

# Creation, Climate and You

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://fortheloveofcreation.ca>.

Published by For the Love of Creation, 2020.

Please use, copy and share as needed.

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Credit for the original idea as well as content sharing goes to Lyn Adamson, Colleen Lynch and ClimateFast ([climatefast.ca](https://climatefast.ca)) with their Kitchen Table Climate Conversation initiative.



# Introduction

This guide is designed for use by hosts and facilitators who want to guide a small group through a basic, entry-level conversation about climate change in a faith context. This conversation, “Creation, Climate and You”<sup>1</sup> is proposed for people who have rarely, if ever, talked about climate change in a group setting before. It focuses on gently surfacing people’s emotions and underlying thoughts about climate change while offering a bit of information on climate science and inviting people to imagine how the world could live up to their dreams.

This is an opportunity for you as a leader - a host or facilitator - to start making change right in your own community. This structured discussion offers you a simple way to open the conversation and keep people attentive to an issue that is important to you. 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, *Creation, Climate and You*, will draw many more people into conscious, thoughtful and faithful awareness of climate change, the part it plays in their lives and the part they play in it. 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 are *not* talking about these issues and offer them a friendly invitation to your event. 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](mailto:flc.pac@gmail.com).

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<sup>1</sup> 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 and offer them the **Feelings and Experience Poll (Appendix B)** on paper if meeting in person or with a link in the chat to download the page. If you anticipate people joining on their phones or coming with few technical skills, you may want to email the document in advance. Also ask people to have pen and notepad ready.

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

When people are settled and have had a moment to look at the Poll, 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) create an open conversation.
- 2) learn from and about each other regarding our thoughts about the idea of climate change and how it affects or concerns each of us.

### 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 want this space to be as safe as possible for all. 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, if comfortable, one feeling you listed on your Poll. Asking for location or association could also be appropriate if it is brief.

## OVERVIEW OF AGENDA

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

## 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 D**. 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.

## Personal Stories (25 minutes)

### LEADER STORY

The host, or the leader who is best known and trusted by the group, tells how they personally learned about climate change and how they feel about it (3 min). It is best if the storyteller writes out and practices their story to make sure it is brief and clear.



## WRITTEN REFLECTIONS

Then invite participants to write their own climate observations and feelings. Even if online, invite people to use pen and paper to avoid the distractions online. Give about 5-7 minutes for this exercise.

Place the following questions on a shared screen or large flipchart paper to prompt people's written reflections:

- 1) **Have you noticed changes in our climate? If so, what are they and how did you notice?**
- 2) **What are your feelings about climate change?**

## SHARING

Give participants each a chance to share a piece of their own reflections on the way that they see climate change in their world (eg. changing weather patterns, plant cycles, animal migrations, etc) and how they feel about it.

## Climate Change Story (15 minutes)

### STORIES OF CHANGE

Ordinary Canadians are experiencing climate change. Share 2-3 short examples from news stories you have read. We are looking for the human interest, individual or personal impact. If you choose from the examples below, you might read just the first 3-5 paragraphs and conclude with a statement that summarizes the impact.

Life and Death Under the Dome <https://projects.thestar.com/climate-change-canada/quebec/>

Open for Business <https://projects.thestar.com/climate-change-canada/ontario-ring-of-fire/>

Fire Alarm: This is Not a Drill <https://projects.thestar.com/climate-change-canada/alberta/>

Fields of Dreams <https://projects.thestar.com/climate-change-canada/saskatchewan/>

### INTRODUCTION TO CLIMATE SCIENCE

Let people know, "I'm going to read a number of scientific facts that have been corroborated by scientists around the world. Take note of any you have not heard before so that you can research

them later. After this reading we are going to do a visioning exercise with this in mind." Read the facts listed in **Appendix E**, pausing briefly after each statement, but not elaborating or inviting questions. Try not to get bogged down or thrown off onto tangents. The purpose of this section is to give people a small amount of basic information. Keeping the science section brief should help people remember and become more comfortable talking about climate change and how it is relevant in our everyday lives.

## Building a new story (35 minutes)

### SETTING UP THE DISCUSSION

Remind the group, "Now we are entering into a new, more visionary stage in our conversation. We have listened to the stories of our own experiences, some stories from others in Canada, and the scientific story of climate change." Then ask, "Are these the stories we want our generation to be remembered for? [pause] We want to take some time now for some big thinking, some "outside the box" thinking. A chance to move away from these stories to build a new story." Ask:

- **What is your vision for the sort of society you want to live in?**

### VISIONING

Invite people to close their eyes for a moment or take up a pen and paper for sketching. You might want to elaborate on the question with a few prompts such as "What is most important to you?" or "Think of times when society is at its best and expand that," but also leave silence for a few minutes.

### BUILDING I

Now ask people to share key words or phrases about their vision. Take notes on flipchart paper if in person. Online you can make a list in the chat box or have one of the facilitators share their screen and take notes in a Word, Google, Powerpoint or similar document.

### BUILDING II

After a few minutes, ask people to consider this question:

- **How could those visions work in a net-zero-carbon world?**



**Achieving “net-zero-carbon”** means reducing carbon emissions as much as possible and any remaining emissions are completely offset by actions that remove carbon from the atmosphere, such as planting forests. Try not to get bogged down in technical solutions but stay general in this particular conversation. Think of the big picture and try to imagine how it could be possible.

## Closing (25 minutes)

### CHECK-IN

Re-visit the Feelings and Experience poll again. Have attitudes or learnings changed?

### NEXT STEPS

Discuss with the group: *What are our next steps? What would it look like to keep this conversation going? Would this group like to spend more time with these conversation starters or try another guided Faithful Climate Conversation, such as, **From Concern to Action** or another kind of conversation or activity together?*

### 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. A few examples are available in **Appendix D**.

### GRATITUDE AND FAREWELL

Thank participants for attending and engaging in this important conversation.

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## 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 “Creation, Climate and You.” It will be a chance to talk from a faith perspective about creation care, changing climate patterns and how that relates to our own lives. I’d like it if you would come.

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

Confused about climate change? Unsure which news stories to believe? Wondering what all the fuss is about? **Creation, Climate and You** is an opportunity for those who haven’t talked much about these issues before to come together with others from our faith community in an open-minded, small group conversation. The resource for this conversation 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 interested in climate *activism*, please talk to [name] for different opportunities.



# Appendix B

## Feelings and Experience

### A POLL

*Which of the following emotions affect you presently, when you think about climate change?*

- Happiness ..... Absolutely ..... Somewhat ..... Not at all
- Anger ..... Absolutely ..... Somewhat ..... Not at all
- Frustration ..... Absolutely ..... Somewhat ..... Not at all
- Defensiveness ..... Absolutely ..... Somewhat ..... Not at all
- No particular feeling ..... Absolutely ..... Somewhat ..... Not at all
- Want to hide ..... Absolutely ..... Somewhat ..... Not at all
- Despair ..... Absolutely ..... Somewhat ..... Not at all
- Confident ..... Absolutely ..... Somewhat ..... Not at all
- Worried ..... Absolutely ..... Somewhat ..... Not at all
- Confused ..... Absolutely ..... Somewhat ..... Not at all

### ***Our experience and convictions***

- Climate scientists are conspirators ..... Yes indeed ..... Not sure ..... No way
- Our relationship with nature is broken ..... Yes indeed ..... Not sure ..... No way
- Forest fires are increasing in intensity and number ..... Yes indeed ..... Not sure ..... No way
- Oceans are as healthy now as 50 years ago ..... Yes indeed ..... Not sure ..... No way
- Greenland’s glaciers are melting at a record rate ..... Yes indeed ..... Not sure ..... No way
- The Paris accord has been largely ignored by  
high-income countries, such as Canada ..... Yes indeed ..... Not sure ..... No way
- The seasons feel different than they used to ..... Yes indeed ..... Not sure ..... No way



# Appendix C – Participant Agenda

## Introduction

- Gathering: Feelings and Experience Poll
- Acknowledgement, Introductions, Intentions & Guidelines

*The intention of this Faithful Climate Conversation is:*

- 1) *to create an open conversation.*
  - 2) *to learn from and about each other regarding our thoughts about the idea of climate change and how it affects or concerns each of us.*
- Scripture and Prayer

## Personal Stories

- A Local Story
- Written Reflections
  - 1) *Have you noticed changes in our climate? If so, what are they and how did you notice?*
  - 2) *What are your feelings about climate change?*
- Sharing

## Climate Change Story

- Stories of Change
- Introduction to Climate Science

## Building a New Story:

- Visioning  
*What is your vision for the sort of society you want to live in?*
- Building  
*How could those visions work in a net-zero-carbon world?*

## Closing

- Check-in: Re-visit the Feelings and Experience Poll
- Next steps  
*What would it look like to keep this conversation going?*
- Wider conversation and exchanging contact info: #FaithfulClimateConversations
- Prayer





## Appendix D – 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)<sup>2</sup>

#### 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](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>

<sup>2</sup> <https://greenfaith.org/ClimateEmergency>



## Appendix E – Climate Science Introduction

- the Earth is warming
- it is now warmer than it has been in the past 10,000 years
- It is warming at a faster rate than can be explained by normal fluctuations in climate created by the Earth's orbit, tilt, sea levels, volcanoes and other non-human related factors
- the average global temperature is approximately 1 degree Celsius warmer than prior to industrialization (1750)
- an average of one degree across the globe is very significant – this is sometimes referred to as global warming
- Climate is the pattern of weather conditions in any region over a long period of time. It includes not only temperature, but also precipitation, wind, frequency of storms and other aspects of typical weather patterns
- Because the change in temperature is not uniform across the globe – some areas are colder at times - and because there are related changes in precipitation, storms, rising sea levels and melting polar ice caps, among other conditions, many people prefer the more inclusive term, climate change over global warming, since it refers to all of these inter-related conditions
- the reason for the warming is a higher concentration of “greenhouse gases” in the atmosphere
- certain gases in the Earth's atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide and methane, trap the sun's heat and keep the Earth warm just like the glass in a greenhouse.
- the Earth's atmosphere has greenhouse gases naturally, but the increase in these gases caused by industrial human activity, such as burning fossil fuels, has caused the increased temperatures
- that the greenhouse gas effect has increased due to human activity is well established by the world's scientists
- Some of the effects of climate change and their repercussions include [choose the most locally relevant examples or substitute others you can explain in a phrase or two]:
  - changing ocean temperatures and rising sea levels have already resulted in more intense storms, the flooding of agricultural land, and the forced evacuation of coastal areas
  - hotter, drier summers, with less snow melt contribute to more frequent and larger forest fires
  - heat also means drought, exacerbated by flash floods where the water quickly runs away, leaving soil depleted
  - changing temperatures have changed plant bloom patterns and animal habitats, upsetting the delicate balance in individual eco-systems



## Appendix F – Summary Chart

Time	Section	Content
20 mins	Introduction	Gathering: Feelings and Experience Poll Land Acknowledgement Introduce the Facilitators Intentions of the Gathering Guidelines for discussion Introduction of Participants Overview of the Agenda Scripture and Prayer
25 mins	Personal Stories	Leader Story Written Reflections Sharing
15 mins	Climate Change Story	Stories of Change Introduction to Climate Science
35 mins	Building a new story	Setting up the discussion Visioning Building I Building II
25 mins	Closing	Check-in Next steps Wider conversation Contact Info Prayer Gratitude and Farewell