Talking Climate Justice
Small group discussion guide

The Christian life is one of transformation. In this Talking Climate Justice small group discussion guide we will take key themes of the Christian life: repentance, sacrifice, redemption, reconciliation and reparation, to help you and your church grapple with the realities of poverty and the climate crisis and how you can respond as a church.

Each week you will explore a new theme, with Bible readings, stories and prayers, to stir up ideas of how you can act together for climate justice.

You will also find a climate justice action log where you can record the actions you want to take together. Committing to and then taking actions as a group is a great way to encourage and energise ourselves.

Guidance notes for leaders

Each weekly session = 1 hour (but you can be flexible).

Weeks 1-5 format

Hope and challenge (15 mins): read and reflect on the prayers, stories and Bible passages. Invite different members of your group to read aloud in this section, with short silences in between for reflection.

Reflect and talk (30 mins): spend 10 mins answering each of the three questions provided. This is an opportunity to talk about what you’ve heard, what thoughts and feelings this is provoking and how you can respond. Invite the group to jot down key ideas on paper to capture insights and ideas.

Invite and act (15 mins): respond to what you have discussed. Use the prompt question to help you agree a group action.

Climate justice action log: fill this in each week so your group has a record of the actions you have committed to taking. If the action is immediate you can revisit it each week. Otherwise, Week 6 provides space for thinking about longer-term action for climate justice.

What you’ll need:

- copies of each weekly session (black and white is fine)
- Bibles or print-outs of the Bible passages
- bread and wine/juice for Holy Communion in Week 4
- pens and paper.
Week 1: Repentance

Where have we gone wrong?

Hope and challenge

Almighty God,
what have we done to the world you created?
We lament your damaged creation,
we confess our inaction,
we confess our actions
that have contributed to the destruction of your world.
Forgive us, O God,
instruct us and teach us the way to go.
Amen.

Repentance

The story of our faith is one of redemption, reconciliation and restoration. It is also one of sacrifice
and repentance. All of us at some point have seen where we've hurt ourselves, one another and
the world around us.

We can find relief in the act of confession, healing in the forgiveness we are offered through Jesus,
and courage to live differently through the transformative work of the Holy Spirit.

Confession is marked regularly as we practise traditions of our faith from Holy Communion to
moments such as Lent. The Bible shows us many examples of personal and communal repentance
– acknowledgements of the state of the soul and of society. There is lament for what has passed,
and a desire to turn towards a life reflecting God's Kingdom. Let's take time to look at the state of
our world, the climate crisis, our part in what is happening and how we can repent.

The world as it is today

The world is heating up. Industrialisation, burning fossil fuels and unsustainable consumption
have dangerously increased the levels of carbon dioxide in the air we breathe. The UK has played
a significant role as the sixth largest historical carbon emitter and the country that kicked off the
mass burning of fossil fuels through the industrial revolution.

Global heating is causing communities to suffer immeasurable loss and damage through ever-
increasing droughts, storms and floods.

The climate crisis could push 130 million people into extreme poverty by 2030. It is the great
injustice of our time that those least responsible for this crisis are bearing the brunt of its impact.

Agnes Machona

Agnes lives in north-east Zimbabwe, where temperature rises have resulted in unpredictable
rainfall and longer-lasting droughts. Agnes has experienced damage and loss of her crops in
these harsh conditions.

For people living in poverty in Zimbabwe, their ability to grow enough food to eat increasingly
hangs in the balance.
Read these Bible passages
Psalm 32
Ephesians 4:21-32

Reflect and talk
1. When it comes to the climate crisis, reflect on where we have been complicit and what we need to confess. What do we need to turn away from as individuals, the church and wider society?
2. Imagine that all the churches in the UK publicly repented for our nation’s contribution to the climate emergency. What do you think the impact would be?
3. Ephesians 4 encourages us to ‘put on the new self’. Think about your church/group specifically. How can we practically put on the new self and be people that seek climate justice?

Invite and act
Agree upon one concrete action you will take forward from your conversation. Think about what is possible not just as individuals, but as a group and as a church. Put your action in the climate justice action log.

Closing prayer
God who calls us to repent, we acknowledge that we have done wrong. We have neglected one another, we have neglected the earth, we are sorry and repent for our sins. Lord have mercy on us. We know repentance means to turn, to live another, better way, help us to put on the new self, instruct us in the way to go, to live in ways that honour all of creation. In your unending mercy heal and transform us. Amen.

‘The greatest challenge women face here is hunger. Children will not be able to go to school because they do not have food.
‘Livestock would not have water, they need to go a long distance to get water, and sometimes cannot even get it. ‘But as women we are very much affected because we use much more water. Thus, we suffer more as women when there is a drought.’
Agnes Machona
Week 2: Sacrifice
What is the fast we have chosen?

Hope and challenge
Jesus, as you fasted in the desert, you resisted the temptations of consumption, power and glory, you chose servanthood, humility and compassion. Help us to choose a fast that leans towards justice, help us resist the pull of the world around us, help us to see the world with compassion, help us to seek justice and to see the oppressed go free.
Amen.

Fasting
Many of us are familiar with the concept of fasting. Christians often use the season of Lent to remember and draw from Jesus’ example as he fasted in the wild.
Like Jesus, we fast in order to remove distractions and fix our eyes on God. Jesus’ fasting preceded his entry into public ministry where he declared, in the words of Isaiah, good news for the poor and liberation for the oppressed.
Setting aside distractions, and fixing our eyes on the things of God, means turning our attention to the injustice around us and the liberation of our global neighbours who are living under the oppression of poverty driven by the climate crisis.
Persistent droughts, floods and extreme weather are destroying communities and damaging people’s ability to support themselves. People are losing their homes, their livelihoods and their lives.
If we are to choose a fast that can loosen the bonds of injustice, then we must understand the systems, laws and practices that are causing the climate crisis.

Nicaragua
Nicaragua is the second poorest country in Latin America. People across the country are experiencing loss and damage due to the climate emergency, with 80% of the population dependent on agriculture for survival, particularly corn and beans. But as the rainy season is disappearing, farmers have no time to grow what they need to live. Some farmers have only been able to grow half of what they used to because of the lack of rain.
Alejandro Alemani works for environmental organisation Oficial de Cambio Climático in Nicaragua. He explains the losses that local farmers are facing

‘Corn is like a symbol of our culture and our food depends a lot on corn. The speed the climate phenomenon is hitting the communities, and the way it is changing things... we do not have time to adapt. Therefore we cannot just talk about adaptation, but we must acknowledge loss and damage.’
The Rev Alton Bell

As Senior Pastor at Wembley Family Church in London, the Rev Alton Bell has reflected on the causes of the climate crisis and who has been oppressed as a result.

“For me, environmental justice is deeply connected to issues of the enslavement of Africans and the birth of capitalism. The rewards from enslavement fuelled the industrial revolution, put the “great” into Great Britain.

“They used the proceeds from slavery and colonialism to build an infrastructure in this country to colonise India, Africa, Asia – and by extracting the resources from those places, were able to develop steam trains, industry, which paved the way for the electrification of the world.”

Read these Bible passages

Luke 4:1-21
Isaiah 58:3-12

Reflect and talk

1. Have you ever spent time fasting or given something up - did it change your perspective in any way?
2. Think about who is being oppressed by the climate crisis.
   How can you make their stories more visible in your church(es)?
3. What do you think your church needs to do to choose a fast that will loosen the bonds of climate injustice?

Invite and act

This month work together to amplify the stories of people impacted by poverty and the climate emergency in your church.

Decide on one additional action you can take forward for how your church can ‘loosen the bonds of oppression’ and work towards climate justice from your conversation. Put this in your climate justice action log.

Closing prayer

Jesus,
you declared good news for people living in poverty,
you proclaimed the end of oppression,
you accepted God’s chosen fast.
Help us to be good news and stand with people living in poverty,
help us to undo the systems of oppression we see in our world,
help us to fast as you fasted.
Amen.
Week 3: Redemption

Redeemed for what?

Hope and challenge

Great Redeemer,
you journeyed to the Cross,
meeting us in our weakness.
Ready and waiting to transform us by your Spirit
while we were still far off,
you sought us out.
Great Redeemer,
who in Spirit groans with all creation
for the redemption and renewal of all things,
redeem us from our destructive ways,
deepen in us the longing for renewal,
transform us and the world around us.
Amen.

Redemption

Core to our hope as Christians is redemption. We are awake to our own brokenness and our need
for grace and forgiveness. We see this on a personal level, and in the world around us too. We see
it in the injustice of the climate crisis and in the scandal of poverty.

When the inherent worth of each human and the beauty of creation is distorted, we long for
something different. We often look to the Easter story to meet us in that longing. Jesus’ sacrifice
and the hope of resurrection speak to us of a God of redemptive vision and action.

This story invites us into the work of God’s redemptive purposes. We are called to put right what is
wrong. We are part of this transformational work when we love our neighbour, when we tackle the
root causes of poverty and the climate emergency. As we will read in our Bible passages, we are
not alone in this Kingdom-building work. We are promised the Holy Spirit who draws alongside us,
strengthening us for the challenges of making climate justice a reality.

Naomi Mumo

The people who have been most marginalised in our world, and
those most impacted by the climate crisis, are women living in
extreme poverty. The injustice of poverty, gender inequality and
racial inequality mean their voices are often the least heard,
and yet many of them are stepping up and leading the way for
creation’s redemption.

Naomi lives with her husband in Kitui County in south-eastern
Kenya. The region has been severely impacted by persistent
droughts, causing catastrophic loss and damage. For Naomi, the
lack of rain meant the loss of livestock and crops, and the added
burden of walking long distances to find water. Naomi and her
community have built an earth dam to capture water closer to
home, giving her more time to pursue other ways to make a living.

Naomi is a climate advocate and works to educate local villages
around the benefits of tree planting and reducing plastics.

Naomi Mumo, chair of the
Climate Change Advocacy
Group in Kyeng’è.
‘The whole world is polluting the environment. The responsibility is everyone’s. Not one individual country.’
Naomi Mumo

While each of us is responsible for looking after the world around us, we must also keep in mind who has caused the most damage and who has the resources to change things for the better. What would it mean for us to truly repent as a nation, acknowledging present and historical responsibility for the climate crisis?

Read these Bible passages
1 Peter 1:18-19
Romans 8:19-27
Mark 12:28-34

Reflect and talk
1. Look back on your Christian journey and think about your experience of God's redemption.
   Has it changed the way you relate to the world around you?
2. Redemption and transformation must go beyond the individual, and into our churches, governments and businesses in order for us to make climate justice a reality.
   What would this look like in practice?
3. Think about how we as individuals/a group/a church can be part of the transformation of our denominations, our government or businesses to help make climate justice a reality.
   What specific actions would we need to take?

Invite and act
This month, find a time in one of your church gatherings to pray for God's redeeming transformation to lead to climate justice.

Choose one transformative action you can take forward from your conversation. Put your actions on your climate justice action log.

Closing prayer
Redeemer of all of creation,
we pray for your continual work of redemption
in our hearts and our lives,
in our communities,
in the systems and structures of our global home,
in all of creation.

Bring your transformation,
put us to the work of redemption
in our own hearts and lives,
in our communities,
in tackling unjust systems and structures,
in caring for creation.

Empower us by your Spirit,
that we would build your Kingdom
here and now.
Amen.
Week 4: Reconciliation
What is the role of forgiveness?

Hope and challenge
Creator God,
beginning and end of all things,
we bring to you our brokenness.
We have not loved our neighbour as our ourselves,
we have not loved the earth as ourselves.
Help us see humanity in all we encounter,
help us to repair our relationships.
As you reconcile all to yourself
through the work of your Son,
help us to be people of reconciliation.
Amen.

Reconciliation
From the very moment in Genesis when humanity’s relationship with God is broken, we see God on a mission to bring us into reconciled relationship. Time and again we see the story repeated of those far off being brought close.

Through Jesus, not only are we provided with a way to be reconciled to God, but also to one another and the whole of creation.

Forgiveness is critical for reconciliation – the forgiveness offered by the one who has been hurt, and the forgiveness being sought by the perpetrator. The act of forgiveness provides the possibility for the perpetrator to be transformed and take a new path.

The hurt of loss and damage from the climate crisis is experienced in many ways. Families can lose loved ones in intensive flooding or communities can be lost as people are forced to seek housing and livelihoods elsewhere due to persistent drought.

In acknowledging our own part in climate breakdown, and in seeking forgiveness and reconciliation to all of creation, we must also be able to see such potential in others. What would it mean for us to see the potential of confession, forgiveness and reconciliation for our world leaders who have ignored climate threats, the fossil fuel industry and big polluters?

Repairing relationships
Bob Kikuyu, Christian Aid’s Global Theological Advisor, reflects on reconciliation when it comes to the loss and damage caused by the climate emergency.

‘When reconciliation is pursued, we can repair our relationships with fellow humans. The loss and damage caused by the climate crisis is a matter of justice, where some have not been considerate of others in their actions.

‘Reconciliation gives us a pathway to the restoration of relationships. Reconciliation allows us to talk with each other and find ways and means in which the harm is acknowledged without cause for further division. But more than anything else, reconciliation opens the door for those communities aspiring to do justice to walk in solidarity with the common goal of being reconciled with creation and healing with creation.’
Reconciliation requires us to see where we have gone wrong, as individuals, communities and humanity. We need to see the injustice of the systems we have created that have caused harm to people and planet, to ask for forgiveness and to seek ways actively to pursue justice.

**Read these Bible passages**
Colossians 1:15-20  
2 Corinthians 5:18-21  
Ephesians 4.32

**Reflect and talk**

1. Where have you seen examples of reconciliation?  
   This could be in your own life, your community or around the world.

2. Reconciliation requires acknowledgement of truth, forgiveness and seeing the potential for transformation in the person who has done wrong.  
   **When it comes to the climate crisis, who needs to acknowledge truth, and who needs to offer forgiveness?**

3. Where do you see opportunities for your church to be reconciled with all of creation?  
   **How would you practically go about this?**

**Invite and act**
Reconciliation is active, so take one idea from your conversation to actively pursue reconciliation. Add it to your climate justice action log.  
The practice of Communion is one way in which we remember that we are reconciled to God, and have the capacity to be reconciled to one another. This week, share Communion together as a group.

**Closing prayer**
Jesus, in bread and in wine,  
you remind us of body and blood.  
Broken and bruised,  
you take on wounded creation.  
It is finished.  
In sacrifice and death you give us life,  
redemption and reconciliation,  
to God,  
to one another,  
to the earth.  
This is love.  
Root in us your deep love.  
Amen.
Week 5: Reparation
What does it mean to repair?

Hope and challenge
God who heals,
God who repairs,
you know the cost of forgiving,
you detest dishonest scales,
you delight in just weights.
Help us to see where we have hurt,
help us to repent of our ways.
Give us a vision of justice,
justice that repairs and heals,
that we may walk in your ways.
Amen.

What does it mean to repair?
Over the last few weeks we have reflected on confession, repentance, and reconciliation. As we have examined these aspects of our walk with God through the lens of the climate crisis, we may have reckoned with our complicity, our need for forgiveness and a desire to be reconciled to the world around us. In acknowledging our personal and collective role in the scandal of poverty and the destruction of our environment, our thoughts may turn to how the damage can be repaired. This is not easy; it can require time, money and reconciliation.

Loss and damage
Nushrat Rahman Chowdhury works for Christian Aid in Bangladesh. Here she reflects on the loss and damage caused by the climate emergency:

‘In April 2022 heatwaves swept South Asia, impacting water and power supplies, agriculture, and the health of both humans and animals. The north-west and central part of India experienced the hottest April in 122 years. In Bangladesh – where I live – it exceeded 40°C in April; water and power shortages made life unbearable.

‘At the same time, Assam, a north-eastern state of India, fought against flooding; 200 people lost their lives, over 700,000 people were affected, and the entire state’s roads and train tracks were severely damaged.

‘But the people and communities who have done the least to cause the climate crisis are the ones most affected. Houses, lands, schools, hospitals and roads are being lost and damaged by floods and cyclones. People are losing everything. Polluters must pay for the loss and the damage they’ve caused.’

Nushrat points us towards an important question – who pays for the damage that has been done, and what should that look like? Christian Aid believes it’s time to make polluters pay.

What has been damaged and lost cannot always be fixed or replaced. But financial compensation can be a start. For 30 years people like Nushrat have called for reparations. Meanwhile, fossil fuel companies, have made vast profits and turned their backs on the damage they’ve done.
Achieving true reparations will take us into places where, like Jesus, we have to challenge the status quo and those who hold power. How will you use your voice to speak up?

Read this Bible passage
Luke 19:1-10
Zacchaeus shows us something interesting about what it means to repair. Jesus calls him a ‘son of Abraham’ – reminding the crowd that they have a shared identity. The oppressor and the oppressed are both made in God’s image. Zacchaeus’ response to encountering Jesus is not only to recognise his sin, accept forgiveness and repent, but to go beyond this to repair the damage that has been done.

Reflect and talk
1. Think of a time when you had to repair a situation with friends, family or colleagues. What was necessary in order to do this – how did you draw on your faith?
2. Where have you seen loss and damage created by the climate crisis in our world – what would be necessary for just reparation?
3. Reflect on the role of the church in repairing the loss and the damage of the climate emergency. What would this look like at your local and national church level and how does each of you play a role?

Invite and act
Spend some time exploring loss and damage around the world in news articles about climate disasters or read stories on Christian Aid’s website: caid.org/riseuppayupstories
If you want to engage the rest of your church with this issue, use our Rise Up Pay Up activity pack: caid.org.uk/riseuppayuppack
Take one practical action from your discussion that you could do as a church. Write this in your climate justice action log.

Closing prayer
Jesus,
like Zacchaeus we desire to see you,
help us to hear your call and invitation.
Like Zacchaeus we recognise
where our action or inaction has upheld injustice,
help us to know your forgiveness.
Like Zacchaeus we long to put things right,
help us to use all we have in the pursuit of repair.
May we be transformed in order to transform.
Amen.
Week 6
The world as it should be

Hope and challenge
God of hope,
you sent Jesus so that all may have life,
life in all its fullness.
We see the thief of injustice kill, steal and destroy –
the loss and damage of the climate crisis,
the scandal of poverty.
Help us be part of your vision for all creation,
set your hope deep in our hearts,
that we may keep steady in solidarity,
remembering always our global neighbours.
May all live life in all its fullness.
Amen.

This final week of gathering is an opportunity to reflect on all we have heard, talked about
and committed to in our climate justice action log.
Spend some time looking back using these two questions:

• What has been the biggest challenge to you in considering the climate crisis?
• What has given you the most hope as you have journeyed through the last five weeks?

The world as it is and the world as it should be
Exercise: take a large piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. Entitle the two halves: 'The
world as it is' and 'The world as it should be'. As a group, write down all the words, phrases and ideas
that come to mind when you think of these two phrases. Think particularly about the reality of the
climate crisis and your hopes for the future.
Take some time to reflect on the differences and similarities between these two pictures of
the world.
As Christians, we live in the constant tension of living in the world as it is, whilst longing for God's
Kingdom to come. It's good for us to remember that the Kingdom isn't a far-off cosmic utopia. Jesus
regularly reminded people that the Kingdom of God is near, and we often pray the words of the
Lord's Prayer 'on earth as it is in heaven'. We're not called simply to dream of a different world, and
a different way of being – we are invited to be part of building it in the here and now.
The insights, dreams and ideas that have come out of your discussions in the last few weeks are part
of working out how we can be part of bringing God's Kingdom right now, by addressing the injustice
of the climate crisis, and finding practical ways we and our churches can seek climate justice.

Building the Kingdom
Spend some time together as a group looking through your climate justice action log.
• Decide as a group how you will progress each of the actions you've listed.
• What will you need to make these happen?
• Who will you need to talk to or build relationships with?
• When will you aim to complete each action?
• How will you keep accountable to each other?
Remaining hopeful
When we walk in the ways of God, we are likely to face opposition. Jesus was not always warmly welcomed – even the religious leaders of the day were often hostile to his message. When we decide to put faith into action and pursue justice, we must be clear that we are entering a struggle. The challenges are real. Governments, big corporations and sometimes our own churches have a long history of inaction.

As we move forward and take action, let’s keep returning to our greatest source of faith and hope – God our redeemer and restorer of all things.

Read these Bible passages
Hebrews 11:1-13
Isaiah 40:30-31
Romans 15:13

Share what has struck you about faith and hope in the context of the struggle for justice from these passages and verses.

Closing prayer
Have an open time of prayer:
• Pray for communities who are experiencing loss and damage because of the climate crisis.
• Pray for governments around the world to be bold and make decisions and policies that care for creation.
• Pray for your church and churches in Britain and Ireland, for climate courage.
• Pray for your group as you step out in faith and fulfil your climate justice actions.
Climate justice action log

Capture your ideas and actions for climate justice week to week. Each week record your ideas for action in the relevant box. **Be as specific as possible about what you are going to do, who is going to do it and when.** Use the session in Week 6 to review your actions and commit your group to keep seeking climate justice.

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