

# Spiritual Reflection

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## Baha'i

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The commitment to preserve the autonomy and diversity of Bahá'í communities does not take away from the unity of the worldwide Bahá'í community. In fact, Bahá'ís all over the world are engaged in a coherent framework of action that promotes the spiritual development of the individual and channels the collective energies of its members towards service to humanity. Thousands upon thousands of Bahá'ís, embracing the diversity of the entire human family, are engaged in certain core activities. These activities promote the systematic study of the Bahá'í Writings in small groups in order to build capacity for service.

They respond to the inmost longing of every heart to commune with its Maker by carrying out acts of collective worship in diverse settings, uniting with others in prayer, awakening spiritual susceptibilities, and shaping a pattern of life distinguished for its devotional character. They provide for the needs of the children of the world and offer them lessons that develop their spiritual faculties and lay the foundations of a noble and upright character.

They also assist junior youth to navigate through a crucial stage of their lives and to become empowered to direct their energies toward the advancement of civilization. As Bahá'ís and their friends gain experience with these initiatives, an increasing number are able to express their faith through a rising tide of endeavours that address the needs of humanity in both their spiritual and material dimensions.

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There are already examples of devotional gatherings in local communities that have chosen as their theme 'care of the earth' or 'the environment'. Prayers, sacred writings and meditations during the devotional have elaborated this theme. Several children's classes offer acts of service to their communities. In some cases this action has been planting a community garden or cleaning up a stream or river. As this program is developed and used in communities throughout the world, such initiatives will be based on a better understanding of climate issues and the relevant Bahá'í perspective. Study, action and reflection on such action will result in a coherent framework for action on the subject of climate change.

Thousands of people worldwide have participated in these core activities. In 2006, the most recent year for which comprehensive statistics are available, an estimated 46,000 people participated in study circles worldwide, 112,000 attended devotional meetings, and some 93,000 were involved in children's classes.<sup>1</sup> The engagement of the Baha'i community will also benefit from resources which will be generated as the process gains momentum. There already exists a wealth of information on the International Environment Forum's website<sup>2</sup> which individuals and communities' can draw upon and surely further resources will be developed and become available.

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<sup>1</sup> Five Year Plan 2001-2006, pp 126-127.

<sup>2</sup> <http://iefworld.org>

## **Buddhists Shanghai**

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\*running Zen “Mind Meditation Camps” including teaching about mindfulness to Nature

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Buddhist monasteries will continue to promote and advocate the “Offering of Incense in a Civilised Way” programme. The plan is to gradually to change the way that offerings have been made for thousands of years. The plan is, for example, to promote offering locally grown flowers instead of burning incense sticks to pay respect to Buddha. This would not only reduce air pollution but also prettify the monastery’s environment. The Incense programme will be augmented by putting up posters and signs in monasteries, in places where people will notice them, or distribute the brochures to pilgrims and visitors to educate these them the meanings and practical impact of the “Mindful Offering of Incense”. Other suggested measures include providing three free incense sticks, and/or a discount purchase of flowers or electronic candles for each visitor.

## **Christian**

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### ***Australian Catholics***

Pastoral Care – theology, tradition and wisdom

- Re-discover and learn more about prophets and saints who cared for creation.
- Re-discover and learn more about scripture and Catholic Social teaching on ecology.
- Use the Sacraments as a means to a deeper understanding of our relationship with God through the gifts of nature.
- Introduce creation centred theology into seminaries.
- Promote environmentally sensitive pilgrimages and discover new routes that deepen our understanding of our past, present and future spiritual relationship with the natural world.

### ***Alexandria and All Africa***

c) The Patriarchate of Alexandria, following the decisions of the Orthodox Primates in the Meeting of Heads of 1992, and after the proposal of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, sets aside the first of September of each year as a day dedicated to the Environment and its protection and marked by special prayers and services for the whole of Creation. (6)

## **Armenian**

In 2007 a book called "Nature Protection and Theology" was published. It consists of three parts: Ecology, Nature Protection and Christian Church on Relations of Man and Nature. One thousand copies were published and distributed to the libraries of theological seminaries, to the chairs of ecology in universities and to the clergy. It is the first Armenian publication ever related to the protection of nature from a theological point of view, and furthermore is the first attempt of its kind from the orthodox world, as acknowledged and stated by many specialists.

## **CBCEW**

### Wisdom and Guidance

- Re-discover and learn more about those prophets and saints who cared for creation.
- Use the Sacraments as a means to a deeper understanding of our relationship with God through the gifts of nature.
- Promote the theology of creation in all places of learning and formation.
- Promote environmentally sensitive pilgrimages and re-discover ancient routes that deepen our understanding of our past, present and future spiritual relationship with the natural world.

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### Wisdom and Guidance

"And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke through the prophets"

Nicene Creed

" For no prophecy ever came from human initiative. When people spoke for God it was the Holy Spirit that moved them."

2 Peter 1:21

### Prophets and Saints

The Catholic Church has 2000 years of wisdom on the environment woven through its teaching, liturgy and the examples given by the lives of saints. Sometimes we can forget our own rich inheritance and so be deprived of riches that can engage our imagination and enable us to draw out the wisdom of ages in a modern context. Very often local saints, holy wells, churches, places of pilgrimage, local stories can help embed a community in its own environmental home. Concern for the earth is also about learning from the past and gaining much needed experience and wisdom from those who have faced challenges before and seen, through the eyes of faith, a way to make the world a better place. This Plan will encourage all Catholics to revisit the rich heritage of the past and see ancient wisdom as relevant to today's world.

### Sacraments

The Catholic use of the sacraments enables us to engage in a concrete way with the elements of the earth, water, fire, oil and ashes. The sacraments allow God to enrich our lives and bring grace to a broken world. They act at the personal level but also at the cosmic. The sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, the Eucharist, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders and Anointing the Sick all have the potential to instill in us a desire for wholeness with God which includes wholeness with creation. Much more can be done to release the potential of the sacraments to help us engage in a spiritual way with the environment.

### Seminaries

This is a rich area of potential change and training our next generation of clergy to inspire others to see God in the natural world will ensure Catholic environmental concern is embedded within our communities.

### Pilgrimages

Pilgrimages to sacred sites form an important part of Catholic tradition. We would encourage all pilgrims to make their journeys as environmentally sensitive as possible through their choice of transport and food. New pilgrimage routes could be determined that bring to light our traditional concern for the earth.

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### A Catholic Understanding of the Environment.

We are at a moment of immense grace. The “environmental crisis” offers us a chance of a different future based on renewed creativity, love and compassion for all. It is a time to extend our love to all that God has created, and by doing so we will see ourselves, the world around us and God in a new and enriched way. It is wrong to think of the environment in terms of just guilt, rather we are being invited to reflect on who we are, what our role is on earth and how to go forward in a way that deepens our Christian life.

One definition of “the environment” is “the surroundings or conditions in which a person, plant or animal operates.” This is clarified because what has become a confusing term. The “environment” is where we live and what all of life depends upon. It is all-encompassing and so cannot be considered the concern of only one particular group. It is as much about peace and justice for all people and all nations as it is about the future of the natural world. “The environment” is what we are part of and not separate from. It is about food, medicine, health, raw resources, spiritual insight, and the face of God; which is immanent in every living thing as well as transcendent and Lord of all. How we live on this earth, how we use and distribute the resources it offers and how we relate to each other and to other life forms is what makes us human and defines our character.

There are four relationships we need to have in balance if we are to be fully human and live holy, creative and flourishing lives. They are our relationship with God, with our own selves, with each other and with the natural world. Each one of those relationships has to be seen in relation to the others, and if any one of them becomes distorted then we see problems arising in ourselves and the environment.

There is no doubt that this is what we are observing in our world today. Concern for the health of the natural world grows daily and we are seeing increasing signs that our over-consumption of resources, excessive use of fossil fuels and our system of use and discard is leaving the poor facing further hardship, the vulnerable more easily exploited, species heading for extinction and a world that is facing ecological collapse.

Our relationship with the earth has become distorted at every level from global climate change through to regional problems such as water supply and desertification. When people notice through their own experience that their environment is changing – such as local birds or insects disappearing, or unexpected and severe weather events -they begin to see global problems as part of their own experience. Fear and anxiety grow and the problems seem to be unmanageable. We make a transition from freedom to fear; from a state of feeling in control to helplessness.

It is therefore timely and appropriate to consider both what practical steps can be taken to protect the natural world and to bear witness that another path of simple, holy, sustainable living is possible.

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The earth is held in the love of God, it reflects God's presence into our lives everyday. Cherishing and caring for this most wondrous of planets, and celebrating this great gift is at the heart of Catholic Christianity. And never has the time been more right to bring that belief once more into the centre of our lives. Now is the time to act for our future, the future of all our children and the future of creation itself.

### ***Catholic Coalition on Climate Change***

After a full year of planning and development, the Coalition launched in the spring of 2009 an ambitious, nationwide initiative designed to ensure a greater understanding and acceptance of the uniquely Catholic approach to climate change and to encourage individual and collective action.

The Catholic Climate Covenant: St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor calls upon Catholic individuals, families, parishes, schools, hospitals, and other institutions to take the St. Francis Pledge. The Pledge asks Catholics:

- TO PRAY and reflect on the duty to care for God's Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.

## **Church of Norway**

### **General Synod committee's remarks:**

*The Church's mission to protect sacredness. The fragrance of sacredness protects the earth; without it the earth will be no more than a piece of raw material. If the earth and its life should be degraded to mere raw material, the earth would rise against humankind in the greatest slave revolt in history.*

Martin Lönnebo, Swedish Bishop Emeritus at the General Synod 2007.

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Almighty God, your wisdom is beyond our understanding.  
We praise you for your greatness, imprinted in the earth and the sea and the sky.  
Through the web of creation you have given us a share in the gift of life.  
You have breathed the breath of life into us earthly beings,  
Show us how to carry your image while in this threatened creation.  
May your love and care for the creation be ours.  
Give us the will and the strength to turn and to fight on the side of life.  
With faith in you, and together with the whole creation, we gather together before you – in thankfulness for the gift of life, and in prayer for the wounded earth.

*(Opening prayer in service on World Environment Day, Tromsø 3 June 2007).*

## **Church of England**

Moreover, the climate crisis is at heart a question of global justice. There can be no just and lasting solutions to the environmental challenges we all face that are not based on concern for the poor and vulnerable, and on recognition of the need for those of us blessed with wealth to live within our world's ecological means, and to ensure that all can share in a decent life on God's earth. As disciples of Christ, we are to practise kindness and mercy, to love our neighbour as ourselves, to do justice and to walk humbly with our God.

We are called also to discern what it means in our times to follow this path – loving God, caring for neighbours and strangers, and acting as shepherds and humble stewards of his creation. The Gospel demands that we regard as our neighbours, in our own time, our fellow human beings all over the world; in generations to come, those whose environments and prospects are being shaped by our actions now, or have been already in the past – even though they remain strangers to us; and not just other human beings but all our fellow creatures, whose fates are linked to our own.

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The lifestyle which Christian discipleship demands in these times is a radical one: of delight in frugality, „less is more“, moving with the rhythms of the week and of the seasons. We must re-order our „aschæsis – the force of habit and daily use. We should be filled with the Spirit of God in worship and in the Eucharist, practising transforming prayer.

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2008

The annual festival of Creation Time is established by the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania. It is supported by the Church of England and Christians Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). Churches are encouraged to devote this period from September to 4 October each year to “prayer for the protection of creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change”.

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2009

22 September: The Church of England’s College of Bishops issues a statement responding to the challenge of climate change, also in preparation for the UN Copenhagen Conference.

4 October: UK Christians including Church of England churches celebrate a Day of Prayer for Climate Change, an initiative of the Environmental Issues Network of CTBI.

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The Diocese’s Environmental Group promotes awareness, understanding and projects in the area and offers a forum in which theological study can take place alongside and through the development of projects in the community. The Group has produced a „Praying for the Earth book of prayers and publishes a newsletter for Christians in Newcastle and Northumberland, „Renewing Creation“.

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The Cathedral has been assessed by the Carbon Trust to identify the scope for energy savings and more energy efficiency, and energy and environmental policies are planned for the Cathedral. In 2009 an exhibition on environmental issues, technologies and energy saving was held in the Cathedral. In 2009 the Lent Prayer Guide included „Green Prayers“ and a call for „carbon fasting“ as part of Lenten observance.

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Christ Church, West Wimbledon has held two community eco-festivals and plans more. These have brought together local politicians, campaigners, producers and community groups, and have provided an opportunity for debate, celebration and awareness-raising. A weekly Green Prayer is offered each Sunday. Jonathon Porritt has been among contributors to an annual lecture series on the environment and sustainability.

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Climate Justice Fund “Climate change affects all of us, but it is the world’s poor who contribute least to the problem and who have the least capacity to adapt to a changing climate. The world’s poor are already suffering the most from its devastating impact. That is why at its heart climate change is a matter of justice. Shrinking the Footprint challenged us to be aware of how our carbon consumption impacts on the lives of others and how we can respond by reducing that impact. The Climate Justice Fund is the logical next step for Christians for whom justice and climate change are issues of prayerful and practical concern.” Rt Revd James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool

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This theme should bring with it opportunities for projects, celebrations, artistic commissions and reflective worship and prayer at all levels of the Church. Many parishes and congregations are already strongly engaged with it. The theme brings together many aspects of sustainability and environmental concern (over-use of fisheries, impacts of meat consumption, animal welfare, and so on), and would generate new openings for partnerships, community projects and weaving of concerns into liturgy, prayer, church festivals, and overseas twinning and other links.

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By 2016, dioceses and cathedrals will be holding annual Creation Time festivals and services of worship and prayer; running courses, retreats, artistic events and celebrations connecting the themes of Shrinking the Footprint to the church calendar; commissioning new art works, hymns, choral pieces, stained glass and other church art inspired by StF and the Climate Justice Fund.

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“When the Septuagesima collect [prayer used in the late winter before Lent] speaks of our justly being punished for our offences we know that they now include the destruction of forests and fish-stocks, huge evils for which in many small ways we may be to blame ... ”

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- Exeter: ‘Roots of the Cathedral’ This DVD project, based on a concept by Christopher Southgate, brings together the work of Robert Harris (Architect), Peter Kyrke-Smith (Composer) and Andrew Millington with singing by the Cathedral Choir. In sound and image, the project highlights the ecological link between humanity and the natural world, the connectedness between natural beauty and human endeavour, a spiritual perspective of God’s total creation. The project looks in particular at the influence of trees on the life and history of Exeter Cathedral.

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“To deny a Christian passion for environmental work, for putting the world to rights insofar as we can right now, is to deny the goodness of creation, on the one hand, or the power of God in the resurrection and the Spirit, on the other, or quite possibly both.”

## ***Church of South India***

Karimnagar Diocese has organised an eco-painting competition for children, with the theme “My World A Dream World.” As one of the organisers reported, “the response was wonderful. The Spirit of Ecology started to take its flame in young hearts too.”

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Reduce carbon consumption as a spiritual exercise: CSI wants to equip its members to explain to others the reasons for their actions – which are excellent ways for your congregation to proclaim the good news and build up the body of Christ.

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Fasting: Choose a day to fast. For 24 hours, eat no solid foods and drink only water and fruit juice. Set aside time to pray. Meditate on your broken relationship with creation and ask God to lead you to repentance and a new faithfulness.

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Karimnagar Diocese: running Eco-prayer day once in a month, Eco-Christmas programmes

Madhya Kerala Diocese: Eco pilgrimage

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\* Encouraging prayers and liturgies which include God’s Earth and people working to protect biodiversity.

\* Laying the Scriptural and theological basis for congregational actions. This can provide an exciting study with the entire church and School, though the Eco-Management Committee may want to lead it.

## ***Franciscan***

Franciscan spirituality is rich in ecological wisdom and all the orders are aware of the need to care for creation. An inter-Franciscan group for Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) disseminates resources and information specifically on this topic. As there is always more to do and an ever-greater need for environmental care this Seven Year Plan is presented on behalf of all the orders, with the blessings of the Ministers General, and will be distributed

widely; implementation will be the responsibility of the communities as they see fit for their situation.

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Intensify the work of consciousness-raising within the family

The life of St Francis and St Clare was based on love and service to God, and their spirituality has a particular understanding of the experience of God through the wonder and beauty of Creation. The requirement that we care for Creation is inherent in Franciscan spirituality and is already disseminated through the JPIC group and this work can be further enhanced and extended.

The family can also build on and take inspiration from work already underway, such as the Franciscan project for environmental education at the Margil Institute in Mexico. Resources such as the Earth Community, Eco-audit for Religious communities and a seminar entitled 'Creation at the Heart of Mission', have already been developed.

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Intensify the work of Franciscan scholars in developing a Franciscan eco- spirituality The rich wisdom that is inherent in Franciscan spirituality has much to offer the family and wider world. This wisdom is greatly needed and we will build upon the work already done.

## ***Jesuit***

Eco-retreats are held at, for example, the Ignatius Jesuit Centre<sup>18</sup> in Guelph, Canada, as well as in India.

Factsheets on the Spiritual Exercises and Ecology and Catholic Social Teaching and Ecology were produced for the benefit of the General Congregation in 2008.<sup>19</sup>

“Green groups.” have started among scholastics (Jesuits in training) in Rome and Paris, in order to encourage thinking about sustainable development, creation and ecology and to make sure that rubbish is properly sorted and recycled in their communities.

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Pastoral Care

We will set up a commission of Jesuits, religious and lay collaborators to write on the topic of Ignatian Spirituality and the environment, using the Spiritual Exercises in particular. We will encourage all those in theology and spirituality to reflect and write on how Ignatian spirituality/theology takes creation seriously (finding and serving God in all things).

We will promote and give priority to days of prayer, retreats and/or liturgies around the themes of Sustainability and Ecology for both Jesuit communities and apostolates.

We will encourage the giving of Eco-retreats as part of the programmes of all our retreat Centres.

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Jesuits, other religious and lay people whose lives and work are inspired by St Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus, gathered for four days before the World Social Forum 2009 in Belém, Brazil. The meeting, called .“Fé.’namazônia.” (Faith in the Amazon), which included talks, prayers, sharings and awareness-raising exercises, involved groups of indigenous people with whom the Jesuits work in Latin America and India and created a sense of community and shared responsibility among the members of the .“Ignatian Family.”

## ***Polish Orthodox***

III. Pastoral care – theology, tradition and wisdom:

1. Ecological crisis may be understood as “a possibility” for a deeper reflection on its reasons and effects as well as a decision to cause changes, make an effort to undertake concrete actions leading to solution of the problem. In understanding of Orthodox Christians any changes on a large scale – local, regional, global – must begin with changes in ourselves.
2. Orthodox monasticism may surely serve as an example helpful in promotion, development and dissemination of a simpler lifestyle
4. Lifes of particular saints explain how creatgion/natural envirionment has always been taken care of in our Christian Orthodox tradition. These stories are not known widely and they should be disseminated.
6. Pilgrims to Grabarka Sts. Mary and Martha Convent and to other pilgrimage centres in Poland will be asked/reminded to leave no trash upon their departure

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More intense reflection on elements of ecotheology in worship of the Orthodox Church may be supported by ceremonies of:

- traditional seasonal blessing of farmlands,
- blessing of water,
- blessing of bread, wine, rain of wheat and oil (gr. artoklasia) and
- Eucharist as liturgical manifestation of human care for natural environment entrusted to people by God.

We will attempt to cause revival of traditional spring/autumn farmlands blessing in all countryside parishes and more often blessing of water and artoklasia in all parishes.

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- a) Camps/workshops on Orthodox spiritual life and conservation organised by the Fellowship of Orthiodx Youth in Poland (FOY) – local equivalents of SYNDESMOS Conservation workshops on Valaam Island, Russia and Orthodox Spiritual Ecology camps on Mt Athos, Greece;

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- b) Educational and practical involvement of the FOY in Poland in celebration of the World Day of Prayer for Creation, September 1/14.

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The World Day of Prayer for Creation initiated by Ecumenical Patriarch should become an occasion for deeper concentration on the natural environment. Its celebration should be accompanied by meetings, seminars, symposia as well as practical conservation oriented actions – i.e. planting trees and/or shrubs around newly constructed churches, on churchyards, parish grounds and elsewhere.

### ***Quakers***

The Quaker 'Living Witness Project' plans to gradually expand its team of expert 'resource people' who already provide workshops and advice to Local Meetings considering their response, both practically and spiritually, to climate change.

### ***Religious Organisations Along the River***

- November 7, 2007 Conference "Listening to Earth and Making Earth-friendly Decisions Regarding Land Use" facilitated by Sisters Margaret Galiardi, OP and Pat Siemen, OP. Invitations were sent to those in religious leadership, parish ministries, land stewardship and concerned about a sustainable future. Conference introduced Resource Book and offered theological reflections and practical applications around land use issues experienced by participants;

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- ROAR member congregations offer retreats, workshops, education and advocacy initiatives in areas of eco-spirituality and environmental justice.

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- November 8-10, 2000 Conference, "Bridging Faith and Environment" convened religious leaders (clergy and lay) from different faith denominations to reflect together on the spiritual and ethical vision needed to address the ecological issues of our times, especially those of the Hudson River bioregion. Dr Larry Rasmussen, author of Earth Community, Earth Ethics, was presenter;

## Daoist

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In connection with the Daoist practices of reflection in nature, and keeping in good health through keeping in nature, we will run summer camps to attract young people and students from China and abroad, and help them to pay attention to and learn Daoist ecological wisdom.

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Traditional Daoist temples have always paid strong attention to the harmonious relationship between buildings and their surroundings. This is to reflect the Daoist thinking about following Nature and returning to lives of simplicity and truth. In doing so, the result has been that the beautiful natural surroundings of Daoist places are protected and also that the purity and sacredness of the temples have been highlighted. This is the foundation of good feng shui, the traditional Chinese geomancy, which gives people a sense that Daoist temples are born from both heaven and earth.

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### d. Rituals, quotations and prayers

We will integrate ecological concepts into our Daoist rituals. We have already experimented with this in some of the Daoist temples - for instance, writing prayers about the environment.

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In terms of concept, we will make it a general practice that – while we are holding preaching and meditation activities – we will hold a Daoist Ecology Protection Forum on a regular basis. The intention is to raise the environment awareness of our Daoist followers, so that they will take greater responsibility for protecting the environment around them. We will also hold regular ecology protection talks in temples.

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In connection with specific Daoist methods and practices on how to keep in good health, we will guide tourists and visitors to better understand beautiful nature and ecology systems during their times of relaxation and entertainment – for example, in the form of meditation sites and pathways through the woodlands and forests. We have already opened up such places in a few temples. From 2012 onwards we will promote this practice in the grounds of suitable Daoist temples across the country.

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We call for a healthier and more environmentally friendly style of pilgrimage and travel. The reforms and improvements of pilgrimage styles have already started in Daoist temples and on Daoist mountains. These mainly focus on the “three stick incense burning” – in which temples strongly promote a new tradition of burning just three sticks of incense instead of the previous many sticks in order to reduce pollution caused by burning incense, candles, papers and fireworks on Daoist premises. We also recommend that people give offerings of flowers and

fruits. All religious articles must be environment friendly. From 2010 to 2012 we will carry out pilot projects (selecting one to two temples from seven of the major regions of China) and from 2013 to 2017 we will promote and pass on the experiences we learned from these projects to temples across the country.

We will call for pilgrims to walk within the land used by the temples in order that these people should have a better understanding of ecology and Daoism during their outdoor times of relaxation, entertainment and exercise (see b. above)

## Hindu

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Hindu priests are influential in the daily running of their temples and in the performance of ceremonies. Crucial to effecting a positive change in the environmental choices of the Hindu community is the education and training of temple priests. Establishing ecological awareness and standards in temple worship will, over time, influence and change the practice of those who worship at home.

A course is proposed that will encourage priests to reflect on environmental issues in their temples and take appropriate steps to address these concerns.

A year will be needed to develop the course. It will then be taught to priests around the UK starting in November 2010. Updated every three years to reflect changes in environmental thought and practice, these changes will be passed on to those who have already undertaken the training, and re-training will take place where requested.

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Closely linked with the development of temple gardens is the Green Pooja Scheme. Poojas, yajnas, and other ceremonies are a daily occurrence in Hindu temples and homes. Each of these make use of a variety of natural products and foodstuffs. For example, poojas and yajnas include the offering of rice, fruits, vegetables, and ghee into a sacrificial fire, an aarti ceremony includes the offering of flowers, incense, and water to the deities.

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### Online course

Not all Hindus live near a temple, or are able to attend a place of worship or gathering on a regular basis. To reach these people, and others, a short course on Hindu approaches to the environment will be developed by the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies to be delivered online. The course will explore Hindu approaches to nature, the elements, and conservation, taking historical, literary, scriptural and current practices into account. The course will run over a four-week period, two–three times a year. It is hoped that by the end of nine years, over 25,000 people will have taken it. This course can also be run in classrooms.

## Interfaith

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### *Operation Noah*

Statement of ambition:

In seven years' time, Operation Noah's ambition is for church, and other faith leaders, to have re-anchored the vital interconnections of faith, so that environmental concerns once again flow from the very essence of faith.

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The story of Noah and the flood pervades the major world religions. The powerful narrative reminds us of the effects of greed, when day to day lives, faith, relationships and the environment are disconnected from one another. It is this greed, materialism and indifference that insulates us, and others, from our spiritual needs. The need to love and be loved; to be connected to each other, not just to things and possessions. The need to be connected to the earth and all its creatures. And the need to be connected to God.

The Noah story also provides a call to action, reminding us that there are times when resolve must be strengthened, difficult decisions taken and brave changes undertaken, supported by faith and hope.

We find it helpful to consider what God would hope to see from humanity at this time of climate crisis, summarised as follows:

- Young people coming back to faith
- An ecumenical response
- An end to belief in the science/religion dichotomy since a proper faith response requires an understanding of the evidence
- An end to greed and individualism

At Operation Noah, we see climate change not just as an environmental crisis but more fundamentally as a spiritual and moral crisis. The grand scale of climate change reveals how modern life has become divorced from connections underpinning humanity, connections to our environment, to each other and to God. But this is where the climate crisis also offers a great opportunity, because tackling it effectively will require us to rediscover all the fundamental connections in our lives as we move to more local production, greater local, national and international cooperation, and a recognition that as individuals and societies we cannot control everything.

The recognition that prayer is not simply a call for help, but rather self-reflection and a surrender to self-limitation is vital in allowing people to come to terms with the changes wrought by climate change, and to see their part in tackling it.



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Between the Flood and the Rainbow - A Study Guide on Climate Change based upon key themes in Catholic Social Teaching. It is intended for study and reflection by adult groups. The guide contains agendas for six meetings with accompanying appendices, reflection and action sheets, reading sheets, plus a "prayers and liturgies" section.

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Church Action Starter Pack – the pack contains the above resources along with recommendations for taking action, and resources for children.

Operation Noah also provides a guidance pack for communities to organise a day of fasting, contemplation and prayer, to help empower the community to tackle climate change. In a world in which so many feel isolated and alone in facing up to the crisis of climate change – a day of fasting and prayer can bring people together, and together make a difference. The message is that by working in community, all those that participate will be inspired, enriched and strengthened by the day, and together discover that, by recognising our limits, by deepening our connectedness to others, to the earth and to God - we regain a sense of community, well-being and leadership.

### ***Interfaith Power and Light***

The word “regeneration” has personal, biological and institutional significance. It is the process of spiritual, moral and ecological renewal. We seek to make a practical link between spiritual and ecological health. TRP envisions that people of faith will serve as the foundation for a national movement that addresses ecological issues from theological roots. Our purpose, therefore, is to expand and deepen this link between religious faith and action, particularly in regards to environmental protection.

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Currently, all of TRP’s efforts are focused on building and sustaining our IPL campaign.

Through this campaign, The Regeneration Project:

1) Fosters a network within the faith community. This affiliated network enables groups to help each other. Through connection to others, groups feel supported and encourage their members to develop mutually sustaining spiritual, economic, and environmental practices.

### ***US GreenFaith***

GreenFaith’s three core values are Spirit, Stewardship and Justice.

Spirit: GreenFaith affirms the religious basis for environmental care and believes that the human soul is strengthened through a strong relationship with the natural world.

Stewardship: GreenFaith affirms that consumption can become a source of ecological restoration, and that moderation in material consumption is a mark of spiritual maturity.

Justice: GreenFaith recognizes that marginalized communities suffer worst from pollution, and that we must empower the most vulnerable to gain a healthy environment.

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Category: Spirit

Goal 1: Develop on-line or distance education capacity for ordained leaders.

Goal 2: Develop user-friendly activities which “mainstream” reflection on spiritual experience in nature.

Goal 3: Develop educational curricula for teens and adults with The Story of Stuff and at least one major environmental group. Develop educational curricula for children.

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Spirit

GreenFaith affirms the basis in sacred writings and religious teachings for environmental care. We also believe that, because Creation is a source of awe and a testament to the creativity and sublime power of the divine, that the human soul is strengthened through a strong relationship with the natural world.

GreenFaith addresses this value in several ways.

- We educate and train ordained leaders to recognize and integrate their experience of the sacred in nature into their teaching and public speaking, spiritual life, liturgical/ritual leadership and pastoral care.
- We offer outdoor experiences to celebrate, affirm and nourish ordained and laypersons’ relationship with the sacred in nature.
- We educate and encourage clergy and laypersons to recognize and connect the sacred in nature with their own religious tradition.

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Category: Spirit

Goal 2: Develop user-friendly activities which “mainstream” reflection on spiritual experience in nature

Through our educational programming, we have found that almost all US citizens are able to recall powerful spiritual experiences which took place outdoors, experiences which carry powerful emotions and deep meaning. We have also found that fewer than 5% of all people

have ever discussed these experiences in a public group or educational setting, due to several complex cultural and religious forces.

GreenFaith believes that these experiences are one of the most important yet underutilized assets available to the US religious-environmental movement. During the coming three years, we will develop a user-friendly, theologically-solid group discussion program to enable diverse houses of worship to provide their members with opportunities to discuss their spiritual experiences in nature and to channel the energy present in these experiences into environmental leadership.

## Jewish

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Highly effective Jewish environmental education in recent years has been done by small organizations that have taken Jewish people outdoors and connected Jewish teaching with action and the natural world.

These programs include:

- Adamah (Isabella Freedman): Jewish Environmental Fellowship is a three-month leadership training program for Jewish young adults in their 20s that integrates organic farming, sustainable living, Jewish learning, community building and contemplative spiritual practice;

### Central practices

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Some of the central practices of Jewish tradition relate to cherishing and protecting the natural environment. Often they are hidden in plain sight in the daily rituals that define Judaism.

#### ● **Shabbat:**

We need to recover the ecological value of Shabbat as a day to step back from the act of creation: manufacturing, shopping, flying, driving, and technological manipulation. The ability to set limits on human exploitation of the world is a crucial check on environmental destruction which Jewish tradition possesses, and which the global consumer culture generally lacks. For Jews who currently observe Shabbat, their observance can lead to a deeper sense of Shabbat's ecological significance. For Jews who do not currently keep Shabbat in a *halakhic* sense, there is an opportunity to explore aspects of Shabbat observance, as an ecological value.

For the broader global community, the model of Shabbat is useful in demonstrating how to live – if only for one day a week – without consuming. For example, if every resident in a major city chose one day of the week to refrain from driving, there would be immediate improvement to the city's congestion, local air quality, and carbon emissions.

#### ● **Berakhot:**

Blessings are the tradition's way of enabling us to express gratitude. The blessings can be understood and practiced as a system of engendering mindfulness towards the gifts of Creation. When someone says a food blessing they pause to consider the origin of the food item to identify whether it grew on a tree, in the ground or in the sea. It is but a small step to extend that moment of awareness to reflecting on the circumstances under which the food was grown, whether in a way that nurtured the earth, or harmed it, whether in a manner that respected the creature that is about to be consumed. In that way, nurturing awareness can lead to change.

- **Shema:**

The *Shema* is the best known of Jewish prayers. It bears profound ecological meanings. The first line is an affirmation of the unity and interconnectedness of all things (Deuteronomy, 6:4). The second paragraph is a statement that if we live well in relation to our natural environment, our surroundings will treat us well and vice versa. (Deuteronomy 11:14-17). Although these passages have particularly Jewish significance, and in an era of global climate change, they clearly have universal ecological lessons to teach as well. These aspects need to be re-emphasized and taught.

- **Shmita:**

*Shmita* (Sabbatical Year) is the practice of letting the land rest one year in every seven. During the *Shmita* Year, as described by the Bible, agricultural work in Israel stops. People eat whatever grows on its own in the fields, and everyone, rich and poor alike (and animals too) may come and take from its produce. *Shmita* acknowledges that the Earth is not raw material to be exploited for profit with maximum efficiency, but is a gift to be used for the common well-being.

In Israel, *Shmita* is practiced (though in an attenuated form) to this day. In the US, *Shmita* Project, a program of Hazon and Jewish Farm School, has begun the work of reapplying *Shmita* in a post-industrial world. The biblical practices of *Shmita* addressed both people's relationship to the land – through not planting – and to each other – through the forgiveness of loans. We should develop new means of honoring both.

We propose reframing berakhot as mindfulness meditations so as to make them accessible for non-Orthodox Jews. By 2015 the goal should be that a greater proportion of Jews will say berakhot, mean them, and reflect on the sources of the food that they eat and the process by which that food reaches their supermarket shelves and dinner plates.

## Muslim

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Qur'an calls for the preservation of nature, the enjoyment of its beauty and the prevention of distortion of the earth, God says in the Qur'an:

"...But do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief."

It is forbidden to act in a way that corrupts or does any harm to the environment or any of its components such as air or water, whether living or non-living, either directly or indirectly. Islam is not only asks humanity to take responsibility to protect and conserve the environment, it also invites mankind to respect, cherish and enjoy nature. Prophet Mohamed (Peace be upon him) confirmed this sense of concern in the Hadith- Sharif (the Muslim should honor his palm tree as if it is his aunt). As well as in the Hadith-Sharif it says "Mount Uhod loves us and we (the Prophet) love it". More important is the Hadith in which the Prophet says "If anyone of you witnesses the day the world ends and in his hand is a seedling to plant then let him plant it".

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We believe that all the creatures in the universe were created in a balanced way and that this reflects the wisdom and creativity of the Creator. Air, water, gas, plants, birds and insects have all been created in proportion, as has the amount of solar radiation reaching the Earth, which

controls the atmospheric temperature on the planet. Almighty Allah said: in AL Talaq chapter (divorce) in verse 3:

"...for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion" The entire universe is designed according to a carefully laid plan: the sun and planets, the moon and stars. He says: in the Ar-Rahman (The Merciful) chapter verse 5 "The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed"

## EcoSikh

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Ten years ago, Sikh communities around the world celebrated the inauguration of the Cycle of Creation. The three hundred year long cycle will be a time for Sikhs to reflect upon and celebrate their relationship with the environment and all that Waheguru has provided.

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The EcoSikh website will be compiling theological reflections written by those who participate in EcoSikh in an eco-theology forum. This forum will provide an excellent resource for renewing and evaluating the success of our educational curricula.

The Gurus encouraged us to develop our relationship with Waheguru by engaging in the world around us. By connecting with our local environment, spending time on nature walks, and embracing our surroundings, we can learn more about our Guru's connection with the natural world.

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Forum for eco-theological reflection

- We will be posting eco-theology reflections written by participants

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Individuals/Families: • Plant an EcoSikh garden or tree • Visit your local parks monthly as time for spiritual reflection and renewal

Gurdwaras/Organizations: • Have the ragis sing more shabads with environmental themes (see appendix; a list of suggested shabads will be created and included)

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Because environmental activism is an expression of our faith, we understand the entire EcoSikh initiative to be a celebration. Like education, celebration finds its roots in the rich eco-theological tradition of Sikhism. As part of the EcoSikh Plan, we believe we should annually celebrate the deepest parts of this tradition by organizing a series of eco- holidays that focus on the life of Guru Har Rai Ji. Guru Har Rai Ji's legacy provides one of the most inspiring models for our ecological consciousness. To commemorate and celebrate the important points of his life each year, while meditating on our own environmental habits, will be a profound way to gain spiritual renewal.

A celebration of Basant will also provide a powerful way for us to recognize the beauty of renewal and regeneration. A number of shabads extol the relationship between Sikhi and the environment and we can focus on the their message during Basant. Thus, we propose to coordinate an annual EcoSikh holiday season corresponding with Basant. Each week we can focus on a particular eco- tip and encourage ragis to perform environmentally themed shabads. Each community can either create their own theme or follow one suggested by the EcoSikh initiative organized through the website. We hope that whichever path community's choose we can identify particular days where the entire Sikh community can do something together, in solidarity around the world.