



# CIYD

# CLIMATE JUSTICE TOOLKIT

TALKS FOR YOUTH GROUPS, SCHOOL  
ASSEMBLIES AND CHURCH SETTINGS

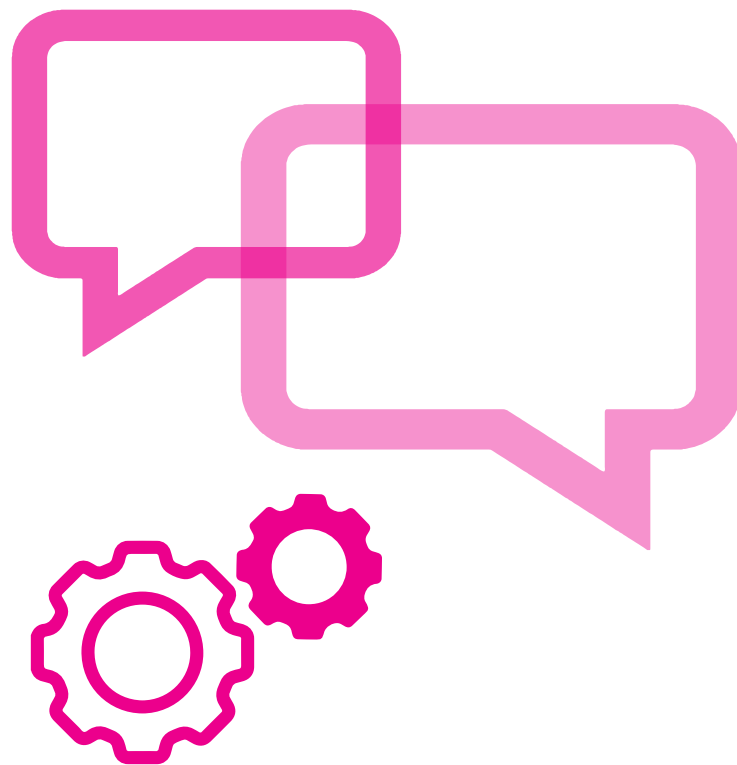


## Introduction

Welcome to this collection of talks for youth groups, assemblies and churches designed to be used as a companion to the CIYD Climate Justice Toolkit resource.

The talks have been contributed from both Ireland and around the world. In particular we wish to thank the Anglican Alliance, Green Anglicans, National Bible Society of Ireland, The Church's Ministry of Healing, Renew our World and Tearfund for contributing to this resource.

Each talk includes an opening activity, a talk, questions for reflection and discussion and a prayer. Some of the talks have accompanying Powerpoints. These can be found on the CIYD website or by emailing [steve@ciyd.org](mailto:steve@ciyd.org)



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1

# WHOLE AND HOLY - REIMAGINING OUR CONNECTION TO THE EARTH AND TO SCRIPTURE

Contributed by **Julie McKinley**, National Bible Society of Ireland



## About Julie and the National Bible Society of Ireland

I live in Rathmines in Dublin and have four amazing children. I work for the National Bible Society of Ireland as the Development Officer, where our passion is to enable people to connect with Scripture in a meaningful way. Our worldwide motto is 'The Bible for Everyone' - meaning everyone should have an opportunity to access the amazing stories contained in the pages of the Bible.



## Opening Activity

For this talk, a handful of clay or soil is useful. The idea is for those hearing/engaging with the story, to touch and feel the earth and realise humanity's deep connectedness to it. Perhaps a little bag of earth from your garden. A lovely exercise, if there is a follow up session, is for the children or participants to bring a bag of soil from their own homes/gardens and put it into a spot in the school, and place their unique handprint on the soil.

A second idea would be to take a seed - an apple seed for example, and hold it to reflect on its invisible potential, yet ability to produce an orchard, and consider this in relation to Genesis 1:11-12 - when God speaks to the earth to bring forth vegetation and the earth responds. The Hebrew word for 'good' (*טוֹב טוֹב*) carries with it the sense of embedded potential bursting forth. We each carry these seeds within us, embedded by God.



**Bible reading:** Genesis 2:5-7



## Talk

Two Hebrew words in the opening story of Genesis teach us of the profound relationship between humans and the earth, *Adam* and *adamah*. The first means 'human being' or 'earthling', the second means 'earth' (the stuff the Adam was made from and then infused with holy Breath). These two words immediately teach us that human beings and the earth are intimately acquainted and deeply intertwined.

Read Genesis 2:5-7.

The relationship between humans and the earth is at once complex, but also simple. Dust and breath mingle together to create a human, according to Scripture. The names given to people or places in the Hebrew Scriptures often have a deeper name than what might appear in the English. For example, *Eden* means 'delight'. The Garden of Eden is the 'Garden of Delight' which gives us a beautiful starting point for life. And one of the functions of the humans in this Garden is to guard it and tend it (Gen 2:15). We can ask ourselves, what needs careful tending in my own life? What needs careful tending in the world?

As we consider this, we might also consider the first question in the Bible. It is when God is walking in the Garden in the cool of the day, and calls to Adam *where are you?* (Gen 3:8) This question of *where are you* invites honesty. God doesn't require anything here other than an honest response and desires connection, even after we have made a mistake.

For each of us, asking this can be a new beginning. A possibility to walk out of shame and hiding, and toward the One who made us. To walk toward His gaze and respond to the call which invites us out of hiding. **Where are you? Where am I?** Only you can answer that today. But it is important you do - it might just be a new beginning.



### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Ask yourself - *How can I be more connected to the earth today? How can I connect more with my breath, and recognise the Holy One who breathes life all around me?*
- If you have a small patch of garden or some planter boxes, plant some herbs or vegetables from a seed. To eat something you have grown from a seed reconnects you the land and the idea that *Adam* and *adamah* are deeply connected in the Biblical text. It also connects us with those who are directly affected by soil erosion and reminds us of the importance of the biodiversity of our soil.



### Prayer

As we say out loud praises of how good you are Lord God, we are reminded of how the wind blows like your Voice, which walked in the Garden in the cool of the day (Gen 3:8). We are reminded of the bright yellow glow of the sunflower, which nods its head as it dances in the summer breeze. We are reminded of the changing seasons, which bring new pathways of certain stars. Teach us to hear and see You afresh, as we listen to the rhythm of the sea. Teach us to trust You, with trust that is as firm as the oldest of mountains. Teach us to spend time with you in nature, as Jesus did. Teach us to guard the places we live and also to guard each other. Teach us to hear and see You reflected in the words of the Bible stories we read and remember, and in the beautiful world around us. **Amen.**

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## ALL IN THE SAME BOAT

Adapted from the CIYD Caring for Creation Resource Pack<sup>1</sup>

.....

'How many are your works, Lord. In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures'  
~Psalm 104:24



### Opening Activity

Ask the group what a conservationist is/does. Then ask if they can name any conservationists. Ideas might include Sir David Attenborough, Dr Ameer Abdulla, Annette Fayet, Dr Amy Dickman, Former US President Jimmy Carter, Gerald Durrell, Jane Goodall, Steve Irwin, Wangari Muta Maathai, Chico Mendes etc.

Ask them who is the earliest conservationist they can think of.

Would it surprise the group to know that the earliest conservationist may have been Noah. His conservation activities are recorded way back in the book of Genesis in the Bible.



**Bible reading:** Genesis 9:1-17



### Talk

We're all in the same boat. God is interested in rescuing human and non-human alike from the threat of disaster.

The ark that God instructed Noah to build was largely full of all the other species with only a very few humans on board. The animals, birds and creeping things were included to 'keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth' (Genesis 9:3) - God was committed to biodiversity and conservation of various species. Following the flood God placed a rainbow in the sky as a promise to 'every living creature on earth' not just humans (v17).

God Cares about all his creatures and God uses us in his plans. Human beings have been set apart with a particular role and calling within creation. At the time of the flood God had a plan to save people and other animals, he could have implemented that plan by himself - however he chose to use a human being - the creature made in his image to fulfil his plans. Noah was the first great conservationist.

Human beings have a job to do!



### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Do you think that you have a God given role in caring for creation?
- Was there anything new that you discovered from the story today?
- Are you familiar with the story of Noah's Ark?



### Prayer

Close your eyes and picture the words of this prayer: Creation flourishing Rivers flowing Earth blossoming Air breezing Trees swaying Iguanas lazing Oceans lapping Nightingales serenading Frogs croaking Lions roaring Octopuses grappling Urchins slinking Ravens croaking Insects buzzing Sun shining Humans loving Icicles sparkling Night glistening God smiling. **Amen.**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Climate-Pack-Revised-Final-1-1.pdf>

### 3 JUBILEE

Contributed by **Ben Niblett**, Renew Our World



#### About Ben and Renew Our World

My name is Ben Niblett, and I'm the coordinator of a global campaign of Christians working for a fairer and more sustainable world. It's called Renew Our World. I'm based at Tearfund in the UK, I used to lead their UK Campaigns team persuading Christians to speak up about the causes of poverty.



#### Opening Activity

Ask the group if any of them have a hero, a sporting hero, a movie hero etc. Ask what makes that person a hero?

Then introduce the idea that some people have a climate hero, like Ben Niblett from Renew our World.

I have a climate hero - her name is Jocabed (pronounced Hocabed) Solano, and she lives in Panama in central America. She's from an indigenous people group called the Gunadule. They have always lived on a group of islands off the coast of Panama, and life there is getting harder as the sea is rising as the climate changes. Now people's homes flood, and the soil is getting saltier with sea water that isn't good for the plants, so it's harder to make a living from farming. One day the rising water may mean they may all have to leave, but where can they go?

Jocabed came with us to the COP climate talks in Glasgow to take a message from her people and help persuade governments to do more and faster, and I remember her meeting the First Minister of Scotland to tell her that climate change really is an emergency. If nobody does anything, the Gunadule will lose their home, even though they did very little to cause the problem, that was mainly much wealthier people. Here is a picture of Jocabed wearing traditional dress in Glasgow - she gave the First Minister a traditional bead necklace. I also remember her giving a talk in a church and suddenly singing to us in Kuna halfway through, she has a beautiful voice.



**Bible reading:** Leviticus 25:1-13



*Jocabed Salano meets First minister Sturgeon at CoP26 in Glasgow*



## Talk

What is a jubilee? It's not just a 25th or 50th anniversary for an organisation or a king or queen. It was part of how God wanted Israel to live. Every 7 years everyone had a year off, a proper rest, and didn't do their main work of being a crop farmer, which was nearly everyone's main job in that time and place. They'd still have had to look after their animals, I suppose, and their children, and cook food and wash clothes and all that stuff, but it was a year off from main work, a refreshing holiday. During the sabbath year God promised the land would produce enough food for everyone. Who was everyone? Well, it means absolutely everyone, rich and poor, citizens and visitors, and not just the people either but the animals, and not just the farm animals that humans owned, but the wild animals too. God's got an eye out for them as well, and he knows that having enough food for humans partly depends on the rest of creation being in balance too - even if the Israelites didn't know that, and we tend to forget it as well.

Then after 49 years and seven lots of seven sabbath years, the 50th year was to be a jubilee year, a super-sabbath. No matter what had happened over the years before that, at the 50th year everyone was to go back to the family farm they all got when the people of Israel shared out the land originally, as equally as possible. Every 50 years, there was to be a big re-set of wealth. People could get richer or poorer in between, but this way it was limited. They also had to cancel debts and set slaves free. And all this was connected to looking after the land, because the owner of the land was God, the people were tenants.

When I'm thinking about our generation's challenge of the climate crisis, I think about the stories of people hit by more floods, droughts, wildfires and storms, and food getting harder to produce and more expensive. I also think about the damage to wildlife as the places they used to live get too warm, the seasons change, or their food supply arrives too soon or too late in the year, and how that makes the world God made less beautiful.



## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- How we live today is much more complicated than the Israelites 3,000 years ago, so what could we do equalise rich and poor in this jubilee idea?
- What can make us want to own more things than the people around us do, and when is that greedy?
- Are you surprised that the bible has instructions to have a year off, and that making sure there's enough for wild animals is part of the reason why? Would you trust God to make sure you had enough to eat in the sabbath year?



## Prayer

O God you hold our lives in your hands. You have promised to give us a new heart, and to put a new spirit in us. **We pray: renew us every day.**

Forgive us where we have failed to be good stewards and to be good neighbours.

Give us the courage to think beyond our own lives; to live and consume responsibly so that our near and far neighbours can experience their full dignity, and that we can help restore and admire the beauty of our communities and of this earth. Our God, you hold our world in your hands. You hear your creation groaning but you have promised to liberate it from its pain.

**We pray: renew our world.**

Forgive those of us who haven't used their power wisely.

Give us and our leaders the courage to think beyond our own economies; to seek genuine partnerships so that all people can experience the fullness of life, and that our planet is known to be the common home for all creation and future generations. **Amen.**<sup>2</sup>



4

## CHOOSE LIFE



Contributed by **Rachel Mash**, Green Anglicans South Africa

### About Rachel and Green Anglicans

Rev Rachel Mash is the coordinator of Green Anglicans of Southern Africa (South Africa, Eswatini- Swaziland, Namibia and Lesotho). She lives in Cape Town. The Green Anglicans movement has spread to 13 countries across Southern Africa. She is also the secretary of the global Anglican Communion Environmental Network and a steering committee member of the Season of Creation Ecumenical movement.



### A 'Rain Bomb' in Durban South Africa

Last Easter Durban was hit by a "Rain Bomb", when torrential rain fell for two days and nights with 350mm of rain pounding the Province.

Floods ravaged houses, roads and bridges, killing over five hundred people including 57 children. Twenty thousand families lost their homes and hundreds of schools and clinics were destroyed, as well as roads and electrical supplies.

Up to today many people are still living in community halls.

The flooding was made worse because of drainage systems being clogged with plastic pollution. As the oceans warm, evaporation increases and rain storms become stronger. Scientists confirm that such rain bombs are now twice as likely to occur than in prior generations, because of climate change.



**Bible reading:** Deuteronomy 30:15-18

### Talk

Our reading today is from Deuteronomy Chapter 30, The people of Israel have spent forty years wandering in the wilderness due to their disobedience and lack of faith in God. The older generation that had left Egypt has died off, and a new generation has emerged, preparing to inherit the Promised Land.

As they prepare to go into this new land - it is like God shows them a sign post - one sign post says - 'This way is life and prosperity' and the other says " this way is death and destruction"

In this passage God says that there are two ways to live - two "paths" - one that brings life and one that brings destruction. God told us to take care of this beautiful blue planet. We have done a really bad job, and now humans are causing climate change, loss of biodiversity and pollution. This is causing death and destruction for children around the world like those in Durban South Africa.

We can make so many choices – to use a plastic bag or to remember to take a cloth bag from home. To take the bus or to go by car. To turn down the heater and wear a sweater even if it is cold. To recycle or to not bother where we throw our rubbish. To ask for lots of brand new clothes or to be content with less. To eat a lot of meat or to try being vegetarian.

God says if we obey God's commands to look after the planet then we will have life in abundance and if we do not then we will see destruction.



## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Break into small groups of three. Think about a child your age who lives in Durban who lost their home, some of their family members and their school. They are staying in a community hall. How do they feel? What is life like for them?
- In your groups of three – make a list of the actions that humans do that are bringing death and destruction to the earth.
- On your own now, think of one action that you can take that brings life and prosperity . Please also write down one action that you will speak to your family about doing together. I want you to write that down , and we are going to pray together. Please hold those pieces of paper up to God.



## Prayer

Creator God, Today we hear the tears of children in other parts of the world who have been impacted by climate change. You are calling us to make a difference . A small action seems like such a tiny drop of water, but when the drops come together they form a stream and then a big river of actions that can make a difference. Bless these small actions we will take, bless the conversations we will have with our families. Use them to grow this river of actions as we act with love for our neighbours in other parts of the world. **Amen.**

## 5 BREATHTAKING BEAUTY<sup>3</sup>

Contributed by **Elizabeth Perry**, Advocacy and Communication Manager, Anglican Alliance



### About the Anglican Alliance

The Anglican Alliance serves to connect, equip and inspire the worldwide Anglican family to work for a world free of poverty and injustice and to safeguard creation.



### Opening Activity

Show an inflatable globe (the bigger the better) or if possible project a satellite image of the earth onto a screen. This is so the young people can see the earth from above and as a whole, see its beauty, see a world without political boundaries. Ask the young people to take a moment to reflect.



### About the Communion Forest<sup>4</sup>

The Communion Forest is an exciting new initiative of the Anglican Communion to join together in tree growing and ecosystem conservation, protection and restoration throughout the world.

The Communion Forest is a *worldwide* initiative made up of *local* activities that people choose themselves and carry out wherever they live. People might choose to create a new forest, but could equally choose to:

- plant trees along boundaries, roads, on church land (churchyards)
- restore a piece of waste land in a town
- create a tiny city garden
- make their churchyard a wildlife corridor
- get involved in a local conservation project
- campaign to prevent the destruction of a habitat.

*"In addressing climate change, few actions are as critical, as urgent, or as simple as planting trees. This ancient carbon-absorbing technology needs no high technology, is completely safe and is very cheap. It literally reverses the process that has led to climate change, in that as trees (and all other biomass) grow, they absorb CO<sub>2</sub> from the air, release oxygen and return carbon to its rightful location: in the soil."*

*From: The Future We Choose by Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac*



### Bible reading

A selection of verses from the end of the book of Job  
Job 38: 4-7; 16-18; Job 39: 1-4; 26-27 and Job 41: 11



### Talk

We live in a world of breath-taking beauty, astounding abundance and intricate interconnection. It is a world God declared good and loves.

We see some of this in our reading, in which God proclaims the glories of creation in a series of questions to Job. God's intimate knowledge and tender care are clear. In these verses we see the earth from God's perspective. We hear God's passionate joy – and sense God's pride - in the whole created order.

3 This reflection has an accompanying Powerpoint presentation. Please contact the CIYD team to get a copy.

4 There are accompanying slides as above

This passage reflects the deep biblical understanding that the earth, and everything in it, belongs to God and is loved by God: *Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine. (41:11)* Jesus too shows deep connection with the earth. In the gospel narratives, he is often found outdoors, fully at home in the natural world and relating to it. *"Look at the birds of the air... consider how the wildflowers grow,"* he says. *"The Kingdom of heaven,"* he says, *"is like yeast ... like a grain of mustard ...like a man scattering seed ...like a fishnet that was cast into the sea".* Jesus speaks of foxes and birds, of trees and grain, of red skies and the wind that *"blows where it will"*.

As we look at the world, what do we see? How do we see the world? How do we relate to it? Do we feel at home? Do we feel connected? Do we love it?

These questions matter because we will only act to save what we love. They matter because the climate emergency is not just a physical crisis, it is also a spiritual one... one that's to do with how people see – and therefore treat - the earth.

Many people, especially in industrialized countries, hold an extractive worldview. They see the earth as a commodity that can be used and exploited without regard for the consequences. This promotes unsustainable ways of living and is causing catastrophic harm and suffering.

However, there are other world views that take a more holistic view of the world and how we relate to it. Indigenous Peoples, especially, share a world view that is about relationship and connection, that understands the deep interconnectedness of the web of life. This is a deeply biblical way of seeing the world and leads to respect and care for the earth.

So, how do you see the world? Are you dazzled by its wonders?

In a poem that reminds me of our Job reading, the poet Mary Oliver wrote, "The multiplicity of forms! The hummingbird, the fox, the raven, the sparrow hawk, the otter, the dragonfly, the water lily! And on and on. It must be a great disappointment to God if we are not dazzled at least ten times a day"



## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What is your favourite thing in the natural world? This might be an animal, a tree or flower, a physical thing (such as a mountain or river) or something external such as the night sky.
- How do you see the world? If the young people need more guidance, suggest some of these options: something separate from day to day life; something you go into and use for relaxation; somewhere you feel at home; something you feel a part of and relate to deeply.
- The Mennonite author Rudy Wiebe wrote "In a Jesus society, you repent not by feeling bad but by thinking [and acting] different". Do you agree?



## Prayer

A prayer written by the late Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya, Swaziland, Southern Africa.

Creator God, we thank and praise you for giving us the opportunity to be co-creators with you and to ensure the sustainability of "Mother Earth", our meeting place with God.

God as a community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit teach us as the Anglican community to work together for mutual respect with one another and your creation.

We repent for our negligence leading the earth to be in peril from loss of habitats and species. Help us to be caretakers of your gifts, protecting the land from abuse, and ready to share with all in need. **Amen.**

## 6

**CARE TAKERS OF THE EARTH<sup>5</sup>**

Contributed by **Promise Salawu**,  
Renew our World Project Officer, Nigeria.

**About Promise**

I was born and I have lived in Nigeria all my life, I am passionate about seeing men and women live to fulfil their destiny and to their full potential. I work actively to see the end to injustice and desire to see righteousness in our communities.



**Bible reading:** Micah 6:8

**Talk**

Creation care and stewardship refer to the responsibility humans have to care for and protect the natural world, and when we think about the earth and how she works you cannot but be in awe and appreciation when we witness the natural world's beauty and complexity. The themes of creation care and stewardship are not just religious concepts but also have practical implications for environmental policy and management. For example, they can inform decisions about sustainable land use, wildlife conservation, and climate change mitigation. Implementing policies and practices rooted in these themes can help ensure that natural resources are preserved for future generations.

They remind us of our responsibilities as caretakers of the earth and inspire us to appreciate and protect the natural world's beauty and complexity.

**Here is Abba's Story**

Abba Gambo lives in Karshe in Kaduna State in Nigeria. Abba is married with five children, one boy and four girls aged from 10 to 22 years old. The Karshe community is a rural community with a growing population. This has led to local people clearing trees and bushes to make more space to farm the land to feed their families. As a result Abba and his community are finding it increasingly difficult to find timber for building work and fuel for cooking.



The lack of knowledge about climate change and the role trees play in restoring the environment and improving vegetation has made Abba's life very difficult and he says he feels stressed out just trying to meet his family's needs. Lack of rainfall and desertification as a result of climate change is now threatening his family's very survival.

<sup>5</sup> This reflection has an accompanying PowerPoint presentation of Abba's story. Please contact the CIYD team to get a copy.

## New Hope

Three years ago Abba heard about a new form of training in Climate Smart Agriculture. Since taking the training his life has changed in several ways. Abba's understanding of creation care has changed completely. He now intentionally cares for his environment. This has included nurturing and protecting the trees around his house along with planting new trees.

Over the past 3 years Abba has planted over 1000 palm trees on his land. He has also understood the importance of integrated farming and has started keeping chickens and goats. Abba has managed to save money by using organic droppings from the chickens and goats to reduce the amount of chemicals he applies on his farmland. This change in practice has already improved the soil on his farmland and increased its yield in just three years.

Motivated by the need to face the challenges of the changing climate and improve his livelihood, the changes Abba has made have enabled him to save money and meet his needs and that of his family.

We must recognise that the happenings in our world today are not mere stories but in fact are realities that leave many people around the world without hope for the future. Creation care is therefore not just a concept but an important part of our faith that supports the sustainability of the lives of those vulnerable people who have done the least to cause the climate crisis but are the most affected. Creation care for Christians is about fulfilling the mandate of God to love our neighbours, love justice and act justly. Our care for creation is a demonstration of our love for God and obedience to his word.

We have a choice as young people, to decide to do what is good according to Micah 6:8. We are not just going to be doing right by the people worst hit by the effects of climate change but you will be doing right by God also. Your actions matter, it may look little but its impact in the global South, your decision and actions as young people can be the beginning of global transformation. Your peers must see the world through the eyes of those of us in the global South. We must go from interceding (praying) to intervening, taking deliberate actions that solve the problem of climate change.

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion



- What can you do to support climate justice for those who are most vulnerable?
- In what ways can your individual consumption choices contribute to or challenge climate justice?
- How can you ensure that action for climate justice becomes a trend amongst your peers?

Promise adds "I believe that these questions invite you to reflect on the complex issues of climate justice, encourage you to explore your own perspectives, take action, and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable world."



## Prayer:

We are sorry oh Lord for failing to take care of your creation as you have instructed us to. We pray that our hearts will be touched to see what our actions and inactions are doing to our global neighbours. Help me to reflect and take decisions and steps that bring about climate justice. **Amen.**

## 7

**ONE BODY BUT MANY PARTS**

Contributed by Lydia Monds, Ministry Leader for the Church's Ministry of Healing: Ireland.

Church's  
Ministry  
of Healing  
✝ Ireland

**About Lydia and the Church's Ministry of Healing**

After 12 years working in a role that focused on the Church and global justice issues, I moved to this role that focuses on moving towards wholeness in Christ through supports in mental, emotional and social health and wellbeing. There are surprising overlaps between the two roles, because God has designed us for connection and for relationship and when we open up to God, we witness his healing and restoration at a cellular level, and on a global scale. I also recently qualified as a Forest School Leader – hence using a reef knot in my talk!

**Opening Activity - Working Together**

You will need Paracord - several lengths of it, each approx. half a metre. You can buy it in hardware stores. If you are cutting cord, you will need to burn the ends in order to stop it from unravelling.



You will also need to learn how to do a simple reef knot and how to teach a simple reef knot. You can have as few as 2 volunteers or as many as 20 volunteers tying one end of their cord to the other end of their neighbour's cord to form a big circle. Participants can test if they have tied the knots correctly by leaning back onto the cord in a circle of trust.

If tied correctly, a reef knot won't untie and can hold people's weight. (Also, a reef knot when rubbed together and it will loosen. If it's not a reef knot, and you shimmy the knot, it will stay knotted.) Lydia adds "I was taught the reef knot by saying 'right over left and under; left over right and through the loop.'"

Here are 2 videos that use colour coordination to teach it:



[\(384\) DIY: Tying A Reef Knot - YouTube](#)

[\(384\) How to Tie a Square Knot \(Reef Knot\) - YouTube](#)

There are more videos if you also put the words 'forest school' into a google search.

**Climate champions in Zimbabwe working together**

In my previous role, the Church of Ireland helped to fund projects all over the world that supported community development, biodiversity and climate champions in places where people were most impacted by climate change but had done the least to cause climate change.

One project in Zimbabwe brought the community together to plant trees and support beehives. The bees flourished because of the tree nurseries, the trees supported the soil and acted as flood barriers and then the bees pollinated crops and farmers there saw increased yields where before they had a lot of crop failure due to drought, soil erosion and lack of pollination.

There were also supports for local micro-businesses and more people in employment meant they were able to continue to fund the beehives and the forestry themselves, creating more sustainability. All of God's creation - humans and nature, working together and mutually benefitting from looking after each other.

See the #connect4creation resource<sup>6</sup>, which shows the project in action.



**Bible reading:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-27



## Talk

We are all interconnected because God has created us that way. Alone, we are unique, invaluable children of God. But He has also designed us for connection and belonging, not separation and isolation.

But look at the paracord - if we use up too much of ourselves (one piece of paracord tied on both sides too close to the middle) for the whole, we lose connection to ourselves and become less effective. But when we give of ourselves, listening to our own needs because we recognise our value in God's eyes, and seeking healthy connection with others, with God and with Creation, we see how those connections can strengthen us and the whole.

It's really important that we see our role in speaking out and making changes as part of a bigger movement - to be aware of our responsibility and our **'response-ability'**, otherwise we can burn out because we're not replenishing our own reserves through self-care and going to God for renewal. There can be a thin line between empathy and apathy for people who care and have big hearts. And giving and giving without tending to ourselves can make us sick. When we are working towards the healing and restoration of the whole of creation, we must see ourselves as part of that, and tend to ourselves as well, in order to keep pressing on with vision and purpose. Seeing the part we play as part of something bigger than us, helps us to keep the balance and keep the connection to self and to others and creation and to God, who sustains it all.

Similarly in nature, God has designed everything for connection. Look at the communities in Zimbabwe beginning to flourish because they tended to nature and encouraged biodiversity.

Each part can play a role in supporting the other. So instead of stepping over what we perceive as weaker or less necessary parts of God's design, we can learn how to live with nature in mutually beneficial ways. I can imagine that farmers in Zimbabwe were cutting down trees to plant crops in order to have some chance of feeding their families. But by learning to protect nature, they realised that they are connected to it by God's very hand and design and their role in protecting and supporting nature is the very role that will allow them to flourish and have enough food.

(Note: we know that in Zimbabwe, there is climate chaos beyond the control of the communities, and these adverse weather conditions are caused by over-consumption primarily in other parts of the world, yet these communities, who are working so hard to build lives that are not just about survival but about actually living, are the ones bearing the brunt of climate change.

This concept can easily be transported to Ireland in the protection of native trees and hedgerows, not as a ploy to make life more difficult for farmers - indeed they are integral leaders in this process - or to slow 'progress' but to recognise that true flourishing happens in connection and in preserving relationships to all the parts that God has designed us to live in harmony with - ourselves, Him, others and all of Creation. And we can learn so much from those who have far fewer resources but who are leading the way in preserving and promoting biodiversity - because for them, moving towards wholeness is a matter of survival.



## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What can we learn from the communities investing in biodiversity in Zimbabwe?



- How can we honour all the parts of God's creation and design - people and nature? You might want to reflect on the draw of convenience and consumption versus living with enough or the things we deem 'weaker parts' that are actually so integral to God's design.
- What steps can we take to tend to ourselves and our own needs and to nurture that connection with self and God when responding to a global crisis like Climate change? OR How can we avoid burn out and apathy from overwhelm through self care and God's care?



### Prayer

God, thank you that you value the little things, the things we might even see as inconsequential. Thank you that you see values in the parts of us that we deem weak or insignificant. Every part of us matters to You.

Thank you that you see value in the parts of your creation that are easily overlooked and you have made us for interconnection – with the trees, with the soil, with the bugs and the bees, and with each other.

Continue to help us to create healthy connections – to ourselves, to You, to each other and to your creation. May we live lives that work for justice and healing and tend to it in our own beings and in the world. **Amen.**

8

# WE ALL HAVE A PART TO PLAY



Contributed by Tearfund Ireland

### About Tearfund Ireland

Tearfund Ireland is a Christian development and relief organisation committed to the holistic transformation of the most marginalised and vulnerable in specific regions around the world. Working in relationship with local partners and the church, we enable people to lift themselves out of poverty and respond with humanitarian relief when disasters or emergencies arise. As a Christian organisation, we resource the Church in Ireland, to practically demonstrate their faith by engaging in sustainable development, pursuing biblical justice and advocating on behalf of the world’s marginalised



### Opening Activity

Bring along some items of common household waste. Make signs to represent periods of time and ask the group to sort the rubbish according to how long it would take to decompose. There are examples in the table below.

Rubbish items	Length of time
Paper bag, apple core	1 month
Banana skin	2 years
Rolled up newspaper, cigarette butt	10 years
Plastic straw, plastic bag	20 years
Aluminium can	50- 80 years
Nappies	250 years
Plastic bottle	450 years
Glass bottle, tin foil	never



**Bible reading:** John 6: 1-14



### Talk

The story of Jesus miraculously feeding 5,000 people with five barley loaves and two small fish is incredible.

The position in which we find the disciples at the beginning of this story is maybe similar to that of many of us as we consider the challenges of climate change. Exhausted by the demands of serving others, even their short break away from people is interrupted by the gathering of a large crowd with, no doubt, many demands. As evening falls the disciples are alarmed that the crowd show no signs of leaving even though the place is desolate and there is no food. Their impulse is to ask Jesus to send them away, nothing can be done. We often want to do the same with big issues like climate change and climate justice that are beyond our capacity to meet.

Our tendency is to focus on problems rather than possibilities. Equally, just like the disciples, we tend to push the problem entirely onto Jesus to solve by his own exclusive efforts, as opposed to asking him how we might work together.

Many of our prayers are rather like the request of the disciples - Jesus, please take this responsibility off our hands! Jesus however is not content for people to remain in need. He has compassion for them and wants to see them fed.

But Jesus' way of acting is in partnership with the disciples. The disciples play a key role in finding the resources (food) which will be multiplied to meet the need. They then play a key role in distributing the food to the people - it seems that the multiplication actually took place as the disciples took action, gave the food out, and then in gathering up the leftovers.

It's hard to get your head around, but there is actually more food at the end of this story than there was at the beginning! And Jesus did not want any of it wasted.



### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What does this passage tell us about how Jesus often works? (In partnership with his disciples).
- Turn to the person next to you and take a moment to discuss: What resources, skills, connections do we have, no matter how inadequate they seem, that could be used towards tackling climate change?
- What does this passage tell us about Jesus' attitude towards waste? Take a moment to think what changes you can make to limit the amount of waste you produce.



### Prayer

Creator God and loving Father, everything you made is good. Thank you for this beautiful home you've given us. Forgive us for the times we have not looked after the earth as well as we could. We're sorry for the rubbish we've discarded without a second thought for the consequences. Thank you for trusting us with looking after creation. Please help and inspire us to serve others together for your glory. **Amen.**<sup>7</sup>

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**We equip, empower and engage the Church of Ireland, young people and adult youth leaders with the right skills, knowledge and understanding to facilitate progressive youth ministry.**

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