

global climate change

A Call to Reflect and Take Action

prepared by Denise Turcotte, CSC, dmturcotte@cox.net

Overview

This (three-hour) “retreat” time is comprised of:

- Centering Time, such as a song, quiet music, using a singing bowl or another choice by the group (5-10 minutes)
- Listening to a “litany” of reflections, choosing the ones the group wishes to use (20-30 minutes)
- Personal time for reflection (20 minutes)
- Group sharing, if desired (20-30 minutes, depending on the group)
- Listening to “primary scriptures” as a time to relate to nature (30-45 minutes)
- Ritual/action (30 minutes)
- Closing Song (5 minutes)

Suggested ambience: a visual of Earth, recent magazine or newspaper clippings on global climate change, a plant, a candle, a bowl of water and whatever else speaks to the life of the group. Leaders may also want a tone chime or gong to call the group together.

Time to relate to nature: This may be done using one of the following options, depending on the preferences of the group:

- Taking a walk outside
- Sitting on a porch or by a window, observing nature
- Enjoying pictures of nature spread out on a table
- Sharing a PowerPoint presentation with nature pictures
- Recalling an experience in nature and sketching it
- Any other activity that puts members of the group in touch with the natural world

Materials needed for the closing ritual:

- List of simple actions that can be taken personally and communally to reduce carbon footprints
- Two commitment cards for each person in the group—one with a piece of yarn attached to it so it can be hung from a branch, the other for individuals to keep (see *attachment*)
- Branch from a dead tree
- One or more of the following:
 - Seeds, potting soil and planters
 - A large pot in which to plant vegetable or flower seedlings
 - Basket or other container for greening donations
- Quiet music
- CD: *My Heart is Moved*, available from Crystal Spring Earth Learning Center, 76 Everett Skinner Rd, Plainville, MA 02762 or 89 Green St., Charlottetown, PEI, C1A 2G1 or www.carolynmcdademusic.com

global climate change

A Call to Reflect and Take Action

Introduction

Leader: We gather to deepen our connection to God, the Creative Mystery who is part and parcel of all that is, to Earth, and to one another. This time is an invitation to slow down, to nurture ourselves, to reflect upon Earth and the whole Earth community, and on the impact of climate change from the perspective of our tradition.

In gathering, we invite the energy and love of the Holy One who permeates the Universe to be with us and to guide us deeper into the mystery of who we really are—the awakening consciousness of the Universe. With that understanding comes responsibility for action. And so we ask for openness to the moment and to our own transformation, pausing to center ourselves.

Centering Activity

Sing a song, play quiet music, use a singing bowl, etc.

Music suggestion: “One Breath” from *Melodies of the Universe* by Jan Novotka

There is one breath,
There is one life,
There is one earth,
There is one chance.
All is holy, so holy,
All is sacred, so sacred,
All is one.

Listening . . . Reflecting

Voices from Our Tradition

Reader 1: The basic question that is slowly emerging is whether human dominance will be asserted as normative over the Earth or whether the priority of the integral functioning of the Earth will be accepted by humans. The decisions made in the past, and decisions being made in the present suppose that human benefit must be advanced as far and as effectively as possible at whatever cost to the Earth. . . .

Only recently has this attitude been severely questioned and a new view of the human proposed, a view that sees the human as a component member of Earth whose well-being depends absolutely on the flourishing of the life community of the planet.

Even more challenging is the view that there is a single Earth community and that every component of this community, including the human, survives only within the well-being of the larger community.

— *Evening Thoughts* by Thomas Berry, 2006

What is my attitude toward Earth, toward the Earth community?

What are the implications of being just one component of the greater Earth community?

Brief pause for reflection

Reader 2: Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past. . . . The ecological crisis is a moral issue.

— *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility* by John Paul II, 1990

We must re-establish the links with nature that we have damaged. We now know that we are tied much more closely to the environment in which we live than we had imagined. Our planet is a spacecraft on which we navigate together with the environment, for better and for worse.

— *Our Relationship with the Environment: The Need for Conversion* by Canadian Catholic Bishops, 2008

True stewardship requires changes in human actions—both in moral behavior and technical advancement . . . we must not allow our desire to possess more material things to overtake our concern for the basic needs of people and the environment.

The common good calls us to extend our concern to future generations. Climate change poses the question, “What does our generation owe to generations yet unborn?”

— *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good* by U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2001

How does our faith call us to respond to climate change?

What do I believe our generation owes to generations yet unborn?

Pause

Reader 1: You will contribute to preparing the world for better times than ours.

— *Christian Education* by Basil Moreau

How would Basil Moreau view the climate change crisis?

How would he challenge us to respond?

Pause

Voices from Science

Reader 3: Climate change is transforming critical ecosystems that support life. Roughly half of the world's coral reefs are "bleaching" from ocean warming and acidification from CO₂, endangering both the corals and the marine life that depends on them. Declining sea ice and shorter, milder winters are disrupting ice-based ecologies—threatening polar bears, fish and other species. Mangrove and salt marsh habitats that protect coastal areas are drowning as sea levels rise. Scientists predict 15 to 40 percent of species could face extinction.

— *Climate Crisis: Peril and Promise*

Ring tone chimes or gong, if available

Reader 4: Warming contributes to over 150,000 deaths and 5 million illnesses each year; these numbers could double by 2030. Rising temperatures are expanding the range and activity of disease carriers like mosquitoes and ticks, spreading threats like malaria and West Nile virus. Warming also intensifies smog, so respiratory illnesses and deaths stemming from air pollution are growing. Increasingly frequent weather extremes are claiming more lives, especially among children and others already vulnerable.

— *Climate Crisis: Peril and Promise*

Ring tone chimes or gong, if available

Reader 3: Higher temperatures, glacier melt, and changing rainfall and runoff are drastically reducing food and water security in many parts of the world. By 2020, agricultural yields in some African countries will shrink by 50 percent and the number of undernourished people in sub-Saharan Africa will be double 1990 levels. Significant parts of Asia and the Americas face water shortages as glacial systems collapse.

— *Climate Crisis: Peril and Promise*

Ring tone chimes or gong, if available

Reader 4: We have only a very brief window of opportunity to deal with climate change . . . no longer than a decade at the most.

If we don't begin to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the next several years, and get on a very different course, then we are in trouble. . . . This is the last chance.

— James Hansen, director, NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies

How have I experienced the impacts of global warming . . . on ecosystems? . . . on other species? . . . on human health and security?

What feelings does the reality of climate change surface in me?

What am I being called to do to protect Earth and the Earth community?

Individual Reflection

Spend some time reflecting on the calls of these human voices.

Group Sharing of Insights

Voices from Our “Primary Scriptures”

Leader: We have listened to these human voices. Now, it is time to listen to nature itself, or as Thomas Berry said, to our “primary scriptures.” The Cosmos, the Universe, Earth were all present long before human species and the written word. They are the primary revelation of the Holy. We open our heart, mind and body to listen to these scriptures from the depths of our being.

Take the next 30 to 45 minutes to do whatever best connects you to nature:

- Take a walk outside...listen to the sounds, touch a tree, smell the flowers, watch the birds
- Sit on a porch or by a window and just listen and observe
- Spread pictures of nature on a table; observe the details of the pictures and which ones you are drawn to
- Recall a favorite experience in nature and try sketching it or making some other visual representation

Ask yourself:

- What are the primary scriptures revealing to me today?
- What am I observing about nature or myself?
- What am I hearing? What am I discovering?
- What invitation are these scriptures offering to me?

Group Sharing

After personal reflection, come together in the large group and share:

- How did the “primary scriptures” reveal themselves to you?
- What feelings and thoughts did they evoke?
- What did they challenge you to do?

Closing Ritual

Music suggestion: “Peril and Promise” from *My Heart is Moved*
by Carolyn McDade and friends

This is a time when humanity must choose its future,
A future that holds both peril and promise.
Peril or Promise? The choice is ours.
Changing mind and heart and ways of living
To focus not on having, but being.
Having or being? The choice is ours.
Sharing a vision, we seek a new beginning,
A beginning of will to form a global partnership.
Beginning or not beginning?
The choice, the choice, the choice is ours.
Peril or Promise? Peril or Promise?
The future holds peril and great promise.
The choice is ours.

— text based on *The Earth Charter*

Personal Commitment

While quiet music plays,

- look over the suggestions for decreasing your carbon footprint
- decide on one or more actions you will take during the coming week, the coming month, even the coming year
- write your commitments on both copies of the cards provided (one for yourself, the second to hang on the branch)
- place your commitment card on the branch, symbolically “greening” it

Group Commitment

In the large group, discuss what the group can do to decrease your collective carbon footprint. When you have agreed on an action, together do one of the following:

- plant vegetable or flower seeds (or seedlings) in small containers to later be planted in a garden
- plant tomato plants or other vegetable plants in a “container garden” for a porch or patio; water the plants or seeds from the water used as environment
- If neither of these options is feasible, make a donation to a greening effort—a community garden, a tree planting, or an organization that defends the environment and works against climate change.

Closing Song

Music suggestion: “We of Earth” from *My Heart is Moved* by Caroline McDade and friends

We of Earth, we declare our responsibility to the whole, to the future
... to the long, winged, migration
... to the grace of wildness enduring
... to our home, our beautiful Gaia.
We of Earth declare.

global climate change

Tips for Reducing Carbon Footprints

Around the house

- Unplug appliances, like cell phone chargers and other electronics with standby features, when not in use
- Install compact fluorescent bulbs rather than incandescent bulbs and turn off lights when not needed
- Shut down and unplug computer when not in use
- Install a programmable thermostat
- Install ceiling fans for more efficient heating and cooling
- Purchase *Energy Star* appliances (or their equivalent in non-U.S. settings)
- Wash clothes in cold water
- Use energy saving settings on the clothes dryer; better yet, dry clothes outdoors
- Install low-flow showerheads and reduce shower times
- Install low-flow toilets

Eating

- Eat locally grown/produced organic food whenever possible
- Eat lower on the food chain, avoiding red meats in particular
- Grow fruits, vegetables and herbs

Driving

- Plan errands strategically to minimize the number of trips and miles driven
- Car pool, or better yet, use public transportation, bike, or walk
- Maintain vehicles as recommended to maximize efficiency
- Drive no faster than 55 mph on the highway
- Consider telecommuting to work one day a week
- Turn car engine off rather than idling when stopped longer than 30 seconds

Waste Management

- Reuse or recycle everything possible
- Compost kitchen waste and use the compost to eliminate chemical fertilizers
- Use “gray water” for indoor and outdoor plants
- Capture rainwater for outside use



In order to reduce my carbon footprint, I am committed to the following actions:

In this coming week: _____

In this coming month: _____

In this coming year: _____

Name: _____



In order to reduce my carbon footprint, I am committed to the following actions:

In this coming week: _____

In this coming month: _____

In this coming year: _____

Name: _____



In order to reduce my carbon footprint, I am committed to the following actions:

In this coming week: _____

In this coming month: _____

In this coming year: _____

Name: _____



In order to reduce my carbon footprint, I am committed to the following actions:

In this coming week: _____

In this coming month: _____

In this coming year: _____

Name: _____



In order to reduce my carbon footprint, I am committed to the following actions:

In this coming week: _____

In this coming month: _____

In this coming year: _____

Name: _____



In order to reduce my carbon footprint, I am committed to the following actions:

In this coming week: _____

In this coming month: _____

In this coming year: _____

Name: _____