

# Lesson Plans that Work

## Faith Practice and Climate Justice

### Lesson Plans for Young Adults: Lesson Six

**Theme:** I am not alone; I belong to a cloud of witnesses.

**Background:** At Pentecost we celebrate that God has given us the Holy Spirit. This gift arrived to people who were gathered to celebrate a harvest feast - people of different cultures, countries and languages. As we address the climate crisis, we can remember that God's Holy Spirit continues to call and empower people across the globe today. We are not alone in seeking to serve God and tend Creation. We are part of a cloud of witnesses. Each of us has gifts to give and a call to serve.

**Supplies Needed:** You will need a prayer table, a candle, a prayerbook, and Bibles for each participant. You will need a piece of paper and writing instrument for each participant. 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. 100, "A Collect for Mission," 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. By now, you have had multiple conversations about faith and climate. Ask everyone what has stood out to them so far. What are they still wondering about? What is giving them hope? What is still a struggle?

**Opening Prayer:** Light the candle, and pray:

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the Earth. You sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Tell the story:** If you have not yet, or if some students are new, share the "Note on Scripture" in the curriculum overview. Also, share the background above. Then invite everyone to open their Bibles to Acts 2.

Invite someone to read aloud Acts 2:1-2. Summarize what it teaches:

- Pentecost was a harvest festival that celebrated the ingathering of crops. The poor and vulnerable were able to glean from the fields, so everyone could eat enough.
- The people were supposed to bring gifts of grain and celebrate the harvest. As they did, everything changed: God the Holy Spirit showed up.

Invite someone to read aloud Acts 2:3-6. Summarize what it teaches:

- The Holy Spirit connects. People who spoke different languages could communicate.
- This is the moment we look back to as the birth of the church, because the Holy Spirit rested on the disciples of Jesus after he was raised from the dead.
- Those who saw what God was doing wondered what was going on, what it meant for them, and what they should do in response.

Invite someone to read aloud Acts 2:38-42. Summarize what it teaches:

- Peter - who used to be in denial! - now calls for others to join him in following Jesus and be baptized.
- To be baptized means to turn away from our own sin and that of a corrupt generation.
- The early church is devoted to learning, community making, eating together, and praying. They make a life together - a life that is different from, yet within - the wider culture.

**Reflection Questions:** What do you notice in this story beyond the points already made? Do you ever feel like different generations speak different languages or come from different cultures, especially as it relates to climate justice? Could the Holy Spirit work here, to help us connect? What would be different if our church kept talking and acting about climate after this series was done? What might older adults and younger adults be able to do together, if we began to imagine working across generations for the sake of future generations?

**Activity:** Watch Dr. Katharine Hayhoe on the importance of talking about climate change. (5:26) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etFPa-tVo5c>. Invite each participant to make a list of the people with whom you want to talk about climate justice, and what message you have in each of those conversations. Then, rank order the conversations from hardest to easiest. Talk with one another about what makes these conversations difficult or easy. How can you support each other in having conversations about climate? How can climate be more easily discussed in your church?

Also, follow up on your conversations from last week. Did anyone provide aid to another person to find a way forward that is different from their past? Are there any updates related to existing commitments that members have to other climate efforts?

**Gather/Ending:** Remind the group that when people are baptized, the priest makes the sign of the cross in oil on their forehead and says, “You are sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever.” The Holy Spirit is God’s gift to them, and yet it’s a little like a muscle: if you don’t use it, it’s still there, but it isn’t very strong. When you start turning to God, relying on God, and seeking the Holy Spirit’s wisdom, it’s like strengthening a muscle. Because it is your connection to God, it is a muscle worth strengthening for your own sake and the sake of the world. Ask people to share a sentence or two about what stood out to each of them today.

**Prayer:** To close, pray for all those gathered, and offer the Prayer for Mission again:

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the Earth. You sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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