

Use the reflection or worship activities below to introduce pupils to the concept of creation, the issues around climate justice and hopes for a better future.

Reflection/ Collective Worship

In many faith traditions, the belief that the world was created by God and is a gift to be treasured is very important.

This is true for Christians. Listen to the Christian creation story and, as you reflect on the words, think about which parts of the natural world you are most thankful for.

Show a PowerPoint with images from distant space moving slowly closer to Earth. Then show an image for each day of creation. Play quiet music as you view the images, followed by a reading of the Christian creation story using a child-friendly Bible. A ready prepared PowerPoint can be downloaded from caid.org.uk/lettersforcreation

● I wonder, which photo did you like best of all?

In the Christian creation story the phrase 'and God saw that it was good' is repeated several times.

● I wonder, what makes our world wonderful and good?

● I wonder, are there things that spoil the natural world?

Christians believe that when God created the world he gave humans responsibility to look after it – to care for it and one another. Many people, of all faiths and none, share the belief that humans have a responsibility to care for our world.

● I wonder, how can we look after our world well?

● Who do we need to ask to help us do this?

Interactive response

Following a moment for reflection, use one of the following reflective activities:

- Display the poster provided and ask pupils to write their ideas about how we can look after our world on a post-it note or a small piece of paper and place it around the edge of the poster image.
- Create a beautiful mosaic collage of a scene or something from nature eg, a tree in blossom or a river. Invite each pupil to add to a part of the collage and as they do so, quietly think about the actions we can take to look after our world.
- Listen to the song *What a Wonderful World* by Bob Thiele and George David Weiss, famously sung by Louis Armstrong, and try to spot all the different aspects of nature which are mentioned.

Prayer

Read the short extract below from the *Canticle of the Sun* by St Francis of Assisi. Reflect on his view of creation. If you would like to, use the words as your own prayer.

Canticle of the Sun

*Be praised, my Lord,
for all your creatures,
and first for brother sun,
who makes the day bright and luminous.
He is beautiful and radiant
with great splendour
he is the image of you,
most high.*

*Be praised, my Lord,
for sister moon and the stars.
You placed them in the sky,
so bright and twinkling.*

In this canticle, St Francis praises God for some of the wonders of the natural world. St Francis believed that everything in the natural world deserves to be valued – because of this he refers to various parts of nature as sisters and brothers. He based this song on one of the ancient poems in the Bible – Psalm 148.

The hymn *All creatures of our God and King* is based on this canticle – you may want to use this version instead and listen to it being sung.

A reflection on the environment

Set up a prayer or reflection space to help children articulate their thoughts and feelings about the natural world. It is worth noting that there will most likely be a broad spectrum of awareness about environmental concerns within the class, and that this might range from pupils who know relatively little about issues such as climate change, to others for whom it is a great source of anxiety.

To create a prayer or reflection space, you could decorate it, and assign different areas and objects to different feelings, eg, hope, worry, sadness, love, gratitude. Encourage pupils to visit each area and express their feelings about the natural world, either by speaking to an empathetic adult or by writing them down. These feelings could then be articulated in written form as a prayer or a letter for creation.

Teaching and learning activities to explore the theme

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development /Literacy link

Explore poems and songs that celebrate the beauty of the natural world.

RE links

- If appropriate to your curriculum, explore the Christian concept of creation. Compare this view with other perspectives.
- Christians believe that God created the world and gave humans the gift and responsibility to care for their environment and one another. For many Christians the immense beauty of the natural world helps them to worship God. Many of the poems in the Bible celebrate the wonder of creation. Read Psalm 148 and create a piece of music which could accompany a reading of the psalm.
- Hymns and songs are still written today to celebrate the Christian belief that God created a beautiful world. Listen to some of the following music suggestions and think about why Christians

might include these songs in their worship and how they might inspire them in their daily life:

For the Beauty of the Earth by John Rutter

Almighty God by Tim Hughes

Indescribable by Chris Tomlin.

- Consider the following quote from Martin Luther. Discuss what his words might mean:

'Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would fall to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.'

Maths and science links

Introduce pupils to the Fibonacci sequence – show them the beginning of the pattern and see if they can predict the next numbers (0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5). Explain what the Fibonacci sequence is and look at examples of where it is reflected in nature – sea shells, sunflowers, waves, the galaxy.

- **I wonder how you feel when you notice these patterns in nature? What questions do you want to ask?**

Look at pictures of snowflakes and learn about Johannes Kepler and his findings about patterns within each snowflake.

- **I wonder what questions you want to ask?**

- **I wonder how you feel when you look at the detailed pattern in each snowflake?**

Talk about, or watch a film of, the process of metamorphosis and how something can be totally transformed. Noticing this process can often inspire people to hope that change and transformation is always possible in our lives and the world.

Are there ways in which we can transform our world into a more beautiful and healthy place? What actions could you take?

Climate justice: the problem and the solutions

The issue of climate change is something which many young people are very aware of and concerned about. Use the following materials to explore this theme – stressing the positive actions which we can all take to make a difference to our planet.

Christian Aid Week story

Michael Junior (pictured on the poster) lives in Kenya, in East Africa. He is planting a tree sapling, and watering it every day, so it can grow tall, strong and green.

He knows it is very important to care for trees. Sadly, because of climate change, many plants in Kenya don't get enough rainwater and can't grow.

This Christian Aid Week, your school can help more children like Michael Junior to have the water they need to live life to the full. You could plant trees and help care for the environment. You could fundraise to help more children have a water dam and go to school. Or you could write a letter to politicians to ask them to care for creation, just like Michael Junior is.

Climate justice resources

It is important to understand that at the heart of the climate crisis there is an injustice, because people in the global South, which includes many of the world's poorer countries, are being affected first and worst by climate change – even though the people in those countries have done the least to contribute to the problem.



Florence Muthiani is Michael Junior's neighbour. She holds some onions she has grown, using water from an earth dam.

The causes, impacts, and some solutions to the climate crisis are explored in the materials below.

Fumes or Futures – caid.org.uk/fumes-or-futures

School strike assembly and film – caid.org.uk/school-strikes

Window on the World – caid.org.uk/window

The Climate Coalition resources – theclimatecoalition.org/show-the-love

Background information for teachers

Church of England Creationtide – churchofengland.org/environment

Finding solutions

In the Fumes or Futures resource, we learn about Glory and Lanie, two climate change activists from the Philippines. Glory and Lanie describe the actions that they and their friends are taking.

I wonder, what actions do you think you could take? As an individual? As a school community? In your family and local community?

Who else do you think needs to take action?

Whose responsibility: framing children's actions within a wider culture of change

It is a delicate balancing act to empower children to take positive action, whilst being realistic about what those actions might achieve – and not burdening them with responsibility (or feelings of responsibility) for fixing a problem that is largely out of their control.

Our top tips for managing this balance are:

- Do not over-state the impact that their actions will have, eg, avoid messaging such as 'you can save the world through recycling more in school'.
- Avoid 'save the world' messaging altogether – this can place a huge psychological burden on children.
- Do suggest practical actions that they can do, though, as it is good for everyone to feel that they can contribute to a better world, even in small ways.
- Frame individual actions within the wider societal changes that are already happening, including at a political level.

- Remind them that adults are working on this, all over the world, and that the seeds of a more sustainable future have already been planted.
- Be age and stage appropriate.

Activities for your school

- Write a 'Creation Charter' as a class to identify small actions which you could take either as a school community or as a wider community.
- Explain that one of the most powerful ways to take action is to let others know how much you care about this issue; this includes your family but it also includes the people in charge of things (like business leaders and politicians). Remind pupils that adults really do care about what children think (and if they doubt this, you could cite Greta Thunberg being invited to address the UK Parliament, or the fact that Burger King have scrapped plastic toys after being asked to do so by two sisters – aged 8 and 10!)
- **Letters for creation** is a project that invites children to tell the people in charge what they think about climate change and how they need to look after our world. We'll share these letters with some leaders and make sure that your voices are heard. Your letters could be in any form: written word, art, song, rap, poetry or prayer. So just think, if you could say something to the people in charge about looking after our planet, what would you say?
- Go to the letters for creation webpage caid.org.uk/lettersforcreation and find out about the project and the challenge.

Getting the message out

- Plan a school event to share your learning about the Christian concept of creation and climate justice.
- Write a letter for creation and send it to us at Christian Aid (see the details below). We'll be working with the Church of England to produce an exhibition showcasing a selection of these letters, and will share these in cathedrals across the country, at the Lambeth Conference, and hopefully at the UN climate change conference to be hosted in Glasgow in November 2021.
- Your letters can be presented using any creative form. But if these include identifiable images of pupils, please ensure that all relevant parental permissions are in place and that people know that there is a possibility that these images could be shared as part of the exhibition.
- Once you have created your 'letters' you could find out if it is possible to display your work in the local parish church or in a community space.

Join our global prayer chain

Christian Aid is coordinating a prayer chain throughout 2021. Schools, churches and individuals across the world will be signing up and joining in to keep a prayer for climate justice going all year long. You can sign up to be part of it at caid.org.uk/prayerchain

Send us your letters for creation

Write a letter for creation and send it to us at **Schools Team, PO Box 100, London, SE1 7RT**, or lettersforcreation@christian-aid.org If you're in Wales please send your letters to **Christian Aid Wales, Churchgate Court, 3 Church Road, Cardiff, CF14 2DX**.

Remember your 'letter' can be a written letter or a piece of art, drama, music, rap etc.

