



CAPA AND GREEN ANGLICANS
MOVEMENT AFRICA PRESENT



HARMONY WITH CREATION

Biblical Reflections on
Eco-Theology Course



**Insights from the Green Anglicans
Movement, Africa.**

April - May , 2023

Acknowledgements

The Green Anglicans Movement, Africa steps out today with this piece of work as its contribution to ongoing discourse and engagement on the Fifth Mark of Mission in the Anglican Communion. While it has been a long and audacious journey, we are delighted that this little contribution has come out in this form many thanks to the efforts and dedication of a number of people whose contributions, support and prayers we acknowledge with very sincere appreciation.

We are grateful to the discussants who offered their time and knowledge every week; Shamiso Mupara (Zimbabwe), Rev. Dennis Milanzi (Zambia), Tonderai Muzhinji (Zimbabwe), Rev. Pilirani Geoffrey Jonasi (Malawi), Prof. Joseph Amuri Nyembo (DRC), Erasto Richard Magamba (Uganda), Rev. Dennis Nthenge (Kenya), Rev. Kudakwashe Madzime (Zimbabwe), Dr Lisa Adjei (Christian Aid - UK), Bishop Jean Pierre Methode (Rwanda), Rev. Godfrey Adera (Kenya), Rev. Mercio Langa (Mozambique), Rev. Canon. Dr. Rachel Mash (South Africa) and Rev. Dr. Joseph Otoo (Ghana).

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Everyone's input, support and prayers are hereby acknowledged and appreciated, especially the many whose names we never got to know and whose faces we never got to see.

God bless you all.

---ALL GLORY TO GOD---

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FOREWORD

It appears that God's command to care for creation has been overlooked, given the degradation caused by human activities on the elements of creation. In our pursuit to meet human needs, we have treated the elements of creation as if they are inexhaustible, disregarding the limits set by God, the Creator, who ordained periods of rest for nature's recovery. Regrettably, the understanding of creation's need for recovery seems to have been lost on humanity, extending even to resources considered renewable.

To emphasize and rekindle the Church's sense of stewardship towards nature, the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa, in collaboration with the Anglican Environmental Network of Africa (Green Anglicans Movement, Africa), engaged in extensive discussions about the current state of the environment and the Church's role in its preservation. These conversations, (incorporating both technical and biblical perspectives) underscored the existing gaps in both knowledge and practice regarding our collective sense of stewardship.

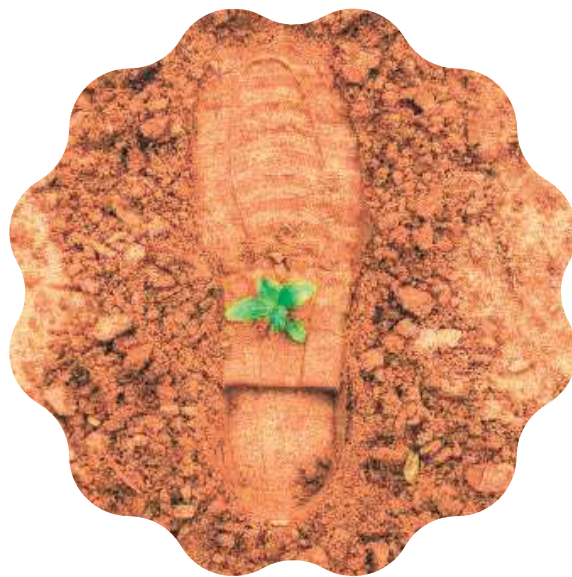
While commendable actions are being taken to alleviate the impact of human activities on creation, there is an urgent need for more comprehensive efforts. Specifically, there is a call to build bodies of knowledge, develop systems, and establish practices that can significantly reduce or, in some cases, eliminate the adverse impacts of human activities on Mother Earth.

The Church occupies a unique position to be a prophetic voice in the call to action. It possesses the space and opportunity to mobilize for actions that will preserve the earth for our collective well-being, as some have already demonstrated. However, there is still much work to be done. It would be illusory for certain parts of the Church to believe that these issues do not concern them. Like the ostrich, let us not bury our heads in the sand and deceive ourselves into thinking that the problem does not exist. The reality is that if the rate of degradation continues, human life is dangerously at risk. The time to act is now. Let us heed the clarion call to action and work towards saving Mother Earth and securing the very existence of the human race.

Today, we experience the context where “the lizard eats chili and the frog sweats for it”. Indeed, God will hold each one of us accountable for our actions. While the Church has a crucial role in advocating for justice in matters of creation care and stewardship, it must also lead by example, to be the first to stand up and do what is right.

Long live Mother Earth. Long live the Body of Christ.

Venerable Joseph William Kofi deGraft-Johnson
General Secretary
Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA)



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE GREEN ANGLICANS MOVEMENT, AFRICA

"In our Journey as Christians on this earth that God has entrusted to our care , our theology remains the foundation. Eco-theology is very important because it explores our relationship and the communion between God, Nature, and Humans as well as the impact of our Faith on environmental challenges. This is why we are happy and proud to see the contribution of these different voices across Africa in this publication."

Bishop Bertin Subi Mwale
(Bishop, Anglican Diocese of Katanga)
Chairperson
Steering Committee
Green Anglicans Movement, Africa





INTRODUCTION

The Green Anglicans Movement, Africa (Anglican Environmental Network of Africa) was launched in Lusaka in September 2021 under the auspices of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA).

A Two-year action plan was put together and one of the focuses was on Eco - Theology. A team of interested persons was put together to plan an online Eco- Theology course. We were very blessed to discover that across the continent we have leading eco-theologians in many fields!

The course was to be as practical as possible both from a theological and practical point of view. The course spanned a period of seven weeks and engaged conversations around Climate Change, Deforestation, Restoration, Environmental Degradation, Land Degradation, Waste and Water. Each session of the course started with an input from an activist on the topic and the second speaker (an eco-theologian), responded biblically to the challenge.

There were 349 participants from 27 countries with 103 participants completing the course and receiving a certificate. One of the requirements for completing the course was to prepare a biblical meditation on one of the topics. The quality of the assignments was very encouraging and some of these reflections have been selected and put together into a small booklet to be circulated as all seasons reflection and also as blogs to go out on social media.

We pray that this publication from emerging Eco-Theologians from across Africa will be a blessing.

Rev. Canon. Dr. Rachel Mash
Steering Committee
Green Anglicans Movement, Africa.



TOPIC ONE: DEFORESTATION

DISCUSSANTS

Find the recording of their presentations on this [YouTube Link](#).



SHAMISO MUPARA (ZIMBABWE)

DEFORESTATION IN AFRICA

Shamiso, the Founder and Executive Director of Environmental Buddies Zimbabwe (EBZ), is a leading figure in climate justice, reforestation, afforestation, waste management, and resource conservation. She holds a Master's degree in Environmental Science, and has also completed the Women for the Environment Africa Leadership Course and holds a Certificate in Occupational Health & Safety, complementing her Bachelor's in Environmental Studies and Sociology.

Her commitment to restoring native forests is deeply rooted in her rural upbringing in Zimbabwe, where she witnessed firsthand the detrimental impact of extensive forest exploitation, particularly on women and girls. Concerned about the escalating desertification and pollution attributed to extractive industries, commercial agriculture, and mining, Shamiso established EBZ in 2017.

In her role as Executive Director, Shamiso leads community-based projects in agroforestry, reforestation, and afforestation in rural and peri-urban areas. Through EBZ, she offers practical solutions to Zimbabwe's shrinking forests and mounting pollution crisis, addressing critical environmental challenges that hinder rural communities' self-sustainability.

Beyond her environmental endeavours, Shamiso extends support to her community by assisting with the payment of school fees for vulnerable students and caring for the elderly, acts that embody a holistic approach to community upliftment.



REV. CANON DENNIS MILANZI (ZAMBIA)

BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO DEFORESTATION

Rev. Canon Dennis Milanzi is an Anglican priest with 26 years of ministerial and pastoral ministry experience. He is married to Dr Peggy Mutale-Milanzi, a University Lecturer and Head of Department, at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Kwame Nkrumah University, Kabwe Zambia. They are blessed with 4 biological children and several adopted children.

Though originally from the Anglican Diocese of Eastern Zambia Canon Milanzi is currently resident in the Anglican Diocese of Northern Zambia based at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation Campus where he works as the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of Theological Education by Extension in Zambia (TEEZ).

TEEZ is an Ecumenical institution and Ministry of several Christian denominations spread across Zambia. The institution currently has 10 denominations as sponsoring members. Canon Milanzi's passion in ministry includes Climate and Environment Justice among others.

Canon Milanzi holds a Certificate in Management Development, a Diploma in Theology, a Diploma in Religious Studies, a Bachelor of Theology with Education (Religious Studies Education & Geography), and a Master of Theology. He has also done several in-service training in Church and Social Justice. He is currently a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) candidate in Theology at the University of Free States in South Africa.



PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS



**REV. CAPT.
THÉRANCE NDUWAYO
(BURUNDI)**

“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”

Isaiah 65:17(NIV)

The Bible does indeed speak to us of the Renewal of the heavens and the earth in the Book of Isaiah. A question arises: Why does God want to renew the earth, and has he already planned it? It is because in his creation plan God had, on unproductive soil, done everything right so that the earth was filled with balanced ecosystems. We can read in Genesis 1.2; 1.11; 1.20; 1.24 that for each type of living being, God blessed saying **“Be fruitful, fill the earth, ...the waters and the heavens.”**

Interestingly, God gave humans dominion over creation not to destroy but to protect (Genesis 1.26) and even give names to all creation (Genesis 2.29). One wonders then why God plans to renew the earth? It all began with humans, who disobeyed God by not respecting the established order. The consequence of disobedience led to the degradation of life both for man and for the other creatures on earth.

“The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled, So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” (Genesis 6.6-7) (NIV).

The relationship between man and God has repercussions on all creation, according to the passages in the Bible. This is because God had placed creation at man's disposal for his good so that he would be grateful.

The mandate that the church has had since its existence is to perpetuate and steward the good relationship between God and his creation, starting with himself and then with other creatures. As a result, we cannot say that we love God without also protecting his creation through proper use and protection. We cannot return to the paradise of Eden with our fallen nature, but we are co-creators with God in restoring and protecting creation (Revelation 21: 1; 4-5).



**ANTHONY KAMSUR ELISAMA
(SOUTH SUDAN)**

“The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes, and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt.” ~ Isaiah 24: 5-6a (NIV)

In the cited passage, we read of the human disobedience of God's laws and their repercussions.

Disobedience is the act of not following and observing God's laws, instructions, and covenant. God made a covenant with human beings and gave them laws and instructions to be followed in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. Violation of God's laws and commandments means people have disobeyed or fallen short, which is a sin.

But the prophet Isaiah is reminding us that the earth is suffering as a result of our sins; we have twisted God's instructions and violated God's laws and his everlasting covenant.

Therefore, in this text, it is very clear that due to human disobedience, we have twisted God's instructions, violated God's laws, and broken his everlasting covenant.

This has resulted in the suffering of the earth. It is human sin that causes the earth to suffer the consequences we are experiencing now. We see that the earth is mourning and has dried up. Crops are wasting away and withering. Even great people are wasting away (Isaiah 24:4).

We read of other climate disasters in other verses: (Isaiah 5:10)- Ten acres of vineyard will not produce even six gallons of wine, and ten baskets of seeds will yield only one basket of grain due to poor soil and loss of fertility. We also read of the flood (Genesis 7:19).

These verses summarize some of the impacts of climate change which are interconnected and related to each other -droughts and floods leading to food insecurity. The land loses its fertility and we see a reduction in harvests and an increase in diseases.

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV) says: **"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land".**

The call is for humans to repent and turn from their evil ways in order for the land to be healed. When you are forgiven, you are a new being and start walking, doing everything by faith following God's laws, instruction and obeying the covenant. Here, people will start protecting, and conserving the environment and use it sustainably.

If we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, in him we will live in the light (1 John 1:7) and through him we are re-joined to God the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Also, the earth's curse will be removed by God and he will pour out his eternal blessing by healing the earth (land). With sustainable utilization of the land and its resources, eco-systems will improve, the land will be healed and crops will increase.

Now, not tomorrow, we must take steps to save the world from the disasters caused by climate change.



TAKUDZWA GRACE MAROWA (ZIMBABWE)

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” ~ Psalm 24:1 (NIV)

The issue of climate justice can be related to the creation of everything on earth, which belongs to God for humanity to use fairly for the benefit of all. Humanity was commissioned to multiply, rule over, and subdue the earth, but this has led to environmental degradation and climate injustice. The consequences include distrust, greediness, and an unfair distribution of natural resources. To achieve justice, it is essential to rediscover the basic truth that God is the owner of the entire creation, as stated in Psalm 24:1-2.

Humans also have a mandate to protect and care for animals and biodiversity in the following scriptures: Proverbs 12:10 (NIV) **“The righteous care for the needs of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel”** and Deuteronomy 20:19 (NIV) **“When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an axe to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees people, that you should besiege them?”**

Furthermore, as custodians of creation, we have the privilege to appreciate and benefit from its abundance. However, it is crucial that we do not undermine the essential fertility upon which the fullness of creation relies.

We have a responsibility to preserve the delicate interactions between species, as well as their harmonious relationship with the environment. We should take to heart the profound wisdom conveyed in Ezekiel 34:18 (NIV) **“Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water?”**

This verse highlights the fact that trampling on the green pasture and muddying the waters are ways of destroying what we get for our immediate needs without thinking of future generations. In advocating for climate justice, there is a need to raise the voices of affected communities. If the church or the society is able, they can even donate to organizations and volunteer to help communities that may have been impacted by climate change.

The Youth will play a crucial role in accessing climate finance by protesting against fossil fuel investments and promoting environmentally friendly renewable resources like wind and solar energy. This helps reduce emissions and promotes collective action for climate finance.

Churches will play a crucial role in climate justice by promoting environmental sustainability through clean-up campaigns and teaching farmers sustainable practices such as rainwater harvesting to save water. Examples also include reducing deforestation through tree plantings in rural communities and promoting agro-ecology and organic farming.

Churches will also preach to people about greed and over-exploitation of natural resources to reduce climate change and also to provide resources to solve climate change.

In conclusion, there is hope for restoration according to Isaiah 35:1-2 (NIV) **“The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendour of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendour of our God.”**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

DEFORESTATION

1. Where do you see deforestation taking place in your country?
2. What are the impacts on the surrounding communities?
3. Why do you think there is so much deforestation?
4. What actions can you take personally, and as a parish and Diocese to combat deforestation?



TOPIC TWO: DISASTERS IN AFRICA AND THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE

DISCUSSANTS

Find the recording of their presentations on this [YouTube Link](#).



TONDERAI MUZHINJI (ZIMBABWE)

DISASTERS IN AFRICA AND THE CHURCHES RESPONSE

Tonderai is a Zimbabwean environmentalist who has dedicated his life to advocating for sustainable development and protecting the environment. As the President of the Zimbabwe Environmental Care Network, he co-founded the organization with the aim of promoting environmental conservation and sustainable development in Zimbabwe. Further, he has led several successful initiatives including tree planting campaigns, recycling projects, and environmental education programs. His work has earned him numerous accolades, including the Environmentalist of the Year award in 2015, and he is widely recognized as a leading voice in the environmental movement in Zimbabwe. He continues to be a passionate advocate for a sustainable future for Zimbabwe and the world.



**REV. PILIRANI GEOFFREY JONASI
(MALAWI)**
**THE STORY OF NOAH (THE
COVENANT)**

Fr. Pilirani is an Anglican Priest in the Diocese of Lake Malawi and a Lecturer of Biblical Studies (Old Testament) and Biblical Hebrew at the Lake Malawi Anglican University (LMAU), Lilongwe, Malawi. He is the current Head of Department-Theology. He is an active Green Anglican, Malawi Creation Care Network (MCCN) Ambassador, and Chairperson for the South and East Africa (SEA) Regional Church and Community Transformation Advocates. He is particularly passionate about working as an “Environmental and Creation Care Activist, Church and Community Transformation Advocate, Children and Youth Worker, Teacher and Preacher of the Word”. He holds two Post Graduate Degrees, a Masters in Theology and Religious Studies (MA-TRS) and a Masters in Divinity (MA-DIV). He is studying for a Doctor of Philosophy in Theology and Religious Studies Programme, specializing in Biblical Creation Theology, at Mzuzu University, Malawi. Fr. Pilirani is married to Grace and together blessed with two daughters, Patience and Shalom.





PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS



**REV. KENETH MTULO
(TANZANIA)**

“For the practices of the peoples are worthless; they cut a tree out of the forest, and a craftsman shapes it with his chisel. They adorn it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so it will not totter.” ~ Jeremiah 10:3-4. (NIV)

According to the Bible, cutting down trees without replacing them is foolishness as the Bible says, **“For the practices of the peoples are worthless; they cut a tree out of the forest, and a craftsman shapes it with his chisel. They adorn it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so it will not totter.” (Jeremiah 10:3-4) (NIV).**

The Bible calls believers to look after God's creation as God has said to man **“to tend and guard and keep the earth.” (Genesis 2:15)** This quote from the bible verse suggests that God is commanding humans not to ruin the land, not to slay any animals and not cut down any of His nature.

Blessing of dominion over nature has an obligation to protect it. God created the earth, but it is humans who should keep it. Care for creation is not just an advice but as a command to God's people. We are the stewards of the creation. To misuse nature will automatically create the punishment. Soil erosion, biodiversity loss, climate change, floods and droughts are among the punishments to human kinds due to deforestation.

God commanded humans to keep the earth for tending. The quantities and qualities of earth's productions depend much on how it is kept. Nature cries loudly in future generations if deforestation will not stop.

From Genesis to Revelation God has blazed a trail of trees through the Bible. The reason so many people love trees is because we are created in God's image (God's trail of trees, 2019). God loves trees, and so should we. Trees help remove carbon dioxide from the air and release oxygen, vital to all living things. Tree is life, which is why trees are more mentioned than any other living thing in the Bible; from Genesis to Revelation.

Surprisingly, many significant events in the Bible are also marked by a tree including the fall of humankind, the flood, and salvation as a tree, branch, fruit, seed, or some part of a tree.

Deforestation is the major current global question and its answer to deforestation is reforestation. It is therefore a Christian duty to preserve and conserve forests. All Christians should follow the global policy of planting new trees. Care for creation is among the major calls to Christian faith.



REV. HOPE SAMU BRINO (MALAWI)

“Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” ~ Genesis 1:26 (NIV)

This scripture passage reminds us of God's mandate to us to look after creation as he proposed when he created humankind. God blessed us to have dominion over nature, to look after and protect nature. God has instructed us to sustain nature, not to destroy and misuse it. The Bible teaches us that if we follow God's call, the earth will last for future generations.

To preserve the earth for future generations, for every tree that is cut down, we can plant several others. Additionally, we can try to only cut down alien trees or only cut down trees that do not take a long time to grow. We must protect old forests which are home to many species.

If we destroy forests, we are going against God's command, thus sinning against Him. **“I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable.” (Jeremiah 2:7(NIV))** Here, God is showing His anger at how humankind defiled His land. “Defiled” means to be made foul, dirty, or unclean; polluted or tainted. The prophet was writing about the defilement of idolatry, but in our context the idolatry of materialism has led to destruction of the eco-systems. In other words, God is also challenging us that we have polluted His land through the careless cutting down of trees.

“Let the trees of the forest sing, let them sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth.” (1 Chronicles 16:33). If the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, who are we to defile the creation of God? It is our mandate to take care of God's creation. We worship together with and through the delicate web of life.

In conclusion, deforestation is a clear example of humans not adhering to God's command about creation. As stated in Genesis 1:25-31, On the sixth day of creation, God blessed humans to have control over His creation. However, deforestation is an example of humans mistreating nature, thus exerting authority rather than stewardship.



**REV. CAPT. ALEXIS PACIFIQUE
NDAYISABA
(RWANDA)**

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” Genesis 2:15 (NIV)

The Church has the message to preach about how Christians can reduce and prevent deforestation. God has placed humans in a position of responsibility over the creation. Genesis 2:15 shows that Christians recognize that all created things belong to God and that they are accountable to Him as stewards of the creation. God commissions us to care for creation in a way that sustains, protects, and enhances his works so that all creation may fulfil the purposes God intended for it.

We are called to steward the environment not only for our own benefit but also for the glory of God. Some people may argue that humans are more important than the rest of creation and that they should therefore concentrate their efforts on meeting human needs rather than on environmental issues.

However, many of our environmental problems have a negative impact on humans as they have on other creatures. If we do not take care of the environment in which we live, humans will suffer.

Caring for the non-human parts of creation and preserving the complex interactions among them is an important part of seeking justice for God's people. God is concerned with the physical world as well as the spiritual world, and restoration of the creation is part of the good news of Christ. We are not to neglect the task of sharing the good news of Christ's redeeming work in our lives, but neither should we neglect the work of "tending and guarding the Garden of Eden (Johnson, 2000). Caring for God's creation is part of our service to God and an integral part of our role as servant leaders in God's kingdom.

John 1:3 "Through him all things were made; without him, nothing was made that has been made." This passage shows that everything is created in His plan and he is the one who takes care of them. **Job 12:7-10 (NIV) "But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? 10 In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind."**

God has the authority over everything that is created, after all, he is the one who sustains creation and that is why the duty of human beings is to care for Creation on His behalf. Psalm 50:10 (NIV) "for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills." A Christian has to protect and take care of what God has created and the environment is the home of fauna and flora of many ecosystems, let us join hands and protect it. Protecting the environment is protecting our common home.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

DISASTERS IN AFRICA AND CHURCH'S RESPONSE

1. What climate related disasters have you seen (or experienced) in your country?
2. Apart from changes in climate, what other issues contributed to the disasters?
3. What can the church do to prepare their communities for coming disasters?

TOPIC THREE: LAND DEGRADATION DISCUSSANTS

Find the recording of their presentations on this [YouTube Link](#) and [Prof. Amuri video](#)



ERASTO RICHARD MAGAMBA (UGANDA) LAND DEGRADATION IN AFRICA

Erasto is an Engineer by profession, a climate advocate and activist who is currently working with the Diocese of Kampala as an Environment Officer.

He attended the COP26 and 28 as part of the Ugandan Government Delegation as well as the Conference of Youth 16 and 17. During COY17 and COY18, YOUNGO nominated him as the Contact point for Uganda Delegates leads as a member and he is among the Young African Climate Change Negotiators for UNFCCC trained by IDEP and he is one of the Co- Founders of Climate Yes [Youth Ecumenical Summit on Climate Change]

He represents Uganda in the Commonwealth Youth Parliament and he served as Chairperson for Jobs & Work Place Committee as well as a member of the Commonwealth Youth Forum 2022 and Commonwealth Youth Network for Sustainable Urbanization.

Erasto is a member of Boards, Planning, Development and Social Transformation, Youth and Children of the Anglican Diocese of Kampala. He is very passionate about tree growing and he has planted several in Uganda.



**PROF. JOSEPH AMURI NYEMBO
(DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO)
LAND DEGRADATION**

Professor Amuri is a renowned professor of development ecology, with a passion for sustainable development, natural resource management and environmental conservation. He is Rector of the Bilingual Anglican University of Goma (UBAGO) and a lecturer at the University of Kindu. His expertise and skills are focused on striking a delicate balance between economic growth and environmental protection, with a particular emphasis on the unique challenges facing communities in his region. Its ultimate aim is to have a positive impact on the local environment and contribute to the long-term well-being of the region's inhabitants.

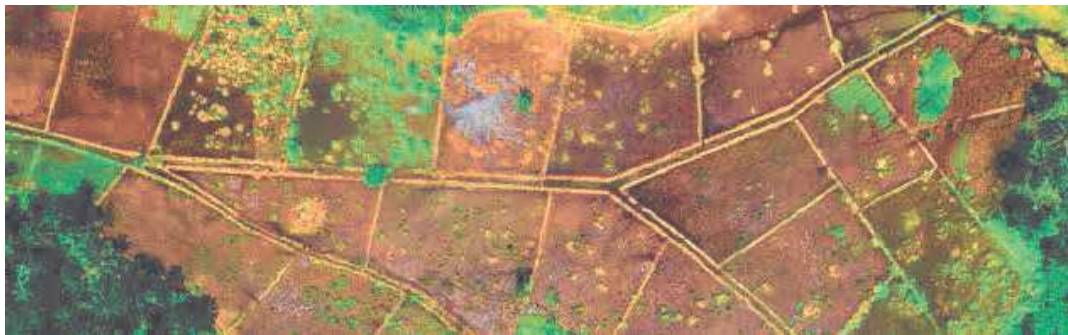


**REV. DENNIS NTHENGE
(KENYA)
BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO
LAND DEGRADATION**

Rev. Dennis currently serves as the Chaplain to the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya, where he provides spiritual and administrative accompaniment to the Archbishop and by extension to the Clergy and congregants as part of the Archbishop's pastoral and administrative role.

In addition to his work as a Chaplain, Rev Nthenge is also the Green Anglican Coordinator of the Diocese of All Saints Cathedral. In this role, he is responsible for promoting environmental awareness and sustainability within the church and wider community. He is a passionate advocate for conservation and has spearheaded numerous projects to protect Kenya's natural resources.

Outside of his pastoral work, Rev Nthenge is a devoted husband and father. He enjoys spending time with his family, reading, and exploring the beauty of Kenya's natural landscape.



PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS



ETSEGERI ARIAKA EMMANUEL (DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO)

**"But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"
Genesis 3:9 (NIV)**

God's garden is a place of direct communication with Him. This garden is a fertile place of varied cultivation with all its goodness and beauty and the abundant fruit it produces. It was here that the Lord spoke with his people. (Genesis 3:9).

In Isaiah 60:13 (NIV) we read **"The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the juniper, the fir and the cypress together, to adorn my sanctuary; and I will glorify the place for my feet."** This passage shows us that God's sanctuary (sacred place) is here on earth and it is adorned with beautiful biodiversity. The Lord God will glorify the place where his feet rest - the earth; and so we must also embellish and make more beautiful the place where God's feet rest- the Earth.

This verse mentions a few categories of ornamental trees in Lebanon, including the cypress, the pine, and the boxwood (which is a large shrub). Even today Lebanon is a hotspot for biodiversity.

In the Old Testament, the country of Lebanon was renowned for its forests and plentiful timber. For example, King Solomon asked for cedar from Lebanon for his buildings. (1 Kings 5.6, 10; Ezra 3.7). The cedars of Lebanon are mentioned many times: (Judges 9.15; Psalm. 29.5; Psalm 104.16; Isaiah 2:13) Lebanon was also well known for its fruits (Psalm 72:16).

Each environment has its climate and supports different types of flora and fauna, so for God's glory to be seen wherever he is worshipped, we need to unite to restore degraded ecosystems that are suitable for that particular area.

God created the Garden of Eden, and filled it with many kinds of plants. God said, **“Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so.” (Genesis 1:11) (NIV)** and then he placed humans in the garden to care for them.

In the Garden of Eden, it was God who planted all those trees that were pleasant to look at and good to eat; and their beauty was in innocence. He declared everything he created as good and made them available for man's use and to take care of them.

Creation - the garden- evokes communication with God. It is a place of prosperity for God's children (Ezekiel 36:35-36); a place of joy (Isaiah 51:3). Wherever we are, we should care for creation (Isaiah 29:17; 32:15-18); so that we can enjoy it; for God Himself is the model. **“The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden; like a spring whose waters never fail.** (Isaiah 58:11). The Bible says the desert will have to change into an orchard (fruit trees) (Isaiah 32:15) and become like a forest through the work of people and the garden will have to become like a forest. The garden by the waters means fertility and prosperity (Isaiah 58:11).



**REV. MAGDALINE KOECH
(KENYA)**

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” ~ Romans 8:22 (NIV)

For this discussion, we will look at it in the present as a prophetic message of warning to humanity. Climate changes are taking place because of our actions and behaviours. This warning takes us back to the creation narrative in Genesis 1 and 2 where human beings are given the privilege to be co-workers with God. However, they misuse, misunderstand, or abuse that privilege of power over God's creation.

Genesis 1:26 (NIV) to be specific, **"And God said, "Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."**

We have misinterpreted this text 'rule' and the effects on ecosystems have been devastating.

Christians also bear some responsibility for the destruction of the environment as this verse has often exemplified our attitude to the earth and its ecosystems.

The mandate given to humankind in Genesis 1:26 made them perceive the entire earth as their space. (Wirzba, 2015) argues that when the doctrine of creation is understood as a statement about the moral and spiritual meaning of the world, this holds the key to a true understanding of our place on earth and our responsibility toward it.

He contends that an adequate response to the earth's destruction depends on a new formulation of ourselves as part of a created whole, rather than as self-sufficient, unencumbered individuals.

Genesis has historically encouraged a vision of persons as masters of creation, a more theologically and ecologically sensitive presentation to be understood that we are servants of creation. Our present culture is a result of individualism and consumerism which has denied creation its existence and is the cause of the destruction of ecosystems.

We are not masters of creation, we are servants and keepers of creation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

LAND DEGRADATION

1. What is the correlation (relationship) between religiosity and environmental degradation?
2. What would repentance and a return to justice and mercy mean in the context of Environmental degradation?

TOPIC FOUR: ECOSYSTEMS RESTORATION

Habitat
Restoration
in Progress

PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS



VEN. DR. DAVID OKYERE KORANKYE (GHANA)

“Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” ~ Genesis 2:7 (NIV)

The classic Biblical understanding of the relationship between God and humans and nature has been narrated in Genesis 1: 28 (NIV). In the passage the Bible proclaims: **“God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”**

There is clear evidence that in recent times as a result of human struggle to survive and increasing technological power, the authority given to man has generally been taken as license to use nature the way we want.

However, it is important to realize that God created man from the soil and breathed in him the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). Therefore, there is a direct relationship between man’s body, spirit, and soul and nature and the world.

The reference in **Genesis 1:27 (NIV) “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”** indicates that as men and women, we are created in God’s image, God is part of our physical reality and we are co-creators with God.

To cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God’s creation is sin.

Any endeavour that compromises the integrity of creation through actions that alter its climate, deplete its natural resources, and pollute the Earth's waters, land, and air with toxic substances is a transgression against God. These actions will deprive God of the honour bestowed to him from his creation (Isaiah 43:20-21).



IMMANUEL MWENDWA KIILU (KENYA)

"The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the earth. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant."

Isaiah 24:4-5

These prophetic words remind us that our actions have consequences not only for the earth but also for the well-being of both present and future generations.

Our response to the issue of ecosystem degradation should be rooted in our faith and be guided by the principles of justice, love, and restoration. How can we respond to the call to restore and heal the earth, drawing from the wisdom of scripture?

The Bible provides us with a rich tapestry of teachings that emphasize the importance of caring for creation. From the opening chapter of Genesis, we are reminded of God's divine act of creation and His charge to humanity to have dominion over the earth. However, this dominion should not be understood as exploitation but as responsible stewardship. We are called to cultivate and keep the earth, nurturing its abundance and protecting its delicate balance.

Throughout the Old Testament, we encounter numerous passages that underscore the interconnectedness between humanity, nature, and God's divine plan. The Psalm, for instance, extols the beauty of creation, praising God's handiwork and inviting us to join in the chorus of creation's praise. In Psalm 24:1 (NIV), we read, **"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;"** This verse reminds us that we are mere caretakers of God's creation, entrusted with the task of preserving its splendor.

In the New Testament, we encounter the teachings of Jesus, who calls us to love our neighbours and to care for the least among us. This love extends to all of creation, as Paul writes in Romans 8:22 (NIV), "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." As followers of Christ, we are called to alleviate this groaning by actively working towards restoration and renewal.

In response to the issue of ecosystem degradation, we are called to be agents of change and advocates for the healing of the earth. By embracing our biblical mandate to care for creation, we can bring about transformation in our own lives, communities, and beyond. Our response should be marked by a deep sense of responsibility, rooted in the understanding that the earth is a precious gift entrusted to us by God.

Practical actions, such as adopting sustainable practices, advocating for environmental policies, supporting conservation efforts, and engaging in ecosystem restoration initiatives, are tangible expressions of our faith in action. By partnering with local communities, organizations, and governments, we can make a meaningful impact on the restoration and healing of our ecosystems.

May our response to the call for ecosystem restoration be a testament to our faith, a source of hope for future generations, and a tangible expression of our love for God and all of His creation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

ECOSYSTEMS RESTORATION

1. "Ecosystem restoration" is quite a technical term, how do you relate to this topic when you hear "renewing the earth"?
2. Where in your context have you witnessed the degradation and destruction of ecosystems?
3. What has been the impact of ecosystem(s) degradation and destruction on food security in your context?
4. What do you believe is the role of the church in ecosystem restoration



TOPIC FIVE: CLIMATE JUSTICE DISCUSSANTS

[Find the recording of their presentations on this YouTube Link](#)



DR. LISA ADJEI (CHRISTIAN AID)

CLIMATE JUSTICE IN AFRICA AND THE CHURCHES' RESPONSE

Dr. Lisa Adjei holds a Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Physiology from the University of Surrey in Guildford, where she was also a church leader for a number of years. Dr Lisa Adjei is the Chair of the global youth climate movement, Climate YES. Lisa is also the founder of Sankofa Collective, an ecumenical racial justice and reconciliation community for Christians. She currently works for Christian Aid as a British Church Relations Manager. Her role seeks to support denominational leaders across the United Kingdom in justice & mission. She works very closely with Churches Together England (CTE), sitting on their Board of Trustees, their Racial Justice Working Group and as the chair of their Theology sub-group and on their millennial leader's forum, Emerge, for the Pentecostal & Charismatic forum. Lisa is currently an active member of Trinity Baptist Church and based at their West Norwood congregation.



BISHOP JEAN PIERRE METHODE (RWANDA)

BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO CLIMATE JUSTICE

Bishop Jean, born in 1971 in Rwanda, has a diverse educational background, having trained as an Agronomist in Rwanda and as a development project designer and manager from Douala, Cameroon. He furthered his studies and earned a Bachelor's degree in Divinity from Uganda Christian University and a Master's degree in Evangelical Theology from Tyndale Theological Seminary. He is now completing his Ph.D. in Theology at NEGST-Nairobi, with a focus on Theology and Development. Bishop Jean has participated in numerous seminars and workshops on environmental protection, holistic and transformational development. He has served as a Parish Priest, Archdeacon, Development Officer, and General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Rwanda. Currently, he serves as the Bishop of Karongi Missionary Diocese in the West of Rwanda.





PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS



TFWALA LINDOKUHLE ANGEL (ESWATINI)

“The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers. Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.” Leviticus 25: 23-24 (NIV)

The land that God has created for all living creatures is becoming uninhabitable for plants, animals, and even humans.

Leviticus 25:23-24 is a reminder from God to humankind that we should remember that we were put here on earth to take care of his creation and not to claim it as our own. That is why it is very important not to damage the land (and other elements of creation). Even when it gets degraded, we must provide for the redemption of the land and find ways to heal and preserve it. This verse clearly shows that God has placed humans in a position of responsibility to care for the land.

“God created human beings to be stewards of the environment and help to take care of the created order and everything in it. God created everything in six days. As the apex of creation, He created humanity in His image and likeness. All creatures together were pronounced ‘very good’ God entrusted humans to care for the environment and not to misuse it as it is happening today.”

Sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden, and because of sin, men and women have been very bad caretakers and the earth has suffered from their sin. They began misusing and overusing the earth's resources without repairing it and this has resulted in many environmental crises including land degradation.

Genesis 2:15 (NIV) says, "**The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.**" Therefore, we should recognize that all created things belong to God and we are accountable to him as stewards of the creation.

God commissions us to rule over creation in a way that sustains, protects, and enhances his works so that all creation may fulfil the purposes of God for it. If Israel disobeys the Torah (law or commandments) and does not allow the land to rest, they will be punished by God, including being sent into exile. "**Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the Lord. ' (Leviticus 25:2 (NIV)).**

Having said that, in Galatians 6:7 (NIV) the Bible says "**Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.**" and Romans 6:23 (NIV) says "**For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**" Both these verses imply that if we continue to misuse the land that God has given us, we will have to face the consequences for those actions. One of those visible consequences that we are facing across the world is land degradation, reducing crop yields, and increasing hunger and poverty.

We must manage the environment not only for our benefit but for God's glory.

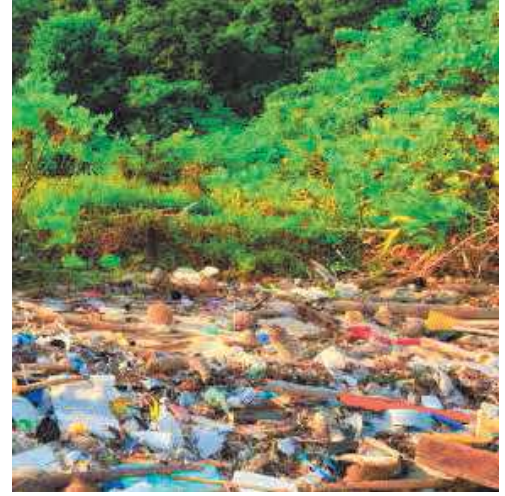
REFLECTION QUESTIONS CLIMATE JUSTICE

- 1. What issues of justice did the prophets in the Old Testament preach about?*
- 2. How can the church amplify the voice of the voiceless to people of and in power?*



TOPIC SIX: POLLUTION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT DISCUSSANTS

Find the recording of their presentations on this [YouTube Link](#).



REV. CANON. DR. RACHEL MASH (SOUTH AFRICA) WASTE AND POLLUTION IN AFRICA

Rev. Rachel is the Environmental Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho and Eswatini). She is also the secretary of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, Co-Chair of the Steering Committee of the Ecumenical Season of Creation, and a member of the UNEP Faith for Earth task team on pollution.



REV. KUDAKWASHE MADZIME (ZIMBABWE) BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO WASTE AND POLLUTION

Fr. Kudakwashe is a member of the Anglican Diocese of Harare in the Church of the Province of Central Africa) and serves as the Rector of St Faith Parish in Harare. He has a BA in Religious Studies and an MSc in International Relations. For the past 12 years, he has been an Environmental Advocate for the Diocese, serving in various capacities. He was the team leader for Zimbabwe at the Anglican Consultative Council gathering in Zambia, where he advocated for a focus on the environment to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He is also a lecturer at the Anglican National Theology College (Bishop Gaul) and a member of SAFCEI Fleet Team in Zimbabwe. Additionally, he coordinates Environmental Advocacy for the Anglican Council of Zimbabwe.



PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS



JUDY ROUS (DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO)

**"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."
Romans 8:22 (NIV)**

We read in Genesis 1: 31 that God created the earth and everything in it, and it was very good. We learn too in Genesis 1: 26-28 that God gave a mandate to human beings to care for the earth and enjoy its many blessings, and that it was sufficient to sustain the lives of those whom he created. However, after sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the whole of nature – humans, land, living creatures, climate – was affected adversely. All down the ages, human beings have lived and continue to live with the consequences of sin that of individuals and whole nations across the world.

Two Thousand years ago, the Apostle Paul talked about the whole earth groaning and being subject to death and decay, waiting for its ultimate renewal, as described in Romans 8: 22.

So what is our world like in 2023?

The earth is still beautiful and fertile in many places – mountains, rivers, coastlines, and an abundance of flora and fauna. But also, the world seems fragile and uncertain.

Increasingly, the natural world and the areas where we live are becoming spoiled by pollution – rubbish of all kinds, but particularly plastic bags and bottles and other non-degradable materials. They litter our roads, neighbourhoods, and even the fields where we cultivate, because the rubbish has not been disposed of properly, and most of it will not decompose.

The problem of pollution is multi-faceted but rooted in our human sinfulness, as individuals, communities, and nations. Firstly, greed and selfishness - as individuals, as we often take or buy more than we need or can use. Also government's neglect waste disposal and pollution initiatives and policies as often policies and investments do not deal with this issue.

Secondly, ignorance. In Hosea 4: 6 (NIV) the prophet speaks powerfully about the danger of ignorance "my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge." There is so much ignorance about pollution and its consequences, especially in relation to plastics. And related materials. Many people do not know that most plastics we use here will never decompose, but will only break up into smaller and smaller fragments, causing danger to livestock, to fish to the soil, and even to humans through the food chain. People do not know how to dispose of plastic waste safely. People lack places where they can dispose of plastic safely and do not have access to street bins, waste collection services, and rubbish pits at home.

Third, laziness – many people live by the 'drop and go' principle and this attitude of laziness is often unconscious. Plastic bags, wrappers, and bottles are dropped wherever their use is. It simply does not occur to people to take rubbish home or find somewhere to throw it away responsibly (even if they are provided for).

We need behavior and heart change towards responsible disposal of waste (and in particular plastic waste). This comes through the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and when the Church and Civil Society empower people with knowledge. Sermons, seminars, Bible Studies, radio broadcasts, informal sharing of experiences, and modeling different ways of living all aid in learning and transformation.

Waste creates an unhealthy living environment, affecting our health, and the ecosystems. Burning of plastic produces toxic fumes. Combating waste is about promoting living life in all its fullness, through faith in Jesus Christ, and living in a relationship with him, and following his commands. This will enable us to live as good and responsible stewards of the world in which we live.

We are faced with hundreds of choices on a daily basis and we struggle with the choice between going God's way, caring for his world, and his people and the creatures in it or going our own selfish way? Do we act on the knowledge we have or ignore them? Many small actions together make a difference and have an impact, just as many drops of water will fill a bucket.

May God give us grace and determination to live as good stewards of all that God has given us, cherishing the beautiful world he has given us to inhabit and working to protect it.



BONNY OBOH (NIGERIA)

“How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished. Moreover, the people are saying, “He will not see what happens to us.” ~ Jeremiah 12:4 (NIV)

There is an issue that is close to our hearts and deeply rooted in our faith – the issue of waste and pollution. Our world, (this precious gift of creation entrusted to us by our loving God), is suffering from the consequences of our actions. The abundance of waste and pollution threatens not only the environment but also the well-being of our fellow human beings.

As followers of God, we are called to be stewards of His creation. In the book of Deuteronomy, we find laws that guide us on how to care for the earth and prevent wastefulness and pollution. These principles are not confined to the pages of an ancient text but they resonate with us today and offer wisdom for the challenges we face.

We need to look at what the scripture says. First and foremost, we must recognize that our actions have consequences. The indiscriminate disposal of waste, the pollution of our air and water, and the unsustainable practices we engage in all have a detrimental impact on the world around us. But we are not powerless. Our faith calls us to respond with compassion and responsibility.

To address the issue of waste, we must embrace sustainable practices in our daily lives. Let us reflect on our consumption habits and consider whether we truly need the things we buy.

Let us prioritize quality over quantity and support businesses that promote environmentally friendly products and packaging. By reducing our waste generation, we can make a significant difference.

Recycling and reusing are essential components of sustainable living. Let us be diligent in separating our waste and supporting recycling initiatives in our communities. When we give new life to materials through recycling, we honour God's commandment to care for His creation. Additionally, let us seek opportunities for reusing items whenever possible, reducing the need for excessive production and waste.

Proper waste disposal is crucial. Let us ensure that we dispose of our waste responsibly, adhering to local regulations and supporting initiatives that provide safe and efficient waste management systems. By doing so, we protect our environment, safeguard the health of our communities, and prevent further pollution.

Education and awareness creation are key in addressing the issue of waste and its implication. Let us educate ourselves and our loved ones about the impact of waste and pollution. By raising awareness, we can inspire others to embrace sustainable practices and become advocates for change. Let us teach our children the importance of caring for the earth, instilling in them a sense of responsibility and love for God's creation.

As we respond to the issue of waste and pollution, let us also remember the power of prayer. Let us pray for guidance and strength, asking God to grant us wisdom in our choices and actions. Let us seek His forgiveness for the times we have neglected our responsibilities as stewards of creation, and let us commit ourselves to making a positive impact.

Dear brothers and sisters, our response to the issue of waste and pollution is not only an environmental imperative but also a reflection of our faith. Through our actions, we have the opportunity to demonstrate our love for God and our commitment to His creation. Let us join hands, united in our efforts to embrace sustainable practices, reduce waste, and protect our planet. Together, we can make a difference and leave a legacy of stewardship for future generations.

Let us remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ after the feeding of the 5000, "When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, **"Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."** (John 6:12 (NIV))



TREVOR LOTTERING (SOUTH AFRICA)

**“The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the earth. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore, earth’s inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.”
Isaiah 24:4-6 (NIV)**

In Genesis 1:31 we read that God created everything (animals, plants, the seas) and everything was very good. On the sixth day, God created humans. Humanity was blessed to multiply and to rule over the earth and its creatures (Genesis 1:26-28).

Humanity received custodianship, but with it came a responsibility to care for and preserve it. But something terrible went wrong - man got involved in every kind of sin. The irresponsible use of our natural resources leads to all sorts of pollution - be it air, soil, or water pollution. This is all caused by human behavior.

What does the Bible teach us about the modern challenges of pollution and waste? The key issue is to reflect on our relationship with God’s creation. In Isaiah 24:4 - 6b where we read that the earth is mourning and withering because of pollution. We have broken God’s laws to care for the earth and the oceans - so the earth is devoured by a curse - and we are held guilty. Of all the species on the planet, it is humans alone that are causing these global problems of pollution.

The scripture gives a true reflection of the conditions to which the earth is subjected due to abuse by humans. Mourning and withering signifies a sad and deathlike feeling. We are causing the earth to suffer, to mourn, and ultimately to die.

We need to reflect on how humanity can reverse such pain and discomfort to the earth. Rivers have become dump sites and waterways are blocked by waste. The air and the soil are polluted and poisoned. Oceans are filled with plastics and even the fish are ingesting these plastics. The mourning of the earth can also refer to flooding, epidemics, and waterborne diseases caused by contaminated water sources.

Jeremiah asks **“How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished. Moreover, the people are saying, “He will not see what happens to us.” (Jeremiah 12:4 (NIV))**

Not only are the land and the oceans mourning, but wild animals and birds have disappeared as the ecosystems are being destroyed.

What can we do? (Moltmann, 1979) argues that Genesis 1:28 will have to be interpreted in an entirely new way. Not to subdue the earth, but to free the earth through fellowship with it. We have to change our relationship with the earth and work with love and justice to maintain and preserve creation and the whole cosmos.

(Fox, 1991) argues that if the earth is mourning and withering because of human activity then we now need to advocate for the liberation of creation. We the inhabitants and custodians of Mother Earth should adhere to and honour the Biblical assignment which is found in Genesis 1 - to care for the earth in a responsible, caring, and loving way and free it from its bondage. **“That the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.” (Romans 8:21 (NIV)).**



**LINET MUSASA
(ZIMBABWE)**

“Stand at the gate of the Lord’s house and there proclaim this message: “Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord.” ~ Jeremiah 7:2 (NIV)

In Zimbabwe, we have major crises of dump sites which are common in most residential areas - the dumping of glass and plastic bottles, used diapers, plastic papers, and cardboard boxes.

In Jeremiah 7 verse 2, God reminds us of the blessings he bestowed on us but regrets how we have defiled the land. We see the land God has given us being defiled, by the dumping of garbage in undesignated places, and the emissions into the atmosphere of all forms of pollutants which have become the order of the day. Companies continue manufacturing plastics that continue to be thrown away as waste and we see people throwing plastic waste from buses.

As humans, we continue to defile the land God has given us. Why is this? Is it through ignorance, deliberately, or lack of knowledge? This is a question we ought to ask. Why do we keep seeing such plundering of the land that God gave to us and what can we do to redress this problem?

In Genesis 1:26 (NIV), Then God said, **“Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”** As God’s stewards, we have been given dominion over our environment. The question arises now of what we are doing with the dominion God has given us.

As Christians, we have an important role to play - in teaching the world to take care of the environment. It is important to bring awareness to those that defile the land unknowingly as the word of the Lord says **“my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6 (NIV))**

Engagement with Governments, world leaders, and Multinational companies is essential at all levels. As Christians, it is important that our voice is heard and that we advocate for policies that promote proper waste management and reduce emissions.

We must stop defiling the land and destroying the heritage of our children and children’s children. the heritage of our children and children’s children.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS **POLLUTION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT**

1. *Where do you see the worst forms of dumping of waste in your context?*
2. *What accounts for this practice?*
3. *What does this show us about humans’ relationship to the land?*
4. *What practical steps could you take as an individual or a church to make a difference in your community?*



TOPIC SEVEN: WATER AND SANITATION DISCUSSANTS

Find the recording of their presentations on this [YouTube Link](#).



**REV. MERCIO LANGA
(MOZAMBIQUE)**
WATER IN AFRICA

Rev. Mércio is a permanent Deacon in the Anglican Diocese of Lebombo, Southern Mozambique, who has served as an Executive Director of the Anglican Social Action from 2015-2021. He has a degree in Theology and Development and a Postgraduate qualification in Management for Sustainable Development Projects. He has implemented various programs such as Church and Community Mobilization Process, Savings with Education, Early Childhood Development, Ministry to the Elderly, and relief interventions. Currently, he works as a consultant for the Early Childhood Development Program for 3 Dioceses in Mozambique and is a hobbyist musician. In 2021, he was part of the faculty team of facilitators of the “Resilience Course”.



**REV. CANON. DR. RACHEL MASH
(SOUTH AFRICA)**
SACREDNESS OF WATER

Rev. Rachel is the Environmental Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho and Eswatini). She is also the secretary of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, Co-Chair of the Steering Committee of the Ecumenical Season of Creation, and a member of the UNEP Faith for Earth task team on pollution.



PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS



OBENG DANKWA (GHANA)

“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.” ~ Genesis 2:8 and 10 (NIV)

The Bible teaches us about the importance of caring for God's creation, including the environment and natural resources such as water. In response to water pollution, we can find guidance in various biblical passages. In Genesis 2 we read that God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, from which flowed a river. In Genesis 2:15 (NIV), we read **“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”**

This highlights our responsibility to protect and preserve the natural world, including water sources such as oceans, rivers, streams, lakes and springs. Water is essential for life, and we must ensure its purity and availability for future generations.

Philippians 2:4 (NIV) **“not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”** This scripture reminds us that in the quest for wealth and riches, we should also be mindful of others and their well-being. For that reason, we are not to destroy the environment and waste or pollute water. But greed has taken over the best part of our human sensibilities and we are destroying the environment because of the search for money and wealth.

In Ghana, for instance, illegal mining has become the order of the day. All our water bodies are being destroyed because of these illegal mining activities. This is endangering the health of those whose lives depend on those water bodies. This means we are not looking out for the interest of others but being self-centred.

Water pollution goes against the principles of stewardship and responsible care for God's creation. As individuals, we can take practical steps to prevent water pollution by properly disposing of waste, conserving water, and supporting organizations that work towards clean water initiatives. Collectively, we can work towards a cleaner and healthier environment, fulfilling our biblical mandate to be good stewards of God's creation and also protecting the flora and fauna, and safeguarding the ecosystems.

“Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?” (Ezekiel 34:18 (NIV))



**PHILISTINE TIELI ADERO
(KENYA)**

“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” ~ Genesis 1:2 (NIV)

Water is so precious that it was present at the very start of creation, it is God's gift. In the Old Testament, water is often presented as a gift from God. Rainfall can be a sign of God's favor and goodness while drought can be a sign of God's anger. **“When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7: 13-14 (NIV)).**

In the New Testament water becomes a sign of rebirth in Jesus' baptism: “John answered them all, **“I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Luke 3:16 (NIV)).** We all become part of the family of God through the sacred waters of Baptism.

Hygiene is about how we live on earth with the creation of God as good stewards (Genesis 2:15). The book of Leviticus 11-15 talks a lot about hygiene, cleanliness, and quarantine and how infections and illnesses are spread. The COVID 19 pandemic and the recent influenza outbreak have been contained through hand washing and quarantine - guidelines from the Ministry of Health but in line with Levitical teaching.

In Deuteronomy 23:12-13, the Bible talks of the need for the Israelites to designate a place outside the camp where they could go and relieve themselves. As part of the equipment, they were asked to dig a hole and after relieving themselves they needed to cover the hole. Burial of excrement is the simplest of all sanitary measures. This is seen as very important to avoid flash floods pushing waste into water bodies.

Although the link between excrement and disease was probably unknown to the Israelites, their feelings about “uncleanliness” probably made them very careful to avoid contact with faecal matter. In Ezekiel 4:9-15. God through the prophet discourages the people from using human excreta while baking their bread and instead asks to use cow manure.

Water is life. 70-75% of the earth’s surface is covered with water. Roughly 70% of an adult’s body is made up of water and about 85% of the adult brain is made up of water. When fish is taken out of the water it dies, so too when we do not quench our thirst we get dehydrated and may die.

When Jesus died on the cross, the soldiers pierced his side and out came blood and water symbolizing life going out. Without blood we die, without water, we die. This should make us ask ourselves why we as God’s children take this gift for granted.

Many pioneering projects were set up by churches as they carried out missionary duties including setting up water and hygiene structures such as water tanks and toilets followed by churches, schools, and hospitals.

Just as the Bible opened with water, so does the last book of the Bible, Revelation contains this vision of Eden restored: **“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb; down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ” (Revelation 22: 1-2 (NIV)).**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS WATER AND SANITATION

1. *Why do you think Jesus chose to be baptised in a river at the start of his ministry?*
2. *How can we help people to understand the sacredness of water in our worship, liturgy and church life?*
3. *What other actions or experiences from your context could be leveraged to improve the response to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)?*





TOPIC EIGHT: RESTORATION RENEWAL OF THE EARTH DISCUSSANTS

Find the recording of their presentations on this [YouTube Link](#).



**REV. GODFREY ADERA
(KENYA)**

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION IN AFRICA

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**REV. DR. JOSEPH OTOO
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THEOLOGY OF RESTORATION

Rev. Dr. Joseph Otoo Ayeh is an Anglican priest of the Diocese of Koforidua in the Internal Province of Ghana, and a biblical theologian. He has the following academic qualifications: B.Sc. Agriculture (University of Ghana), Diploma in Theology (University of Cape Coast), Diploma in Ministry. (StNicholas Seminary, Cape Coast), Master of Arts in Religion. Bible (Yale University, U.S.A.), and Ph.D. in the Study of Religions (University of Ghana).

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His teaching and research interests are in contextual theology of the Psalm, Wisdom Literature, African Biblical Hermeneutics, and Eco-Theology/Environmental Hermeneutics. He has co-authored a chapter in the book titled: Christianity and COVID - 19: Pathways for Faith. Edited by Chammah J. Kaunda, Atola Longkumer, Kenneth R. Ross and Esther Mombo. London-New York: Routledge, 2022.



PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS



**RAKOTONDRANJALAHY
ROVA HERINAIVALONA
(MADAGASCAR)**

**“To be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ”.
Ephesians 1:10 (NIV)**

In full communion with God, the environment is not only the space where life develops, but also represents the elements that surround us, such as living beings, objects and all natural conditions.

According to Genesis, man and woman are invited to fill, dominate and cultivate the earth, while respecting it and preserving it for future generations.

It is not a question of remaining passive or exercising tyranny over creation, but of taking care of it for the good of all creatures and for the sole glory of the Creator.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to be God's co-workers in reflecting the infinite beauty of the Creator.

The mission has not changed (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15) from creation to the present, and protecting the environment is an important duty for all Christians.

By caring for God's creation, we obey his mandate and ensure a better future for future generations. By concretely demonstrating our love for God through love for our neighbor (Luke 10:25-37); in this way, we fulfil the mission of evangelization.

The evangelistic mission is to make disciples throughout the world and teach them to obey everything Jesus commanded.

So what is the role of the Church in the restoration and renewal of creation? God has placed all things under the authority of Christ and made him ruler over all things for the benefit of the Church. And the Church is his body; it is full and complete through Christ, who fills all things in all places with himself (Ephesians 1:22-23). It is therefore clear that the ministry of the Church must include the restoration of Creation, filling it with the presence of Christ.

We have also received the ministry of reconciliation: **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-19 (NIV))**. We are a new, renewed creation, and we have therefore received the ministry of reconciling all things to Christ. Salvation and the new life therefore do not concern not just human beings, but everything that exists **“and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” (Colossians 1:20 (NIV))**.

We care for the environment because it is God's creation and joy. As we learn to care for them, we learn from the Bible that for God, righting wrongs and righting injustices is as vast as His creation. At a time when the casualties of climate change are increasing dramatically, the United Nations estimates there could be between 25 million and one billion environmental migrants by 2050 (Kamal, 2017), Christians must be prepared to respond as good Samaritans.

These last decades in particular have marked a critical point in the history of human civilization, both in terms of the speed and intensity of the climate crisis which therefore demands a response from the Church, firstly as ambassador of God's justice and compassion, but also as an opportunity to bring to the world the good news of the hope of renewal and restoration.

He said to them, **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” (Mark 16:15 (NIV))**.



STEPHEN KERUNGA (UGANDA)

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” ~ Isaiah 43:19 (NIV)

God through his word has spoken about the renewal of the earth in various ways. In Isaiah 43:19; the wonderful promise is that God will do a new thing on the earth. This restoration will occur when man reconciles with God. The wilderness which are desolate places and the deserts are dry unproductive lands that can have life once more. Water is an important resource in supporting plant and animal life on earth.

The book of Psalm 24:1 (NIV) says, **“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”** The earth is the Lord’s; God created it and saw it as beautiful. God made humankind in his image. God gave us the responsibility to take care of the creation.

In the book of Genesis, the word of God says that mankind was to have dominion over the beasts in the field, fish in the sea, and the birds that fly. Much as God gave us the authority; it is worth noting that taking good care, renewing, and replenishing creation are part of the responsibilities we have.

As Africans, we need to trust God and play our part in ensuring the earth is renewed. Let us plant trees, conserve the soil, and preserve water for the glory of the Lord. In Africa, and in particular Uganda; the majority of the poor depend on the land for their livelihoods and survival.

If the church can wake up and participate in the renewal of the earth; we shall be fulfilling God’s plan for the earth.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS RESTORATION - RENEWAL OF THE EARTH

1. When we see the state of the earth, it can be depressing, how does your faith give you hope of restoration?
2. What scriptures or biblical message gives you the most encouragement to go forward with caring for creation?
3. What is your vision for your community in the next ten years in relation to the restoration of the earth and its systems?
4. What is God calling you to do (as an individual and as a church) is working towards the restoration of the earth?

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Green Anglicans Movement, Africa

