

A set of
measurable,
real world
initiatives

**DRIVING ACTION ON
KEY ISSUES....**



**....INCLUDING
CLIMATE CHANGE**



**....INCLUDING
BIODIVERSITY**



**AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

FAITH PLANS FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET



Photos, clockwise from top: World Bank, Mathias Appel, Brad Ruggles, Steve Corey

Commitments to protect people and the living planet

The destruction of the natural environment, including the impact of climate change, together comprise the biggest challenge to all life on earth, threatening the survival of communities and putting the diversity and wonder of nature at risk. And it is at this time, when the world's scientists have issued a 'Code Red' to humanity over climate change, when one million animal and plant species are threatened with extinction and wild spaces are being destroyed at unprecedented rates, that the major religions of the world are taking a lead. They are developing action programmes with their faithful to address these issues for generations to come, through the creation of Faith Plans – the biggest and most ambitious environmental initiative ever launched by the world's faiths.

**'Never have we so
hurt and mistreated
our common home
as we have in the
last 200 years. Yet
we are called to be
instruments of God
our Father...'**

Laudato Si', Pope Francis

Introduction to Faith Plans for People and Planet

The world's faiths are responding to the 'cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor' by developing Faith Plans for People and Planet. These are long-term commitments to use their buildings, lands, investments and purchasing power to drive practical action to create a better world – for the benefit of people and planet, and for today's and future generations.

They involve faiths looking at how they manage their assets and resources over the next seven to ten years – from land, investments and purchasing power to schools, hospitals and youth organisations, and from influence and advocacy to teachings and wisdom.

The Faith Plans framework has been created by the faiths for the faiths. It is the most ambitious faith-driven initiative on the environment, aimed at mobilising the vast potential of religious organisations – the biggest organised sector of civil society – to make a significant contribution to the urgent crises facing people and planet.

Unprecedented coalition of partners

The Faith Plans initiative does not exist in isolation but is part of a collaborative effort by many faith-based organisations taking action for people and planet. It was initiated by FaithInvest (www.faithinvest.org) and WWF's Beliefs and Values Programme and is supported by an unprecedented coalition of partners, including faith networks and UN and environmental groups.



Faith partners include Religions for Peace, the Laudato Si' Action Platform, Hazon, Operation Noah, GreenFaith, World Evangelical Alliance, Interfaith Power & Light, Bhumi Global, and many more. Secular partners include UN Environment, Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, UNDP, Stop Ecocide, the Conservation Foundation, EAT and more.



Top: HRH Prince Philip and HE Ban Ki-moon at the 2009 launch of the Faith Commitments at Windsor Castle, UK. Above: The 2012 launch of African Faith Commitments. Photos: ARC

A dedicated website – www.faithplans.org – has been created to inspire faith communities to take part, showcase what they are doing and share the collective efforts of this growing movement of faiths taking far-reaching action on climate change, the environment and sustainable development.

What led to the Faith Plans?

Today's Faith Plans initiative builds on the success of the original 2009 Faith Commitments programme, which resulted in more than 60 plans that have profoundly shaped the faiths' response to the environment.

It was inaugurated by the UN and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and resulted in the launch of 31 Plans at Windsor Castle in the presence of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh (founder of ARC). This was followed by another 32 plans in 2012, of which 28 were from faiths in sub-Saharan Africa.

Why now?

The Faith Plans framework is a response to the climate and ecological crises and the UN's call for action on the SDGs. It demonstrates the readiness of world religions to "hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor", a phrase made famous by Pope Francis, and in so doing launch a fresh wave of action for people and planet.

Faith Plans participants

As in 2009, the faith groups involved in Faith Plans cover all major traditions within Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Daoist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, Shinto and Sikh faiths as well as key interfaith organisations.

Many participants are working through partner networks. For example, the leading US Jewish environmental group Hazon is working with 200 of its members; the Khoryug Network is working with 70 Buddhist monasteries in Asia.

In some cases faith communities will develop a Faith Plan. In others their action will be inspired by an initiative run by one of our partner networks, such as the Laudato Si' Action Platform's programme to bring the Pope's ground-breaking encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, to life.

Faith Plans in a global context

On 4 October 2021, Pope Francis and 40 religions leaders called for urgent action to save the planet from an 'unprecedented ecological crisis'. They committed themselves to taking 'far-reaching environmental action within our own institutions and communities'. They promised to educate their members and actively participate in the public debate on environmental issues, but they also pledged to go further by:

- making '**bold plans** to achieve full sustainability in our buildings, land, vehicles and other properties'.
- striving to '**align our financial investments** with environmentally and socially responsible standards'.
- evaluating '**all the goods we purchase and the services we hire**' with the same ethical lens.

'Given the size of their assets and influence, faiths alone, through their actions, could make the crucial difference to the world's efforts to halt irreversible climate change and reverse environmental destruction'

– Martin Palmer, FaithInvest

Seven key areas



The Faith Plans framework focuses on Seven Key Areas where the major faiths can have a huge impact on environmental action through their assets, resources and traditions.

1. Faith-consistent use of assets – including land, buildings and investments
2. Education and young people (in both formal and informal situations)
3. Wisdom, including theology, liturgies and prayer
4. Lifestyles, including traditions of simple living, pilgrimage
5. Media and advocacy, including influence, advocacy and guides
6. Partnerships, eco-twinning, and creating and environment departments
7. Celebration, including festivals and traditions

2009: The first Faith Plans programme

In 2008, following concerns that the 2009 Copenhagen climate negotiations would not achieve its goals, UNDP and the ARC joined forces to create the first Faith Plans programme. In 2009, 31 Long-term Faith Commitments were launched in the UK with another 32 developed by 2012, including 28 from sub-Saharan Africa.

The plans were delivered in a three-step process:

1. Each group began with research and planning

These activities were supported with a small amount of seed funding and, in some cases, a large amount of advice and support. ARC hosted events with faiths and experts to catalyse the research and planning phase.

2. Each group created its Plan

Faith groups found that the formal process of discussing their tradition's strengths within the Seven Key Areas, and committing to generational change on paper, enabled them to develop a vision of the future – a vision that supported implementation of the plans.

3. Each faith group published its Plan publically

These can be viewed on the Faith Plans [website](#).

Achievements

The first Long-term Plans programme delivered many notable achievements, including:

- The creation of *investment priorities* for the faiths, resulting in the faiths becoming the leading group involved in the fossil fuel divestment movement and now the largest values-driven group investing in impact and ESG projects worldwide.
- The growing of *millions of trees* globally to tackle deforestation and protect biodiversity.
- A new focus on *sustainable agriculture* across sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia, training Christian and Muslim farmers in sustainable methods.
- A massive increase in the demand for *sustainable energy* from the faiths for their buildings.
- The Long-term Plans also created *new organisations*:
 - Sikh environmental organisation, EcoSikh, now working with tens of thousands of Sikh temples
 - The Bhumi Project, the largest Hindu environment and development agency

The first Plans launched a host of green initiatives



As a result of the first Plans, faiths installed solar panels on churches; trained their farmers in sustainable agriculture; planted millions of trees; and introduced environmental education into their schools. Photo credits from top: Michael Coghlan, ARC, ARC, Steven Gray.

- The Daoist Ecological Temple Association, linking tens of thousands of Daoist temples across China.

Interestingly, the planning team that created the Jesuit Long-Term Plan, launched in 2009, included an Argentinian bishop called Jorge Mario Bergoglio – who became Pope Francis in 2013.

Subsequently, in 2015, the Pope published his groundbreaking document, *Laudato Si'*, the most discussed faith document on faith and the environment yet published and of considerable significance to the wider environmental and sustainable development worlds.

Faith Plans today: How it works

The driving principles of the Faith Plans framework are the core beliefs and values of each faith group. Each faith community offers its own distinctive contribution to efforts to address the world's climate, ecological and development crises.

Developing your Faith Plan

The Faith Plans website includes resources to help you get started at www.faithplans.org/creating-your-plan. You may also find the process outlined below helpful.

1. Research and planning

What matters to your faith? What action is most needed in your context? What difference do you want to achieve? What activities are already underway? What are the wider operations (schools, hospitals etc) within your faith? Do you have access to knowledge and partnerships to support you to deliver the changes you want?

How you will know your activities are on track to make the changes you want? We suggest you carry out a baseline assessment so that you know where you are starting from. How you will communicate your progress? Doing so is a key factor for embedding lasting change.

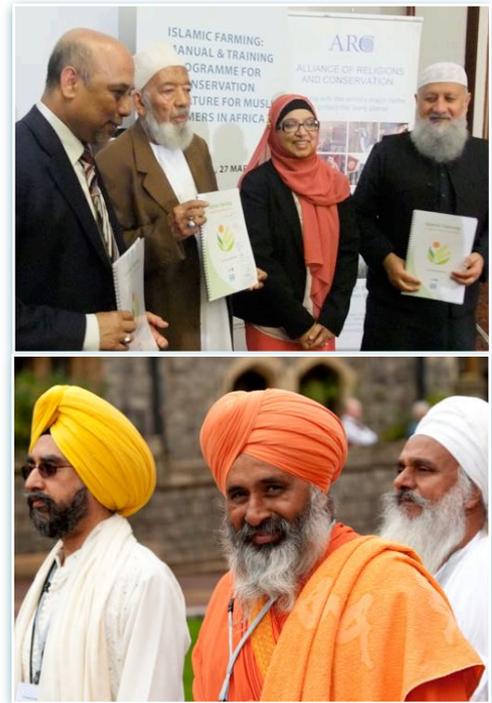
2. Writing your plan

Each faith community starts from its own unique position and needs to create a Plan that accords with its theology, context and capacity. The Faith Plans website provides:

- A more detailed Seven Key Areas framework
- Case studies and inspiring stories
- Resources and links to partners with technical expertise; for example, tree growing or faith-consistent investing

3. Publication and dissemination of the Plans

When faith groups have finished their Plan, we invite them to upload it to the Faith Plans website to serve as an inspiration to others. We also suggest you share your Plan widely, within your faith leadership and laity, via your faith media and with the wider world.



From top: A guide to sustainable agriculture was developed for Muslim farmers and new faith environmental organisations were launched, including EcoSikh. Photos: ARC

The Seven Key Areas in more detail

The Seven Key Areas framework offers a starting point for faith communities to consider as they develop their Faith Plan. We also ask participating groups to consider how gender, race and human dignity considerations will be applied in each area. The framework is not mandatory: each faith community will decide which of the seven areas are appropriate to its own priorities and reality. Visit www.faithplans.org for more details of the Seven Key Areas, along with resources, case studies and recordings of webinars on various topics.

1. Faith-consistent use of assets

- a. Construction and buildings
- b. Land and forests
- c. Water
- d. Wildlife/habitat protection
- e. Healthcare, including medical facilities
- f. Financial investments
- g. Purchasing and consumption, eg, food, suppliers, recycling, waste

2. Education and young people

- a. School curricula
- b. Informal education
- c. Vocational training & entrepreneurship
- d. School buildings and grounds
- e. Conservations and recycling policy
- f. Youth organisations and camps
- g. Nature trails
- h. School eco-twinning
- i. Environmental monitoring

3. Wisdom

- a. Theological education and training
- b. Crisis and adaptation
- c. Liturgies, quotations and orders of prayer
- d. Sacred places
- e. Theology of nature, land, forests, water
- f. Stories and practices
- g. Prayer



4. Lifestyles

- a. Green audits
- b. Traditions of simple living
- c. Families, population and choices
- d. Pilgrimage and tourism
- e. Nature protection
- f. Purchasing power

5. Media and advocacy

- a. Subject matter
- b. Influence
- c. Advocacy
- d. Guides and handbooks
- e. Materials

6. Partnerships, eco-twinning and new environmental departments

- a. Dedicated staff and funding
- b. Lay people
- c. Eco-twinning
- d. Other partnerships

7. Celebration

- a. Traditional festivals
- b. New festivals
- c. New traditions
- d. New beautiful places and developments