

GETTING RICHER AT THE EXPENSE OF  
**PEOPLE** AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
MAKES EVERYONE POORER  
WE CAN CHOOSE TO LIVE DIFFERENTLY

**WE CAN RECLAIM THE FUTURE!**

WE CAN CHOOSE TO LIVE IN A WAY THAT CREATES  
A BETTER WORLD FOR EVERYONE  
WHERE HUMAN DIGNITY  
AND THE **ENVIRONMENT** ARE RESPECTED

GOD CALLS US TO **LIVE SIMPLY**

**LIVE SUSTAINABLY**

AND LIVE IN SOLIDARITY  
WITH PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY

**National Youth Sunday 23rd November 2008**

**Reclaim the Future! Assembly**



National Youth Sunday 2008  
The Solemnity of Christ the King – 23rd November 2008

## Assembly Resource

**Introduction** This year's National Youth Sunday (NYS08) on 23rd November has the theme **Reclaim the Future!** It continues the *livesimply* message by looking more specifically at living sustainably, and exploring climate change and related issues.

**About this resource** This assembly features a sketch, action and prayer to introduce the theme. The sketch aims to show how there is a connection between the affect of climate change in certain parts of the world with our own actions, and to show that we can do something about it. Our actions are more effective if we work together.

The assembly can be used in the lead up to NYS08 – and may be used to help promote other NYS08 events that are taking place locally. (It might be worth checking, for example if local parishes are celebrating NYS08.) You may also wish to use the assembly alongside other **Reclaim the Future!** resources – including session ideas and collective worship materials. The sketch can also be used independently to promote the subject of climate change and sustainable living.

## Sketch

**You will need** Two actors  
A newspaper  
A bottle of water  
A litter bin

1 *[Sits on stage holding a newspaper, flicking through the pages and reading a number of 'headlines', commenting dismissively on each one.]*

"The world's surface temperatures are rising more rapidly than at any point in the last 10,000 years."  
Huh, not round here they're not.

"Warmer, wetter weather sees malaria spread to new areas."  
Well, it's not going to come to the sunny UK, so that's alright.

"Sea levels expected to submerge 18% of Bangladesh by the end of the century."  
Oh great. I don't even know where Bangladesh is.

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“Water shortages will leave three billion people in the Middle East and India desperate for water.”

What a shame... *[Takes a swig from a bottle of water]* Oooh, that's refreshing!

“Over the last 30 years the average amount of Arctic sea ice has shrunk by nearly 1 million square kilometres - an area larger than Denmark, Sweden and Norway combined.”

Hmm, the Arctic – is that the one at the top or the bottom?

2 *[Enters from the side and interrupts]*

Hey, what are you reading?

1 Oh – this newspaper. It's just sooooo depressing.

2 Why, what's up?

1 All this stuff about the environment and climate change and all that. They just seem to be going on about it all the time.

2 Well, I guess it is pretty important.

1 Do you think so? Just seems a bit irrelevant to me. I mean, who gives a stuff about Bangladesh, or India or places like that?

2 *[Shocked]* Are you serious?

1 It just seems so far away. We're all okay here, aren't we – I just don't see what it's got to do with us.

2 I can't believe you're saying this...

1 What do you mean?

2 Well, don't you care about what happens to other people?

1 Er, not *really*. I mean, not people I don't even know.

2 And don't you think you're partly to blame for what's happening to the climate?

1 What – little old me? Are you having a laugh?

2 And don't you think you should try to do something about it?

1 I don't know what you mean – like what can I do?

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- 2 Look, the things we do here and now can have a huge impact on people on the other side of the world.
- 1 I don't get it.
- 2 Well, we hear loads about climate change and global warming all the time, right?
- 1 Yeah, too right.
- 2 And we often think that it's something that'll affect us in the future.
- 1 I suppose so.
- 2 But it's already happening now, and affecting people in other parts of the world.
- 1 Like who?
- 2 Like people in Malawi, for example. They rely on agriculture and the land for their income and survival. But rising sea levels, more floods and severe weather mean that the climate has already changed. Many people are struggling to survive.
- 1 Okay – and where else?
- 2 Cambodia is another example. Some places have had to deal with drought, floods and typhoons. It has left many people and livestock dead, crops ruined, and clean water supplies damaged.
- 1 So that's two places... So what?
- 2 Well, there are loads of other examples. But the point is that change is happening right across the world now.
- 1 Okay, okay! But I still don't know what that's got to do with me.
- 2 Well, that's where you need to make the connection.
- 1 *[Confused]* The connection?
- 2 Yes! The connection! Climate change is happening right across the world because of the lifestyle choices we make.
- 1 *[Shaking the head]* I don't get it.

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- 2 Well, rich countries like ours produce most of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change. Yet, it's the poorest countries that are hit hardest.
- 1 *[Smugly]* But I don't produce any greenhouse gases. I haven't even got a greenhouse...
- 2 Really? So you don't use heating, or ever take a ride in a car, or use electricity, or have the latest iPod, or buy food, or use...
- 1 *[Interrupting]* Yeah – of course I do. But I still don't have a greenhouse.
- 2 No, but all those other things help to produce greenhouse gases, which contribute towards climate change, which causes sea levels to rise, which causes flooding, which affect people on the other side of the world.
- 1 *[Stunned for a moment]* Ahhhhh.
- 2 People who, after all, are your brothers and sisters in Christ.
- 1 *[Stunned for a moment]* Ahhhhh.
- 2 Who really need you to do something about it.
- 1 *[Stunned for a moment]* Ahhhhh.
- 2 And that's the connection. And it's why you keep hearing lots about it. You've heard all that stuff about turning off the tap when brushing your teeth, using energy saving light bulbs, recycling, buying FairTrade things, walking and using public transport instead of cars... Now you know *why* it's important to do these things. I suppose, in a way, it's about saying we can do things *together* to change things for others. It's about reclaiming the future.
- 1 *[Animated and excited!]* Reclaim the future! I like that idea...  
Do you know, you've really explained things to me. Thanks very much! I'm going to change as much as I can.
- 2 You're welcome. I'm glad to have helped.
- 1 *[Crumples up newspaper and casually throws it in a bin, exiting the stage]*  
See you later.
- 2 *[Looks at audience, exasperated]* Arrrrrgh!

## Explanation

At this point in the assembly, it can be helpful to reiterate the theme and talk about some of the ways that National Youth Sunday and Reclaim the Future! is being celebrated in the local area. Some of the points that you may wish to highlight are listed below:

- Overwhelming scientific evidence supports the conclusion that observed changes in the global climate are, in large part, due to human activities and primarily related to fossil-fuel consumption.
- Climate change is already affecting some of the poorest communities in the world.
- Without urgent action to curb greenhouse-gas emissions, the Earth will become warmer by 2050 than at anytime in the last 10,000 years.
- Some of the possible effects of climate change include a rising in sea levels, a shortage of water, a change to rainfall patterns (which could increase both droughts and floods), an increase in extreme weather events, and an increase in diseases such as malaria.
- **Reclaim the Future!** invites young people in England and Wales to join together to think about climate change and living sustainably.
- **Reclaim the Future!** reminds us that we live in a global community and that our actions make a difference to others.
- **Reclaim the Future!** acknowledges that we are part of God's creation, charged with the responsibility of caring for the earth and its resources.
- **Reclaim the Future!** helps to make connections: we are able to achieve more if we work together to combat climate change and poverty.

## Scripture

Of course, one of the main reasons that climate change and living sustainably has become a key issue within the Church is thanks to the recognition that we are all part of God's family. As Christians, we recognise the fact that we are called to care for the earth and we are also conscious of the need to promote justice across the world. It can be helpful to include a short reading from Scripture to emphasise this. Two examples are given here:

### **God creates humanity** (*Genesis 1:26-31*)

God said, "Now we will make humans, and they will be like us. We will let them rule the fish, the birds, and all other living creatures."

So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women. God gave them his blessing and said:

"Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth.

"I have provided all kinds of fruit and grain for you to eat. And I have given the green plants as food for everything else that breathes. These will be food for animals, both wild and tame, and for birds."

God looked at what he had done. All of it was very good! Evening came and then morning – that was the sixth day.

### **The greatest commandment** (*Luke 10:27*)

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Love your neighbours as much as you love yourself.'

*Note: Jesus goes on to tell the story of the Good Samaritan at this point – this may be a helpful parable to use.*

## Action

You may wish to invite people to think about positive actions that they can make to **Reclaim the Future!** One way to do this is to ask a group of students to present some practical ideas. Express this visually by writing the ideas on strips of paper or card, and then connecting the strips of card together – like a giant paper chain – as each idea is read. This chain of ideas helps to reinforce the idea that we are stronger if we work together.

If time, space and logistics allow, you could invite everyone to do the same – making a commitment to act on a strip of paper, and then joining all these together. This could also be done as a follow-up activity in form time or during PSHE.

# WE CAN RECLAIM THE FUTURE!



## Prayer

Conclude with the **Reclaim the Future!** prayer. you could project this to allow everyone to pray together – or ask the audience to repeat the prayer line by line, after a leader.

Brilliant God,  
we celebrate your wonderful world  
and we thank you for the gift of your creation.  
Inspire us, we pray,  
to **Reclaim the Future!**  
Help us to see how our actions today  
will make a difference tomorrow.  
And bring us together in faith  
to make that difference a positive thing.  
Amen.