



tearfund

Creation Church Talk

A guide for how to set up a sermon or conversation about creation and the changing climate



Thank you!

Thank you for downloading our guide to talking about climate change at church. In this resource, we've included our top tips, an example for a short climate change announcement, and a full sermon for you to use in a Sunday service.

Whether you've only got time for a quick announcement or a whole sermon slot, you can help people understand the effects of climate change and be inspired by God's love for creation and his heart for justice.

Please email us at connect@tearfund.ca at least two weeks before you speak at your church so we can pray for you and support you as you prepare. Thank you for talking about climate change and encouraging others to change how we think about creation.





A Short Announcement

It you only have time for a short announcement, here are the three main points you'll want to clearly communicate:

- A changing climate is already hitting people in poverty the hardest.
- God calls us to love our neighbours and speak up for them.
- You can make a difference by starting the conversations and by praying. (Feel free to share our [Prayer Guide](#) & [For All Creation – A Must Have Conversation](#) during this time too)

Also, please consider sharing a story of someone who is feeling the effects of a changing climate. We would recommend referencing someone like Lebiso Labena. Before you share his story, you may want to read about his story in full below (on page 7) and consider showing his [video](#) during your announcement. After sharing a story and announcement, pray for families and communities as they try to live within the impacts of climate change.

An example of an announcement using Lebiso's story.

Good morning. I would love to introduce you to Lebiso, who has been a farmer for the past 15 years. He lives in Hobicha, Ethiopia, with his wife and six children. The landscape is picturesque—characterized by hilly terrain, large plains, valleys and gorges. But beneath the serene landscape, there is suffering. Families don't have enough to eat because of the changing climate. "The climate has changed, and it has harmed us a lot and made farming difficult." Lebiso shares, "as the weather changes, it causes rainfall fluctuations and untimely rainfalls, which often destroys the crops."

Like many families in the region, Lebiso relies on rain-fed farming for his livelihood and to feed his children. For many years, this was enough. The rains were predictable and steady. But now, things have changed. This year it didn't rain for four months. The usual way of farming doesn't work anymore. "As a result, we have a low harvest, and thus a lack of food and income. We have suffered. My children have suffered as well."

In the Bible, Jesus tells us that the most important commandments are to love God and our neighbours. By honouring God through the care of his creation and and showing love to our global neighbours like Lesibo, we are fulfilling the most important commandments Jesus gave to us.

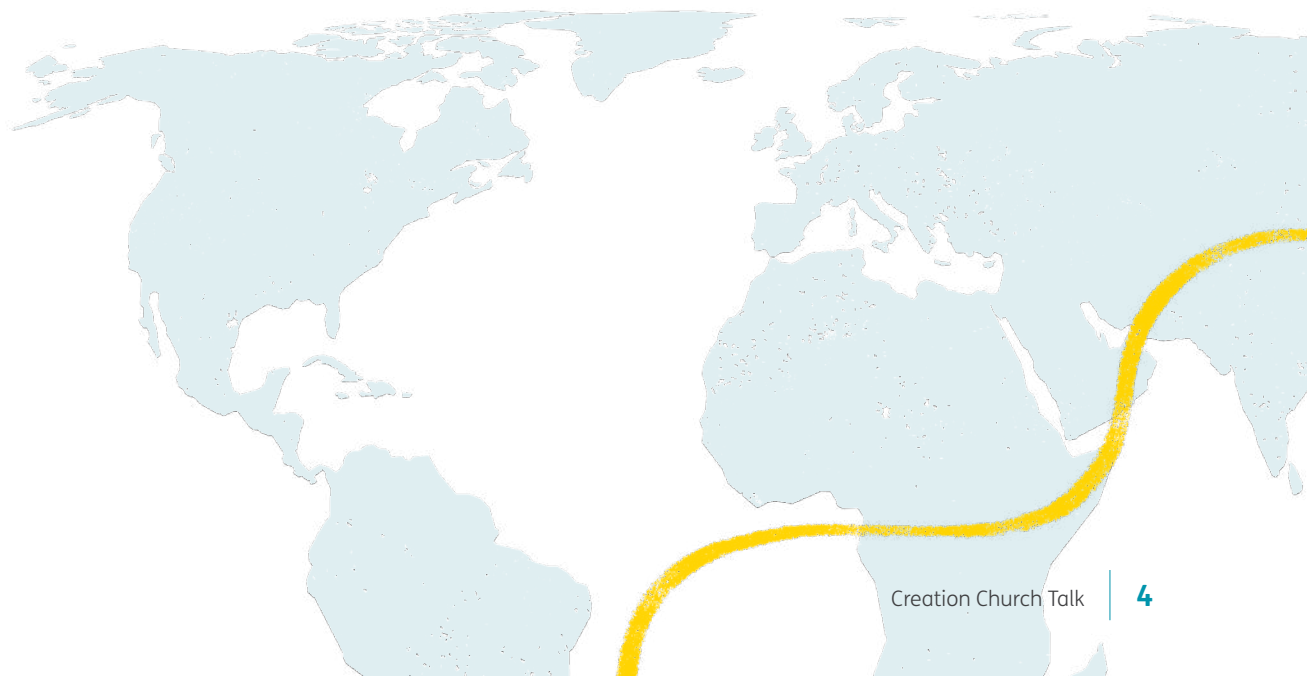
Not only do we want to love God and the humans on Earth, but we must love and care for all creation. Sadly, the world has stopped caring for creation and now overuses and abuses the resources within creation. As Christians, we must speak out and work with others to care for creation as we are called by God to do.



Let us pray

Father God, we thank you that you are a God of justice. Thank you for knowing Lebiso, his family, and all those already impacted by climate change. Jesus, we are sorry for the ways we've damaged your creation. Help us make changes in our own lives to love our global neighbours well. Holy Spirit, would you stir the hearts of members of our government, guide them in all their decision-making, and inspire them to protect the most vulnerable.

Amen.





A Sermon/Main Talk

Sermon speaking takes time and thoughtfulness. It's the main time in the week when your community comes together to learn about God and what it means to follow him. We want to honour that time and offer you some great teaching content to help your community go deeper in their relationship with Jesus as you speak to them about climate change. After several years of quietness, many churches worldwide are finally speaking out and including climate change in their conversations and sermons. It's a vital topic for Christians to engage with, and it can help us learn more about discipleship, worship, God's justice and much more. Our top tip for planning a good talk on a changing climate would be to structure your talk in these four clear sections:

- 1. God's love of creation:** Drawing on biblical passages such as those we've suggested, helping people see God's delight in all he's made – its value and beauty.
- 2. How we've damaged creation, and how this impacts people in poverty:** Explaining the urgency of a changing climate and how it impacts people around the world.
- 3. The hope we find in Jesus As Christians, we know the end of the story:** We have a deep and unshakeable hope because of what Jesus has done for us and what he continues to do in the world.
- 4. An invitation to respond:** Our first response should be to fix our eyes on God and to pray. But we can't stop there. In a situation like this, we need to be brave and use our voice. When we speak up together, change can happen.

Below is an example of a talk/sermon you might like to adapt, and use in your church. We've provided four readings for you to reflect on as you prepare. Although we suggest only using the top two as readings during the service, you could reference the other two as you speak. Please feel free to adapt the talk for your church, but we hope the template below is a helpful example. We've also suggested two places in the talk where you might want to use a video instead of covering those parts yourself.

God's love of Creation

Main readings: Psalm 104:1,10–26 Mark 4:1–10, 13–20, **Optional readings:** Romans 8:19–21 Esther 4:12–16

Good morning,

Our readings from Psalm 104 and Mark 4 vary in many ways: their purpose, setting, and when they were written are all noticeably different. But they also have a lot in common.

Both passages demonstrate intimate knowledge of creation.

The psalmist describes the beauty of creation, declaring, 'O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom, you have made them all.' The author understood how creation works. They knew where the bird's nest and where the mountain goats live, the great skill of a lion as it hunts its prey, and the vast array of creatures living in the water.

The writers knew creation intimately, so they must have spent time observing and learning how all things fit together and were inspired to worship as a result! In verse 31 of the psalm, just after the part we've heard this morning, it says God rejoices in his creation. The beauty and variety of all he's made brings God joy!

Similarly, in our New Testament passage from Mark, Jesus demonstrates his own detailed understanding of creation.

He describes the issues that can hinder the growth of crops: he knows how drought can cause plants to wither or how rocky ground prevents the development of roots. Even though he was a carpenter by trade, he knew the importance of nutritious soil for a bountiful harvest. Jesus has an intimate knowledge of the workings of creation. This shouldn't surprise us; the Bible tells us how all things were created for Jesus and by Jesus. In him, all things hold together; He's Lord of all creation. It's not a surprise that Jesus considers it important to observe the creation around us.

But Jesus shows us something else too. He teaches us that not only does he have an intimate relationship with creation, but we can also learn about our heavenly Father through it. Whether it's through the relentlessness of weeds, the character of birds or the power of a mustard seed, time and again, Jesus points to the Father and the way he works through creation.

We live in a busy world and often fail to take time to observe creation, but as the writer of Proverbs advises, 'Go to the ant... consider its ways.' (Proverbs 6:6-11)

From the psalms to the gospels, we see the ways creation can reveal more of God's character and inspire us to worship, and we see how God delights and finds joy in all he's made!

How we've damaged creation and how that is impacting people in poverty

But when we look at the world today, we can see the many ways that we've damaged this beautiful gift God has given us. How we live, work, and consume has pushed creation to a breaking point.

(You may read or refer to Romans 8 here): In our reading from Paul's letter to the church in Rome, we heard how creation is in bondage to decay, trapped in frustration and crying out for redemption.

Whether plastic pollution littering seas and the poorest communities, species going extinct at record rates, or climate change making droughts, floods and storms more frequent and severe, we've misused and damaged this beautiful gift from God. We're feeling some of the effects in Canada, but the impacts are hitting people in poverty the hardest, and many live in the global south. It's hard to grasp what that means: it's big and abstract. So let me quickly introduce you to Lebisio.

(If you'd like to use a video: You can watch the video of Lebisio) <https://youtu.be/H9HyW8y500Y>

Telling Lebiso's story

Lebiso has been a farmer for the past 15 years and lives in Hobicha, Ethiopia, with his wife and six children. The landscape of Hobicha is picturesque—characterized by hilly terrain, large plains, valleys and gorges. But beneath the serene landscape, there is suffering. Families don't have enough to eat because of the changing climate.

Like many families in the region, Lebiso relies on rain-fed agriculture for his livelihood and to feed his children. For many years, this was enough. The rains were predictable and steady. But now, thanks to a changing climate, things have changed. This year it didn't rain for four months. The usual way of farming doesn't work anymore.

When sharing with Tearfund, Lebiso says, "The climate has changed, and it has harmed us a lot and made farming difficult." Lebiso tells us. "As the weather changes, it causes rainfall fluctuations and untimely rainfalls, which often destroys the crops."

Imagine how hard it must be to watch your livelihood be chipped away. Every year, you try harder to make ends meet, doing the only thing you've known for many years. Only to come up empty-handed. As a father, Lebiso feels the pressure. It is his responsibility to provide for his family.



‘As a result, we have a low harvest, and thus a lack of food and income. We have suffered. My children have suffered as well.’

Around the world, millions of people like Lebiso are being pushed back into poverty because of climate change and conflict. Since 2016, world hunger started to increase for the first time in a decade and has continued to increase every year since. And that's because of climate change and conflict, with climate change exacerbating the risk of conflict.

Climate change is getting worse each day and humans are the leading factor in accelerating this crisis. Especially those in wealthy nations like us in North America. We are running out of time to prevent the worst effects. We have to act fast and change the way we live.

In the Bible, Jesus tells us the most important commandments are to love God and our neighbours. Tackling climate change is vital to both of these. By honouring God, protecting his creation, and loving our neighbours in the global south, we are living out the commandments Jesus gave to us.

Hope and Creation Care

Colossians 1:19–20 says this: ‘For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.’

‘To reconcile to himself all things, things on earth and things in heaven...’ Our world is broken, but God is at work reconciling and restoring it.

To me, this says I need a much bigger view of Jesus. He didn’t come just to reconcile me with my Father in heaven, but to reconcile and restore ALL things – in heaven and on Earth! That’s far more than just us. Too often, the church divorces creation from the action of salvation and redemption Jesus came to fulfill. As Kenyan theologian Samson Gitua says, “There can be no redemption without creation.” Jesus came to begin the restoration of the world to how God intended it to be, both humanity and the rest of creation. He came to make all things new.

Jesus values creation and shows us how it reveals the love of the Father, and brings restoration and healing – uniting everything back with God.

We can have hope. Because of Jesus’ death on the cross, all things can be made new; everything sin has broken and corrupted is being restored and reconciled to God. And what’s more, we can be part of it. Jesus invites us to participate in his mission in this world.

The world is crying out, but God is at work, and we’re invited to join him in a ministry of reconciliation – reconciling people to their Father, but also reconciling people to the creation we’ve been given to care for and seeing it restored. The act of reconciliation with creation begins with an action called creation care.

Creation care is the action of living in a way that values, cares and enjoys creation. As Christians, we believe that God has created a world where there is enough for everyone and that caring for creation will allow all to flourish. If we do not care for creation now, the future generations will struggle to thrive because of the damage we caused. Christians are called to nurture and take care of the gift of creation.

The Bible is clear, Jesus is clear, and we as Christians need to be clear. Creation matters to us and our faith, so we choose to live and act in a manner of Creation care. A way that values and cares For All The Earth.





An invitation to Respond

So how can we respond? To answer that question, let's turn to Esther in the Old Testament.

In the face of a crisis, she responds with faith and courage. In the book of Esther, the Persian king makes plans to wipe out the Jews, but Esther's uncle, Mordecai, warns her about the plan. Esther's response to the news of the threat to her people is remarkable. She tells Mordecai to gather people together to pray and fast. While they do so, she will approach the king and ask him to reconsider – even though she knows that it is against the law and she could lose her life. In chapter four, she says to Mordecai, 'Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.'

Esther teaches us that following Jesus requires us to speak up against injustice, even when it's costly to ourselves – and that we should act from a foundation of prayer. So I want to invite you this morning to join in prayer and action to address the huge injustice of climate change and its impact on the poorest people around the world.

If Jesus came to reconcile all things, then shouldn't we as the church and Christians do the same. Should we not be fighting for people to be freed and for people to thrive within this creation? As climate change continues to worsen, more people suffer from these injustices. So today, I challenge you to do three things;

- Pray about climate change and those suffering from the effects
tearfund.ca/resources/praying-for-all-the-earth
- Educate yourself and seek to know more about the issues and how it affects real people
tearfund.ca/program/creation-care/#resources
- Act, it's important that we respond with love and care as the church. One of the ways to care is by giving to those who are struggling from climate change the most, but also by changing the way you live. Check out our Guide on How to Live For All The Earth
tearfund.ca/resources/caring-for-all-the-earth

We thank you for considering to share about creation and how the changing climate affects people around the world. This is an important, yet often forgotten issue in the church today. As you prepare to share, we encourage you to reach out to us and ask any questions you may have. We also encourage you to take a look at our resource page (tearfund.ca/resources), so that you can gain a better understanding of the overall topic of climate change and creation.

May God bless you and keep you as you search to share the truth about creation and the way its meant to be.

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*Following Jesus where
the need is greatest*