

Greater Northwest Area of the United Methodist Church

Climate Change and Disaster Response Video Learning Guide

☩ Climate Change and Disasters

✠ Scripture:

- Genesis 1:26 "Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."
- Genesis 2:15 "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it."

✠ What do you think it means to have rule (or 'dominion') over the earth?

- Hebrew word translated as "have dominion" is used elsewhere for the authority of masters over servants and kings over subjects. This verse does grant humanity power and authority over the animal world. But the word doesn't in itself define the way power and authority is exercised. So, to "have dominion" must be understood as exercising the same kind of power and authority God would exercise in the natural world. *
- The Hebrew word for 'to work' (or 'to till'), can also be translated, 'to serve,' and the word for 'to take care of' (or 'to keep'), can also mean 'to preserve, protect.' *

(*) From: Common English Bible – Study Bible sidebar article "Dominion or Dependence"

✠ Reflection

- Disasters have disproportionate impact upon people of color and those in underdeveloped regions and former colonial areas
- These people and locations have fewer resources to manage disasters and address climate change
- It is only when we recognize the different realities, understand what is happening and how it impacts these communities and peoples, see that how things have been done in the past are not adequately addressing the problems and needs, and enter partnerships and collaborations that take into account what we see and know, and the ones being impacted that transformation can happen.

✠ **Prayer:** Lord, grant us the wisdom to care for the earth and till it. Help us to act now for the good of future generations and all your creatures. Help us to become instruments of a new creation, Founded on the covenant of your love. Amen. - *The Cry of the Earth from the website: <https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/sustainability-prayers>*

☩ Phases of Disaster Response

✠ Preparing for a disaster

- **Scripture:** Matthew 7: 24-27 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on

sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!"

▪ **Reflection**

- There are three areas of preparing for a disaster:
 - For you and your family
 - For your congregation
 - For the larger community
- The common element is knowing what you can realistically expect. Using the metaphor in our scripture, it is knowing if you are built on rock or sand. You need to be aware of what might happen, what disasters are not only possible, but also likely. This knowledge will then help you know what you need to do to prepare.
- In all cases being prepared involves a preparedness plan.
- If you prepare, then it is like building your house on rock.

- **Prayer:** O God, our times are in your hand. In the midst of uncertainty lead us by your never-failing grace as we seek to be agents of healing and hope. Walk with us through difficult times; watch over us in danger; and give us a spirit of love and compassion for those who suffer and mourn. And finally remind us that you have promised never to leave us so that even in the valley of the shadow of death your love may be felt, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen – Rev. Lyndon Harris, from the Episcopal Diocese of New York disaster preparedness plan.

‡ Responding to disasters

- **Scripture:** Matthew 25: 31-40 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

▪ **Reflection**

- For most Americans, a disaster is not a matter of "if" but "when." According to a 2021 [survey by Wells Fargo & Company](#), 84% of Americans live in an area that has experienced a natural disaster in the past three years, and more than half—54%—live in an area that has experienced severe natural disasters, specifically hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, wildfires or earthquakes.
- Jesus calls us to care for those that are impacted in such a way as to need even the most basic essentials of life – water, food, clothing, compassion. The exact things people need when they are struck by a

disaster. As people of faith, we are to come to those in need with the essentials for life and care for them with compassion. In all that we do, through donations, response teams, etc. we fulfill this call of Christ.

- **Prayer:** Holy One, you are our comfort and strength in times of sudden disaster, crisis, or chaos. Surround us now with your grace and peace through storm or earthquake, fire, or flood. By your Spirit, lift up those who have fallen, sustain those who work to rescue or rebuild, and fill us with the hope of your new creation, through Jesus Christ, our rock and redeemer. Amen. From the website: www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/pda/pdfs/prayersintimesoftroubleanddisaster.pdf

† Rebuilding after the initial response

- **Scripture:** Amos 9:14: I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.
- **Reflection**
 - God restores, that is one of the clearest messages of the Bible. God brings new life. As partners of God and Christ working together to transform lives and the world, we are also partners in rebuilding so that people can live again.
 - The work of rebuilding after a disaster is the work of restoring fortunes and planting vineyards and gardens. It is holy work because we are the hands and feet and hearts of God and Christ bringing about new life.
- **Prayer** Gracious God, I pray for the victims of this disaster, Lord, that you would comfort the lives that were spared Lord, and that you would take care of those who perished. Lord, please bless those who are doing everything they can to help these people and make sure that things run smoothly in repairing this [great place]. Please help the victims to have patience and also help family members to be reunited. Lord, I pray that you will ensure that the victims do not come under any illnesses from this disaster, and I also pray that they get enough food and clean water and proper shelter for everyone. Lord, please touch the hearts of the world to continue to pray for these people and also to donate whatever they can to help rebuild this wonderful [place]. Lord, only you can make miracles happen and I am asking for one now. Amen. *Bridgett of Ontario, CA, adapted from "Hurricane Katrina Prayer" from the website: <https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/prayers-in-times-of-crisis/in-times-of-natural-disaster>*

⌘ Participating in the Change

- † **Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 9: 6-8 The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.
- † **Reflection**
 - There are five basic ways we can participate in bringing about the change needed in a disaster situation:
 - Prayer – pray for all involved and those who suffer and for the causes of the disaster

- Donations – giving money to help in whatever way is needed
 - Assembling resources – in our system this is often kits which are the very nature of disaster response
 - Expertise – offering your skills and talents for the effort
 - Volunteering – going to the place and working as needed to restore those affected to life.
- The point is that everyone can do something, everyone can give something. We are asked to participate in the response and rebuilding, and we give as we “have made up” our minds. God rejoices when we can be part of the restoring of life.
- ✠ **Prayer:** God who is giving and forgiving, help us to respond with generosity to all the places where disaster has struck. Help us be generous in prayer, in assistance, in aid to the best of our abilities. Keep our hearts focused on the needs of those affected, even after the crisis is over. Help us to be joyful in our giving of our time, talents, and resources so that your joy may be full. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Adapted from a prayer found at: <https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/prayers-in-times-of-crisis/in-times-of-natural-disaster>

✠ Resources and links

- ✠ <https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/environmental-justice/climate-justice>
- ✠ <https://greaternw.org/disaster-response/>
- ✠ https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/get-help/pdfs/preparedness-essentials/EN_Preparedness-Essentials-Checklist.pdf

This guide is meant to help groups spend a little time in thoughtful reflection on various aspects of disaster response and preparedness. It is just a sampling of what is available and only scratches the surface of how we might delve into this work from a Biblical and theological perspective. Rev. Tim Overton-Harris curated this guide to accompany a video produced for the Great Northwest Area of the United Methodist Church. All scriptures are from the Common English Bible.