



Harvest of Hope

Assembly guide and lesson ideas

This assembly follows the commonly used structure of GERS (Gathering, Engaging, Reflecting and Sending). There is an accompanying slide deck which you can choose to use or not. Some follow-up lesson ideas are given in Appendix 3.

What you will need:

- a table in the middle or front of the room with lots of natural objects (such as seeds including acorns, conkers and chestnuts, pebbles, sticks, feathers, fossils, leaves, bones, nests, flowers, seed heads).

- four pupils primed to read out one of the four quotes in Appendix 1.

GATHERING

SLIDE 1 *[As pupils arrive, you could be showing a beautiful film clip from the BBC – the [Old Oak Tree](#) would be perfect.]*

SLIDE 2 Today's assembly is called Harvest of Hope and we are going to be thinking about nature clubs. To help us, we have a nature table.

[Add a few extra objects to the table – describe and express wonder. Make sure

there are examples from trees, eg, acorn, chestnut, conker, leaves, apple.]

Paired discussion – What do you like best that you have seen on the table? What would you bring to add to the collection and why?

SLIDE 3 *[Share these quotes and ask pupils and teachers what they think they mean.]*

'The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago; the second-best time is now.' (Chinese proverb)

'He who plants a tree, plants a hope.' (Lucy Larcom, teacher and suffragist)

[Hold up any seeds from trees (such as conkers, acorns, chestnuts, beechnuts, apple seeds) and explain that they are like the harvest of a tree. We could plant them and they would eventually grow into trees. Point out that there are many benefits of having trees.]

ENGAGING

What if we set up a nature club or became a nature club? What would be the club's focus? What sorts of activities could we do? Why might it be important? Can we learn from other nature clubs? Who could help run this club? Are there local experts we could draw on?

There are lots of nature clubs in the UK, eg, the [London Wildlife Trust](#), and there are similar groups all over the world.

SLIDE 4 Today we are going to learn from some nature clubs in Sierra Leone: a country in West Africa. In one area of Sierra Leone, over 250 pupils from eight schools are members of the clubs.

SLIDE 5 Here is the front gate and the main building of one of the schools. Listen to what four pupils from that school have to say about their nature club. Listen out for some of the things they do in their nature club and raise your hand if you hear something we thought we could do in our nature club.

SLIDES 6–9 *[Ask four pupils to each read out one of the quotes (which are also given in Appendix 1).]*

SLIDE 10 What were the most important aspects of the nature clubs? And why? (Eg, local tree planting and clearing litter, family, school and government).

SLIDE 11 Here are some of the members checking on one of the trees in their school grounds. Did anyone notice why members of the nature clubs think planting trees is important?



SLIDE 12 Trees benefit all of us, whether we live here in the UK or in Sierra Leone. Trees produce oxygen, help clean the air, provide shade to shelter from the

heat, give us food, protect the soil from wind and rain, help to keep the climate cooler, and help to stop the heavy downpours of rain becoming floods.

SLIDE 13 As well as all those reasons, we go back to one of the quotes we looked at earlier – planting a tree brings us hope.

SLIDE 14 Like in the UK, the climate in Sierra Leone is changing. The country has a tropical climate with a wet season from May to November and a dry season from December to April. But the weather is becoming more unpredictable, which has a huge impact as so many people are farmers and grow their own food. The rainy season now comes at different times and when it does rain, it rains really heavily, washing away the soil from farmlands and causing flooding. Local farmers can also have long periods without any rain, which can kill the plants and animals. Their harvests can fail, bringing the very real threat of not having enough food.

SLIDE 15 Climate change is a serious problem and is just not fair. It has been caused by people burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, gas), which releases carbon into the atmosphere that acts as a blanket – making our climate warm up. While all of us are affected by climate change, people living in the global South are facing faster and more dramatic changes. Yet they have done the least to cause it. It's the countries in the global North such as ours that have, over hundreds of years, used huge amounts of fossil fuels compared to the tiny fraction used by countries like Sierra

Leone. What do you think needs to change?

SLIDE 16 Christian Aid is an organisation that works to make the world fairer. It is doing this in two ways: by calling on governments and big companies to help the world move away from using fossil fuels. It is also supporting all sorts of work in countries worst affected, such as Sierra Leone, where it is helping to support nature clubs.



SLIDE 17 The nature clubs have been set up and are run by an organisation in Sierra Leone called WONES (which stands for Women's Network for Environment and Sustainability), a partner of Christian Aid. This provides the nature clubs with things to help members learn and take action, like books, trees and litter bins. Here is one of the books each club member receives. Ask pupils to look carefully at the front cover. Can they work out who produced the book and why?

SLIDE 18 Can anyone read the top two lines from the inside of the book: *The Environment – taking care of our future?* Both WONES and Christian Aid believe it is important to invest in education, bringing hope to children and young people, and giving them the tools to

learn and build a better future. One way this happens is by planting trees.

SLIDE 19 Can anyone think how nature clubs might help communities in Sierra Leone to build a better future? How might nature clubs help to do so in this country too? Why has this assembly been called a 'Harvest of Hope'?

SLIDE 20 Although Sierra Leone is far away and we don't know the people who live there, we are all working to look after our precious world and to encourage those with power to look after it too. Christian Aid keeps working even when things seem difficult because it believes in the power of love to inspire hope and to keep working for a better world for everyone. Love is a powerful thing and the following words from the Bible show the impact of love and loving actions:

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Corinthians 13:7)

REFLECTING

At this time of year, when we think of harvest, we can reflect on the wonders of creation and be grateful for all that it gives us. We can think about how we can work together to protect it. It is a time of year when we can think and work to protect others who share this wonderful world with us.

[Listen to the song [Wonderful World](#) by Louis Armstrong. Ask pupils what they would want to include in this song that makes our world wonderful.]

[Before the sending part of this assembly, you could finish with this prayer]

*God of Creation,
At harvest time, we thank you for the wonderful world in which we live and breathe and grow. We pray for our global neighbours and the nature clubs in Sierra Leone. We ask that through their learning and actions they will show their communities what a difference just one tree can make. We pray that the leaders of their country and ours make wise decisions to help protect the planet to slow climate change and to support the people most affected by it. Please help the work of Christian Aid in bringing hope for the future and making this a fairer world for everyone. Amen*

SENDING

Here are three ideas for you to choose from to finish the assembly:

- Close by asking pupils to look at trees in the neighbourhood. Do they have a favourite? What do they like about that tree? Talk about them back in class.
- Play a BBC video clip such as [Calm Woodland](#).
- Give every pupil a cut-out leaf (Appendix 2) as they leave on which to write or draw something that has inspired them during this assembly. These could then be added to a class or whole school tree of hope.

Further assembly material can be found in the reflective resource, [Drink from the Well](#).



APPENDIX 1

Quotes from pupils in nature clubs in Sierra Leone

'I love being part of nature club – we did a program called 'clean Sierra Leone' and we went out and cleaned the environment. We took some of the waste away because people like to just drop things to rest in the ground, anyhow. We also advised them not to do so.'

'Planting the trees was a great experience. It helps us to have clean air. The trees give us shade to shelter from the heat and it also gives us food. 90% of the world population depend on agriculture. Trees and plants not only are a food source and we need to plant more, but they give us protection. From heat, but also from wind and rains. We have a lot of excess rains in Sierra Leone. In nature club, we enjoy watering plants. It's important for us to plant trees because it reduces the climate temperature. The trees can help to stop heavy downfall and stop water pooling and gathering – that is why we planted some.'

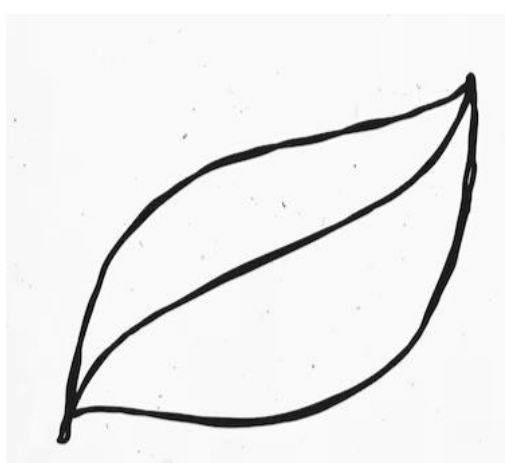
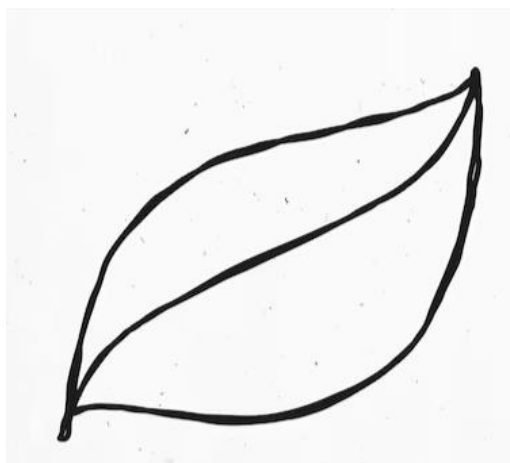
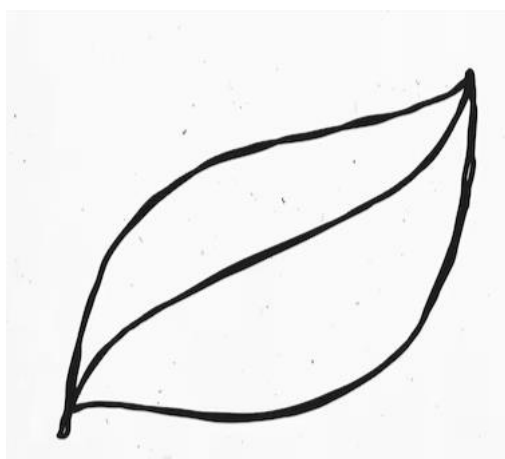
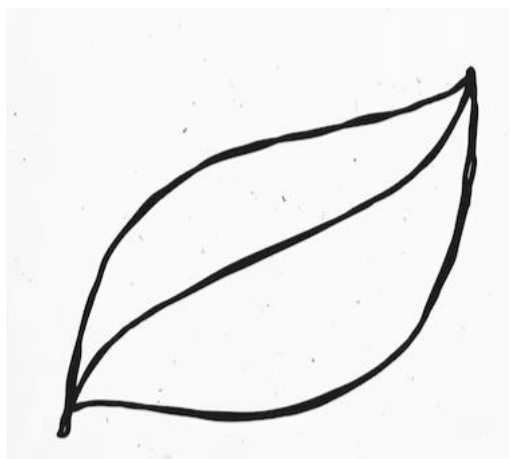
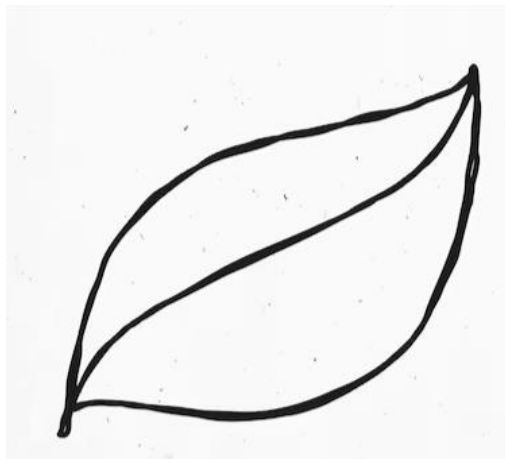
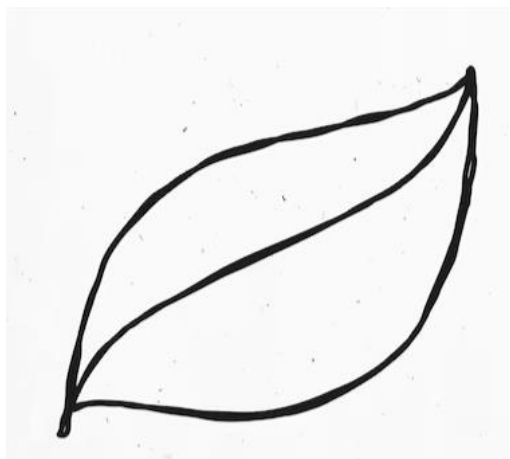
'It is important for us to know about climate change now, because when we get older, we can teach people how to manage the climate and also do things that will protect climate change, by raising public awareness. We can tell people to stop cutting down the trees and tell the government we need policy. Government policies can also help to protect the trees.'

'We have also been learning about the weather. The weather here in Sierra Leone is impacted by climate change. We experienced heavy downfall of rain this year. It's never been like that before. This is the first time. I was afraid of our plants being spoilt by the rains. When the rains are plenty, we feel bad because it doesn't help the plants grow fast. When there is heavy rainfall, it can wash away the nutrients of the soil and causes erosion and it can wipe out our plants.'



APPENDIX 2

Leaves for printing



APPENDIX 3

Lesson ideas/Follow-up classroom activities

Here are seven ideas that can be used in lesson time to further explore some of the themes from the Harvest of Hope assembly.



Take your class on a walk and take photos of nature (regardless of the setting, look for signs of wonder in nature). Use the Natural History Museum's [Wildlife Photographer of the Year: finding urban wildlife](#) images as inspiration. Use the photos to make a 'Wonderful World' display.



Climate justice is explored more deeply in the resource pack, [Sing Up For Justice](#), and in particular through the teaching ideas related to *Let Justice Roll Like a River* (p26–29). Download the resource or order a free printed copy by emailing christianaid@mosaic-fs.co.uk requesting the Sing Up For Justice resource pack, quoting item reference F5015.



Make a calendar of local trees using photos taken by pupils and their families throughout the year. Sell them and give the money raised towards Christian Aid's work.



Make a class or whole school nature table. Refresh it each month to show the changing seasons. Encourage the wider school community to contribute to it.



[Fume Free Futures](#) is an interactive game with learning activities for key stage 2 that helps pupils understand the unfair nature of climate change. The game could be played – using the teaching ideas – over one or two lessons. Download the resource or order a free printed copy by emailing christianaid@mosaic-fs.co.uk and requesting the Fume Free Futures resource pack, quoting item reference F5028.



[Creative for Climate Justice](#) is a courageous advocacy project encouraging pupils to express their feelings on climate justice through art and the written word, and then advocate to their local MP. It includes guidance on hosting local exhibitions, and artwork can also be submitted to a national parliamentary exhibition, where MPs are invited to engage with young people's voices.



[Climate Feelings](#) is a tool to help teachers, environmental educators and counsellors support young people in understanding and processing their feelings about climate change and justice. With up to two-thirds of young people experiencing eco-anxiety, this resource equips pupils and those who work with them to explore and understand their feelings, and to take action. Download the resource or order a free printed copy by emailing christianaid@mosaic-fs.co.uk and requesting the Climate Feelings resource pack, quoting item reference F5018.