

Come and See 2024: Caring for the environment

Schools and families Lent course 2024

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Hello, my name is Reverend Kay and I'm the Chaplain at the Oxford Academy school. So you have through this Come and See series of films been thinking about the two greatest Commandments that Jesus reminded people about, that is loving the Lord God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your soul and loving your neighbour as yourself.

In this session, we are thinking about that second part, about loving your neighbour as yourself. We are particularly thinking about how regardless of our faith and beliefs, we all have a responsibility to look after this beautiful planet in which we live. It is important that each of us cares and takes notice of the environment around us, not just here, but in different parts of the world as well.

We are all parts of the family called the human race, in the Bible, it tells us that God created the planet and the vegetation and the animals and God saw what God had made and God was pleased and proclaimed all that he made to be good, very, very good. And then God created humans and he made humans the keepers of his creation, looking after the planet. A steward, like a steward that you might find at a football match or in a car park at a big event or someone dressed in a high viz jacket, someone that guides us and protects us and cares for people or in this case we are the stewards of creation the stewards of this wonderful, planet. So, my question to you is what sort of job do you think humankind has done in looking after this amazing planet? So let's just pause here so that you can discuss that question and come up with some answers.

So now I'm going to tell you a story, once upon a time, somewhere far away from here but exactly where I don't know, a young girl was walking along a windswept beach on a nice sunny morning. There had been a fierce storm the night before and as the girl walked along, she began to notice that the shoreline was covered with thousands of starfish that had been swept up in the storm the night before. So she started to pick up the starfish and fling them back into the sea, so that they would have a chance to survive. She continued her walk, bending down often, picking up a starfish and flinging it back into the sea, now it just so happened that a couple had also come down to the beach to get some fresh air that morning and they sat and watched the girl for a while.

Eventually they could stand it no longer and they went over to talk to her "what are you doing" they said, "I'm rescuing starfish" she said as she lobbed another one into the sea as far as she could throw it. "But look" they said, pointing along the beach "there are starfish as far as we can see, there are thousands of starfish on this beach washed up by the storm, you can't possibly rescue them all." The girl stood up, from picking up yet another starfish, she looked along the shore and could see just how many of these star starfish had been washed up and she looked a bit sad. "You're right" she said "there are just so many, I know I can't possibly save them all, however I can save this one." and with that she threw the starfish back into the sea as far as it would go.

The couple watched her as she continued in her singlehanded project to save the starfish on the beach and then they too started to pick up one or two starfish and throw them back into the water as well.

So why have I told you this story today? Well everybody every living creature deserves to live in a safe environment, starfish, polar bears, bees, birds and people, we all share this planet. Most animals and plants need very particular types of conditions to live in, in order to thrive. Now that we are

connected with other parts of the world through the internet, we realize and can see that the way we live and make choices here, can impact on other places in the world. As the planet gets warmer and the ice starts to melt, this is causing all sorts of problems in the world. As the sea levels rise some parts of the world, they're struggling with flooding and in other parts of the world they're struggling with droughts, that's not enough water, a lack of rain and many usual weather patterns that we expect in the planet are starting to change.

Pollution is adding to this global crisis of global warming but sometimes this can all seem so far away from us and it's too overwhelming for us to do anything about it. Rather like that girl on the beach, full of stranded starfish washed up by that big storm. We can look at the big picture and think that anything we could do will make no difference at all, yet that little girl, that little girl was doing what she could to make a difference, with each starfish she was giving them a chance as she threw them back into the sea.

If everyone is our neighbour, we need to love our neighbours by each doing our part to look after the planet, so that our neighbours in other parts of the world do not suffer more through changing climate and the destruction of habitats by clearing forests or pollution or through things such as plastics contaminating the world. So, we're going to pause again now and think about things that we might do to show that we care for our neighbours in the way that we care for the planet. What ideas can you come up with?

So, what are the many small practical things that we can do to help? I'm sure that you will have come up with some great ideas yourself, but here's some of the ones that I've come up with. Walking or cycling, rather than using a car all the time, cuts down on pollution in the air around us. Reusing things where possible and that means sometimes not using things for just a single purpose, but reusing them in a new way to give them a new life of usefulness. For example, we're doing lots of that in our school garden, a school community garden, I would have taken you there today but it's a bit wet outside today. But here's some of the ideas we're using old car tires, we stacked them up and painted them, filled them with soil and we're using those as plant pots. We've also used old wooden pallets, which we'd fixed together against a wall and filled that with soil and made a big planting area as well for vegetables. But along with that we've used an old basket, which has been relined and made into a plant pot and even a pair of old wellington boots that had a split in, they've been turned into planting pots as well.

But alongside that, we've used something like an old sand pit, one of those old ladybird sandpits we've dug that into the ground and filled it with water so that will create a habitat for some animals and we've also made some of these, these are pieces of mosaic to decorate our garden. They're actually made on an old desk that was cut up into squares and then we've covered it with cement and broken tiles to decorate our garden with. I'm sure you can think of many more ideas, but in all these things we tried to create a habitat where frogs and newts and insects and birds and bees will thrive.

Perhaps you could get involved in a local gardening or even school project too, we should avoid using single use plastics when possible. So, things like having drinking bottles that can be refilled rather than used in plastic bottles, is a good idea or perhaps you could make plastic bottles into bird feeders or even if you're very clever make them into a structure that becomes a greenhouse in your garden. We can mend things and clothes whenever possible, rather than just putting them in the bin. We can try using less energy resources, things like lighting, electricity, heating and water. Let's think of every little thing we can do, let us work together to take care of the habitats around us, let's keep our

minds on the ways in which we can live here and how that can impact others in different parts of the world.

So let us all try to be good stewards of God's amazing planet, this complex and fragile creation, for everyone is our neighbour, let us love our neighbour as ourselves and show that love by the way we care for all of creation.