

Background

The purpose of the all-age service is to explore the issue of climate justice intergenerationally as a church and then respond through Letters for Creation, a youth-led project exploring climate justice through art.

Through Letters for Creation, we are inviting children, young people and their supporting communities to learn about climate justice and then make artworks that express their prophetic voice on the issue. We would warmly welcome your church to take part in Letters for Creation as we use our faith and our voices to call for action for climate justice on behalf of the people living on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

To find out more about Letters for Creation please visit our website caid.org.uk/creation or alternatively email us at lettersforcreation@christian-aid.org

Service themes

Through this all-age service we hope that your church community can explore the biblical mandate to care for creation together with the application of seeking justice for people living in poverty. In this guide we offer speaking notes, prayers and a variety of activity suggestions you could use throughout the service. Choose the activities you feel will resonate best with your community, or better yet, consider how you could work with young people in your church to have them help plan and lead the service!

If you have a flexible space it would be useful to consider seating people in groups around tables. You may also consider running the service in a café style by setting up activities around the building and inviting your congregation to move around between the activities as they please.

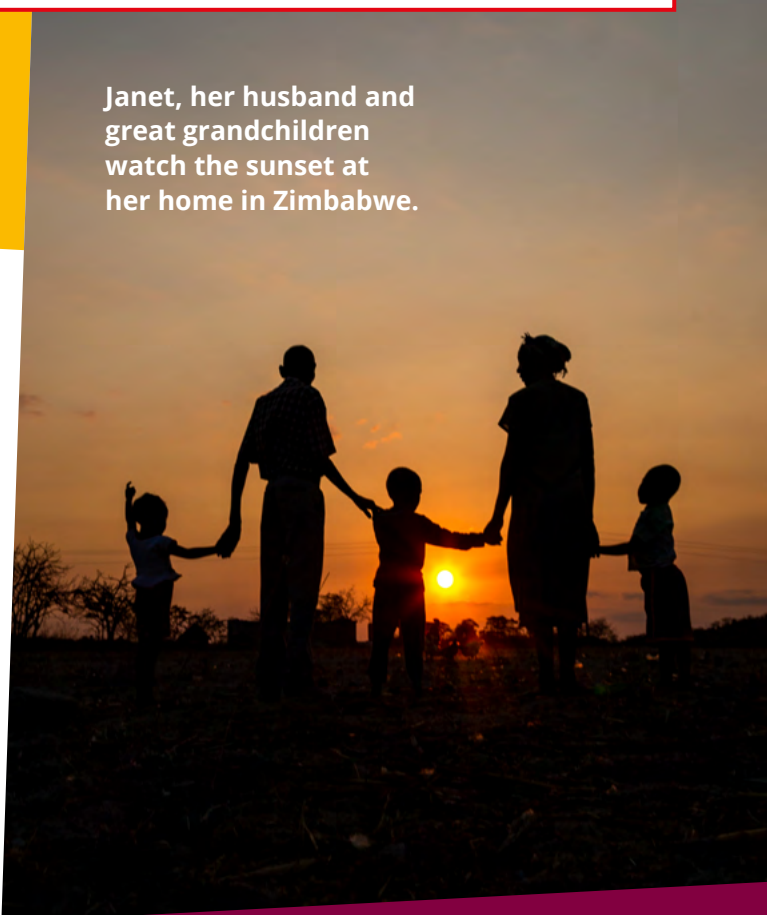
All-age service

Introduction and welcome

Welcome your congregation, explaining the day's activities and introducing the theme for the service: climate justice and our faith. You may want to let your congregation know in advance that the service will require them to join in interactive activities and conversations in groups.

Take a moment to define climate justice in a way that everyone can understand to ensure that the whole congregation is on the same page with the concept. You might want to start by asking someone to share what climate change means. Building on this understanding, explain that climate justice is about recognising that climate change impacts people unequally. The climate crisis is impacting the people in the poorest countries in the world the most, yet these people have done the least to cause climate change!

Janet, her husband and great grandchildren watch the sunset at her home in Zimbabwe.



A tale of two islands

Interactive introduction

To introduce the theme of the service, invite two volunteers to read out the script below. The role of the narrator is to be read by the person introducing the service.

Narrator: Let's listen to a tale of two people, Charlie and Carla, who live on two very different islands.

First up we have Charlie.

Charlie: Hi! I am Charlie. I live on a big island. On my island, I, along with my community, enjoy lots of resources – like trees, water and coal. We use coal, oil and gas as fuel and energy to power our heating, watch TV, and use our computers, our cars and lots of other appliances! We have cut down huge numbers of trees for profit and to access more land. All these things make life comfortable on my island. Because we use fossil fuels, we have a high standard of living and some people have gotten very rich! And since we have a high standard of living, we eat lots of meats and imported foods.

Narrator: Next up we have Carla. Hi Carla!

Carla: Hi. I'm Carla. I live on a small island. We don't have access to so many resources as Charlie. On my island we have to work very hard to grow food to feed our families, and to sell the things we grow to make a living. Our island is small and getting smaller as the sea levels rise. This means it is even harder for us to grow food. Many in our community are worried about whether we will be able to stay in our homes. Some of the smaller islands nearby have already disappeared under the sea!

Narrator: As Charlie's island burns coal for fuel, uses gas and oil for energy, cuts down trees for paper and eats a diet rich in red meat, all of this has an effect on the Earth's atmosphere. As carbon dioxide and other gases are released into the air, these gases hold in heat, causing the climate to get warmer, not just where Charlie lives, but across the whole world. These gases acts like a greenhouse, and as a result, the world is heating up. Glaciers and ice sheets in the Arctic and Antarctic are melting quickly. Water from the melting ice falls into the oceans and causes the sea level to rise.

Let's find out the impact that the rising sea is having on Charlie and Carla.

Charlie: On my island we are a little worried about rising sea levels, but we are able to build flood defences and sea walls. We have enough resources that make this possible.

Carla: On my island it's different. We are losing the land where we are able to grow crops. This means we are getting poorer. We have no money to build flood defences and we are at risk of being completely flooded off our island. And rich countries aren't helping with the costs of protecting our community or helping us rebuild our lives elsewhere.

Narrator: Everything that happens here affects things in other places. We share our everyday lives with other people, and our actions and choices have an impact on them and the world around us. We are all part of a community: at school, in our home, in our town, in our country and in our world. I think what we have all experienced with the pandemic and lockdowns over the past two years demonstrates this very well. Things that happen even on the other side of the world can eventually affect us all.

Ask the congregation to think about Charlie and Carla's stories. What did they recognise about the world around us as they heard the stories? Did they identify with either Charlie or Carla?

Remind the congregation of what climate justice is: climate justice is about climate change but is also more than that. Because climate change is affecting the people living in the poorest parts of the world, first and worst, climate justice is about finding solutions to climate change that include the people suffering the most. It is about working together to create a fair future for all people and the planet!

Our demonstration showed that climate change doesn't affect everyone in the same way. Some people are affected worse than others, and often the people who are worst affected are those people already living in poverty.

Opening prayer

To be read aloud. (This might be a good opportunity to invite a young person in your congregation ahead of time to lead you in an opening prayer. Invite them to read the prayer below, or write their own prayer.)

Creator God,

You made the world, and it is good.

The trees, mountains, rivers, and seas.

The birds, lions, ants, and bees.

Invite the congregation to think about what is good in the world. If you would like, you can invite people to share out loud.

Creator God,

**You made us to care for the world
and for all people.**

**Our planet is hurting. Many people
are hurting.**

**Help us do what we can to bring healing
to your creation and your people.**

Bible reading

This service will look at three verses from Genesis that speak to our relationship with God and the world that God created. These are in three themes in the sermon notes below.

1. We are all human beings made in the image of God and have a responsibility to one another as image bearers of God.
2. All of creation in its full diversity and richness is good – including us!
3. God made it clear that part of our responsibility as people made in the image of God is to care for all of creation – including human beings!

You may want to print out these Bible verses and ask younger members of your congregation to read them aloud.

Genesis 1:27

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:31

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.

Genesis 2:15

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.



Vimbainashe and Phaniel play a game with their friends just outside their home while the sun sets over their dry and dusty land.

Short sermon notes

Be mindful to make the sermon relatable and accessible to the whole congregation.

Care for creation

- Highlight the creation narrative in Genesis. God creates the world, the seas, oceans, mountains, trees, the animals, birds, fish, stars, sky and humans. We are introduced to God as the creator of all things. Genesis also tells us that God looked at creation and saw that it was good!
- The story of Genesis tells us a lot about our relationships with God, the world and each other. God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and gave them responsibilities to care for the world around them. The Genesis story reveals that God created us for relationships both with God and with creation!
- We sometimes like to think of ourselves (human beings) as different and separate from the rest of God's creation. But Genesis tells us something different.
- Genesis does tell us we are special in God's creation, because we were made in God's image. We are all wonderfully created by God.
- In Genesis 2:15 we learn something really important about what being created in the image of God means for us. We learn that we are supposed to be a people who care for God's creation.
- Invite people to take five minutes in groups to think about examples of what caring for God's creation looks like to them. (Make sure that children and young people are listened to as well! You might ask a volunteer to scribe ideas, paying special attention to what children and young people are saying.) Hopefully some of the answers shared back with you will reflect vulnerable people. If no one has made the connection between care for creation and care for people on the frontlines of the climate crisis this is a good opportunity to present this to the community.
- Read Micah 6:1-8.



Janet walks with her great grandchildren to and from school near her homestead in Njani village.

- Once you have established the importance of caring for creation, make clear that caring for others as people created in the image of God is an integral part of our responsibility to care for creation. Think about Micah 6:8. Highlight that this passage talks about what God wants from us. God doesn't want our rituals or sacrifices. What God asks of us is that we join in building justice and a fairer world for all of God's people, that we act out of love to be merciful to others and that we humbly join in with God's kingdom.
- Take a moment to communicate what justice, humility and mercy mean – especially for younger children.
- Micah makes it really clear that as the people of God, what God wants us to do is to be merciful, justice-seeking and humble. This is a very useful way for us to think about how we can respond to the climate crisis.

Optional reflection: re-read Micah 6:1-8 and listen to **You Have Shown Us** by Chris Tomlin.

Framing climate justice

Before you head into the activities below, we would encourage you to read Janet's story aloud as an example of how climate change is affecting people around the world.

Climate change is a direct result of human activity. Rich countries, like the UK, produce a lot of fossil fuel emissions so we hold a greater share of the responsibility for causing climate change. But the impacts of climate change are felt most by people, like Janet Zirugo, who live in poorer countries.

Janet lives in a village called Njani in Zimbabwe, Africa. She is 70 years old and has a big family that she helps to care for. Janet has 10 children and 28 grandchildren, and she is great grandmother to 8 more children.

One result of climate change that affects millions of people is drought. A drought is when there isn't enough rain or water to grow food or for drinking!

Where Janet lives, droughts have become a much bigger problem because of climate change. Janet farms to make a living and to feed her family. But farming is much harder when there is drought. Janet told Christian Aid about how difficult it was to feed her family and herself when drought took away their ability to grow food.

Janet shared her own food with the children, but still they didn't have enough, and all experienced lots of hunger. In addition to caring for her own family, Janet helps to look after children whose parents have died. Even though she and her community have faced challenges, they make sure to love and care for one another.

For Janet, hunger took away her freedom as a parent. She had sleepless nights thinking about her family. She had to sell things to make sure that they could eat, and she traded and shared with the wider community to make sure that they all had enough to get by.



Janet is proud that she now has enough food that her grandchildren no longer go hungry.

Janet has worked with Christian Aid's partners in Zimbabwe to change the ways she grows food. Now, when drought hits, Janet's important crops can cope better. This means that Janet is able to support her family and the children in her community, even when drought comes!

Janet and her community have contributed the least to climate change, but they are having to live with the reality and impacts of it every day.

Activities

Introduction activity

Ask everyone to spend a few moments reflecting on Janet's story. Ask them to take a moment to think about how they feel having heard it. Also ask them if Janet's story has inspired hope. What can we learn from Janet's story? How can we see God through Janet's story? What can Janet's story teach us about climate justice?

After you have given them time to reflect, you may wish to share some of your reflections on the ways in which Janet has modelled walking humbly, acting justly and loving mercy.

For the next section of the service we have suggested some interactive activities to promote intergenerational conversations in your congregation. We have made a few different suggestions under each heading. **Do not feel like you have to do all the activities.** Choose the activities and adapt them as necessary to best fit the needs of your congregation.

Act justly (act)

Discussion: How can we as a church join in with God in caring for creation and people created in the image of God? This space is for people to talk together about who God is and how as a church community you can join in with God's mission to care for creation. (Note to the adults in the group to ensure that children and young people are given space in any conversations to generate ideas.)

You may want to consider different categories of ways to get involved:

- **Personal** – What are some of the things you can do as individuals to have a positive impact on climate change?
- **Communal** – What are some things you can do as a church locally that can positively affect the local environment?
- **Global** – What are things you can do as a church that may have an impact in the places where climate change has already been affecting communities living in poverty?

Christian Aid is campaigning to make sure that the communities that have done the least to cause climate change, but are suffering the worst impacts of it, are supported through a loss and damage fund. Could your church community join us in calling on the UK Government to:

- Push for a new global fund to pay for loss and damage caused by the climate crisis
- Introduce a new 'climate damages' tax on fossil fuel companies.

Find out more at caweek.org/action

Get creative: Put out some art supplies and provide space for people to create artistic responses to climate justice. Letters for Creation is an arts project to give people the space to creatively reflect on why and how climate justice is important.

- Look at some of our other Letters for Creation resources such as the **Impact Toolkit** to explore how you can make sure that the artworks you create can have an impact. You may want to consider creating space to make a collaborative artwork together alongside the individual pieces people make.
- You may want to order the **Letters for Creation Poster Pack** and hang the posters to inspire the congregation. When you order the poster pack, you will also receive a set of postcards with questions which you can place around for people to use to prompt reflection.

Find out more at caid.org.uk/creation

Janet shows off the bountiful harvest from her garden of plenty.



Love mercy (restoring relationship)

Listening exercise: Climate justice doesn't only affect those on the frontlines of the climate crisis. Many children and young people are experiencing eco-anxiety at the prospect of inheriting a world affected by climate change. Climate change is not any person's fault individually, but as older generations we collectively share responsibility. One of the issues of eco-anxiety is young people (and adults) experiencing feelings of isolation with their concerns about climate change. For this exercise invite the congregation to listen to one another – especially the young people.

Use these questions as prompts:

- How does climate change make you feel?
- Do you feel that other people take climate change seriously?
- Is there anything that makes you feel worried? Why?
- What gives you hope?

At the end of the conversation take a moment to pray together considering:

- Is there anything you would like to say to God about climate change?
- Is there anything you would like to give over to God?
- Is there something that you will commit to doing with God?

Generational letters: Provide some pens and postcards or paper, and invite members of your congregation to write a postcard or letter to someone else in the congregation or in their family of a different generation.

- If you are older you may want to write a letter expressing sorrow for the climate crisis and show your commitment to act, letting younger people know they are not alone.
- If you are younger, you may want to write a postcard to tell older generations (adults) what you would like them to do to help stop climate change.

Photo activity: Find or print out a range of photos and put them on a table. Give instructions that each person should select one image that represents climate injustice to them, and one that represents climate justice.

Climate injustice – What are the causes of climate injustice or what does it look like?

Climate justice – What does a just and sustainable world look like?

- Have a big piece of paper or flip chart and draw a line to split the paper in two. One side will be used for images of climate injustice and the other for climate justice. Invite participants to stick the images they have chosen on the corresponding side. They may want to write some words around the image they have chosen.



Janet's love and hard work gives her grandchildren hope for a better future.

Find a variety of pictures that show things like biodiversity, indigenous activists, fossil fuel production, deforestation and reforestation, renewable energy, etc. We have attached a few images in the appendix to get you started. The purpose of the exercise is to spark conversations and thoughts about the causes and impacts of climate change and to begin to imagine what a sustainable and just future looks like.

Global restoration: On a world map, or using the map in the appendix, invite the congregation to write down ideas or commitments of how they can show love to people elsewhere in the world.

Walk humbly (restoring our relationship with God's world)

Mapping connections: At the back of the church put up a copy of the world map provided in this resource. During the service invite the congregation to take some time to mark their connections to communities around the world. This could be family or friends in other cities

Drought affects millions of families, making it difficult to grow food in the sun-scorched land.

and countries, or places that they have lived, visited or have a cultural connection to.

The purpose of this activity is to show that even in our churches we have global connections and relationships with places elsewhere in the world. It is important to remind ourselves we are part of a global community.

The map provided highlights the parts of the world most at risk to climate change. As the church community charts their global relationships, highlight the fact that the places most at risk are also typically home to some of the people in the world who have done the least to cause climate change and have the least resources.

Write a shared liturgy or prayer: Ask participants to write a prayer together about climate justice. This could be something that you revisit in the future as a church. You could even finish off the service by reading it.



Closing the service

There are several suggestions below for how to end your worship service. Please choose the most appropriate for your context.

Conclude the group activities and draw people together as a whole congregation.
Ask everyone to be still and quiet for a moment.

Reflect:

Invite the congregation to reflect as you read aloud the following questions:

- I wonder, is there something new you have learned today or something you've thought about in a new way?
- I wonder, what do you think God has been saying to us through our worship, activities and conversations? Is there something we need to think about more deeply or to talk about some more?
- I wonder, is there any action that you would like to take because of the things we've reflected on today?

We've been reminded that God has blessed us with a beautiful, amazing world and with one another. Each one of us is wonderfully created in the image of God. We were created to live in peace with God, the natural world and one another – to care for the world and everything in it – including each other.

Praying for one another and our world:

Let's take a moment to pray for one another and our world.

Use one of the following prayers or provide space for a short time of open prayer:

In this prayer ask everyone to join in with the refrain: **God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.**

Creator God,

We thank you for the gift of our wonderful world.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

We thank you for day and night.

Janet praises God for his blessings of abundance on her family.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

We thank you for the sky.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

We thank you for land and sea, plants and trees.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

We thank you for the different seasons, for the sun, moon and stars.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

We thank you for fish and the variety of sea life and every kind of bird.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

We thank you for all living creatures – for the animals and wildlife and for one another – humans created in your image.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Please help us to care for your world and one another – to love mercy, seek justice and walk humbly with you, our God.

Amen.



Blessing the world:

Place a world map or globe at a central place where everyone can see it. If possible, ask everyone to gather around the map in a circle. Sing an appropriate hymn or song together, such as:

- **He's Got the Whole World in His Hands**, traditional African-American spiritual
- **Whole World in His Hands**, Tim Hughes
- **Every Move I Make**, David Ruis
- **We are Marching in the Light of God**, South African traditional
- **Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You**, Richard Gillard

Look at the map and identify some places in the north, south, east and west and pray for those places. If appropriate you could ask the congregation to turn in the corresponding direction as you pray.

Blessing:

Explain that our final prayer will be asking God to bless each one of us and those we have thought about today.

- You might sing or listen to a version of **The Blessing**, by Kari Jobe, Cody Carnes, Steven Furtick and Chris Brown which was written in 2020 and was sung by many Christians during the early part of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nations across our world recorded their own version of this song as a way of praying blessing on their nation. There are a number of versions available on YouTube.
- Use the Celtic blessing:

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Amen.

As an option, you could create actions or movements to use with the prayer to help emphasise its meaning and to enable people to enter prayer with their bodies as well as their words.

- Use the simple blessing found in the book of Jude as a concluding prayer:

'May God give you more and more mercy, peace and love.'

Jude 1:2

Janet and her husband watch the sun set over their now-fruitful farm.

Appendix

Map for global mapping activity.

The map shows highlighted in orange and red the areas most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Clearly, the map highlights particularly Africa, Asia, the Philippines, Pacific Islands, parts of Central and South America and Greenland. Use this map to chart your global connections. It may be useful to contrast this map with the national CO² emissions per capita, which would particularly highlight the CO² emissions of Europe and the United States.

Sources: [Center for Global Development](#)

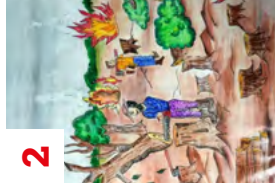
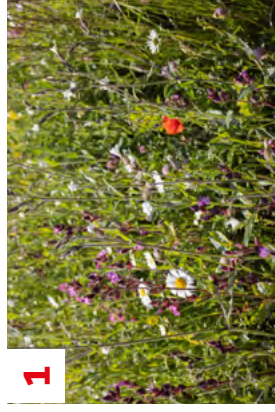
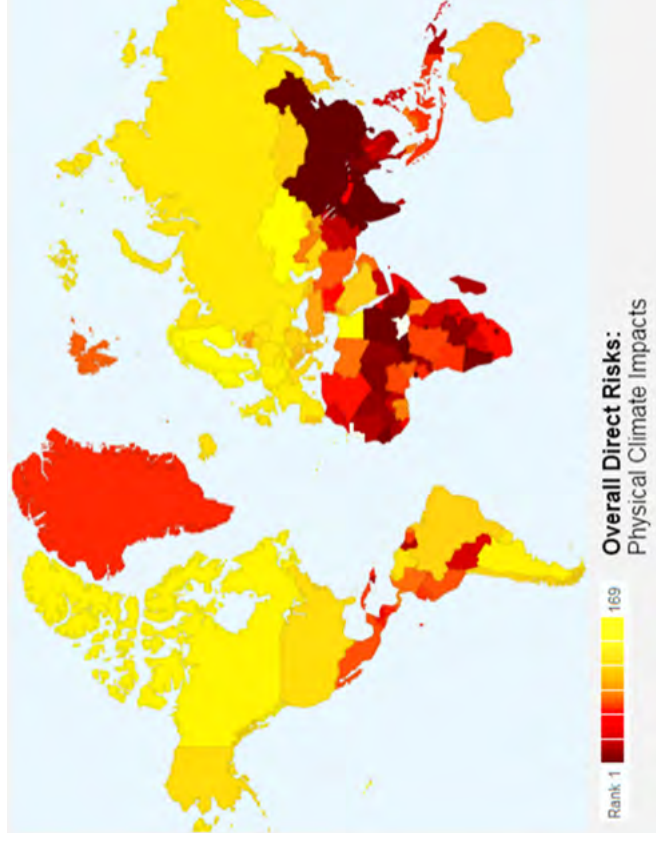


Image credits.

1. Photo taken by Margaret Polinder via [unsplash.com](#)
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](#)
6. Photo taken by Ashraf Hendricks via [Groundup.org.za](#).the photo shows young people in South Africa protesting against climate change.

