

Climate Spirituality

Collection of biblical reflection, theological debate, spiritual life, prayer and action from UEM members



→ Peace with
the Earth ←

Foreword



Foreword

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Working on climate justice: Dr Jochen Motte, Longgena Ginting, Richard Madete, Katja Breyer (from left)

"As long as the earth endures, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease" (Genesis 8,22). In accordance with this, God's promise, the UEM, since 2008, has been raising awareness through exhibitions, projects and advocacy work that it is not our human responsibility to destroy the earth. God has given this earth to human beings as living space that is to be preserved.

Today, climate change and environmental destruction represent a serious threat to human beings and to nature. Churches within the UEM in Africa, Asia and Germany have responded to this challenge by supporting climate and environmental projects, awareness building and advocacy work.

Together with churches throughout the world, the UEM is participating in the ecumenical World Council of Churches' programme "Peace with the Earth". Through international ecumenical team visits, UEM Member Churches are supporting each other in the fight against deforestation, land-grabbing and environmental destruction brought about by mining and palm oil plantations as well as environmental pollution in big cities.

Furthermore, churches have started to reflect on creation theology in their respective regional and cultural contexts. Climate and nature have become a matter of biblical reflection, theological debate, spiritual life, prayer and action. At the same time, members in the UEM have asked for a collection of such material from all three regions to be shared and used within the UEM communion. This brochure, which has been edited by a pastor from Germany, a musician from Indonesia and a music lecturer from Tanzania, is intended to serve as a genuine resource for 'climate and spirituality' to be used in prayer, worship and bible sharing in congregations in all UEM regions. The brochure will also be made available in other languages including German, Bahasa Indonesian, French and Kiswahili. It can also be accessed through the UEM website (www.vemission.org/climatespirituality). All who are interested are also invited to share further material on climate and spirituality, which will be added to this website in the coming years.

Jochen Motte

Introduction

See the world through God's eyes



Working on climate justice: Imelda Simangunsong, Jenitha Kameli, Christian Sandner (from left)

The challenge of climate change and environmental destruction can leave us feeling helpless and powerless. Or we may be pressed into activism to show what we, as Christian Churches, are doing to respond to this challenge. But, as a communion of Churches, we can call upon God, who gives us the power that enables us to respond with the strength of our faith. God gave all people land to live on and water for our health. In the air we breathe, we can feel His spirit: the breath of life He gave all living beings.

We know that this God-given power will flow when we open our hearts and minds for His spirit to enter us. Therefore, we have started this initiative, which brings together our actions for climate justice with our worship as Churches and as individuals. Climate change and environmental issues must be part of our spirituality, because land, water and air are essential parts of God's wonderful creation. We want to encourage you to also embrace climate spirituality so that God's power can lead us to play our part in preserving His creation. His power will also help in the confrontation with the powers that tend to destroy the foundations of life: governments, companies, individual consumerism.

"The awareness of God's presence calls for celebration, for a break in our everyday activities, for times of rest. To keep the Sabbath may be exactly what the earth needs to restore itself. (65) The liturgy helps us as Christians to learn gradually to see the world through God's eyes – with infinite compassion. On that basis it may lead to a fundamental reorientation of all other aspects of life. (16)" These words from a South African document on climate change have led us to be encouraged in the exchange of our international worship experience.

We have collected experiences from member churches in Africa, Asia and Europe – and thank all who have contributed. But this is only a beginning: a small selection of prayers, liturgical resources and extracts from sermons as well as songs from different traditions... We hope to be able to collect even more materials, which we can share whenever we come together and also make available on the UEM website.

We hope that God's blessing will give us strength!

Imelda Simangunsong, Jenitha Kameli, Christian Sandner

1. Land - mother of life

Song

Oh Andiko Jilena, Indonesia

4

Oh Andiko Jilena
Oh How Beautiful

GBKP Hymn Book
Song: Ph. Surbakti, 1987
Lyrics: S. Tarigan, 1997
English version:
Matt Ashworth, Imelda Simangunsong

Karonese, Indonesia

Oh an - di - ko ji - le - na, ti - ne - pa Di -
Oh can you see the beau - ty, of the Lord's cre -

4
ba - ta, Su - buk per - ti - bi en - da,
a - tion. This spec - ial place call'd Ear - th

7
ras i - si - na k'ri - na. De - leng si me -
and all liv - ing th - ings. There are gre - en

10
ra - tah ke - ra - ngen Pe - rik - pe - rik re - nde ka - ba - ngen. An - di - ko ji -
moun - tains and for - ests where the birds fill the air with their sing - ing. Oh how beau - ti -

14
le - na si ban - Na. Seh kel kap u - li - na. E - ma - ka ta - ngar - lah min ki - ta
ful is the wo - rld that the Lord has giv - en. And that is why we beg man - kind to

19
jel - ma, O - la me - la - sang o - la me - tur - dak - sa, Lit te - nah ka - ta pe - dah ni Di -
he - ar The cries of na - ture liv - ing in... fe - ar the Lord has giv - en a mess - age that

23
ba - ta. Ja - ga ke - le - ngki, k'ri - na ti - ne - pa - Na.
is clear and we must love and save ev' - ry - thing He has cre - a - ted.

Oh Andiko Jilena, Indonesia

Oh, Sungguh indah ciptaan Tuhan
Bumi dan seluruh isinya
Gunung dengan hutan yang hijau
Tempat burung bernyanyi dan beterbangan
Oh, Indahnya ciptaan-Nya
Sungguh teramat indah...

Oleh sebab itu, dengarlah wahai manusia
Janganlah sombong janganlah angkuh
Tuhan berpesan padamu
Jaga dan sayangilah semua ciptaan-Nya

Oh how beautiful, Indonesia

Oh can you see the beauty of the Lord's creation?
This special place called Earth and all the living things.
There are green mountains and forests
Where birds fill the air with their singing
Oh how beautiful is the world that the Lord has given

And that is why we beg mankind to hear
The cries of nature living in fear
The Lord has given us a message that is clear
And we must love and save
Everything He has created

Biblical text

Lev 25:19

Then the land will yield its fruit,
and you will eat your fill and live there in safety.

Psalm 24

5

Reflection

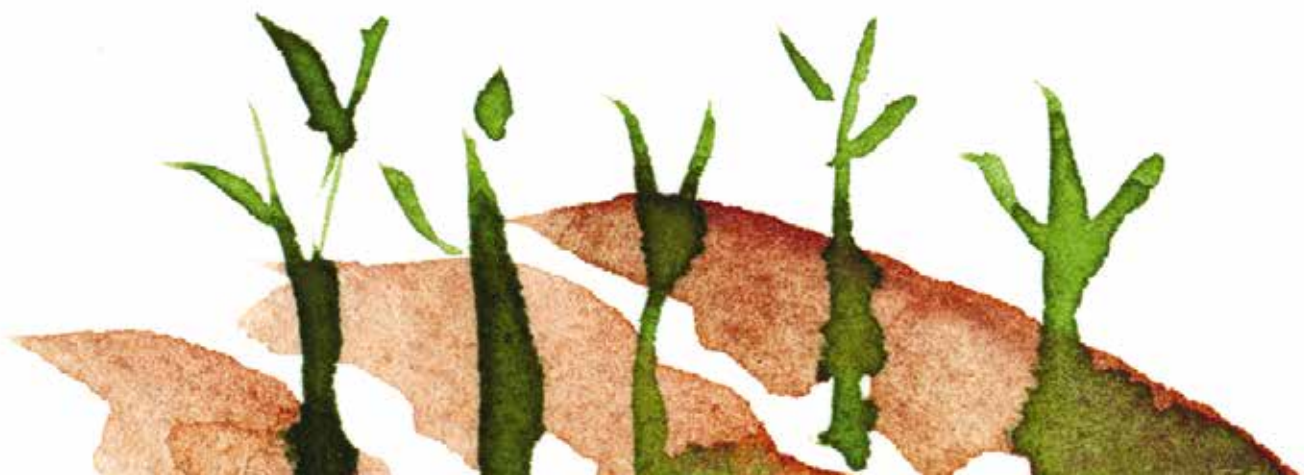
Lev 25:1– 8

The year of jubilee is clearly marked with setting free people and property. Also, the year of jubilee is the benchmark for determining prices or for regulating the selling and buying of land and property. It was provided in the law that the land should not be sold away from the families that own it. It could only be disposed of, as it were, by leases till the year of jubilee, and then returned to the owner or his heir. All bargains ought to be made by this rule: You shall not oppress one another, nor take advantage of one another's ignorance or necessity, but you shall fear your God. And, lastly, jubilee is the year of people returning to their own property. It is, thus, the year of freedom and atonement, in which case property – including land – is set free while, at the same time, the bonds of slavery and poverty are loosened.

Property and owners are brought together again. This law enabled people to preserve their tribes and families distinctly, while waiting for the coming of the Messiah. The liberty every man was born to, if sold or forfeited, should return at the year of jubilee. This was a typical analogy of the redemption by Christ from the slavery of sin and Satan, and of being brought again to the liberty of the children of God.

The concept of jubilee reminds us that property ownership – especially of land – is the right of all people and it explicitly symbolises liberty or not being a slave.

*Bishop Dr Stephen Ismail Munga, Tanzania,
Peace with the Earth Worship, Medan, Indonesia, 2012*



1. Land - mother of life

Prayer

The environmental song

6

Our most creative almighty father
Oh How creative thee
My beautiful country
The pearl of the Indian ocean
Is a priceless gift from God
Oh, Christ thy lord please help
Us to protect these valuable treasures //

The fresh and crystal waters
The long and windy creepers
This wonderful land is a blessing for us
Destroy the pollution around
To protect our animals and forests
Oh, Christ thy lord please help
Us to protect these valuable treasures //

*Malsha Nawanjani, member of the Methodist Church
Bandarawela, Sri Lanka*





Story

Benzoin story – Conflict with Toba Pulp Lestari (TPL), Indonesia

Two hours' drive from the paper factory, the forest is still intact. Like his father and great grandfather before him, Hapusan Sinembela earns his livelihood from the precious resin of the benzoin trees, from which aromatic incense is produced. The trees still standing here and there in the jungle thicket are lovingly cared for and ritual singing is part of that care. "Oh dear daughter, your father is resting now... Oh dear daughter growing well..." But the trees are in danger. The deforestation machines have eaten their ways just a few hundred metres from them. The benzoin forest that is sacred to the villagers is to be replaced by eucalyptus plantations for the paper industry. The sensitive jungle soil is quickly leached and, in the end, only wasteland is left.

People's livelihoods have been dependent on these benzoin trees for generations. When you look at these trees, they may look like natural trees but they are planted, managed and taken care of by people very carefully, as if these trees were their daughters. So they really have to care and love them. ...Many creations live here together in harmony with people. "If we surrender this land to Toba Pulp Lestari, the people will become slaves of the company. Then we will not be happy anymore."

*Extract from the video film, "A light for every hut"
by Johannes Meier, Germany*

Prayer

Prayer of repentance

Lord God, we know you are our creator. You created us in your own image. You gave us responsibility of dominion over the earth and all in it. We repent that we have not been good stewards of your creation. We have caused global warming through burning fossil fuels, we have cut down a lot of trees without replacing them, we have advanced in technology and increased in population, hence manufacturing machines that pollute your nature, we have constantly benefitted from the natural resources and in return giving nothing back. Lord, grant us your wisdom, so that we may turn back and preserve our environment. Help us to always stick to the proper use of the natural resources so that we do not continually harm climate. We ask all of these in Jesus name, Amen.

*Rev. Emmanuel Ngambeki, Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Tanzania, Karagwe Diocese (ELCT/KAD), Tanzania*

2. Water - source of life

Song

Tusisahau Kutunza Mazinga – Let's remember, Rwanda

Music and lyrics: Poul Bayona, Rwanda, English: Philipp Sandner

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Tusisahau Kutunza Mazinga - Let's remember

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of six staves of music with corresponding lyrics in Kinyarwanda and English. The lyrics are: Ndu-gu za - ngu tu - si - je tu - ka - sa - ha - u ka - zi / Let' re - mem-ber, my sis - ters, bro - thers, re - mem-ber: our - ye - tu mu hi - mu ya ma - zi - gi - ra mwa - ya - o - na - na - na - nature we have been giv - en to care for. When for years we ya - me - a - nza ku ha - ri - bi - ka mu da ndi o hu - u ku - have - done our best to de - stroy it - take re - spon - sa - bi - li - ty. Refrain a - za wa - ji bi - ka Tu - a - mu - e - mo - ja Time is now for ac - tion. Let us speak with one voice kwa - mba tu - ya - li nde ma - zi - ngi - ra ye - tu kwa ma - nu - and try to pre - serve it. It's in our own in - terest to pre - serve fa a ya - tu. our en - vi - ron - ment.

Reflection

God, idols and drought

While debating with Ahab, the King of Israel, the prophet Elijah announces an extremely great drought that would last for several years. "There will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years" (1Kings 17:1). Ahab had established the worship of the Canaanite rain god Baal in Israel (18:18). But Baal turns out to be impotent and,

now, as a consequence, the rain fails to appear. The result is a great famine in Samaria (18:2).

Drought and famine are present-day issues: Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya – a disaster that is also a consequence of climate change. At the time of Elijah and Ahab, the cause

was not climate change but a conflict between and over gods. A decision had to be taken: whom does Israel follow, whom do they worship and in whom do they believe? Thus the question was: which faith is the cause of disaster? With this as our starting point, our question arises: which faith in our present time is the cause of climate change? The worship of which idols is the cause of environmental disasters?

We are able to identify the powers that are trying to control us and we have to admit that, quite often, they are, indeed, successful. One of them is called "growth". It is truly gratifying that productivity increased at a time of human development and that needs can be met to a large extent. Simultaneously, though, the word "growth" – "economic growth" – became something of a magic formula. Politics and economy regard it with reverence, look on it as a miracle drug and hope it might put an end to current crises. But, at the same time, we know that

quantitative growth simply causes new and deeper economic and ecological crises. That is how idols are: they promise life and lead to death.

"Mobility" is another power. Over thousands of years, people developed the ability to move more and more freely to every corner of the world. But this achievement has developed an independent existence, develops its own logic, follows its own rules, puts pressure on people and destroys the environment. That is how idols are: they promise freedom and lead to addiction.

It is not always easy to answer this question: when do growth and mobility improve the quality of life and when does the idol – the independent power – turn up that, in the end, turns against humankind.

Rev. Dr Eberhard Loeschke, Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (EKiR), Germany

Story

Gifts of God are endangered

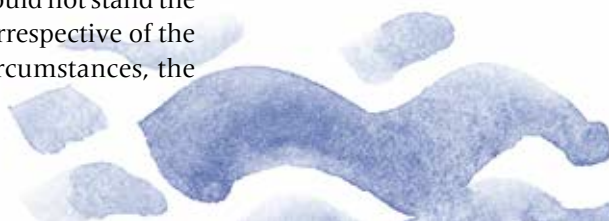
We can't sit back and put ourselves in an idling mode and watch on how the world goes down because of trouble caused by humanity. Climate change is no yoke and every human being needs to get involved before it is too late. Besides troubling signs in nature and happenings that are touching heavily on our existence, I witnessed in a small but worrisome way that even WIND can get scarce. In the past I never thought so deeply about the importance of wind in our lives like in December 2011 and January 2012. Windiness can be irritating in some parts of our country and there are places that are terribly windy. As much as wind can cause disasters so also can the absence of wind cause suffering not only to human beings but also to livestock on farms.

As I searched for quietness and rest after a long and tough year, I had the chance to be on a resettlement farm for some days. As we all know, water is a very important resource and component for our existence and on many farms in Namibia, windmills are being used for pumping water to reservoirs. Almost for three days the windmill on the farm did not make a move. Everything seems to be dead. No drop of water from the pipes and no sign of life visible. The heat was unbearable and although we did not measure the exact temperature because of the absence of such an instrument it must have been over 45 degrees C. The livestock could not stand the heat and searched for shade all over. Irrespective of the rampant situation and intolerable circumstances, the

windmills show no sign of willingness to make a move because of the absence of WIND. What a shocking discovery that even WIND is absent because of climate change?

It brought some sense of discovery that the call all over the world that we all should be role players in preserving the universe is a call to be taken very very seriously by all of us. Our governments, churches and other organisations should make this a standing agenda and programmatic item. God ordered seed time and harvest, sunshine and rain and all that sustains life, these gifts of God are endangered and poorest of the poor will be the ones feeling the damage the most. God created a fruitful earth to produce to our needs but all is being damaged because of our selfishness and greed. God gave us dominion over all things on earth, and through this made us fellow workers in His creation. May He give us all wisdom and reverence to use the resources of nature wisely so that no one may suffer from abuse of them, and that generations yet to come may continue to praise His name for His bounty. May God bless those who are working for safeguarding the earth for a better future.

Rev. Hatani Kisting, Vice-President Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), Namibia

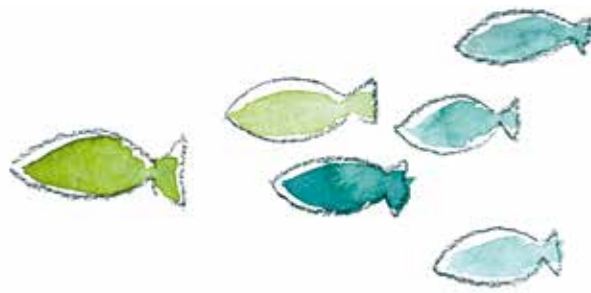


2. Water- source of life

Biblical text

Noah's Arc, Genesis 9

Psalm 1:3



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Story

Experiences from the Philippines

Asleep in the middle of the night of 16th December 2011, thousands of people were caught by surprise by typhoon "Sendong" and the raging flood-waters that crushed their homes and washed away their means of livelihood. The death toll reached 1,453. This unexpected rush of water came from the mountains that have been denuded as a result of illegal logging and the rivers that overflowed because of the unexpected 12 straight hours of heavy rain – something never before experienced in the North-eastern part of Mindanao, in the Philippines.

Again, on the 9th August 2012, ten cities and municipalities in Metro Manila and six provinces in Luzon were placed under a state of calamity on account of the massive flooding caused by four days of non-stop monsoon rains.

These traumatic calamities in recent months have made the people aware that God's plan of order among His creation is now disordered and the wonderful cycle of seasons that God created is now distorted. Our climate has really changed. We no longer experience the normal cycle of dry and rainy seasons. We no longer enjoy the freshness of the air and the waters in our rivers and seas. We can no longer stay out in the sun, even as early as seven o'clock in the morning, because of its penetrating heat.

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), which is one of the 34 member churches of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM), believes that human beings are given responsibility to care and protect all that God has made: land, seas, air, water, birds, plants and all living crea-

tures. God made human beings stewards of His good and beautiful creation. But human beings have failed miserably in their responsibility.

Through their lust to possess and to amass for themselves the wealth and bounty of the earth, together with their total wantonness and disregard for the welfare of creation, human beings, for example through mining and the logging industry, have committed disastrous acts. These have caused the rapid disappearance of the forest and the denudation of the mountains. And when the rains came, the rivers swelled into floods that inundated farms and towns.

Reconciliation between the economy and ecology is urgently needed in order to stop the rapid destruction of the basic conditions of human beings throughout the world. It is not those trying to protect the environment that are the "criminals" here, but those destroying the environment for "profit" and "greed of money".

I guess the Philippines is not the only the country that experiences massive destruction and calamities as a result of climate change. Therefore, it is a challenge for each one of us, who feels responsible to care for the creation that God has entrusted to us, to act out in his or her own capacity to care for it, so that our climate and environment will continue to be enjoyed by the generations that will come after us.

Elsie Joy Dela Cruz, Pastor, United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), Philippines





Prayer

Call to worship

We must ask God to help us
When god created heaven and earth
God gave the earth boundaries and limits
And God saw that it was good.
But today temperatures are rising, the ice is melting.
And seas and rivers are covering the land.

They also say when God created the world
God let water be forth to water and
nourish the dry earth.
But today deserts spread and people seeks refuge
from droughts.

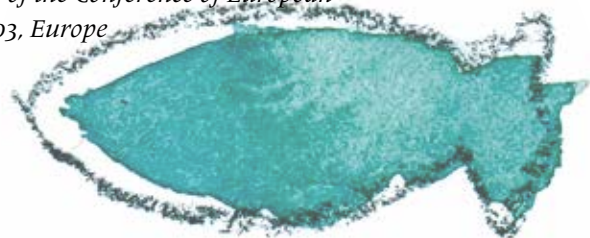
We must combine all our strength and energy today
to combat climate change,
to work together to save God's creation
that we are part of.
We must pray to God for help.

*Keld B. Hansen, European Christian Environmental
Network (ECEN), 2009*

Drama – Water – Life-Death Loving creator

- L** Loving Creator,
you care for the land by sending rain;
you make it fertile and fruitful.
What a rich harvest you provide!
- A** All your creation sings for joy.
- L** When we take care of the land,
sowing the seed and reaping the harvest,
- A** All your creation sings for joy.
- L** When we keep streams and rivers clean,
when we respect the purity of lakes and seas,
- A** All your creation sings for joy.
- L** When we recognise that we are one family,
brothers and sisters together,
with responsibility for the land and the waters,
- A** All your creation sings for joy
for you bless us abundantly all our days.

*Per Harling, from Gloria Deo, Prayers & Hymns
for the 12th Assembly of the Conference of European
Churches (CEC), 2003, Europe*



3. Air - breath of life

Song

Disabar! - Be wise and be patient!, Indonesia


12

Disabar!
Be Patient!

Song & Lyrics:
Sutarjo (GKJTU, Indonesia)


Javanese Language, Indonesia

D \flat




Di - sa - bar, o - jo gam-pang ne - su! Di - sa -
Be - wise and think be - fore you talk. Be pa -

4 E \flat



bar, o - jo gru - sa - gru - su! Di - sa - bar, o - jo ngge-ge-mong-
tient don't a - ct has - til - ly Do not run be - fore - you can

7 F B \flat



so! Gus - ti - a - sih wong sa - bar pra - ca - ya.
walk The Lord loves those who are ke - en and be - lieve.

Biblical text

Psalm 104:30

When you send forth your breath,
they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

Deuteronomy 20:19-20



Reflection

Responsibility for God's creation

In the Christian faith, each of us has a dual role. On the one hand, we are creatures among fellow creatures. But, on the other, each of us was created in the image of God. As human beings, we are able to reflect on who and what we are and the consequences of what we do. We, therefore, bear a special responsibility for nature, for God's creation: the responsibility to cultivate and to preserve the earth in trust.

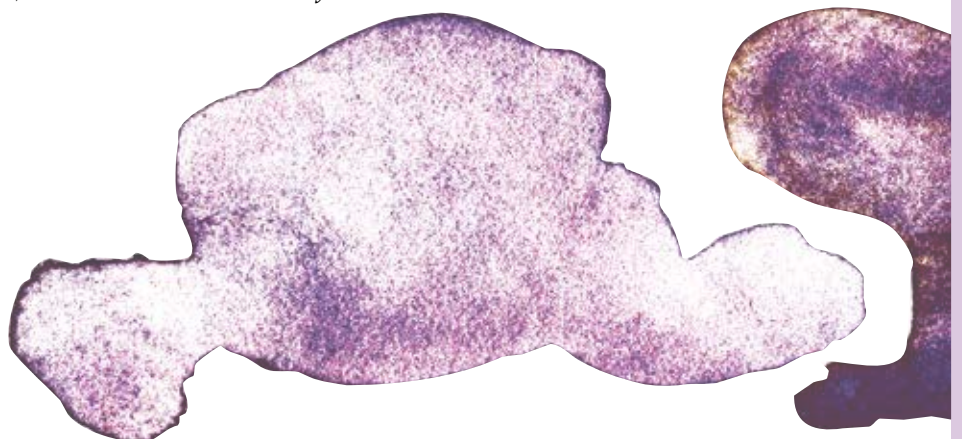
It is not the unlimited mandate to rule the world bestowed upon us by God, and not our capability to subdue nature that makes us human beings the "Pride of Creation". We will not become the image of God until we fulfil our responsibility to "cultivate and preserve" the earth.

The laws governing the Sabbath and the sabbatical illustrate this responsibility to "cultivate and preserve". These laws are based on the guiding principle that there should be no unrestrained exploitation of the soil, of animals or of

human beings. They stand in opposition to boundless immoderation. There are limits that have to be accepted. The dignity and freedom of other people and of creation itself set limits for us. And we must adhere to these limits. But we must also set rules for ourselves and abide by them. In relation to climate change, this limitation means, firstly, a rapid reduction in the use of fossil fuels and the renunciation of growth in industrialised countries such as Germany, if this growth is at the expense of nature and people in other countries. Self-limitation also includes the equitable sharing of the goods God has provided for us, in order to make life possible for human beings as well as for nature.

"Cultivate and preserve" includes everything important: acting creatively while, at the same time, setting limitations.

Katja Breyer, Evangelical Church of Westfalia (EKvW), Germany



3. Air – breath of life

Story

The cost of oxygen and initiatives for planting trees

14

Currently, there is a story about the cost of oxygen and importance of trees going around in the Internet. It says, "In one day a human being breathes oxygen equivalent to 3 cylinders. Each oxygen cylinder on an average costs Rs. 700/-, without subsidy. So, in a day one uses oxygen worth Rs. 2,100/- and for a full year it is Rs. 766,500/-. And, if we consider an average life span of 65 years; the cost of oxygen we use become a staggering sum of Rs. 50,000,000 (converted 700.000 Euro)/. Fifty million rupees! All this oxygen is derived free of charge from the surrounding trees and plants. However, very few people look at trees as a resource and there is rampant cutting of tree going on everywhere. This must be stopped now."

At the end, one is asked to forward this message to friends so that they also take care for trees and plants to enable us to get more free oxygen.

This is just a story and the actual cost is irrelevant, but I find it interesting and it is underlining the importance of trees in our life. Whereas all over the world we find efforts for reforestation as well as efforts for reduction of

deforestation, because forests are proved to absorb carbon dioxide that is added in the atmosphere by burning of fossil fuels as source of energy, for most of the people in developing countries, especially in Africa, trees are the main source of energy. Firewood accounts for over 90 per cent of the total energy consumed in these countries. This is the main cause of environmental degradation due to deforestation.

There are therefore initiatives going on for tree planting and introduction of energy saving stoves (to reduce consumption of firewood) so as to reduce deforestation and degradation of forests and associated impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem. Trees will reduce soil erosion and nutrient loss and consequently help farmers to improve their crop and livestock production. This is a timely call for everyone. It should be part of lessons for environment protection for all schools and for all communities.

Richard Madete, regional consultant (Africa), UEM climate protection programme, Tanzania





Prayer

Kyrie

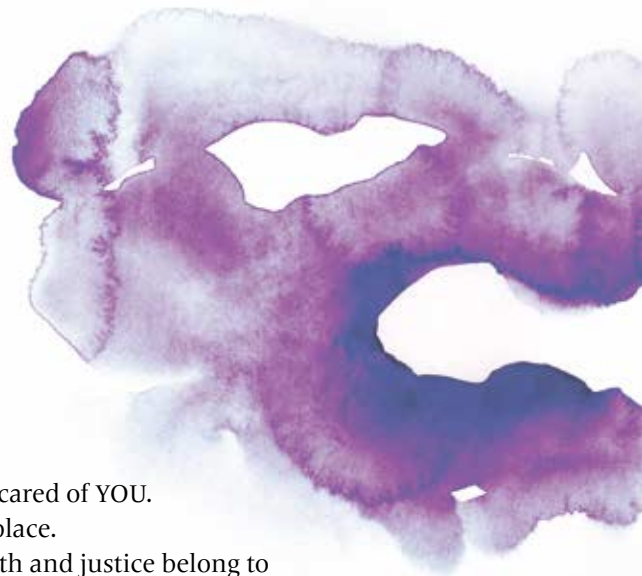
L We ruin life by starting the fire in our woods
We replace the fresh air with smoke
We poison our clean water and bath our children with waste
We killed our grandchildren by inheriting them poison and pest
God, have mercy on us

All Kyrie, kyrie, Eleison. Kyrie, kyrie, Eleison.
Ya Tuhan, Ya Tuhan Kasihani, Ya Tuhan, Ya Tuhan Kasihani

L O God, we are ignoring the natural disaster, but nature is you.
We are speechless, afraid of the laws abusing the nature. And we are scared of YOU.
And even a church as your body, often keeps quiet looking for a safe place.
O God we are waiting for the new the heaven and earth where the truth and justice belong to
all your creation
O God, have a mercy of Lord

All Kyrie, kyrie, Eleison. Kyrie, kyrie, Eleison.
Ya Tuhan, Ya Tuhan Kasihani, Ya Tuhan, Ya Tuhan Kasihani

Karo Batak Protestant Church (GBKP), Worship, Medan, Indonesia, 2012



4. Power - power of life

Song

God' call for today, The Philippines

16

God's Call For Today

Words & Music:
Luna L. Dingayan, 1989
Transc. Perla P. Dingayan, 1989

1 From ma - ny na - tions we have come with
2 We've heard the les - sons of the past, how
3 Cre - a - tion groans now in tra - vail in

4 bur - ning hearts and... minds To share to all what we have
greed des - troyed hu - ma - ni - ty. The na - tions rise and fall in
need of care and dig - ni - ty Come peo - ple of the world, let's

7 seen and heard as God's call in our lands and... seas; We have
flames of war and the peo - ple live in mi - se - ry.
share our live for to live is to care for the earth.

10 seen the strug - gles of the poor, we have seen our bond of u - ni -

13 ty we have heard... God call - ing us to - day: Pray for

16 peace, work for jus - tice and res - tore cre - a - tion's dig - ni - ty.

Quotations

"We conducted a JPIC workshop in Kaliki in 2011, but were feeling we already came too late. Many companies have entered Merauke and money has become more important than anything else for the people."

Dora Balubun, Co-ordinator of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Desk of the Evangelical Christian Church in Tanah Papua Synod, (GKI-TP), Indonesia

"The company is not a saviour. It steals land rights at the expense of vulnerable."

Nicolaus Adi Saputra, Catholic Archbishop of Merauke Diocese, West-Papua, Indonesia

Biblical text

Exodus 32:1–19

Psalms 96:11–13

Reflection

God – Power of Life

Power! Power is good. That is why everyone wants to have it in some form – in family, work, politics, etc. That is why it is important to empower people in different ways. But I remember one sentence in one of the Spiderman films, an old man telling Spiderman: »With great power, comes great responsibility.«

Over the last 100 years, the population of the world has grown from two to seven billion people. No wonder the pressure on the environment is so severe that we fight for resources on the same planet which do not increase. There is no place on earth that is not touched by this. As we humans have received great power to »rule over the earth«, we have also great responsibility. The duty to take care of the earth is great, and we must take it seriously. The problem is that instead of taking care of the earth responsibly, we focus on exploiting the earth, because we can; we have the power! And between us, those with political, economic or circumstantial power are able to use it to oppress and exploit others.

The biggest problem the world faces is its lack of recognition of the relevance of God, the Supernatural, in our own lives. As we think we have power over our lives, we forget our responsibility for stewardship. Many people no longer connect God with the appointment to a new job, or with hunting, or breaking ground for a new house or farm. Many do not remember to thank God when a disease is accurately diagnosed, or a child is born, or promotion at work is given. God does not matter. We think that we as human beings have achieved these things, through whatever means available to us. We have taken for ourselves what God has only given to us as stewards. We think the world belongs to us. But in fact: »the earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it; the world and those who live in it« (Ps. 24:1). Billy Graham once said, the discovery of new galaxies and planets give him even more reasons to praise God, because: »God is the creator of it all«

The power of God is also an enigma. Many times we ask ourselves, where is God? Why is God silent when we need his intervention? Where is God when drought, typhoons, earthquakes or tornadoes are causing the deaths of innocent people? Where is God when poor people are crying

and praying in vain, while those in power drive them out of their lands to give way to mining and oil drilling or to new development projects? Why doesn't God respond quickly to the prayers of the church, despite our efforts? Such questions have always been an enigma to the people of faith of all generations. And we do not have the answers!

But we have some idea. God chose to work with people in the world. God gave us responsibility to be stewards and care for one another. And God chooses not to punish us each time we do wrong, but calls us to turn to God and love our neighbor. God uses his power responsibly: not to crush the sinner but to call the sinner to repentance. We are called to turn to God in love and, therefore, to serve the world with the same love. If we do not, God is in agony with the suffering part of his wonderful creation. This is a God who uses power very responsibly, not to crush but to save even the sinners!

Let us use the power God has given us over the earth in the same responsible manner as God deals with us. Caring for all members of creation with this love should be our goal.

*Rev. Dr Fidon Mwombeki, General Secretary,
United Evangelical Mission*



4. Power-power of life

Song

Wandle das Leben, Germany

English: Christian Sandner

18

Wandle das Leben
Kyrie-Lied zur Kampagne „Klimawandel – Lebenswandel“

Dein O dem, hei-lig, durch-we-he die Welt. So lebt sie. Er-fri-sche die See-le,
So lebt sie.

Herz, Mut und Sinn. E-lei-son. Wand-le das Le-ben.
E-lei-son. Wand-le das Le-ben.

Wand-le den Sinn. Wand-le die Er-de ich at-me, ich bin. at-mest da-rin.
Wand-le den Sinn. Wand-le die Er-de, ich du at-me, ich bin. at-mest da-rin.

Transform our Lives, Germany

2. Es atmet dich, Gott, ein Wal im Meer – Dort lebt er.
Zieht alleine seine Bahn, ruft stumm sich an – Eleison.
3. Es atmet dich, Gott, eine Eiche im Wald – Dort lebt sie.
Sie steht traurig da, dem Ende nah – Eleison.
4. Es atmet dich, Gott, ein Adler im Wind – Dort lebt er.
Schwebt einsam hinan, schreit still dich an – Eleison.
5. Es atmet dich, Christus, die Kleine im Tuch – Noch lebt sie.
Sie liegt hungrig da, dem Weinen nah – Eleison.
6. Dein Odem, heilig, durchwehe uns hier – So leben wir.
Erfrische die Seele, Herz, Mut und Sinn – Eleison.

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Text und Melodie: Mechthild Werner, Till Werner 2010

Satz: Fritz Baltruweit 2010

1. Your holy breath let flow through the world for living,
Refresh our souls, our hearts and our minds: Eleison.

REFRAIN:

- Transform our lives, transform our minds, transform the earth: I breathe, I am. Transform our lives, transform our minds, transform the earth: You breathe in her.
2. Your breath, O God, in the whale in the sea, for living.
Alone on his way with a silent call: Eleison.
 3. Your breath, O God, in the oak of the woods, for living.
So sadly, it grows, and its end is so near: Eleison.
 4. Your breath, O God, in the eagle in the sky, for living.
He's lonesomely gliding with a quiet call: Eleison.
 5. Your breath, O Christ, in the tiny child, still living.
It's lying hungry and crying soft: Eleison.
 6. Your holy breath, God, let flow through us, for living.
Refresh our souls, our hearts and our minds: Eleison.

Story

And the investor brought the light

Matus recently got a mobile – and, with it, a bad conscience. Together with four other clan chiefs, the Papuan has leased a large part of his community land to the Rajawali sugar-cane company. Or perhaps he has sold it; they don't know exactly. In the end, it was already dark that March evening when they succumbed to the pressure from the firm.

Land-grabbing has many faces. In Indonesia, as in other countries in the global South, entire villages have been uprooted and exiled in order to make room for plans by domestic and foreign investors.

The question of land ownership is already highly contested in Indonesia. From the point of view of the government, the land belongs to the state – unless someone can prove through a lease that they are the legal owner. But this practically never happens, since such documents were hardly ever issued in the past, and today the land authorities usually refuse to issue common-law leases retroactively. This way, the government can lease the land to the highest-bidding investor at its own discretion. Such procedures are actually subject to the UN Declaration on the Protection of Indigenous Peoples, which stipulates that the “free, prior and informed consent” (FPIC) of indigenous peoples be obtained before their land is sold. The government simply does not acknowledge the native inhabitants of Indonesia as indigenous. But since local and regional laws can deviate

from the Jakarta doctrine, many investors will conclude additional contracts with the local residents.

Matus's village is only the beginning. Kristina Neubauer, co-ordinator of the West Papua Network (WPN) and the Faith-Based Network on West Papua (FBN), estimates that in ten years Papua will look just like North Sumatra does now. In August 2010, the Indonesian agricultural ministry started the agricultural mega-project, MIFEE (Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate), which is intended to transform 1.2 million hectares of land around the South Papua area of Merauke into mega-plantations. By 2011, 36 investors had already received concessions to cultivate wood, sugar-cane, maize, and soya beans.

Most villages are left to their own devices when making the decision, unprepared for the tricks of corporations. “The churches should make it clear to their congregations how the firms operate”, suggests the Papua team. Again and again, in both Papua and Sumatra, the UEM delegates observed the same pattern, regardless of whether it was mining corporations, agricultural concerns, or paper factories that were involved: the company would address targeted, influential members of the congregation and use them to convince the rest.

Christina Felschen, freelance journalist, Germany

Prayer

Lord you have created heaven and earth for our goodness, but many times we have not appreciated your creatures, on contrary we exploit it

United Evangelical Mission (UEM), Asia regional assembly, 2011

God of power, God of people

- L** God of power, God of people,
A you are the life of all living things,
- L** the energy that fills the earth,
A the vitality that brings to birth,
- L** the impetus toward making whole whatever is bruised or broken.
A In you we grow to know the truth that sets all creation free.
- L** You are the song that the whole earth sings,
A the promise liberation brings, now and forever.

From Words and Songs of Reconciliation and Praise, Graz, Europe, 1997

Blessing

We have been guests of Jesus Christ.
We have received God's good gifts.
Now we go to our homes,
to our neighbours, to our work
equipped to put Jesus' words and being into action,
to be the salt of the world,
to seek justice,
to make peace,
to preserve the creation,
to gain life.
ALL Thanks and amen.

2nd European Ecumenical Assembly, Graz, Europe, 1997



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Climate Spirituality

»Climate Spirituality« is a collection of material on the subject of the environment and human rights that includes songs, biblical texts, reflections, stories, and prayers. The collection is now available both as a support for congregations from UEM member churches and as a forum for the exchange of ideas. »Climate Spirituality« is an attempt to help us join forces and to demonstrate how we could successfully exchange material which can be used in our spiritual work within the churches.

One thing is clear: we can only make good on this claim if everyone who wishes to take part in »Climate Spirituality« contributes their own ideas, songs, biblical texts, reflections, stories, and prayers about climate justice, environmental protection and human rights from their own congregations, church districts, and churches. If you would like to share your »spiritual« ideas about the creation in relation with climate justice and environmental protection and human rights with a larger group within the UEM communion, simply forward them to the Department for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation at jpic@vemission.org. Your suggestions will be published on the UEM website (www.vemission.org/



climatespirituality), where they can be downloaded by other members of our UEM communion. The UEM website represents an opportunity to collect and publish all of the material already available on the subject and therefore to display a much more comprehensive collection of material than can be shown in this brochure.

We look forward to hearing from you!

»Climate Spirituality« will also be available in German, Bahasa Indonesian, French and Swahili by the end of the year.