

Lesson Plans that Work

Easter People: Faith Practice and Climate Justice

Lesson Plans for Youth: 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. If you are doing the in-person activity, you will need a bunch of red stickers, about three times as many as you have youth (to play three times).

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. If you are gathering in person, figure out where you will play "Fire" and set it up accordingly.

Beginning: By now, you have had multiple conversations with youth about faith and climate. Ask them what has stood out to them so far. What are they still wondering about? Are they seeing a way that faith and science together can make a difference?

Opening Prayer: Light the candle, tell the students the prayer is for the mission of the church and many Episcopalians pray it daily. 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 the youth to open their Bibles to Acts 2.

Read aloud, or invite youth 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.

Read aloud, or invite youth 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.

Read aloud, or invite youth 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: Do you ever feel like youth and adults 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 adults and youth be able to do together, if we began to imagine working across generations for the sake of future generations?

Online Activity: Watch Dr. Katharine Hayhoe on the importance of talking about climate change.(5:26) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etFPa-tVo5c>. Ask everyone to make a list of the people they want to talk about climate change with OR a list of why they don't feel comfortable talking about climate change yet. Then ask them to private message the leaders to let them know what list they made and why. They should ask for any help or prayer they would like to receive. (Online platforms allow for shared leadership in groups. Please select that option and also archive the conversations.)

In Person Activity: Play "Fire"

Find a wide-open location where youth can move around freely. Pick one youth to be the Fire Starter and set up a place in the room that holds the red stickers which symbolize fire. The Fire Starter gets a red sticker on them and gets red stickers to put on other youth. Once a youth gets tagged with a red sticker, they join the Fire Starter in tagging other youth, using the stickers in reserve. If this goes quickly, you can play it more than once with the last person to be tagged beginning as the Fire Starter in the next round.

(credit: <https://ministrytoyouth.com/youth-group-lessons-on-pentecost/>)

Gather/Ending: Remind the youth 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.

Prayer: To close, offer the Prayer for Mission again:

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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.*

Written by The Rev. Nurya Love Parish, Plainsong Farm

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