



## CONTENTS

### 39 CLIMATE CHANGE AND FAITH

a workshop

### 42 WEATHER I CAN CHANGE?

a simulation game

### 45 OVERCOMING BARRIERS

what blocks us from action?

## Climate Change and Faith

### A two-hour workshop by Bill Phipps

This workshop will create a space for honest conversation and help people understand climate change as a spiritual matter, which is profoundly important for people of faith.

#### PURPOSE

- to recognize in ourselves our love of our earthly home
- to commit ourselves to being communities of solidarity, caring, and support for a sustainable future
- to contemplate actions toward those ends, including connections with Indigenous peoples

#### PREPARATION

1. Ahead of time, invite people to bring two symbols: one symbolic

- of their love of the Earth, the other symbolic of the causes or consequences of climate change. For example, a photograph of a river and a plastic water bottle.
2. Ahead of time, invite people to bring books, videos, magazines, names of websites, and other resources to place on a common resource table.
3. Ahead of time, photocopy the Discussion Starters. Cut these into four for Groups A, B, C, and D.

4. Have ready chart paper, markers, small slips of paper and pens.
5. Have on hand enough Bibles for everyone, or at least for four small groups.
6. Prepare a side table to display resources. Set chairs in a circle around a low, cloth-covered table with room for a Bible, globe, candle, bowl of water and the symbols people bring. (If there is not enough room on the table, place a tablecloth on the floor and add symbols there.)

7. Create a welcoming atmosphere by playing gentle music as people arrive.

Optional: refreshments, bell or prayer bowl

### WELCOME (10 minutes)

Introduce yourself and outline the purpose of the workshop. Ask the group to respect time, so that each person has an opportunity to speak and be heard throughout the time. The goal here is lively, humble, and respectful conversation. There may or may not be any end product.

People may just be thankful for the opportunity to have such conversations or they may also want to share more widely. Within the constraints of time, try to be flexible and open.

### INTRODUCTION (15 minutes)

Invite participants to introduce themselves. Then, in a sentence, introduce their symbols and place them on the worship table.

### Prayer

Light the candle, pause for a moment, and pray:

**Gracious Creator, lover of all life, we gather in gratitude for all the blessings of our earthly home. We are amazed by the beauty of your creation. We are sustained by its abundance. Yet we gather knowing of our destructive habits of living that impose enormous stress upon Earth. We open our hearts to your wisdom, forgiveness, and love. We open ourselves to one another, eager for hope, imagination, and commitment to the common good. May your Spirit be with us, guiding us into a healthy and hopeful future. In the name of the Christ, all that is good and beautiful. Amen.**

### OPENING CONVERSATION

(20 minutes)

Divide participants into four groups, and discuss the following. If you wish, record brief highlights of the conversation.

- As we realize the urgency of climate change, what are your major

concerns locally, nationally, and globally?

- What actions are you, your church, or community involved in concerning any aspect of climate change?

Reconvene in the larger circle, and share discussion highlights.

### SCRIPTURE CONVERSATION

(20 minutes)

Divide into groups of four again. Distribute Bibles. In each group invite a volunteer to read the passage(s), then record highlights of the discussion following the question posed.

**Group A:** Genesis 2:10–14 and Revelations 22:1–2. Remind the group that these biblical passages are the bookends of the Bible, symbolic of Earth’s fertility and nurturing.

#### Question

How do these readings inspire care for the Earth in light of climate change?

**Group B:** Psalm 104:1–25. Remind the group that this is one of the most poetic expressions of the beauty and diversity of creation.

#### Question

How does this passage touch a 21st-century understanding of creation?

**Group C:** Isaiah 24:4–5 and Hosea 4:1–4. Remind the group that these are two profound judgments on humankind’s treatment of the Earth and all life.

#### Question

Do you feel the Creator’s judgment now? Explain your answer.

**Group D:** Job 38:1–7. Remind the group that toward the conclusion of Job’s conversation with God, we have this passage in which God reprimands Job, reminding him of his real status in the scheme of things.

#### Question

In our time, where do you think human arrogance and the need for humility meet?

Depending on the size and style of the group, either reconvene to share discussion highlights or simply carry on.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS

(20 minutes)

In the same small groups, invite a volunteer to read the Discussion Starter and facilitate discussion around the questions.

### WRITE A PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute slips of paper and pens. Invite participants to write a prayer concerning climate change. Suggest that they bring these prayers to worship and place them in the offering plate next Sunday.

### ACTION (20 minutes)

Reconvene in the whole group. Ask:

- What specific further actions are you, your church, and your community willing to initiate or join in? Be as specific as possible. List these ideas on chart paper.

### CONCLUSION (10 minutes)

Going around the large circle, ask participants to state in three words how they feel about the workshop. Then ask if anyone wants to meet for a next step. If so, set a date.

### Concluding Prayer

**Loving Creator,  
Be with each one of us as we seek to “live with respect in Creation.” May we be open to the pain of the Earth and to your dream for the Earth. Stimulate our imagination, and draw us together to act for the common good. Thank you for this time together. In the name of Love, Amen.**

Extinguish the candle.

If you have arranged for refreshments, invite participants to enjoy them as they visit the resource table.

**The Very Rev. Bill Phipps** is the author of *Cause for Hope: Humanity at the Crossroads*. He served as Moderator from 1997 to 2000. He is retired from ministry and lives in Calgary.

# DISCUSSION STARTERS

Please photocopy, then cut apart these Discussion Starters for each group.

## GROUP A

Climate change is the embracing reality of our time. It is the most urgent reality facing us and our earthly home. It demands the very best of the human spirit, intellect, imagination, and action. It demands a basic change in the ways we understand life and view the world. It demands spiritual, political, economic, and social passion, as well as co-operation and ingenuity.

Climate change is not one issue among many. It is encouraging that many analysts understand climate change as a spiritual struggle, taking us to our deepest selves, asking the most basic questions. Who are we? Where do we fit in the Creator's imagination? How are we to live in relationship with our earthly home, with all creatures, and with one another? And if we are to change our ways, the transformation movement required is a moral and spiritual one, just like all significant social movements, such as the movement to abolish slavery.

### Questions

- Is climate change a spiritual matter? Why?
- What other transformation movements, like slavery, do you know about?

## GROUP B

The story of God's people is rooted in gratitude for the splendour and fertility of the Earth. The Bible contains soaring poetic rhetoric about God's good Earth, and harsh holy judgment for human disregard and plunder. The bookends of the Bible speak of the rivers of life. In the Genesis story, the rivers flow out of the Garden of Eden into all the world, bringing life and nourishment. In the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, they flow into the City of God, bringing healing and renewal of life.

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea pronounce holy judgment on God's people for their greed, corruption, and ruination of the Earth.

The Gospel of Luke calls for people to "be alert." We have not been alert for too long. Now we can no longer plead ignorance of climate change, global warming, and other profligate pollution. Now we know that human agency is causing unparalleled and rapid change in the Earth's climate, with disastrous consequences. We can no longer say to our grandchildren, "I didn't know." So when they look into our eyes and ask, "Why were you so silent? Why did you not take actions?" What will we say? What kind of ancestors will we be?

### Questions

- How do you think the generation following your own is responding to the climate change question?
- What kind of ancestors do you think we will make?

## GROUP C

Oceans are becoming dangerously acidic. Glaciers are receding all around the world. We are experiencing record high temperatures, drought, flooding, and wild storm systems. Global biodiversity is declining at alarming rates. Even the huge boreal forest stretching across the northern hemisphere is under threat. Poor and marginalized people around the world bear the brunt of climate change.

In the Western world we are fatally addicted to fossil fuels. We depend upon hyper consumption to fuel our economies and our egos. Each and all of us are embedded in an economic system that can no longer be sustained by our resilient yet fragile earthly home. There is no convenient enemy, no one to whom we can point fingers without including ourselves. Western lifestyles have benefitted from a brief moment in human history where burning carbon produced uncharacteristic and enormous wealth, including tons of "stuff." The party is over. Environmentalists, ethicists, scientists, bankers, business people, including the International Monetary Fund, and NASA are finding common ground. There is growing consensus that at least 80 percent of fossil fuels in the ground need to remain there if we are to avoid catastrophe. Industry, urban sprawl, agriculture, and transportation all depend on unsustainable consumption of fossil fuel. Real, radical change beckons us. The climate change conference in Paris last year marked the first step in turning the corner.

### Questions

- Do you agree with the statement that leaving 80 percent of fossil fuels in the ground would be best? Why?
- In your opinion, how possible is radical change? Why do you believe this?

## GROUP D

Using your own wisdom and experience, discuss the following.

### Questions

- What are the greatest possibilities to address climate change in your community and in Canada?
- Which primary leaders, partners, and activists come to mind?
- Recall the positive steps taken at the climate change conference in Paris in 2015. What are some good news stories that encourage you?