

Inter faith activity in the UK

A Teacher resource
for secondary pupils
aged 11–14



UNIT 5

MAKING A DIFFERENCE
IN THE WORLD

Inter Faith Responses to the Climate Crisis



This unit is intended to take pupils on a journey:

All religious traditions have writings and teachings about treatment of the planet and its creatures.

The 'climate crisis' had led faith communities to focus increasingly on sustainability and to draw on these resources to respond.

Faith groups are working individually and together to tackle climate change.

Climate change has an impact on land and economies and has a link with poverty.

Work to tackle both climate change and linked poverty together is often framed as action for 'climate justice'.

Teacher note This unit of work is intended as an introduction for pupils learning about how faith bodies and inter faith groups respond together to the climate crisis. It focuses on the way that UK faith communities and inter faith bodies are responding to climate change at a national and local level in a practical way in light of their religious traditions.

About the unit

This unit looks at the ways that faith and inter faith organisations are responding to climate change and its consequences. It gives pupils an opportunity to look at the teachings of different religious traditions about the earth and care for it and the ways that faith groups are working individually and together to tackle climate change.

Vocabulary

Climate change; nature; creation; ahimsa; stewardship; vasudhavya kutumbakam; environmental justice.

Expectations

Pupils will be able to:

- Explain how religious sources inform the approach of people of different faiths caring for the environment.
- Explain why particular faith communities have come together to address climate change.
- Refer to some of the actions that faith communities have been undertaking to respond to the climate crisis.
- Explain why faith communities and inter faith groups link climate change to poverty.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK closed in 2024, with outward facing operations ceasing in April.

In order to ensure that the material in IFN's publications remained available to the public, to inter faith practitioners, and to scholars after IFN's closure, the copyright status of publications has been changed.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn...	POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That all religions have teachings about the world and its creatures, some of which are drawn on to support and inform their response to climate change. 	<p>Pupils could explore the scriptural bases for the responses of faith traditions, comparing and contrasting what they have found. They might find the Faiths for a Future Resource a useful starting place.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That climate change is a concern for people of faith. 	<p>Pupils could work together to look at two faith traditions and how they are responding to climate change by exploring those listed on the Faith for the Climate (FFTC) website. FFTC links and works with a wide range of faith groups to address climate change.</p> <p>Faith leaders have made a number of statements together about climate change. See, for example, a faith leaders statement on how economic recovery should not ignore the environment and the Statement of Commitment made by the Scottish Religious Leaders Forum.</p> <p>The climate change protest movement Extinction Rebellion had faith groups linked to different traditions. See for example Who are we? – Extinction Rebellion: XR Buddhists. Some of its protest action were carried out on a multi faith basis. See, for example, Church leaders create Extinction Rebellion ‘faith bridge’ across the Thames – Christian Climate Action and Bridge of faith: Why are extinction rebellion taking over a London bridge? CAFOD.</p> <p>Pupils could explore how specific traditions are making responses in the UK, for example the Bahu Trust, The Network of Buddhist Organisations, Quakers, Church of England, the Druid Network and the Jain community¹.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That some places of worship and religious communities have sought to reduce their carbon footprint, reduce waste and limit the use of plastics. 	<p>Pupils could investigate the work of Eco Church, The Green Mosque Project, EcoSynagogue, the Bhumi Project’s Green Temple or specific projects such as Climate Sunday or Plastic Free Iftar or the EcoSikh inspired plastic free New Year event at a Derby gurdwara.</p> <p>Pupils could look at the example of a Cardiff mosque that has been making its members and the wider community aware of environmental issues.</p> <p>Pupils could complete a cross curricular project, including Geography, Design Technology and RE to design an eco-place of worship and explain the ecological and religious features.</p>

¹ These are just a small number of examples. Many more from different faith communities and denominations are listed on the Faith for the Climate website linked above.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That communities come together at international, national and local levels to respond to the climate crisis. 	<p>Pupils could research international responses such as GreenFaith and the UN Environment programme’s Faith for Earth initiative, national responses such as Faith for the Climate, and local responses like Footsteps based in Birmingham or the North West England based Faiths4Change, which has a number of local projects.</p> <p>Pupils could look at the ways faith communities are responding to international efforts to respond to climate change such as COP26, including the Faiths Task Group (co-convened by Faith for the Climate and the Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland), Faith for the Climate’s key principles for climate justice; or the response of other faith groups such as, eg, The Spiritualists’ National Union.</p> <p>Pupils could look at an initiative of a local inter faith organisation, such as that of Devon Faith and Belief Forum, to see how some local groups are involved in practical action to combat climate change.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many faith-based development organisations also work for ‘climate justice’. 	<p>Pupils could research the ways that faith-based bodies draw a link between climate change and poverty and, in the light of that, work for ‘climate justice’.</p> <p>They could explore the work of organisations whose primary focus is international development, such as CAFOD, Tearfund, and Islamic Relief.</p>

LEARNING OUTCOMES Pupils should be able to	POINTS TO NOTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate that faith communities have sources of inspiration that they turn-to to help them frame a response to the climate crisis. 	If using the Jain example linked to above, teachers may find it helpful to read about the Jain principle of ‘ahimsa’ .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how faith communities work together with inter faith groups to have an influence on policy makers to address climate change. 	Teachers may find it useful to see how faith communities have disinvested from companies that contribute to global warming to see how this applies to businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show ways that faith and inter faith groups work practically at a local level to make a positive contribution to slowing and halting climate change. 	Teachers may wish to be in contact with local faith and inter faith groups to see how they are helping to tackle climate change.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss why climate change and poverty are often linked, as are faith-based efforts to tackle them. 	

NOTES

Faith and faith based groups

The Bahu Trust has its origins in classical Sufi Islam. Its work includes helping people prepare for disasters and providing humanitarian assistance, both in the UK and abroad. It has developed resources for Muslims to become environmentally more aware and active.

The Bhumi Project is an international Hindu response to the environmental challenges facing our planet. It is facilitated by the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies in partnership with the GreenFaith.

CAFOD is the Catholic Aid for Overseas Development for the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales.

The Church of England is the established church in England. It is of the ‘mother church’ of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Christian Climate Action is a community of Christians that support one another in taking action in the face of climate catastrophe. Since 2018 it has worked closely with Extinction Rebellion and is now sometimes known as Christians in XR.

Climate Sunday is a project of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland focusing on COP26

Eco Church is an award scheme in which diocese, circuits, synods, districts and individual churches and chapels can participate.

EcoSikh is a response from the Sikh community to the threats of climate change and the deterioration of the natural environment.

EcoSynagogue works in partnership with The Board of Deputies of British Jews, to promote environmental sustainability and engagement across the Jewish Community.

The Environmental Issues Network is a network convened by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, one of the UK’s national ecumenical instruments.

The Green Mosque Project is a project of the The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES), a multi denominational Muslim organisation in the UK.

The Druid Network is a body that represents modern day Druids in the UK. In 2018 the Network declared a climate and ecological emergency.

Islamic Relief is an independent non-governmental organisation (NGO) founded in the UK in 1984 by a group of medical doctors and activists.

Plastic Free Iftar is a project of IFEES (see The Green Mosque Project, above).

The Jain community has the principles ahiṃsā (non-violence) and anekāntavāda (many sidedness) at the heart of its values and these underlie its work on environment issues.

The Network of Buddhist Organisations is a national umbrella for UK Buddhism, working to support Buddhist organisations and their members.

Tear Fund is a Christian charity which partners with churches in more than 50 of the world’s poorest countries.

The Quakers in Britain is the common name for Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM), also known as the Religious Society of Friends. It supports Quaker meetings around Britain and Quaker causes.

The Spiritualists’ National Union supports Spiritualist Churches across the UK, around 300 of which are in membership of it.

Inter Faith Groups and resources

Devon Faith and Belief Forum is a local inter faith organisation.

Faiths for the Future is a project of the Religions and Environment Education Programme (REEP) and is based on the recognition that there are strong educational, environmental and religious reasons for taking a ‘green’ approach to Religious Education (RE).

The GreenFaith Network is a global movement seeking to address the world’s climate issue by bring people of faith together. It focuses on grassroots leadership development, building power, and campaigning for compassionate and just responses to the climate crisis across the world.

Faith for the Climate is a UK network that has been established to encourage, inspire and equip faith communities in their work on climate change.

Footsteps, also known as Faiths for a low Carbon Future, is a project of the Birmingham Council of Faiths that encourages faith communities in the city to become ecologically responsible.

Faiths4Change is a charity based in the Wirral that brings people together to encourage and help them improve their local environment.

Other organisations

COP26 is the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2021, due to be held in November 2021 in the UK.

Extinction Rebellion is an international movement that uses non-violent civil disobedience in an attempt to halt mass extinction and minimise the risk of social collapse.

Technical vocabulary

Multi faith environmental action is where people from different faiths come together to address climate change and other environmental issues

Climate change is a change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels.

Climate crisis is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as “serious problems that are being caused or likely to be caused by changes in the world's weather, in particular the world getting warmer as a result of human activity increasing the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere”.

Ahimsa a key Jain principle meaning 'doing no harm, whether deliberate or accidental', often translated as ‘non-violence’ in English.

Vasudhavya Kutumbakam is a Hindu concept that the whole world is one family, and it is humanity's responsibility to look after everything and everyone.

The resource points to a number of resources linked to Inter Faith Network member bodies and other sources. There are many such materials available and those included are in no way exhaustive. IFN's member body list and other resources on its website www.interfaith.org.uk will take you to other useful materials.

Other than those to IFN's own websites, links provided are to materials of independent organisations. IFN takes no responsibility for their content – as it stands at this time or as it may evolve.

The links may change over time. They are correct at March 2021 and will be checked periodically. If you find any that do not work, please do let us know so that we can replace them.

The resource covers a broad range of faith traditions in the UK. This is reflected across the resource as a whole, not in each of the individual units.

Teachers should consult the Teacher Introduction before using this unit as a basis for curriculum planning.