

Letters for Creation

Church Youth (11s-18s)

Introduction

This resource aims to provide activities and reflections to help your church youth group explore the issue of climate justice from a faith perspective, providing a creative opportunity for them to use their voice within your church and beyond. You can pick and choose from the activities and resources we have provided. You may wish to do some of these over the course of a few different sessions, or to do one longer session. You can adapt these ideas for your context and may wish to supplement with your own ideas! The important thing is that you make space to learn about and reflect on climate justice. This resource is the perfect tool to prepare your youth group for making some Letters for Creation (more information on that is provided at the end of this resource).

Key principle

We have written these resources with a view to creating open spaces for dialogue and exploration of the ideas and themes. It is not our place to force young people to think, feel or believe a certain way; we aim to provide questions and some learning to help explore those questions together.



Theme One - Justice, Jesus, & the Bible

What is justice and what does the Bible/Jesus have to say about it? This first theme is intended to provide a foundational understanding of justice more broadly. *It may be that the young people you work with already feel comfortable with the relationship between justice and their faith – if this is the case, skip straight to theme two: climate justice.*

Starter Activity suggestions

Obstacles to Justice

If you have space, set up a small 'obstacle course'. Create between four and six barriers that the young people have to cross. In order to pass the barrier players must roll a 6 on a dice; however, each person is given a different number of dice to start with (one person will have one die, the next two, and so on). If you are given more dice, you still only need to roll one 6 to progress.

- This game is designed to highlight some of the inequalities present in our world, determined by things like: where you are born, where you live, the colour of your skin, your gender, how wealthy you are and more.
- It isn't a perfect analogy, but once you have played the game a few times and hopefully had a bit of fun amid the chaos, make some time to discuss the game. Ask the young people if the game has any similarity to reality. Was it fair/unfair? *Should* the world be a fair place? Does it matter to God how fair the world is? This doesn't need to be a long discussion but is important grounding for the session.

The Rigged Chocolate Game

It's a youthwork classic – the chocolate game! Have a bar of chocolate, a pair of gloves, a hat, a scarf, and a knife and fork for each player, plus a bunch of 6-sided dice. This is a classic game: when a player rolls a 6, they have to put the gloves, hat and scarf on, pick up their knife and fork, and cut and eat chocolate - until someone else rolls a 6, when they have to take the hat, gloves, and scarf and put them on etc. The twist here is that, rather than having one die that is passed around for people to roll, each player has their own dice, with unequal amounts of dice distributed amongst players (some players will have one each, while others will have two or three). This means that the players with more dice have a higher probability of rolling a 6. The game is therefore rigged to give those with more dice have more chance to eat the chocolate.

- As above, after the game has finished, spend a moment reflecting on the fairness of the game and how it is reflective of the world. Having more dice doesn't only give that player a higher probability of rolling a 6, it also means that



other players have a reduced length of time to try and eat the chocolate. This demonstrates the interconnectedness of privilege and disadvantage.

Building blocks of Justice

Split your group into three teams. Give one team some plastic building blocks (such as Duplo/Lego), give another team wooden blocks (such as Jenga), and another a pack of cards. Each team has to build a tower that is tall and doesn't fall over. They have two minutes to build it.

- As above, reflect with the group how the different building materials are representative of privilege/disadvantage in the world around us.

Video and Discussion

Watch this video on Justice by The Bible Project on [YouTube](#).

After you have watched the video, create space for the young people to share their thoughts and feelings:

- Did they agree or disagree with what was said in the video?
- How do they feel? Inspired? Hopeful? Scared?
- Make sure you ask why they feel the things they do (there is no 'wrong' emotional response, and the young people should be reassured of this – acting on issues of justice can feel daunting and scary whether they affect us directly or not).

Short Bible Study: Love Your Neighbour

Read Mark 12:28-34.

Context: Mark 12 is prefaced by a hostile interaction with authorities (priests and elders). The subsequent interactions between Jesus and the Priests, Pharisees and Elders are attempts to trap Jesus. The Priests, Pharisees and Elders were people of authority and power, and therefore Jesus' response can be seen as a challenge to the systems of power and privilege at the time.

Questions to help with the reflection:

- Does Jesus' response to the question of the most important commandment make sense?
- By offering two commandments, is one more important than the other?
- Is loving your neighbour connected to loving God? Why?
- What does loving our neighbour look like? Who is our neighbour?
- Going a bit deeper – compare Mark 12:28-34 with Mathew 22:34-40
 - Are there any differences? What are the implications of any differences?



Theme Two - Climate Justice & Care for Creation

What does justice have to do with climate? How does it relate to the Christian faith?

It is our intention that this session is focused on positive visions of hope and change; we do not want to create feelings of anxiety or apathy. Climate anxiety is an increasingly prevalent issue for many young people – as you lead the young people through this session, try to be aware that some of the young people you work with may be struggling with climate anxiety. It is important to communicate that the causes of - and solutions to - climate change are not down to individuals, but about all of us working together. Climate change is driven by systemic problems, and its solutions are in people working together to change those systems. Remind the group that all over the world, people in every sphere are working hard to combat climate change.

Ahead of the session you may want to invite the young people to bring an image with them that reflects Care for Creation for the bible study activity.

Introductory Video

Start this theme by watching [this](#) short clip from the BBC TV programme **Ade on the Frontline of Climate Change**. The clip details some of the wider justice issues from the perspective of communities in the Solomon Islands. The key part of this clip is that it highlights that the Solomon Islands, like many islands in the Pacific, are bearing the brunt of climate change though they have contributed very little to the greenhouse gases driving climate change.

Ice Breaker Game

Same Storm, Different Boats

This is an introductory game to help tease out the idea that climate change is having unequal impacts around the world. The poorest communities, who have done the least to cause climate change, are suffering first and worst from its impacts.

- To play *Same Storm, Different Boats*, divide your group into small teams – but make sure they aren't all even in size. Some teams should be in pairs, with others being a 3 or a 4.
- Give each team a piece of old newspaper; this paper is their boat. All team members have 30 seconds to arrange themselves on their island with no part of



their body touching the floor. After 30 seconds, eliminate any players who are not completely on their 'boats'.

- Once you have checked to see if all their team members are on their newspaper, you should tear a piece of their boat off, making it smaller, and give them 30 seconds again to get everyone onto their boat and repeat the process, making the 'boat' smaller each time.

Alternatively, you can play a longer game called [Forest Foods Forever](#), with a more serious conversation at the end. This game places teams as Bolivian villagers in the Amazon, trying to make sure they have enough food to survive and needing to adapt to climate-related challenges.

Short Discussion Activity

Split the young people into groups and ask them to discuss and write down on flip-chart paper the ways that climate change is a justice issue.

Some examples you can offer if they get a bit stuck:

- *Historic responsibility – the poorest communities in the world have contributed the least towards climate change, but have been living with the consequences for generations. Developed nations in the 'global north', like the UK and the USA, have contributed the most towards climate change, exploiting planet and people to gain huge amounts of wealth.*
- *Gender – women and girls are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Often (though of course not always!), women play the role of primary care-giver within a family and/or community, meaning it is often their responsibility to gather food and water. Additionally, as climate change is displacing communities, it leaves women and girls more vulnerable to abuse.*
- *Age – older people, who have lived in an era when greenhouse gases rose sharply, will not have to live with the worst impacts of climate change.*
- *Geographic – those living in the 'global south' (which also tends to correlate with a lack of material wealth) will experience the worst risks and impacts of climate change – having contributed the least towards climate change.*

After they have had a chance to feed back, ask them to discuss and write down the different groups of people they are aware of who are either working to minimise climate change or who have power to make change. They may want to discuss the role of Christians and faith in this conversation too.

Bible Study: Caring for Creation



Read Genesis 1:1-24 & 2:15.

For this exercise we have opted to focus on Genesis 2:15. This passage is crucial in contextualising the Genesis 1:28 statement that humans are to 'rule' over creation. It is easy to think of our responsibility to have rule or have dominion as the same as domination – i.e. exploiting the natural world and all living things for our gain. However, Genesis 2:15 makes it clear that our responsibility is to work the land and take care of it.

The purpose of this study and reflection is to consider our responsibility and duty of care for creation – not only the natural world, but also our fellow humans as part of creation. Climate change – and its impact on affected people – is a consequence of the way societies and economies have developed over the past few hundred years. We have collated some images for the young people to look at and reflect on that we hope will enable the young people you work with to consider what care for creation looks like [see *appendix A*]. If you have asked the young people to bring images of caring for creation with them, ask them to share the images they brought with them and include them in the reflection.

Theme Three - Good News in Action: how does our faith shape what we do and say?

What relationship is there between what Jesus and the Bible have to say about justice, and what we do and say? We hope this theme helps to build confidence in some of the ways we can, as Christians, help to create change for the common good. Some of the skills can be directly employed as part of the Letters for Creation project (for more information take a look at the [Impact Toolkit](#)).

Ice-breaker Game

Sit everyone in a circle and then ask one person to leave the room. While they are out of the room, choose someone to be the leader; the leader has to start a rhythm (e.g. by clapping their hands and then their knees), and everyone else has to copy them. Every 15/20 seconds, the leader needs to change up the rhythm slightly and everyone else has to pay enough attention to copy. (Once the rhythm has started you can invite the person who is out of the room to return and stand in the middle – they have 3 guesses to identify who the leader is).



- After the game, take a moment to think as a group about what leading and following means. What skills did they have to use? Did anyone not work as part of the team? What impact did it have?

Game: In the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

This game is a bit like charades. In pairs, they need to act out situations in the manner of the Fruit of the Spirit. Get one person to leave the room; the rest of you should pick a characteristic of the Fruit of the Spirit. Once you have decided on one as a group, ask the person out of the room to come back in. They have to come up with situations to ask one or two people to act out 'in the Fruit of the Spirit' to help them guess the fruit. E.g. 'Natalie and Jacob, could you cook a meal in the Fruit of the Spirit?' Natalie and Jacob would then act out cooking a meal, but they can't say which fruit they are acting but they can talk. Play for a few rounds.

- The purpose of this game is to give space for the young people to reflect on **how** we do things as part of the solution. What does change-making look like from the perspective of being a disciple of Jesus?
- This game certainly has its limitations as the Fruit of the Spirit isn't a pick and mix of behaviours/characteristics! However, it is important to consider what these behaviours look like in different contexts. It's also important to consider how we develop those behaviours intentionally as part of our discipleship.

After the game, spend a bit of time exploring how the Fruit of the Spirit makes us distinctive as disciples of Jesus. How does the Fruit of the Spirit show itself in our behaviour in different contexts? What would it look like if we were campaigning for change? What about the limits of some of these behaviours? When, if ever, is there a time not to be patient? Was Jesus patient all of the time?

Activities to explore change making!

Below are a couple of activity ideas to help the young people to explore some different aspects of change-making. You may want to get them working on different activities in groups and sharing their ideas after - or pick one that feels more relevant and do the activity all together.

Narrative

Thinking about how we communicate about climate justice is important. So for this activity we suggest you source some different news articles about climate change/justice and ask the young people to evaluate them. Note: consideration of climate anxiety is important here! Select articles that are appropriate to your audience, and remember that you might not necessarily know if someone is suffering with climate



anxiety, so err on the side of caution. Wellbeing is key and we want this activity to engage people, not alarm them.

- What do you like?
- What don't you like?
- What is the core message? Is it hopeful? Fatalistic?
- Imagine your youth group has hosted a Letters for Creation art exhibition focused on climate justice – what would you want a news article about the event to say? (This doesn't need to be detailed, a headline is fine.)
- How might you use local press or church press to share your ideas on climate justice?

Writing a Letter to your local politician

Local politicians have a responsibility to represent the needs and views of their local constituents (the people who live in the area they represent), so writing them letters can be really useful.

- There are some key pointers in the impact toolkit.
- For this exercise, get a small group of young people to write a letter to their local MP (it may be useful to encourage them to spend a few minutes looking up who their MP is and finding a bit out about them – this information can be found at www.theyworkforyou.com).
- Once they have written their letters, read through them together. Ask them to identify things that have been done well and look at things that could be done differently (differently doesn't always mean 'bad' but there is always room for improvement!)

Negotiation

This is a light-hearted role-play game that gets young people thinking about how to have strategic conversations with people who hold decision-making power and influence. Each player has 3 moves and each 'move' is a statement/question to try and convince the other party of their proposition. Rule: the word 'no' is banned, instead you must construct a statement/question that moves the conversation closer to your aim.

- The purpose of this game is to explore negotiation and to recognise the way that different interests can align and positive outcomes (that might not be what we wanted when we started) can be found by negotiating with people who hold power. This game will help the young people to think about the perspectives and interests of different groups and to think about how they can work towards their aims through negotiation and compromise.
- This game can be played by two individuals or by two groups who work together.



- Give each group/person a few minutes to think about their role and answer some of the questions provided.

Scenario one

Group/Person A: you are a group of young people at a church. You would like money from the church to be able to develop and improve your youth club. Consider: what do you want to use the money for? How will it be of benefit to the youth and the wider church? What are the possible challenges/obstacles to you giving money to the youth group? Are there other ways that you can resource the youth group? How much money do you need?

Group/Person B: you are a church leader responsible for managing the money of the church. You want to support young people but have lots of competing needs for church resources. Consider: What are the different things you might do instead of giving them money from the church budget? How much of the budget would you be willing to give, if any?

Scenario two

Group/Person A: You are representing your youth group. You have an opportunity to speak to the elders/PCC/church members about divesting the church from fossil fuels (if they are not familiar with what 'divestment' means, explain that it means switching money away from investments where money is used in ways that make climate change worse, such as investments in companies that fund fossil fuel extraction, into ones where their money won't have a harmful impact on the environment). Consider: What kind of action do you want them to take? What might potential compromises be? What are the interests of this group? How might you communicate/frame the issue alongside their interests?

Group/Person B: you are the elders/PCC/church members. You are interested in the life of the church, and keen to know how the issue of climate change can be understood, communicated and implemented through the church community. Your group also has a responsibility to make sure the building is looked after and has electricity and heating etc. within budget. What might be some of your concerns?

Scenario three

Group/Person A: Your youth group has hosted a Letters for Creation art exhibition and your local politician has agreed to come to the event. How can you use the platform to influence the politician? What do you want them to do? What party do they belong to? What's their voting record?

Group/Person B: You are the local politician (if you want to find out more about them, visit www.theyworkforyou.com). What are your interests? You don't necessarily want to



make firm commitments, but you do care about public opinion – what compromises can you make?

TOP TIPS for negotiation

- Consider the other person/group's interests/perspective
- Try to align your interests to their interests
- Negotiation isn't always a win/lose situation – you can create win/wins.
- Do listen to what the other person is saying
- Be willing to compromise to find acceptable alternatives
- Failure to compromise can lead to a lose/lose.
- Be confident in yourself – you belong in the conversation!

Letters for Creation next steps:

Letters for Creation: a fantastic opportunity to make some art and raise your voices on the theme of climate justice

Don't forget to do some art-making with the young people you work with! Our Letters for Creation project is a climate justice prophetic art project aimed at enabling children and young people to creatively express their hopes and visions for a more sustainable and just world. It is a collaborative project with the Anglican Communion Environmental Network and the CofE Environment Programme. We have worked with children in the UK and across the world to develop some beautiful pieces of art that capture their concerns and hopes about the climate crisis. These artworks are available to order as a poster and postcard set, to inspire your pupils to raise their voices with their own 'letters for creation'.

We invite schools and churches everywhere to hold Letters for Creation exhibitions – and to create their own artworks – so that the prophetic voices of children and young people can be heard and engaged with by the wider community.

We have a creative facilitation guide: [Caring Deeply, Dancing Freely](#) to help unlock creativity and warm people up to making some fantastic art.

For ideas for how you can use Letters for Creation to support the young people you work with to raise their voice for climate justice then check out our [Impact Toolkit](#).

To pre-order your poster pack, email: schools@christian-aid.org



Appendix A: Photos for Care for Creation Bible Study.



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2. & 3. Artworks created by students in Panama for the Letters for Creation project.
4. Photo taken by Christian Aid at the Glasgow Global Day of Action demonstration during COP26.
5. Photo taken by [Karsten Wurth via unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com/photos/Karsten-Wurth)
6. Photo taken by [Ashraf Hendricks via Groundup.org.za.](https://groundup.org.za/) the photo shows young people in South Africa protesting against climate change.