

Lesson Plans that Work

Easter People: Faith Practice and Climate Justice

Lesson Plans for Youth: Lesson Seven

Theme: Our church is meant to cultivate resurrection hope together.

Background: This series may be over, but the climate crisis is not. As youth together with the wider church, are there next steps you would like to explore to live your faith as baptized servants of Jesus Christ in the world shaped by climate emergency? How might your church be a witness to Christ, willing to walk by faith to tend and heal God's creation?

Supplies Needed: You will need a prayer table, a candle, a prayerbook, and Bibles for each participant. If you are gathering in person, you will also need index cards/post it notes (use post-it notes if they will stick to the walls of your gathering space) and writing utensils for each person.

Before: Prepare your prayer table. Open the prayerbook to p. 101, "A Collect for Mission," and place it on the table open to this page. Set out the materials for the final activity.

Beginning: Tell the students this is the last day of our curriculum, but it doesn't have to be the last day of our conversation. Some of them may be ready to move on from climate, and others may feel like you've just begun. Let them know that before the lesson ends there will be time to share their hopes and dreams for what might be possible in the church to practice faith and move toward climate justice.

Opening Prayer: Light the candle, tell the students the prayer is from the prayerbook for the mission of the church and many Episcopalians pray it every Friday. Pray:

*Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love
On the hard wood of the cross
that everyone might come within
the reach of your saving embrace:
So clothe us in your Spirit
that we, reaching forth our hands in love,
may bring those who do not know you
to the knowledge and love of you;
for the honor of your Name. 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 1 Peter.

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, 1 Peter 1:3-4. Summarize what it teaches:

- The resurrection of Christ from the dead teaches Christians a new way of life.

- We inherit more than the mistakes and unintended consequences of our ancestors which are destroying the life of the earth.
- We inherit and are meant to demonstrate the grace of God, which can't be destroyed.

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, I Peter 1:13-16. Summarize what it teaches:

- Christians are called to reflect the holiness of God - to care for the whole of Creation.
- The normal patterns we have inherited that do not give life to Creation are not of Christ.
- To live faithfully, we have to prepare, act, learn, and be willing to change our ways.

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, I Peter 2:4-5. Summarize what it teaches:

- Each one of our lives is a building block for the reign of God, the well-being of Creation.
- Together we are meant to manifest a way of life that is healing and holy.
- Each person's living stone is unique, but we share a call to be living stones together.

Reflection Questions: When have you seen our church or another church show the love of God? Have you ever seen our church or another church show the love of God for anything except humans? How does our church show the love of God for the rest of God's Creation?

In-Person Activity: Pass out index cards/post-it notes and pens/pencils to each youth. First, ask them to brainstorm their wishes for the adults in the church. What do they wish the adults would understand or change? Gather the index cards/Have the youth put the post-it notes on the wall and read them out loud. Then, ask them to brainstorm their wishes for themselves. What do they wish they understood themselves, or knew how to change? Gather the index cards/Have the youth put the post-it notes on the wall and read them aloud. Is there any one thing that stands out as a next step for your group? Might the group want to explore an intergenerational project with adults beyond the youth leaders? Decide if you want to commit your next meeting to exploring these ideas further. Include their wishes as prayer requests in the closing prayer.

Online Activity: Ask the youth to message the leaders their wishes for adults in the church. Give them three minutes of silence to add at least three wishes. Copy/paste their wishes into a document. Then repeat the process with their wishes for themselves. This encourages them to share honestly but anonymously what they wish could be possible in the church and for themselves. Finally, screen share their document. Ask if there is anything that stands out as a next step for your group and if the group is interested in exploring an intergenerational project with adults beyond the youth leaders. Decide if you want to commit your next meeting to exploring these questions further. Include their wishes as prayer requests in the closing prayer. (Online platforms allow for shared leadership in groups. Please select that option and also archive the conversations.)

Gather/Ending: Climate justice and faith practice aren't a one-and-done. Both will be before us for a lifetime. But as disciples of Jesus, we aren't alone in either. And we don't have to be in despair. God calls, equips, and empowers us as agents of healing and teaching. We can make a difference alone and together, by listening and learning, together and separately.

Prayer: Begin by lifting up the wishes they offered in the closing activity. Give thanks to God for the learning you have done together over the last seven weeks. Then conclude with the Prayer for Mission:

*Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love
On the hard wood of the cross
that everyone might come within
the reach of your saving embrace:
So clothe us in your Spirit
that we, reaching forth our hands in love,
may bring those who do not know you
to the knowledge and love of you;
for the honor of your Name. Amen.*

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