

Loving People and Planet in God's Name

by umcjnews | Feb 26, 2023 | Blog, News, Resources



ENGAGING THE LOCAL CHURCH IN THE STUDY AND PRACTICE OF CLIMATE JUSTICE

Given that Scripture is clear that the Earth is the Lord's (Psalm 24:1) and that humans are to be caretakers and good stewards of this gift (Genesis 1–2), and given that United Methodist leadership recognizes both the crises facing creation and the need to address the related justice issues, how do we help congregations and their people move to action?

Help comes through the new offering, **LOVING PEOPLE AND PLANET IN GOD'S NAME ENGAGING THE LOCAL CHURCH IN THE STUDY AND PRACTICE OF CLIMATE JUSTICE** (LPP). Developed and piloted in 2021 and 2022 by a team of EarthKeepers and other leaders, the 10-hour course, published by Discipleship Ministries,

- Familiarizes students with Christian theology endorsing Creation Care,
- Identifies the challenges and social justice implications of environmental degradation,
- Equips students to engage their congregations to act on behalf of creation justice.

Designed to be presented live or virtually in a variety of settings ranging from a two-day camp retreat to two-hour classes spread over five weeks, LPP builds from the newly updated text, *Climate Justice [Second Edition]*, edited by Rev. Pat Watkins, which was in the first edition used for the UWF 2016–17 *mission u* curriculum.

Each session is a combination of instruction through a variety of media (slides, videos, case studies) and discussion of the relevant topic, all linked to the study of related Scripture. An abundance of alternate reading materials and

videos is provided to supplement the base information and encourage tailoring the course to local demands and environmental challenges.

A certified advanced course for the Lay Servant Ministries program, LPP is also suited to clergy and other interested laypersons. It can be presented at a local church, district, conference, or jurisdictional level. The five sessions progress with the first three focusing on understanding and the last two emphasizing action:

SESSION 1 Our Theological Grounding. From our Wesleyan traditions, this session identifies the scriptural imperative for Creation Care, describes the history of church involvement over the centuries, evokes personal experiences of the participants, and calls for a reasoned response. Emphasis is placed on the UMC Social Principles and Council of Bishops' *Call to Hope and Action*.

SESSION 2 God's Good Gifts—Called as Stewards and Prophets. This session establishes the scientific evidence for environmental degradation, its causes, and challenges. It also describes the elegant cohesion and resilience of God's ecology, emphasizing the gifts of natural systems such as water and soil in supporting life and providing tools for sustainable recovery.

SESSION 3 Climate Crisis and Creation Justice: Connecting the Dots. The state of the Earth reflects the state of the people, healing both is needed. Environmental degradation most affects those least responsible for its cause and least benefiting from its implementation. Case studies are used to show examples of injustice and call for adaptive responses.

SESSION 4 What Can Churches Do? This session starts with examples of environmental stewardship by local churches addressing all aspects of response including education, action and advocacy. Students are asked to evaluate the needs and strengths of their own churches to respond to local environmental challenges. Each student is charged with developing a specific project to carry out at their local church using a pair of analysis tools called SWOT and SMARTIE. Where no local environmental action team exists at the local church, students are encouraged to establish a Green Team as their project.

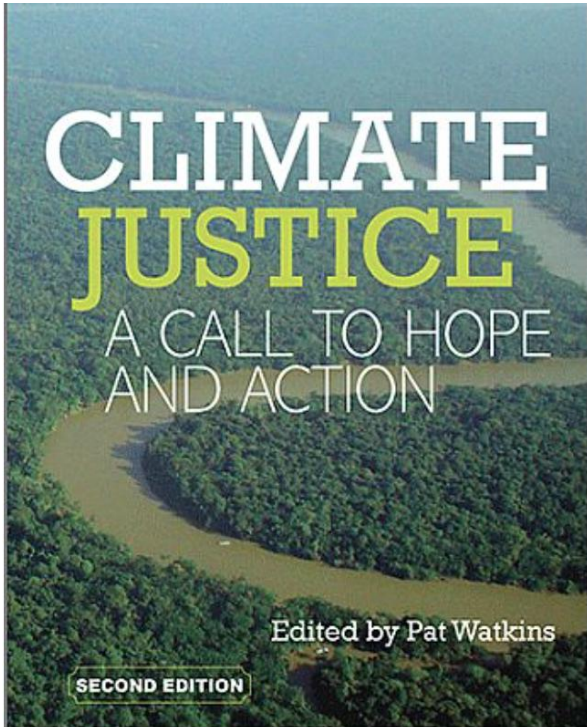
SESSION 5 Your Church, Your Plan. This session starts with presentations on the various UMC boards and agencies that can provide information and help to students in completing their projects. The bulk of the session allows students to discuss and critique their project ideas in small

groups. This session concludes with worship and “sending forth.” Also, an option is offered for the students to gather six months later to share their progress and/or results.

<https://umcreationjustice.org/3296-2/>

You can find our primary text, *Climate Justice: A Call to Hope and Action*, at the following links:

- [Hard copy](#)
- [Kindle](#)



The Leader’s Guide will be published soon. Check back here for the link.



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