

# **Between the Flood and the Rainbow**

## **Climate Change and the Church's Social Teaching**

### **- A Study Guide**

A production of Operation Noah,  
with support from  
CAFOD, Columban Faith and Justice  
and the National Justice and Peace Network

“I welcome these study materials from Operation Noah. They are a practical and stimulating way in which to help deepen our appreciation of the environment and understand the challenges arising from climate change. The world of nature is a gift from God and a primary way in which God invites us to share in God's life and become more truly human. God saw what he had made and found it good.”

*Bishop Declan Lang of Clifton Diocese,  
Episcopal Liaison for Environmental Justice,  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales*

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Operation Noah was the first Christian campaign to focus exclusively on Climate Change. It was founded in 2001 by Christian Ecology Link (CEL), and later became a joint project of CEL and the Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. It takes the view that Christians have a unique leadership role to play in helping society and government face up to Climate Change, and to encourage a move towards living more simply and sustainably. The core goal is for the British government to bring in legislation that will fairly and equitably drive down British carbon emissions by 90 percent by 2030.

**Operation Noah, The Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT  
Tel: 020 7324 4761. [www.operationnoah.org](http://www.operationnoah.org)**



For CAFOD, climate change is an issue of justice. Rich countries make the greatest contribution to climate change, but poor communities are already suffering its worst impacts. Increased floods, droughts and extreme weather could wipe out progress in tackling poverty. In developing countries, CAFOD helps people adapt to changing weather, brings aid after climatic disasters and helps those affected to get their voices heard. In the UK, CAFOD campaigns for national and international action and invites people to examine their own lifestyles in order to live more simply, sustainably and in solidarity with poor communities.

**CAFOD, Romero Close, Stockwell Rd, London SW9 9TY.  
Tel: 020 7733 7900. [www.cafod.org.uk/climatechange](http://www.cafod.org.uk/climatechange)**



The Columban Missionary Society regards climate change as a matter of life and death for millions of poor people around the world, and a disaster for the natural world. This crisis facing all life on Earth it is a key moral issue for the churches to address. Columban clergy, religious and laity involved in Justice, Peace and Ecology gathered in the Philippines in September 2007 to examine global warming and issued a statement saying that, “the endangered Earth demands a new prophetic way of being missionaries”, following the lead of Pope John Paul II who urged Catholics six years ago to undergo an “ecological conversion”.

**Faith and Justice Team, St. Joseph's, Watford Way, Hendon London NW4 4TY.  
Tel: 020 8202 2555. [www.columbans.co.uk](http://www.columbans.co.uk) and [www.columban.com](http://www.columban.com)**

*J/P Justice & Peace*

The National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), whose aims and efforts are accepted by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, has worked for 30 years to encourage work for Justice and Peace by promoting liaison and communication among diocesan groups. The NJPN Environment Working Group started up in 2005 to inform and mobilise the NJPN network to take action on environmental issues. A key issue for the group has been Climate Change. Another has been promoting the theology and spirituality that underpins concern for the environment.

**National Justice & Peace Network (NJPN,) 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX  
Tel: 020 7901 4864. [www.justice-and-peace.org.uk](http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk)**



*Mark Dowd, Operation Noah's Campaign Strategist, joined around 300 members of more than 40 religious orders at a Religious Lobby of Parliament on 23rd April 2008, urging MPs to support a stronger Climate Change Bill.*



*Some of the hundreds of young people who attended a 'livesimply' event in Manchester on 14th March 2008.*

*Bernadette Delaney*

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## Climate Change and the Church's Social Teaching - A Study Guide

God said: "Here is the sign of the Covenant I make between myself and you and every living creature with you for all generations: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the Covenant between me and the Earth."

*Genesis 9:12-13*

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# INTRODUCTION

This study guide on climate change is based upon key themes in Catholic Social Teaching. It is intended for study and reflection by adult groups. The causes and impacts of climate change will be examined, insights from scripture reflected upon and action suggested, based upon Christian respect for Earth's natural systems. Climate change is an entry point into the whole of the ecological crisis facing human society and the guide covers related issues as well as responses already being made by Christians. It suggests ways of living more sustainably, and urges Christians to play a leadership role in helping society and government face up to this crisis.

The Guide contains agendas for six meetings with accompanying Appendices, Reflection and Action Sheets, and Reading Sheets. Each meeting in the Guide is designed to lead groups through the Pastoral Cycle of EXPERIENCE – ANALYSIS – THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION – ACTION. It provides a framework which should be adapted by groups to suit their needs.

The programme could cover six weeks with one meeting per week, or be spread out over a longer period. Each meeting should be no longer than two hours. Prayers to start and conclude each meeting could be taken from the *Prayers and Liturgies* section towards the end of this guide. As a precursor to the first meeting, there could be a showing of the film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, produced by Al Gore, former U.S. Vice-President. It is an excellent introduction to the issue of climate change.

## Small Groups

People tend to learn and understand better when they meet in small groups over a period of time. Small groups are supportive and the recommended size for following this guide is between eight and ten members. It would be helpful to have a group leader or facilitator whose role is to help the group achieve its purpose. Different members, however, could assume responsibility for the planning of each meeting, checking the venue and timekeeping. Everybody in the group should have a chance to contribute views and to be involved in decisions being taken.

## What you need

This guide is strictly all you will need, and it would be ideal if all group members had a copy. However, any of the following will come in useful:

- Large sheets of paper and pens for noting key points or action ideas to be followed up.
- A laptop computer for playing extracts suggested throughout the programme.
- Refreshments, such as fairly traded tea and coffee.

**You are most welcome to photocopy any part of this guide. Also, pages can be downloaded from the Operation Noah website on [www.operationnoah.org](http://www.operationnoah.org)**