

Renew the Face of the Earth: A Faith-based Approach to Climate Justice

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(<http://www.oikoumene.org/>)

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How do we SEE the Face of the Earth? Of God? And of Each other?

- Look to your neighbour on the right and the left and see their face! S/he is the image of God
- We begin by acknowledging that God is present in our midst – we are not alone
- We can also glimpse the renewed face of the Earth in windmills, solar panels - and green pastures and still waters – in a restored Creation

Climate Change and the expression of the deepest longing of our hearts

- The people are waking up!
- The huge demonstrations/manifestations around the world on December 12 calling for climate justice
- The candlelight vigils prayerfully asking for a “real deal” – a transformation from business-as-usual
- The bells ringing out around the whole world on December 13, each rung 350 times for a return to 350ppm CO_{2e} concentration in the atmosphere
- For those with eyes to see and ears to hear, the world’s citizens have awakened and are taking action!

The problem and the realization

- A) life on the planet is indisputably faced with an imminent danger
- B) that threat is the real and rapid onset of climate change, with devastating consequences and suffering for the most vulnerable – and eventually all
- C) the issue of climate change is not simply a political, social, economic or environmental issue
- D) at the root it is the profound moral issue of who we think/believe we are, and how we act in relation to the planet – our home, the Creation, and to the Creator

As we truly believe, so we act

- If we believe in our hearts that the planet Earth is just a resource bank, “natural capital”, there for all-powerful humans to exploit, excavate, extract, and dump, we will treat it that way and make a heavy footprint
- If we believe in our hearts that we are a part of the sacred Creation, and depend on its wondrous gifts for life, and that human activity requires respect and responsibility, we will act differently
- We will love and protect and serve our home, the *oikos*

What is held as the highest value?

- What do humans value most - and worship as god: the market, money - or community and relationships, and a sustainable home - or God the Creator of all?
- Affluence gets in the way of spiritual consciousness.
- People in the affluent West seem to believe that they are above Creation, can overcome the laws of Creation, and those powers have been allowed to become the norm.
- Many prominent economists acknowledge that the dominant economic principle is greed and self-interest.
- Now the principles of equity, equality, fairness and justice need to be worked out among all peoples.
- We need a new ethic and a new understanding that we are beings made from dust, from earth (whence we will return); we are water, we are air, we are fire/energy. The understanding of who we are as natural beings needs to be restored.

The message of the bells

- Bells can ring out rejoicing-or toll in mourning
- Bells call to prayer
- Bells call the whole community, to fellowship
- Bells sound the alarm in times of emergency for all to come and act quickly and resolutely
- NOW is that time!

What message did you hear?

- A call to the rich and powerful to repent and act to “seal the deal”
- A call to the impoverished and victimized to take courage and speak up boldly – to make sure the deal reflects climate justice
- A call to the whole Earth Community to act together in unity and restore right relationship – with all peoples, all species of life, and with Mother Earth herself
- A call to justice – ecojustice – and peace
- A call to truly work together to renew the face of this troubled Earth, this polluted, degraded, denigrated, battered, hurt and abused, but beautiful home of ours – the only one we have

All Creation is groaning

- “All creation is groaning, waiting for the revealing of the children of God” – (Romans 8:19)
- In the season of Advent, Christians wait with expectation for new birth
- We long for the day of celebration, as we will enter into a new Season of Creation, when the news that the bells will ring out will be “Rejoice!”
- The WCC is here in Copenhagen as a community of faith, with many other people of faith, in the midst of this assembly of the global community
- With faith in something bigger than history, bigger than all of us, bigger than fear or despair
- And faith in the future and our ability to change our behaviour
- To transform our global society to live in unity, solidarity and sustainability; with equity, harmony, compassion, and love

A little bit of history

- Since at least 1973 the World Council of Churches has articulated ideas like:
 - Sustainable societies, limits to growth, climate change and ecological justice
 - JPIC – justice, peace and integrity of creation
- Since 1998 the WCC has
 - studied the harmful aspect of the project of neo-liberal corporatized globalization, and called for AGAPE (Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and the Earth)
 - Developed the concept of “ecological debt” and “climate debt”
 - Developed the integrated framework of “Poverty, Wealth and Ecology”
- August, 2009, the central committee unanimously adopted policy statements on
 - “Just finance and the economy of life”
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2009/reports-and-documents/report-on-public-issues/statement-on-just-finance-and-the-economy-of-life.html>
 - “Eco-justice and ecological debt”
<http://www.oikoumene.org/gr/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2009/reports-and-documents/report-on-public-issues/statement-on-eco-justice-and-ecological-debt.html>

Working with the text

- Like the UN the WCC works with text – some sacred text, and some declarative and policy texts
- The statement on eco-justice and ecological debt defines ecological debt as:
 - *(#6)...damage caused over time to ecosystems, places and peoples through production and consumption patterns; and the exploitation of ecosystems at the expense of the equitable rights of other countries, communities and individuals. It is primarily the debt owed by industrialized countries in the North to countries of the South on account of historical and current resource plundering, environmental degradation and the disproportionate appropriation of ecological space to dump greenhouse gases (GHGs) and toxic wastes. It is also the debt owed by economically and politically powerful national elites to marginalized citizens; the debt owed by current generations of humanity to future generations, and on a more cosmic scale, the debt owed by humankind to other life forms and the planet. It includes social damages such as the disintegration of indigenous and other communities.*

The text continues:

- *(#7) Grounded on an overriding priority for the impoverished and a deep moral responsibility to rectify injustices, ecological debt lenses reveal that it is the global South who is the principle ecological creditor while the global North is the principal ecological debtor. The ecological debt of the global North arises from various causal mechanisms whose impact has been intensified in the current economic crisis.*
- *(#10) In the light of biblical teaching (cf. Matthew 6:12), we pray for repentance and forgiveness, but we also call for the recognition, repayment and restitution of ecological debt in various ways, including non-market ways of compensation and reparation, that go beyond the market's limited ability to measure and distribute.*
- *(#11) The central committee of the WCC recognizes the need for a drastic transformation at all levels in life and society in order to end the ecological indebtedness and restoring right relationships between peoples and between people and the earth. This warrants a re-ordering of the economic paradigms from consumerist, exploitative models to models that are respectful of localized economies, indigenous cultures and spiritualities, the earth's reproductive limits, as well as the right of other life forms to blossom. And this begins with the recognition of ecological debt.*

What we believe

- To face climate change we need system change
- To stop unstoppable climate change we must unleash an unstoppable movement of people for climate justice around the world that governments and corporations cannot constrain
- For climate justice we need to replace
 - Competitive globalization *with* multilateral cooperation
 - Neo-liberal capitalist exploitation *with* sustainability, equality, equity, sufficiency and subsidiarity
 - Global commons commodification *with* conservation of the sacred gift of the Earth
 - Voluntary global agreements *with* legally binding global treaties
 - Economy based on greed *with* economy of enough

How do we change our ways?

- There are many known ways with children and adults to elicit new and better behaviour.
 - First with children, gently, show them the problem and together find an acceptable solution
 - With older children, if necessary, firmly confront and have them own up to it and make amends, repayment or compensation
 - With adult violence and abuse, or addictions, ensure that steps are taken to stop it, and put in place conditions that are monitored and evaluated to prevent the harmful behaviour and create new and healthier patterns and traits
- Can the latter work with abusive, violent, addicted society?

A 12-Step program for the planet

- Many of us humans currently have some very bad habits
 - dependence on unbridled growth and unfettered finance
 - belief in a theology of “dominance”, or human rule over Creation - and others (which we may call “empire”)
 - repressive and oppressive thinking and global systems (as with apartheid,) that shackle many and need to be overcome
- Therefore we need a new ethical imperative, like the *Kairos* document during the South African apartheid struggle
- Here in Copenhagen, with its most famous son, Hans Christian Andersen, we should declare “the Emperor has no clothes”
- We need a power analysis, and power sharing: God- given power to all people
- We need interfaith language and mandate for inclusiveness
- Need mandatory *not* voluntary limits
- Need global rules
- Need commitment to ethical and moral choices on climate change issues that benefit all people and the whole Creation
- Need models of inclusive Earth Community
- Need a FAB (Fair, Ambitious and legally Binding) Agreement in Copenhagen - to begin to Renew the Face of the Earth

How to get out of the mess we are in?

- The WCC statements address the ecological issues of economic relationships
 - Jesus warned “You cannot serve both God and wealth” (Luke 16:13)
- “Economics”, like “ecology”, and “ecumenism”, comes from the Greek “*oikos*”, and is about global housekeeping
- We need some global house*cleaning*
- The global financial crisis is an opportunity which is in danger of being missed
- Originating in the richest parts of the world, it points to the immorality of a system that glorifies money and has a dehumanizing effect by encouraging acquisitive individualism
- The resulting greed-based culture impoverishes human life, erodes the moral and ecological fabric of human civilization, and intoxicates our psyche with materialism
- There is growing awareness of our common vulnerability and the limits of our current way of life
- Those most affected – who we should listen to as modern-day prophets - are women, who bear a disproportionate share of the burden; young people and children, as doubts are raised and their sense of security for the future is eroded; and those living in poverty, whose suffering deepens
- The crisis we face is at the same time systemic and moral

A new financial architecture for a sustainable planet

- We need a new global financial architecture
 - ethical, just, and democratic
 - grounded on a framework of common values: honesty, social justice, human dignity, mutual accountability, ecological sustainability
 - accounts for social and ecological risks in financial and economic calculation
 - reconnects finance with the real economy
 - sets clear limits to, as well as penalizes, excessive and irresponsible actions based on greed
- We need a new ethos and culture
 - Reflects the values of solidarity, common good and inclusion
 - Replaces the anti-values of greed, individualism and exclusion
- We need new indicators of progress (other than GDP)
 - e.g. Human Development Index, ecological footprint calculations, Gross National Happiness (GNH),

Values for new economic systems

- For example: A Gross National Happiness Index would hold as the highest priority and reflect
 - Quality and pattern of life
 - Good governance (true democracy)
 - Education
 - Health
 - Ecological resilience
 - Cultural diversity
 - Community vitality
 - Balanced use of time
 - Psychological and spiritual well-being

An economy glorifying life

- A new paradigm of economic development and a re-conceptualization of wealth to include
 - Relationships
 - Care and compassion
 - Solidarity and love
 - Aesthetics and the ethics of life
 - Participation and celebration
 - Cultural diversity and community vitality
 - Responsible growth that recognizes human responsibility for Creation and for future generations

Re-Drawing the Line

- There are current international agreed understandings of the “*Poverty Line*”
- The WCC is working to create and propose a “*Greed Line*” to measure how much is enough, too much
- A “*Green Line*” must include 1.5°C and 350 ppm of CO_{2e}

Follow the Money – Some Solutions

- 1. Admit that the current system is broken, with huge social and ecological costs
- 2. Revise and create new taxation systems to incentivize green technology and dis-incentivize the fossil fuel industry and keep petroleum in the ground
- 3. Redistribute wealth – the North pays up its climate debt – a proxy for ecological debt – using tools like Greenhouse Development Rights (GDR Framework)
- 4. Cancel the illegitimate international debt of poor countries
- 5. Create new systems of accounts and indicators
- 6. End institutional complicity – including our own church complicity - in unjust and unsustainable structures
- 7. Emphasize participation of women, Indigenous Peoples, differently-abled, youth, poor, previously excluded
- 8. Promote new values for Whole Earth Justice

Specific proposals

- Innovative sources of finance, including Carbon Taxes, and Currency Transaction Tax (CTT) - to pay for global public goods and poverty eradication, mitigation and adaptation
- New global reserve system based on a supranational global reserve currency and regional and local currencies
- United Nations Global Economic Council, on par with the Security Council, to oversee international financial institutions
- Gender-just social protection programs in national fiscal stimulus packages
- Uphold commitments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly #8 on co-operation worldwide
- Corporate social accountability within legal regulatory frameworks
- Inclusion of environmental liabilities and assessment of responsibilities for ecological destruction

More proposals

- Treat finance as a public service, making loans to small and medium enterprises, farmers and poor people, micro-financing not-for-profit enterprises and the social economy
- A new international credit agency with greater democratic governance than under the current Bretton Woods institutions
- International bankruptcy court to cancel odious debts and arbitrate other debt issues
- Regulate and reform the credit agency industry into proper independent supervision institution(s), based on more transparency about ratings and strict regulation on the management of conflict of interest
- Revise taxation systems, establish an international accounting standard requiring country-by-country reporting of transnational companies' economic activities and taxes paid, and forging a multi-lateral agreement to set a mandatory requirement for the automatic exchange of tax information between all jurisdictions to prevent tax avoidance
- Ensure that resources are not diverted from basic education, public health, poor countries, or environmental protection

Message to Faith Communities

- Advocate, educate and demonstrate your commitment to a belief in Whole Earth Justice
- Help build moral courage to get where we need to go as a global community
- Repudiate a destructive theology of dominance and embrace one of humility and being an integral part of the Creation
- Confess, repent and make restitution for past wrongs
- Get involved in Greening Sacred Spaces and be self-critical, measuring your contributions to GHG emissions reductions
- Be the change you want to see
- Be the messenger to herald a new world that awaits
- Model hope

Message about Climate Debt - especially to Rich Annex 1 Countries

- The climate debt bill is due – in fact, overdue.
- The time and term of the loan of the resources and ecological space entrusted by God, but taken disproportionately by you and your predecessors, is up and is being called in.
- It is time to pay Mother Earth and the poorest and most vulnerable, who are the real creditors.
- Never again mortgage the future.
- Seal the deal – make it a FAB deal.

The Call of the Bells

- God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer is calling us to a new way of being and living as One Earth Community
- Are we listening to the call of the bells?
- Archbishop Desmond Tutu said yesterday, “Lets reach out to the politicians and decision makers and invite them to join the winning side.”
- Today I say, “Let us all join in the building of a sustainable, loving, compassionate, resilient and beautiful Earth Community – our island family home.”

Blessings and Thank You

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