Operation Impact
By Jane Angha

Purpose
This session for all ages is designed to encourage participants to make little changes in their lives and lifestyles that will have a big impact on the environment and the future of the planet. Participants will examine the causes and consequences of climate change, their personal connections and contributions to it, and how to reduce and reverse their carbon footprint. They will also learn about the Catholic Church’s teachings on this issue.

Session at a Glance

Extend the Session: Dinner (add 60 minutes)
7:00 p.m. Gathering
7:05 p.m. Welcome/Opening Prayer
7:15 p.m. Opening Session
7:30 p.m. Age-Specific Learning Sessions
8:10 p.m. Large Group Sharing
8:25 p.m. Closing Prayer
8:30 p.m. Good Night!

Extend the Session: Dinner (60 minutes)
This session can be extended with a dinner before the event. Provide a meal that models simplicity: locally grown food, meatless menu, glass dishes or biodegradable/compostable products, fair trade chocolate, and coffee for dessert. See Resource 1 for recipes and plans.

Materials Needed
- Opening Session/Opening Prayer/Closing Prayer
  - Small suitcase
  - Water bottle
  - Food (in a brown lunch bag)
  - Picture of a house or a small doll house
  - Optional: cell phone, iPod, television, toys, sports equipment, and any other items purchased out of want not need
  - “River of Glory” by Dan Schutte (Sprit & Song, OCP)
  - “Rain Down” by Jaime Cortez (Spirit & Song, OCP)
  - “City of God” by Dan Schutte (Spirit & Song, OCP)
  - CD or MP3 player and speakers (if musician is not available)
  - Resource 2, Opening Prayer, three copies for the readers
- **St. Francis Pledge Sign-Up Form** (see #9 in Prepare in Advance)

- **Adult Session** (see #2 in Prepare in Advance)
  - Pens, for each participant
  - Paper, for notetaking

- **Young Adult Session**
  - Newsprint
  - Markers
  - Laptop computer
  - LCD projector

- **High School Youth Session**
  - Newsprint
  - Markers
  - Laptop computer

- **Middle School Youth Session**
  - Random props
  - Markers
  - Paper
  - Video recorder/camera

- **Elementary Children session**
  - Inflatable beach balls, one for each participant
  - Sharpie permanent markers
  - Paper

- **Preschool Session**
  - One of the following books: *Mortimer's First Garden* by Karma Wilson, *One Watermelon Seed* by Celia Barker Lottridge, or *The Trellis and the Seed* by Jan Karon
  - Recycled coffee/tea cups from local thrift store, one for each participant
  - Potting soil
  - Variety of vegetable seeds and fresh vegetables that match the seeds (see #3 in Prepare in Advance)

- **Dinner** (see #4 in Prepare in Advance)
  - **Resource 1, Dinner Menu and Decorating Ideas**
  - **Resource 3, Age-Specific Session Outlines**, copies for the catechists and helpers
  - Laptop computer, LCD projector, speakers, and cables
  - Video, “Journey of Bananas: From Land to Your Hand” (4:37) or “Journey with Tropicana Banana” (5:31) – both may be downloaded from YouTube

  **Note to Leader:** Your audio/visual set up needs to be adequate for everyone to be able to hear/see the video.

  - Compostable/Biodegradable paper products
Prepare in Advance

1. Invite a team of volunteers to help out as meal preparers if needed, welcome and hospitality, table leaders, age-specific learning session catechists and helpers. Get help for the technology needed for the session. Review their tasks prior to the session.

2. For the adult session: Invite a local expert on climate change, environment, or global warming to speak with the adults. Ask the speaker to focus on ways they can make a difference now with a few changes in their lives and lifestyles. Check to see if a Catholic Climate Ambassador is available by going to http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/about-us/catholic-climate-ambassadors/. See Resource 3 for more details in preparing this session.

3. For the preschool session: Cut up the fresh vegetables to serve to the children. Let parents know what will be served in case of allergies.

4. For the dinner (Extend the Session option): Invite a team of people to help plan and prepare the meal as well as clean up afterward. In addition, invite people to be table leaders, one for each table of people.

5. For the opening prayer, you will need four readers. The first reader will proclaim Leviticus 25:1-7, 10-12. The other three readers need a copy of Resource 2.

6. Have a take home gift for all participants: reusable water bottle, faucet aerator, reusable grocery tote, etc. Solicit local stores for donations and offer to advertise their generosity.

7. Make signs that let people know where to go for age specific sessions, have volunteers ready to help get people to and from spaces.


Session Outline

(Optional) Dinner (60 minutes)

Step 1: (8-10 minutes) Banana Video
Welcome everyone, and introduce the video saying something like this:

Who likes bananas?
Let folks raise their hands.

I do too! Where do they come from? How do they get to us? Well, it is a very interesting journey that every banana takes. It is not easy to get to our table to have for breakfast or a snack. Let’s watch a little movie of a banana’s journey.

Show the clip. Ask the following questions to be talked about at the tables:

1. What surprised you about the movie?
2. What did you learn about bananas, and their journey?
3. Who is behind all this production and travel for a banana?

At the end of dinner, say something like:

There are so many things that we take for granted, like bananas that travel pretty far to get to us. It’s good for us to stop and think about where our food and goods come from. A lot of time, energy, hard work and resources go into bringing us the things we need and many things we just want or like to have.

We ate a simple meal tonight... one that was grown mostly locally. We ate on dishes that help to save the environment. We had treats of coffee and chocolate that we grow on farms that treat the land and workers with respect and dignity. We hope this will spark your imagination to find ways at home to do the same. Eat locally-grown foods, support fair trade, be mindful of what you eat and how much. Take care when it comes to waste. Recycle and compost trash and mainly, use just what you need...no more.

Thank you for joining us for dinner and thanks to all who helped prepare and serve it!

Gathering (5 minutes)
As people gather, have the welcome team welcome, greet and invite people to make a nametag and find a seat. The team should mingle and visit, making everyone feel welcome. Have upbeat music playing and focus hospitality, not last minute details or preparations.

Welcome (5 minutes)
Welcome everyone! We are so happy you are here tonight to learn about the climate, how it is changing, and how our lives and lifestyles have had an impact on the earth. We have come to find out what we can do to make sure the earth has a bright future and is here for generations to come. As our U.S. Catholic Bishops have said: “We believe our response to climate change should be a sign of our respect for God’s creation.”

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good

Let’s begin our time together with prayer.
**Opening Prayer** (10 minutes)

*Gather*

Sing the opening song, “River of Glory.”

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

God of Creation, we come together to listen to your word and to find ways to care for the earth you gave to us. The earth is a beautiful gift for all. Blue skies, green grass, fish in the oceans and rivers, plants and vegetables grown in the rich dark soil. You have given us watermelon, apples; pumpkins and peaches and the list goes on. We know the earth is in danger, and we pray that you teach us how to be good caretakers and stewards of this gift. We pray this in your Son’s name. Amen.

*Listen*

Invite the first reader to proclaim Leviticus 25:1-7, 10-12. Allow a few moments of silence, then invite the second reader to begin.

*Respond*

Reader 2:

*Our response is: Show us the way, Lord.*

There is an order to the universe that God intended—people should be close to nature and respectful of her seasons and rhythms and the earth would provide all they would need. We are challenged to look at our relationship with the earth and see how much of the earth’s resources we use and try to live more simply so the earth can continue to provide for all people. We pray... *Show us the way, Lord.*

Reader 3:

We humans have gotten far away from our connection to the earth. Our way of life keeps us far away from growing and planting, tending and harvesting. We often aren’t sure of our water and food sources and how they are treated or who has access to the basic things of life and who does not. We are challenged to slow down, listen, look and respond to God’s creation. We pray... *Show us the way, Lord.*

Reader 4:

We are challenged now by global climate change and extremes in nature that threatens plants and animals and us, God’s beloved creation. There are serious problems around the world that need our attention—poverty, famine, drought, and natural disasters. In a world where there is enough...we are challenged to work at repairing and renewing the earth, so everyone has what they need. We pray... *Show us the way, Lord.*
Go Forth
Prayer Leader:

We face challenges today, this is true, but we are not alone. God, who created all things, is a God of forgiveness and hope. We ask in urgency, that God might show us how to live differently—respecting all creation and being good stewards of this amazing gift—Planet Earth! We pray... Show us the way, Lord. Amen!

Sing “Rain Down” to close the prayer.

Opening Session: What Do I Really Need? (15 minutes)
Begin by saying:

I need a couple of volunteers to help me out.

Invite a child or two up to the gathering space.

Thank you for helping me tonight. As you see, there is a pile of pretty nice things up here isn’t there? Can you tell people what you see?

Wow, these are really great things. However, if you were going on a trip and had to live all by yourself on a desert island or a new planet, and you had to use this suitcase to take what you need...what would you pack?

Let the volunteers pick a few things and put them in the suitcase. Ask:

Is all you will need?

Ask the audience if they would have chosen differently and why. Help the volunteers pack the basics—food, water, shelter. The rest can only come if it fits or can be used. Share with the group the final packing list—and thank the volunteers for helping you share an important message. (Have fun with this activity!)

All the things up here tonight are things we might have in our homes and live with each day. We have come to rely on them, enjoy them, and almost need them! All these items and the ones millions of other people purchase are having an impact on the earth.

Our volunteers started out thinking about all the things they like or feel they need to live—but once they saw they only had a tiny suitcase, they figured out what was most important. It’s like that with the earth, too. If we can slow down a bit and think about what we are doing and using and consuming, we might be able to lighten our load... our footprint on the earth. We will all have a chance tonight to learn how we can have a positive impact on the earth and make sure it is healthy and beautiful for future generations.
**Age-Specific Sessions** (40 minutes)
At this time, give directions for age specific sessions, where they are being held, etc.

**Large Group Sharing** (15 minutes)
Once everyone is gathered back together begin by saying:

> I hope everyone had fun while learning some important things tonight! We want to hear from some of you about what you did... some of you created something, starred in a movie, designed a t-shirt, etc.... so let’s hear from you.

At this time, invite people forward to share what they accomplished. Compliment and thank the volunteers after they share.

*Note to Leader:* Make sure this portion of the evening moves along swiftly; you may need microphones so folks can hear the volunteers.

When the sharing is complete, continue by saying:

> This is incredible! It is hard to believe all you learned in just a short time tonight. We encourage you to keep on learning what you can do to live more simply, protect the earth and to take Pope Benedict’s words to heart. He challenges us with this statement, “The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole.”(48)

> We aren’t alone in this... we have God, our faith community, family, friends, and all humanity who need the earth to be healthy and whole. It will take everyone working hard to fix our mistakes, to think differently about what we need to live a happy life and to imagine a future for the earth that will bring food, shelter, joy, and wonder for generations yet to come. As our U.S. Catholic Bishops tell us: “Global climate change is about the future of God’s creation and the one human family. It is about our human stewardship of God’s creation and our responsibility to those generations who will succeed us.”

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

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

> Let’s close with prayer.

**Closing Prayer** (5 minutes)
Prayer Leader: *(begin with the Sign of the Cross)*

> God,
> We have learned so much tonight and there is still so much we need to know. There have been saints, wise men and women, and people passionate about their faith and all creation who can teach us. We will close with the St. Francis Pledge, promising to make a difference in the world each day.
I/We Pledge to:

- **PRAY** and reflect on the duty to care for God’s Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.
- **LEARN** about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.
- **ASSESS** how we-as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations-contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.
- **ACT** to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change.
- **ADVOCATE** for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable.

This is our challenge...this is our promise, and so we pray all this in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Make any announcements and thank all who helped with the evening in any way and the participants for coming! Invite everyone to sign the pledge form before they leave. Don’t forget to enter the pledge information at [http://catholicclimatecovenant.org](http://catholicclimatecovenant.org).

Sing “City of God” to close the prayer and session.

*Websites and links in this session were accessed successfully on August 11, 2011.*

This session was written by Jane Angha, Project Coordinator for Young Neighbors in Action at the Center for Ministry Development. Jane also teaches the Justice & Service course in the Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies Program.
Resource 1

Dinner Menu and Decorating Ideas

The meal should be as simple as possible, but delicious. Use as many locally grown items as possible. Use regular dishes if possible, or biodegradable/compostable paper products if necessary. Serve water to drink and be sure to decorate the tables with some of the ideas below. Here are some recipes to try. You will need to adapt the recipes to the number of people expected to attend.

Middle Eastern Stew and Rice (serves 8)
- 2 cups basmati or long grain rice
- 4 cups water
- 1 tsp. salt
Bring these ingredients to a boil, cover, and simmer on medium low heat for two minutes.

- 1 cup of yellow split peas, cooked in 3-4 cups of water till tender. Drain and save for stew.
- 2 medium onions, chopped and sautéed in 4 tablespoons oil. When lightly browned, add 1 small can of tomato paste or five fresh tomatoes chopped. Add split peas, garlic powder, salt, and pepper to taste. Simmer for 30 minutes on low heat.
While simmering, slice 3-5 potatoes into French fries and sauté in vegetable oil over medium high heat until golden brown. Add to stew just before serving.

Serve with salad of any seasonal vegetables, and local bakery bread.

Vegetable Soup (serves 12)
- 2 large onions
- 4 carrots
- 3 stalks celery
- 2 zucchini, sliced
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 1 can kidney beans
- 3-4 cups fresh spinach
- 2 cans chopped tomatoes or 5 fresh tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup barley
- 1 cup small pasta noodles
- 2 potatoes, diced
• 3 quarts vegetable broth
• 1 quart water
• Salt, pepper, garlic and Italian seasoning, to taste

Heat ½ cup of vegetable oil in soup pot. Sauté the onions, celery, zucchini, green pepper, spinach, and potatoes. When lightly browned, add rest of vegetables, broth, water and barley. Cook for an hour on medium heat. Add pasta the last 20 minutes of cooking.

Serve with local seasonal vegetables for salad, and fresh local bakery bread.

Dessert Ideas
• Fair trade coffee and chocolates
• Brownies, made from fair trade cocoa
• Fruit cobbler, crisp or pie (use fruit that is in season)

Table Decoration Ideas
Flowers in season, branches from trees in vases, leaves in baskets, river stones in small bowls, small rocks that have been painted, canning jars with coffee beans or beans of any kind and votive candle. Quotes or ideas for going green at each table setting.

Music
Download some background music that focuses on the environment at www.planetpatriot.net or www.grinningplanet.com.

Table Leaders
Questions to discuss at the tables:

1. What are some ways you try to save energy at home?
2. Why do we need to save energy?
3. What will happen if we run out of things on earth?
4. Why does climate change affect the poor most significantly?
5. What does climate change mean?
6. What worries you most about the earth, the future?
7. What can the church do about climate change?
8. Who is supposed to take care of the earth and how?
9. What are some new things you can start doing today that might help the earth?
10. What do you want the earth to look like in 10, 20, 30 years?

Note to Leader: Choose questions that will be appropriate for the people at your table. They will also have time to watch the video from YouTube.
Opening Prayer

Reader 2:

Our response is: Show us the way, Lord.
There is an order to the universe that God intended—people should be close to
nature and respectful of her seasons and rhythms and the earth would provide all
they would need. We are challenged to look at our relationship with the earth and
see how much of the earth’s resources we use and try to live more simply so the
earth can continue to provide for all people. We pray... Show us the way, Lord.

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keeps us far away from growing and planting, tending and harvesting. We often
aren’t sure of our water and food sources and how they are treated or who has
access to the basic things of life and who does not. We are challenged to slow down,
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problems around the world that need our attention—poverty, famine, drought, and
natural disasters. In a world where there is enough...we are challenged to work at
repairing and renewing the earth, so everyone has what they need. We pray... Show
us the way, Lord.
Age-Specific Session Outlines

Adult Session
Invite a local expert to talk about climate change in light of faith. Contact a Catholic Climate Ambassador at [http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/about-us/catholic-climate-ambassadors/](http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/about-us/catholic-climate-ambassadors/). Or ask your local college or university, diocesan Social Justice Office, seminary, or local business owners for names of possible speakers who might feel comfortable speaking in a church/school setting. When you invite the speaker, ask him/her to address some of the following points and describe the audience and evening so they have an idea of what is expected.

- What is climate change?
- What are some of the imminent issues surrounding climate change?
- How can our faith speak to the issues the earth faces? What does Catholic social teaching about care for God’s creation, the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, and global solidarity challenge us to do about climate change?
- What can be done personally, corporately, politically, and religiously to remedy things?
- What can we expect in the next decade if things do not change?
- How does one reverse climate change?
- What are some issues we face locally that can be remedied?
- What is being done locally to care for the environment?
- Where do we go from here?

Give the speaker a timeframe for the presentation. Ask if they will need a projector, handouts made, microphone, etc. Plan ahead to give a stipend or donation.

Young Adult Session
Select some resources from the following websites available for the young adults to use to create a blog, bulletin and website questions, and information nuggets:

- [www.pewclimate.org](http://www.pewclimate.org) (global warming)
- CAFOD (policy papers and resources for young people)
- [http://www.coc.org](http://www.coc.org) (Center of Concern’s resources on ecology and development; trial membership available to access the information)
Directions
1. Present the resources and invite the participants to come up with a list of issues facing the planet from their perspective.
2. For each issue, participants are to read, discuss, and then write a summary statement and a challenge for people to do something about it (a solution). This should be in the form of an information nugget that will go on the parish website, in the bulletin or the group can create a Facebook page or web page that will address the issues they uncovered and offer opportunities for dialogue, comments, challenged and solutions.

High School Youth Session

Directions
1. Facilitate discussion that will include:
   • Definition of Global Climate Change.
   • Who is at risk and most affected by global climate change?
   • What are the long-term effects of the issue?
   • What are some solutions?
   • What can be done now by you, your family, your school, your parish, your community?
2. Divide participants into small groups. Each group will design a logo or t-shirt to get the message across that something can be done to fight Global Climate Change. Images, words, Scripture, and symbols all can be used. Be prepared to share with the larger group.

Middle School Youth Session
The participants will create a Public Service Announcement about ways one can reduce consumption and fight against Global Climate Change.

The leader facilitates a discussion first to define Global Climate Change and then help youth create a list of ways to reverse the effects of climate change and be a positive influence in their homes and families, schools, parishes, and communities.

Background information and resources can be found at:
**Directions**

1. Share some of the background information with the youth and help them define Global Climate Change.

2. Next, brainstorm a list of ways to help reduce climate change ranging from the simple and personal to the global and political.

3. Give into small groups of five, and create a public service announcement that will get the message of global climate change out to the world and give people ideas on how to make changes that will have a positive impact on the planet.

   *Note to Leader:* Be sure to include that a faith perspective always keeps people and human dignity front and center on the fight against climate change. Their message must have a faith perspective!

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**Elementary Children Session**

In this session, the children will discuss climate change and come up with ways to save energy, lower consumption, and reduce at home. The leader will share information from: CAFOD—the youth booklet and [http://www.pewclimate.org/global-warming-basics/kidspage.cfm](http://www.pewclimate.org/global-warming-basics/kidspage.cfm) (information on global warming basics on their kids’ page).

**Directions**

1. Share some information on climate change, and ask the children to give their ideas and share what worries them.

2. Ask the children to create a list of questions for their families to discuss regarding climate change.

3. Provide a brief summary of the Church’s teaching on the issue. Families can discuss how God is calling them to care for creation in response to global climate change and come up with some solutions to climate change. These will range from simple things around the house, and for them personally.

4. Once the list is made, post it for all to see.

5. Give each child an inflatable beach ball to blow up (or have them ready) and a Sharpie permanent marker. Instruct them to write some of the ideas on the ball in different places. After each one they write, they need to blow on it to dry, and then move around the ball writing ideas down.

6. Once the ball is finished, they can take it home as a discussion starter to use before dinner or whenever they spend time together as a family.

How to play the game: Toss the ball to a friend or family member, wherever their right thumb lands, they are to read the question or comment closest to it and discuss or answer it. After the question is answered, the person tosses it to another one. This can go on until all have had a chance to talk.
Some questions to use: What are three things I can do today that will reduce my water usage? How long is long enough to take a shower? What are some energy sources that are good for the environment?

Preschool Children Session
In this session, the children learn what it takes to care for one of the smallest of God’s creation—a seed. They will have an opportunity to plant a seed into a recycled coffee or tea cup and then enjoy some of the fruit or vegetables (of the seeds) they planted. The choice is up to the leader and what is available in your growing area. Some examples: peas, beans, cucumber, sunflower, tomato, lettuce (whatever is going to be eaten with the children should be shared with parents in case of allergies).

Directions
1. Read one of the following stories (or another of their choice) to the children: Mortimer’s First Garden by Karma Wilson, One Watermelon Seed by Celia Barker Lottridge, or The Trellis and the Seed by Jan Karon.
2. After the story, discuss what it takes to care for a seed. Ask the children what things they care for at home. Do they care for their yard, toys, animals, and family?
3. After the discussion, have them sit at tables where the cups have been set out and buckets of potting soil are ready with scoops. Let them fill their cup and choose a seed to plant.
4. Once that is done, have them wash up and enjoy some vegetables or fruits of the seeds they have just planted. While enjoying the snack, talk about how much care will go into taking care of the seed until it grows into a fruit or vegetable ready to eat and enjoy.