Making Peace with the Earth
Making Peace with the Earth
Action and Advocacy for Climate Justice

Edited by Grace Ji-Sun Kim
Foreword by Guillermo Kerber

World Council of Churches Publications
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This volume draws on the lived experience of Christian churches around the world as they address the problems, perils, and possibilities inherent in climate change.

In 2013 the World Council of Churches Assembly in Busan, Republic of Korea, concluded by inviting Christians and all people to join a pilgrimage of justice and peace. In 2015, in various countries, pilgrimages for climate justice were organized by churches, specialized ministries, and ecumenical and civil society organizations. Many of these pilgrimages were the result of what churches have been doing on climate and ecological issues for many years. Climate justice is a complementary dimension of peace with the earth, one of the components of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation which concluded the Decade to Overcome Violence, Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace, held in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2011.

In recent years, more and more publications in various regions and in different languages are addressing the climate and ecological crises from theological perspectives. These theological reflections have been inspired by concrete actions been taken by churches on the ground. At the same time the theological insights have inspired Christians to translate into action a renewed concern for creation.
The purpose of this book is to show through some particular cases how churches and church-related organizations have been translating into practice, through action and advocacy, peace with the earth and climate justice. Together with concrete actions being taken by churches on the ground (green churches and eco-congregations being an example of these), churches’ advocacy at the national and international level on environmental issues has a history of more than twenty years. The Earth Summit or United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, can be seen as a catalyst in the international arena as three environmental conventions were adopted there by the international community: the convention on biological diversity, the convention on desertification, and the convention on climate change. Churches, as we will see in one of the chapters of this book, were strongly involved in Rio 1992 and since then, especially at the Conference of Parties (COP) of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change that started in 1995.

The World Council of Churches’ Working Group on Climate Change, also in existence for more than twenty years, has been a space where representatives of member churches, other churches, specialized ministries and civil society organizations working on care for creation and climate justice have come together to share experiences, learn from each other and strategize for advocacy at COPs and at the United Nations Human Rights Council. Most of the chapters of this book have been written by members of the Working Group. But, because the group does not cover the full variety of actions being developed on these issues, other people were also invited to contribute to this volume.

Despite this long history of ecumenical engagement, in many places ecology and specifically climate change continue to be a topic far from the action of the churches. Publication of this book is meant to share with a wider public stories and reflections from very diverse contexts and with very diverse styles. The contributions reflect the richness of the ecumenical movement in addressing the challenges and also the difficulty in finding a common pattern. Yet “caring for creation” and “striving for climate justice” can be seen as concepts that reflect what churches have been doing based on a theology of creation which responds to the current ecological crisis and an ethics of climate that recognizes that those countries and communities who suffer today (and will suffer tomorrow) the worst consequences of climate change are those who have contributed the least to the causes, mainly the increase in CO\textsubscript{2} emissions.
The ecumenical work on the ecological and climate crises has been done not in isolation but in close cooperation with other churches, other faith traditions and the global civil society movement.

Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato si* shows how the topics that have been at the core of the ecumenical movement’s work for climate justice are also essential to the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Care for creation as our common home, the need to listen to the cry of the earth together with the cry of the poor, the need for profound change from the individual to the international level, a deep spirituality of creation and the relevance of education are some of the key common aspects highlighted by the encyclical.

Recent interfaith statements, like those adopted in New York in September 2014 at the Climate Change Summit or presented to the UNFCCC Secretariat in October 2015, reveal an increasing interfaith consensus in addressing the topic. The statements, based on the different faith traditions, called the international community to agree on a fair, ambitious, and binding treaty to respond to the climate change threat, and express the commitment of faith leaders to implement in their communities the necessary changes.

Campaigns and advocacy at the international level have also been undertaken by the ecumenical movement in cooperation with larger non-governmental organizations and networks. The World Council of Churches has worked especially with the Global Call for Climate Action, linking faith voices to other voices which share the same perspectives and concerns, and with 350.org in mobilizing people all over the world for an effective response to the threats humanity is facing because of climate change. The call to divest from fossil fuels, which has been listened to by many churches, theological seminars, and other church-related organizations, with the WCC’s Central Committee having explicitly included fossil fuels among the list of areas where the WCC will not invest, is one example of this collaboration.

As a result of long years of negotiations and strong advocacy being done by faith communities and civil society at large, the 21st meeting of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted in December 2015 the so called Paris Agreement. The international community has reached a consensus on how to address the climate crisis, which is very much welcomed, but much more is needed to hold “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C,” as the Agreement expresses in Article 2. Courageous decisions will have to be
taken by governments to limit the increase in the global average temperature. Actions and advocacy by churches and faith based organizations cannot stop now but should look for other creative forms of engagement to inspire and put into practice the needed “ecological conversion,” as Pope Francis put it, for the care of our common home.

While sharing a host of examples of churches’ action and reflection on the topic, this book will, we hope, also be an invitation to further commit and share stories of action and advocacy for climate justice.

Guillermo Kerber
Programme on Care for Creation and Climate Justice
World Council of Churches
I remember visiting my grandmother’s house when I was a young girl living in Korea. I have fond memories of playing in the madang (a Korean term that describes a courtyard within a traditional Korean home). Most Korean houses are surrounded by a large metal fence with a front gate that leads into the madang.

A typical part of Korean homes, the madang is much like a family room where family and friends gather to rest, talk, share, and engage with each other. Most of the rooms in the home are entered through the madang and thus it serves as a space for encounter and sharing, celebration and fellowship, greeting a visitor and welcoming a stranger. Ancient, medieval, and even contemporary European buildings are built on the same principle. Perhaps the madang is something like the courtyard at the Cloisters in New York City, although the surrounding building there is far larger than what my grandmother had or what most Korean homes would have. My grandmother’s home was small, with just two rooms leading away from the madang.

The tenth assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was held in Busan, South Korea, from 30 October to 8 November 2013. Participating churches, along with ecumenical organizations and groups, created a madang with information booths, cultural performers, and workshops. This madang became an energetic meeting place where individuals and groups continued ongoing conversations, shared, brainstormed, envisioned, and reimagined.
The participants in the tenth assembly adopted a message that asked churches and Christians to join in a “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.” Many are now working on what it means to be on this pilgrimage.

Part of this journey and pilgrimage involves doing environmental justice and making peace with the earth. And this requires working on the pressing issue of climate change, one of the most challenging realities in today’s world. People and vulnerable groups—in particular, communities—face climate change in various parts of the world. Churches and other faith-based communities are called to address climate change. Some Christians and churches fail to recognize the reality of climate change, however, because of their views on the Bible and faith. Others do not believe in climate change because of culturally conditioned climate skepticism. Yet others believe that it is not the role of faith communities to address climate change, feeling that it is not religion’s job to engage any political issues.

Why should churches address environmental or climate-change issues? Why should Protestants join Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Evangelicals in caring for creation initiatives? Why should Christians look to join interfaith work with Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and other faith traditions? Why should they advocate for climate justice and peace with the earth? These are just some of the questions that Christians, churches, and faith communities face when addressing climate change.

In light of these questions and doubts, the WCC is addressing climate change for two specific reasons. First, churches in various parts of the world recognize how the consequences of climate change affect the lives and livelihoods of their communities. In an effort to respond to these consequences, churches are helping to develop resilient communities, equipped to adapt to climate change. These churches benefit greatly by learning from the work of other faith communities from around the world. Second, at the local level, churches of different denominations are coming together to respond to the impacts of climate change and to advocate at local and national levels for policies that respond to the needs and rights of vulnerable populations. In both instances, the WCC has a unique ability to build networks and relationships between churches around the globe, and to accompany and enhance their work.

As scientific reports confirm, climate change affects the people who have been made the most vulnerable in our societies. Climate change intertwines with issues of land, food, work, devastation, and human dignity. Climate
change often results in people becoming vulnerable to losing their land and being forced to live in other areas that are not devastated by climate change. The rights of the victims of climate change are being violated in various ways and the threats to human beings and to life in our planet will only get worse.

Religious leaders and faith-based organizations must embrace the climate-change issue vigorously. Advocacy for the earth must become a priority. For example, all must work towards preventing Earth’s temperature from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius. Unlimited carbon pollution must be stopped. There needs to be a strong mitigation of CO$_2$ emissions by wealthy countries, so those countries still developing do not suffer from a burnt-out planet, through no fault of their own. All these steps are crucial to address climate change.

Environmental justice is intimately related to economic justice. The environment affects our economy, and people who live in poverty are the most affected. To emphasize and illustrate the link between these two intertwined issues, the WCC adopted the term *eco-justice*.

Furthermore, without environmental justice, there cannot be peace. The WCC’s International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, held in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2011 clearly stated that there can be “no peace on earth without peace with the earth.” The way we have related to the earth, however, is with little conservation and no restraint. We have lost any tradition of being stewards of the earth. This path of violence and domination may not lead to open war, but it contributes to the destruction of the earth.

The earth cries out and pleads with us to join together to work toward climate justice and environmental justice. We need to advocate for the earth and be at peace with the earth. We need to come into the earth’s *madang* and be in that space to share, communicate, fellowship, greet a stranger, and welcome a friend. We need to bring Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, individuals, communities, politicians, churches, and corporations into the *madang*, so all can challenge each other to live a life of stewardship rather than of greed, domination, and destruction. We all need to turn to the God of life and ask God to lead us to social justice and peace.

To respond to this threat to humanity and to earth as a whole, even climate-change skeptics must join in the journey for the protection and sustainability of the earth. This book tackles the important ecological-justice questions of our time. It is a collection from climate activists, faith leaders, theologians, and others who are on the pilgrimage of justice and peace, reflecting on climate
justice and peace with the earth. The concrete experience of churches around the world can be instructive for the reader’s church, and this volume gathers that hard-earned knowledge. This book seeks to provide imaginative possibilities of how the church, faith communities, individuals, and the academy can move forward to help save God’s creation. It serves as an example of a virtual madang. It is my hope that readers will create madangs around the world: linked-together places for the worldwide church to work together to make changes in the world that will help lead toward peace on earth. The madang is open; let us come in, converse, envision, and reimagine. The journey has already begun and our hope is that everyone will join in this journey of justice and peace with the earth.

Acknowledgments
This book rose out of the 2014 Climate Change Working Group for the World Council of Churches at Wuppertal, Germany. Through the various discussions, site visits, and presentations, it became very clear that a published book was necessary to address the concern about climate change and sustainability of the church and the academy.

I thank the World Council of Churches for their dedication and work for climate justice. The WCC has placed high emphasis on the importance of creation care, social justice, and sustainability. It has shared its deep social concern by responding to the heightened alarm resulting from the increase of pollution and carbon waste and how it affects the people around the globe who are the most vulnerable.

My deepest thanks to Dr Guillermo Kerber, who has coordinated the work on Care for Creation and Climate Justice at the WCC for more than ten years. He understands the tensions and dynamics of how churches work, or resist working, toward climate justice. His deep theological understanding and approach to climate justice helped launch this book project. He provided guidance and support for this project.

I thank Michael West, the editor at WCC Publishing, who showed great interest and understood the necessity of this project right from the start. His constant care for this project from the beginning to its publication is commended and appreciated. His wisdom and knowledge helped strengthen this book and make it a reality.
I express my gratitude to each of the contributors to this book. Many of the writers are part of the WCC Climate Change Working Group and are engaged in their own churches and organizations on working toward climate justice. Some of the contributors are not part of the Climate Change Working Group, and I appreciate their faithful work on climate justice and their contributions to this book. Each writer showed support and patience with the editing process.

Lastly, I thank my family. My sister, my brother-in-law, my nephew Matthew, and my niece Naomi supported me and encouraged me. Naomi was helpful in her editorial suggestions and assistance. My husband, Perry, showed faithful support in helping me start, write, edit, and complete this book. He stood by me as I showed despair and loss of hope during the difficult times of finishing it. I thank my children for their constant wonder and amazement in my writing, research, and work. My daughter, Elisabeth, who is sensitive to environmental issues, is concerned that such a book on sustainability be published. My two boys, Theo and Joshua, accompanied me to various climate-change events held by the WCC. My youngest, Joshua, was with me in Wuppertal, Germany, when we decided to write this book. To my family, I owe my deepest gratitude and love.

This book is dedicated to my children, Theodore, Elisabeth, and Joshua, and to their generation, who are experiencing the effects of climate change and in whose hands we lay our hope for climate justice.
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Lucy D’Souza-Krone was born in Goa, India, rooted in the Catholic Church, worked as a teacher, and later engaged in rural education and development for women and children. She learned painting from Jyoti Sahi and lived in the Art Ashram INSCAPE near Bangalore. In 1989 she painted for Misereor in Germany the Lenten Veil *Biblical Women: Guides to the Kingdom of God*, which was printed in large quantities and has been seen in many countries in the world. She is married to Andreas Krone, a pastor in Germany. She continues to paint and has exhibitions and workshops in Germany, other parts of Europe, and beyond. Her recent series, “Art for Climate Justice,” aims to raise awareness of the challenge of climate change.

Rev. Henrik Grape is an officer on sustainable development in the Church of Sweden. He is a member of the enabling team of ECEN (European Christian Environmental Work) and has attended most of the UNFCCC COPs with the
WCC climate-change group since 2006. He prepared the Uppsala Interfaith Summit in 2008 and the manifesto that emerged from that conference. Most recently, he has been involved in the writing of the Swedish bishops’ letter on climate change.

**Rev. Fletcher Harper** is executive director of GreenFaith, a leading interfaith environmental organization. An Episcopal priest based in the United States, he oversees GreenFaith’s Divest & Reinvest Now! campaign, which supports religious divest–reinvest campaigns globally by providing educational and thought-leadership resources, strategic support, and networking. GreenFaith offers a range of programs to help diverse faith communities put their beliefs into action for the earth.

**Joy Kennedy** is a consultant and long-time activist who has worked for ecological justice through faith-based organizations and NGOs. She is a member of the WCC Climate Change Working Group and the Poverty, Wealth and Ecology Reference Group. She has held eco-justice portfolios with the Anglican Church of Canada; KAIROS, Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives; the United Church of Canada; and the Canadian Council of Churches. She has also served on many boards, such as the Climate Action Network-Canada; Green Communities Canada; the Canadian Business Ethics Research Network (CBERN); Transparency International; and the Canadian Interfaith Conversation. She is a frequent public speaker and has addressed the United Nations several times on climate change, sustainability, and social and economic justice issues.

**Guillermo Kerber** presently coordinates the work on Care for Creation and Climate Justice at the World Council of Churches, based in Geneva, Switzerland. He holds academic degrees in philosophy and theology (ITUMS–PUG, Montevideo, Uruguay) and a doctorate in sciences of religion (UMESP, Sao Paulo, Brazil). In Uruguay, his home country, he was professor of social ethics both at the National and Catholic Universities in Montevideo and the director of an NGO working on development and human rights. He is author of various books and articles on climate change, human rights, and international affairs from an ethical and theological perspective, published in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America. He currently teaches at the Atelier Œcuménique de Théologie in Geneva (http://www.aotge.ch) and sits on
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**Grace Ji-Sun Kim** received her M.Div. from Knox College (University of Toronto) and her Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. She is a visiting researcher at Georgetown University. Kim is the author of nine books, most recently *Embracing the Other: The Transformative Spirit of Love* (Eerdmans, 2015). She is a co-editor with Dr Joseph Cheah for the Palgrave Macmillan book series “Asian Christianity in Diaspora.” She serves on the American Academy of Religion’s (AAR) Research Grants Jury Committee; is a co-chair of the steering committee for AAR’s Women of Color Scholarship, Teaching, and Activism Group; and is a steering-committee member of AAR’s Comparative Theology Group and the Religion and Migration Group. She sits on the editorial board for the *Journal for Religion and Popular Culture* and is a referee for two other journals: *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion* and *The Global Studies Journal*. She is an ordained minister of word and sacrament within the PC(USA).

**Jochen Motte** was born in Germany and has studied Protestant theology in Tübingen, Bern, and Wuppertal. In Wuppertal he worked at the theological seminary, where he wrote his thesis on biblical theology. An ordained pastor of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, since 1993 he has worked as executive secretary in the United Evangelical Mission Communion of Churches in Three Continents, where he presently heads the department for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

**Jea Sophia Oh** is assistant professor of philosophy at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. She has developed comparative postcolonial eco-theology in the area of constructive theology to combine her research areas of comparative theology, process theology, environmental ethics, postcolonialism, and feminism. Her book *A Postcolonial Theology of Life: Planetarity East and West* (Sopher Press, 2011) is the first approach to bridge postcolonialism and ecological theology with the use of Asian spirituality as the philosophical underpinning for the argument that all forms of life are sacred.
Pawel Pustelnik is a Ph.D. student at Cardiff University, UK. He is researching issues related to global governance and climate change, with a special focus on emissions-trading systems. For the past five years he has been engaged in the youth ecumenical movement through the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe and the World Student Christian Federation–Europe. He is also actively working with Jewish organizations on matters connected to interfaith dialogue and Jewish heritage.

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