

CHOOSING HOPE

ANGLICANS WORKING FOR JOINT ACTION ON NATURE LOSS

Anglican Communion Calls for COP16

ANGLICAN
COMMUNION
IN OVER 165 COUNTRIES



CHOOSING

HOPE

ANGLICAN COMMUNION CALL TO ACTION FOR COP16

ANGLICAN DELEGATION ATTENDING COP16

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WELCOME

The Anglican Communion is the world's third largest Christian community with 85 million members in over 165 countries. Many Anglican churches are in communities that face the realities of biodiversity loss every day.

This paper represents the voices of millions of Anglicans around the world to leaders at COP16.

It calls the parties at COP16 to respond to calls for action on biodiversity loss.

It shares examples of how Anglican faith communities, are working together for change.

Together we can choose hope.



WHY IS COP16 IMPORTANT TO ANGLICANS?

Giving thanks and praise for the world as God's creation is a major aspect of Christian belief. In Anglican liturgy, the 'Benedicite' is based on words that share praise for all creation: "*Bless the Lord you creatures, sing his praise and exult him for ever*".

The book of Genesis describes God's created world as 'very good'. It is the fullness of all that he has made, with the sabbath being the culmination, or crown, of creation. A pause, a breath, a taking stock to wonder at nature.

Yet we know that biodiversity loss is a major crisis facing humanity. Anglicans around the world are experiencing first-hand biodiversity collapse, the daily impact of climate change and the scourge of pollution.

When a species becomes extinct by human action, we damage, harm and reduce the diversity of God's creation. This can only be grievous to God who loves everything into being. We have failed in our calling, not only to take care of creation, but to live in harmony with our fellow creatures.

WHAT ARE ANGLICANS SAYING AT COP16?

In our churches and communities, we sense a growing cry of lament, as the cost of nature loss takes its toll. At COP16 we want to represent this lament, on behalf of Anglicans around the globe, as we urge governments to act to protect and restore nature. We want to express our global commitment as Anglicans to be part of the solution, demonstrating the impact of faith actors in restoring and safeguarding God's world. We come to listen, to learn and to collaborate.

Bishop Graham Usher

Anglican Communion Lead for Biodiversity

Resources:

Visit anglicancommunion.org/COP16 for information about the work of Anglicans at COP16 and to access resources including:
Bishop Graham Usher's Theological Reflection '*All Creatures of our God and King*'.
Nicholas Pande's '*The Challenge of Biodiversity Loss*'.

CALL
ONE

CHOOSE

HOPE

WORKING
TOGETHER,
OUR ACTIONS
ADD UP

ANGLICANS WORKING FOR JOINT ACTION ON NATURE LOSS

CALLS TO GOVERNMENTS:

- We call governments to work with faith groups to protect and restore ecosystems.

INVITATION TO CHURCHES OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION:

- Tackle biodiversity loss through reforestation.
- Join the **Communion Forest**.

WHY IT MATTERS

Global deforestation in 2022 was over 1 million hectares above the level needed to be on track to zero deforestation by 2030. We are also seeing the destruction of montane, savannah, marine and other habitats at an unprecedented scale. We must turn the tide and restore nature.

REFLECT

When we slow down and enter into a sabbath pause, we notice things. Jesus brought this pause into every day. He saw the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the fruiting of trees, the corn ripening in the fields and that which had been choaked by thistles. When we notice something, we are far more likely to treasure it.

When we treasure something, we want to protect it. When we protect something, we want to see it thrive. When policies, commitments, actions and habits are in place that are good for nature, generally they are also good for sustainable business, and good for people too. This is a hope-filled vision for all creation.

SPOTLIGHT ON ANGLICAN ACTION: KENYA

Surrounded by challenges linked to environmental degradation, including severe flooding and erosion of soil for farming, the Anglican Church of Kenya made wholesome ecology a major part of their 10 year strategy.

They prioritised tree growth and ecosystem stewardship. Over the last five years, the church has planted over 5 million trees across the country, established tree nurseries, and adopted public forest blocks for reforestation interventions in Ngong Forest, Nairobi.

The work is part of their wider worship programme. They plant trees at major celebrations, including weddings and baptism. It is also integrated into their theological studies, advocacy to government, and local community action.

CHOOSE

PEACE

RECONCILE
PEOPLE AND
PLANET

CALLS TO GOVERNMENTS

- **Stop nature loss and slow climate change to prevent worsening conflict.**
- **Prioritise peacebuilding and reconciliation work to stop the cost of war on people and planet.**

INVITATION TO CHURCHES OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION:

The impact of conflict and war harms people and planet. Developing skills in peace making and reconciliation can inform our response. Use the Anglican Difference course to learn about environmental justice and conflict from the Difference blog posts [here](#) and read a blog post about climate change and conflict [here](#).

WHY IT MATTERS

Nature is often a casualty of war. Conflicts destroy habitats, kill wildlife and generate pollution – with major consequences for decades. Nature loss also affects human living conditions, contributing to mass migration and instability. About 35% of Europe's biodiversity, concentrated in Ukraine, which represents less than 6% of the continent's territory, is under severe threat.

Many Anglicans live in places of war, are emerging from conflict, or are themselves refugees. Inspired by their faith, they are often the reconcilers and menders in their communities. Faith groups are helping to restore land destroyed in conflict, or support communities where livelihoods and security are under pressure due to nature loss.

REFLECT

The Hebrew bible uses the word 'shalom' for peace, though shalom is a broader concept referring to the harmony of all life lived with an awareness of God.

It is that harmony with creation that we are called to discover through our servant-hearted discipleship as we follow the call of the prophet Micah (6:8) to "to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God."

SPOTLIGHT ON ANGLICAN ACTION: JERUSALEM AND THE MIDDLE EAST

The links between conflict and environmental degradation are all too clear in the Anglican Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. A deal between the Jordanian and Israeli government to exchange water for solar energy evaporated following the atrocities of October 7th 2023 and public opposition that was mounting beforehand. The conflict since has not only claimed tens of thousands of lives and flattened 70% of Gaza's infrastructure, but also decimated environmental resources. As more people are displaced by the conflict and have less land to use for habitation and agriculture, the risks of further tension between host and displaced communities rise.

Churches across the region are responding through peacebuilding and through environmental action. Often one motivates the other – churches and members of other faiths can come together to address environmental damage (litter picking, river clean-ups etc) in ways that strengthen bonds, protect against conflict and allow increased collective action.

The Archbishop for Jerusalem and the Middle East, The Most Reverend Hosam Naoum attended COP28 to raise attention of these issues. He advocated for multilateral cooperation that recognises the existential threats that conflict causes to our planet.

CALL
THREE

CHOOSE

WISDOM

LEARN FROM THE WAYS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

CALLS TO GOVERNMENTS:

- **Protect indigenous land.**
- **Learn from indigenous worldviews and ways of life that balance ecological and financial growth to ensure we live within natural boundaries.**

INVITATIONS TO CHURCHES OF THE COMMUNION:

- **Explore Anglican indigenous resources about our planetary crisis 'A lament in the Present and a Vision for Living Well'.**

WHY IT MATTERS

As we strive to act on nature loss, our efforts must listen to the voices and experience of indigenous people. We need a moral mindset change that values the wisdom of indigenous people and transforms humanity's relationship with nature from one of exploitation to relationship, care and harmony. In many places they are custodians of biodiversity, carrying a deep knowledge of life on the land and water. The joint action plan on biodiversity needs their wisdom. Their contribution is beyond monetary value and is lost forever when its carriers are silenced, broken or die.

REFLECT

Indigenous people have much to say about living in harmony with nature if only we have the ears to hear. They point us back to the wisdom of God. The book of Proverbs speaks about wisdom as a woman who is always pleasant and peaceful and brings something more special than jewels. Unlike the tree of knowledge in Genesis, which is off limits to Adam and Eve, the Tree of Life found

in Proverbs is ready to be harvested and with more wisdom comes more happiness (Proverbs 3.13-18).

SPOTLIGHT ON ANGLICAN ACTION: POLYNESIA AND THE REM FRAMEWORK

The Anglican Church in Polynesia (through the Pacific Conference of Churches and Pacific Theological College), is approaching biodiversity loss through an initiative called 'Reweaving the Ecological Mat (REM).' It is a collaboration of faith-based and civil society organisations from Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tuvalu and Kiribati.

The project aims to embrace indigenous worldviews in addressing the ecological crisis and was developed based on the values and culture of the Pacific people. The framework sees life as interconnected and interwoven like the strands of a mat. It combines theological, ethical and indigenous perspectives. Alongside financial growth, the value of human relationships, community resilience and the role of people as stewards of land and water are equally prized. Through the framework, Gross Domestic Product is seen as being dependent on other measures of well-being, including the health of soils (through which food is grown), the health of creeks and rivers (from which drinking water is taken), the health of forests and, crucially, of oceans (that sustain nutritional needs, way of life and worldview).

The REM Framework includes indicators for all these factors. It is now part of the Pacific Island Forum's strategy for development to 2050.

CALL
FOUR

CHOOSE

JUSTICE

FUND ACTION
TO REDUCE
DAMAGE AND
INEQUALITY

CALLS TO GOVERNMENTS:

- Ensure full funding of national plans for nature restoration and climate change responses, particularly in developing countries, using grants not loans.

INVITATIONS TO CHURCHES OF THE COMMUNION:

- Find out about the **Communion Forest** pilot twinning projects which fund nature restoration through Companion Links.
- Find out how your bank or pension invests your money – this could be for you as an individual or for your church finances. Consider changing to a green bank or fund.

WHY IT MATTERS

Most of the earth's biodiversity damage is impacting the global south due to the extraction of resources used by the global north. The world's poorest cannot afford to pay for this, but it is a moral duty on those who have economically benefited to provide funding. Faith groups can bridge between corporations and communities, seek justice and promote more sustainable approaches to tackle biodiversity loss.

REFLECT

The Lord's Prayer asks God to 'give us today our daily bread,' not 'my' daily bread. He does not promise a whole bakery or deep freezer of bread. He promises us enough. He is reminding us of the gift of creation and that we have yet to find a way to ensure everyone has enough. We must confront the individualism of our consumer culture

head-on. Too often we are consuming not today's bread, but the bread of the day after tomorrow though the over-exploitation of nature's bounty. We are surpassing planetary boundaries with nature and robbing future generations.

SPOTLIGHT ON ANGLICAN ACTION: MELANESIA

The Anglican Church of Melanesia, through the Franciscan brothers in the Solomon Islands, has been calling for justice in many communities whose human rights are being abused through illegal logging in the islands. The communities traditionally rely on the forest and sea for their resources. Streams have been polluted or blocked. Deforestation is causing a rise in temperatures. The barges used to collect logs have damaged coral reefs and fishing grounds. Invasive species are threatening their crops.

Working with Franciscans International the churches prepared a joint submission to the UN Human Rights Council, 3rd Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on the Human Rights Situation in the Solomon Islands. It highlighted violations of human rights related to widespread commercial logging, under the headings of (a) the participation and consent of local communities on their customary lands, (b) the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, (c) the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, water and sanitation, (d) women's and children's rights, (e) environmental human rights defenders and (e) impact of logging activities on climate change.

CALL
FIVE

CHOOSE

WELLBEING

RECOGNISE
THAT NATURE
IS GOOD FOR
THE SOUL

CALLS TO GOVERNMENTS:

- **Mandate that businesses disclose their impact on nature**
- **Encourage whole society approaches to protecting nature as a source of wellbeing**

INVITATION TO CHURCHES OF THE COMMUNION:

- **Integrate nature in your church's liturgy and regular worshipping practice (find out more from the Anglican Communion Environment Network)**

WHY IT MATTERS

Nature connection is important for childhood development and adult mental health. Studies have shown that we thrive when out in nature and there are many positive health benefits in terms of reducing stress and enhancing mental wellbeing, as well as the enjoyment of physical exercise.

Children should grow up in environments where nature is cherished, where pollution is prevented, and where businesses disclose their impact on nature, not in a voluntary way (as currently in the Global Biodiversity Framework) but through mandatory action that will lead to pride in their business delivery.

REFLECT

The psalmist knows the value of each person in God's creation and the value God's earth is intended to have in our lives "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" (Psalm 8.3-4)." Safeguarding and sustaining God's earth plays a vital role in quality of life and wellbeing both now and for future generations.

ANGLICANS WORKING FOR JOINT ACTION ON NATURE LOSS

SPOTLIGHT ON ANGLICAN ACTION: ENGLAND

St Mary the Virgin, Lewisham, South London, sits next door to a hospital mental health unit. Patients regularly walk through the churchyard, so it was a natural next step to create a therapeutic garden – a safe and beautiful green space in which patients can reflect and revive. Now, patients are given social prescriptions to join the church's weekly gardening club, working in the raised beds to plant and weed, as well as general tidying. Each session ends with a short time of quiet, and patients can add a ribbon to the prayer tree.

BRAZIL

"Eco Saúde" (eco health), an initiative of Paróquia da Ascensão, Brazil, emphasizes a holistic approach to health and wellbeing while closely connecting participants with nature. The program includes community activities such as a local trail, a solidarity economy fair, and events like the blessing of health and guided meditations, illustrating how nature significantly contributes to physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

EL SALVADOR

During September, the Anglican Diocese of El Salvador promoted a reforestation campaign in churches and surrounding areas to encourage an environment of wellbeing – improving the ambient temperature through the trees reducing heat. The diocese also sought to raise awareness among children and young people about the importance of protecting and restoring nature, encouraging them to have a more responsible mind, a commitment to creation and to be an example for our sectors, neighbours, and authorities.



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