

Build a Better Future

A guide for small group conversations

FAITHFUL CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS



**FOR THE LOVE
OF CREATION**

There are three conversation guide options. Choose the guide that is right for your group at: <https://forthe loveofcreation.ca>.

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Please use, copy and share as needed.

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Introduction

This guide is designed for use by hosts and facilitators who want to guide a small group through a conversation about climate justice that focuses on enacting political and systemic change. This conversation “Build a Better Future”¹ is proposed for people who already have a grasp of the science behind climate change and have been involved in climate action at some level (whether personal or organizing a group). It focuses on overcoming barriers to climate justice and choosing the most important actions to pursue in the face of a global climate emergency.

This is an opportunity for you as a leader - a host or facilitator - to make change right in your own community. This structured discussion offers you a simple way to help others to become faithful climate justice leaders, strengthening the social and political advocacy from your community. You don't need to be a climate change expert to lead; everything you need is right here in this guide. This is a concrete way for you to help address climate change. You can make a difference. Whether you lead one Faithful Climate Conversation or many, all of us in For the Love of Creation are grateful for your leadership and look forward to hearing from you on the feedback form.

Group Size

We recommend using this guide with groups of 6-8 participants. The strength of this exercise is in personal participation. Larger groups will decrease the opportunities to participate. If you want to include 12 or more participants, consider breaking into smaller groups, each with their own facilitator, for each of the discussion questions.

Invitations

For the Love of Creation hopes that this conversation guide, “Build a Better Future”, will help climate activists find encouragement from one another and move from personal engagement to political and systemic action. Please be mindful when making invitations to be open and welcoming of those who may not have the same understanding of climate change as you do. We encourage you to think about those people in your circles who have a strong interest in ecological justice and could benefit from some collaborative work. Some sample invitations are available in **Appendix A**.

Logistics

Choose a comfortable, accessible setting for a meeting in person or online. This initial session is designed to be about 2 hours long. Pay attention to the time, so that the group can work through the whole arc of the conversation before your time is up. If refreshments are to be served add that social time onto the 2 hours.

Leadership

Conversations are best led by a leadership team. The **host**, even online, looks after all the logistics as well as making people feel welcome and comfortable, leaving the **facilitator** free to focus on leading the discussion.

Overview

A summary chart is available in **Appendix F**.

Questions

Contact flc.pac@gmail.com.

¹ Three conversation guide options are available depending on the starting point of the participants. See resources at <https://forthe loveofcreation.ca> to determine which option is best for your group and download alternatives.



The Conversation

Introduction (20 minutes)

GATHERING

As people arrive, welcome them individually, making people feel comfortable in the space as you wait for others to arrive.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

When people are settled begin the group conversation with a simple word of welcome and offer a land acknowledgement appropriate for your area, researching local treaties, people groups, watersheds and landmarks as necessary. This is an opportunity to acknowledge displaced Black, People of Colour and immigrant communities as well as Indigenous peoples. If you are new to the practice of land acknowledgements, start here for a description: <https://www.kairoscanada.org/territorial-acknowledgment>

INTRODUCE THE FACILITATORS

Briefly give your name, role and why you decided to join in leadership of this conversation.

INTENTIONS OF THE GATHERING

Share the intent to:

- 1) Learn together about how to be faithful change leaders in a world that desperately needs change
- 2) Support one another in social and political advocacy for the sake of climate justice

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

Offer some simple encouragements, such as,

“Emotional topics could come up. Pay attention to your feelings and how you express them. Be gentle with yourself and others. We are all equal in learning and exploring here. Please be mindful of sharing the time equally as well. Finally, any personal stories don't leave the room unless permission is given.”

INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Ask that each person share their name and mention one action they have already taken towards climate justice or how they are connected to this issue. Asking for location or association could also be appropriate. Remind participants that we want introductions to be brief and therefore they

should tell of one action or association without going into detail about the history or purpose of the event or action.

OVERVIEW OF AGENDA

Hand out or share the Participant Agenda from **Appendix B**.

SCRIPTURE READING AND PRAYER

Take this opportunity to ground the conversation in faith.

- Start with a general comment appropriate to your group, such as, *“We want to be mindful of the generous gifts of our Creator and to consider the calling of our faith as we interact with the rest of creation. Our Scriptures tell us of the sacredness of creation.”*
- Offer a brief Scripture reading of your choice here.
- Continue with a statement affirming the faith context of this conversation, such as *“We are gathered here as people of faith. Let us be open and mindful of that calling in our conversation.”*
- Introduce the prayer as appropriate to the group, perhaps saying, *“We bring our hearts before the Creator with all of our concerns and our questions knowing that it is God who holds each of us and all of creation.”*

A few sample prayers and scripture choices are offered in **Appendix C**. In a multi-faith group, acknowledge this context and name the tradition you have chosen to speak out of, claiming the common ground among many faiths around the call to care for creation and each other.

Science and Impacts (10 minutes)

Why is this a crisis? Have each person write down 3 - 5 statements with each statement on a separate sticky note. Write the facts or ideas that make the participant most concerned about climate change or help them to explain climate change to others. (2 min)

Go around the circle and take turns reading and putting statements on a common board. (8 min)

If not meeting in person, one option for collecting statements would be [Mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com). Another alternative is to have people write their statements in the chat feature - *but not hit enter* until it is their turn to share. Then have



someone else, such as the host, order the comments onto a document eliminating the duplicates and grouping them into ideas.

Please compare the statements given by your group with the statements in **Appendix D - Climate Change Fact Sheet** to ensure that you cover the most relevant and important information. Mention any facts or ideas listed in the appendix that were not mentioned by your group.

Responses and Barriers (10 minutes)

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Divide into small groups of 3 or 4. Each group should respond to the following question: ***What are you already doing in response to climate change?*** List everything you can think of. Have one person record responses for the group. Remind people to just list, not explain their actions.

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Reconvene in the large group and ask the following question: ***What is holding us back as a society from making change toward climate justice?***

Have an appointed recorder. Keep this discussion brief to list as many barriers as possible, but not go into details. A graphic style of recording that groups ideas could be helpful.

Social Science: What It Takes to Create Change (10 minutes)

Share the following information with the whole group:

We often become discouraged because it seems like there are so many people who ignore or outright challenge the reality of climate change. This discouragement can lead to a sense of hopelessness or lack of motivation to try to enact climate justice. However, the good news is that a small number of people can shift public perceptions and agendas. We don't need the majority of people to work towards climate justice, we simply need to engage with more people who are currently disinterested or unengaged in climate justice work.

Per Espen Stoknes offers 5 D's, or 5 defenses that often stop people from engaging in climate justice. These are:

1. Distance - the sense that the climate emergency is far away in time and geography and therefore out of an individual's sphere of influence
2. Doom - the climate emergency is often presented with disaster narratives that leave people fearful and eventually causes "apocalypse fatigue"
3. Dissonance - when the facts of climate change conflict with our lifestyles we experience cognitive dissonance and often choose to justify our actions rather than change
4. Denial - people may be aware of the facts of climate change, but that knowledge does not impact their lifestyle
5. Identity - people who strongly identify with a political affiliation may be less likely to trust the science of climate change if it conflicts with their political ideology.

Per Espen Stoknes also offers 5 S's, or 5 strategies that we can use to overcome these defenses and engage more people in the work of climate justice. These are:

1. Social - if we can model climate positive behaviours and change social norms, more people will be willing to change their behaviours
2. Supportive - reframe the climate emergency as being about human health, safety, new job opportunities etc.
3. Simple - "nudging" people by making climate friendly behaviours easy and convenient
4. Signals of Success - providing motivating feedback and encouraging reinforcement for climate positive behaviours
5. Story - provide stories of climate success to show people that change is possible and it's already happening.

If you wish to learn more about Per Espen Stoknes' research, you can find his Ted Talk here (there is likely not enough time to watch the entire video with the group, but you may find it helpful to watch in preparation to facilitate this conversation):

https://www.ted.com/talks/per_espen_stoknes_how_to_transform_apocalypse_fatigue_into_action_on_global_warming/up-next#t-650209



Choosing Actions (15 Minutes)

Discuss the following questions with the group: ***What do you care strongly about and want to see initiated or accelerated to address the climate crisis in your community, in the province, nationally or globally?***

Invite participants to consider quietly for a moment and then share a phrase or sentence that answers the above question when they are ready. When the first 3-4 people have spoken, invite others in the group to team up with those who have spoken if they would be interested in brainstorming with them about the 'care' or 'desire' they have mentioned. This is only a commitment for the rest of this session. Continue hearing answers to the question until everyone is in pairs or teams.

Have groups discuss these questions:

- ***What role could participants and their faith communities play in making progress on the items participants have identified?***
- ***Are there other groups or campaigns that you could usefully work with or learn from?***
- ***Consider which groups and concerns should any action be sensitive to?***
- ***Which changes are interconnected? Which have the greatest impact?***

If everyone has ideas or no one has ideas divide into 4 groups by level of governance (community, province, national or global).

Each group would then choose one idea to work on. Here are a few examples:

Community: making your place of worship or town hall into a "green" building; shifting investments.

Provincial: increase charging stations and incentives for electric vehicles

National: invest in training and transitions for oil and gas workers

Global: advocate for the adoption of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recommendations

Leading Change (40 minutes)

Each small group takes the original idea and considers:

How can you best play a part in making this happen?

Consider groups that you might join or work with, people who might help you, and skills you can put to use.

In the groups, identify 3 or 4 things that you could see as realistic short-term priorities, and a couple of things that you think are important but more long-term. Offer the groups **Appendix E** as a handout to use for tracking their goals and considering the actors and barriers to their work. Each group should create a list of action steps or a plan for moving forward.

Report back to the large group by simply posting a list of next steps under the area of interest title.

Closing (15 minutes)

NEXT STEPS

Discuss with the group: *Would we like to meet again? How can we best follow-up with one another regarding personal and group commitments? Are there others who should be part of this conversation? If so, how do we reach out to them? Would we like to continue this conversation in some way – perhaps by discussing together or leading another Faithful Climate Conversation?*

WIDER CONVERSATION

Let people know that you will share generalities about this discussion in a feedback form and are invited to share on social media if the group is interested in connecting with other faith groups who are at the same stage of discussion. Confirm that people's names and personal identifiers will never be used on the form or social media. Use **#FaithfulClimateConversations** to link to the conversation thread.

CONTACT INFO

Ask permission to collect and share contact information of group members if appropriate.

PRAYER

Consider a prayer form beforehand but if comfortable, improvise in situ.

GRATITUDE AND FAREWELL

Thank participants for attending and engaging in this important conversation.



Follow Up

CONTACT

Contact the group the next day if possible or within the next week to thank them again for coming, share contact information as appropriate and offer any other links or resources that were discussed.

FEEDBACK FORM

Please fill in a brief questionnaire at <https://forms.gle/BAzEBSA7k7pXAsXe9> to help For the Love of Creation see where conversations are happening and what additional resources might be helpful.



Appendix A – Invitations

PERSONAL EMAIL

Dear _____,

[You may wish to open and close with a salutation appropriate to the season and current state of affairs.]

How are things going with you? I hope all is well.

I am hosting a small group conversation called “Build a Better Future.” It will be a chance for people from our faith community to gather and discuss climate justice and advocacy. This small group conversation will focus on some of the barriers that people face in climate advocacy and how we can faithfully overcome these challenges in the face of the climate emergency.

We’ll meet at [my place/the library/online] on [date and time]. I think there will be about 6 or 8 of us – mostly people from [church/the mosque/the neighbourhood/another association]. [Add accessibility and social distancing details as applicable.]

Hope you can make it!

[Your name]

BULLETIN OR NEWSLETTER ANNOUNCEMENT:

Already involved in climate advocacy? Interested in gathering with others to discuss the challenges and opportunities of climate justice? **Build a Better Future** is an opportunity for those who are involved in climate justice work to come together with others from our faith community for an honest conversation about the ways that we engage in climate justice and how we can encourage greater action. This opportunity is brought to us by **For the Love of Creation**, a growing faith-based initiative for climate justice. [Date, time, location.] The conversation will be hosted by [name] and facilitated by [name]. Sign up [here – link/email/bulletin board]. Spots are limited for this date. If there is more interest a second group or date will be added. If you are not yet involved in climate activism, but want to learn more please talk to [name] for different opportunities.



Appendix B - Participant Agenda

Introduction:

- Acknowledgement, Introductions, Intentions & Guidelines
- *The intention of this Faithful Climate Conversation is:*
 - 1) *To learn together about how to be faithful change leaders in a world that desperately needs change*
 - 2) *To support one another in social and political advocacy for the sake of climate justice*
- Scripture and Prayer

Science and Impacts

- Write 3-5 facts or ideas that:
 - *make you most concerned about climate change or*
 - *help you to explain climate change to others.*
- Sharing

Responses and Barriers

- Small Group Discussion:
What are you already doing in response to climate change? (list only)
- Large Group Discussion:
What is holding us back as a society from making change toward climate justice?

Social Science: What It Takes to Create Change

- Per Espen Stoknes offers 5 D's and 5 S's

Choosing Actions

- Large Group Brainstorm
What do you care strongly about and want to see initiated or accelerated to address the climate crisis in your community, in the province, nationally or globally?

Leading Change

- Small Group Discussion
How can you best play a part in making this happen? Consider groups that you might join or work with, people who might help you, and skills you can put to use.

Closing:

- Next steps
How can we best support each other and our justice efforts going forward?
- Wider conversation and exchanging contact info:
#FaithfulClimateConversations
- Prayer



Appendix C – Scripture and Prayer

Scriptures

O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

(Psalm 104: 24 NRSV, see also Ps 104: 1-30)

By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and the farthest seas.

(Psalm 65: 5 NRSV, see also Ps 65: 5-13)

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

(1 Cor 10:26 NIV)

The Earth is my mother and I am her child!

(Atharva Veda 12.1.12)

So long as the earth is able to maintain mountains, forests and trees

Until then the human race and its progeny will be able to survive

(Durga Saptashati 54)

Truly, God will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.

(The Holy Qur'an, Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:11)

Prayers

A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH, LAUDATO SI, POPE FRANCIS

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those

who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

A HINDU PRAYER

May peace radiate in the whole sky and in the vast ethereal space,

May peace reign all over this earth, in water, in all herbs, and the forests,

May peace flow over the whole universe,

May peace be in the Supreme Being,

May peace exist in all creation, and peace alone,

May peace flow into us.

Aum - peace, peace and peace!

(Yajur Veda Samhita 36:17)⁴

SEASON OF CREATION PRAYER 2020

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RANyrrjoHYzNzFL5N1fg5H8Y4RvglUbe/view>

A PRAYER FOR CREATION BY RABBI DAVID MEVORACH SEIDENBERG

<https://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/prayer-creation>

SIKH PRAYER ON CLIMATE CHANGE AT ECOSIKH INTERFAITH EVENT-2015

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=36&v=cxNfF3MGZc&feature=emb_logo

ISLAMIC PRAYER BY AUSTRALIAN RELIGIOUS RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

<https://www.arrcc.org.au/reflect-prayers-islamic>

⁴ <https://greenfaith.org/ClimateEmergency>



Appendix D - Climate Change Fact Sheet

Certain gases – carbon dioxide, water vapour, methane, nitrous oxide and some others – are called **greenhouse gases**. They allow solar radiation to pass through them but absorb infrared radiation given off at the surface of the planet. This effect has been understood since the work of Fourier (1827) and Tyndall (1860). Since the industrial revolution, human civilization has been doing things which emit these gases in ever greater quantities. The result is an imbalance known to scientists as **radiative forcing** – the earth receives more energy from the sun than it sends back into space. The outcome is **global warming**, or **global heating** – i.e. the average temperature of the earth's surface increases. The first attempt to fully describe and quantify this effect was by Arrhenius (1895).

Global heating results in a number of effects known as **climate change**, which vary according to location – the retreat of glaciers worldwide, the decline of arctic sea ice, rising sea levels, longer dry spells and droughts, more intense rainfall and flooding, more frequent periods of extreme heat, more extreme hurricanes and cyclones, stronger storm surges, etc.

These effects cannot be explained away by changes in solar radiation (it isn't increasing), volcanic activity (it produces only very small quantities of greenhouse gases compared to human generated emissions), or natural cycles (they just shift energy around and can't explain all the extra energy in the system).

Continued global heating will result in:

- Long periods of drought in many parts of the world, creating risks to global and regional food security
- Frequent extreme and prolonged heat waves in many parts of the world, threatening lives but also making outdoor work, including food production, impossible
- Extreme weather events generally becoming more extreme
- Significant global sea rise, threatening small island states and coastal communities
- Increasingly rapid species extinction and threats to vital ecosystems.

Carbon dioxide is emitted mostly from the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) but also from the chemistry of some

manufacturing processes. Methane is leaked from oil and gas installations, including fracking and is also belched by livestock. Heavily fertilised fields give off nitrous oxide. Water vapour levels in the atmosphere increase as temperature increases, thus amplifying the effects of the other gases. By reducing absorption of carbon dioxide, deforestation also contributes to climate change.

The world's average temperature is currently about 1°C higher than pre-industrial levels. The higher this temperature rise goes, the more extreme the effects. But because the main greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, stays in the atmosphere for about 100 years, every new emission increases the global heating effect – even if we manage to reduce our total emissions year by year.

The Paris Agreement of 2015 committed the world's political leaders to keep the increase “well below 2°C” and aim to stay below 1.5°C. A major scientific report in 2018 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – which represents all the leading experts in the field - showed big differences between the effects at these two temperatures, particularly those affecting the most vulnerable in the world. For example, the authors estimate that 420 million fewer people would be frequently exposed to extreme heat waves at 1.5°C than at 2°C.

Scientists are able to estimate the rate of emissions reduction required to stay within these temperature limits. The 2018 IPCC report found that, to achieve the 1.5°C limit, carbon dioxide emissions need to be reduced by at least 45% globally by 2030, and brought down to net zero (i.e. reduce emissions as much as possible and completely offset any remaining emissions with actions to remove carbon from the atmosphere) by mid-century – and that other gas emissions need to be rapidly reduced.

The Paris Agreement commits wealthy industrialised countries to move faster than the global average in emissions reductions, because of our greater responsibility and greater capability. For Canada, a calculation of its “fair share” means reducing emissions by 60% by 2030 and supporting emissions reduction strategies in low income countries by USD 4 billion a year (estimated to be equivalent to a further 80% reduction in emissions).



Appendix E - Handout for "Leading Change"

Potential Climate Change "Solution"		
Benefits in Areas Other than the Climate		
Who is Responsible For Moving It Forward?		
Any Barriers to this in the Faith Community or Broader Community?		



Appendix F – Summary Chart

Time	Section	Content
20 mins	Introduction	Gathering Land Acknowledgement Introduce the Facilitators Intentions of the Gathering Guidelines for discussion Introduction of Participants Overview of the Agenda Scripture and Prayer
10 mins	Science and Impacts	Group Brainstorm
10 mins	Responses and Barriers	Small Group Discussion Large Group Discussion
10 mins	Social Science: What It Takes to Create Change	The 5 D's The 5 S's
15 mins	Choosing Actions	Large Group Brainstorm
40 mins	Leading Change	Small Group Actions and Plans
15 mins	Closing	Next steps Wider conversation Contact Info Prayer Gratitude and Farewell