

All-age Resources for Public Worship

Introduction

The two interactive all-age reflections below are designed to help congregations explore two of the climate justice themes being highlighted in the 2015 World Development Appeal:

the need to support communities like those in **Bangladesh** and **Ethiopia** who are already having to **adapt their livelihoods** to changing climate patterns;

and the need to **make significant changes in our own economic and social structures and personal life choices** in order to make our own communities more sustainable, and in order to reduce, as far as possible, the negative effects of climate change, both for ourselves and for our more vulnerable neighbours.

In an All-Age service, the two suggestions below could certainly be combined.

Crab farming: hope for the future

In the video and power point material, and in the card text, children and adults will learn that in the low-lying coastal regions of Bangladesh, fresh water rivers are being increasingly contaminated with salt water. This affects both the soil, in which certain crops can no longer be grown, and the fresh water fish, which were once a staple part of people's diet but which have now disappeared.

As a result, and in connection with the climate change adaptation work being supported by the Appeal, people like Momata Bala and Gyatree Mondal (two of the women who appear in the video material) have had to create alternative ways of producing food and making a living, one of which is crab farming in small ponds.

To prepare for this activity, you will need to cut out at least 5 or 6 large crab shapes from stiff paper or cardboard. On the back of each crab shape, you or one of your local Eco-Congregation Ireland representatives should write down a single task that could be immediately taken up by any household determined to move towards a more sustainable and healthy way of life.

For practical purposes, the suggestions will need to be geared to those most likely to be present in your congregation and to the realities of your own community. Urban dwellers may need to make more deliberate use of public transport, but in a rural area where public transport is limited, a better challenge might have to do with waste disposal,

for example. Include very simple things for children, such as replacing the light bulb in their bedside lamp with a more energy-efficient one, or learning to make a simple meal out of locally grown food.

The crabs should then be hidden around the room, under or alongside pews, between chairs, crawling into people's rucksacks, or whatever. Be inventive! If you really want to make this fun and have a balcony, attach small magnets to the crabs and let them "swim" under the balcony for the first part of the service.

Then, when the time comes, go crab fishing! Invite pairs of children and older people to search for crabs. They can be "fished" with nets, "caught" with lines to which Blu-Tack has been attached, or magnetically fished from the balcony with a fishing line which you have provided.

When the crabs have all been caught, you and the crab-fishers and the congregation can then have a brief conversation together about the challenges we have found in our own "crab pond". Remind everyone that people like Momata Bala are already learning ways to make the life of their village more sustainable as the climate changes, and we are invited to do no less: supporting her and others like her through the Appeal; and reshaping our own lives in Ireland in the direction of sustainability.

Full of years . . .

The society around us often speaks in dismissive and deeply disturbing ways of older people, but the Bible describes those who have lived a long time as being "full of years", and commends their faithfulness over the long haul.

It is becoming clear, anecdotally, at least, that many of the most committed advocates for climate justice and a sustainable future, inside and outside the churches, are older adults. Perhaps because they themselves have children and grandchildren, and a perspective on life which extends well beyond their own expected life span. Perhaps because they have lived long enough to see for themselves the undeniable effects of environmental degradation on the natural world. And perhaps because they have a more vivid sense of no longer having "all the time in the world" to do the things that give a life meaning.

You might, therefore, in the context of support for the Appeal, consider providing a moment in the service in which a representative group of your oldest adults come forward and publicly commit themselves, for the years remaining to them and as they can, to work for climate justice and a more sustainable future for all. You could set this up with a bit of ceremony, so that the older people come up to the front to speak, and the children are invited to stand and solemnly witness their commitment across the generations.

This would obviously take some planning. But it could be a vivid and moving expression of biblical solidarity across the generations, and a counter-cultural affirmation of faithfulness to the gospel over the long haul.