



***Climate Changed* Podcast Discussion Guides Season 1**

***Climate Changed* Podcast Description**

The BTS Center's podcast, [*Climate Changed*](#), offers intimate interviews and conversations around some of the most pressing questions about faith, life, and climate change. Hosted by [Ben Yosua-Davis](#), Director of Applied Research, and [Nicole Diroff](#), Program Director, and produced by [Peterson Toscano](#), the podcast features acclaimed guests who are exploring what spiritual leadership looks and feels like in a climate-changed world.

The theme of Season One is *Parenting in a Climate Changed World*. Check out [this short promo](#) for Season One to learn more about the vital questions that Ben, Nicole, and the array of remarkable guests hold in this first season of the podcast.

About the Leadership Commons

The Leadership Commons offers this resource to adult education facilitators based in communal settings who are seeking to learn how to navigate the uncertainties of life on a changing planet. This resource is intended to be used within small gatherings so that your group can go deeper with the topics and ideas presented in the *Climate Changed* podcast.

For example, a local congregation may meet to discuss one episode weekly over six weeks. During this time, they might consider how the questions and stories told in the podcast could inform their own spiritual practices and mission within the local community.

About this facilitator's guide

Each episode guide begins with a Welcoming Activity and concludes with a Closing Activity, both of which mark a boundary around the time of your gathering. These require around five minutes each, depending on group dynamics. A brief summary of the episode is provided, plus a recommended listening excerpt that captures the essence of the guest's conversation.

Five discussion questions are provided for the facilitator to guide group conversation through the themes, challenges, questions, and curiosities of the episode. Because each episode is loaded with perceptive, stimulating, and often weighty subject matter, be encouraged to remain focused on a couple of questions (even if that means not addressing all five).

Anticipate each discussion guide taking between 45-60 minutes to complete, as this allows enough time for the group discussion to emerge at its own rhythm.

Navigation

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Episode 5: *If I Can't Make a Difference, then What Do I Do?* with Veronica Miles ([Listen](#))

Episode 6: *Daddy, Did We Hurt Them?* with Ben Yosua-Davis ([Listen](#))

***Climate Changed* Podcast Discussion Guide**

Season 1, Episode 1

Guest: Rev. Mariama White-Hammond

Title: How Do We Stop Doing Things that Make No Sense?

Listening excerpt: 11:55–18:40

Welcoming Activity

Recall a place that is special to you, then think of the reasons why you find meaning in this place. Introduce yourself to the group by filling in the blanks of this prompt: “My name is _____ and a place that I consider meaningful is _____. One reason why it’s meaningful to me is _____.”

Introduction to Episode 1

In a thoughtful, thought-provoking conversation with our hosts, Nicole Diroff and Ben Yosua-Davis, Rev. Mariama talks about the systems which have shaped us, the hold that certain ways of doing and being have on us, and what a different way of doing and being could mean for us and for our world. She engages the relevance of the Christian church in understanding the roots of climate change and offers ways of reorienting our understandings of the more-than-human world in order to reorient away from a disconnected, distracted consumer culture.

Discussion Questions

1. Rev. Mariama says that “[w]e have gotten confused about what things actually matter.” She continues: “Climate change is just an indication that we have chosen wrong again and again and again.” What are some examples of the wrong decisions that contributed to the present climate crisis? Can you think of any possible *right* decisions?
2. To describe the disruptive activity of humans around the globe, Rev. Mariama uses the metaphor of Earth as the mother of a household of children, each child a unique species. Our species has become like a misbehaving child who terrorizes others in the terrestrial house. Now our species is reckoning with whether we can continue existing as a member of the household. What do you find useful about this metaphor for the harmful lifestyles of humans? What would you add or change about this metaphor to acknowledge that not all humans are equally responsible for these issues?
3. Respond to Rev. Mariama’s vital question: “What does it mean for us to be at the heart of the questions people are asking and the crisis that we are in, so much so, that the empire actually might want to take us out, ‘cause then we could be in good company with Jesus?”
4. Rev. Mariama describes how present generations’ pursuit of an individualistic and consumeristic good life amounts to stealing from future generations, something that Nicole calls “intergenerational injustice” and Ben summarizes as pillaging the future for the sake of the present. Nonhuman animals and plants instinctually act in ways that benefit their offspring. Yet the lifestyles of many humans today are counterproductive

to the flourishing of younger and future generations. How might the effects of your own life contribute to this stealing? How much does culture and contemporary economics influence or require you to choose this way?

5. Economy has been used to excuse the destruction of ecology, says Rev. Mariama. What are a couple ways that your own religious/spiritual tradition might confront the culture of consumerism and deified market worship that surrounds (and permeates) our lives and communities? Nicole and Ben give the example of baptism as a ritual that could threaten empire.

Closing Activity

Slowly read aloud this excerpt from Maya Ward's "Getting in on the Making."

We care for ourselves through tending our connections. Our love for this world, our kindredness with it all, and the actions that arise from love — these must weave a vessel that could nest a new culture. Through everyday acts of attentiveness, from aligning with the other as kin, change will come. Practices of kinship involve a conscious restoring of our irrevocable entanglements. All things are born from this system of earth and sun, a system entangled among endless stars, the dying of which gave birth to the elements of all our bodies. The root of the word kin means "to give birth." Kin is our intimacy with our things, our big and colorful family emerging as and from the eros force: we are this, noun and verb. It's a wild and sexy thing we've arisen from. All things are woven into it; threaded, knotted, bound. And within the weave we dance.

(Maya Ward, "Getting In On The Making" in *Kinship: Belonging In A World of Relations*, vol. 5, edited by Gavin Van Horn, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and John Hausdoerffer)

After the group absorbs these words, provide two or three minutes of silence for everyone to reflect upon the earthly entanglements in which they are woven and to give thanks for these relations.

***Climate Changed* Podcast Discussion Guide**

Season 1, Episode 2

Guest: Corina Newsome

Title: Where Do You Find Hope?

Listening excerpt: 17:44–23:19

Welcoming Activity

Our hosts, Nicole Diroff and Ben Yosua-Davis, begin the episode by discussing what each of them is paying attention to in life. To open your time together, pass around the group a few different natural objects, collected by the group facilitator beforehand (a leaf, stone, pine cone, etc). After everyone has had a moment with each item, ask them to share something that surprised, inspired, or otherwise affected them during the practice of paying close attention.

Introduction to Episode 2

In this episode, Nicole Diroff speaks with conservation scientist Corina Newsome about how taking on racial injustice directly through activism led her on a journey of outrage, struggle, and questions about her faith. She and Nicole talk about this messy and essential process, as well as the practice and process of paying attention, what birds can teach us about hope, and how Black faith communities are now addressing resource inequity and depletion in relation to food sovereignty including the [Black Church Food Security Network](#).

Discussion Questions

1. Corina shares about her experience of being consumed by anger in the face of wrongdoing. Have you experienced anger about issues of injustice (white supremacy, climate change, oppressive systems, etc)? How does this affect your relationship to the religious/spiritual traditions and stories that are meaningful to you?
2. Corina claims that paying attention to the natural world around us provides endless supplies of wonder and healing, whether in urban, rural, or wild places. Yet as she points out, such opportunities are not accessible equally. Can you think of a time when you had an encounter with wonder or healing in the outdoors? Where do you see examples of unequal access to green or wild spaces?
3. In your day-to-day life, what is one thing in the other-than-human world that you would like to give more of your attention? What is one way that you can do this?
4. A hummingbird, Corina tells us, feels weightless and fragile when held in a human hand. Yet these small birds are capable of completing the seemingly impossible migration over the Gulf of Mexico. What was your reaction to hearing Corina's example of birds as symbols for unimaginable hope in the face of impossibility?
5. In Corina's essay in *Rooted & Rising*, referenced during the episode, she writes, "As I seek refuge in the forested hills and refreshing sanctuary that God's Creation provides, I take comfort in this: there is no place I've gone where hope has not found a way to

survive and perch gently in my soul.” How does hope arrive in your life? Where might you find hope if you engaged in contemplative awareness?

Closing Activity

As conditions allow, move the group outside to watch for birds. Find a comfortable position for your body and remain in attentive silence as you observe the feathery creatures. The goal is not to search for as many types as possible, but instead to appreciate the birds around you through the cultivation of ecological contemplation. This practice values the loving observation of a single bird far more than the half-attentive accumulation of multiple sightings.

Climate Changed Podcast Discussion Guide Season 1, Episode 3

Guest: Craig Santos Perez

Title: What Do We Tell the Children?

Listening excerpt: 9:15–15:44

Welcoming Activity

As an opening to deep and honest conversation about this episode, read aloud this prayer of blessing for all peoples. Linger on each line, and perhaps allow a moment of silence after each stanza. Invite the members of your group to reflect on the meaning of each line and on whose behalf we seek the blessing of God.

*Bless us in your divine grace.
Bless us in your divine grace,
bless us in your love,
and bless the bread on the tables,
the hands of those who work,
the dreams of those who resist,
who still sing and hope.*

*Bless us as we walk in your ways,
give us your strength and vision,
may your peace give an end to death,
to hate, and to all injustice;
bless us as we seek an abundant life.
Bless us.*

(Cláudio Carvalhaes, “Bless Us” in *Liturgies from Below*)

Introduction to Episode 3

In this episode, Ben Yosua-Davis and poet Craig Santos Perez have a moving conversation about raising children in a time of climate change. Craig shares his thoughts about writing poetry as a way to draw people into deep conversations about ecology, politics, and other matters. He also reads two of his original poems.

Discussion Questions

1. Craig refers to Donna Haraway’s idea of staying with the trouble. In her book by the same name, she writes: “In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in

terms of making an imagined future safe, of stopping something from happening that looms in the future, of clearing away the present and the past in order to make futures for coming generations. Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.” What does staying with the trouble mean in your life, work, and relations?

2. The word ‘entanglement’ is mentioned a handful of times during this episode. What does entanglement mean? What examples come to mind in terms of multispecies kinship? Exploitative systems? Intergenerational relationships?
3. Have you faced the challenge of communicating the reality of climate change to a young person (maybe a family member, neighbor kid, student, etc)? How did it go? If you haven’t done so, then why?
4. Nicole and Ben muse about the idea of framing educators and artists as climate professionals. What gifts do educators and creative persons offer in making sense of our climate-changed world? How might they help us to prepare children for the realities of climate change and other injustices?
5. In his poetry, Craig uses familiar themes and things (e.g., eating, food systems) to introduce his audience to deeper ethical, political, and ecological issues. What does this reveal to you about the capabilities of poetry and storytelling to expand our conversations about such issues? How can you bring this further into your communities?

Closing Activity

Read the poem by Craig Santos Perez, titled, “[Love in a Time of Climate Crisis](#).” As you move throughout this next week, consider what it means to love the other-than-human world in a time of ecological breakdown.

***Climate Changed* Podcast Discussion Guide**

Season 1, Episode 4

Guests: Keyana Pardilla, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and Sherri Mitchell

Title: What is Wrong with Me?

Listening excerpt: 14:25–17:17

Welcoming Activity

Take a few minutes thinking about the word *entanglement*. What does it mean to you? Are there examples of entanglement in the world that you can point to? Are you entangled, and to what or whom? Then invite each person to fill-in this prompt and share it with the group: “When I hear the word entanglement, I think/feel _____. One example of my own entanglements is _____.”

Introduction to Episode 4

In this episode, Keyana Pardilla joins host Nicole Diroff in a conversation about Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and why she is choosing to use that phrase less. Also heard in this episode are excerpts from Robin Wall Kimmerer and Sherri Mitchell, both of whom spoke during live Zoom programs at The BTS Center. Sherri shares a story about the deep interconnectedness of all living things and Robin examines the relationship and differences between Indigenous knowledge and Western scientific knowledge.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you define or describe Traditional Ecological Knowledge?
2. The term Traditional Ecological Knowledge, writes Amitov Ghosh, “is suggestive of a fundamental misunderstanding [because] it assumes that indigenous understandings are usable knowledge, rather than an awareness created and sustained by songs and stories.” What challenges and concerns do the episode’s guests raise about this concept?
3. Consider your own cosmology, or the story/stories you carry about the origins and source of the universe. It might be a creation narrative, a tale of your people’s beginnings, the Big Bang or evolution, or so many others — even multiple stories held together. How does your story inform or complicate your thinking about the realities of climate change?
4. What stories and/or beliefs do you hold regarding the relationship between humans and the other-than-human world? Take a moment to identify some of the central characteristics of these stories/beliefs (e.g., interdependence, hierarchy, mutualism, dignity, createdness, sacredness) then share with the group. If it feels appropriate for the group dynamic, encourage everyone to consider the possible negative characteristics of their stories/beliefs, too.
5. Robin Wall Kimmerer points out that knowledge is almost always coupled with something else. Indigenous knowledge, she says, may be coupled with responsibility,

emotion, and love. Western knowledge has demonstrated its coupling with economics and power. What could it look like for knowledge to be coupled with an ethics of care and love?

Closing Activity

Chickasaw poet and author Linda Hogan often weaves together the themes of interconnectedness and kinship in her writing. Read aloud her poem, "[The Heron](#)." As you go through this next week, try to imagine that every creature is speaking in its own language, saying to humans, "You could kill me or help me." How would you want to respond to them?

Climate Changed Podcast Discussion Guide **Season 1, Episode 5**

Guest: Rev. Dr. Veronice Miles

Title: If I Can't Make a Difference, then What Do I Do?

Listening excerpt: 20:32–26:02

Welcoming Activity

Our hosts, Nicole Diroff and Ben Yosua-Davis, begin the episode by discussing what each of them is doing to practice hope. To open your time together, go around the group answering the question: What have you done to practice hope recently?

Introduction to Episode 5

Hope — that is the essence of this conversation between Ben Yosua-Davis and Rev. Dr. Veronice Miles. She describes culturally-induced despair and how it can stall even our best intentions for acting towards transformation. Also, Ben and Rev. Dr. Veronice discuss the connection between ancestors who imagined a better future and our present moment, and our responsibility today to imaginatively hope for the sake of future generations.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the implications of climate change and the place where you live? Given these implications, do you sense a call to live differently (or have you already been doing so)? In what ways?
2. Rev. Dr. Veronice summarizes culturally-induced despair as the “notion that what exists in the present must always exist, that there’s nothing that we can do to change the state of existence, [and] so we might as well continue to do what we’re doing.” Have you experienced culturally-induced despair? What does that feel like?
3. A key theme of this conversation is the potential for imagination to move us through and beyond present injustices, systems, and ways of being towards future restoration. Why do you suppose that there is such a taboo around imagining something that is absolutely new? What are the obstacles in the way of imagining new systems or ways of being?
4. In this episode, Rev. Dr. Veronice frames hope as a yearning for wholeness. She says that it assures us of God’s presence, power, and fidelity, and it calls us toward loving, just, and restorative action in the world. How do you define hope? What does hope *do* for you (if it does anything at all)?
5. “All along, they're encouraging us towards something that they don't know a thing about themselves, but they believe it's an absolute possibility for the next generation and for the next generation we have a responsibility then to pass that on.” So says Rev. Dr. Veronice about how hope held by her enslaved ancestors imagined her into this present moment, emphasizing the moral duty of hope for the sake of future generations. What characteristics make up a good ancestor? Today, in this time of

climate crisis, what could we actively hope for (or hope-fully act towards) for the sake of future generations?

Closing Activity

This exercise in hopeful imagination requires enough paper and pens/pencils/markers for everybody in the group. Recall that hope calls us toward loving, just, and restorative action in the world (see Discussion Question 4). In 2-3 minutes, draw or write something that represents one such action, whether it is in your local community or elsewhere. Even if this action seems impossible today, imagine that it is possible within your lifetime. Then have everyone share about the loving, just, and restorative action on their paper and how they hope it would lead to a transformed world.

Climate Changed Podcast Discussion Guide **Season 1, Episode 6**

Guest: Ben Yosua-Davis

Title: Daddy, Did We Hurt Them?

Listening excerpt: 9:00–19:32

Welcoming Activity

To begin this gathering, spend a few minutes quietly thinking about a particular tree that you are fond of. Consider how long you have been in relationship with this tree. Visualize the texture of the bark, the colors of the leaves, the way that the branches stretch outwards.

Introduction to Episode 6

Three conversations about climate grief occur in this episode. Co-host Ben Yosua-Davis reads his audio essay, “Daddy, Did We Hurt Them?” featuring his five year-old-son, Then co-host Nicole Diroff and her father, Michael DiMonte, speak about the importance of intergenerational dialogue about climate change. Hannah Malcolm and Nicole then discuss the diverse experiences of grief from global Christian perspectives.

Discussion Questions

1. Think of the young people in your life. Children, nieces and nephews, neighbors, students, and so on. Do you feel ready to answer their questions about climate change and the injustices of society?
2. How would you describe to them the reality of climate change and present injustices?
3. Nicole’s father, Michael DiMonte, states that one reason why children ask such poignant questions is that they can see through the clutter. What do you think he means by this?
4. One of Hannah Malcolm’s colleagues commented about her edited volume, *Words for a Dying World*, how many of the essays from authors in the West sounded lonely. He attributed this loneliness to people living in a culture that is not acknowledging the problems contributing to climate change. Hannah adds that individualistic culture and extractive capitalism, too, alienate people from their communities and lands. Have you experienced this loneliness yourself? How might a local community recover a depth of relationship between its people?
5. What is one way that conversations about climate grief can move from the individualistic and private sphere to one of collective sharing and learning? What are the benefits of learning from the grief experienced by people who don’t look like, live like, worship like, or speak like you?

Closing Activity

Recall the tree that you had thought of during the Welcoming Activity. Hold that tree in your spirit as someone reads aloud the poem by Jamaican poet Claude McKay, titled, “[Like a Strong Tree](#).” As everyone moves on with the week, take time to reflect on the poem and what it can

teach us in this era of climate change, especially the lines: "So would I live... Like a strong tree against a thousand storms."