

Lesson Plans that Work

Easter People: Faith Practice and Climate Justice

Lesson Plans for Youth: 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 gathering in person, you will need clipboards, paper and writing instruments for each youth.

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. If gathering in person, figure out where the youth can safely go to do the discovery activity seeking elements of nature. If gathering on Zoom, prepare a way to screen share the five questions for the online activity by making a Google Slide or other shareable document.

Beginning: Ask the youth if they have spent a night outside. Have they watched the sunrise or the sunset? What is different about watching the sunrise or sunset instead of turning on a light?

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

*O God, you have given humans great power over the earth;
Teach us reverence before life's mysteries,
Give us new insight into your purpose for our species,
And new wisdom and determination to find a future
That is aligned with your will for all Creation,
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. Remind the youth that the Bible is an outdoor book - it was recorded by people who lived outdoors far more than we do. Then invite the youth to open their Bibles to Psalm 104:14-24.

Read aloud, or invite youth 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.

Read aloud, or invite youth 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.

Read aloud, or invite youth 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.

Read aloud, or invite youth 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 the youth to turn to Psalm 24. To conclude the Bible study portion, read aloud, or invite youth 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 Questions: How have you gotten to know and love God's Creation here where you live? Are there outdoor spaces that matter to you? Are there people you know in our community making a difference to mitigate climate change and care for Creation?

Online Activity: Zoom Challenge

Ask the youth to message the chat with the answers to these questions:

1. What time was sunrise today?
2. What time is sunset today?
3. What watershed do we live in?
4. What is one way we know climate change is real?
5. Who is one person in our state working to address climate change?

As they share their answers, keep track and award a virtual prize (imaginary gold trophy, Zoom applause and their name in the public chat) to everyone who completes the challenge. Also, discuss the answers they provide for the last three questions.

In Person Activity: Get Outside

Give each youth a clipboard with a piece of paper and a writing instrument. Send them outside on your church grounds. Have them write down the names of every natural being they see or know. Challenge them to find at least ten things that God made, that our lives depend on. As they come back, compile one big list of everything they discovered, and bring it to the gathering time.

Gather/Ending: Compile the answers from your activity into a prayer list. Ask God to help you understand how to care for the watershed or the elements of nature that the youth discovered on church grounds. Give God thanks for the people working to address climate change. Conclude with prayer.

Prayer: To close, offer the Prayer for the Future of the Human Race again, either in the words of the prayerbook or the adaptation:

*O God, you have given humans great power over the earth;
Teach us reverence before life's mysteries,
Give us new insight into your purpose for our species,
And new wisdom and determination to find a future
That is aligned with your will for all Creation,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Bonus Links for Learning or Sharing:

Climate Impacts

New Climate Maps Show a Transformed United States: <https://projects.propublica.org/climate-migration/>

Climate Change Impacts by State: https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/climate-impacts/climate-change-impacts-state_.htmlhttps

What Churches Are Doing

Faithful Resilience Guide: www.creationjustice.org/resilienceguidedownload.html

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Published by the Department of Faith Formation of The Episcopal Church, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

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