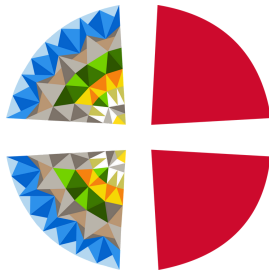


Yorkshire West
Methodist District



RESPONDING TO THE
CLIMATE CRISIS

TALKING ABOUT THE WEATHER: CHURCH RESPONSE

A free worship resource - please use, adapt and share!



TALKING ABOUT THE WEATHER: CHURCH RESPONSE

Italics are not to be read out, they provide guidance as to what to do.

Materials needed: paper/card and pencils/pens; pre-prepared cards with weather symbols (for Prayers of Intercession), slide or notice/handout with links for websites mentioned in 'responding' section.

Call to worship

During our service today we will be thinking about the weather. We begin with some verses from the book of Job for our call to worship:

"Can you find your way to where lightning is launched,
or to the place from which the wind blows?
Who do you suppose carves canyons
for the downpours of rain, and charts
the route of thunderstorms
That bring water to unvisited fields,
deserts no one ever lays eyes on,
Drenching the useless wastelands
so they're carpeted with wildflowers and
grass?
And who do you think is the father of rain
and dew,
the mother of ice and frost?
You don't for a minute imagine
these marvels of weather just happen, do
you?"

Job 38:24-30 The Message version

Opening prayers

A prayer of praise

Let us pray:

We imagine the comfortable warmth of a summer's day...

God, warm and loving, bringer of light, source of life we praise you for the sunshine.

We imagine a gentle shower of rain, enjoying the cooling and refreshing drops...

God, you pour out the water of life and through Jesus offer it to all who come to drink. You wash us clean and refresh our lives. We thank and praise you.

We imagine the whisper of a breeze, softly blowing across our faces.

God, you breathed the breath of life into creation.

At Pentecost the wind of your Spirit energised the disciples. Breathe your Spirit once more into our lives we pray, to equip and energise us for your work. We thank and praise you.

Receive our prayers we ask through Jesus, Amen.

Opening hymn choices

STF 136 Morning has broken

STF 108 - In the beginning God played with the planets

STF 499 - Great God, your love has called us here

Other hymn choices

STF 100 - All things bright and beautiful

STF 495 - Dear Lord and Father of mankind

STF 693 - Beauty for brokenness

STF 696 - For the healing of the nations

STF 239 - Sent by the Lord am I

STF 708 - O God of hope, your prophets spoke

STF 674 - Would I have answered when you called

STF 92 - Think of a world without any flowers

STF 313 - Thine be the glory

Opening prayers (contd)

A prayer of confession

Generous God, origin of life and of all that exists, we bow our heads before you.

God wise beyond measure, you formed the world and made possible the cycles of life. You created the world and its systems to work in balance.

We are sorry that humanity, given the role of caring for creation, has fallen short of our calling. In the enthusiasm for ever advancing technology, humankind has not given enough thought to protecting the world you have made.

We recognise that you are the sovereign of creation.

You are our God and our saviour. We ask forgiveness on behalf of humanity. We ask forgiveness on our own behalf. We are sorry for when we have been complacent about climate change. We pray that through Jesus and by the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, we may know the truth of your forgiveness at work in our lives. Help us to become more willing to change.

As Jonah eventually went the way you called him to, help us, we pray, to discover and to go the way you are calling us to respond to this crisis. Give us the words to share your message of challenge and hope and guide us to play our part in making the difference that is required.

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus the healer and bringer of peace, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

In a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Introducing the theme

The British have a reputation for talking a lot about the weather.

I wonder, what is your favourite kind of weather and why? (*gather answers*)

Show or draw images of weather symbols (think about those we are used to from the weather forecast) or invite people to draw their own weather symbols on paper/card.

Is there any kind of weather which you think we do not need and would like to do without?

(Gather answers and develop a conversation: talk about the need for rain to water crops, sun for plants to grow, cold to trigger some plant activity, wind is needed to spread seeds. Talk about the good which can come from some weather which might be irritable e.g. fog brings moisture – try to explore how the variety of weather brings what is needed for creation to thrive but allow an acceptance that some extreme weather is not good.)

Our call to worship came from Job chapter 38. There we find God speaking to Job and his companions about his creative power which, of course, includes the weather.

Can anyone here think of other Bible stories or passages which refer to the weather? (*Gather answers with a brief conversation to draw out the connection between God the creator and weather. If people are struggling here are some suggestions:*

Introducing the theme (contd)

Genesis 7:11-12; 8:2-4; 9:12-17 Noah and the flood

Exodus 9:22-25 Moses and plague of hail/thunder

1 Kings 17-18 God withholds rain: Elijah & ravens/widow of Zarephath/prophets of Baal

Psalms 66:9-13 God waters the land to bring harvest

Jonah 1:4 Jonah and the storm

Matthew 7:24-27 Jesus' parable of the two builders

Matthew 8:23-27/Mark 4:35-41/Luke 8:22-25 Jesus calms the storm – this will be used later in the service

Matthew 14:22-26/Mark 6:45-56/John 6:16-24 Jesus walks on water – ref to wind and waves

Acts 27:1-44 Paul's witness and encouragement through the storm

Revelation 4:3-5 Rainbow, lightning and thunder at the throne of God

Revelation 7:1 Angels hold back the wind from damaging land, sea and tree

Biblically (and from our own experience), we see that weather is important in people's lives. It can cause problems when there is too much or too little. We see also that God is recognised to be in control. All sorts of weather might be expected and dealt with: from hailstorms to sunshine.

Reading

Let's remind ourselves about the story of Jonah the prophet. Jonah was sent by God to Nineveh to call the people to repentance. He did not want to go and ended up inside a big fish. But eventually, Jonah had to do what God wanted and took the message to Nineveh. This is what happened next:

Jonah 4:5-11

Reflection on the reading

The story of Jonah reminds us that God is merciful; we see this in God's response to the Ninevites. It also shows us the truth of God who continues to be active within creation and who is not only willing but desires to have conversations with us. The final conversation with Jonah is a clear reminder of God's right as sovereign creator to choose to be merciful.

I wonder, has anybody ever asked you to pray for good weather when a particular event is coming up? As Christians this is something which we may find ourselves being asked to do, whether as a joke or seriously. It has been said that you need to get such prayers in well in advance to allow for the weather patterns to be in the right place. But, I wonder, how much do we really think of God as controlling the weather?

You may have noticed on the news that severe weather events are now happening much more frequently than used to be the case. Recently we have heard about (heat waves, floods, forest fires... include some recent examples). Do we blame God for this?

There are simulators and models which have been set up to help the experts know why certain weather events take place. It is recognised that not all extreme weather events are a direct result of climate change but many of them are. The data shows that climate change is making the occurrence of severe weather more likely.

This is a very blunt question to ask but we need to be aware of the answer: who do you think is causing climate change? Is it God or humanity or the rest of creation?

Reflection (contd)

The answer is quite clear that humanity as a species has caused the climate change which we are currently seeing. This is the result of many different aspects of the way we live our lives including the use of fossil fuels, the destruction of natural environments and the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

There are still climate change sceptics, but the vast majority of scientists agree that climate change has been produced by human activity. Research shows that the current global warming began about 200 years ago (in the 1830s) although the rate of change has been greater over the last 100 years. Although industrial development has brought many advantages, it has also knocked God's creation out of balance.

Once we have acknowledged that humanity has caused climate change it becomes easier to also recognise that we need to do something about it.

We are enabled to find our way through approaching our sovereign God in worship. We begin with confession and repentance, then we can look to God for guidance and for the merciful hope which God offers.

While listening to the next reading and reflection, Invite people to design (and draw) additional weather symbols for extremes: e.g. red hot sunshine or rain with flooding. (See box on Craftivism at the end of this resource).

Reading

Luke 8:22-25

Reflection on the reading

This is a very short Bible passage, but it is one which many people would say was their favourite. We can look to this story and readily apply it to our own lives, not because we are often in boats (although perhaps you are) but because, when we are going through rough times, it reminds us that Jesus is there to guide and help us and that even through the storms, we can find the peace which Jesus offers.

Let's think about the weather which was causing a problem to the disciples. It is said that because of the way the hills are shaped around the sea of Galilee such sudden squalls were a constant danger. Some of the disciples were fishermen and therefore used to being in boats. But on this occasion, they were full of fear. This storm seems to have been worse than usual.

The disciples, worried, woke Jesus up. We do not know what they expected him to do but when they saw him still the storm, they were astounded. Jesus, God made man, had the power to calm the wind and the waves. The disciples saw in Jesus the sovereignty of God over the natural forces of creation. Around the world we are beginning to see the effects of climate change. It can feel very frightening. We might even want to turn our backs on the evidence and try to suggest that it is someone else's problem to deal with. But, like the disciples in the boat would have been swamped if they had not done something, we cannot ignore the troubles which face the world, and we need to do something. We could suggest that we do not have the power to make a difference. The truth, however, is that this is everybody's problem

Reflection (contd)

and that the world needs everybody to respond.

It is important that governments act to make change more possible and more affordable. It would be helpful if subsidies and tax cuts were designed to support genuinely green initiatives. It matters that we hold our government to account for the decisions it makes. But much has already been done, there are many people working to make a difference and a great variety of opportunities are available.

We can each get involved through our lifestyle decisions from what toothbrush we use to how we heat our homes and cook our food. Nowadays the information is readily available as to what the carbon footprint is for different industries from travel to fashion and so much more. It is well worth each of us taking the time to think carefully about our choices, for instance finding out what is really involved in producing the things we buy. Some environmentally friendly choices can seem too costly for us to consider but we can do a lot by what we choose not to buy.

In the boat the disciples discovered that Jesus was powerful enough to bring peace. We also turn to God through Christ, seeking help. As we do so, we recognise that we are part of the answer to those prayers. The people who are living in parts of the world where climate change is currently making a severe impact need us and our families and friends to be part of the solution.

God our creator blesses us with all kinds of weather.

Take a moment to look again at the weather symbols we used earlier in the service. Do any of these offer us part of a solution to climate change? (*discuss: wind power, solar power, hydroelectric power...*)

God our sovereign creator has given us so many opportunities through the resources of the world. If we can speak and act in ways which recognise once more the sovereignty of God over creation and approach our use of earth's resources with a sense of God's merciful justice, then we can be part of making climate hope a possibility.

May God's will be done through us, Amen.

Responding to the reading

What does all this mean for us, as a church?

It is difficult to know how to respond to large issues like the climate crisis, when we know that our own individual actions may not have much impact, and the weight of responsibility for our complicity in broken systems and structures feels like too much.

However, there are things you can do, and your own choices do help make a difference, but more importantly they help to shape the views of others, the decisions of political leaders and frame the ways we have a conversation about responding to climate injustice.

Here are just three things to consider, though a conversation or some searching on the internet may reveal dozens more – have a think about which one is right for you!

Pray: we believe that God made creation, and weeps for the destruction done to it

Responding (contd)

in the name of greed, profit and selfishness. Use your prayer time as a way to process your own climate grief and climate guilt – talk to God about the weather!

You can also pray for all involved in work with those most affected by the climate crisis, for climate scientists, for political leaders, for those still in denial or giving voice to those who argue for the status quo. Help find a way to frame your prayers around the planet, and if it helps you to reconnect with nature, take the opportunity to do that.

You might find David Benjamin Blowers' music helpful, particularly his song about reconnecting with the soil -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V79jDLZOShU>

2. Join or support an existing group:

Lots of organisations and community groups are already doing something about the climate crisis and the natural environment. If you care about this, you are not alone! Have a quick look on the internet, or talk to some of the people in your church to find out what is already going on? It could be a local litter-picking group, or an Extinction Rebellion meeting, or anywhere in between!

Get involved in some craftivism – either by yourself, with your friends, or start a group! In the boat the disciples discovered that Jesus was powerful enough to bring peace.

3. Become an Eco-Church, which includes measuring your own impact and ways to improve. Find out more and sign up today at ecochurch.arocha.org.uk

Dedicating the offering

Sovereign God, we bring you our offering as a sign of our love and worship.

Teach us we pray to use these gifts in your service,
so that others may know your love and peace.

In the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace,
Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Either: prepare paper or card circles with various weather symbols on e.g. sunshine, rain storm, cloudy with showers trying to have enough for each member of the congregation to have a choice as to which to use.

Or: give each person a paper/card circle on which to draw the weather symbol of their choice (you may choose to use the symbols which have been produced earlier in the service).

Invite the congregation to write prayers on the back of whichever of the weather symbols they feel is appropriate for the concern or hope for which they are praying. The symbols could then be collected in an upturned umbrella or another appropriate receptacle.

We ask, God of peace, that you will bring light and hope where life feels full of dark clouds and stormy weather.

We pray for your blessing for all those who are struggling at this time.

May we have the faith to follow your guidance as we seek to share your peace and to make a difference through the way we live our lives.

In the name of Jesus who calmed the storm,
Amen.

Blessing

Encourage the congregation to share a blessing, the following Gaelic blessing may work well.

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields and until
we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of his hand.
Amen.

Craftivism

Craftivism is an important part of the work of the Leeds Sanctuary - you can find out more here:

In this service, there have been several prompts to make and use weather symbols, such as the ones used on a weather forecast. You might like to use this as your craftivism activity for this service.

Craftivism takes multiple forms, and in the other services in this series, you can find ideas for creating something to send to your local MP or to engage with larger campaigns and activism.

On this, occasion, however, you could use the weather symbols as a prompt for prayer - activism in its own right. Could you keep and distribute the weather symbols you've made and used during this service to others in the congregation and community, and ask them to pray into the climate crisis - to pray for those most affected, pray for political leaders, and pray that each of us will know what is 'ours to do'.

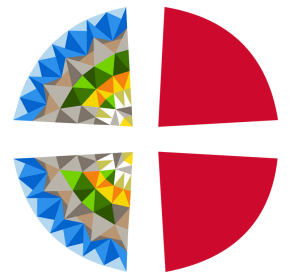
You could use the symbols as a prompt to start conversations with other people in your community about the climate crisis, and about what your church could do as part of a commitment to becoming an Eco Church.



Find out more and take action today:

ywmethodist.org.uk
allwecan.org.uk
ecochurch.arocha.org.uk

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