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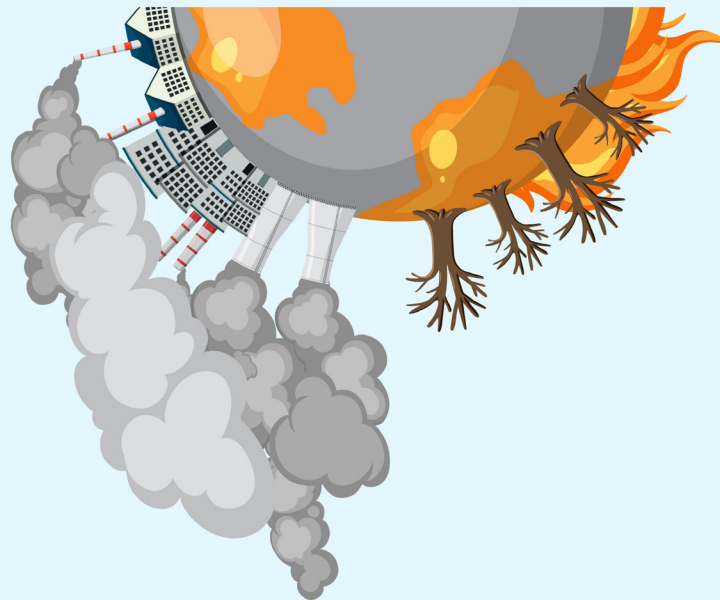
Issue 3, 2024

Evangelical Perspectives on Mission and Ethics



Climate Change

Paving the way to a Climate-resilient Future



**“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)**

Drishtikone means perspective or viewpoint in Hindi. The magazine seeks to provide a space in which Christians can share their perspectives and points of view on wholistic mission in India.

Our Vision is that **Drishtikone** will motivate change in readers. The experiences of development practitioners, theologians, grassroots workers and others demonstrating God’s love in a practical way, will influence and encourage Christians to join the struggle for peace and justice in this country.

Drishtikone seeks to present a Biblical perspective on social issues and provide readers with information and models of engagement in wholistic concerns. It is a forum for evangelical reflection and dialogue on development issues in India.

Drishtikone is published by EFICOR to mobilise Christian reflection and action. Financial contributions from readers are welcome to support EFICOR in its efforts to influence the mind towards action.

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Drishtikone is a magazine with many perspectives.

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Contents

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,

Greetings from Emmanuel Ministries Calcutta!

I was delighted to receive the second issue of your magazine Dristikone on 'Forgiveness, Peace and Reconciliation.' It is a well-planned magazine with good articles which are worth reading and helpful.

Please know that I will be praying that God will bless your work.

Well done and keep it up!

Every blessing.

Premila Pavamani

President,

Emmanuel Ministries, Calcutta, West Bengal

Dear Editor,

Thank you for sending Dristikone magazine on 'Forgiveness, Peace and Reconciliation.' In terms of design and content, it looks good and well done. Keep up the good work, God bless your efforts!

Peace and joy.

Rev. Joel Ashirwadam J. W.

Dear Editor,

Thank you for sharing the magazine. It is a valuable resource on the important life principles on 'Forgiveness, Peace and Reconciliation.'

With kind regards.

Pradeep Waghre

2	Editorial
3	Cover Story Climate Modelling and Loving Our Neighbours Dr. A. Azhoni
8	Response to the Cover Story A Response to 'Climate Modelling and Loving Our Neighbours' Dr. Bonik Chandra Brahma
10	Biblical Perspective Faith and the Environment: Biblical Insights on Stewardship Ms. Prashanti Mikayla
12	FACTS
15	My India - 1 What is COP? It's purpose, Significance and Agenda this Year Mr. M Ramesh Babu

Contents



Editorial...

Climate change refers to the long-term shift in Earth's weather patterns, impacting temperature, humidity, wind, and precipitation. Global warming, largely driven by human activities like fossil fuel burning, specifically refers to the rise in average surface temperatures. This increase disrupts ecosystems, threatens biodiversity, and leads to more frequent extreme weather events. In India, the effects are clear - erratic weather patterns, heatwaves, and floods strain resources like energy, water, and food.

Efforts to address climate change have been ongoing, starting with the 1992 UN Earth Summit, followed by the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, and the Paris Agreement in 2015. These agreements set targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, aiming to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Nations are required to submit and update Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as part of their climate action plans.

This edition of Drishtikone explores the Christian response to the climate crisis. As Christians, what is our role in all this? Where do we start? What does it mean to love our neighbours - our global neighbours - in this context? The Church's role is multi-faceted, requiring both practical discipleship and action. The Bible calls us to be stewards of God's creation, sharing it equitably and justly.

The Church and civil society have played significant roles in raising grassroots awareness and promoting environmental conservation in collaboration with local communities. This edition emphasizes these efforts, showcasing initiatives that highlight the importance of preserving our environment, urging the Church to remain engaged and advocate for a climate-resilient future. We hope and pray that this edition inspires us to care for our earth, even as the impacts of climate change become increasingly apparent.

17 **My India - 2**
Climate Change: Incremental Steps is No Longer Enough
 Mr. P.K. Khup Hangzo

19 **Voices From the Grassroots**
Addressing Climate Change
 Mrs. Joylin Niruba

21 **Book Review**
Climate Change: Faith and Action
 Mrs. Joan Lalromawi

Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet
 Ms. Nem Thian Sang

23 **Bible Study**
3 views of Climate Change: Which one do you hold?
 Mr. Mark Dee

24 **Ideas For Action**

Climate Modelling and Loving Our Neighbours

Dr. A. Azhoni

In an era where the consequences of climate change are becoming ever more evident, Christians are called to engage with climate science in ways that align with their faith, particularly the commandment to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:31). As global temperatures rise, ecosystems shift, and extreme weather events become more frequent, we are forced to ask: How can we love our neighbours in a world increasingly shaped by climate change? This article explores the crucial role that climate modelling plays in understanding our planet’s future and how Christians, inspired by Biblical teachings, can work alongside scientists and policymakers toward a more sustainable world. By understanding the key assumptions behind climate models, and global efforts to combat climate change, Christians can lead the charge in protecting creation and the vulnerable communities most affected by environmental degradation and climate change.

Climate vs. Weather: Clearing the Confusion

Climate and weather are often confused, but understanding the difference is essential in grasping the nature of climate change. **Weather** refers to short-term changes in atmospheric conditions—think of the temperature, humidity, and precipitation you experience in a day or a week. It is localized and variable, meaning it can change dramatically in a short time.

In contrast, **climate** refers to the long-term patterns of temperature, humidity, wind, and precipitation in a particular region over an extended period, typically measured over 30 years. Climate determines what is typical for a region in the long term, whereas weather describes the day-to-day fluctuations within those broader patterns. Climate change refers to alterations in these long-term patterns, driven largely by human activities such as greenhouse gas emissions.

Understanding this distinction is key because many misunderstandings about climate change stem from conflating unusual weather events with broader climate trends. An unusually cold winter, for example, does not disprove global warming; it’s a fluctuation within the broader pattern of a warming climate.

Key aspects of climate change includes a) *Global Warming*: The increase in Earth’s average surface temperature due to rising levels of greenhouse gases, b) *Extreme Weather Events*: More frequent and severe events such as heatwaves, droughts, floods, and storms, c) *Rising Sea Levels*: Melting polar ice caps and glaciers, along with the thermal expansion of seawater, contribute to rising sea levels, threatening coastal regions, d) *Shifting Ecosystems and Biodiversity Loss*: Altered temperature and precipitation patterns affect ecosystems, causing species migration and biodiversity loss, and e) *Impact on Human Systems*: Agriculture, water resources, health, and infrastructure are vulnerable to climate change effects, leading to food insecurity, water scarcity, and displacement.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assesses scientific data on climate change, providing projections for future impacts based on various scenarios. The IPCC AR6 report (2021) emphasizes that human influence is “unequivocally” the main driver of climate change, with the effects being felt globally.

Climate Modelling and Projections

“Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18) emphasizes the importance of foresight and planning, particularly when addressing global challenges like climate change. To foresee likely outcomes and prepare for the future, scientists rely on **climate models** - complex computer simulations that predict future climate conditions based on different scenarios of greenhouse gas emissions, land use changes, and other factors. These models are essential tools for understanding how human activities impact the planet’s climate systems and for guiding mitigation and adaptation strategies. By simulating different scenarios, scientists assess temperature rise, sea-level changes, shifts in weather patterns, and the frequency of extreme events, such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves.

Climate models make assumptions about future economic growth, energy use, population changes, and technological advancements. They take into account the physical processes that govern the Earth’s atmosphere, oceans, ice, and land surfaces. While no model can predict the future with 100% certainty,

the strength of climate models lies in their ability to provide a range of likely outcomes based on different assumptions about future human actions.

The use of climate models provides guidance for both **mitigation** (reducing emissions) and **adaptation** (preparing for climate impacts). Each model scenario reflects specific pathways, ranging from the best-case scenario (rapid decarbonization and sustainability) to worst-case scenarios where emissions continue to rise unabated. Two prominent concepts that help define these scenarios are: a) Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs) and b) Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs)³. These provide narratives about possible futures, considering both socioeconomic factors and policy choices. The combination of SSPs and RCPs helps policymakers understand how societal actions influence climate outcomes.

For Christians, these models and projections carry important lessons. Climate modelling requires long-term thinking, careful planning, and global cooperation - values that resonate with the Biblical call to stewardship and love for our neighbours. **Loving our neighbours**, as Jesus commanded, takes on new dimensions when we realize that our actions today can determine the future liveability of the planet for generations to come. Therefore, let us briefly discuss some of the basic concepts and assumptions behind these models and projections to understand how Christians can take advantage of climate models to engage with the larger society and remain faithful to the Biblical call.

“...our actions today can determine the future liveability of the planet for generations to come.”

Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs)

A key feature of climate modelling is the use of **Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs)** - scenarios that describe different levels of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. RCPs are scenarios that outline possible greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere based on different levels of emissions. Developed for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)⁴, the RCPs allow scientists to model future climate conditions under various GHG concentration levels. RCPs are numbered based on the amount of radiative forcing (measured in watts per square meter) that would occur by the year 2100. The most commonly used RCPs are:

- **RCP2.6:** A scenario where global greenhouse gas emissions peak and decline rapidly, limiting warming to around 1.5°C to 2°C above pre-industrial levels. This is the most optimistic scenario.
- **RCP4.5:** A scenario where emissions stabilize by

mid-century, leading to moderate warming of around 2°C to 3°C.

- **RCP6.0:** A pathway with higher emissions and a warming of 3°C to 4°C by 2100.
- **RCP8.5:** The "business-as-usual" scenario, where emissions continue to rise throughout the 21st century, leading to catastrophic warming of 4°C or more by 2100.

These pathways highlight the critical importance of reducing emissions to limit global temperature rise and avoid the most severe impacts of climate change.

Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs)

To complement RCPs, scientists developed **Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs)**, which describe different potential global developments regarding population growth, economic development, technological progress, and governance. The SSPs are designed to examine how socioeconomic factors could influence the capacity to mitigate or adapt to climate change. These narratives describe possible futures based on how societies develop over time:

- **SSP1 (Sustainability):** A future where the world makes significant progress toward sustainability, with reduced inequality, effective institutions, and technological advances that limit environmental degradation. This scenario is aligned with the goals of RCP2.6.
- **SSP2 (Middle of the Road):** A scenario where social, economic, and technological trends continue along historical trajectories, leading to moderate improvements in sustainability and development.
- **SSP3 (Regional Rivalry):** A fragmented world with increased nationalism, low cooperation, and slow economic growth. Environmental degradation continues unchecked, leading to severe climate impacts.
- **SSP4 (Inequality):** A world of high inequality, where elites control resources and much of the population is marginalized, leading to limited progress on environmental and climate goals.
- **SSP5 (Fossil-fuelled Development):** A future where economic growth is prioritized above all else, leading to high emissions and severe climate impacts.

Thus, as can be seen from the above possible pathways, policies, governance, attitudes and ideologies such as nationalism, regional rivalries, and diplomacy amongst others have a bearing on the climate.

Global Climate Initiatives: The Paris Agreement and INDCs

The **Paris Agreement** of 2015⁵ marked a pivotal moment in global climate action, with countries pledging to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. Each country submits **Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)**, outlining their climate goals and strategies for reducing emissions. These INDCs are regularly updated to reflect more ambitious targets, and progress is assessed through a global stocktake every five years.

While the Paris Agreement represents a significant step forward, many countries, including India, need to increase their ambition. India has pledged to reach carbon neutrality by 2070, but given the severity of climate risks, especially in vulnerable regions like South Asia, more aggressive action is required. India's commitment to **carbon neutrality by 2070**⁶ is a positive step, but the country must accelerate its efforts. India is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures, unpredictable monsoons, and extreme weather events. For India, achieving carbon neutrality by 2070 might be too late to avoid the worst effects of climate change, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable populations. Climate Action Tracker, an independent scientific project that tracks government climate action, rates India's commitment as "highly insufficient."⁷

India must adopt more aggressive targets, invest in renewable energy, and prioritize adaptation strategies that protect the most vulnerable communities.

The Role of Religious Leaders in Climate Action

The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** has increasingly recognized the role of religious leaders and communities in addressing climate change. For example, in the chapters discussing ethics, values, and decision-making, the AR5⁸ acknowledges that religious institutions and spiritual values play a significant role in shaping societal responses to climate change. The report suggests that religious and spiritual beliefs can help foster a sense of collective responsibility, motivate ethical behaviour, and promote long-term thinking necessary for sustainable development. Faith leaders have unique influence in shaping moral and ethical responses to climate issues⁹, and many religious communities are already engaged in climate action. The IPCC encourages the integration of ethical considerations into climate policy, highlighting the importance of religious voices in advocating for climate justice.

Today, the academic community is constantly monitoring and observing which religious communities¹⁰ are being consistent with their teachings and practice and Christians will be failing in their witness if we do not take the issue of climate change seriously.

Biblical Reflections on Climate Action

The Bible calls us to care for God's creation and to act justly, particularly in the face of injustice and inequality. Starting from Genesis to Revelation, the creation mandate given to the humankind is evident. **Genesis 2:15** commands humans to "work and take care" of the Earth, emphasizing stewardship. **Psalm 24:1** reminds us that "the Earth is the Lord's," underscoring the sacredness of creation. **Proverbs 31:8-9** calls believers to "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves," which includes advocating for climate justice for those most affected by environmental degradation. Jesus' teaching, "*The meek shall*

inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5) holds profound relevance for climate action and environmental sustainability. This teaching emphasizes humility, gentleness, and a spirit of peacefulness—qualities that stand in stark contrast to dominance, exploitation, and aggression. When applied to contemporary climate issues, this beatitude speaks to the Christian responsibility for environmental stewardship and care for creation. Unlike many misconceptions about the end of the world, the book of Revelation describes the renewal of heaven and earth, with imagery of a "new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1), symbolizing God's intention to restore creation. This passage suggests that while the current world may be marred by sin and destruction, God's plan is not to discard the Earth but to redeem and transform it. The idea of restoration implies that creation is valuable and worth preserving, aligning with the concept of environmental stewardship - caring for the Earth as part of God's creation and plan. The Book of Revelation is rich in symbolic imagery drawn from nature - rivers, trees, mountains, and seas (Revelation 22:1-2). Implicit in the Book of Revelation is the belief that humans have a role in creation. While the text portrays divine intervention, in the present as well as the future, it also hints at human responsibility for maintaining harmony with God's creation. The promise of a new Earth does not justify neglect of the current one, but rather invites stewardship as part of the Christian faith. The Creator-God who pronounced his creation as "good" in the beginning will not just throw it away but renew it. Therefore, Christians are called to act as stewards of creation, to protect the Earth and its inhabitants, and to work toward a just and sustainable future. However, climate action is not only about preserving the environment but also about loving

“The promise of a new Earth does not justify neglect of the current one, but rather invites stewardship as part of the Christian faith.”

our neighbours, especially those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Lessons from Climate Models

The basic principles in Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs) and Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs) have important lessons for promoting policies and lifestyles aligned towards flourishing. The concept of “shared” is particularly in sync with Christian values. This God-given Earth is to be shared with all - including the future generations to come. Christians are called to act as co-creators with God, working toward a future that protects creation and ensures the well-being of all people. This means taking climate action seriously, reducing our carbon footprints, advocating for ambitious climate policies, and caring for the most vulnerable. By embracing sustainability and advocating for lower greenhouse gas emissions, Christians can play a vital role in addressing one of the greatest moral challenges of our time: climate change.

Christian Organizations and Communities

Christian organizations and communities can learn from climate models and scenarios by understanding the assumptions behind RCPs and SSPs. These models highlight the importance of human choices - whether through aggressive mitigation, business-as-usual emissions, or sustainable socio-economic policies. SSPs, particularly scenarios of inequality (SSP3, SSP4), show how the socio-economic impacts of climate change are disproportionately borne by the poor and marginalized. Christian organizations can advocate for climate justice by addressing how these scenarios exacerbate global inequalities. By aligning with SSP1, the sustainability pathway, Christians can emphasize the need for fair, inclusive policies that promote environmental conservation, economic equity, and climate resilience. SSPs and RCPs highlight that unsustainable development paths can exacerbate conflicts over resources like water, land, and food. By advocating for sustainable development (SSP1), Christian organizations can help prevent/reduce resource-based conflicts intensified by climate change. The Church, as a collective body, can serve as a powerful witness in addressing climate change by creating sustainable practices within the church. Churches can take practical steps to reduce their environmental impact by implementing energy-efficient systems, minimizing waste, and promoting environmental stewardship through green building practices.

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The Church can collaborate with scientists and policymakers to ensure that climate action is inclusive and peace-oriented. Church communities can identify Christian climate scientists in their congregations to help the church community understand the implications of climate change and also draw inspirations from global Christians such as the late Sir John Theodore Houghton (co-chair of the IPCC and president of John Ray Initiative an organization "connecting Environment, Science and Christianity"), Prof. Katharine Anne Scott Hayhoe and Rev. Dr. Neddy Astudillo (a Venezuelan eco-theologian and Presbyterian pastor) who have contributed immensely to the global understanding of climate change.

As Christian leaders

Christian leaders can incorporate this understanding into their advocacy by emphasizing the moral responsibility to act for the welfare of future generations. For instance, RCP2.6 (aggressive mitigation) reflects a path of global cooperation and care for creation, resonating with Christian values of stewardship. On the other hand, the "business-as-usual" approach (RCP8.5) reflects a selfish world, neglect of creation, contributing to suffering, especially for the vulnerable.

Christian leaders have a crucial role in shaping the conversation around climate change and guiding their congregations towards responsible action. They can:

- **Preach and teach on creation care:** Leaders should incorporate themes of creation stewardship, justice, and love for neighbour into their sermons and teachings, helping to bridge theology with practical action.
- **Engage in public advocacy:** Leaders are called to speak truth to power by advocating for stronger environmental policies, including transitioning to renewable energy, protecting biodiversity, and promoting climate justice.
- **Mobilize congregations for collective action:** Leaders can organize initiatives such as tree planting, community recycling programs, and environmental education campaigns, showing how faith communities can be active in combating climate change.

As Individuals

At the end of the day, individually, Christians are responsible for adopting sustainable lifestyles that reduce environmental harm. Practical steps include:

- **Reducing Carbon Footprint:** Individuals can reduce energy consumption, limit waste, and choose environmentally friendly transportation and products.
- **Advocating for Change:** Christians can raise awareness within their communities, urging others to adopt sustainable practices and advocate for government policies that protect the environment.
- **Supporting Fair Trade and Ethical Consumption:** Buying products that respect human dignity, ensure fair wages, and minimize environmental damage is a tangible way to align consumer habits with Christian ethics.

Conclusion

Climate change disproportionately affects the poor and marginalized. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and food insecurity often hit the most vulnerable communities hardest. For Christians, loving their neighbours means advocating for climate policies that protect these populations and providing direct support, such as disaster relief and sustainable development projects.

Loving our neighbours also includes future generations who will inherit the consequences of today's environmental actions. The principle of intergenerational justice calls on Christians to act now in ways that will safeguard the environment for future generations. This means supporting ambitious climate mitigation efforts, such as limiting global warming to below 1.5°C, which aligns with RCP2.6 in climate models, and advocating for a transition to renewable energy sources.

As Christians, we are called to love our neighbours and care for creation. Climate models, RCPs, and SSPs provide us with tools to understand the future impacts of climate change and the pathways to a more sustainable world. By working alongside scientists and policymakers, and guided by Biblical principles, we can take meaningful action to protect the Earth and ensure a just and sustainable future for all.

Let us embrace the challenge of climate action, not just as a scientific necessity, but as a profound expression of our faith and our call to love our neighbours in a rapidly changing world.

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“By working alongside scientists and policymakers, and guided by Biblical principles, we can take meaningful action to protect the Earth and ensure a just and sustainable future for all.”

A Response to 'Climate Modelling and Loving Our Neighbours'

Dr. Bonik Chandra Brahma

The clinching lines of motivation and hope read as, 'the promise of a new Earth does not justify neglect of the current one, but rather invites stewardship as part of the Christian faith. The Creator-God who pronounced his creation as "good" in the beginning will not just throw it away but renew it.' Yes, God's plan is not to discard the Earth but to redeem and transform it. The responsibility and duty given to Adam to have dominion over the earth was lost after the fall of man in Eden. But this was given back to the second Adam in Jesus Christ after the defeat of sin, Satan and death and henceforth we must own up stewardship of God's creation and treat it with respect because God provides for us through the planet. This earth would be made perfect at the coming of our Lord, but until then, environmental stewardship is definitely our responsibility.

Dr. A. Azhoni's article on 'Climate Modelling and Loving Our Neighbours' gives an altogether different perspective to the issue of conserving our environment. It is a well written highly scientific article, which is appreciable on account of relating Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs) and Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs) with Christian responsibility and duty.

On the phrase, 'Loving our neighbours' embedded in the title, I want to raise imaginative thoughts in layman's terms. Simplistically, it is to imagine that I am going to promote an environmental lifestyle somewhat like this - 'I love my neighbours; so I will not cut down trees in my campus. I love my neighbours; so I will not use plastics in my home; I love my neighbours; so I will increase greenery in my land.' Can anyone be thinking on this line in the world? That's a difficult one to answer!

On the global scenario, the thinking goes, 'I am going to develop more industries in my nation; I am going to promote more development works in my country. I am going to raise the economy of my country to the zenith. All these works may produce negative environmental impacts. But my country must be a global power.' So where can we bring in the ethics of loving your neighbours as ourselves? Who can enforce environmental treaties internationally? Is there any International Supreme Court that can enforce treaties on climate change and environment? Those again are difficult to answer. This is a selfish world under the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5: 19).

“I am going to promote an environmental lifestyle somewhat like this - 'I love my neighbours; so I will not cut down trees in my campus. I love my neighbours; so I will not use plastics in my home; I love my neighbours; so I will increase greenery in my land.' Can anyone be thinking on this line in the world? ”

Dr. A. Azhoni's article explores the crucial role that climate modelling plays in understanding our planet's future and how Christians, inspired by Biblical teachings, can play a role in assisting scientists and policymakers toward a more sustainable world. Mention may be made here that the buzzword of the world in all areas of economic development is

'SUSTAINABILITY.' The world now is in agreement that once the so called 'sustainability' is attained amongst the communities, the drivers of climate degradation would be automatically halted.

We may remember that the Sustainable Development Goals agenda was formulated at the United Nations in 2012 at the Rio De Janeiro Council Meet with an aim to promote a healthy and developed future of the planet and its people and was implemented in 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals are a set of seventeen pointer targets that all the countries which are

members of the UN agreed to work upon for the better future of the country. Economy, social and environment are the three pillars of sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals have components of Climate and environment protection and conservation. The available information on the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024 highlights that the world is significantly behind schedule in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations in 2015; inequalities are growing and the climate crisis is worsening, and biodiversity loss is speeding up.

Report which is freely available on the internet, shows, that in 2022, global greenhouse gas emissions reached a new record of 57.4 gigatons of CO₂ equivalent. The energy sector, responsible for 86% of global CO₂ emissions, remains the largest contributor, driven by the expansion of coal and gas-fired power generation. Between 2000 and 2020, the proportion of forest cover decreased from 31.9% to 31.2% of total land area, resulting in net forest area losses of nearly 100 million hectares. Agricultural expansion drove almost 90% of global deforestation; cropland accounted for 49.6% and livestock grazing for 38.5%. Species are silently becoming extinct, the protection of key biodiversity areas has stalled and global illicit wildlife trafficking has steadily increased, posing serious threats to biodiversity. Sustainability is still a distant goal. The global community must unite to end conflicts causing immense suffering worldwide through dialogue and diplomacy.

As a Christian, I know that someday, we are going to have an earth that will be reset by the creator Himself. The earth in its present form is groaning under the impact of sin and therefore, no matter whatever attempts humans may take to make it a better place, deterioration and degradation will continue until redemption. Because the good attempts are offset by the greed of mankind, which is reflected not only at individual level but at the level of the world. CLIMATE CHANGE THUS BECOMES EQUATED WITH HEART CHANGE!

The challenge is therefore promoting means that would have unique influence upon mankind in shaping moral and ethical responses to climate issues. Thus, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has recognized the role of religious/

faith leaders and communities in addressing climate change through ethics, spiritual values, moral values and decision-making.

Therefore, I definitely agree with Dr. A. Azhoni that Christians will be failing in their witness if we do not take the issue of climate change seriously. Christians are not called as co-creators per-se but as stewards or caretakers of the master's possessions.

Remember - the earth is the footstool of our master.

The call to love our neighbours and care for creation begins at home, which true Christians can display. I do agree that at the higher scientific level, the educated Christians have the role of working alongside scientists

and policymakers toward a more sustainable world along with protection and uplifting of communities affected most by environment and climate change.

Secondly, I agree that the Church, as a collective body, can serve as a powerful witness in addressing climate change by creating sustainable practices within the Church. The slogan 'THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY,' is to be worked upon as practical steps by the Church such as to reduce their environmental impact by implementing energy-efficient systems, minimizing waste, water harvesting. Tree planting and promoting environmental stewardship through green building practices.

The cardinal principle for us is, 'Do all unto the glory of God.' May we take meaningful steps and actions to display our sensitivity to our neighbours in the area of 'environment.'

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Species are silently becoming extinct, the protection of key biodiversity areas has stalled and global illicit wildlife trafficking has steadily increased, posing serious threats to biodiversity. Sustainability is still a distant goal. The global community must unite to end conflicts causing immense suffering worldwide through dialogue and diplomacy.

Faith and the Environment: Biblical Insights on Stewardship

Ms. Prashanti Mikayla

I. Introduction

That we have coined a term with two seemingly innocuous words to sum up what is potentially irrevocable damage to the planet, is a testament of human ingenuity. 'Climate Change' encompasses disrupted food and water supplies, fractured ecosystems and economies, declining wildlife habitats, endangered biodiversity, escalating temperatures resulting in global warming, and increased occurrences of cataclysmic events like floods, droughts and wildfires, converging towards a crisis which threatens both the environment and the human species. The 2023 United Nations' (UN) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) not only significantly referred to overwhelming scientific evidence of climate change, but more importantly, called out the drivers of this predicament as 'anthropogenic', which simply means, caused by human activity.

Global conversations over the past three decades (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change during the earth Summit in 1992 in Rio, Kyoto Protocol in 1997, Paris Agreement in 2015) and more recently the IPCC, have unapologetically highlighted how human activity and practices have steadily culminated in adverse consequences on the environment and the ecosystem. Predictions point to the binding impact which will hit closer home - water availability and food production as well as health and wealth of the human race.

And that perhaps is most poignant and sobering. Because as the human race, the primary undeniable relationship of trust, care and responsibility was ordained at the very beginning. The Bible is unequivocal in elucidating the covenantal bond made in the garden of Eden with the faith that it would be upheld. As the planet faces unprecedented environmental stress, the intersection of faith and environmental stewardship emerges as a critical area for exploration and action, offering profound insights into our relationship with the Earth.

This article aims to delve into climate change through a Biblical lens, highlighting the theological foundations for environmental stewardship and encouraging a faith-based, responsible and

resilient response to this global crisis.

II. Biblical Foundations of Environmental Stewardship: Creation and the role of humanity

The Bible presents a robust framework for understanding humanity's role in creation. In Genesis 1:26-28, God creates humanity in His image and grants dominion over the Earth. This concept of stewardship, often misinterpreted as exploitation, is better understood as a call to responsible care. Humanity is tasked with nurturing the world, reflecting God's creativity and concern for creation.

Genesis 2:15 (NIV) further elaborates this role: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." The Holman Christian Standard Bible puts it this way – "to work it and watch over it," while the KJV says, "to dress it and to keep it," and the MSG version beautifully articulates it as, "to work the ground and keep it in order."

There is no scope of misunderstanding the authorisation. This verse emphasizes the dual responsibility of cultivating and protecting the environment. Instead of domination, the Biblical mandate is to cultivate a sustainable relationship with the Earth, ensuring its health for future generations.

The Covenant with Noah and environmental implications

The covenant God establishes with Noah in Genesis 9:8-17 further elucidates the initial theme of stewardship. After the flood, God promises never to destroy the Earth again and places a divine responsibility on humanity to care for creation. The framework of preservation is definitively divine, stemming from the One who is not only the Creator, but also the One who has demonstrated infinite willingness to love, care for and save all that He has created. This covenant emphasizes not only God's mercy but also the ongoing obligation we as the stewards have, to maintain the integrity of His creation.

The implications of this covenant resonate today as we confront

climate change. It calls us to recognize the interconnectedness of all life and our responsibility to protect the environment. As stewards of this promise, we must engage actively in preserving the Earth, advocating for sustainable practices, and standing against environmental degradation.

III. Prophetic Voices and Environmental Warnings: Old Testament prophets and their messages

The Old Testament prophets often spoke about the relationship between human actions and the health of the land. In Jeremiah 12:4 (NIV), the prophet laments, “How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered?” The NLT, KJV, NKJV and several other versions put it starkly: “How long must this land mourn?” This verse reflects the profound distress experienced by the land due to human sin, neglect and callousness. Prophets warned that turning away from God resulted in dire consequences for both people and creation.

Hosea 4:1-3 further underscores this connection, with the continuing imagery of grief, anguish and sorrow associated with the loss of someone or something loved: “The land mourns” due to the people’s unfaithfulness. This passage draws a direct line between moral failure and environmental degradation, serving as a sobering reminder that our actions have consequences. The prophetic messages encourage us to reflect on how societal injustices contribute to climate change and to advocate for the restoration of both communities and the environment.

New Testament perspectives

In the New Testament, creation’s struggle continues to be a theme. Romans 8:19-22 describes creation as “groaning” in anticipation of redemption. This imagery evokes a sense of hope, reminding us that the plight of the earth is not separate from our spiritual journey. The connection between humanity and creation suggests that our redemption is intertwined with the healing of the natural world.

Revelation 11:18 reinforces this notion of divine judgment and restoration, stating that God will destroy those who destroy the earth. This passage calls Christians to consider the moral implications of severing the interconnected relationship with the environment and the ecosystem we live in, challenging us to act as agents of renewal rather than destruction.

IV. Practical responses: Living out Biblical Principles - Individual actions and lifestyle changes

Living out the Biblical principles of stewardship requires a restorative journey to the covenant and a symbolic ‘reset to factory settings.’ Charles C. Camosy expounds a radical framework he calls the Consistent Life Ethic² which he uses to analyse several contemporary issues. He argues that the prevalent ‘throwaway culture’ is not just limited to the material consumerism but has insidiously pervaded every societal structure to impact a plethora of issues from interpersonal relationships to our responses to poverty, state-sponsored violence and the climate change crisis now in the spotlight.

While individuals can contribute through remedial initiatives like waste reduction and curtailed consumption through simple practices such as recycling, composting, and choosing environment-friendly products, a mesh of actions or behaviour modifications without a transformative mindset renewal can at best be sporadic, agenda-led interventions, subject to ennui and disintegration when pitched against the rigours of sustainability.

The call of the hour is a rekindling of the covenant of faith and responsibility demonstrated when Creation was bequeathed to humankind in the garden of Eden.

The call of the hour is a rekindling of the covenant of faith and responsibility demonstrated when Creation was bequeathed to humankind in the garden of Eden. It requires a willingness to relinquish the avarice, the lack of mercy, the violent insensitivity and abuse which define the prevailing relationship we have with the planet and the ecosystem we live in.

Community and Church involvement

Churches and communities play a pivotal role in advocating for environmental stewardship. In several parts of the global church, the month of September was demarcated to focus on the environmental crisis and possible solutions, culminating on October 4th, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, or the Harvest Festival. In his famous ‘Canticle of the Creatures’ (which was later translated by William Henry Draper and put into music as the much-loved hymn ‘All Creatures of Our God and King’), St. Francis perhaps most poignantly affirms our relationship with and rightful place in Creation, with his references to ‘Brother Sun’ and ‘Sister Moon’.

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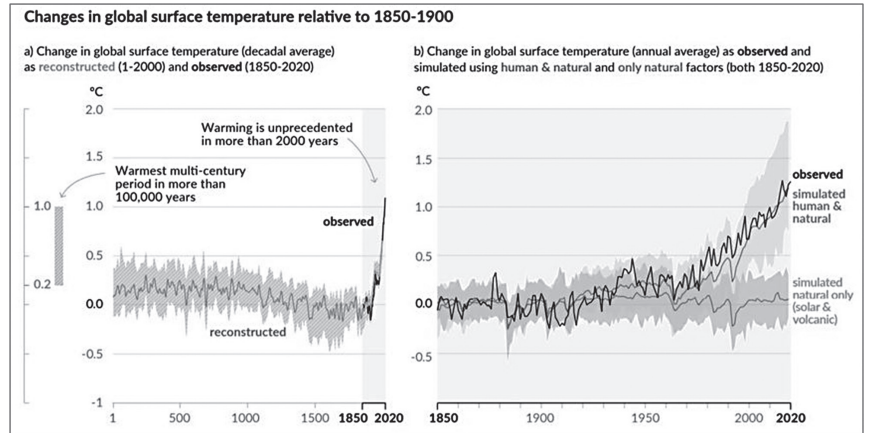
FACTS

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its 2021 report states that: "It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land."

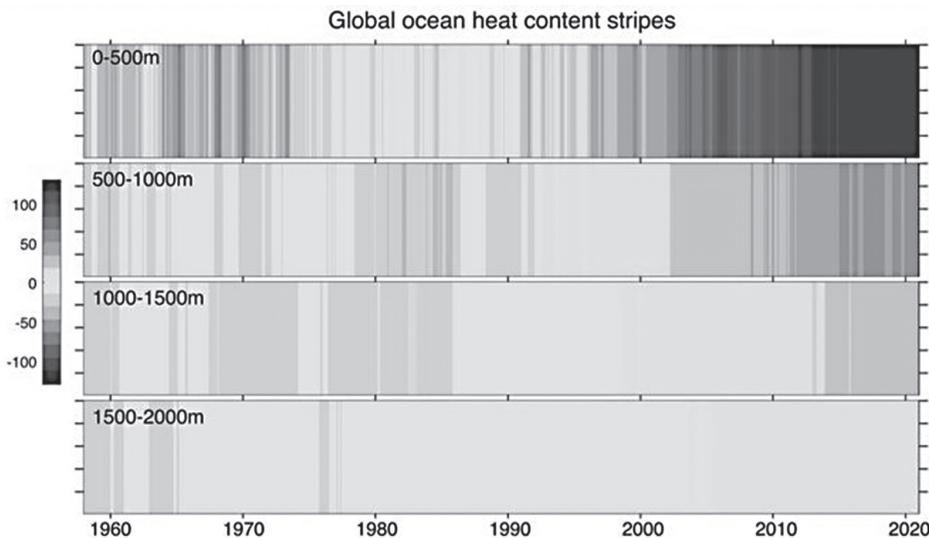
Every minute, the equivalent of one garbage truck of plastic is dumped into our ocean. Huge amount of plastic waste also ends up in our landfills.¹

WHO estimates that 4.2 million die prematurely every year from outdoor (ambient) air pollution. 3.8 million die from indoor air pollution. 7 million die in total from all sources of air pollution.²

According to the IPCC's sixth assessment report on the state of our climate, the past decade is likely to have been the hottest period in the last 125,000 years. For about 100,000 years, we have been oscillating between glacial (ice ages) and warmer interglacial periods like the one we currently live in. Yet, this is also the warmest multi-century period we have had in this timespan.



Source: IPCC, 2021



Only around 125,000 years ago, a time prior to the last ice age, might have had higher temperature than the ones we are currently experiencing. Each of these past warm periods were caused by slow (multi-millennial) orbital variations that are not in play today.

The ocean has tremendous volume and heat-storage capacity, which is why some organisms are used to temperatures being quite stable. Of these, coral reefs are particularly sensitive to temperature levels, reason for which many are now dying off.

Greenhouse gas concentrations are at their highest levels in 2 million years and continue to rise. As a result, the earth is about 1.1°C warmer than it was in the 1800s. The last decade was the warmest on record.

Many people think climate change mainly means warmer temperatures. But temperature rise is only the beginning of the story. Because the Earth is a system, where everything is connected, changes in one area can influence changes in all others. The consequences of climate change now include, among others, intense droughts, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity. People are experiencing climate change in diverse ways. It affects our health, ability to grow food, housing, safety and work. Conditions like sea-level rise and saltwater intrusion have advanced to the point where whole communities have had to relocate. In the future, the number of 'climate refugees' is expected to rise. To limit global warming to 1.5°C by the end of the century, we must halve annual greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Ecosystem degradation affects the well-being of an estimated 3.2 billion people, or 40% of the world's population.

¹ <https://www.unep.org/plastic-pollution>

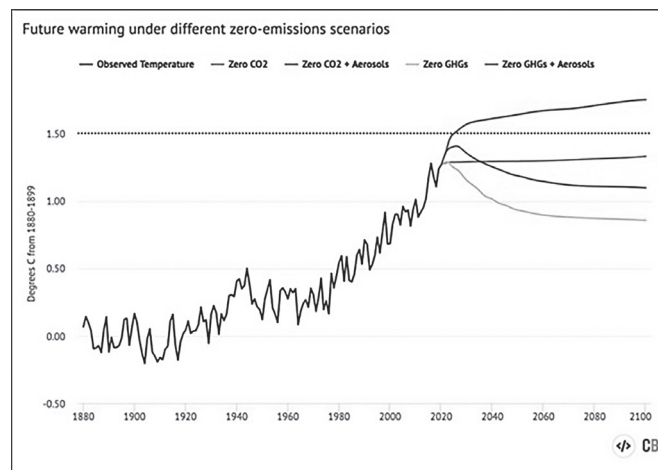
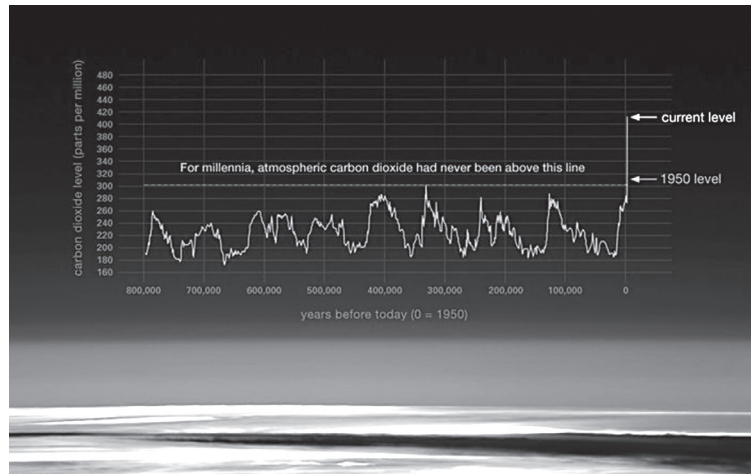
² <https://www.who.int/news/item/02-05-2018-9-out-of-10-people-worldwide-breathe-polluted-air-but-more-countries-are-taking-action>

CO2 is at its highest in 2 million years

Pre-industrial CO2 levels were around 280 parts per million (ppm). Today, we stand close to 420 ppm.

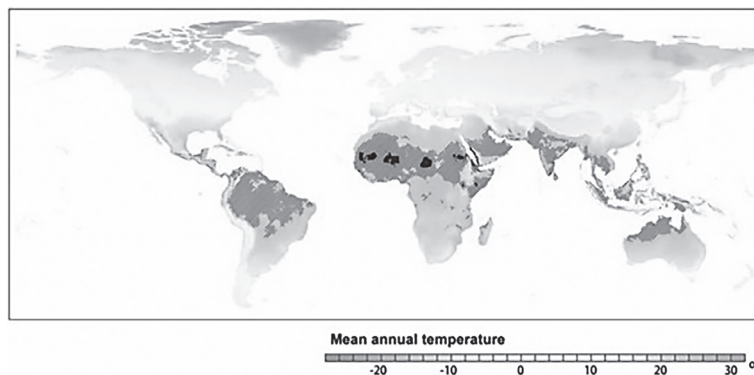
We are losing 1.2 trillion tons of ice each year

Since the mid-1990s, we've lost around 28 trillion tons of ice, with today's melt rate standing at 1.2 trillion tons a year.



Source: Carbon Brief

A study by Xu et al. (2020) called “Future of the Human Climate Niche” found that by 2070, under a high emissions scenario, these unbearable temperatures could expand to affect up to 3 billion people (black hashes).



Source: Xu et al. 2020, Future of the Human Climate Niche.

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Continued from page 11

Promoting sustainable practices within our communities-like supporting local agriculture, conserving water, and minimizing energy use-aligns with the Biblical call to cultivate and care for the earth. Each small initiative can ripple out, influencing others to follow suit and foster a culture of sustainability rooted in faith.

Practical actions like organizing local environmental initiatives, such as clean-up drives, tree planting, and educational workshops, can inspire collective action. Engaging congregations in discussions about climate change and its moral implications can motivate church members to embrace stewardship as part of their faith journey. Supporting global and local climate justice organizations can further amplify efforts to address systemic issues related to climate change. By aligning our resources and influence with those advocating for marginalized communities disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, we can embody the Biblical principle of loving our neighbours.

While all these have their place, the primary mandate of the Church is to reinstate the Biblical emphasis on God's indisputable sovereignty elucidated in Psalm 24:1 – "The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the compass of the world and all who live therein." The foundational truth for all believers is that the preservation of the unique gift of creation was entrusted to humankind, with the congenital understanding that there would be a day when accountability of stewardship would have to be given.

V. A vision for a restored present and future: Theological hope and the promise of restoration

The Bible offers a vision of hope and restoration, especially in the face of climate challenges. Revelation 21:1-5 speaks of a new heaven and a new earth, highlighting God's promise to restore creation. This eschatological hope encourages believers to act with confidence, knowing that our efforts contribute to a larger narrative of redemption. However, this could often be transferred to sometime in the near-or-faraway future, which belies the call of the present. In the Lord's Prayer, the invocation for His Kingdom to come, and His will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven, serves as a reminder of our faith for a more imminent 'now', here in the present.

Faith fosters responsibility, inspiring individuals and communities to confront environmental challenges with urgency, repentance, faith and a willingness to reform, accepting the path that leads back to the beginning. In cultivating this hope, we become agents of change, embodying the Biblical promise of renewal in our actions and choices.

The call to integrate faith with action for a sustainable future

Integrating faith with action for a sustainable future is non-negotiable. The Biblical call to stewardship requires that we not only pray for the world but also actively engage in its restoration. This means advocating for policies that protect the environment, holding corporations accountable for their ecological impact, and supporting sustainable practices within our communities.

A restored earth depends on our commitment to live out these Biblical principles, reminding us that faith without works is dead (James 2:26). By embracing our roles as stewards of creation, we can begin creating a sustainable future that reflects God's love and care for all of creation.

VI. Conclusion

The intersection of the present ecological crisis and Biblical teachings provides a profound framework for understanding our primary responsibilities as stewards of creation. By accepting the Biblical foundations of environmental stewardship, responding to prophetic warnings, and embracing practical actions, we can contribute to a regenerated and sustainable future, by starting right away.

As we reflect on these Biblical teachings and edicts, may we be inspired to honour God, our Creator and rekindle the ownership to nurture the Earth and the ecosystem. The call to stewardship is a divine invitation to participate in the ongoing work of a New Creation. Let us commit to living out our faith through action, working together to forge a path toward a thriving, sustainable world for generations to come.

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What is COP? It's purpose, Significance and Agenda this Year

Mr. M. Ramesh Babu

What are the UN 'COP' climate change conferences?

The UN climate change conferences are the official meetings of the Conference of the Parties, or 'COP' for short. COP is the supreme decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC is an international treaty to address climate change. The treaty effectively includes every nation, with a total of 197 ratifications. Every year since 1995 (except 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic), leaders from all over the world have come together to discuss and agree international climate policy. Many of the most significant international climate commitments, agreements and laws have emerged from these summits over the years, including the Kyoto Protocol (1997, Japan) and the Paris Agreement (2015, France). The Paris Agreement reaffirms the goal of limiting global temperature increase to well below 2 degrees Celsius, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees. Many representatives from civil society, business and academia also attend COP every year to observe and participate in proceedings and host 'side events' to engage policymakers for fair and ambitious climate deal.

This year's COP29 (2024) was held in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Purpose of COPs

The Conference of Parties (COP) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international climate summit, which is held annually unless the Parties (the countries involved) decide otherwise. At COPs, world leaders gather to work together on solutions to tackle climate change. There are now 198 Parties (197 countries plus the European Union) to the Convention, constituting near universal membership.

COP (Conference of Parties) is an annual conference for governments, scientists, activists and business leaders to discuss ways to limit the negative impacts of climate change. One of the main goals is for countries to make commitments to reduce carbon emissions such as using less energy from fossil fuels and using more energy from renewal energy. It will also look back

past promises since Paris Agreement 2015. Previously, countries agreed to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degree Celsius. Scientists have warned that we are currently on more than 2.5 degree Celsius increase in temperature. If this is not addressed, there will be more extreme weather events and natural disasters. In this year's COP (29), the countries urged to implement their commitments and address them seriously to get the weather pattern back on track. Climate Change is really worrying us as we keep facing disasters. Hence, the COP is an platform to get all the countries under one roof to find solutions that benefit planet and people. It This year's COP was also called "The Finance COP."

Significance of Annual Preparatory talks

While the UN COP is a key date in the political calendar, formal and informal discussions surrounding it are ongoing during the year. The formal negotiations that form the basis of the decisions at the conference normally take place months ahead of the annual meeting at a 'Pre-COP'. Inter-sessional meetings take place too, where many of the technical decisions are negotiated and prepared for adoption. The two-week conference then provides the space to finalise and formalise the outcomes of these discussions.

Why this year's COP, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, is important?

- New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG): COP29 in Baku reached agreement on the new collective goal quantified on climate finance, and that would effectively respond to the scale of needs in developing countries to take climate action. The civil society demand is to have a provision of public finance provision goal of a minimum of \$1 trillion per year, the bulk of which should be grants.
- Loss and Damage: Civil society demands that parties must make real progress towards a full rights-based operationalisation of the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), including through addressing capitalisation, access to finance for Indigenous Peoples, frontline communities, local CSOs and all groups experiencing marginalisation, and decisions on funded activities. Moreover, there should be dedicated mechanisms and mainstreaming of policies to ensure and enhance direct

access for Indigenous Peoples, frontline communities, local CSOs and groups experiencing marginalization.

- Just and Equitable 1.5°C aligned NDCs: Countries are expected to deliver their next NDCs in 2025. For countries to deliver ambitious, equitable and just climate plans that are aligned with 1.5°C by the February 2025 deadline we need COP Presidency must ensure that COP29 leads the NDC enhancement process through providing a 'Roadmap for 1.5 & Climate Justice'. This roadmap on the one hand should include guidance to countries on how to ensure alignment of NDCs with climate justice and 1.5 degree pathways at national levels as well as how international cooperation will support the implementation of NDC's.

Role of Faith Based Organizations

The Faith Pavilion, under the banner of ““Bringing Faith to the Climate Frontlines,” ” is a pioneering platform at COPs dedicated to exploring and amplifying the vital intersections between faith, justice, and environmental stewardship. Serving as both a coordination hub and gathering space, the Pavilion unites faith leaders, scholars, activists, and policymakers to inspire holistic and just climate action. Through powerful interfaith dialogue and collaborative initiatives, it seeks to bridge the moral and ecological imperatives of our time, catalysing ambitious, compassionate, and effective responses to the climate crisis. The Pavilion underscores the essential role of spiritual and ethical values in driving sustainable and inclusive solutions for people and the planet. Faith communities have actively engaged in COP 29 at Baku by calling for Climate Justice, scaling up ambitions and make brave decision to deal with adverse impacts of climate change. FBOs have organized various events in Faith Pavillion to promote fairer distribution of resources worldwide and addressing issues of economic and social justice that underpin sustainable solutions.

India's stand in COP 29

India took a firm stance at COP 29, opposing the proposed text related to the NCQG (New Collective Quantified Goal) on climate finance. India argued that the proposed framework would not deliver meaningful outcomes and could, in fact, exacerbate challenges in climate finance delivery for the Global South. It emphasized the critical need for grant-based concessional climate finance as a key enabler for developing and implementing the new Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs). While the deal was approved, India asserted its sovereign right to critique provisions that it views as inconsistent with the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR). The legal implications and follow-up actions remain uncertain, raising questions about the potential impacts on Climate Action and Ambition for India and the broader South Asian region.



Photo: EFICOR

The conference outlined a cumulative \$300 Billion from various sources - public, private, multilateral, and bilateral - as climate-related expenditures. This figure falls significantly short of the estimated \$1.3 trillion required for effective mobilization. India rejected the proposal, stating it failed to address the scale of the global climate challenge.

India reiterated that only trust and collaboration can drive meaningful action against climate change, which remains one of humanity's most pressing existential threats.

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Climate Change: Incremental Steps is No Longer Enough

Mr. P.K. Khup Hangzo

Climate change is one of the biggest threats, an existential threat even, faced by humans today. And there is an overwhelming consensus that humans are responsible for causing it. A survey of 88,125 climate-related scientific papers that are published from 2012 to November 2020 by researchers at Cornell University in the UK found that there is now more than 99.9% scientific consensus that climate change is mainly caused by humans. One of the lead authors of the survey observed that it is “case closed” and there is “nobody of significance in the scientific community who doubts human-caused climate change.”

Escalating impacts of climate change

The impact of climate change is clearer now than ever before. For example, global average temperature reached 1.48°C above pre-industrial (1850-1900) levels in 2023, the highest ever recorded. One expert at the European Union’s Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) lamented that 2023 was “an exceptional year” with climate records “tumbling like dominoes.” She further observed that temperatures “likely exceed those of any period in at least the last 100,000 years.” Record greenhouse gas emissions, assisted by the return of the natural climate phenomenon *El Niño*, are the primary causes of the unprecedented warming in 2023. CO₂ emissions reached record levels of 40.9 billion tonnes that year. The burning of fossil fuels accounted for 36.8 billion tonnes or 90% of all global CO₂ emissions in 2023.

Increased concentrations of CO₂ in the atmosphere have intensified global warming. That in turn made weather events more extreme. Extreme weather events including heat waves, tropical cyclones, floods, wildfires, etc. are deemed to be the day-to-day face of climate change and they have occurred with increasing intensity and frequency throughout 2023. This year promises to be even worse - summer temperature have already exceeded last year’s records and many places in the world registered their highest temperature ever. For example, the temperature in New Delhi reached 49.1°C on 29 May, a record. The previous record was 48.4°C in May 1998. Other extreme weather events including tropical cyclones, floods, and wildfires have also ravaged large parts of the world this year.

According to experts, limiting the increase in average global temperature to well below 2°C and ideally at 1.5°C above

preindustrial (1850–1900) levels by 2100 is the surest way to escape the worst ravages of climate change. These warming limits have already been codified in the landmark “Paris Agreement” during COP15 in Paris, France in 2015. Achieving these targets requires more than 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero emissions by 2050. Towards this end, countries have prepared their respective national plans known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). NDCs typically contain targets on emissions reductions and some details on how they will be met, and they are submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC), the international body that oversees the implementation of the Paris Agreement. However, existing plans for emissions reduction



are highly inadequate and even if they are implemented, global average temperature would still rise to between 2.6°C and 3.1°C this century. Global temperature now averages 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels and scientists projected that the 1.5°C warming threshold would be crossed at some point in the 2030s. The window of opportunity therefore is closing fast.

Rich countries have a historical responsibility

To be sure, climate change is a collective action problem that requires actions from every country. However, rich countries have a greater responsibility and they take the lead. Rich countries, including the U.S., Canada, Japan and much of Western Europe, accounted for just 12% of the global population today but are responsible for 50% of all the greenhouse gases released from fossil fuels and industry over the past 170 years (1850-2020).

The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) also observed in its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) in 2022 that Southern Asia, despite its enormous population, accounted for just 4% of historical cumulative CO₂ emissions between 1850 and 2019. The corresponding figure for North America is 23% and that of Europe is 16%.

History matters because the cumulative amount of CO₂ emitted since the start of the industrial revolution in the 1800s is closely tied to the 1.2°C of warming that has already occurred. Despite contributing the least to climate change, its impacts are disproportionately felt by poorer countries. In light of this, developed countries should take the lead in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and even compensate poorer countries for the damages caused. These expectations however may not be realized at least in the short to medium-term. Besides, climate change has become highly politicized in key developed countries like the US and the UK. As a result, the issue has fallen victim to the increasingly vicious “culture wars” that has afflicted both countries. That could potentially undermine not only their efforts to combat climate change, but global efforts too.

COP29 to the rescue?

The 2024 United Nations climate change conference (COP29) in Baku, Azerbaijan offers the best and perhaps the last chance to limit the increase in average global temperature to 1.5°C this century. As such, fossil fuels will come under the spotlight there. During last year’s COP28 in Dubai, fossil fuels were for the first time identified and targeted and countries agreed to “transition away” from it. Whether countries will agree to phase-out all fossil fuels at COP29 however remains to be seen. The contentious issue of climate finance for funding climate action in developing countries will also dominate discussions in Baku. Developing countries have long insisted that developed countries should provide them the necessary finance and also technology so that they can fund climate action. According to one estimate, about USD 2.4 trillion will be needed each year by 2030, just for developing countries (excluding China) to bring about the changes needed. It is highly unlikely that COP29 will produce an outcome that could drastically reverse the course of climate change. At best it will produce results that can only be deemed incremental. As such, achieving the goal of limiting the increase in global average temperature to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of 2100 will become harder to achieve.

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Addressing Climate Change

Mrs. Joylin Niruba

“Things have changed. It has become much hotter,” explained a participant in a recent creation care workshop in India. “We no longer know when it will rain. The streams have dried up. The forests have been replaced by roads and instead of trees there are concrete jungles.”

We often hear statements like this when we visit communities or get feedback from people attending the creation care workshops that we conduct in different parts of India.

EFICOR’s Three-Pronged Response

Our response as EFICOR to creation care can be largely summed up as a three-pronged response driven by our understanding of integral mission. These are church, community, and collaboration. At the heart of our response is our faith that compels us to participate with God in his mission. As an organization, we foster transformation in the communities that we work with and collaborate with various stakeholders in order to achieve that.

Church

Churches in India are frequently located in areas of widespread poverty, injustice, discrimination, and marginalisation. The Church in India has played a key role in bringing transformation in local communities and continues to do so. Motivating and building the capacities of churches and enabling them to address issues of justice, poverty and the needs of the community has resulted in tremendous changes.

EFICOR has supported the church’s transformational work by teaching integral mission. A key component of our integral mission training focusses on caring for creation – for God’s world. Instead of reacting out of fear of environmental disasters, our training teaches Christians in India to respond to the first call of God – the call to care. Our response must be informed by Scripture, and our action must come from God’s mandate.

We have developed modules and curriculum that has been widely used. We conduct workshops and seminars, create awareness for creation care issues, and build the capacity of local leaders to act. Knowing our limitation of not being able to reach all parts of the country, our strategy has been to also train trainers. These trained trainers, equipped with strong Biblical foundations are then able to teach others in their own area of influence and local communities and congregations.

National level consultations on integral mission have enabled us to bring together influencers from Bible colleges, mission organisations, local churches to learn from each other. This has reached local communities and helped people experiencing injustice and living in poverty to come out of it.

We invite the Church in India to dedicate at least one Sunday in a year to preach and pray about the environment through what we call *Eco-Sunday*. Churches and Christian organisations that have been influenced have gone on to participate in creation care in a variety of ways. Some have sponsored tree plantation drives and reforestation efforts. Others have advocated for stopping the use of single use plastic at events, and cleaning plastic for recycling to reduce trash.

Another approach has been to encourage people to make small lifestyle changes especially in the use of energy, water, and other resources. Other organisations and churches have developed Sunday school curriculum on creation care. And still others are working to develop environmental policies.

Community

An important aspect of EFICOR’s integral work is our direct involvement in the community. We work with our country’s most marginalised communities. While they contribute least to the problem, they are always the hardest hit.

Bikam Yadav, who comes from a village in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh in Central India said, “The forests are disappearing; the plants and trees are suffering. The rains do not come on time. The crops are failing and there is no profit if we do not use fertilizers. Our lives are in danger.”

This region has seen the worst of climate change. It is infamous for frequent droughts, dry and barren lands, the consequent crop losses, unemployment, and perennial water stress. The farmers here prepare the land, sow the seeds, and wait in expectation towards the skies for rains.

If the rains fail (which has occurred frequently in recent years), they have to pack their bags, leave their families, and migrate to the cities in search of greener pastures. Despite having land, the declining land productivity has pushed many into huge debt. Their land documents are mortgaged, and social exploitation is rampant.

EFICOR works with drought-affected communities like these in North and West India. Starting with community mobilization and organization, strong local organizations called Village Watershed Committees and Self-Help groups¹ are built from the bottom-up. They participate in brainstorming sessions to understand climate related problems and promote solutions.

Local knowledge and skills are built upon to manage and sustainably develop natural resources such as Jal (water), jamin (soil), jungle (forest), janwar (livestock), and jan (people). We address three pillars of sustainability – namely social, economic, and environmental development.

Our activities include land survey, linking the farmers with farm science centres and the Government's Agriculture Department, and training and support on sustainable agriculture techniques. Those techniques include multi-cropping, drip irrigation, sprinkle irrigation, a system of rice/wheat intensification, cultivation of minor millets and cash crops, watershed management, and land treatment for optimal use of water and money.

The materials are locally sourced, and ecological integrity of the micro-environment is maintained. The land and water works are done by employing people from the community to promote a *green economy*.

EFICOR works with the indigenous people groups whose traditions, knowledge and skills are of huge value in building climate resilience. Their poverty level, remoteness, their reliance on agriculture and forest-based livelihood, their existing socio-economic conditions, and their lack of knowledge on the latest technology and information, has increased their vulnerability to climate change.

Working with the Government and the community, EFICOR has tapped and fine-tuned the available local resources and skills to help manage and develop natural resources. We actively promote nature-based solutions like *Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration*,² vermi-composting, conservation agriculture, growing kitchen/vegetable gardens in the fallow backyard using recycled water, and better livestock management.

Collaboration

While we can facilitate changes at the local level, at EFICOR we understand that real change can only come when shifts occur at the policy level. We have felt the need, the urgency, and the

importance of adding our voice to this dialogue with policy makers. Thus, EFICOR works with local Governments, national and international Governments to ensure the voices of the most marginalised people are heard and that policies that benefit them are put in place.

EFICOR is a voluntary member of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). This is the nodal Government agency for Disaster Management in India chaired by the Prime Minister of India influencing the policy makers with our experience and expertise.

EFICOR is also an active member of Climate Action Network - South Asia and currently serves as a member of their board.

We have collaborated to develop District Climate Resilience Plans (DCRP) in some of the most drought prone districts in Central India. The DCRP has been developed through a bottom-up approach, starting with the community at the grassroots who are most affected by climate change, identifying climate patterns, its impact on the socio-economic status of the community, the gaps in policy and implementation in addition to finding collaborative solutions to build climate resilience.

On the global front, EFICOR engages in strong collaborations and partnerships with Climate networks, interfaith groups, and other like-minded organizations adding our voice in the dialogue and influencing as we speak up for those who are most affected by climate disasters. We regularly participate at the United Nations Framework Climate Change, Conference of the Parties (COP) gatherings. EFICOR is part of a global campaign, "Renew Our World." As a network of Christians taking action and praying for a fairer and sustainable world, this campaign gives us an opportunity to motivate the Church in India to be part of this movement.

Conclusion

Things have definitely changed and sometimes the issues we face seem too large to address. While the problem can seem overwhelming, it is possible to make a difference. It must begin in our own understanding and attitude, and that change in understanding can last only if it comes from our conviction to participate with God in his mission. We can all respond by making wise choices which affirm what the Cape Town Commitment stated, "Creation care is... a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ."

(Mrs. Joylin Niruba is currently working with EFICOR as Trainer in Creation care, engaging church leaders, youth and children in taking action for a sustainable environment. She can be reached at joylin@eficor.org)

¹ Self-help groups are informal groups of people who come together to address their common problems. An ideal SHG should have about 10 to 20 members. The women are mostly from a similar socio-economic background and are involved in undertaking small savings amongst themselves in a bank. This amount acts as the fund for the SHGs and is used to provide loans to its members.

² Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration is the systematic regrowth and management of trees and shrubs from felled tree stumps, sprouting root systems or seeds, or in woody thickets.

Books on our Desk

Climate Change: Faith and Action

Ed. By KB Veio Pou, Published by The Media House, Delhi for TRACI (Theological Research and Communication Institute, 2020, 116 Pages

Mrs. Joan Lalromawi

This concise book, edited by KB Veio Pou, offers a well-researched compilation of nine articles contributed by experts in the field. The authors gave a comprehensive overview of the debates around climate change and its corollaries - global warming and environmental degradation. While there are still some who argue that human beings have nothing to do with these climatic changes, there are increasing number of people who are convinced that our actions have adversely affected climatic conditions on earth, directly or indirectly. The book aims to address the growing concern over climate change through the lens of faith, drawing from various theological, philosophical, and practical perspectives. As the world grapples with the adverse impacts of climate change, the book stands out by urging faith communities to engage more deeply with environmental issues, framing the climate crisis as not just a scientific challenge but a moral imperative as well.

The central theme of the book is the idea that faith-based perspectives can provide profound motivation for climate action. The authors present climate change not only as an environmental issue but as one that intersects with justice, ethics, and spirituality. The Christian notion of humans as caretakers or stewards of God's creation is a recurring theme throughout the book, as the authors reflect on how religious communities can become custodians of the earth. The book further delves on how environmental justice is integral to many faith teachings, which calls for compassion and protection of the marginalized. The articles collectively stress that climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations - the poor, indigenous communities, and those in developing countries - and that religious groups are morally obligated to advocate for policies that protect these groups.

While the book provides a strong moral and theological foundation for climate action, it also emphasizes the need for practical engagement. The authors explore ways in which religious institutions can implement environmentally sustainable practices. For example, faith communities can promote energy efficiency, reduce carbon footprints, and endorse renewable energy sources. These tangible actions, combined with advocacy for climate-conscious policies, can help bridge the gap between theological teachings and real-

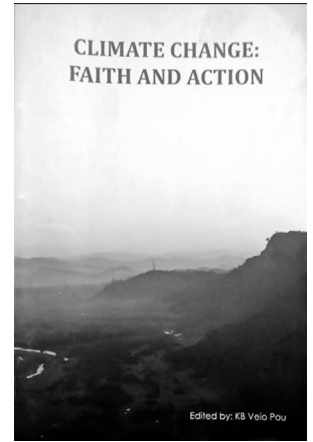
world solutions.

One of the key input of the book is its examination of interfaith efforts to combat climate change. The authors argue that religious communities, with their large followings and moral influence, are well-positioned to mobilize people towards environmental action. The main strength of the book lies in its ability to bridge abstract theological concepts with actionable steps for mitigating climate change. The contributors have made a persuasive case that the environmental crisis is, at its core, a moral and spiritual issue. By framing climate change in religious and ethical terms, the book effectively broadens the conversation to include diverse voices from faith communities, thereby reaching a wider audience. The interdisciplinary approach of the book is commendable. Drawing from theology, philosophy, ethics, and environmental studies, the book offers a well-rounded examination of how faith intersects with climate action. Each chapter presents a unique perspective, allowing readers to appreciate the diversity of thought.

While the moral and ethical case is compelling, the book could have benefited from more engagement with scientific rigour. Nonetheless, the book assumes a certain degree of openness within religious communities to engage with environmental issues.

The book makes a significant contribution to the expanding literature on faith-based environmental activism. It makes a strong moral case for religious communities to step up and take action on climate change, blending theological insights with practical recommendations. While it may be most compelling for faith-based audiences, its call for collective responsibility in addressing the climate crisis resonates broadly. The book is definitely a valuable resource as it urges faith communities to turn their beliefs into action for the planet's sustainable future.

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Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet

By Bill McKibben, St. Martin's Griffin; First Edition (15 March 2011), 288 Pages

Ms. Nem Thian Sang

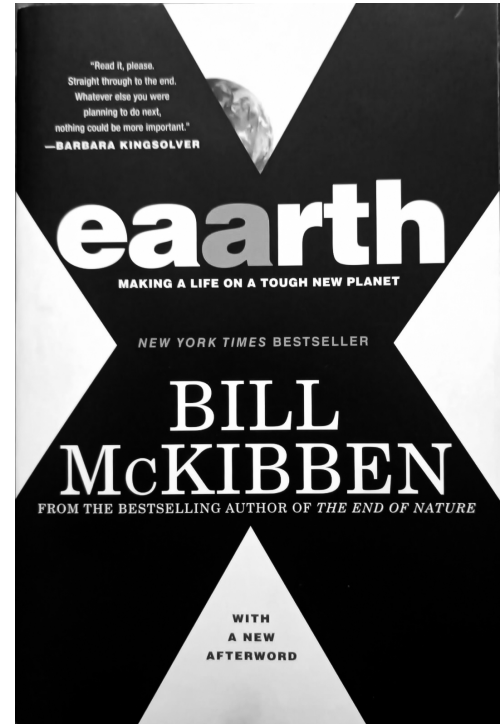
A renowned environmentalist and a well-known scholar Bill McKibben, in his book 'Eaarth' emphasizes greatly on how we have destroyed our planet Earth and are now living in a new world, an inhospitable place resembling a desert called the 'Eaarth.' Unlike the earth, Eaarth is a totally different planet. He describes how in this new world, every action we perform leads to a series of double or triple problems. For instance, global warming led to the melting of Arctic ice. Methane captured within those permafrost escapes and peat bogs dry out and adding to the load of carbon. This leads to drier regions in the Amazon making them more prone to natural fires; half of Australia has faced drought conditions and long standing glaciers of the Himalayas continuously melt at a faster rate. Reshaping the planet should be our aim to tackle this problem. In the Chapter 'High Tide,' a new growth has been suggested - 'The Green Growth' to replace the fossil fuels so that we can live on the new planet like the former one. Ironically, we haven't found that fossil fuel yet, and the world that we live in is running out of it.

Every feature of the Eaarth is filled with uncertainties. From increasing prices of oil to life threatening vectors on the rise and the never-ending climatic changes has affected not only the minds but the bodies too. Amidst these, an impressive suggestion by the author was to stop growth. Growth in terms of population, industrialization, food production and resource depletion. Altering these growth rates can help us reach a state of global equilibrium so that the basic needs of each person are satisfied. In order to stop this growth, a few steps need to be taken: 1. To mature. Our human thirst for knowledge has helped us achieve great heights but we need to slow down, sit and explore the things around us. 2. To figure out what we must jettison. One of them is to drop the consumer lifestyle. Live a simple life. As we have pushed nature around for our need, nature is now pushing us back.

To face a world where there is no growth, we need to start shrinking for anything big is basically looking for trouble. McKibben argues that our society should be small, so that it could be easily governed. In addition, a self-reliant community needs to be formed in order to seek control over its own economy.

Lightly, carefully and gracefully to restore our planet Eaarth to Earth, McKibben highlighted these points:

1. Saving money on fertilizers and pesticides and adopt traditional farming practices like inter-cropping.
2. Conserving power and using environmental friendly ways to generate heat. For example, using biogas instead of coal for cooking.
3. Using the internet wisely
i.e. to connect and gather information from the world.



Overall, the book has explained every sphere affected by climate change. Every scientific or political statement has been well-researched with notable references. Snippets of real life encounters of the effects of climate change by the author, McKibben, is really thought provoking, like how our smallest deed could have an enormous effect. After a single read a slight tinge of scare remains, intensifying on the importance of saving our earth. Perhaps a subtle mention on the possibility of a successful transition and vice versa along with life on the planet thereafter, would have made the book more noteworthy. Nonetheless, it truly serves as a reminder to the readers that the clock is ticking, the earth is suffering and it is time to change our fate, before it gets too late.

(Ms. Nem Thian Sang is currently pursuing Master of Science in Zoology at the University of Delhi. She is passionate about climate change issues and actively advocates for environmental conservation.

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3 views of Climate Change: Which one do you hold?

Mr. Mark Dee

“Oh don’t worry about climate change! The earth is passing away anyway!”

I was shocked. This was a Christian friend. How could someone with the same faith as me, believe something so different! By contrast, for me, climate change and our treatment of the earth are so central to my faith, that I’ve been prepared to be arrested for it.

As I reflect on these very contrasting responses, I realise that the difference largely stems from how we answer these two questions:

1. *“Is the earth a gift to be valued, or is it simply a bunch of stuff, (coal, oil, timber, water) for us to use however we want?”*; and
2. *“Is the earth something temporary and passing away, or is it an integral and enduring part of the Kingdom of God?”*

Answers to these questions tend to result in three alternative views of God’s earth and climate change: The Pantry view; The Apocalypse view; and The Stewardship view. Interestingly, each of these views has support in Scripture, but each leads to a very different attitude to climate change. Let’s explore each of these before asking ourselves which view we hold.

The Pantry View

Some Christians believe the earth is like a pantry, whose goods can be taken and used however we like. They point to Genesis 1:28 which instructs man to *‘fill the earth and subdue it’*. Many Christians used this view to justify the industrial revolution and its insatiable desire for resources – no matter what damage was done to the earth. This perspective has been perhaps the dominant view among Christians for the last 250 years.

The Apocalypse View

While the ‘pantry’ view is based on Genesis 1 and God’s intentions at the *beginning* of (human) time, the ‘apocalypse’ view is based on Scriptures focused at the other end of human time – the *end times*. Passages like Revelation 21:1 describing *‘a new heaven and a new earth’* suggest that the earth is passing away. Thus, Christians holding this view (like my friend) conclude that it doesn’t matter too much how we treat the earth now. After all, it will be replaced by a new earth.

However, in recent decades both the pantry and apocalypse views have arguably been discredited, as we watch the world

around us disintegrate – floods, fires, droughts, heat waves and sea level rise – affecting millions, especially the poor.

The Stewardship View

Given the terrible consequences of climate change, especially on the poor for whom we are called to care (Matt 25:31-46), many Christians have gone back to the Bible to find a different view of the earth, and our relationship to it. And it wasn’t hard to find – in fact it was in the very next chapter of Genesis. There, in Genesis 2, in the alternative creation story, we find God instructing people to ‘take care of’ the earth (Gen 2:15) – a much more gentle, respectful relationship to the earth. Such a view would clearly imply being careful to conserve the earth’s resources (including its atmosphere) for future generations.

As we evaluate each of these views, I’ve found a word picture useful: Imagine working on a beautiful handmade gift to give to your close friend. It takes you 6 days of painstaking work and then, when it’s done, with a beaming smile, you give it to your friend. Your friend takes your gift but, to your horror, burns it to heat their chai, or perhaps scrunches it up to use as a cleaning rag.

You can see the parallel with the beautiful earth God has painstakingly created, and given to us to ‘care for’. A pantry approach justifies burning it, or using it as a rag. And the apocalypse approach justifies such use by claiming the gift was only temporary and wouldn’t have lasted anyway. The outcome of both views, I suspect, would leave the giver devastated.

Which of these views were you taught to believe as you grew up? Which of them sits most comfortably with you now? Does your current view have implications for how you actually live in the world in terms of what you buy, what you eat, and how you travel?

(Mr. Mark Dee and his family have lived and worked with the poor in slums of north India for the last 30 years. He is also passionately involved in issues of climate change. This led him to co-author ‘Low Carbon and Loving It’ in 2018.

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IDEAS FOR ACTION

AS AN INDIVIDUAL

- You can contribute to environmental sustainability and combat climate change by switching to renewable energy options or install solar panels at home. Use energy-efficient appliances, LED lighting, and smart thermostats to reduce energy consumption.
- In your day to day life, follow the six 'R's to conserve natural resources: Refuse, Reduce, Re-use, Reinvent, Recycle, Replenish (water-harvesting, planting trees etc).
- Reduce your carbon footprint by adopting simple changes like turning off lights when not in use, using public transportation, carpooling, or walking and biking instead of driving.
- Install water-saving fixtures, fix leaks promptly, and conserve water during daily activities.
- Carry reusable bags, bottles, and containers when shopping or dining out. Avoid single-use plastics by using alternatives like cloth bags and glass jars.
- Participate in tree-planting initiatives, grow vegetables and herbs in your yard.
- Join environmental groups. Get involved in clean-up drives, climate action, and conservation efforts in your community.

AS A CHURCH

- Your Church or community could promote environmental sustainability by creating climate-resilient, future-proof buildings and serving as community hubs or shelters during extreme weather events.
- You can plan to have an outside worship get-together with your small group/Prayer cell group. Go to the zoo, park or a garden and have an evening worship/prayer when you focus on the taking care of God's creation. On these occasions, take time to reflect on your role as a steward of God's creation. You can conduct Bible studies based on Psalm 104.
- Creation care ministries. Establish groups focusing on environmental initiatives, form a 'Green Group' for environmental commitment, hold 'Environment Sundays,' and encourage carbon reduction practices during Lent. If possible, include your Pastor or one of the church/community leaders in the group.
- Organise trips to local wildlife areas, botanical gardens or the zoo.
- Support climate justice and engage in public policy discussions.
- Make environmental stewardship part of your church/organisation's guiding principles and communicate these to the church community and to the wider public. Support initiatives that promote sustainable living, like offering healthy, plant-rich meals to your staff and community during events and observances.

YOUR FEEDBACK

Drishtikone has been in print since 1994, and we are deeply thankful to the Lord for His guidance over these years. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to readers like you, whose continued support has been vital to sustaining the publication of our magazine.

From your responses we recognise that over the years Drishtikone has been a blessing to our readers and it has been instrumental in shaping evangelical thinking on several social issues and inspiring action.

At EFICOR, we are considering changes in the publication format of Drishtikone. We request you to kindly send us your feedback on whether you prefer to receive the magazine in hard copy or soft copy format. Your feedback will be invaluable in guiding our decision-making process.

I prefer to receive Drishtikone in –

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