A Carbon Footprint
By Jane Angha

Purpose
This 90-minute session explains some of the science behind climate change, bust myths, and help participants face climate change with faith and reason, science, and prudence. Youth have an opportunity to create positive solutions and action steps to impact their homes, schools and communities.

Session at a Glance
7:00 p.m. Welcome and Climate Change Bingo
7:15 p.m. Opening Prayer
7:30 p.m. Footprints Tells the Story
7:40 p.m. Large Group Sharing
8:00 p.m. Science Meets Faith
8:10 p.m. Closing Prayer
8:20 p.m. Thank You and Announcements
8:30 p.m. Good Night!

Extend the Session Ideas
1. Download a carbon footprint calculator for each participant to take. Here’s one that can be downloaded: http://the-carbon-footprint-calculator.en.softonic.com/download.

Most carbon footprint calculators are done online:
a. Carbon Footprint Calculator at:
b. Center for Sustainable Economy at:


3. Invite a Catholic Climate Ambassador or a speaker from a local college, diocesan social justice office, or a grassroots movement in your community to talk about how to reduce one’s carbon footprint. Find an ambassador near you by visiting
the Catholic Climate Covenant website:

Materials Needed

- Laptop computer, LCD projector and speakers
  Note to Leader: Your audio/visual set up needs to be adequate for everyone to be able to hear/see the movie clips.
- Bingo prize, such as a reusable water bottle, a lunch tote, shopping bag, fair trade chocolate or coffee, glass mug etc. Have one prize for each game you play.
- Washable markers, two for each small group of five participants
- Brown packaging paper or butcher paper cut into 3-foot lengths, one for each small group of five participants
- Scissors
- “Here I Am” by Tom Booth (Spirit & Song, OCP)
- “Our God Reigns” by Leonard E. Smith Jr. (Spirit & Song, OCP)
- CD or MP3 player and speakers
- Bible, marked to Isaiah 44:24 and to Psalm 8:3
- Table, cloth, pillar candle, lightstick or matches
- Newsprint
- Resource 1, Climate Change Bingo (see #1 in Prepare in Advance)
- Resource 2, Opening Prayer, three copies (see #2 in Prepare in Advance)
- Resource 3, A Prayer for Simple Living, nine copies (see #2 in Prepare in Advance)
- Handout 1, Carbon Footprints—Serious Impact, one for each participant
- Handout 2, FYI—Be Informed!, one for each participant
- Pens or pencils, one for each participant
- “Wall of Hope” sign (see #5 in Prepare in Advance)

Prepare in Advance

1. Using the information from Resource 1, make climate change bingo cards for the opening activity. If possible, laminate the cards so they are reusable.

2. Invite five youth to read for the opening prayer. Give Readers 1, and 3 each a copy of Resource 2, Opening Prayer. Let Readers 4 and 5 know which Scripture passages they will proclaim. Invite 8 youth to be readers for the closing prayer. Give each a copy of Resource 3, A Prayer for Simple Living. Invite a musician to lead music for prayer.
3. Invite older high school youth, college students or adults to be group facilitators.

4. Divide participants into groups of 5 for the small group sessions. This can be done by placing a colored dot or number on their nametag as they arrive.

5. Prepare a sign using butcher paper that says “Wall of Hope” (this will be posted on a wall for the closing prayer).

**Session Outline**

**Welcome and Climate Change Bingo** (15 minutes)

Distribute a Bingo playing card and marker to each participant as they arrive. Welcome the participants and introduce the first activity by saying:

Welcome everyone! We are really excited about all we have planned and glad you will be a part of it all. Let’s start by getting to know each other a little bit better and learning some of the concepts we will be learning tonight, too. We are going to play Bingo. But not just any Bingo game...Climate Change Bingo! It’s just like the game we all know and love, but here is how it is a little different: all the squares are climate change words. The caller will say a word or phrase and describe it a bit. If you have that word or phrase, make an X with a marker on the space. The caller will choose how the game is played—four corners or traditional. Get your cards and markers and let’s go!

Give each winner a prize.

**Opening Prayer** (15 minutes)

_Gather_

Invite the participants to gather in the prayer space. Sing “Here I Am.”

_Prayer Leader:_

This evening is all about us—our lives, how we are living, and what impact humanity is having on the earth...literally. This night is about learning, reflecting, and finding hope in our future and the future of the planet. We come together as a faith community and so we begin with prayer. We are a people, set apart and sealed at our baptism with the sign of the cross. We are called to live differently and to set the course for others to follow. And so we pray, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Indicate to the first reader to begin.

**Reader 1:** Lord of all creation, we are grateful for the gift of life. The amazing diversity of all creation astounds us and holds us mesmerized. We marvel at a spider’s web, the birth of a child, the growth of an acorn into a beautiful oak tree.
Reader 2: When we see the countless species of fish, animals, plants, and trees, we are brought to our knees. Your vision, creation, and design are beyond our imagination or comprehension.

Reader 3: Teach us tonight how best to care for the earth and remedy the scars she has from over-consumption, misuse, lack of knowledge, and sin. May we marvel like the prophets of old and sing your praises—and enjoy a world that will sustain us for generations to come.

Listen
After a few moments of silence, indicate that Reader 4 should begin.

Reader 4: Isaiah 44:24

Allow a few moments of silence and then indicate that Reader 5 should begin.

Reader 5: Psalm 8:3

Respond
Prayer Leader:

Inspire us Lord, that we might in turn inspire others to find new and creative ways to steward the earth. We pray all this in the name of Jesus our friend and brother. Amen.

Send Forth
To close the prayer, invite everyone to sing “Our God Reigns.”

Footprints Tell the Story (10 minutes)
Invite participants to get into small groups of five. Introduce this part of the session by saying:

Every day in the news we are looking at images in nature that cause us to stop and think. In the past few years, we have seen hurricanes, tornadoes, drought, and floods. There are scientists who say this is normal and reflects the cycles of nature. There are others, though, who are trying to get the attention of the world to say that something is not right with the earth and atmosphere, and we have to pay attention. We have seen lots of work in the area of going green, recycling, and being more mindful of using earth’s resources, but we often are confused about the end goal. Is this just a fad, or will all these activities really help save our planet?

We need to find out for sure and become knowledgeable about climate change. If you are wondering why it is a church thing... well, Earth was and is a gift to us from God. We were given the responsibility of caring for it and making sure it is tended
well for generations to come. So it is a matter of faith, a matter of science, and a matter of urgency.

We are going to get into groups of five to take a look at a challenging video on climate change that describes our carbon footprint on earth. After the video, you’ll have time to talk about this with your small group.


**Large Group Sharing** (20 minutes)
After watching the video, distribute pens or pencils and **Handout 1, Carbon Footprints—Serious Impact**, and invite small groups to discuss the questions. Allow several minutes for discussion. Then invite all the groups to share the key insights they got from answering the questions, including what they think is the biggest concern facing the earth. As they share their concerns, list them on newsprint. After all groups have had a chance to share, introduce the next part of the session by saying:

Thank you all for the information you shared with us. This list of concerns is rather overwhelming isn’t it? Well, that’s the last thing we want it to be for us. As we began in prayer tonight, we acknowledged that the earth is a gift to us from God, and God is very aware of what is occurring because of human behavior. We are not alone in this. For the rest of our time together, we will learn how our Catholic faith addresses the difficult challenges we face with climate change. We want to find out how our living...our carbon footprint...can leave less of an impact on the world. We want to leave a legacy of a different kind!

**Science Meets Faith** (10 minutes)
Provide some background on the Catholic Church’s participation in the climate change conversations by saying:

You might be surprised to learn how much our Catholic Church has written and taught about global climate change. Our own Pope Benedict XVI, in his message for World Day of Peace in 2007, challenged us to strengthen “that covenant between human beings and the environment” which God wants us to have through prudent actions which mirror God’s love. Prudent actions are those which are carefully thought out and have a good moral purpose. The bishops in their Statement on Climate Change say, “Prudence is intelligence applied to our actions...a thoughtful, deliberate, and reasoned basis for taking or avoiding action to achieve a moral good.”

Because so many environmental disasters hurt the poorest among us more than any other group, our U.S. Catholic Bishops have asked us to “reflect the genuine participation and concerns of those most affected and least able to bear the burdens” as we offer aid and support to them. So whenever we talk about how to care for God’s creation, we should also be talking about how to care for the poor who are the victims of climate change.
In 2010, Pope Benedict called on us to solve the problems we face with our environment, not just because creation is in dire straits, but because we are called to achieve "world-wide solidarity inspired by the values of charity, justice, and the common good." In other words, what we decide to do to care for creation must always consider what is best for everyone, not just what is best for us.

So our Catholic Church guides us to take prudent actions to care for creation, to protect the poor who are affected deeply by climatic disaster, and to always keep the common good in mind so that we live in solidarity with each other and with our environment.

In your small group, this time, you will be making a proclamation—a letter to the good people of [insert your school, church or community name]. On this scroll will be a list of all the things you can do to eliminate your carbon footprint… to lower your consumption of the earth’s resources…so that you can live up to the challenges which our Catholic Church gives us.

Review the directions with them:

In a moment, you’ll be asked to send one person from your group to the front of the room to get the supplies you’ll need to make your proclamation. Each group will create a faith-based statement or proclamation and then below it list all the ways you will fulfill that. You will have 15 minutes. We will close with prayer where you will be invited to share your scroll.

Invite someone from each group to get the supplies for their group: one or two markers, two sheets of scratch paper, a pen or two, and a “scroll” (sheet of newsprint or butcher paper). After 15 minutes, call time and invite participants to gather in the prayer space.

Note to Leader: As teams are working, get the prayer space ready. Light candles, make room for readers and scroll holders.

Closing Prayer (10 minutes)
Prayer Leader:

Our closing prayer tonight reflects that we have learned the seriousness of the problem of climate change and how our lives and lifestyles have contributed to it. We learned tonight that there are things we can do to stop and reverse climate change…and that is by lowering our carbon footprints. This will be the challenge of a lifetime.

We are a hopeful people though. Our Catholic faith reminds us that we are not alone. God loves and cares for us and is with us in our struggle for the earth. As Pope Benedict wrote, “My dear friends, God’s creation is one and it is good. The concerns for non-violence, sustainable development, justice and peace, and care for our environment are of vital importance for humanity.”

(Message for World Youth Day, June 2008)
As each prayer is read, we invite a small group to bring their scroll forward and tape it to the Wall of Hope for all to see. Let us pray...

After the readers have completed the prayer, invite participants to walk around and read the Wall of Hope to conclude the prayer experience.

**Thank You and Announcements** (5 minutes)
Thank everyone for coming and all those who participated in the evening as musicians, small group leaders, readers etc. Give each person a copy of **Handout 2, FYI – Be Informed!**, to take home and share with their families. Make any needed announcements of upcoming programs and events.

*All websites and links were accessed successfully on August 8, 2011.*

This session was written by Jane Angha, Project Coordinator for Young Neighbors in Action at the Center for Ministry Development, as part of a project with the Catholic Coalition for Climate Change. Jane also teaches the Justice & Service course in the Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies Program.
Resource 1

Climate Change Bingo

Go to [http://www.bingocardcreator.com](http://www.bingocardcreator.com). This website allows you to create your own set of Bingo cards. Below is the list of words needed to create your cards on Climate Change. Each person gets a laminated card and a washable marker. (Consider pointing out that you laminated the cards to make them reusable so they don’t just become trash after the session.) You will need one caller who can use the list below to play the game. Just cut apart and put in a basket. Pick one at a time. Have a prize or two ready for the winners!

1. Shop farmer’s markets
2. Compost
3. Buy items with less packaging
4. Carbon footprint
5. Choose renewable resources
6. Fix leaky faucets
7. Greenhouse gases
8. Turn lights out
9. Repair not replace
10. Ride the bus
11. Generate less waste
12. Reduce consumption
13. Climate change
14. Buy local often
15. Buy less
16. Reduce
17. Unplug appliances
18. Clean without chemicals
19. Read Scripture
20. Reuse
21. Read Church documents
22. Recycle
23. Eco-friendly packaging
24. Eat vegetarian often
25. Carpool
Reader 1:
Lord of all creation, we are grateful for the gift of life. The amazing diversity of all creation astounds us and holds us mesmerized. We marvel at a spider’s web, the birth of a child, the growth of an acorn into a beautiful oak tree.

Reader 2:
When we see the countless species of fish, animals, plants, and trees, we are brought to our knees. Your vision, creation, and design are beyond our imagination or comprehension.

Reader 3:
Teach us tonight how best to care for the earth and remedy the scars she has from over-consumption, misuse, lack of knowledge, and sin. May we marvel like the prophets of old and sing your praises—and enjoy a world that will sustain us for generations to come.
A Prayer for Simple Living
by Fr. Jim O’Keefe, CAFOD

Reader 1:
We know we are beginning to live simply when we glimpse that we are content with less; when we discover we don’t have to compete with other people in relation to what they have or what they have achieved.

Reader 2:
We know we are beginning to live simply with we find ourselves delighting in little things; when we can affirm the achievements of other people of any age and background; when we appreciate the gifts of others; when we find ourselves valuing the present moment and worrying less about tomorrow and its mysteries.

Reader 3:
We live sustainably when we value what we have and need, not what others want to sell us. We recycle what is not needed; we do not recycle relationships and commitments that underpin our very existence.

Reader 4:
We know we live sustainably when we find ourselves increasingly sad about the destruction of the created world that has been given to us as a gift by God.

Reader 5:
We know we are deepening our commitment to live in solidarity when we are hurt by the sheer lack of respect for our brothers and sisters throughout the world; when we weep more easily as we appreciate the plight of others on whatever margin they live.

Reader 6:
We know we are deepening our commitment to live in solidarity when we don’t just observe, don’t just complain about or analyze problems, but find ourselves ready to commit to changing the circumstances and removing the obstacles to the fullness of life of our sisters and brothers – then we are beginning to glimpse “living in solidarity.”

Reader 7:
Living simply is not primarily about changing anyone else or anything outside ourselves. It is to discover that I am indeed made in the image of God, I am sustained by God, and I need nothing else.

Reader 8:
This awareness will mean that I make different choices about what I need, what matters, what I care about, what I commit myself to. These are huge insights… and huge risks… but what wonderful ideas!

Prayer Leader:
Lord, these scrolls filled with hope and creativity will remind us that you are in the midst of our world in crisis. We know that you have gifted us with ideas, creativity, determination and courage. May we use those gifts to help renew the earth so we can leave a healthy planet for generations yet to come. We pray this in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(This prayer was used with permission of Catholic Climate Change and CAFOD.)
Handout 1

Carbon Footprints—Serious Impact
Small Group Activity

Directions: After watching the video, answer the questions below.

Questions:
1. What is the main point of this video?

2. What is the biggest concern for the earth? For humanity?

3. What concerns you the most?

4. What does faith have to do with this issue?

5. What can the church do to help with the problem?

6. What is one thing you could do today to help solve the problem?
FYI – Be Informed!

Some ideas and information from eHow.com

- **Climate Change**: a series of events in the earth’s environment resulting from increasing global temperatures.
- **Greenhouse Effect**: Greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, help keep the earth warm. They float in the atmosphere, the blanket of gases that surrounds the earth, and allow the sun’s warming rays through to the earth’s surface. When these rays reflect back up, the greenhouse gases keep the warmth from the rays inside the earth’s atmosphere. This is how the planet stays warm.
- **Greenhouse Gases**: These gases are not in themselves a bad thing. Earth’s greenhouse effect is what keeps the planet warm, and allows life to exist, even for the half of Earth that isn’t facing the sun at any given point in time. Scientists believe that climate change is the result of mankind producing too much greenhouse gas. This excessive amount keeps too much of the warmth from the sun bottled up underneath the atmosphere, and the added warmth is causing a number of problems for the climate.
- **Carbon Footprints**: An individual’s carbon footprint is the amount of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that the individual’s activities produce. These are activities add this greenhouse gas to the atmosphere. These activities include things like driving in a car, flying in a plane, and using electricity in their homes. Most power in the United States is provided by plants that burn coal, which produces greenhouse gases. While leaving a light on doesn’t seem like it is creating greenhouse gases, if the power is coming from plants that burn fossil fuels, which produce greenhouse gases, then it is.

Read more: Carbon Footprint Facts for Kids | eHow.com
http://www.ehow.com/info_7972220_carbon-footprint-kids.html#ixzz1Qn5QCeiq

Simple things you can do to slow down climate change:

- Recycle, eat less meat, buy items with less packaging, reduce your consumption, drink from reusable water bottles, generate less waste, ride the bus, shop locally, carpool, clean without chemicals, repair, don’t replace, fix leaky faucets and windows, use cloth shopping bags, compost, turn lights out, unplug appliances, cook on burners that fit your pan sizes, take shorter showers...

Share this message with others!