

PART THREE - SESSION NINE

Resilience along the Way of Love

Adrienne Elliot, Sarah Nolan

At the conclusion of this session, participants will:

- Make connections between our faith and care of creation.
- Understand the importance of and distinction between physical and spiritual resiliency.
- Continue the work of discernment toward environmental action.

Please review the primary resources, guiding Scripture, and reflection and discussion questions prior to the small group gathering. Optional resources are available for a deeper dive.

PRE-GATHERING PREPARATION

Find these resources online at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/session-nine/>.

Primary Resources:

- Film: “The Church & Climate Resilience” by Georgia Interfaith Power & Light / Creation Justice Ministries (4:34)
- Film: “A Wilderness Like Eden: Stories from the Christian Food Movement,” Food & Faith video (15:48)
- Film: COP 26 Video
- Article: “They’re Turning Churches Into Climate Resilience Centers” by Brianna Baker, Grist, Jan. 13, 2021
- Article: “Despite setbacks, The Episcopal Church and Alaska Natives step up fight against drilling in Arctic refuge” by Egan Millard, Episcopal News Service, Aug. 29, 2019

Optional Resources:

- Article: “Spirituality, Global Warming, and Grief: How Clergy Can Help Tackle Climate Anxiety” by Rebecca Randall on Grist/Sojourners, June 9, 2023
- “What If We Get This Right?” “On Being” podcast episode with Ayana Elizabeth Johnson (49 mins)

GUIDING SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 13:8-13 (NRSV)

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

SMALL GROUP GATHERING

Facilitator or volunteer can use the prayer below to open your time together.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy God, your mercy is over all your works, and in the web of life each creature has its role and place.

We praise you for ocelot and owl, cactus and kelp, lichen and whale;

We honor you for whirlwind and lava, tide and topsoil, cliff and marsh.

Give us hearts and minds eager to care for your planet,

Humility to recognize all creatures as your beloved ones,

Justice to share the resources of the earth with all its inhabitants, and love not limited by our ignorance.

This we pray in the name of Jesus,

Who unifies what is far off and what is near,

And in whom, by grace and the working of your Holy Spirit,

All things hold together. Amen.

From “Liturgical Materials for Honoring God in Creation,” Reports to the 78th General Convention Supplemental Materials, p. 237.

CHECK-IN

Facilitator leads the group through brief check-ins from each participant.

REFLECTION

Group can choose to read the reflection out loud together or go directly to discussion questions depending on timing and how many participants were able to do the reading prior to the gathering.

“We know in part and we prophesy in part,” but what will we do? What will God do? The climate crisis is dislocating and at times may feel overwhelming and insurmountable. However, as people of faith, we are grounded in our belief in God’s accompaniment, in our hopeful vision of God’s Kingdom, and in God’s love that sustains us in the midst of crisis and calls us to embodying that love in action. And as people of faith, we have an important role in building physical and spiritual resilience.

“And the greatest of these is Love.” Love is an action and the antidote to the troubles we face. Loving God and God’s very good world means loving all of it. As we have learned, creation care and climate justice encompass everything from our food, waste, energy, and stormwater systems to honoring Native sovereignty and safeguarding the health and voting rights of communities of color. Co-conspiring with Spirit, we are invited to re-imagine, re-member and re-create a world that is more loving, liberating, and life-giving.

Each session in this curriculum explored pressing environmental issues, rooted in our loving, liberating, and life-giving faith—inviting us into resilience as we walk (and keep walking) the Way of Love.

Session One reminded us that we are part of a greater whole. And from the beginning we have been made for relationship with our God, with each other, and with all of creation.

Session Two invited us to imagine God's dream for the world as an interconnected, interdependent, interrelated creation, and that the water of baptism reminds us whose we are: members of a covenant relationship with God and all of creation, including water stewardship.

Session Three lifted up why reclaiming the sacred nature of creation is vital in the work of creation care and environmental advocacy and why land-based environmental issues are intertwined with Indigenous identity, culture, and spirituality.

Session Four encouraged us to wrestle with the reality that we collectively have not loved the Earth as we are called and the negative impact that has had. It asked the question, what would change in us—in the way we live, purchase, and pray—if we saw in every stone and seed, creek and creature something of value beyond anything we could buy?

Session Five introduced the concept of environmental justice and highlights the disproportionate impact of climate change on the most vulnerable. We were asked to consider what it means to be in mutual relationship with one another, caring for our neighbors as ourselves and bearing one another's burdens.

Session Six expanded upon how the environmental crisis is a humanitarian crisis, looking at the global plight of climate refugees. Reminding us it is not a question of mere ecological activism, but of justice and attention to the least fortunate.

Session Seven asked what it would look like for us to join the God of Jeremiah in weeping and wailing for the mountains? To lament, to grieve, and to honor the gifts we have been given and live once more into God's call of care and relationship with this Earth.

Session Eight proclaimed that through Christ's resurrection, the good news of restoration is not only something meant for all nations, but the entire cosmos. We saw that prayer is essential to this work and witnessed how a community committed to prayer was able to engage in environmental justice organizing and to promote mental and physical health for all.

Can you imagine it? See it, taste it, feel in your bones what it would mean if we lived into our call to Love God and Love God's world? Can you envision ways that we might face the climate crisis with true resilience?

Physically speaking, our churches need to prepare our buildings, grounds, parishioners, and neighborhoods for our own climate vulnerabilities, like sea-level rise or flooding, fire danger, and even energy and cost-saving projects like solar, battery storage, electrification, and weatherproofing. Our congregations can also partner with our local municipalities to offer our spaces as a resiliency hub⁶ or central community nexus for shelter, aid, and communications during extreme weather events and other disasters. Working with neighbors and local stakeholders builds social resiliency and trust, too. Building climate resilience is mitigating the most suffering while seeking to adapt to a changing climate to save all that we can. Equity and justice are at the heart of resiliency and require systemic transformation at the local and global scales.

Spiritually speaking, resilience is being existentially grounded, knowing we are in God's hands. It enables us to remain faithfully committed to practices that connect us to God, our neighbors, and all creation, even in

⁶ Read more about this in this Grist article about Climate Justice Ministries, and in their resiliency toolkit: <https://www.creationjustice.org/resource-hub/category/resilience>.

the midst of crisis. Rooting our climate action in our faith tradition and baptismal covenant fosters this spiritual resiliency in our parishes, and it enables us to minister to our neighbors' existential and spiritual needs. We can offer meaningful spaces for ethical deliberation, liturgical and contemplative practices, and other forms of spiritual accompaniment to continually return to God's love.

And it starts with us in our small groups. With so many opportunities to act, discerning vocation is a great place to start—or to come back to if you are already active in creation care. As author and theologian Frederick Buechner said, vocation is “the place God calls you to...where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”

Discussion Questions

Facilitator guides the group through the discussion questions.

1. Throughout this curriculum, we have encountered a multitude of stories that likely broke your heart, infuriated, or surprised you. What stories have stuck with you, and what stories are missing? What have you been feeling in your body and spirit?
2. How do we hold faith, hope, and love alongside the “litany of doom” that is truth-telling about what has and is going to happen as a result of climate chaos?
3. What is the role of transformative imagination and spiritual resiliency in this work, and how might we better practice both as people of faith?
4. To equip us to discern our vocation or climate action, we invite you to use Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's Climate Action Venn exercise (more details below). She asks us to find the intersection of our joy, our gifts, and the work that needs doing. What is in your climate action Venn diagram? What might be in your church's Venn diagram?
5. What do the next steps look like for you and/or this group in sustaining and deepening creation care and climate justice?

CLOSING CHECK-OUT & PRAYER

What word describes how you feel right now? After you've shared, please invite another person to go.

After all have offered a word, the facilitator or volunteer can pray a simple prayer bringing together the hopes and prayers of the whole group.

ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

These are activities and engagement opportunities to explore different ways to get involved and learn more.

- Engagement invitations for different levels: Use Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's Climate Action Venn [exercise](#) to discern how the Spirit may be calling you and your faith community into deeper climate action. You can also learn more from her [Climate Action Venn TED Talk](#) (10:11 mins).
- Remember, you can reframe the “you” to “your parish.” Using this tool in our personal lives and with our parishes can help us discern where God may be calling us. We invite you to do this exercise with your church in conversation with your neighbors' needs and assets.



- Just beginning? Try this exercise and see where you might start.
- Already engaged in creation care and environmental justice activities? What areas of focus have been in your climate action Venn and what level of action has it included? Where can you nurture and support this work in your life and in the life of your church or diocese?
- Do you want to explore new levels of engagement? Is there some spiritual or physical resiliency offering your church could provide to individuals, local institutions, or partner with other community organizations and faith communities to develop?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Adrienne Elliot works for the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia in Western Washington as the program coordinator for multicultural ministries and community transformation, which also includes some creation care. In 2022 she finished her master's degree in climate science and policy at Scripps Institution of Oceanography and has remained in San Diego to be close to family. Beyond the work she does for Olympia, she is also involved with the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego's Creation Care Community. Adrienne is passionate about intersections of environmental justice, grassroots organizing, and activating the church for partnership with the wider community. In her free time, she enjoys coaching high school cross-country and track.



Sarah Nolan is originally from a small town in New Mexico and spent most of her early adulthood in and around the Los Angeles region. She was a cofounder of The Abundant Table, an Episcopal-rooted educational farm and worshipping community in the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, and was active in community organizing, cooperative farming experiments, and food justice initiatives in the state of California and the wider Episcopal Church. She recently served as the director of communications and giving at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, Virginia, and now serves as the director of development, giving, and economic justice at All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California. Sarah is a two-term member of the Episcopal General Convention's Task Force on Creation Care and Environmental Racism.