



Environmental Justice 9/14/20

Dear friends,

We humans are built for community. During this time of social distancing, it's crucial that we remain connected, holding one another in love and support. It's for this reason that each week during the COVID-19 crisis, we'll be sending you a short resource to use in a virtual meeting held over the phone or via video conferencing. This weekly resource is a great tool to stay connected with your current and past JFM small groups. It is also a great resource to use individually, or with groups of friends or family to stay connected and engaged in a meaningful way. These reflections will provide a time to pray together, check in with one another, and have conversation around a short passage.

In the meantime, we're offering tips and tools for facilitating all of our current programs through videoconferencing. While we hope that this weekly resource will spiritually sustain your community while in quarantine, [now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs](#). The call to seek justice is just as important now as ever!

Last but not least, generosity is, at its core, a benefit to everyone. When you donate today, your gift helps us sustain individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out](#). Also, please feel free to **forward this resource** to friends and family!

Thank you for continuing to care for one another during this time of heightened anxiety. Know that we are praying for you!

Stay well,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you, despite that we can't be together in person. Today we'll begin with prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around a short reflection before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a minute of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 1 minute before beginning the opening prayer.

Then say: I will now read aloud "Prayer for Our Earth" by Pope Francis. Let us pray.

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.

Pope Francis

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you're by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you're with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- Before we begin this week's reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling? (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- What is something you're struggling with this week?
- Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?

Reflection (15 minutes or so)

Read aloud or individually the *New York Times* article, [“Black Environmentalists Talk About Climate and Anti-Racism.”](#)

Let us pause for silent meditation.

Pause for 30 seconds.

Then ask:

- Before reading this article, were you aware of the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color? Have you experienced environmental racism or have you studied the issues of environmental racism and environmental justice? If you have, share a piece of wisdom/insight you've gained from your personal experience or your studies.



- What wisdom can you receive from this article?
- Dr. Bullard said, “Climate change is more than parts per million and greenhouse gases. The people who are feeling the worst impacts of climate, their voices have got to be heard.”
 - How can you better listen to the voices of those impacted by climate change?
- Heather McGhee said, “We’ve got to divest from systems that are killing us and costing us, and invest in our people and our planet.”
 - What are a few ways that you can invest in people and our planet?

Announcements (10 minutes-ish)

- Remind participants that today’s conversation offered only a brief insight into a huge topic. If they would like to take a deeper dive into this subject matter, they should consider the eight-session program on eco-justice that will be released in the fall of 2020.
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff in order to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. In order to support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through justfaith.org.
- JustFaith Ministries is currently hosting a monthly webinar series called “Acting for Justice While Sheltering in Place,” in which an expert on a justice-related topic will offer tips for taking action during COVID-19. Visit the [JustFaith Ministries Facebook page](#) or the [JustFaith Ministries Website](#) for more information on times and topics.
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice.
- Share these resources on Environmental Justice with participants, perhaps through copy/pasting the links into the Zoom chat box:
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/05/climate/racism-climate-change-reading-list.html>



- <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/28/magazine/pollution-philadelphia-black-americans.html>
- <https://time.com/5864704/environmental-racism-climate-change/>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/climate/climate-environmental-justice.html>

Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

Then say: Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.

Pause for 30 seconds.

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

Leader: And yet, we've misused it for our gain,
Contributed to its destruction to ensure an extravagant lifestyle,
Neglected its cries for restoration.

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

Leader: And yet, we greedily deplete this gift of abundance.
We take instead of receive,
consume instead of give,
demand instead of thank.

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

Leader: And yet, our own wants have taken priority over the needs of others.

Because of our indifference,
species of animals and plants are becoming extinct.

Because of our acts of discrimination,
racialized communities live closest to the sources of pollution.

Because of our selfishness,
Indigenous people are forced to fight for the protection of their own land.



Because of our apathy,
poverty stricken areas are left with unsanitary drinking water.

Because of our carelessness,
Bodies of water fill with waste.

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

Leader: And yet, we do not take responsibility for our actions or lack thereof.

Instead, we are quick to point fingers—to blame and accuse.
Though we see the pains and hear the groans of this beaten world, we continue to pass by on the other side of the road.

Creator God, Lord of the earth and everything in it, forgive us.

And now, Creator God,
Just as you breathed life into dust, breathe anew into your people—that these ashes of confession may bring your justice, peace, and hope to the once dust of this world.

Creator God, you make beautiful things out of the dust. Give us the eyes to see, the voices to declare, the hands and minds to affirm this truth:

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

Prayer of Confession: The Earth is the Lord's
Carissa Groot-Nibbelink
<http://justice.crcna.org/prayers#confession>

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country.
Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might



participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.