

Alliance of Religions and Conservation
Religions and the environment: The Assisi Declarations and after.
Teachers' notes for Lesson 2

Teachers' notes – GCSE Religious Studies

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

Exercise

Objective: To understand the different ways in which religions have applied the Assisi declarations as organisations, communities and individuals.

Opening discussion: In what ways might a religion be able to have a positive influence on the environmental situation?

Issues to raise include:

- Scale of major religions – land/wealth/people worldwide
- Use of wealth to invest for environmental/ethical good
- Management of land (farms, forests)
- Management of buildings (schools, monasteries, temples, shrines)
- Teaching to promote religious duty to environment
- Teaching to model good environmental practices (sermons, school lessons, adult/community education)
- Engagement in local environmental causes (against pollution, degradation, exploitation; for reforestation, protection of land/species/habitat, sustainable living/farming)
- Religious media – radio/TV/print/internet
- Religious leaders role in political lobbying
- Celebration of nature and successes in promoting/nurturing it

Small group exercise

Assign three groups to look at one of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam
Issue relevant pupil notes to each small group

Questions:

1. Does the plan reflect the religion's spiritual message? How?
2. Use one or more of the project examples to show how the conservation effort is linked to the aims of the religion.

Notes on faith and conservation developed by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) for religious education teachers.
Further resources available from ARC's website www.arcworld.org

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3. What other ideas could you have for environmental projects linked to the religion?

Groups prepare a proposal for an environmental project appropriate to the religion (taking into account likely global locations, social environment etc). This project could be global, national or local.

Plenary:

Each group present one actual project and their chosen proposal.

Who would be the natural partners for religions to work with to achieve their long-term plans?

"We religious people are not political leaders whose task is to propose or impose solutions. Yet we are obliged in the name of our faith and of truth to proclaim the need to change people's lifestyles and attitudes.we have become accustomed to lifestyles of waste and greed. We are not always willing to undergo the sacrifice required of us in order to respond to the ecological crisis, and so we prefer either to ignore it deliberately or dismiss it indifferently. What we need is another, different worldview, a fresh perception of matter and the world" –

Patriarch Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church

("The Orthodox Church and the Environmental Crisis – Spiritual Insights and Personal Reflections" in 'Holy Ground: A Gathering of Voices on Caring for Creation'. Ed. Lyndsay Moseley/Sierra Club Books 2008)

*"I used to think that top global environmental problems were bio-diversity loss, eco-system collapse and climate change. I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address these problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy and to deal with these we need a spiritual and cultural transformation. We scientists don't know how to do that – we need the help of religious leaders." **James 'Gus' Speth**, former environmental adviser to US President Jimmy Carter, at a 2006 US retreat for scientists and evangelical leaders.*