

Lesson Plans that Work

Easter People: Faith Practice and Climate Justice

Lesson Plans for Middle School & High School

SERIES OVERVIEW

Background and Goal: This lesson is part of a series of seven lessons originally written for Easter season 2021, but can be taught at any time of year. As you teach, please be aware:

- The curriculum assumes that adults and youth are familiar with the basic facts about climate change: *it is real, it is human-caused, it is a long-range consequence of the industrial revolution (when society began to burn fossil fuels), the impacts are serious and those impacts unjustly fall on the poorest and most vulnerable.* If you are not sure that your students are familiar with these facts, begin by reviewing them. Here are some resources you can use:
 - A short, engaging video about the basics of climate change: (4:37) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOht6qmuG-k>
 - Short BBC video about churches and climate, including the quote “It becomes ever clearer that climate change is the greatest challenge that we and future generations face” - Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Justin Welby (2:59) <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/science-environment-56001191>
 - A video from a teenager explaining environmental justice: (2:48) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lo-suK65Llo>
 - A video from a leading youth climate activist making connections between the pandemic and climate change: (5:33) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfd9FE0Intc>
- The climate crisis is experienced as an existential issue for some middle and high school students. Their adulthood will be shaped by the challenges of the earth’s changing climate unless policymakers and people make significant change.
- People in this age range may be angry that adults who have had decades to address the climate crisis have largely failed to do so. They may wonder why the church has failed along with other institutions. Feel free to share that some within The Episcopal Church have been working on climate for a long time. Examples:
 - General Convention resolution of 1973 https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=1973-B106
 - General Convention resolution of 2006: https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2006-C018
 - General Convention resolution of 2018: https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2018-A011
 - Churchwide resources currently available: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/>
- Middle and high schoolers are independent learners and creatives. The goal of this series is to provide resources to support their growth in love of God and neighbor according

to the teachings of Jesus Christ, that they may use their gifts and skills inspired by the Holy Spirit for the healing of the world.

A Note to Adult Leaders: In the Nicene Creed we say “We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.” We don’t say that we believe in a perfect church or that adult leaders have all the answers. As you are bold to teach, you are practicing your own faith that God continues to breathe life into a holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

A Note on Scripture: This curriculum is largely a Bible study. Youth need to understand the Bible and see how it connects to today’s issues. This is part of the path of discipleship. If they read the Bible themselves, they can experience it directly. They also need to be taught its meaning for their lives, so they can consider the tradition they inherit.

As you begin, it is helpful to examine the lens through which you see Scripture. As the author, this is how I see Scripture: The older stories (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament) reveal both God and the indigenous wisdom of the ancient people of Israel. This is rooted in a specific place and a specific people. The newer stories (Christian Scriptures/New Testament) reveal God to all humanity. They are centered on the person of Jesus Christ and the meaning of his life, death and resurrection. Jesus Christ was born in and to the people of Israel. He is both a bridge person from God to humanity and a bridge person from Israel to all tribes and nations.

Scripture is sacred story in which we find ourselves and discover what it means to be human. We need the wisdom of Scripture and the facts of science both for life today. Students will learn the science of climate change in school. In church, we need to teach the wisdom of Scripture.

Overarching Theme: *As disciples of Jesus Christ, we seek truth and practice faith.*

The truth is that climate change is real, human-caused, destructive to people and places, and a long-range unintended consequence of the industrial revolution. Its impacts are being experienced already - causing unjust harm to peoples around the globe.

Our faith is that God has conquered sin and death through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As members of Christ’s body we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to act as witnesses of God’s power in the world. Practicing faith means seeking a way of life that brings healing to planet and people. We do this individually and collectively as disciples.

A Virtual Formation Note: Each lesson following assumes a central “prayer table.” If you are leading these lessons at home/online, just gather the items listed and show them to the students online.

Written by The Rev. Nurya Love Parish, Plainsong Farm

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

© 2021 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.

All rights reserved.