

Lesson Plans that Work

Easter People: Faith Practice and Climate Justice

Lesson Plans for Youth: Lesson Two

Theme: I belong to Jesus Christ, who is God. Jesus teaches me to seek truth.

Background: When we are baptized, we are made one with Jesus Christ, who is God. This doesn't happen in a way we can see, measure, or prove. It happens in a way which is invisible, eternal, and known by faith. Our baptism is the outward sign of an inward grace. We can see baptism happening with our eyes, but our eyes can't see what baptism really means. That involves taking a risk to trust what we cannot see: the grace of God. In baptism, we receive the invisible, eternal power of the Holy Spirit in this mortal, visible world of data and measurement.

Supplies Needed: You will need a prayer table, a candle, a prayerbook, Bibles for each participant, and at least one image or icon of Jesus for your prayer table. Please try to find images that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of human communities that worship Christ. (If you have materials to teach about baptism, you can include those too.) If you are gathering in person, you will need a bowl of water, water-soluble markers, and coffee filters.

Before: Open the prayerbook to p. 254, "At Baptism," and place it on the table open to this page. Set up your prayer table with the candle, the dish of water, the image(s) of Jesus, and any materials you may have on hand to teach lessons about baptism. If you are teaching online, pull up the appropriate video on your browser and get ready to screenshare or share the link in the chat. If you are teaching in person, get the water, markers and coffee filters out.

Beginning: Gather the youth around the prayer table. Begin with wondering questions. I wonder if anyone remembers their own baptism? I wonder what happens in baptism? I wonder what baptism means?

Opening Prayer: Light your candle, tell the youth the opening prayer is adapted from the one on p. 254 in the prayerbook on the prayer table, and pray:

*Almighty God, in baptism you turn us from our old life of sin,
joining us to the life and death of Jesus Christ.
Because we have been reborn in him,
help us to live as holy people:
healers and justice makers
showing the world your way of love.
This we ask through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Tell the story: Review the previous week's discussion and share the background above. Then invite the youth to open their Bibles to John 1.

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, John 1:1-3. Summarize what it teaches:

- God is the one who began the creation of all life "in the beginning."

- “The Word” in John’s gospel refers to Jesus, who was one with God at the beginning.
- All life was made through him, including this planet and all beings.

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, John 1:4-5. Summarize what it teaches:

- Life itself began all Creation; that life is symbolized by light.
- Life is not conquered by death; light shines in darkness.

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, John 1:10-11. Summarize what it teaches:

- Jesus is God, but when Jesus was in the world, people did not recognize him

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, John 1:12-13. Summarize what it teaches:

- There were a few people who recognized and welcomed God in Jesus Christ when he came in history. Those people began the church. Generations later, here we are.
- In this broken and unjust world, God provides us a way to become children of God - one with Christ and Creation.

Reflection Questions: The climate crisis has broken the world just as sin has always broken humanity’s relationships. Jesus Christ, through whom the world was made, comes to take away the sin of the world. But often, Christians are portrayed as not caring about the planet or climate. Sometimes it seems like you are supposed to be either a person of faith or a person of science. For many Episcopalians, science and faith go hand in hand. Is that how the youth see Christianity portrayed in the news, media, or by friends? How do participants understand the interplay of science and faith in their own lives? What would be different if Christians everywhere understood our faith as mandating care for all Creation?

Online or In Person Activity for High Schoolers: Play the NASA climate data video found here (no audio): <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/global-temperature/>. Then, watch a five-minute video for older youth featuring Dr. Katharine Hayhoe (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EV-loFFlwAA>). Discuss how she connects her faith to her work for climate justice.

Online or In Person Activity for Middle Schoolers: Play the NASA climate data video found here (no audio): <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/global-temperature/>. Then, watch a three-minute video for younger youth featuring Dr. Katharine Hayhoe (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIeGJLqxxKQ&t=87s>). Discuss how she connects her faith to her work for climate justice.

Optional In Person Activity: Provide youth water soluble markers and coffee filters. Ask them to write or draw on the coffee filter paper the sins of the world that they pray would be removed (poverty, pollution, homelessness) as well as any personal sins they would pray to have removed. Have them fold the filter papers in half for anything they would like to keep private, then put them in the tub of water. Add some of your own (open, unfolded) so they can see the water wash the sins away.

Gather/Ending: Summarize what Scripture teaches: God made the entire world and made us healers in it. Science gives us data and measurements that show us that the earth is warming. Faith gives us eyes to see our place as healers in Creation. As baptized people, we need science and faith to understand and act in the world.

Prayer: To close, offer the Prayer at Baptism again, either in the words of the prayerbook or the adaptation:

*Almighty God, in baptism you turn us from our old life of sin,
joining us to the life and death of Jesus Christ.*

Because we have been reborn in him,

help us to live as holy people:

healers and justice makers

showing the world your way of love.

This we ask through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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