 - What is “watershed discipleship”? (www.watersheddiscipleship.org)
- Who are the people in our local community working toward climate justice, and what are they doing?
 - Try searching on your city name and “climate change” or “climate justice”
- What has the Episcopal Church already done for climate justice?
 - 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 resolutions of 2018:
 - https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2018-A011
 - https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2018-D053
 - Churchwide resources currently available: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/>

Then, if you are in person and the weather allows, go outside on your church grounds. Spread out and take five minutes in prayer, asking God to show you one next faithful step toward your unknown future. If you are online, ask people to go outside and pray (Jesus often went outside into nature to pray), setting a timer so they regather in five minutes.

Gather/Ending: Regather around the prayer table or the Zoom. Ask people to share a sentence or two about what they learned today about their place in Creation.

Prayer: To close, pray for all those gathered. Ask God to help you understand your place in Creation. Give God thanks for the people working to address climate change. Finally, offer the Prayer for the Future of the Human Race again.

Bonus Links for Learning or Sharing:

Climate Impacts

<https://projects.propublica.org/climate-migration/>

https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/climate-impacts/climate-change-impacts-state_.htmlhttps

What Churches Are Doing

www.creationjustice.org/resilienceguidedownload.html

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