



Sample Lesson Plans: Hope in Crops

Lesson for children under 13

Objectives for participants

- Learn about the rain forest in Kenya and how Kenyan kids are protecting it through Hope in Crops
- Recognize the importance of your local ecosystem and how protecting it is everyone's responsibility
- Connect to the environment and caring for it by planting a seedling or drawing a picture
- Plan to help Kenyan kids protect their rain forest with a Blue Buckets fundraiser project and share what you've learned with the congregation
- Connect the rain forest in Kenya and your local ecosystem to the interdependent web of all existence

Materials

- Assorted small items from nature (leaves, pinecones, acorns, bark, seashells, etc.)
- Map of Kenya and a globe or world map to help identify where Kenya is located
- For Activity Option 1: bean seeds, clear cups, black construction paper, scissors, and paper towels
- For Activity Option 2: sunflower or other seeds, glue, paper, and crayons or markers
- Optional: pictures of local plants/animals

Focusing activity (10 minutes)

Ask each child to select one of the small items from nature. Have each child identify the item and where it comes from. Then, ask them to sit quietly for a moment and think about how the object feels (e.g., texture, weight, and if it reminds them of anything) or imagine it in its environment and all the things it is connected to (e.g., the pinecone is connected to the branch, to the tree, to the roots, to other elements in nature, to the food chain, and to the earth).

Discussion (15 minutes)

Ask if anyone would like to share what they thought about during the focusing activity. Guide the discussion toward how the objects they held are part of their natural environment. Ask why it is important for us to protect the environment. Emphasize that we are connected to the environment and that we need the plants and animals (for food, to breathe, to be healthy, etc.) and that we need to uphold respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part. You may wish to show pictures of your local ecosystem and ask questions related to those pictures.

Next, hold up a map of Kenya. Ask if anyone knows where Kenya is located. Explain that Kenya is a country in Africa and that the environment there is a bit different from the United States. Show the globe or world map and help the children locate their home community and Kenya.

Some people in Kenya live near a rain forest, called the Kakamega Rain Forest. The rain forest is a very busy place! More than 400 kinds of butterflies, 300 types of birds, and 27 kinds of snakes live there! The forest is their home. [You may wish to show pictures of some of the animals that live in the forest; see references below.] The forest is also important for the people who live near it. They eat plants found in the forest and use materials found there. But did you know the rain forest is important even for people who do not live near it? It is a source of water and can influence climate even in areas a long distance away.

Just like in your town and throughout the United States, people in Kenya need to protect their environment. Even though Kenya is far away, we are connected to the people and rain forest there through the interdependent web.

Activity: plant a seed or make a picture of a plant (15 minutes)

There are two possibilities for this activity: the children can plant a seed or draw a tree, sunflower, or other plant. Choose whichever option works best for you based on timing, materials available, and past class activities.

Option 1: plant a seed

Use a clear plastic cup that is 6-12 inches tall. Cut black construction paper so that it fits inside, lining the cup walls. Fill the cup with wadded-up paper towels. "Plant" bean seeds between the cup walls and construction paper, about half to two-thirds of the way down. Water the paper towels and keep them moist. As the bean seeds grow, you can view root formation, what happens to seeds, etc. They can grow quite large and will be fine as long as you keep the paper towels moist. (Activity from stepbystepcc.com/seeds.)

Option 2: make a picture of a plant

Give each child one or more sunflower or other seeds, glue, paper, and crayons or markers. Have the children draw a plant and glue the seeds to the paper so that they are part of the picture. You may wish to guide discussion to include how plants grow from seeds.

Introduce UUSC's work (10 minutes)

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is a group that works with people around the world to improve lives by protecting their human rights, which are rights that every person deserves. One of the ways UUSC does this is through helping people protect the environment and cope with climate changes affecting the environment.

In Kenya, UUSC is working with another organization on a project called Hope in Crops. Like we've just learned about the environment and planted a seed, children in Kenya are learning about their rain forest and planting trees to make sure the rain forest stays healthy, to protect riverbanks from erosion, and to help clean the river water. They are also planting local food crops that naturally survive better during droughts or heavy rains.

You can help children in Kenya protect their rain forest by raising money to buy seedlings and other supplies they need for the Hope in Crops project. [Introduce the specifics of the fundraising activity your congregation is developing, involving children in planning as appropriate.]

Closing

Outdoor option

If the weather permits, go outside and have all the children touch a tree and close their eyes, encouraging them to think about how the tree is rooted in the earth, touches the water in the ground, and reaches up toward the sky. Tell them to also think about the earth underneath their feet and how they are connected to it.

Indoor option

Read aloud the following poem:

The Presence of Trees
by Michael S. Glaser

I have always felt the living presence
of trees

the forest that calls to me as deeply
as I breathe,

as though the woods were marrow of my bone
as though

I myself were tree, a breathing, reaching
arc of the larger canopy

beside a brook bubbling to foam
like the one

deep in these woods,
that calls

that whispers home

Lesson for children 13 and older

Objectives for participants

- Learn that water is a human right for all people
- Appreciate the importance of water in your own lives
- Learn how protecting the rain forest in Kenya is tied to protecting water sources
- Take ownership of a fundraising project to help young people in Kenya protect their water
- Plan to share what you have learned with the adults in the congregation

Materials

- Four basins, tap water, cups, and towels
- Readings for stations to be used during Taize Ritual (printed and taped to the wall or otherwise displayed)
- Instructions for Taize Ritual
- Paper for origami-cup activity, if the youth will do this during coffee hour (you will also need a water dispenser or sink that is easily accessible)
- Instructions for origami-cup activity
- Any materials needed to plan your congregation's fundraising project

Focusing activity: Taize Ritual (10 minutes)

See attached instructions for Taize Ritual. You may wish to have older children help with the activity by being attendants at the stations (adults can also fill this role).

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Discussion (15 minutes)

Ask the children how they felt during the ritual. Consider the following questions: What do we need water for? How is water important to them? Ask them to list the ways they use water. Does everyone have water? Have they ever needed water and not been able to get it or seen other people unable to access water?

Explain that even though we need water to live, there are people in the United States and in other countries who do not have access to water for their basic needs. Talk about the fact that since we all need water to survive, access to this basic resource is a human right. The human right to water entitles everyone to safe, sufficient, physically accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic use. If you need to define human rights, try a definition like “basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled” (the dictionary definition). Countries around the world have signed an agreement, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which says that children should have access to water.

You may wish to further explain that the human right to water has been recognized in international treaties and national and state constitutions. However, water is sometimes treated as a commodity for making profits. Water should be affordable for everyone! (More information available on UUSC’s website at uusc.org/water.)

Introduce UUSC’s work (10 minutes)

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is an organization grounded in UU values that is working to protect the human right to water for all people. UUSC works with other organizations, UU congregations, and activists to guarantee people’s right to access safe, affordable water.

In Kenya, the Kakamega Rain Forest is the last remaining rain forest in the country. (More information: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kakamega_Forest.) UUSC is working with another organization to teach students in Kenyan schools how to protect their rain forest through a project called Hope in Crops. Protecting the rain forest is critical to protecting their water. The students working with Hope in Crops are planting traditional Kenyan trees close to the riverbanks, which helps the soil retain moisture and also protects the river from contamination. Planting trees helps the forest stay healthy and the rivers stay clean and strong. This means clean water for people to drink!

Activity: plan fundraising project (15 minutes)

Guide discussion to what type of Blue Buckets project you will organize this year to support Hope in Crops, together with other congregations in your area.

Begin to plan the project. Explain that many local communities are working together to [raise \\$175 to help communities in Kenya](#).

If your students will talk about the human right to water at coffee hour, cut out paper for the origami-cup activity. Students can teach people how to fold the origami cups and then talk about the human right to water, Hope in Crops, and their Blue Buckets project. Look up instructions for creating origami paper cups online.

Closing

Have youth take turns reading aloud Reading #554 in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Water flows from high in the
mountains.

Water runs deep in the Earth.
Miraculously, water comes to us,
and sustains all life.

Water and sun
green these plants.
When the rain of compassion falls,
even a desert becomes an
immense, green ocean.

—Thich Nhat Hanh

Sources for further reference

Kakamega Forest National Reserve
kws.org/parks/parks_reserves/KNFR.html

SoilFarm Multi-Culture Group and Hope in Crops
uusc.org/updates/partner-profile-soilfarm-multi-culture-group
uusc.org/stories-of-hope-2014-chrisantus-mwandihj

Water Justice Taize Ritual
uusc.org/sites/default/files/waterritual_climatejusticesunday.pdf

What is Hope in Crops?

This year, UUSC is asking our supporters to consider supporting the Hope in Crops project, which UUSC carries out in partnership with Kenya's SoilFarm Multi-Culture Group.

This innovative project is teaching schoolchildren in Kenya how to protect their local Kakamega Rain Forest. They learn to protect the environment, grow crops, and raise bees and milk cows. The children plant indigenous trees to offset carbon, doing their part to counter climate change. Hope in Crops is part of the SoilFarm Multi-Culture Group's courageous efforts to protect their rain forest and ensure that it continues to provide food and income for community members.