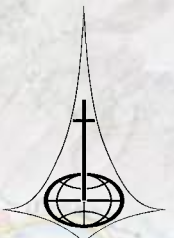


# LWF TOGETHER THE EARTH NEEDS YOU

## GUIDEBOOK



**THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION**

A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES – EINE KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT – UNA COMUNIÓN DE IGLESIAS – UNE COMMUNION D'ÉGLISES

LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

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## Editor

Roger Schmidt

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Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;  
break forth into joyous song  
and sing praises.  
Let the floods clap their hands;  
let the hills sing together for joy  
(Ps 98:4–8)

Welcome to a global journey!

For the first time in the history of the Lutheran World Federation, young people from around the world will share their everyday lives and their local contexts with newly found friends from other parts of the world.

Groups of young people in local congregations and other church settings are in contact with two other groups from other continents.

This is a unique experiment and we will therefore have to move along carefully with one another. Following this booklet—a road map for our six-month journey together—will make the journey easier. If you would like to take a detour, please do so in agreement with the other two groups.

**PHASE 1:  
 GETTING TO KNOW ONE  
 ANOTHER  
 (MAY 2011, PP. 7–10)**

1. **First contact:** Group leaders will get into touch with one another and agree on some basic questions.
2. **Presentation:** At this stage, you will learn more about the other groups and their communities. You will also present yourselves.
3. **Bible study on Psalm 104:** The groups will work on a common biblical text. You will share your insights in a creative way with the other groups.

**PHASE 2:  
 ANALYZING THE CONTEXT AND  
 PLANNING AN ACTIVITY  
 (MAY/JUNE 2011, PP. 11-16)**

1. **Learning:** The booklet suggests ways of learning about climate change and the global environmental crisis.
2. **Bible study on Leviticus 23 & 25:** The groups will work on a common biblical text. You will share your insights in a creative way with the other groups.
3. **Analyzing the context:** Here you will find ideas as to how better to understand your context.

**PHASE 3:  
 IMPLEMENTING AN ACTIVITY  
 (JULY–SEPTEMBER)**

1. **Bible Study on Colossians 1:** The groups will work on a common biblical text. You will share your insights in a creative way with the other groups.
2. **Pick an issue:** You will review the issues that are most important in your community and pick the most pressing one. Share your insights with others and you will learn from theirs.
3. **Plan the activity:** Come up with an idea for an activity, plan it, and ask others for support.
4. **Implement the activity:** Get ready to act and share your experience with others.

**PHASE 4:  
 CELEBRATING AND EVALUATING  
 (OCTOBER)**

1. **Bible study on Revelation 21–22:** The groups will work on a common biblical text. You will share your insights in a creative way with the other groups.
2. **Evaluate:** Together with the other groups, share your experiences—your successes and your failures.
3. **Celebrate and share:** Share what you have learned with your congregation in the form of a short presentation and a prayer—if possible around Reformation Day.

Below are some rules we should all abide by:

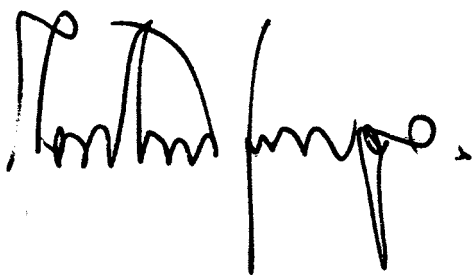
- Be humble: Do not use technology or language inaccessible to the group with the least means. Do not show off with what you can afford.
- Be helpful to one another and try to understand the problems of the others.
- Do not offer or ask for money. This is a reason for being expelled from the program.

# THE LWF IS YOU!

The Lutheran World Federation—A Communion of Churches (LWF) is many things: it is a major global relief organization, active in thirty-four countries and often the first to respond to natural and human-made disasters; it nurtures theological learning and supports churches in mission. Within the framework of the LWF, the church leadership, including women and young people, come together to discuss issues of common concern. Through its conversations with other confessional families such as the Roman Catholic Church or the Mennonites the LWF acts as a bridge builder.

But, most fundamentally, the Lutheran World Federation is you, when you, young baptized Christians in the Lutheran tradition, become actively engaged and connected to others in the worldwide communion and when you express your faith through actions for justice.

This is what you are doing by together participating in the LWF. I thank you for this commitment and send you my blessings for the coming six months.



Martin Junge  
LWF General Secretary

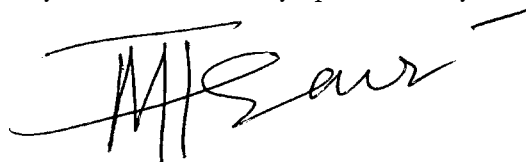
# PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

The church of Jesus Christ does not have its own mission; rather, mission belongs to God who sent Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit into the world in order to reconcile the world to God's own self (2 Cor 5:19). The church is called to participate in God's mission to the world. "Mission in Context," the Lutheran World Federation's important contribution to the understanding and practice of mission, identifies three ways in which the church can participate in God's mission, namely: transformation, reconciliation and empowerment.

This year, you, the youth within the LWF communion of churches, will be focusing on ecological justice. We will join in prayer that God uses us in all three aspects:

- We need transformation toward societies that nurture rather than vandalize nature.
- We need reconciliation amongst ourselves and between human beings and nature. Nature that is abused in one part of the globe renders life in another part of the globe impossible.
- We need reconciliation with God whose creation we so often brutalize.
- We need empowerment—plenty of it—so that together we can pursue justice.

We are delighted that you have agreed actively to participate in God's mission and to witnessing to the love of Christ in a suffering world. Thank you. I pray that God bless you and that the Holy Spirit be with you.



Musa Pantil Filibus  
Director for Mission and Development



# ECOLOGY AND THE CURRENT CRISIS



The word ecology comes from the Greek *oikos*, house, dwelling place, habitation. It means that on earth everything is interconnected. When somebody pours poison into a river, the people, animals and plants downstream will suffer. High levels of carbon dioxide emissions in Europe impact the global climate.

## ALL IS CONNECTED

Many ecological problems have immediate, direct consequences at the local level, while others will only be felt in the long term. Some problems at first only affect nature, while others are problematic for human beings straightaway.

A bad sewage system will definitely damage the soil, human beings may become sick and the drinking water might become unsafe.

In a city that relies heavily on car traffic people might get sick because the air is bad and children risk being injured as they cross the street. In addition, the air is getting worse and, in the long run, the global atmosphere will be badly affected.

It is impossible in this short publication to list all the possible consequences. We can only point to some specific issues and facts. When you work with your partner groups, you will have to explore the correlation between particular problems.

## WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

Scientists around the world have observed that the global climate has been changing at a rapid pace, especially in terms of increases in average temperatures. The first decade of the twenty-first century was the warmest on record since the beginning of instrumental climate records in 1850. This has certain consequences:

- Sea levels rise endangering low lands and islands
- Glaciers melt and shrink changing local weather patterns and reducing access to water
- Droughts but also heavy storms seem to have become more frequent.

Today, the vast majority of scientists are convinced that human beings contribute significantly to this change.

Since the nineteenth-century industrial revolution, humanity as a whole has emitted higher levels of such gases as carbon dioxide than can be offset by the global climate. This has had a warming effect. Problematic in this respect is any type of burning, including the burning of wood and especially fuels. The flip side of the coin is the destruction of nature, which could actually transform gases such as CO<sub>2</sub>. Therefore, global deforestation is another factor contributing to climate change.

## WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

There are two basic strategies, namely mitigation and adaptation.

### MITIGATION

The human contribution to climate change should be reduced. This includes the following measures:

- Switch to alternative energies that do not require burning fuel
- Reduce travel that requires burning fuel
- Stop deforestation.

### ADAPTATION

Climate change is well under way and can no longer be stopped. Therefore, people everywhere, especially vulnerable communities, need to prepare for the coming changes.

### OTHER AREAS OF CONCERN

Climate change is definitely not the only concern. In terms of ecological justice there are more areas in which humans hurt nature and, ultimately, themselves. Below a short list of other issues that could be considered:

- **Biodiversity:** more and more species are threatened by extinction.
- **Water:** rivers and ground water are contaminated and human beings do not have safe drinking water.
- **Waste:** waste is disposed in an unhealthy manner.
- **Deforestation and desertification:** forests are shrinking while deserts are growing.





## FIRST CONTACT WITH THE OTHER GROUPS

Around 30 April 2011, you will receive the contact details of the other groups that will be working with you. Please do not wait to be contacted but write an e-mail yourselves.

This e-mail should contain the following information:

- Short introduction: your names, ages, and where you live.
- How often you can access e-mail. What other means of communication you would

like to use (i.e., text message, chat, video conference).

- Indicate if you have long holidays between May and October 2011 when your group will not be able to meet.
- Please tell the other groups when you plan to deal with the different phases.
- Anything else the other groups should know at this stage.

Please respond to the other groups as needed. Please be aware that some groups might need several days before they can access the Internet.



## PRESENT YOUR GROUP

After the initial contact, the time has come to share information about your group.

There are several different ways of doing this:

- Write stories and distribute them by e-mail
- Send photos
- If you have the possibility, you might consider making a short film.

What the others would be interested to know:

- Your names
- What you do in life: work, looking for work, going to school, etc. What languages you speak
- Information about your community. Do you live in a large city or a small village? What is significant about this?

- The way in which you worship. What is important to your church?

### HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR GROUP MEETINGS

Perhaps your group has been meeting for a long time, or you might only just have got to know one another. It is crucial that your group meetings are fun; it is not enough simply to read the messages of the other groups and to respond.

Take your time, play games, be as creative as possible in your responses, sing together and share your songs with the other groups.

# PSALM 104

## ADMIRE THE BEAUTY OF CREATION

This Psalm admires creation and praises the Creator. The song helps us to see nature as more than something that we use in order to survive ourselves. Nature is as much part of God’s creation as we are; it has its own dignity.



This Bible study helps you to read the Psalm carefully and to see nature more clearly.

Activity	Style/Material	Objective	Suggested Time
Song or game that the group likes		Warming up	10 min.
Short prayer		Inviting God into the conversation	4 min.
Spread pictures/postcards of nature scenes, objects (e.g., nice stones, flowers, grasses) on the floor. Participants choose the object to which the group can relate to best.	Individual (material needed: pictures or objects that relate to nature)	To raise awareness of nature’s diversity	10 min.
Each person briefly explains why they have chosen this particular item.	Plenary, individual contribution	To give a voice to our different understandings of nature	15 min.
Read Psalm 104 in two groups—female and male. Read the text individually again. Clarify any unfamiliar words and concepts.	Plenary, reading aloud, individual (needed: Bibles or printouts of the text)	To understand Psalm 104 as a song	10 min.
Divide into small groups and come up with a heading for the Psalm.	Small groups	Getting closer to the meaning of the Psalm	10 min.
Each group shares why they chose the heading they did.	Plenary		5 min.
Discuss as a group differences in interpretation and the meaning of the passage	Plenary		20 min.
Song/closing prayer			5 min.

Please share with your partner groups: Tell them about your meeting. Share all the headlines that you have come up with. If possible, take and send a few photos of the objects that you and your group used.

On the LWF youth blog, share one or two headlines for the text in the comments section. If possible, upload pictures.



## A PRIMER ON THEOLOGY AND THE ECOLOGY

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa 6:3). Isaiah hears the Seraphs’ song before the heavenly throne. However, God’s glory and dynamic power are not restricted to heaven; they are everywhere. Therefore—there is not other way—the ecological crisis also puts in question our understanding of God. Can it be that God is unconcerned about what happens to the world and the people in it? Certainly not. This short primer on theology and the ecology proposes several ways of thinking about the way in which God relates to the current ecological crisis.

### CREATOR, CREATION AND CREATURES

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (cf. Gen 1:1). This is the underlying convic-

tion of the Bible and of all Christians. In creation, God, the Creator, brings forth the created order. While the creation stories at the beginning of the Bible clearly distinguish between human beings and other parts of the created order, already here it is very clear that God, the Creator, has a relationship with the whole of creation. There is no room for the forceful oppression of nature by some creatures (i.e., human beings). This concept becomes even more pronounced later on in the Bible. According to John 1, everything is created through the Word of God (later identified with Jesus, the Christ). In Romans 8, Paul speaks of how human beings and all other creatures wait for redemption in Jesus Christ. God loves all God’s creatures.

## THE TRIUNE GOD

Confessing the Triune God in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit means believing in a God in relationship. The Christian understanding of God does not emphasize an entity distant from all struggles of life. God is not the unmoved mover who observes the world from afar. On the contrary: in Godself, God is already the vibrant and loving relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But that remains also true in the relationship with the whole of creation. This becomes especially clear when Christians speak about incarnation. This word means that the Son, the second person of the Trinity, becomes a human being, becomes flesh, as Martin Luther emphasizes in his theology of the cross. We do not meet God distant from creation. Quite the opposite: we encounter God when we see Jesus Christ on the cross. We encounter God when we see the suffering creation.

Trinitarian theology describes God's interrelated gracious movement. "God is the source, the power and the goal—the spirit that enlivens the complex process of creation. God is the source of all being rather than one who intervenes from the outside" (Bloomquist, 19f.).

## JUSTICE AND THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

The current global ecological crisis is unjust in at least two major respects. It is unjust in the relationship of human beings to nature, and in the relationships among human beings. The injustice towards nature is self-explanatory. In order to secure their survival—or simply to make their lives more comfortable—humans destroy parts of nature, polluting air, land, and water. Thus they seriously reduce biodiversity and extinguish entire species.

There is also the second dimension: human beings are unjust toward one another. Excessive consumption on the part of some destroys nature and seriously impacts other parts of humanity. The many ecological issues, such as climate change, bear witness to this. People in the industrialized countries

have been making excessive use of technologies that emit high amounts of carbon dioxide and other climate changing gases. The tragic truth is: people in the North are wasting resources that belong to all. The first to suffer are the people in the South who have never contributed to this destruction.

Throughout the Bible, justice is a major concern. In Amos 5, the prophet accuses his listeners of oppressing the poor and of unjust practices and announces the Word of God: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Am 5:24). At the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus refers to major justice related texts from the Hebrew Bible: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Lk 4:18–19).

How can we get closer to discussing justice in connection with the ecological crisis? In a helpful way, Christoph Stueckelberger distinguishes between the different aspects of justice that need to be fulfilled when confronting a crisis:

"Capability related justice meant that every person and institution has the duty to contribute to solving problems on the basis of their ability."

"Needs related justice means that the basic human needs and right (i.e., a living wage, a life in dignity and the right to food and water) should be taken into consideration for every person and institution."

"Distributive justice means that access to resources, goods and services is distributed fairly, taking into account the balance of capability, performance and needs."

"Intergenerational justice means the sustainable use and fair distribution of resources, including between present and future generations."

"Participatory justice means fair and appropriate participation in decision making by all those affected." (Bloomquist, 48f.).

## LEVITICUS 23:3; 25:1–5

# A REST FOR CREATION



God endows the whole of creation with dignity. According to this Old Testament text, even the land has the right to rest, and people should stop farming the land every seventh year (Sabbath year). Today, this does not have to be applied literally. This Bible study will explore the dignity of nonhuman creation and the way in which we endanger it.

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- To reflect on the meaning and purpose of the Sabbath
- To understand that the human exploitation of nature has deprived the land of its right to observe the Sabbath.

### THE STEPS

- Read Leviticus 23:3 out aloud to your teammates and reflect on it.
- Play a game, or dance, maybe with music. The group is in full movement. The leader

slowly counts from 1 to 7. At 7, all movement stops and there is complete silence for a long moment. Repeat this at least once.

- Participants sit down and share what they have felt and what makes the Sabbath important to them.
- Form groups of no more than six people. Read Leviticus 25:1–5 slowly in the group.

### REFLECTION

- In what ways are we depriving the land (or other parts of nature) of its right to observe the Sabbath?
- Are there ways in which human beings suffer because the land does not receive the Sabbath's rest?
- Why do we do that? What forces and desires are stronger than giving the land a rest?
- What arguments could we use in order to support the right of the land?

Share with the other groups some of the insights you had while reading the text. Share with the other groups and, if possible, also on the blog, your ideas and arguments as to how we can give the land a rest.

# CHANGING BEHAVIOR IS HARD

A PERSPECTIVE FROM  
THE UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA

**ALLISON BEEBE**



In North America, people know about the need for making environmentally friendly choices. However, this knowledge does not often change our actions. We are well informed. News from all over the world is available whenever we would like to access it, and yet our habits toward the environment remain the same.

It is often the case that North Americans care, but not enough to change. People want to make a difference by taking the bus, but not as much as they want their independence by driving their own car. People want to conserve water, but not as much as they'd like to take long, hot showers in the morning. People want to buy food which is grown locally and sustainably, but not as much as they want the best price at the grocery store. People want to travel in an ecologically friendly way, but not as much as they would like to fly quickly across the country.

## CHOOSING THE MOST COMFORTABLE ALTERNATIVE

On the streets of Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA (the city where I live) you will see many cars on the road. Most of the cars carry only one person. While the city has a well-developed public transport system and programs in place for sharing car rides with people who are going to the same destination, many do not use these programs. This results in high fuel emissions, air pollution, and heavy dependence on gasoline.

My brother is a pilot for a small, regional airline. There are flights from airports which are only 90 miles (145 km) apart, but some people take these flights frequently, usually those who are flying for business meetings. While this trip would take less than two hours by car or train, some people still insist on flying. This practice uses much more fuel. Also it is more expensive for the passenger. The money spent on a plane ticket could be used for a more worthwhile cause.

## PROMOTING BIKES

Fortunately, efforts are being made towards changing the driving and flying habits of North Americans. At the moment, Minneapolis is the most bike-friendly city in the nation. The city received this rating because it has many miles of bike trails, bike lanes on city streets, and many places to park bikes, to name but a few of the criteria used. The city has just started a bike sharing system that is quite popular. Minneapolis has made much progress in increasing the amount of bikers on the road, but the city is still far behind many major cities in other countries. I am proud that my city is bike friendly, but this news also makes me laugh. Minneapolis is one of the coldest cities in the USA, and in winter the streets are full of ice and snow. This weather does not often encourage people to go outside and ride their bikes. Some brave people still bike in the cold, but many only bike during the spring and summer months.

## THE CHURCH SHOULD PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY

I attend Grace University Lutheran Church. The church is making good efforts to act sustainably. We recycle the worship bulletins every Sunday after the service. On Sundays, the bike racks outside of church are usually full, as many church members bike to Sunday services. The church is also planning to expand the building. As plans are formed, one priority area is to make sure that it is constructed with sustainability in mind. Recycled materials,

energy-efficient lighting techniques and solar panels are among the ideas that have been discussed. I think it is important that churches are leaders in sustainable practices. As Christians, we value God's creation, and this should be reflected in church functions. If the church makes this a priority, then church members will follow the example.

After the LWF youth named environmental sustainability among the top priorities of the Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, I vowed to change some of my habits in order to live a more environmentally friendly life. I now take the bus to work several days per week. My commute is a bit longer but I have time to read and relax on my way to work. This is good for the environment, and good for the brain. It has been a positive change.

I come from a land full of wealth and resources. In North America, people know about the earth's needs worldwide, but often do not work towards change. We need to stop acting selfishly, and start making choices that benefit everyone. As Christians, we have a responsibility to be good stewards of God's earth. A friend once wrote to me, "Christians can take a long view of life, and that's part of what keeps us going." If we are truly taking a long view of life, we will continue advocating environmental change for the future and for all the saints to come.

*Allison Beebe (born 1988), graduated in Global Studies from the University of Minnesota, USA. She was a steward at the 2010 Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Stuttgart, Germany.*



# ANALYZING YOUR CONTEXT

Everything is interconnected; that is the principle of ecology. This group exercise is about learning what this means in your particular context.

## PURPOSE

To help a local activity with an eye toward the three components of sustainability: the environment, society, and the economy.

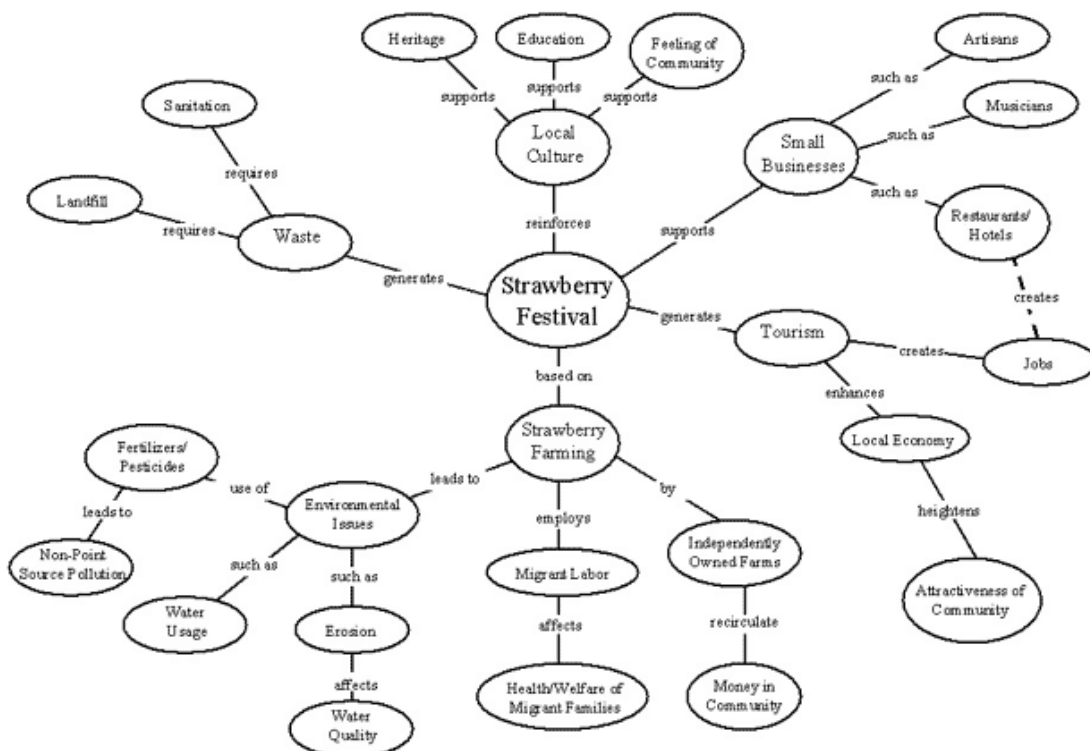
**Time needed:** 90 minutes or longer if required.

### Materials:

- Three large sheets of paper for each group
- Tape
- One marking pen per participant.

## DIRECTIONS

- Divide participants into groups of two to four.
- Ask each group to identify an annual local activity (e.g., local festival, parade, or sporting event).
- Design a concept map (see below) using this activity as the point in the center.
- Think of ways in which the activity affects the local environment, society, and the economy. For example: A football match might help the local economy by generating work for people running the food stalls and those selling the food to them. However, in terms of environmental impact, the event produces waste that might pollute the waterways, etc.



If you had several groups, let the different groups report on their maps now.

In order to summarize the findings, prepare a chart on the remaining sheet of paper. Write the headings

“Environment,” “Society,” and “Economy” across the top. Write “Local” and “Global” on the left-hand side of the page. Write down the keywords that you have come up with as in the following example:

	<b>Environment</b>	<b>Society</b>	<b>Economy</b>
<b>Local</b>	Use of fertilizers Use of pesticides Groundwater Landfill Reservoir Urban sprawl Waste Traffic Riverfront park	Public health Education Landmarks Heritage Culture Migrant workers Events Values	Tourism Shipping Service industry Government subsidy Seasonal jobs Private support Taxes Property values
<b>Global</b>	Acid rain Ozone depletion Logging Fishing Air	Source community Workers Child labor Disease Poverty Government	Big business International trade agreements Wages Cost of living

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

- What are the most problematic factors for your local community?
- What are the most problematic factors at the global level?
- Do you have any ideas as to how these can be addressed?

(Adapted from: [www.esdtoolkit.org/community\\_goals/sust\\_lens.htm](http://www.esdtoolkit.org/community_goals/sust_lens.htm))

# TEARS IN HEAVEN

## AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

ANGELIOUS MICHAEL



Increasingly, climate change and global warming are becoming serious concerns for all of creation. The efforts being undertaken to reduce their harmful effects cannot keep up with the pace at which these changes are taking place. The earth is experiencing drastic climatic changes, and the victims are the poorest of the poor, living in situations of deprivation in terms of the economy and social welfare.

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND CYCLONES

The state of Odisha (formerly Orissa) in India is facing the worst effects of climate change. Located at the head of the Bay of Bengal, the slightest change in the behavior of the sea has immediate implications on the coast since it can, for instance, cause cyclones. Over the past decades, Odisha has faced severe natural disasters including a super cyclone. It has been reported that, over the past four years, natural disasters have claimed more than 30,000 lives in the state. People living on the coast are forced to move away because of the threat to their livelihoods. There are increasing numbers of climate refugees.

### RISING TEMPERATURES AND DROUGHT

The Koraput district, located in the southern part of Odisha, has been experiencing significant increases in temperature. In the past, temperatures in Koraput were moderate, and in my childhood we hardly ever used fans. My parents never knew a hot Koraput. Unfortunately, today, summer temperatures in this densely forested area exceed 40°C. Rain is scarce and the days of my childhood, when it never stopped raining during the rainy season, are over. This lack of precipitation is a serious concern.

Western Odisha is the one of the hottest parts of the state. Temperatures in such places as Titlagarh have reached nearly 50°C. Severe summer droughts are making cultivation impossible because of water shortages. All of this has direct consequences for human beings. Every year people die of hunger in Odisha.

## FLOODS CLAIM LIVES

In addition to drought, the state has also been experiencing floods. They have become a common feature in the state, with the 2001 monsoon leading to the worst flood recorded in the state over the last century. Some western districts, which previously had no history of floods, were largely submerged. Further, the frequency of cyclones has increased on the coast of Odisha. Two cyclones hit the state in quick succession in 1999, leaving the state ravaged. A second cyclone, lasting for three days, ruined 14 coastal districts. More than 15 million people were affected, 2 million tons of rice crops were destroyed, and around 17,000 square kilometers of agricultural land were devastated.

## MINING AND DISPLACEMENT

Odisha is one of the few states in India with rich mineral deposits. While mining might provide development opportunities it also demands considerable natural resources. Over the years, massive deforestation has taken place and Odisha's natural resources have been exploited by multinational corporations.

Koraput's population are predominantly tribals and dalits, with tribals living in the beautiful surrounding mountains and valleys. Unfortunately, minerals have been found in those areas and, over the years, the tribals have been displaced to make way for aluminum companies and power projects. Koraput

has quite a number of electricity producing power projects but there are still villages without electricity. The effect on the population has been largely negative and some tribals have even lost their lives while protesting against mining that promotes displacement.

Development has taken place at the expense of the indigenous communities that live in acute poverty. The indigenous people of the state have been deprived of their basic right to education, access to health facilities and development and are subject to exploitation. While development has been experienced by other sectors of society, indigenous people continue to face social and economic subjugation. Despite all deprivation, the tribals exhibit their rich culture and traditions that impress and draw many to the state.

## THE NEXT STEPS

It is strange that a beautiful place such as Koraput does so little to take care of it. I read once that if Koraput were to be compared to heaven, the agony and pain of people would be like "tears in heaven."

Forests must be saved and ecological concerns need to be made a top priority. Community owned programs—particularly for the indigenous community—should be one of our main priorities.

*Angelious Michael (1979) is Program Secretary for Youth, Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church, Odisha, India.*



## COLOSSIANS 1:12–20

# THE FIRST BORN BEFORE CREATION

**KENNETH MTATA**

In the group, slowly read the following text aloud several times.

He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body,

the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Respond to these questions:

- What is the text saying (what did you hear in the text)?
- What does this text say about God?
- What does the text say about creation?
- What other creation or life processes are mentioned in the text?
- How is the creation organized according to this text?
- What does or should creation serve according to the text?
- What is the hope regarding all of creation according to the text?

Read the following notes and reread Colossians 1:12–20.

The Epistle to the Colossians is said to be part of Paul's letters, commonly called the Prison letters (Philippians, Ephesians and Philemon) although the language in Colossians is somewhat different to that in Paul's other letters. This pericope or text is a prayer honoring Christ. Similar texts honoring Christ in this way would include John 1:18 and Philippians 2:5–11. The prayer starts with the first section (vv 9–14) and focuses on the church's spiritual welfare. Verses 15–20 praise Christ. The text begins by pointing to Jesus Christ as the "image of the invisible God" and as the "firstborn of all creation." In this sense, in his earthly form, Jesus embodies the image of God while at the same time sharing in the state of created things. This association of the image of God with creation makes that which is created sacred. For this reason, in 1:16, all created things are subordinated to God because God created them

for God's own purpose. As a result, all of creation is finally accountable to God such that there is nothing created whose authority over other creation is final. This includes human beings. In 1:18 Jesus' headship over the church is one example in which God's lordship over all structures of authority over creation is demonstrated. What is interesting is that just as Jesus has partaken in being human, he has, through this association, made all creation supreme. This is another way of putting 1:15. God's nature was alive in its "fullness" in Jesus (1:19) so that created things and beings could be restored to divine nature (1:20).

What is your response to the following questions in light of this short explanation?

- What are some of the challenges to this hope?
- What does this text mean for you in terms of how you should relate to others and creation?
- How is the final restoration of all creation possible in this text?

The text evokes images. In groups of two, paint or draw a picture of how Christ and creation are connected.

Present the pictures to the other small groups. Discuss the meaning of the pictures and maybe your different understandings.

*Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata (born 1971) is a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe and currently serves as study secretary in the Department for Theology and Studies of the Lutheran World Federation.*

If possible, take a photo of all the pictures from your group and send it to the partner groups in other countries. Please add explanations and responses to the questions.

Have a close look at what your partner groups are sending—discuss these with your group and send some questions back. Please send some pictures to [lwfyouth.org](http://lwfyouth.org)

# CHANGING TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE A BRAZILIAN PERSPECTIVE

**DANIELE SCHMIDT PETER**



Leading a good life means fostering good relationships. We can see this in the way in which we relate to colleagues, family, and friends. Friendships help us to live happily. With regard to the environment, the way in which we relate to the soil and to nature, the type of agriculture we practice, and the type of food we buy can either help humanity grow or bring about a crisis. Our way of life and nature's suffering are connected.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY FARMS

The earth gives us all that we need. The farmers in southern Brazil, where entire families work on the farm and find a way to survive, have internalized this knowledge. They produce vegetables, fruits, beans, milk, etc., all part of a typical Brazilian meal. Life is simple and the access to and proximity of nature brings tranquillity to the people. Breathing fresh air, combined with smelling the green forests, meadows, and flowers, renews those who come from the cities.

According to statistics, 42 million smallholdings produce seventy percent of the food consumed in

Brazil. The strong connection between smallholders and the production of food changed in southern Brazil when farmers increasingly began to plant tobacco. Tobacco now accounts for almost 100 percent of the agricultural production in this region. What does tobacco mean for the farmers, for nature and for the entire community?

## THE FALSE HOPE OF TOBACCO

In southern Brazil, tobacco was regarded as an opportunity for agriculture to expand. In times when large numbers of rural workers migrated to the big cities because farming could no longer sustain them, cultivating tobacco enabled farmers to survive in the countryside, even on a small plot of land. Therefore, large companies built tobacco plants and many people started cultivating tobacco. This shift to tobacco has changed agricultural techniques and has led to a new relationship with the soil. Families who for generations had worked in food production switched to monoculture.

While tobacco has brought hope to the region it has also caused health problems. Toxic pesticides contaminate the soil and waterways affecting the region's biodiversity. Wood is required in the production of tobacco, and producers are encouraged to plant eucalyptus trees which are native to Australia. However, the eucalyptus needs a lot of water to survive; this causes the soil to dry out which subsequently leads to erosion. Ironically, the production of tobacco impacts nature in much the same way as its consumption affects the health of human beings.

## **DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

In order to overcome these problems, the Brazilian government has started programs that are supposed to guarantee the sustainability of production, marketing and support the social organization of farmers in the region.

The first step of this development strategy has been successful, and the reality of some tobacco producers is beginning to change. The establishment of co-operatives helps farmers to deal with the challenges resulting from agricultural modernization.

There are several examples of programs to support the transition to ecological food production.

These programs are not only directed at farmers who are currently producing food but also at those who would like to switch from growing tobacco to growing food. Rural organizations help farmers to conserve their own seeds, improve production, and develop marketing strategies.

One of the problems arising from increased production is that the actual market is not sufficiently large. For many families it will not be possible to stop growing tobacco until an alternative source of income is found. Therefore, while the new programs are changing the lives of many families, for others growing tobacco remains the only means of survival in the rural areas. The challenge is to help the wider population recognize the importance of the farmers, the necessity to preserve land, water, and air, and the whole environment by stopping the use of toxic products.

If we want to support these initiatives, we have to remember that just by buying organic produce we can make a difference. If we can make a difference in our homes, then we can do it in the world.

*Daniele Schmidt Peter (1986) works for CAPA, a rural development organization of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil. She interned with the LWF Youth Desk in 2010.*





## PICK AN ISSUE

In the last step you analyzed a local issue. This session will enable you to focus on a particular topic. In terms of ecology and sustainability, everything is interconnected. However, in order to make an impact you will have to focus on a specific issue.

Select your topic carefully. This is important because the whole group will have to agree to work on a specific issue for quite some time. Three major steps will have to be taken first:

- Discuss the issues that you have identified in the session “analyzing”
- Choose **one** issue for your further attention and action
- Agree on how you would like to find out more about the issue (research).

### POSSIBLE CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING AN ISSUE

- Your group feels passionately about this topic
- The topic is connected to your local context
- Your partner groups have similar interests.

### Now, Do Some Research

- Can you invite somebody who knows about the issue (e.g., an expert)?
- Can you interview people who are directly affected? Write down what they say.
- Divide the issue into several subtopics. Ask a member of your team to give a short presentation on one of the subtopics.
- If possible, use libraries and the Internet further to explore the issue.

Share with your partner groups which issue you have chosen and why. Please share some insights with the whole community.



## IDEAS FOR ACTION

After identifying the issues that you care about, it is important that you plan a specific action that addresses these. Please find below a few ideas for this.

### PLANNING

What change do you want to bring about?

In the time you have spent together, you will have discussed in depth one or several issues. Now it is time to be clear as to what you would like to see done differently in your community. What sort of changes would you like to see?

### GOALS

- Who could effect these changes? Is all the people living in the village? Or, could change already be brought about by a smaller group?
- What exactly would these people need to do differently? Please be as precise as possible.
- What would be a good time frame for this? How long would it take for this change to take effect?

On this basis, you can now define a realistic, measurable and time-bound goal for your actions.

This goal helps you to plan what you need now. How many people do you need? What kind of resources do you need and how and where can you get hold of them? A lot is possible with very little or no money at all.

## ACTION

Your action should be based on the real desire to make a difference in your community. The change you want to bring about will probably not be achieved after one event: You will have to convince people; for that you will have to talk to them and that will take time. However, an event as part of your action captures people's attention and profiles your group.

(Based on [www.350.org/en/action-ideas](http://www.350.org/en/action-ideas))

**Worship service:** Consider preparing and leading a special worship service. Maybe you have the possibility to do so in collaboration with other congregations and other churches.

**Panel discussion:** If you would like to change something that involves many different people, then it might be a good idea to invite some of them to joint discussions. This would also be a good opportunity to invite elected officials at the community or city level.

**Biking action:** Biking, like a march or a walk, is a great way of getting out and being visible in your community. It can also demonstrate the need for an improved infrastructure and alternative modes of transportation.

**Clearing away trash:** Cleaning part of your environment—a stream or a park for instance—would also be very effective action. You should tell others why you are doing this.

**Service actions:** You can actively participate in areas where strong hands are needed. But do not forget to tell others about what you are doing and why.

**Art installation:** Provide art supplies and invite your participants to create art—maybe something that speaks of the importance of nature in your community.

**Support local food production:** Have a feast, a carbon-free picnic, in the best local spot. This is an easy way to get everyone to participate and to highlight local and/or organic foods.

**Sports:** Organize a sports event at a place at the center of your community. Maybe you can display posters describing what you would like to change.

**Music:** Perhaps you know some local musicians who might want to join. Or, you could invite participants to bring instruments themselves and to create their own music.

**Film festival:** Film is a powerful medium and a great way of inspiring people to take action. Introduce sensitive issues, tell powerful stories of those making a difference and provide solutions to our ecological crisis in an entertaining and captivating way.

**Sharing:** Please share with your partner groups your ideas and plans. Maybe they have other good additional ideas and questions. Take time to respond to the others.

If possible, please take photos of your event, write stories and send them both to your partner groups and to the wider community.

# A WALK THROUGH THE “GREEN CITY IN THE SUN”

## A KENYAN PERSPECTIVE

**MOSES ABOKA**

Nairobi is one of the fastest growing cities in Africa. It is the home to many international corporations and organization such as the United Nations Environmental Program and the United Nations’ Africa offices. It has tall, beautiful buildings and clean, fresh parks including a game park that is the only one of its kind. It is an important social center where you can meet all of Kenya’s forty-two tribes.

### GETTING WATER IS HARD

A walk through the same city paints a different picture, with shanties (slums) being home to over sixty percent of the city’s population of 3 million. Most of the 3 x 3 meter houses are inhabited by five to ten family members and have no running water. Kawangware, which has been my home for close to thirty years, is one of these slums. I cannot remember the last time that I received water from our neighborhood tap which is supposed to serve about sixty people. The shortest distance that I can travel to get water is half a kilometer.

Women and children suffer most because sometimes they have to wait, even at night, to get water which is sold for 5 Kenya Shillings (approx 0.06 USD) for twenty liters. On average, a family uses about 100 litres or 0.30 USD per day. This is a considerable amount for an urban slum family that can only spend about 1 USD per day. Therefore, most families who live close to the Nairobi River use its dirty water for washing their clothes. At times, there are lorries that supply water but these same lorries might have been carrying human waste before. Even worse, some people drink cheap, un-

treated borehole water. This results in water borne diseases such as cholera and typhoid.

### USING THE “FLYING TOILET”

As we arrive in the slum of Kibera we will be greeted by the bad smells of human waste and garbage that flow along major drainage ditches. Kibera is the world’s second largest slum, with a population close to one million. Most inhabitants do not have a toilet and therefore have to use the “flying toilet” system. They relieve themselves in plastic bags and then throw them away at night. In some places in Kibera, like in Soweto, UN Habitat has built ditch toilets and bathing facilities. These are managed by the local communities. One pays around 3 Kenya Shillings (0.04 USD) and as many as 1 600 people line up daily to use these facilities which only serve about one percent of Kibera’s population.

Nairobi, once known as East Africa’s “Green City in the Sun,” is no longer a green city. It has become choked with smoking cars and smoldering industries that, second by second, are damaging our environment. Sometimes I wonder how long the beauty of Nairobi will last. We share one common environment. If it is damaged, then both of us will suffer.

*Moses Aboka (born 1981) was the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya’s delegate to the 2010 Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, Stuttgart, Germany.*



## REVELATION 21:3–7; 22:1–5 **THE PROMISE OF HOPE**

**MIA WRANG**

Using an abundance of rich metaphors, these verses describe “a new creation.” We do not know what exactly is meant by new here (21:5) but, luckily, we do not need to know everything. Instead, we can concentrate on that which is clearer.

One of the symbols, the tree of life (22:2), refers to Genesis. Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden due to the Fall. Ever since our choices and actions have led us away from paradise and the struggle between the forces of life and death con-

tinue. Revelation is addressed to people struggling with the understanding that the world as they knew it will end one day. Revelation is about hope in situations that seem hopeless.

It shows us that for Christians there is no reason to give up—no matter how difficult the situation is. The struggle will end in the victory of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we are the body of Christ and therefore part of his struggle and victory.

Revelation is full of God's promises. It is said that while God does not fulfill all of our wishes, God fulfills all of God's promises. As Christians we are privileged to have hope in God. God's promise, I will "give you a future with hope" (Jer 29:11), remains valid. The future has not been cancelled. Even if everything seems to go wrong in the world, we have God who will have the final word on earth (Job 19:25).

## HOW TO WORK ON THE TEXT

The text is read several times (so that everyone has the possibility to read part of it out aloud). Each participant chooses one or several words (maximum one sentence), which they find the most meaningful and relevant at the moment. Everyone will share the word or words they have picked with the others. It is good to sit in a circle so that participants can easily see one another. The objective here is to familiarize yourselves with and be touched by the text.

Divide into small groups (3—5 people). Each person briefly explains why they have chosen these particular words.

Further questions to be discussed in the groups include:

- What do these verses tell you about God?
- What makes young people helpless in your country vis-à-vis environmental issues?
- As Christians, why do we not need to be afraid?

Many churches use the anchor as a symbol of hope. What, in your culture, are symbols, signs or colors of hope? Nowadays, what else could be used as a sign of hope?

Suggested time for the discussion is 30 minutes. The main findings should be noted and shared with the wider group.

Groups will come together in order to share the issues they have discussed. The objective here is to share and to learn from the perspective of others.

Choose from the following suggested activities those appropriate to your context. Please note, these will require time and preparation.

- Together construct an altar representing hope given by God using symbols, Bible texts, and colors.
- Plant a tree.
- Sing a song of hope. You may wish to compose the music and/or write the lyrics for a new song

Passing the symbol of hope: Form a circle. One person in the circle will give the next person a symbol of hope (a seed, small anchor, or something else) with words of encouragement (i.e., a quotation from the Bible). The one who received the symbol will hand it to the next person in the circle with words of encouragement. This will be continued until the symbol and words of encouragement have come full circle. The symbol can be the same throughout while the words can differ and are chosen by the one who says them. Alternatively, everyone brings their own symbol of hope to be given to the next person in the circle. The objective here is to be empowered by the hope given by God.

Finish with a prayer such as the following:

God almighty, Creator of heaven and earth,  
 You give us the food of the earth and the water of the well.

Bless every effort and every struggle that seeks to restore the harmony and beauty of your creation.  
 We praise you, for you have not left your creation alone.

Lord Jesus Christ, who walked our ways, you have revealed the will of God and the holiness of the earth.

We thank you for your promise to be with us always. Without you we can do nothing.

Holy Spirit, giver of life and helper, you awaken our song of praise in faith and struggle.

We thank you that you are greater than any of the obstacles we face. Amen

Agree on who will be responsible on the sharing with the groups abroad. It is good to share the responsibility with several people and to be clear about which part of the sharing each person takes care of and when they will do it. The leader of the group will have to do the follow-up.

*The Rev. Mia Wrang (born 1972) is a parish pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and served as program secretary on the LWF Youth Desk.*

Share the main findings of the group discussions. Use the notes taken during the sharing within the wider group. In addition to questions and answers arising during the group discussions, share your answer to the following questions: What is the word for hope in your language? Does the word have any additional meaning?

Share what you did as a group activity.

- If you built an altar, take a photo of it and share it with the groups abroad. Write also a few words of explanation about the symbols used.
- If you planted a tree, tell the groups abroad about the tree (what type of tree, where you planted it, etc.)
- If you composed a new song, record it and share it with the groups abroad. If you wrote the lyrics for a new song, translate these into the language that you use with the groups abroad and share the words with them.

Pray for the groups abroad during your local youth gathering.



## EVALUATION AND CELEBRATION

Evaluation is not about complaining about people or being angry about something that did not work out the way you might have intended. Rather, it is about finding out what we should be thankful for to God. We will try to acknowledge what we have learned in order to remember it for the future. We will face our mistakes honestly in order not to make the same ones next time.

### GROUP EVALUATION: A FEW TIPS

When working with your team, it is important that everybody is heard—even those who do not generally speak up.

- Stand in a circle. Use a ball or something else that you can catch easily. Everyone who has caught the ball has to say what they thought about the project.
- Sit in a circle. A volunteer stands up, moves to the center, and makes a statement about the project. For example, “I really liked the program because... .” Then, all the others stand up. If they agree with the statement they move closer to the speaker; if they do not, they go further away. The facilitator asks some people why they have chosen to stand in a certain place.
- The facilitator has prepared statements regarding the program. S/he explains the scale on



the floor: one corner represents “I fully agree,” the opposite corner “I do not agree at all.” Then s/he reads the statements and the participants stand in the place that corresponds to whether they agree or disagree with the statement. For example, if they agree they will stand very near the “fully agree” corner. The facilitator will then ask them why they have chosen to stand in a certain place.

## **CELEBRATION**

Do not forget to celebrate what you have achieved and also what did not work as well as you might have hoped. Meet, have a party. Take time to thank God in prayer.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

There are many excellent resources that provide information on environmental justice and climate change and related issues. Most of the resources mentioned here are in English.

Karen Bloomquist (ed.), *God, Creation and Climate Change. Spiritual and Ethical Perspectives*, LWF Studies, 2009). A shorter version is available at [www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/god-creation-climate-change.html](http://www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/god-creation-climate-change.html) (English and German)

The South African Council of Churches has published a statement by African church leaders to the crisis: *Climate Change. A Challenge to the Churches in South Africa* (2009). The full text is available at [www.neccsa.org.za/documents/ClimateChange\\_Challenge-to-the-church-in-SA.pdf](http://www.neccsa.org.za/documents/ClimateChange_Challenge-to-the-church-in-SA.pdf)

The LWF Youth Toolkit on Climate Change (2009) is available at [www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/god-creation-climate-change.html](http://www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/god-creation-climate-change.html)

Christian Aid (a British agency) has put together some interesting resources. At [www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/campaign/index.aspx](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/campaign/index.aspx)

For the most recent scientific thinking and evaluation of the situation, see the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The Fifth Report will be published soon. At [www.ipcc.ch](http://www.ipcc.ch)



**“LWF Together—The Earth Needs You!” This experiment, conducted by the Lutheran World Federation, brings together three groups of young people on three continents to work together for ecological justice.**

**The guidebook, containing Bible studies, background information and tools for action in the community, seeks to support the journey of global learning.**

**More than 100 groups (over 900 individuals) have joined this journey.**

**For updates, go to [lwfyouth.org/lwf-together](http://lwfyouth.org/lwf-together)**

