

Season of Creation

Sisters and brothers, grace and peace to you from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ!

It is good to reflect with you on the significance of this Season of Creation (September 1st – October 4th), and to be challenged by our responsibilities for the earth, our common home. This year's theme is 'Jubilee for the Earth,' echoing from Scripture what it means to rejoice and to rest in God.

Isaiah of Jerusalem paints a wonderful picture of the desert coming to life again after a period of drought. As the flowers blossom and the streams flow, what has been wild and unfriendly becomes a place where humankind and the created world live together peaceably. Here is that living triangle of relationships which runs like a thread through the Old Testament: God - humanity - the earth (Isaiah 35).

But Isaiah has also painted a picture of what happens when humankind breaks the covenant made with God following the Flood, recorded in Genesis (9:17). It is a desolate scene, indicating that no-one will be spared because *'the earth lies polluted by its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.'* (Isaiah 24:5).

We must choose between one picture and the other: we are aware of the warnings of climatologists; we have experienced extreme weather events; we have heard stories from those most affected...

At the 2016 World Methodist Conference in Houston, Texas, a church leader from the Pacific region observed that his people would be among the first climate change refugees and that they would have no 'right of return' because their islands would be submerged by the rising waters of the ocean..

Many of those attending the 2019 WMC Consultation on Diaspora and Migrant Churches confirmed that climate change is a major factor in contributing to people leaving their homes and undertaking dangerous and uncertain journeys towards a new life.

Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change, Laudato Si (2015), has attracted attention not only from Christians of all persuasions and from environmentalists, but also from politicians and policy makers. It made a considerable impact at the United Nations Climate Change talks in Paris the same year.

Earlier this year, a follow-up document, 'Journeying towards care for our common home', has outlined how we may act as responsible stewards of creation. It highlights the main message of Laudato Sí that everything is connected – how we live affects the well-being of others, particularly the most vulnerable, who have few options in life; how we live affects the well-being of the planet, our common home.

Taking the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands in bread and wine at Holy Communion reminds us at a profound level of that life-giving triangle of relationships which Isaiah saw around him – God, the earth and humanity. '*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.*' (Psalm 24.1)

We may despair at the enormity of the task, but Matthew in his Gospel reminds us that God is not an absentee landlord – '*Remember, I am with you always.*'

Thanks be to God!

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