

Climate Justice and RE

Webinar presentation, Lat Blaylock, RE Today National Adviser

This webinar makes some reference to the resources I wrote for Christian Aid and Riding Lights Theatre Company, which can be found, free, here. Many lesson ideas, videoclips and more, ready to use.

<https://ridinglights.org/baked-alaska/baked-alaska-for-schools/>

Please plan to enter the NATRE 'Art in Heaven' competition where one theme for the 2021 competition is related to this webinar: 'God's good earth?'

Full details: <https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-arts-gallery/2019/>





RE Today
Services

Baked Alaska

Resources for school RE for students aged 13-18 about climate change inspired by the Riding Lights Theatre Company drama which asks...

Can we save the planet?

This is one of seven files of teaching and learning ideas, useful in RE and RME, where issues about ethics, theology and climate change are explored with young people.

Each file of lesson ideas is accompanied by a PowerPoint sequence for teachers to use as they introduce the complex ethics of climate to their students.

The work draws upon ideas from Christianity and other religions and worldviews but the key focus is on human and humane values.

Each of the seven units relates to a film clip from the stage show.

Unit 1:

What can we do for our grandchildren?

In this unit, the film clip explores the idea that we owe the next generations the care of the earth. Do we care, or 'ain't we bovered'?

British Values

Schools promote the values of tolerance, respect, individual liberty, democracy and the rule of law.

This work contributes to exploring these values by enquiring into questions about responsibility: does it matter whether individuals practice their personal liberty with respect to the planet?

Curriculum connections

The learning objectives in this work connect to GCSE, Standard Grade and RE outcomes for 14 year olds, including enabling learners to:

- Explain connections between religion and belief and environmental ethics;
- Give reasons for their views about climate change and its impacts on humanity;
- Consider arguments for climate justice
- Develop their analysis of the challenges faced by this generation on Earth about the future of the planet.

GCSE RS requires the study of:

- The value of the world and the duty of human beings to protect it, including religious teaching about stewardship, dominion, responsibility, awe and wonder.
- The use and abuse of the environment, including the use of natural resources, pollution.
- The concepts of sanctity of life and the quality of life.

In Scotland, this work connects to the intention that the RME

Curriculum enables students to:

- apply developing understanding of morality to consider a range of moral dilemmas in order to find ways which could promote a more just and compassionate society [RME 4-02b]

Summary of the theatrical clip

The film clip, 'Sleeping while the Planet Burns' explores the issue of apathy. Why is it that we know the dangers of climate change, or can easily find them out, but we do nothing? Grandad wakes up to the weather forecast, on a global scale, and it points out that we are driving the planet to hell. He is not much bothered, like the rest of the West. He dreams of puppet grandchildren who ask: what did you do in the Great Climate War?

He doesn't have much to say about his own contribution to the planet saving that would make his grand childrens' lives sustainable.

Two songs bracket the action, drawing ironic attention to our apathetic responses to the climate dangers humanity faces.

John F Kennedy quoted this idea in the 1960s: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing."

Why are humans so apathetic about the danger to our planet? Can this 'ain't bovered' attitude be challenged and changed? How?

Learning Activity 1: Raising awareness of the issues about climate change

- Introduce and watch clip 1. Address any issues the students want to bring up from it.
- In groups of three, give pupils the stimulus materials on pages 3-5 below. Each student looks at one item, and prepares in 5 minutes of silence to tell their partners what they have got, noting answers to questions and points they want to make.
- Compare the three stimuli with each other, as each learner contributes their stimulus and thinking.
- Ask students to summarise what they learned from each of the three stimuli in their work in three short paragraphs.
- Does art, poetry or sacred text communicate the issues about climate justice most effectively? Maybe we need all 3!

Learning Activity 2: From the Assisi Declarations on Humanity and Nature

- In 1986, to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the World wide Fund for Nature, religious leaders from 5 world faiths met in Assisi, the town made famous by Christianity's green and animal-loving Saint Francis. Each faith sent a leader to declare the religion's views about nature and contributions to a greener future. Copy page 6 below for students. Can they work out from clues in what is said which statement comes from which religion? The correct answers are in the box above right here.
- Why is this difficult? The reason this is difficult is because religions all teach similarly that the Earth is valuable, a treasure store and is not to be treated lightly, as a dump or as an exploitable resource.
- If it is true that religions have very similar views and teachings about environment and climate justice, then how can religions be mobilised to protect the Earth? What can anybody do?

Answers:	Buddhist
Christian	Jewish
Hindu	Muslim

Learning Activity 3: Five Tweets from the future

Play around in discussion with the puppets from the drama clip.

Ask the class: What messages from the future we would need to hear to jolt us out of our apathy? What could change our ways and secure a fairer and more sustainable future?

Give each student five of these Twitter logos to write into. Imagine that the median predictions of the climate scientists from current behaviour come true by the start of the 22nd century BCE, 100 years from now. Things have got a bit apocalyptic! Disaster has come. Sea level has risen, and Peterborough and Manchester are now seaside towns.

Global famine has halved the world's population: over 3 billion dead.

Food security is a thing of the past: only the most powerful are sure to eat each day.

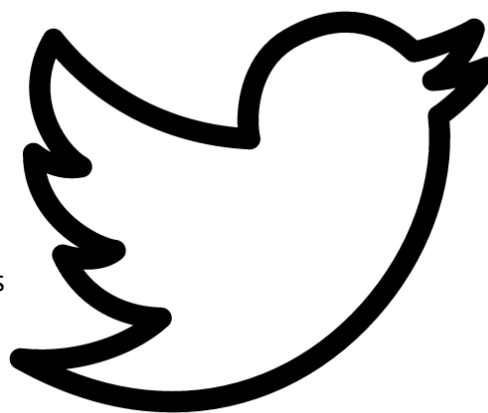
Crises have ended air travel, the internet, fossil fuels – no more cars or driving. Horse-drawn is the new Ferrari.

Tribal wars and conflicts about basic food and clean water are common.

From this ravaged future, what messages would the people send to us?

140 characters each please.

- “2020: Listen, you idiots...”
- “You can't imagine the horror coming...”
- “If only you would change one thing...”

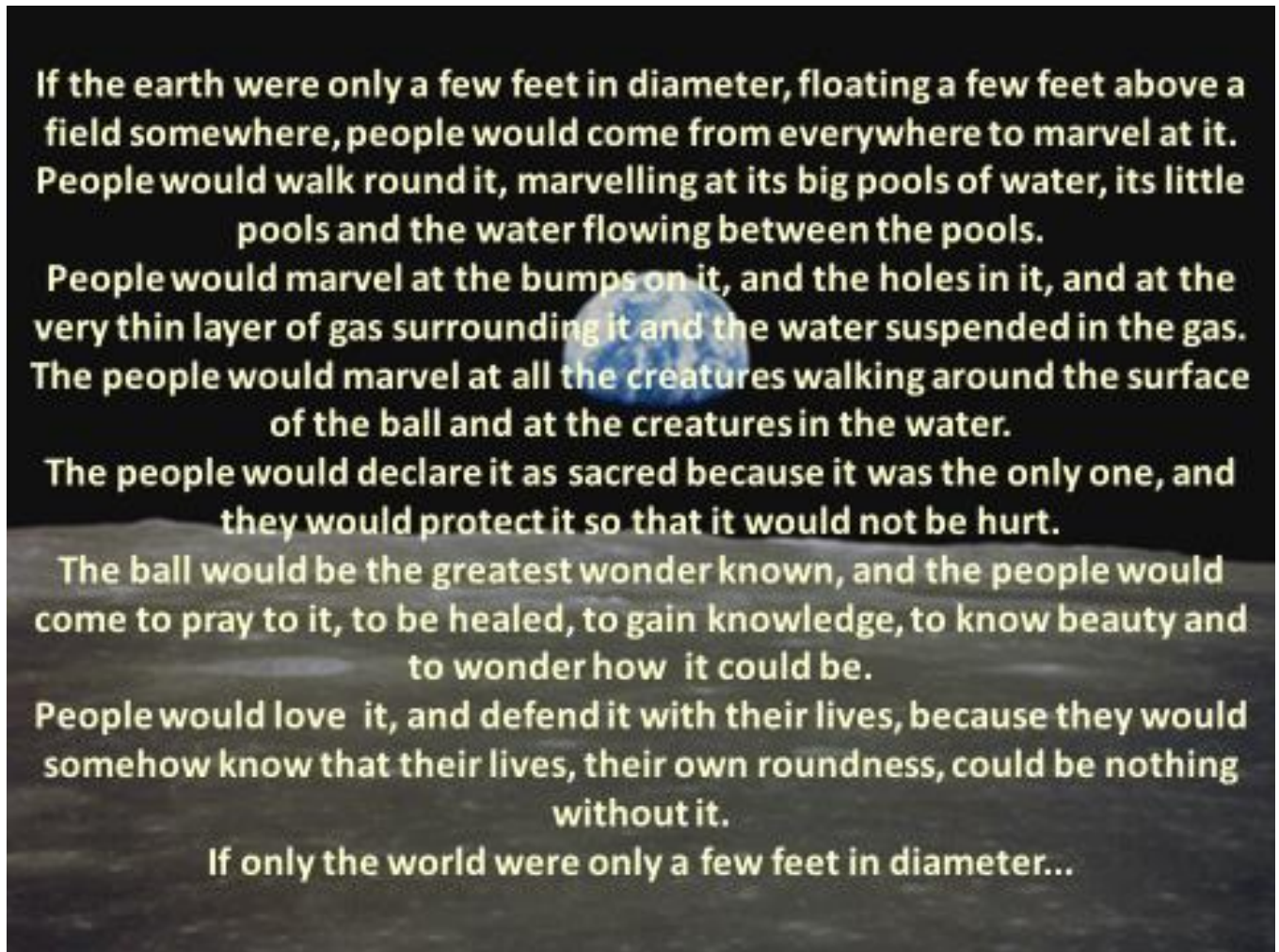


Stimulus A: Sculpture. ‘Politicians discussing global warming’ also known as ‘follow the leaders’. By Isaac Cordal.



- How many people?
- What seems to be going on?
- What do you like / dislike about the image?
- How do you explain the title?
- Are any of them not older white men? Does that matter? What does it mean? Who will save the Earth?
- Does this art work have an impact? How, what and why? What challenges do you notice here?

Stimulus B: If the Earth...



This version by Lat Blaylock, 2017

- Consider the text above. Read it aloud, to begin with, like a poem.
- What are the main ideas the writer wants to get across?
- Which lines do you think make most sense? Have most impact?
- What do you like and dislike about it?
- What significant messages come from this text for you?



8. An atheist might think...

3. The people who need to notice this include...

9. I think a politician might say...

4. I'm not sure about...

2. The main message of the picture to me is...

10. My own best ideas about the image are...



5. Looking at this, I realised that...

7. What a Christian might think about the picture is...

1a. I noticed...

6. This made me think more deeply about...

1b. My imaginative title for this image is...

5 Observations, 5 Reflections

Stimulus C: What do religions and beliefs say?

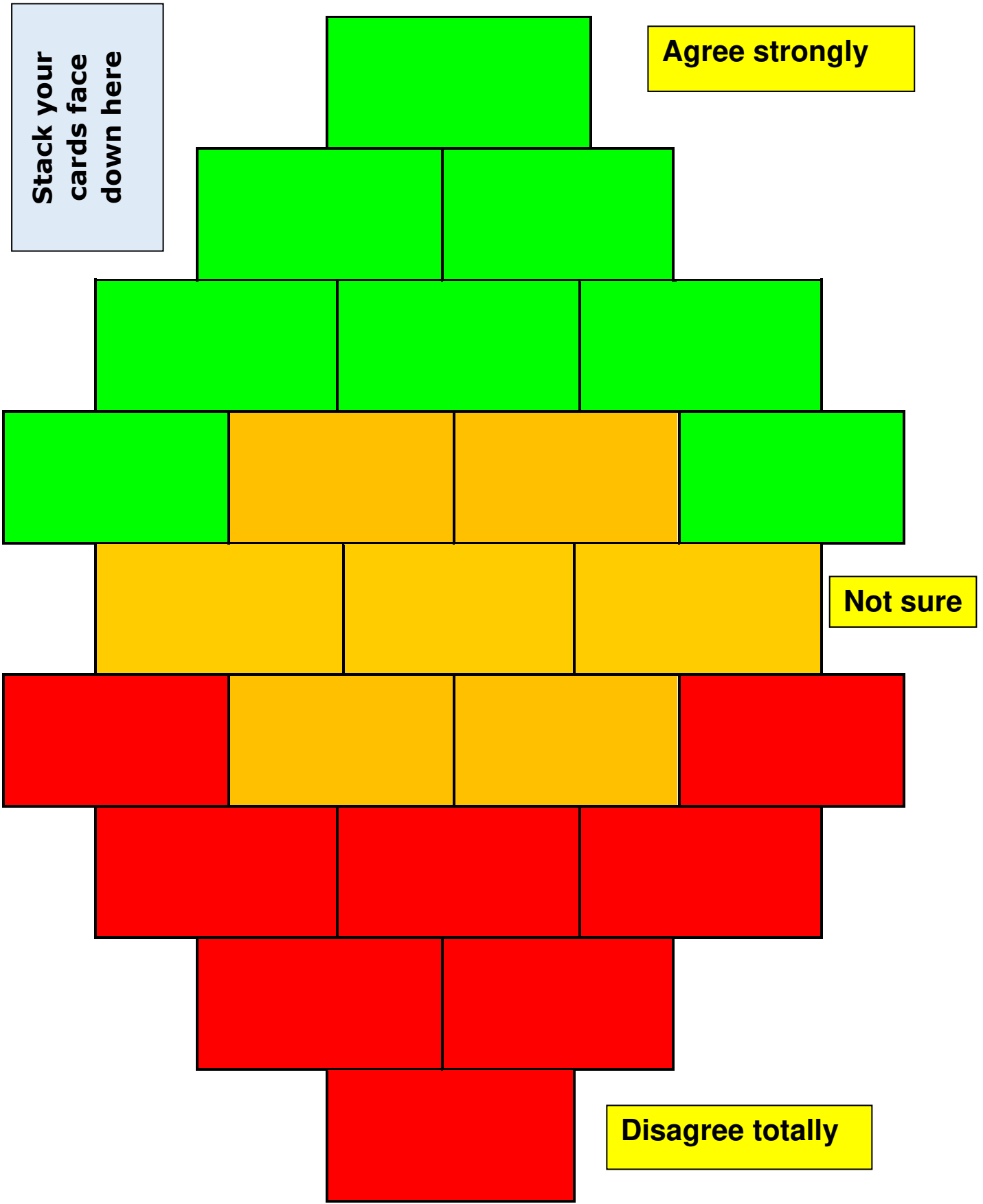
Consider these 6 quotations. Religions often have high ideals, but sometimes fail badly putting them into practice. What should the members of the religions named here do about the problems caused by climate change if they want to live up to their religion’s teachings?

<p>“May all beings live in safety with hearts full of joy Whether weak or strong, great or small, seen or unseen, far or near, born or to be born May all beings be full of Joy Let none deceive another, or despise any being whatsoever. Let none by anger or ill will wish harm to another.” Buddhist, the Metta Sutra</p>	<p>Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. Christian, 1 Corinthians, 13:4-8</p>	<p>“What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow human” Jewish, Talmud: Shabbat 31a.</p>
<p>“O Supreme Personality of Godhead, make me strong May all beings look on me with the eye of a friend May I look on all beings with the eye of a friend May we look on one another with the eye of a friend” Hindu, Yajur Veda, 36.18</p>	<p>“O human beings! We created you from (a single pair of) a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honoured of you in the sight of God is the one who is the most deeply conscious of Him. Indeed, God is all-Knowing, all-Aware.” The Qur'an, 49: 13</p>	<p>“One who performs selfless service, without thought of reward, shall attain his Lord and Master. He himself grants His Grace; O Nanak, that the selfless servant lives the Guru’s teachings.” Sikh, Guru Granth Sahib, p.286</p>
<p>Construct 6 sentences, one for each quote, each beginning: ‘This idea is relevant to our ecological needs because...’</p>		
<p>Ask six questions: what would you like to ask each religious text writer about what they aid, if you could?</p>		
<p>If you could take three of these quotes and get every human to pay attention to them, which three would you choose and why?</p>		

The Assisi Declarations: from 1986. Did they make a difference?

<p>From the Assisi Declarations on Humanity and Nature</p> <p>35 years ago, in 1986, to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the World Wide Fund for Nature, religious leaders from 5 world faiths met in Assisi, the town made famous by Christianity’s green and animal-loving Saint Francis.</p> <p>Each faith sent a leader to declare the religion’s views about nature and contributions to a greener future.</p> <p>Discuss with your partner: which statement is from Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish and Hindu thought? What clues help you?</p> <p>Consider: have the religious communities done enough since then to put their ideas into action?</p>	<p>“As we all know, disregard for the natural inheritance of human beings has brought about the danger that now threatens the peace of the world as well as the chance to live of endangered species. Such destruction of the environment and the life depending upon it is a result of ignorance, greed and disregard for the richness of all living things. This disregard is gaining great influence. If peace does not become a reality in the world and if the destruction of the environment continues as it does today, there is no doubt that future generations will inherit a dead world.”</p>
<p>“We repudiate: All forms of human activity – wars, discrimination, and destruction of cultures – which do not respect the authentic interests of the human race, in accordance with God’s will and design, and do not enable men as individuals and as members of society to pursue and fulfil their total vocation within the harmony of the universe; All ill considered exploitation of nature which threatens to destroy it and, in turn, to make man the victim of degradation... (We believe that God) reconciles all things visible and invisible, and that all creation is therefore purposefully orientated, in and through him, towards the future revelation of the glorious liberty of God’s children, when, in the new heavens and the new earth, there will no longer be death, mourning, sadness or pain.”</p>	<p>“Now, when the whole world is in peril, when the environment is in danger of being poisoned and various species, both plant and animal, are becoming extinct, it is our (religious) responsibility to put the defence of the whole of nature at the very centre of our concern.</p> <p>And yet it must be said, in all truth, that this question of man’s responsibility to the rest of creation cannot be defined by simply expressing our respect for all of nature. There is a tension at the centre of (our scripture’s) tradition, embedded in the very story of creation itself, over the question of power and stewardship. The world was created because God willed it, but why did He will it? (Our faith) has maintained in all of its versions that this world is the arena that God created for man; half beast and half angel to prove that he could behave as a moral being.”</p>
<p>“What is needed today is to remind ourselves that nature cannot be destroyed without mankind ultimately being destroyed itself. With nuclear weapons representing the ultimate pollutant, threatening to convert this beautiful planet of ours into a scorched cinder unable to support even the most primitive life forms, mankind is finally forced to face its dilemma. Centuries of rapacious exploitation of the environment have finally caught up with us and a radically changed attitude towards nature is now not a question of spiritual merit or condescension, but of sheer survival.</p> <p>This earth, so touchingly looked upon in the - - - view as the Universal Mother, has nurtured mankind up from the slime of the primeval ocean for billions of years.”</p>	<p>“(Our religion gives us) a world view which enables us to ask environmentally appropriate questions, draw up the right balance sheet of possibilities, properly weigh the environmental costs and benefits of what we want, what we can do within the ethical boundaries established by God, without violating the rights of His other creations. If we use the same values, the same understanding in our work as scientist or technologist, economist or politician as we do to know ourselves as those who submit themselves to the Will of God then, I believe, we will create a true (religious) alternative, a caring and practical way of being, doing and knowing, to the environmentally destructive thought and action which dominates the world today.”</p>

Climate Change and Green Futures: What do you think?



Climate Justice: viewpoints to discuss – theology / ethics / ecology / futures

God created the world perfect, but humanity has ruined it by greed and selfishness.	I believe God loves the whole Earth: after all, it's God's own creation.	God made every species, and is grieved when any species dies out.	Hindus teaching says: All life is one. Don't kill animals. Love the whole planet. I agree.
Climate change is killing the poor first, but then it will kill the rich.	Religious and non-religious people should unite to tackle climate change.	Christians believe God has made us stewards of the Earth, to look after it. I agree.	To save the world from humanity, it helps to pray: this can change our consciousness.
Being stewards of God's Earth means we can do what we like with it.	The Psalm says: "The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it." The Bible was green before us!	Allah tells Muslims in the Qur'an to be 'khalifa' – good rulers – over the physical Earth. Islam's green.	Climate change is affecting the poor most. Fight for climate justice!
Lifestyle changes can't save the planet. Political action is essential, big scale.	Christianity should be a much 'greener' religion.	The Gaia Hypothesis says, 'Treat the world like one living organism.' Good advice!	If Christians are 'stewards' of God's good Earth, they have made a lousy job of it.
It doesn't matter too much if we lose some species from the planet.	Saving the planet is a purely human responsibility. Don't expect divine help!	Jesus asked us all to 'consider the lilies of the field and the sparrows'. He's for biodiversity.	Religion - Christianity in particular - has to answer for big environmental damage.
The world is a kind of beautiful accident. All the more reason to care for it.	It's astonishing that the universe evolved: we're very lucky. That's why we must fight climate change.	Humanity has evolved through time and chance. Perhaps we deserve to die out next!	???

To play this discussion game: Take a set of these cards between 4 people, and place them face downwards. Take turns to read out a card. Ask the others: where would you put it? After you have heard their opinions, ignore them – put it where it goes for you. When it is your turn, you can move a card as well as placing a new one down. No overlapping. When all cards are used, play round the group 4 more times, swapping cards and saying why.

After you have played: Write a six-point statement: which ideas in the game did you disagree with most? Which six did you agree with? Say why.

God's Next Messenger

If God sent a messenger to the Earth today...

1. We need her because...
2. She would be pleased to see...
3. She would warn us about...
4. She would ask us to change by...
5. She would protect the Earth by...
6. She would show us how to...
7. She would bring justice by...
8. She would make peace through...
9. She would show us love so that...
10. She would show her strength by...
11. Some would oppose her, for example...
12. Her enemies would...
13. She would be in danger from...
14. The trees would be...
15. Animals would welcome her because...
16. She could just save us if...

ANNABELLE IS 6



Can you see how Annabelle has show in eight strips the broken world?

Prayers for a broken world

"God can heal a broken world.
I pray for the world I see on the news.
I hope he fixes it."

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