

Session 1:

The Floods of Climate Change

Floods. Hurricanes. Droughts. Wildfires. In recent years, there has been an increasing number of severe weather events around the world. These days, just watching the news can feel apocalyptic, as though the sky is falling around us. The devastation caused by such events often prompts people to ask: Why does God allow disasters to happen when they cause so much human suffering?



THE EARTH IS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE

The story of Noah describes a flood that covers the whole world - an apocalyptic global disaster. Biblical scholars debate whether Noah and the Ark is about a real flood that actually took place, or a general reflection on why God would allow natural disasters such as floods to occur. Whether you read this story as history or myth, it definitely raises the question: Does God cause human suffering for no reason, or do people bring suffering on themselves?

Read Genesis 6:5-8

BIBLE NOTE:

There are two different explanations given for the Great Flood in Genesis. Genesis 6:5 attributes it to the "wickedness of humankind," while Genesis 6:13 indicates it is because "the earth is filled with violence." Both versions suggest humans brought the suffering on themselves.

Discuss

- Do you believe people brought the Great Flood of Noah on themselves? If so, how?



Is it God's fault?

Today, at first glance, the increasing severity of disasters around the world might look like the wrath of God. But scientists say the human suffering caused by these storms is not God's fault—by changing the climate of our planet, we are bringing this destruction on ourselves. The global scientific community overwhelmingly agrees that humans are driving climate change, which is creating “unnatural” disasters as earth's warming temperatures cause extreme weather events to become more common and more severe. The United Methodist Church does not deny the reality of climate change.

- **Read** the following excerpt from the United Methodist Social Principles, paragraph 160, on Global Climate Stewardship:
 - “We acknowledge the global impact of humanity's disregard for God's creation. Rampant industrialization and the corresponding increase in the use of fossil fuels have led to a buildup of pollutants in the earth's atmosphere.”
- **Watch** *The Floods of Climate Change*.
 - According to Shana, how are people bringing weather disasters on themselves?
- **Discuss**
 - How does climate change stem from “humanity's disregard for God's creation”?

A unique ministry...

Climate change can feel overwhelming, like a global apocalypse no one can do anything about. But, because human action is driving the problem, changing our actions can help to solve it. In Detroit, Cass Community Social Services - a United Methodist non-profit organization - is working to care for God's Creation as well as the people of Detroit. They have constructed a small community of tiny homes, which provide environmentally sustainable housing to people who live in poverty. We met with Rev. Faith Fowler, the Executive Director of Cass, to learn more about the project.

>> **Watch *Tiny Homes***

Discuss

- Compared to larger houses powered by fossil fuels, what makes Cass's Tiny Homes more sustainable for the environment? For the finances of their owners? For the community?



Why do you believe God is allowing so many climate disasters to occur?

Would you say disasters are the wrath of God or the result of natural processes?

Do you believe climate change is caused by human action?

What changes would you be willing to make to help prevent future floods like the one that hit Detroit in 2021?



Did You Know?

Detroit's "100 Year Flood" of 2021 was the city's 2nd historic flood in just 7 years.

Learn More...

- Read all of Genesis 6:1-12 to gain more context for the story.
- Learn more about the Tiny Homes project at www.casscommunity.org.
- Check out the Energy section from *A Non-Expert's Guide to Living More Sustainably* to get ideas about practical ways to reduce your use of fossil fuels.
 - What is one change you would be willing to make in your personal life? In your church? In your community? Are there any other ideas you would add?



Footprint Fact

The average temperature in Detroit has gone up over 2 degrees due to climate change.

