



A banner displayed at a climate vigil in St Oswald's Church, Sheffield

Living Faith as Agents of Justice

Restoring creation, humans and the heavens to rejoice as one

This bible study is one of a series of five, designed to help your small group put your faith into action.

The focus of this session is:

1. Restoring our relationship with God the creator
2. How we can live out our faith in community as agents of justice.

It includes:

- Brief notes on Romans 8:22-25 and Psalm 96:11-13

- Prayers to open and close your session
- A Faith in Action video featuring Archbishop Marinez of Brazil
- Questions to help your group put their faith into action
- Suggestions to help your group think about their next steps

NOTE: We advise downloading the suggested resources in advance to show your group



Notes on the Readings

Archbishop Marinez says, “we’ve been taught to believe that God is outside of creation...[but] He is in his creation”.

It is through this misunderstanding of our creator God that attitudes of exploitation and degradation have arisen. However, in both bible passages you will read today, we see God’s heart for people, planet and heaven united in shared joys and sorrows.

Throughout the bible, we hear “objects” like trees, rivers and oceans described as feeling beings. In Psalm 96:11-13, the Earth praises the Lord for the goodness of the world. In Romans 8:22-25, the whole of creation groans in pain as we hope for salvation.

The world feels the pain of human greed that has ruptured our relationships.

Not only is every rock, animal and plant known and loved by God, but has been purposefully made for God’s vision of creation. Every stone in the riverbed is sacred in its place. Indigenous and Black theologies remind us of our heavenly call to build the Kingdom on earth for all creation. This is a call to care for our environment and to see our futures as interconnected.

Opening Prayer

Creator of All, from your communion of love life sprang forth like a mighty river and the whole cosmos came into being,

God, you sweep over the face of the waters, drawing all creation into your embrace. You fill us with fire, with passion, with the desire to set right what has gone wrong.

You open up new horizons and energise us with dreams and visions of a more hopeful future.

Guide us in this time of reflection, and we pray we will leave with the strength to live our faith with feet on the ground. In your holy name we pray,
Amen

Introduction

Indigenous communities across the world hold close connections to the land, protecting, preserving and living in relationship with it. But these relationships have been undermined time and again. Colonial powers like the UK deliberately sought to destroy and erase indigenous ways of being that connected people to the land. This paved the way for the extraction of land we see in modern industries.

Capitalism has consolidated these attitudes and accelerated this extraction. Billions of people around the world face the consequences; their lives made harder through drought, floods, and environmental degradation. The same people who experienced the violence of colonialism now face the worst of the climate crisis with the least resources to respond.

We are not powerless. Today, we will reflect on how we can transform our attitudes to live aligned with the vision God lays out for all creation.



Reading

Read Romans 8:22-25 then pause for a few moments and then discuss the questions:

- What makes your heart groan in pain?
- What does this passage tell us about the importance of hope? How might hope guide us putting faith into action?
- Paul describes us as waiting for salvation with “patience”. Fighting for climate justice is a long journey- and we can’t always “see” the answers. How can we remain patient yet encouraged in this journey?

Making connections

Read Psalm 96:11-13 watch Archbishop Marinez’ Faith in Action video.

Archbishop Marinez reflects, we are made as one with creation, not above or separate to it. In Romans 8:22 we read that the whole of creation groans in labour pains, and those who are filled with the spirit groan alongside creation.

This verse invites us to share in the pain of our planet’s destruction. While in Psalm 96 we learn that the heavens rejoice as the trees of the forest sing for joy. We see God’s vision of a world in which creation, humans and the heavens are intertwined- rejoicing as one.

- Have you ever thought about creation as described in these passages? How does this change our relationship to the Earth?

- Archbishop Marinez describes the Amazon forest as a sacred place for indigenous and traditional communities in Brazil. God has made our local parks, beaches and rivers sacred too. What steps can your church take to see all of creation sing for joy?
- Governments and companies continue to put profits over people and planet. We want to transform their attitudes and practices of exploitation. What role can you play in making this happen?

Next steps

Archbishop Marinez challenges us to mend our broken relationship with creation, and to strengthen our relationship with the creator.

Her journey to the Amazon is over 40,000km, but we can have an impact where we are today.

Explore how you can put your faith into action:

- Get involved with the [Restore Campaign Creative action](#). Christian Aid is collecting prayers, pictures and messages of hope for those impacted by the climate and debt crises to create something beautiful– a giant restoration pot.
- Talk to your MP about the need for action from the UK government to tackle the climate and debt crises. You can find resources to support your conversations here: [Restore MP Resources - Christian Aid](#)



Read about other work happening in Brazil and other perspectives on environmental justice.

- [Read](#) personal perspectives on social and environmental justice from Black church leaders.
- [Read](#) this interview with an indigenous leader at the UN climate talks in Brazil.

Take a few moments to pray for one another and for the actions that you have decided to take following this study, then read the closing prayer taken from the Brazilian book of common prayer.

Closing prayer

Breath of Life, from whom all order was created,
the whole of creation bears witness to you.
Teach us to respect all creatures,

increase our gratitude for your loving providence.

Forgive us for our insensitivity and carelessness with the environment.

Instigate us to fight for socio-environmental preservation and for the end of the climate crisis, taking care and working for the preservation of species and the maintenance of life on earth, as living proof of our conversion to the way of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and with the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen.

We love hearing how our supporters are putting their faith into action. If you have a story you would like to share, please email us at

campaigns@christian-aid.org

