A Dream for the World
By Joan Weber

Purpose
As people of faith, Catholics believe that God invites us into an intimate relationship with God, each other, and God’s creation. We live in covenant with God, and part of the covenant is being in right relationship with creation. This 90-minute session is designed to introduce participants to the Catholic perspective on climate change and to give the young people and their parents or guardians an overview of the topics being covered.

Session at a Glance

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<td>7:35 p.m.</td>
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Extend the Session Ideas

1. Engage the parents of the youth in this session by having them participate in the Welcome and Opening Prayer. When the young people move into the next segment of the session, invite the parents to go to a different room with a parish leader. Give a quick overview of the Session Outline. Or invite a guest speaker to cover the topics in the resource mentioned below. Pass out the handout A Catholic Approach to Climate Change – Question and Answer Resource. It can be found at http://www.catholicsandclimatechange.org/pdf/FAQ.pdf. Engage the parents in a Q & A session, using the handout as your guide. At approximately 7:55, bring the parents back into the room with their adolescents so they can hear the dream sculptures and participate in the closing prayer.

2. Invite the youth to teach younger children about climate change and care for God’s creation. Connect them with the DRE or the catechist in charge of a particular age group with whom they would like to work. Use the lesson plans on the CCCC website (http://www.catholiccovenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/K-2lessons.pdf) and work with the youth on preparing to teach the children.
Materials Needed

- Pictures/symbols of each of the following on a large sheet of paper:
  - God (a Trinitarian symbol would be great)
  - A local community (family, neighbors, etc.)
  - The global family
  - Planet Earth/creation
- Bibles for the participants
- DVD “Who’s Under Your Carbon Footprint” found on the CCCC website
- Laptop and LCD player or DVD player and TV
- “All Good Gifts” from Godspell (music by Stephen Schwartz), available from iTunes
- “Song of the Body of Christ” by David Haas (Spirit & Song, OCP), or another song of solidarity
- CD or MP3 player and speakers
- Play-Doh or other clay substitute (various colors), enough for each participant to have access to different colors
- Flat-based paper plates, one per participant
- Handout 1, Am I in Right Relationship?, for each participant, copy double-sided
- Handout 2, Take Action to be in Right Relationship, for each participant
- Pens or pencils for journaling

Prepare in Advance

1. Set up your large sheet of paper with the symbols of God, your community, people around the world, and creation in the front of the room. Make sure it is high enough and large enough to be easily viewed by everyone in the room, even when they are standing.

2. The room needs to be set up in such a way that there is a large amount of open space so participants can move forward and backward without impediment. Having chairs set up in a circle around the periphery of the room would work well.

3. Invite five young people to proclaim the five Scripture passages in the opening prayer.

4. Select one youth to proclaim Micah in the session on Our & My Dream for Planet Earth.

5. Be ready to set up tables and chairs for participants to sculpt their clay for the Our & My Dream for Planet Earth session.
Session Outline
Welcome (5 minutes)

Greet and welcome youth as they arrive to the session. Introduce the session making the following points:

I am going to do a word association with you. I will give you a word or phrase, and then I want you to share whatever comes into your mind. Don’t think about an answer—just share the first word that pops up. Ready?

- Creation
- Earth
- Planet
- Air
- Water
- Climate
- Creator
- Drought
- Pollution
- Climate change

Some people question if climate change is real. Some may wonder what climate change has to do with faith—in our case, the Catholic faith. In this session we are going to look at both of these issues. We are going to explore God's command to live in what our Church calls “right relationship”—with God, with each other, with people across the globe, and with creation. But first let’s pray.

Opening Prayer: God Calls Us to Right Relationship (10 minutes)

Gather

Prayer Leader: (begin with the Sign of the Cross)

God of all creation, we thank you for the abundant gifts you have given us—the gift of your unconditional love, the gift of each other, the gift of all created things. We praise you for your generosity and care for us. We hear your call to us to live in right relationship. Help us to always be mindful of how our actions affect your gifts—for good or for bad. We ask this in the name of your Son, our Redeemer, and in your Spirit. Amen.

Listen (allow a few moments of silence between each reading)

Reader One: Genesis 2:15
Reader Two: Isaiah 58:6-7
Reader Three: Micah 6:8
Reader Four: Luke 4:16-19
Reader Five: John 17:20-23
Respond
Prayer Leader:

We hear in Scripture how God calls us to live in right relationship—to God, to each other, to people around the world, and to creation. Now we pause to ask forgiveness for all the times in which we haven’t lived the way God asks us to live. Our response will be: **We ask your pardon, Lord.**

Prayer Leader:

For all the times we have ignored your commands, for the times we have failed to pray, for the times we haven’t trusted your care for us, we pray…

**We ask your pardon, Lord.**

Prayer Leader:

For all the times we have failed to love our families, our friends, our fellow students, our neighbors, all the people in our lives, we pray…

**We ask your pardon, Lord.**

Prayer Leader:

For all the times we have failed to recognize our connection to all of Your people across the globe, for not paying attention to their suffering or their gifts, we pray…

**We ask your pardon, Lord.**

Prayer Leader:

For all the times we have hurt your creation by the choices we have made—to consume, to pollute, to damage—we pray…

**We ask your pardon, Lord.**

Prayer Leader:

Creator God, we ask you to forgive us for not always being good stewards of the world in which we live. We ask you for the courage and strength, the self-discipline and sacrifice which we need to live as better dwellers on this wonderful earth. Amen.

Send Forth
Sing the closing song you selected.
Right Relationships and Climate Change (20 minutes)

Introduce this activity with the following:

Climate change is a reality in our world. As our own U.S. Catholic Bishops have written in *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*:

*We all breathe the same air. Guarding the integrity of the atmosphere—without which complex life could not have evolved on this planet—seems like common sense. Yet a broad consensus of modern science is that human activity is [is altering] the earth’s atmospheric characteristics in serious, perhaps profound ways. For the past century, researchers have been gathering and verifying data that reveal an increase in the global average temperature.*

But what exactly do we mean by climate change? And what does it have to do with right—or wrong—relationships with God, each other, all of humanity, and our earth?

To answer the first question, climate change includes increased temperatures, rising sea levels, and changes in rainfall—things which impact the atmosphere of our earth. Some of the consequences of climate change are more frequent droughts and floods. This means increasingly limited access to water, reduced crop yields, more widespread disease, increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters, and conflicts arising from the decline in resources. And the poorest among us on earth suffer the deepest hardships of these consequences.

The second question, what this has to do with God and faith and right relationships, can be summed up in a statement from the Bishops’ 2001 document:

*At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God’s creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both the ‘human environment’ and the natural environment. Let’s take a moment to watch a quick video that show what the Bishops and Pope are talking about. It’s called, “Who’s Under Your Carbon Footprint.”*

To take this further, we are going to play a climate version of “Red Light, Green Light.” I need all of you to stand in a straight line in the middle of the room.

Allow time for the youth to move to the middle of the room. Get them to stand in a line facing the symbols at the front of the room. Then continue:

I am going to read several statements to you. If you do what the statement says frequently, take two steps forward. If you do what the statement says sometimes, take one step forward. If you don’t do what the statement says, take one step backward. Are there any questions?

I and my family use energy-efficient light bulbs.
I turn off my computer, shut off lights, unplug chargers, and try not to waste electricity whenever possible.

I walk or bike to places which are a reasonable distance from my starting point instead of getting in the car and driving.

I and my family recycle old newspapers, used beverage containers, printer cartridges, and cell phones.

I and my family wash clothes in cold water.

I and my family use reusable containers and utensils.

I and my family pay attention to where food is produced and try to buy locally-grown food items.

I try to carpool and not drive alone in my car.

I try to eat more vegetables and less meat.

I have helped plant trees.

I have campaigned for recycling at my school, my parish, or my workplace.

I have emailed/written my legislators on the state or national levels to advocate for laws which protect the environment.

I have emailed/written my legislators to advocate for funding on behalf of the poor and vulnerable around the world.

I have donated to Catholic Relief Services or another faith-based organization to support those in need around the world.

I pray for the courage to make hard choices to protect the environment.

I pray for people across the globe who suffer the most from climate changes.

Now look at where you are standing in relationship to God, your loved ones, the global community and creation, then please take your seats in silence.

Reflection: Am I in Right Relationship? (15 minutes)
Once participants have taken their seats, invite them to take Handout 1, Am I in Right Relationship?, and journal on the questions.

After about nine or ten minutes, continue:

Gather in groups of three and share what the activity and the journaling have led you to conclude. Is there something you want to do as a result?
Our & My Dream for Planet Earth (30 minutes)
Invite the participants back into the large group. Then continue:

We have looked at the challenges of living in right relationship with our planet, which can help us to live in right relationship with God and with God’s people across the world. Now let’s look at what the world would be like if we actually did this—if we cared for God’s creation, if we always considered the common good and the effects of our actions on the poorest and most vulnerable, if we listened to God’s command to be in right relationship.

Have the prepared reader proclaim Micah 4:1-4.

Pause for a moment after the reading, then continue:

On the supply table you will find various colors of Play-Doh and some paper plates. I invite each one of you to take a plate and create your own sculpture of what the world would be like if we all lived in right relationship with the earth. What is your dream, looked at through the lens of your Catholic faith, for planet Earth?

Give participants about 15 minutes to complete their sculptures. Then invite them to share their sculptures with the large group. Encourage them to let the sculptures speak for themselves and to use just a few words to convey the meaning. Note to Leader: If you have a very large group, consider having them share their sculptures in smaller groups.

After all participants have shared, wrap up the session and challenge the youth to action by sharing the following:

Dreams are only dreams unless we take steps to make them come true. I invite you to take the handout being passed out now and do some research on these websites and others you may find to discover an action which you can take to make your dream for Planet Earth come true. Find something that matches your God-given gifts and your passion. The next time we gather, I will ask you to share your ideas for action with the whole group.

Closing Prayer: The Catholic Dream for Creation (10 minutes)
Before the closing prayer, invite participants to hold their sculptures in their laps. Tell them there will be a point in the prayer service when they will be asked to lift up their sculptures as an offering to God.

Gather
Sing City of God or another song about our dreams for the Kingdom of God.

A Dream for the World
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Prayer Leader: (begin with the Sign of the Cross)

God, you created the world with your dream of what it could be. You dreamed of people and plants, animals and air, all living in right relationship to you and to each other. Today we offer to our dream for a world which is not threatened by climate changes which hurt our atmosphere, which wound the poorest and most vulnerable, which leave this wonderful planet in poor shape for future generations. And so we close our time together listening to your Word.

Listen
Have the prepared reader proclaim Isaiah 65:17-25.

Respond
Invite each participant to bring his/her sculpture up to the front of the room and place it below the sheet with the symbols of God, nature, and humanity. Invite everyone to sing “All Good Gifts” or another appropriate song during this time.

Send Forth
Distribute Handout 3, Walk Lightly, and invite participants to close the prayer together by praying this prayer aloud together.

All websites and links in this session were accessed successfully on August 9, 2011.

This session was written by Joan Weber, Project Coordinator of Young Neighbors in Action at the Center for Ministry Development. Joan also teaches the Justice & Service course in the Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies Program.
1. How do you feel about where you were standing at the end of the activity? Circle all of the following which apply:

Sad  Angry  Confused  Proud  Concerned  Challenged
Happy  Anxious  Impatient  Scared  Annoyed  Indifferent
Other  ______________  ______________  ______________

2. How do the actions named in the activity which we just did affect your relationship with God? What is the connection?

3. How do your choices about the named actions affect others around the world? Why should that be your concern?

4. Read the following passages, then answer the questions accompanying each one.

   a. Genesis 4:1-16
      How does Cain’s question to God apply to right relationships in your own life?

   b. “True stewardship requires changes in human actions—both in moral behavior and technical advancement. Our religious tradition has always urged restraint and moderation in the use of material goods, so we must not allow our desire to possess more material things to overtake our concern for the basic needs of people and the environment. Pope John Paul II has linked protecting the environment to “authentic human
ecology,” which can overcome “structures of sin” and which promotes both human dignity and respect for creation...Changes in lifestyle based on traditional moral virtues can ease the way to a sustainable and equitable world economy in which sacrifice will no longer be an unpopular concept. For many of us, a life less focused on material gain may remind us that we are more than what we have. Rejecting the false promises of excessive or conspicuous consumption can even allow more time for family, friends, and civic responsibilities. A renewed sense of sacrifice and restraint could make an essential contribution to addressing global climate change.” Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, USCCB, 2001

How would living a more environmentally friendly lifestyle affect your relationship with God and others and the planet?

c. “Working for the common good requires us to promote the flourishing of all human life and all of God’s creation. In a special way, the common good requires solidarity with the poor who are often without the resources to face many problems, including the potential impacts of climate change. Our obligations to the one human family stretch across space and time. They tie us to the poor in our midst and across the globe, as well as to future generations. The commandment to love our neighbor invites us to consider the poor and marginalized of other nations as true brothers and sisters who share with us the one table of life intended by God for the enjoyment of all.”

Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, USCCB, 2001

What is the connection between the common good and your responses to the actions in the activity we just did?
Take Action to Be in Right Relationship

Check out the following web links to find multiple ways you can take action to care for God’s creation, help stop negative climate change, and be in right relationship with the earth.

1. [http://www.catholicsandclimatechange.org/take_action.html](http://www.catholicsandclimatechange.org/take_action.html)
   This is the action section of the website of the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change (CCCC), a partnership of the USCCB, Catholic Relief Services, and other national Catholic organizations.

2. [http://old.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp_waystopray.shtml](http://old.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp_waystopray.shtml)
   This is the action section of the website of the Catholics Confront Global Poverty, an initiative of the U.S. Catholic Church. See also [http://old.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/pdfs/Climate_Change.pdf](http://old.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/pdfs/Climate_Change.pdf).

3. [http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org](http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org)
   This is the part of the CCCC website which invites you to take a stand by pledging to be part of the solution to climate change. You will be challenged to pray, learn, assess, act, and advocate.

   This is the website of the Environmental Justice Program of the USCCB, and provides real-life examples of parishes and dioceses engaging youth in promoting care for God’s creation.
Walk Lightly

Each leaf, each petal,
each grain, each person,
sings your praises,
Creator God.

Each creature on the earth,
all the mountains and great seas
show your glory,
Spirit of love.

And yet the hand of greed
has patented and plundered
your splendour,
has taken and not shared
your gift,
has lived as owner of the earth,
not guest.

And so
the ice is cracked
the rivers dry,
the valleys flooded
and the snowcaps melt.

God our Father, show us
how to step gently,
how to live simply,
how to walk lightly
with respect and love
for all that you have made.
Amen!

Linda Jones/CAFOD
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