

DISCUSSION  
GUIDE

# Climate Conversation: Kenya



**OSJ**

Office of Social Justice



**WorldRenew**  
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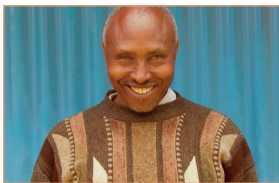
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# The World We Have Been Given

## What's Happening in Kenya?

### TRAILER SUMMARY

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For millions of subsistence farmers in Kenya, climate change is not a political debate. It is a reality in which adaptation can mean the difference between life and death. The *Climate Conversation: Kenya* video series is a chance to move past the white noise and to get up close and personal with the issues of climate change and environmental stewardship. It is a chance to meet people, not statistics; to hear stories, not arguments. It is an invitation to a conversation.

### VIDEO 1 SUMMARY

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Something's not right in Kenya. The rains have become unpredictable and are coming later and later, if at all. Farmers are playing a guessing game as to when to plant, and development experts are raising concerns about the ways in which changing weather patterns are threatening livelihoods. What exactly is happening in Kenya, and what might it mean for Kenyans?



## 1. Opening READ GENESIS 2:4-25 AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING AS A GROUP

- Tell about your earliest memory of having an interest in creation. What feelings come with that memory?
- How does that early memory relate to the creation story?
- How does that early memory relate to your feelings about creation today?

## 2. Video and Discussion WATCH THE TRAILER AND VIDEO 1.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

- The town of Kijabe received the equivalent of a year's worth of rain in the span of one month. How much rain does your city get in a year? What would it be like to get that much rain in one month? What might this much rain do to your city's infrastructure and your family's well-being. Margaret, the Kenyan farmer in the video, said that the rains are no longer falling when they used to. If you are a farmer, or if you know a farmer, consider what this uncertainty would do to the planting process and eventual crop yields. Would you dare plant if rain weren't guaranteed?
- Raphael says that the church is uniquely positioned to make a real difference on this issue. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
- The Contemporary Testimony of the Christian Reformed Church states that, as Christians, "we commit ourselves to honor all God's creatures and to protect them from abuse and extinction." What are some concrete ways that a commitment like that could be embodied in your everyday life?

#### GLOSSARY & FACTOIDS

**Droughts in Kenya** Since 1980, Seven of Kenya's 10 most significant natural disasters (as measured by number of people affected) have been droughts. In 1999, drought affected 23 million Kenyans, or 79% of the 29-million-person population.

**Deforestation** The process whereby natural forests are cleared through logging and/or burning, either to harvest the timber, to create charcoal, or to prepare the area for alternative uses. Deforestation is a common practice in poor rural areas because charcoal is often the cheapest and most plentiful source of energy.



## 3. Next Steps

Based on what you've seen so far, take some time to think about what you want to learn from this process. If you're comfortable, share it with the group. Offer it to God and pray that he will open your eyes and ears and soften your heart to learn what he would have you learn.

# A Sacred Trust

## Creation Care and the Poor

### VIDEO SUMMARY

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Impoverished populations are some of the most vulnerable in the world. They subsist on marginal lands and have little capacity to invest, innovate, and adapt. If weather is changing in Kenya, how will it impact the poor of Kenya?

## 1. Opening READ LUKE 4:16-19, MARK 12:41-44, AND LUKE 6:20-21

Listen together to Jesus' words about the poor. Have one group member read Luke 6:20-21, another read Luke 4:16-19, and another read Mark 12:41-44 while others follow along in their own Bibles.

- What are the words and phrases that resonated with you as the passages were read?
- What is it about these words that make them a comfort? Or, do they make you uncomfortable? Inspired? How are they moving you?
- Jesus says we live in the age when the oppressed are released—it's "the year of the Lord's favor." What does this mean for the lives and families of the poorest of the poor who are being negatively affected by changing weather patterns? What does it mean for you?

## 2. Video and Discussion WATCH VIDEO 2.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

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- The World Bank quote at the beginning says that climate change will have negative impacts on the livelihoods of the poor. Why would this be the case? How might climate change and poverty be connected?
- Dennis Garrity states that Africa is the area of the world that will be hit hardest by climate change, yet they have done very little to contribute to the problem. In what way might this be viewed as a "moral tragedy"?

- At the end, Peter says that, “We have to have creation and its care at the center of the gospel to the poor, or we’re living a lie.” Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
- Life is a gift from God’s hand, and Christians are called to protest and resist all that harms or diminishes that gift. Abortion is a widely agreed on life issue for Christians. In what ways might pollution and a changing climate be considered a life issue—particularly in its impact on the poorest of the poor?

### 3. Next Steps

In the month of April 2013, the community of Kijabe, Kenya, received rainfall levels that equaled their average annual rainfall. This extreme rain event reached a climax at the end of the month when the saturated land could hold no longer, and a massive mudslide ripped through the village, killing three children. This level of destruction likely would not have happened without the effects of years of deforestation on the surrounding hillsides. Fewer trees make the land less able to absorb water, and cleared hillsides provide no plants to slow water rushing downhill. World Renew is working to turn the tide of environmental degradation in Kenya by partnering with organizations that implement agriculture and training programs that provide healthy, effective alternatives to poor families who previously cleared the forests for farming and fuel. By engaging local farmers and villagers in projects that emphasize sustainability, World Renew’s partners teach people about the value and need to protect their surrounding forests and ecosystems. To find out more about World Renew’s work in Kenya and around the world in sustainable agriculture and climate adaptation, go to [worldrenew.net/environmentalstewardship](http://worldrenew.net/environmentalstewardship). Invest some time in finding out what World Renew is about and prayerfully consider supporting their work—through financial gifts, through prayer, through advocacy, or through volunteering.



#### GLOSSARY & FACTOIDS

**Emissions Disparity** Each year, an African emits roughly 1 metric ton of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas which is known to contribute to climate change. By comparison, a North American (US or Canada) emits an average of 16 tons of carbon dioxide per year (23% of global emissions vs. 4%).

**Fisheries and Climate Change** As the ocean absorbs up to half of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, it becomes more and more acidic, even as its temperature rises and its levels increase. All of this change—which usually takes hundreds of thousands of years to occur naturally—has occurred in roughly 150 years, due in large part to the burning of fossil fuels on an industrial scale. Marine organisms are left to adapt as best they can.

**Coral Reefs and Climate Change** Due to increasing acidity, rising temperatures and ocean levels, and more and more extreme weather events, it is estimated that up to 60% of the world’s coral reefs—the bedrock of the marine ecosystem—are severely threatened. This means that subsistence fishermen are at risk of losing their livelihoods.

**Poverty and Climate Change** Those who are poor are often relegated to the most marginal lands, where the wealthy would rather not be: low-lying coasts, arid and semi-arid farmland, shanty and slum housing. As a result, those who are poor are often most vulnerable to droughts, floods, disease, and extreme weather events. Unlike us, people who are poor do not have the luxury of moving to a more temperate area, away from the effects of drought and disease.

# The Ongoing Story

## Kenyan Christians Speak

### VIDEO SUMMARY

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Listening to difficult truths can be one of the hardest parts of a conversation. Kenyans have uncomfortable and deeply important words for their brothers and sisters in North America—words of encouragement and words of challenge; words of rebuke and of reconciliation. Will we listen?

### 1. Opening READ PROVERBS 25:12 AND PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7.

- Where did you hear the topic of climate change in media or other conversations since our last meeting?
- Why do you think the topic of climate change evokes such strong emotions? How do your own personality or concerns fit into this picture?
- Spend time in group prayer asking that God would empower us as Christians to listen well to our Kenyan neighbors.

### 2. Video and Discussion WATCH VIDEO 3.

#### CONVERSATION STARTERS

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- Cindy mentions pointing fingers and the “blame game.” Have you ever been guilty of finger-pointing on this issue or any others that you may be passionate about? Was it effective? What might be some different strategies for drawing people into this conversation?
- Have you ever chosen to stay silent about climate change because you were afraid of offending someone or of starting an argument? How did you feel about your silence? How might speaking up have made a difference?
- Dennis states that North Americans aren’t serious about climate change because they don’t clearly see its effects. Evaluate his perspective based on your own experience.



- Craig urges Christians in North America to err on the side of being “too cautious and too compassionate” on the issue of climate change rather than erring “on the opposite side of ignoring it.” What do you think? What are some dangers of erring on the side of precaution? What are some dangers of erring on the side of inaction?
- Stanza 39 of the CRC Contemporary Testimony describes the church as “a gathering of forgiven sinners called to be holy” and Christians as those who “deal patiently with others and together confess our need for grace and forgiveness.” What roles do grace and forgiveness play in this conversation? How might we be called to deal patiently with each other?

## GLOSSARY & FACTOIDS

**Food Insecurity** Food insecurity sets in when people do not have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

**Precautionary Principle** A principle of risk management which states that if an action or policy is suspected to pose a risk to the public or the environment, the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on those taking the action. In other words, because there is little evidence that current climate trends are not harmful (and ample evidence that they are), those who wish to do nothing must prove that to do so would not be harmful.

## 3. Next Steps

Having heard from Kenyans and from North American tour participants, what would you like to say to them? Perhaps it's a lament, a confession, a challenge, or a new commitment. Journal your response and share it with one or two others in the group.





# Firstfruits of a New Creation

## Stories of Hope

### VIDEO SUMMARY

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Kenyans are not sitting around waiting for the rest of the world to address the problems that they are facing. They are already coming up with incredibly creative solutions to help them adapt to the challenges facing their communities. If *they* aren't waiting around, what is keeping us from acting?

## 1. Opening READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-20 AND PSALM 148:7-12.

- Where do you see creation giving praise to God?
- What pieces of creation are meaningful to your relationship with God? What pieces do you pay special attention to?
- How does Colossians 1 affect your interpretation of Psalm 148?

## 2. Video and Discussion WATCH VIDEO 4.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

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- Where do you see the heart of Jesus reflected in the words and actions of the Kenyan farmers?
- What did you think of the sand dams? A sand dam is one way to slow runoff and capture water for application during dry spells. What other low-cost methods have you heard of to slow runoff or evaporation and contain water for dry spells?
- Conservation agriculture is an indigenous solution to adapt to the effects of climate change in Kenya. What are some ways that climate change has impacted North America? How are North Americans adapting to the ways that climate change affects us?
- Why are stories of hope, like these, so important in discussions about climate change?
- What are some creative ways that you could join with Kenyans who are already acting to protect themselves against the effects of climate change? What are some ways you could respond in your own community?
- Stanza 5 of the CRC Contemporary Testimony reminds us that "God holds this world with fierce love." What comfort does this truth offer you as you engage the issue of climate

change? What might it mean, in the context of creation care and climate change, for the church to be called the “firstfruits of a new creation”?

### 3. Next Steps

Take a few minutes to think back to the first session and how you answered the question: “What do you want to learn from this experience?” Were your expectations met? Exceeded? Unsatisfied?

Now take a few minutes to prayerfully consider other people or groups in your life who you believe would benefit from this resource. Send them an email this week telling them about your experience and challenge them to check out this resource as well at [climate-conversation.org](http://climate-conversation.org).



#### GLOSSARY & FACTOIDS

**Seasonal River** A river which runs with water during the rainy season and is dry the rest of the year. In Kenya, there have traditionally been two rainy seasons: a long season from April-June, and a short season from November-December.

**Sand Dam** A sand dam is a partial dam constructed in a seasonal river in order to trap sand behind it as it runs downriver. As the sand builds up behind the wall, it collects and stores water. Much like sand at the beach, this sand stores the water even after the river has stopped running. This means that during the dry season, local residents are able to dig a few inches into the sand of an apparently dry river bed and access cool, clean water for drinking, washing, cooking, and irrigating their crops.

**Conservation Agriculture** An agricultural technique that emphasizes the relationship between agricultural crops and the rest of the ecosystem in which they grow. It teaches, for instance, the importance of mulching in order to keep soil cool and moist and protect it from erosion. Once the crops are harvested, this mulch is allowed to decompose in the soil in order to increase the productivity of the soil.

**Reformed Eschatology** In theology, eschatology is the study of end things. Doctrines of eschatology affirm what we believe about God’s providential purposes and where we believe the world is headed. Reformed eschatology affirms God’s concern for the entire creation and God’s desire to reconcile all things back to himself. This means that salvation is not simply for humans, but for the entire created order and that God is working to free the world from the effects of sin and to bring it into a new reality of peace, flourishing, and perfect covenant relationship.

As Reformed people, this is what we believe about the ultimate purpose of creation and where we believe creation is headed. As you may imagine, what we believe about where creation is headed in the future has a direct impact on the way that we think about and treat creation in the present.

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