

Alliance of Religions and Conservation

Religions and the environment: The Assisi Declarations and after.

Students' notes for Lesson 2

Worksheet 2 – GCSE Religious Studies

Religion & the environment 2 – After Assisi (plans and actions)

Opening discussion:

The 1986 Assisi Declarations established that believers of all the major religions have a spiritual duty to respect and care for the natural world. In what ways might a religious organisation and its followers act on this duty:

- a) as a national or international organisation?
- b) as leaders in communities at a local level?
- c) as individuals in everyday life?

Do you think it is right for religion to get involved in environmental campaigns and projects? Should it be left to politicians to address these issues? Or scientists?

After Assisi

Since the original Assisi Declarations more religions have added their statements on the environment to the first five. Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, launched an independent organisation the Alliance of Religions & Conservation (ARC) in 1995. ARC has been coordinating and supporting the environmental development of religions since then. In 2009 a total of 31 traditions from nine major faiths launched their long-term plans for environmental action at a special meeting at Windsor. The United Nations has described the scale of faith-based action on the environment as "potentially the biggest civil society movement on climate change in history". The first 25 years since 1986 saw the different religions developing thousands of different initiatives and projects aimed at reducing environmental impact and restoring ecological balance.

That work continues to expand and contributes to environmental conservation and improvement to this day.

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Group exercise

Your group will have a worksheet about the long term plans and projects undertaken by one of the major religions. Use it to answer the following questions:

Q1: How does the plan reflect the spiritual message of the religion?	
Q2: Find examples from within the projects/actions that show how the conservation effort is linked to the aims of the religion.	

In your small group, think of an original environmental project appropriate to the religion you have been given, considering the likely global location of the religious community.

Where will the project be based?	
What kind of a community will it benefit?	
How does it relate to the values of the religion?	
What are the project cost factors ?	
What is its environmental benefit likely to be?	

Be ready to explain your project simply to the other groups, with arguments as to why your project is most deserving of funding.

Whole class discussion

If there are only limited funds available why should your project be the one to get funding?

What other partners might religious leaders and members have to work with to achieve their long term environmental goals?