

# SHIFTING CLIMATES



## Sunday School Guide

5 week curriculum

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**CENTER FOR**  
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## **5-Week Sunday School Curriculum Guide**

*This guide is meant to replicate the full Shifting Climates experience by providing episode segments that can be listened to within class sessions.*

*The 5-week guide is especially meant for Sunday School classes in search of month-long materials or looking to get an introduction to the Shifting Climates podcast. We hope that these clips will inspire further listening and help to spark engaging conversation. For a more in-depth curriculum, see our 10-week guide, also available on our website..*

*Find all podcast episodes on our website, [www.shiftingclimates.com](http://www.shiftingclimates.com). Links to episode transcripts can be found on corresponding episode pages. Transcripts may be a helpful resource for those who have trouble following the audio. All episodes can also be found on any podcast app, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, and Google Podcasts.*

*In addition to the following discussion guide, we invite you to use the photo essays as visuals to accompany each week's lesson. Photo essays and other resources can be found on our website, [www.shiftingclimates.com](http://www.shiftingclimates.com).*

*For the most recent version of this curriculum, see the Faith & Climate Resources page on CSCS's website, [www.sustainableclimatesolutions.org](http://www.sustainableclimatesolutions.org).*

*This curriculum was written by Harrison Horst, Michaela Mast, and Sarah Longenecker. For questions, feedback, or suggestions, please email us at [shiftingclimates@gmail.com](mailto:shiftingclimates@gmail.com).*

# Session 1: Questioning our Assumptions

Based on Episodes 1 & 2

Listen (13 minutes):

- Introduction (*Episode 1: Weeping While Planting, 3:14 - 4:30*)
- Randy Green (*Episode 1: Weeping While Planting, 7:42 - 14:50*)
- Matthew Groves (*Episode 2: Feeding the Five Thousand, 24:40 - 29:15*)

Discuss:

1. Is it difficult for you to have conversations about climate change, or to bring up climate change in an everyday context? What emotions come up for you when you hear the words “climate change”? (*Suggestion: Go around the room so that each person has a chance to speak. Before opening up the floor, invite everyone into open and honest conversation, regardless of expertise or uncertainties.*)
2. How would you have responded to Randy if you were across the table from him?  
Brainstorm: What are some of the other economic, social, and political impacts of climate change that we don’t often talk about? Who is getting left behind?
3. Matthew Groves points out that, while conservative denial gets more attention, what he calls “liberal denial” is just as problematic. He defines “liberal denial” as “believing that you can have the benefits of fossil-fuel level consumption without having to deal with the side effects (we’ve also heard this called “soft denial”). Do you agree that climate change denial is problematic all along the political spectrum? What are the different forms of denial you see taking place in yourself?
4. What do you think of Matthew’s assertion that “The church needs to speak science if they want a seat at the table” in the 21st century?

Additional Resources:

- Visit Matthew Groves’ website, [www.matthewdgroves.com](http://www.matthewdgroves.com), for additional writings, including his “Climate Change Guide for the Perplexed.”

Links to Episodes and Transcripts: <https://shiftingclimates.com/episode-1/>  
<https://shiftingclimates.com/episode-2/>

## Session 2: Investigating the Impacts

Based on Episodes 3 & 4

Listen (18 minutes):

- Kevin King (*Episode 3: Winds of the Spirit, 0:00 - 2:40, 16:00 - 17:30*)
- Durga Sunchiuri (*Episode 3: Winds of the Spirit, 24:24 - 28:05*)
- Bob Suter (*Episode 4: Tales of the Sower, 8:52 - 13:20*)
- David Moser (*Episode 4: Tales of the Sower, 22:55 - 28:21*)

Discuss:

1. In all of our interviews, we start with the same question: “What was your relationship with the earth like as a child?” We found that this question helped ground our conversations and establish empathy. Share with one another: What was (and is) your relationship with the earth like?
2. Do you have any experiences with Mennonite Disaster Service (or other service agency) that remind you of Kevin’s or Durga’s stories? Have you noticed any climate changes in your own context?
3. What are some of the values or traditions we already possess as a church that we could draw from as we try to mitigate the impacts of climate change? What are ways the church could act as a model in that way?
4. We’ve been surprised as we come to understand the layered effects of climate change. When we started, we thought the main impacts of climate change were natural disasters – but we didn’t think of the farmers dealing with seasonal changes or the coal mining communities needing to transition economically. Can you think of any other sub-effects, or ripple effects, of climate change?

Additional Resources:

- If you’re interested in learning more about the particular impacts of climate change in different parts of the U.S., check out these two articles.
  - The first: a summary of a research article that looked at a variety of impacts by county, from agricultural yield to mortality.  
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-the-geography-of-climate-damage-could-make-the-politics-less-polarizing/>
  - The second: a summary of the 4th National Climate Assessment, which has detailed information about projected impacts of U.S. regions.  
<https://grist.org/article/we-broke-down-what-climate-change-will-do-region-by-region/>

Links to Episodes and Transcripts: <https://shiftingclimates.com/episode-3/>  
<https://shiftingclimates.com/episode-4/>

## Session 3: Transitioning into Justice

Based on Episodes 5 & 7

Listen (15 minutes):

- Tallu Quinn (*Episode 5: Communion, 27:35-31:55*)
- Veronica Kyle (*Episode 7: The Bodies of Christ, 21:00-31:15*)

Discuss:

1. Reflect together on the content (*Suggestion: spend a few minutes in reflective silence after listening to all of the clips. This is heavy stuff – it's all right to give it some space!*)
2. Tallu says the Nashville Food Project has been transformed “from charity into something that looks more like justice” to the point that it has become their mission. What are some ways your community could begin to move “from charity into something that looks more like justice”? What could this idea look like in your own context?
3. Have you thought about how race and the environment are connected? Who do you think is being left out of this conversation in your communities?
4. We've come to understand that climate change has both “front-end” impacts and “back-end” impacts. Back-end impacts are the direct effects of climate change through severe weather and natural disasters, which we focused on last week (in Session 2). Front end impacts, on the other hand, are the localized impacts of pollution from the industries that are *causing* climate change. Veronica's story showcases one community experiencing the front-end impacts of climate change. What communities in your context are experiencing front-end impacts?

Additional Resources:

- Leah Penniman's book, “[Farming While Black](#)”
- Learn more about Veronica Kyle and her work at Faith in Place at their website, [www.faithinplace.org](http://www.faithinplace.org). Their website includes many of the strategies and projects they use to partner with faith communities, which may serve well as a resource for your congregation.
- For further exploration of specific cases of environmental justice, listen to our second season: <https://shiftingclimates.com/season-two/>

Links to Episodes and Transcripts: <https://shiftingclimates.com/episode-5/>  
<https://shiftingclimates.com/episode-7/>

## Session 4: Learning the Harmony Way

Based on Episode 6

*\*\*optional – skip if planning for 4 weeks\*\**

Listen (15 minutes):

- Randy Woodley (*Episode 6: Healing of the Eyes, 2:40-6:43, 20:10-30:30*)

Discuss:

1. The origin story Randy told includes several different animals. Duck is initially eager, but after understanding the depth of the situation, decides maybe someone else should do it; Otter gets distracted by material comforts and forgets to work on the problem; and Beaver overextends himself and returns cynical and disillusioned. Which animal do you relate to most?
2. Randy says he believes our sole purpose as Christians and humans is to “repair disharmony.” Do you agree with him? Are there narratives or stories in the Bible that give the same message? What are some of the ways we have not done a good job of living up to our mandate? Are there places in your life that you see disharmony being repaired?
3. Climate change is an overwhelming topic, and it’s not something any of us can tackle alone. Sharing our fears and anxieties within a trusted community has been healing for us. When it comes to climate change, what fears or anxieties do you have? Do you have a trusted community to share with?

Additional Resources:

- Randy has a podcast of his own called, “Peacing it all Together,” which you can find at <https://www.peacingitaltogether.com/>.
- *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer is a beautiful collection of short stories that weave Indigenous teachings, ecology, and reflections on motherhood together.

Link to Episode and Transcript: <https://shiftingclimates.com/episode-6/>

# Session 5: An Apocalyptic Hope

Based on Episodes 9 & 10

Listen (15 minutes):

- Mark Dixon (*Episode 10: Go, In Peace, 18:49-26:45*)
- Ken Lawrence & Sara Brenner (*Episode 9: The Eye of the Needle, 25:19-26:48, 28:03-32:50*)

Discuss:

1. Mark describes what he sees as the unimaginable genius in nature (spiders) and the importance of slowing down to set our compass. What areas of your life inform your compass the most now? How do you think those informants have altered your relationship with nature? Your community's relationship with nature? In what ways do we need to walk backwards as we reset our compasses?
2. Mark and Sara both told us that they try to “detach themselves from outcome” as a way to maintain their energy. Is that something you think you'd be able to do? Do you think that would leave you more or less free to act on climate change?
3. What is your personal climate change mental health like? Is it something you deliberately avoid thinking about, and do you have any guilt associated with the topic? How have you maintained hope when thinking about climate change? Do you think it is important or necessary to maintain hope?
4. Ken & Sara and Mark have all spent their lives looking for a “better way to live” and have discovered that, for them, it looks an awful lot like responding to climate change. What are some ways you think responding to climate change could enrich your own life? What do you feel called to do?

Additional Resources:

- Benjamin Isaak-Krauss's sermon on “Apocalyptic Hope” at the Rooted & Grounded conference in 2018 <https://soundcloud.com/followambbs/2018-09-28-r-g-benjamin-isaak>

Links to Episodes and Transcripts: <https://shiftingclimates.com/episode-9/>  
<https://shiftingclimates.com/episode-10/>