

# LOSS AND DAMAGE



EXPLORING HISTORICAL  
RESPONSIBILITY AND REPARATIONS

# INTRODUCTION

This booklet is the second in a series designed by Quakers in Britain to explore one analysis of climate breakdown and how we might respond, known as climate justice. It's a term that is increasingly used in the UK, but not one that is well understood. It challenges our status quo and imagines a different world – a world in which we recognise and address the inequalities and power imbalances that have led us here; in which we repair the harm we have done to one another and to the planet, and build a more sustainable, loving system of organising ourselves.

We have tried to make these booklets as accessible in language and content as possible, while offering plenty of links to other resources for those who wish to explore topics further. We welcome ignorance: for us, what's important is a curiosity to learn. While we will try to explore the topic of climate justice as comprehensively as we can, we will never be able to cover it fully. We hope these booklets will serve as a launchpad for you to begin your own journey of exploration into what taking action for climate justice might mean to you.

There will be six booklets in total, and each will consist of three main sections: analysis, practical examples and queries.

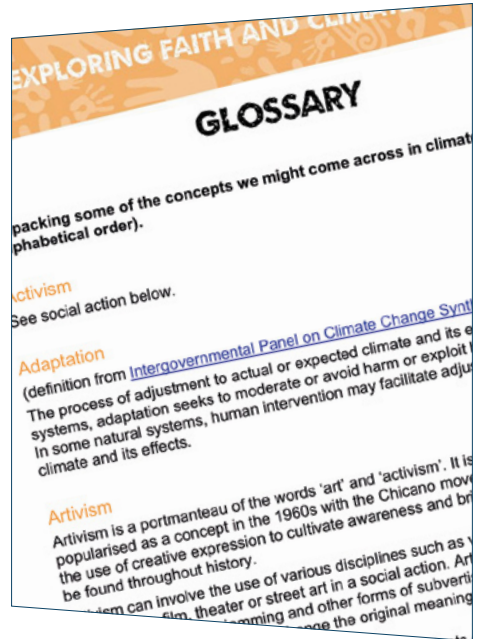


Photo: Michael Preston for Britain Yearly Meeting

The analysis section is intended to provide some basic content for consideration, along with lots of further avenues to explore. The practical examples section shares information about grassroots groups and campaigns in the UK and globally that you can draw inspiration from or support. Finally, the queries section offers some questions for reflection or discussion, individually or in groups, as a tool to process and integrate your thoughts about the booklet and its topic.

As a companion to the booklets, we have put together a glossary of key terms, which you can find [www.quaker.org.uk/documents/climate-justice-glossary](http://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/climate-justice-glossary). Any terms followed in the booklet text by '[G]' appear in the glossary.

For Quakers working through these booklets, we recommend taking a look at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre's [Responding to Ecological Crisis](#) resource. This has been designed to support Quakers to explore the spiritual underpinnings of the Quaker commitment to sustainability. It will tend to the 'personal' aspect of your journey through these booklets and complement the resources and promptings they contain.



*As in the days of early Friends, we sense this is a time of prophecy and want to uphold the prophets in our midst and in the wider world. We must heed the Spirit's call to urgent action. Prophets are visionaries, calling out those in power, and reconcilers stand in the middle of conflict: in this both run great risk.*

From the Epistle, Yearly Meeting Gathering 2021

As we embark on this journey, we are demanding courage of each other; looking to support each other; and, especially, seeking to hear and see prophetic voices and examples. We extend an invitation to all to embrace discomfort. Learning to see the wrong in our lives and in our society, and experiencing that inwardly, is a moment when we become truly engaged with transforming our lives.

# ANALYSIS

## 1. Introduction

*The historical emitters have taken up all the carbon budget for 1.5°C [G] and spent it on their own development. In that sense we have lent them our carbon budget and they owe us for it.*

Mohamed Nasheed, former President of the Maldives

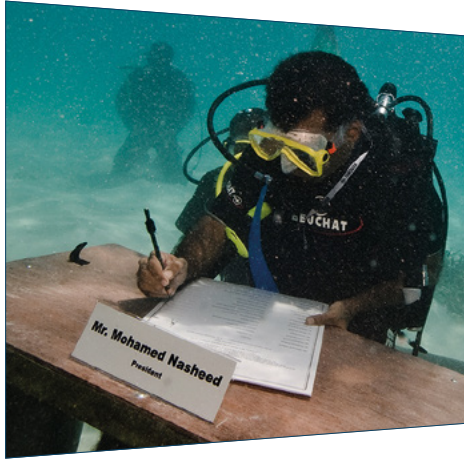


Photo: Mohamed Seeneen/Sindi via Flickr

Over a decade ago, in 2009, President Mohamed Nasheed held a cabinet meeting underwater. His aim was to draw attention to global warming and rising sea levels, submerging land in his country. With over 80 per cent of its land less than a metre above sea level, hitting 'net zero' [G] by 2030 has a much greater significance in the Maldives. For its people, our ability to rein in global heating will mean the difference between existing and disappearing – between life and death.

Having explored the meaning and origins of climate justice in Module 1, we move on in Module 2 to explore two key concepts of climate justice: historical responsibility and **reparations** [G]. Since both topics can feel quite abstract, we are choosing to explore them through the lens of a particular climate justice issue – climate change-induced 'loss and damage'. Quakers in Britain has made this a policy priority.

In common with other nations vulnerable to the effects of climate change, the Maldives has been highlighting the devastating impact of climate change (loss and damage) for more than 30 years. And, as Mohamed Nasheed's quote illustrates, the situation they find themselves in wasn't caused by them. Loss and damage allows us to understand why wealthy nations owe a huge 'climate debt' to the rest of the world, as well as how we might begin to repair the harm we have done.



## 2. What is loss and damage?

Loss and damage refers to the impacts of climate change that have not been avoided or adapted to. These include extreme weather events like hurricanes and cyclones, as well as slower-moving disasters like desertification and rising sea levels. Loss refers to the loss of life, biodiversity, territory, livelihoods, culture; damage refers to the damage to homes, businesses, hospitals, schools, roads. All caused by climate breakdown. It can sound quite technical, but really it is a story of people losing their lands, their homes, their livelihoods – in a climate crisis they did not cause.

According to a **2018 report**, the economic cost of loss and damage is expected to reach \$290–580 billion a year by 2030 in **Global South [G]** countries alone. But despite the soaring costs, there is still no international fund to support communities experiencing loss and damage. Addressing climate change is a big sticking point in international negotiations, because the wealthy nations most responsible for climate breakdown don't want to pay up. We explore in more detail some of the reasons for this below.

Loss and damage is sometimes called the 'third pillar' of climate action, alongside **mitigation [G]** and **adaptation [G]**. While these also need urgent funding, they should not be conflated with loss and damage.

- Mitigation focuses on the steps we can take to reduce our **greenhouse gas [G]** emissions to zero to **avoid** future loss and damage (e.g. by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy).
- Adaptation focuses on the steps we can take to **minimise** loss and damage (e.g. by building sea walls or planting trees to reduce flooding).

Existing climate finance is mostly for mitigation, with some earmarked for adaptation. However, much of it is in the form of loans, which only fuel the transfer of wealth from poorer countries to the rich through interest payments. Although campaigning has led the UK government to recognise loss and damage as a stand-alone



Photo: Debsuddha Banerjee/Climate Visuals Countdown

issue, it is still unwilling to commit finance specifically for it. In contrast, the Scottish government (as COP26 hosts) made a commitment of **£2 million to support communities experiencing loss and damage**. Although a fraction of the funds needed, it is the first national government to have done so.

As well as warning against conflating funding for loss and damage with funding for adaptation and mitigation, campaigners for loss and damage finance point out that what is needed differs from humanitarian aid (which is primarily for the immediate aftermath of disasters). Rather, loss and damage finance is about long-term rebuilding – or, in some cases, relocation. But there are of course losses no one can put a price on, like the destruction of sacred sites, cultural traditions and life itself.

*Loss and damage is happening right now. We can't adapt to the loss of our cultures. The loss of our identities. The loss of our histories. We can't adapt to extinction, to starvation. We can't adapt to loss and damage.*

Vanessa Nakate, climate justice activist

### Further exploration:



Written – [Jocelyn Timperley: The world's fight for climate justice](#)



Audio – [Dr Shanon Shah and Olivia Hanks: Why people of faith are mobilising around loss and damage](#)

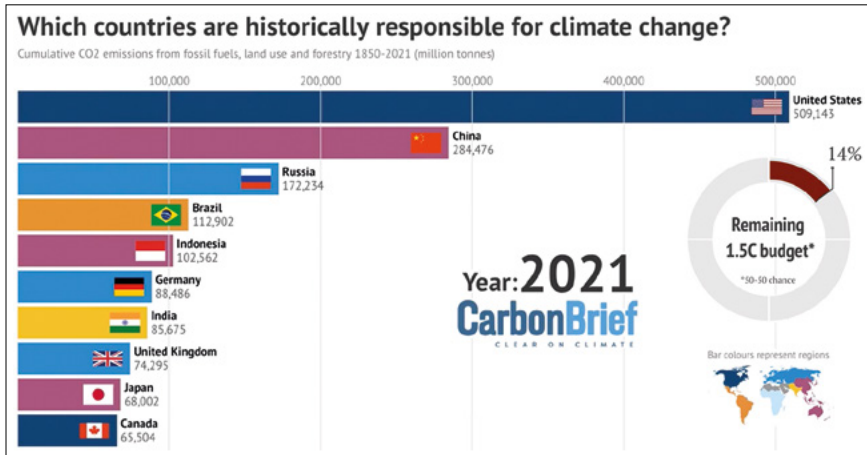


Video – [Make Polluters Pay: This is loss and damage](#) and [IIED: Untold stories of loss and damage](#)

## 3. Why is it important to understand historical responsibility?

To understand why an international fund for loss and damage has stalled for so many years at UN climate talks, we need to look at why communities started experiencing loss and damage in the first place.

Climate breakdown is caused by greenhouse gases. We have been releasing these into the air in increasing quantities since the industrial revolution in Europe, mostly by burning fossil fuels. At present, the country with the highest annual greenhouse gas emissions is China (much of which comes from producing consumer goods for the **Global North [G]**). The highest emitter per capita is Qatar. But if you look at [a graph of all the emissions since 1850](#), you can see that the United States is way



Graphic: Carbonbrief.org

out in front – it's responsible for around 20 per cent of all greenhouse gases ever pumped into the atmosphere.

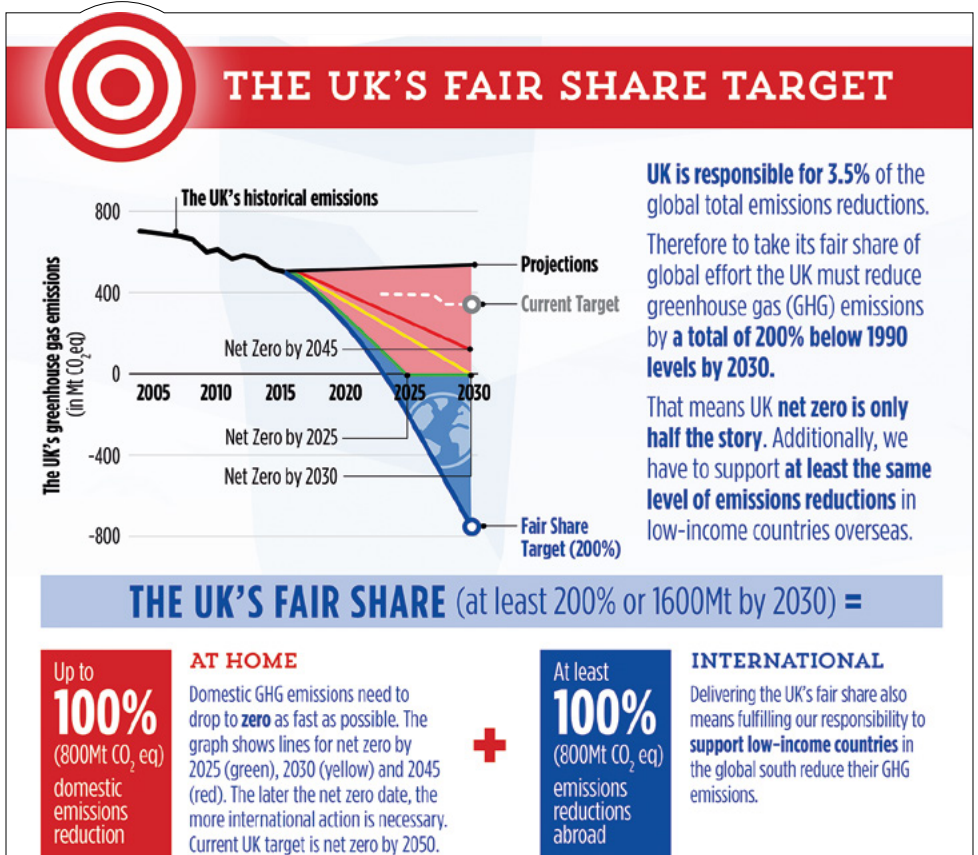
The global 'carbon budget' (referred to by Mohamed Nasheed above) is a helpful way of thinking about this. Our global carbon budget is the amount of carbon we can put into the atmosphere without breaching the **1.5 degrees Celsius threshold agreed in Paris in 2015**. By 2021 we had burned through 86 per cent of this budget. Global South countries and advocates for **fair shares [G]** argue that the remaining budget should be allocated to countries that have emitted very little carbon, to help them while they transition to green energy and improve their standard of living. Seen this way, countries like the US and the UK have already used far, far more than their fair share of the budget.

[Full infographic outlining the UK's fair share available here.](#)

The most polluting nations are nervous about the concept of historical responsibility because it logically leads to talk of liability – the idea that those responsible should pay the costs. But we must take responsibility for our actions. How else can we hope to build a better world?

*The environmental crisis is enmeshed with global economic injustice and we must face our responsibility as one of the nations which has unfairly benefited at others' expense, to redress inequalities which, in William Penn's words, are 'wretched and blasphemous'.*

Minute 36, Yearly Meeting 2011



Graphic: WarOnWant.org

**Attribution science** [G] is also improving, which has led to a rising number of legal challenges against governments and fossil fuel companies from people suffering the consequences of climate breakdown. In many ways – whether polluters like it or not – justice is creeping into our understanding of the climate crisis. And this is strengthening the basis for us to redress the inequalities we explored in Module 1 and to repair historical harm, to both people and planet.

### Further exploration:



Written – [Friends of the Earth: International climate fair shares](#)



Audio – [Drilled News S2: Hot water](#)



Video – [Peoples Dispatch: Rich countries are pretending they're responding to climate crisis while blocking real solutions](#)



## 4. Looking back to move forward

*It is important to understand and tell the truth about the past – it is even more important to recognise its enduring consequences: the trauma and impact on lives in the present. We must start making changes now and for the future: “planting flowers as well as pulling up weeds”.*

From the Epistle, Yearly Meeting 2022

People sometimes argue that it's unhelpful to look at the past, and that finding solutions means focusing on the future. But our past shapes our present, and our solutions are likely to differ depending on our understanding of the present and how we got here. This can be uncomfortable to grasp and to sit with. But taking the time and energy to interrogate our history also offers us opportunities to truly build the “flourishing, just and peaceful Creation” (*Quaker faith & practice* 25.04) that we shared in Module 1.

So, apart from our unequal use of the carbon budget, what does our history tell us? In Module 1 we looked at how climate breakdown and the extreme exploitation of the earth have their roots in colonial conquest. Of course, every country has a different history, but we can see common patterns across much of Africa and the Caribbean in particular:

- Colonialism led to impoverishment and an emphasis on commodity production.
- This left countries over-reliant on imports and vulnerable to global markets.
- These countries then often ended up in debt and had no choice but to divert money from public services and infrastructure into interest payments.
- This lack of investment in infrastructure left these countries highly vulnerable to extreme weather events.
- When such events have hit (with growing frequency and intensity because of climate change), these countries have experienced devastating loss and damage. And this has forced them to take out more loans and spend even more to service their debts.

There are many examples of this story – of weeds that need to be pulled out to enable new growth. In the context of British colonialism, one example stands out: India. It is often cited as a major contributor to climate change. Based on current

emissions, this is true. But that doesn't tell us the whole story. Research published in 2018 showed that **Britain drained an estimated \$45 trillion from India during its 200-year rule**. This has undoubtedly had a devastating impact on India's ability to meet the needs of its population or to invest in clean and sustainable infrastructure. In our 'Further resources' section below, you can also see an exploration of Mozambique's history and listen to the little-known history of Haiti being forced to pay reparations for its own liberation from slavery on top of the common story we describe above. The impact of having to pay these reparations to Haiti's colonial occupier – France – for two centuries has crippled Haiti's economy, trapping it in debt and poverty and leaving it even more vulnerable to extreme weather events.

Seen in this light, who is indebted to whom? As with Mohamed Nasheed's point about the carbon budget, might wealthy, industrialised countries actually owe a



Graphic: Wikimedia Commons

A map of the British Empire in 1886, by Walter Crane. The map was published to celebrate the Empire and the riches it brought Britain. However, the artist was a socialist and has worked in references to the human cost and exploitation of colonialism. Some more information [here](#).

debt – in both carbon and funds – to formerly colonised countries? In the context of these histories, we begin to see why owning responsibility can shape our solutions; and why money – and the waiving of debts – might be needed to repair the harm and move towards a sustainable future.

### Further exploration:



Written – [Rebecca Woo: Mozambique](#) and [Debt Justice: Debt and the climate crisis – a perfect storm](#)



Audio – [Quakers in Britain: A Quaker take – Reparations series](#)



Video – [Inside Story: Is colonialism to blame for the dire situation we face with climate change?](#)

## 5. How do reparations fit this context?

Reparations are often linked to the transatlantic slave trade and to war and genocide. For example, the German and French governments have paid tens of billions of dollars to Holocaust survivors, and in some cases to their descendants. Many churches in the UK are also currently exploring making reparation for their role in the slave trade.

But calls for reparations aren't confined to slavery and war. Reparations are the act or process of making amends for a wrong. So, could reparations also include historical responsibility for climate breakdown and for the socio-economic position many climate-vulnerable countries find themselves in? If we look at the histories of Mozambique and Haiti, we begin to see how loss and damage finance could be seen as a form of 'climate reparations' – polluters making amends for the damage they have caused.

Calls for financial reparations can prompt fears of whether we can afford them, how we quantify them, and where we draw the line. The complex impacts of large-scale human rights violations mean that it may not be possible to design a 'perfect' reparations programme. But are these worries perhaps also a way of avoiding responsibility?

*Finding our right relation and sustainable life together on the earth is a matter of joy when we are grounded in the light.*

Douglas Gwyn (2014): *A sustainable life*, p. 138

Whether or not we choose to see loss and damage finance as reparations, our guiding principle could be: 'What do love and justice require of us in response to the climate breakdown-induced harms we see around us?' Without becoming mired in blame for what our ancestors might have done, we all need to take responsibility for where we are now and what we do next.

### Further exploration:



Written – [Perspectives on a Global Green New Deal \(Chapter 9: Who pays?\)](#)



Audio – [Olúfẹ̀mi Táíwò: Reconsidering reparations](#)



Video – [Shado x GoClimate: Why reparations are crucial to climate solutions](#) (more detail [here](#))

## 6. Why is it important for us to talk about reparations?

Talking about reparations – and funding for loss and damage – can trigger many emotions. Maybe you will feel uncomfortable. Maybe you will feel a sense of shame or guilt. Maybe you will wonder where on earth we could possibly begin. Maybe all of these thoughts will feel overwhelming and sap your energy. We encourage you to sit with all of these feelings and to name them. If you'd find it helpful to do this in community with others, you can join our [online course with Woodbrooke](#).

We can't offer you an easy or neat route through these feelings. What we can offer are our thoughts on why an understanding of reparations that's broader than monetary compensation – as challenging as that might feel to explore – excites us. For us, reparations are about recognising harm and working **together** to make amends. They offer an opportunity for dialogue, for partnership, for healing, and for transformation. They present us with the chance to be in right relationship with each other and with the planet. Well-designed reparations can offer a way to move forward, both practically and psychologically, helping those



Photo: Anatoly Stafichuk via Pixabay

harmed to meet their basic needs and process trauma.

Reparations might come in many forms. One way might involve thinking about how we support one another structurally and relationally in our workplaces and communities to heal and ensure everyone has equal access to a good quality of life. Another way might be to pay a specific amount of money for a quantified harm. Quakers in Britain explore these ideas and more in our reparations

podcast (follow the link under 'Further resources' in section 4 above: 'Looking back to move forward'). Quakers in Philadelphia have just announced plans to pay **\$500,000 in reparations to Black neighbours** over the coming decade.

Returning to loss and damage, climate-vulnerable countries are asking for monetary reparations. Can we offer them this in light of the debt countries like the UK owe them for our use of the carbon budget and for how we became a wealthy nation? Can we cancel their debts and start to make amends for historical harm? Can we stop seeing poorer countries as weak and in need of our help, and instead recognise the role colonialism played in their situation and listen to what they're asking of us? And if we did, might we come closer to bringing about the better world we want to build?

*Even our charity is essentially patronising. Give a man a fish and he can eat for a day. Give him a fishing rod and he can feed himself. Alternatively, don't poison the fishing waters, abduct his great-grandparents into slavery, then turn up 400 years later on your gap year talking a lot of shite about fish.*

Frankie Boyle, comedian

### Further exploration:



Written – [Jason Hickel: Enough of aid – let's talk reparations](#)



Audio – [On being Desmond Tutu: Healing through story](#) and [Mpho Tutu van Furth \(in the Church Times\): Forgiveness and reparation, the healing journey](#)



Video – [Albright Lecture: Climate justice and the question of reparations](#)



Photo: Shourav Sheikh via Pixabay



# PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

In this section, we highlight examples of grassroots groups and campaigns you might draw inspiration from or support. We have divided them into 'local' and 'global', but this can be an arbitrary distinction as both are interlinked. We use the terms here to help describe actions that are primarily focused on life in the UK (local) and actions that are primarily focused on life outside the UK (global).

## Local

**Make Polluters Pay** is a coalition of charitable organisations and grassroots groups campaigning for loss and damage finance. They believe loss and damage finance should be paid for by polluters; come in the form of grants, not loans; be new; and be needs-based.

**Climate Reparations** is co-led by a number of UK grassroots groups, campaigns and organisations. They are calling for the UK government to start providing the care and reparations that communities in the UK and around the world need to protect themselves and repair the damage already done.

**Stop the Maangamizi** Their 'We Charge Genocide/Ecocide' campaign calls for an All-Party Parliamentary Commission for Truth and Reparatory Justice, along with other actions necessary to advance dialogue on reparatory justice.

**Healing Justice London** seeks to repair, vision and sustain futures free from intimate, interpersonal and structural violence. It creates safe spaces for healing in marginalised communities.

**No More Exclusions** is an abolitionist grassroots coalition movement, with a focus on racial justice in education.



Photo: Ben Robinson for Britain Yearly Meeting

## Global

**Loss and Damage Youth Coalition** is a collaboration of young people from the Global South and North sharing stories and holding governments to account for climate impacts. Their alliance is made up of more than 150 members from 40+ countries.

**Debt for Climate!** is a grassroots, Global South-driven initiative connecting social and climate justice struggles. It seeks to unite labour, social and climate movements in the common goal of turning debt-trap diplomacy on its head by cancelling the debt of impoverished nations as a way to pay for leaving fossil fuels in the ground and financing a just transition.

**Wretched of the Earth** is a collective of over a dozen grassroots Indigenous, black, brown and diaspora groups, individuals and allies acting in solidarity with oppressed communities in the Global South and Indigenous North.

**Debt Justice** is part of a global movement to end unjust debt and the poverty and inequality it perpetuates. It builds collective power with those affected so that together we can rewrite the rules of global finance and build a fair economy for all.

**Climate Action Network** is a global network of more than 1,500 civil society organisations in over 130 countries driving collective and sustainable action to fight the climate crisis and to achieve social and racial justice.



Photo: Michael Preston for Britain Yearly Meeting

# QUERIES

In this section, we have put together some suggested queries for reflection or discussion, individually or in groups. You might like to use one of the resources we have shared in this booklet as a prompt for reflection and discussion. You are also welcome to find your own resources to use as a prompt!

We are conscious that the Covid-19 pandemic has made our lives even busier and more stressful. We believe social action should be energising and sustaining, so in these booklets we will try to weave moments of joyfulness into the queries section (for example, suggestions of poetry to read aloud or listen to). If you are gathering in a group to consider the queries, we also recommend incorporating food and building in time to check in with one another.




*Britain Yearly Meeting resolves to build on our decision last year to be an anti-racist church, working with partners, including churches and faith groups, to look at ways to make meaningful reparations for our failings. We need to take urgent action as individuals, in our local, area and yearly meetings.*

‘What do love and justice require of us?’

From the Epistle, Yearly Meeting 2022

- What is the difference between aid/charity and reparations? Does it matter?
- As we face a cost-of-living crisis in the UK, how can we still act in solidarity with climate-vulnerable communities around the world?
- The philosopher Olúfẹmi Táíwò argues for what he calls the “constructive view” of reparations: since colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade built the world as it is, it is not enough to look backwards for the source of harm and seek to repair it – we must embark on our own world-making project. In this view, reparations are “the just distribution of the costs of moving us from this unjust world to the just one”. What do you think of this view? Does it change how you think or feel about reparations?

## Poetry to explore:

-  [Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and Aka Niviãna: Rise – from one island to another](#)
-  [Young poets at COP26: Poems to solve the climate crisis](#)
-  [Rasheena Fountain, Jade Lozada, Eliza Schiff and Miriam Mosqueda: Climate speaks.](#)

# WHERE NEXT?

Exploring Faith and Climate Justice runs from July 2022 to July 2023. Over the year we will explore the following areas:

## 1. What is climate justice?

July – August 2022

## 2. Loss and damage: exploring historical responsibility and reparations

September – October 2022

## 3. Climate justice and the new economy

November – December 2022

## 4. What happens if we don't focus on justice?

January – March 2023

## 5. Living in right relationship with the earth

March – May 2023

## 6. How do we act in solidarity and friendship across social justice movements?

May – July 2023

The next module will explore the economic structures driving climate breakdown, and how we might imagine and build a different economy.



**Text in this dark blue colour** indicates a link to further information or resources.

To access the further information or resources in this booklet, please go to the online version which you can find on this webpage:

[www.quaker.org.uk/efcj](http://www.quaker.org.uk/efcj)



Join **Quakers in Britain** and **Woodbrooke** on our year of learning and spiritual reflection about climate justice.

You can sign up on your own, or as part of a group or meeting at [www.woodbrooke.org.uk/efcj](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/efcj).

For more information and resources visit [www.quaker.org.uk/efcj](http://www.quaker.org.uk/efcj).

Get in touch at [climatejustice@quaker.org.uk](mailto:climatejustice@quaker.org.uk).

This booklet was developed with support from Lucy Faulkner-Gawlinski and colleagues at Faith for the Climate, Woodbrooke and Quakers in Britain. A number of Quakers helped to shape the project. We are grateful for the time and feedback they so generously shared.

Did you find this resource useful? To let us know your thoughts, to share a story of witness or to request support from Quakers in Britain, please email [climatejustice@quaker.org.uk](mailto:climatejustice@quaker.org.uk) or call 020 7663 1046.

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