



MANY HEAVENS, ONE EARTH



FAITH COMMITMENTS TO PROTECT THE LIVING PLANET



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THE ALLIANCE OF RELIGIONS AND CONSERVATION

in partnership with

United Nations Development Programme



Guidebook on the Seven Key Areas for Creating a Long-term Faith Plan to Protect the Living Planet

Many faith commitments, in response to the ARC-UN call to the world's faiths for long-term plans to protect the living planet, were first announced in the presence of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations on 3rd November 2009 in the Waterloo Chamber, Windsor Castle, U.K.

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Introduction

The destruction of the natural environment – including the impact of climate change – is probably the biggest challenge to the welfare of all life on earth. It threatens the survival of communities and puts the diversity and wonder of nature at risk. And it is at this time that the major religions of the world are taking a lead – sharing their insights, and working with their faithful to address these issues for generations to come.

The Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) is a United Kingdom-based international organisation founded by His Royal Highness, the Prince Philip, in 1995. ARC is a secular body that helps the major religions of the world to develop their own environmental programmes, based on their own core teachings, beliefs and practices. In 2007 it joined with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. The aim of this partnership between ARC and UNDP was to develop a significant and innovative programme to work with the world's major faiths to address issues of climate change and the natural environment through helping them develop long term environmental action plans, offering practical models of engagement with these great global issues based on their own beliefs, strengths and outreach.

By today, November 3, 2009, there are 30 such commitments, made by nine major faiths on seven continents. In many cases – the Baha'is, Daoists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Shinto and Sikhs – a single overarching plan was created, to be extended out to their different traditions and communities to adapt for their own needs. The Buddhists and Christians have taken a different approach, and in their cases each tradition has wanted to create its own plan, special to itself. There are therefore 19 different Christian plans here, and although there is only one Buddhist plan published in summary form – from China – there are also serious commitments by the heads of both Cambodian and Mongolian Buddhism to commence the process of creating their own full plans by November 2010.

All the plans are being launched and announced at Windsor Castle, by His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, founder of ARC, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, in advance of the Climate Change summit in Copenhagen in December. It is part of a celebration, titled Many Heavens, One Earth, running from November 2-4. The UNDP has called this potentially the biggest civil society movement in history, and one of the few good major news stories on the environment this year.

The Process

‘We believe that the key contribution the religions can make is to develop programmes that will deliver responses based not on fear, guilt, or apprehension, but because they are true to what the faith understands.’

Martin Palmer, Secretary General of ARC.

The ARC-UNDP programme started with the publication of a handbook for faith communities creating their own long term commitments over a number of years. It identified the areas of possible action in terms of assets, education, wisdom, simple living, media and advocacy, partnerships and celebration. The process was then supported with a small amount of seed funding and in some cases a large amount of advice and support, in order to help start the process of creating a plan.

The original handbook is reproduced and updated at the beginning of this document, with inspiring examples of how the faiths are taking action. It is then followed by summaries of the faith commitments. The full versions of all of these – which in some cases stretch to many pages of details and examples – will be available on the ARC website.

In each case, where a plan has been created, the people within the faith group have tended to find that by going through the formal process of discussing their tradition’s strengths within the seven key areas, and by writing their commitment to generational change down on paper, they have been able to have a vision of the future: a vision that will allow the conditions necessary for the plans to manifest.

At the launch of the EcoSikh commitment in New Delhi, in July 2009, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General Olav Kjørven said that what has characterized the history of the climate change negotiations over the past 20 years has been ‘everyone generally wanting to do as little as possible, while pushing for others to do as much as possible’. This comes from a scarcity mentality, ‘to make sure that someone else pays the bill.’ However, he said, what we see in many meetings of faiths on their environment commitments is quite the opposite. We see people are saying: ‘This is what we can offer: this is what we are going to do.’ They don’t say: ‘We’ll only do this if another faith does this, or if the government does this,’ they simply say: ‘This is what we can give and this is what we can do.’

This comes from an abundance mentality... And if some of that mentality rubs off on those attending the Copenhagen talks in December, then the world just might be a clearer place. And even if it doesn’t, then all these actions that religions are announcing in the next few years, are going to happen anyway. ‘Religions hold a key – an important key – to the task that humanity has been given.’

The process of helping to create these long term plans has already had an impact in the secular environmental world. It has created an awareness both of the potential of

partnering with the faiths, as well as the difference between faith-based civil society processes and more political or economic approaches. At Windsor, many key secular environmental groups also made commitments to partner with faiths as equals in the endeavour to combat climate change and protect the natural environment. These include the Soil Association, the Marine Stewardship Council and Compassion in World Farming, as well as the World Bank, UN and WWF who committed to continuing and expanding their faith environment programmes.

The Seven Key Areas for Creating a Long-term Faith Plan to Protect the Living Planet

There are seven key areas in which many of the world's major faith traditions can have huge impact on environmental action through their own resources, traditions and beliefs.

1. Faith-consistent use of assets – land, investments, medical facilities, purchasing and property.
2. Education and young people in both formal and informal situations – including school buildings and curricula, as well as nature teaching and camps.
3. Wisdom – including theological education and training, as well as rediscovering past teachings and understandings about the natural world from religious texts, and helping people adapt to new situations in areas where climate change makes this necessary.
4. Lifestyles.
5. Media and advocacy.
6. Partnerships, eco-twinning, and creating and funding their own environment departments.
7. Celebration.

1. Faith-consistent use of assets

a) Construction and Existing Buildings

Have you looked at the environmental impact of your construction activities and decisions? For example, to what extent have you assessed the environmental impact of new buildings? What were the key ecological problems and did you find any solutions?

The Muslim plan includes the ambitious proposal to develop 10 major Muslim cities as green city models – for example, Medina (Al Madinah), in Saudi Arabia.

Daoists in China are installing solar panels at all their temples in China. The

first Daoist ecological temple – at Taibaishan in Shaanxi Province – was built in 2007 with local sustainable materials: it is now a model for ecological temples being planned throughout China.

The Armenian Apostolic Church is taking the lead in promoting solar power in Armenia by installing solar power systems in church and some public buildings such as kindergartens and bathhouses.

The Church of England discovered, in a 2007 audit, that the national carbon footprint of its 16,200 churches as well as clergy houses, halls and offices was 330,000 tonnes of CO₂. It has pledged to reduce this by at least 42 percent by 2020, and by 80 percent by 2050. One example is St Denys's Church in Sleaford, Lincolnshire, which despite being Grade I listed and subject to rigid architectural controls, has installed solar panels on its lead roof using a frame with non-intrusive clamps.

Quakers in the UK have pledged that their historic conference centre, Swarthmoor Hall in Cumbria, will come off-grid by 2012 through on-site small-scale energy production. They are investigating using their surrounding farmland to install commercial wind turbines.

The New Psalmist Baptist Church in Baltimore, USA, a predominantly African-American church with a Sunday congregation of more than 7,000, is developing its new US\$41 million church to be energy-efficient, and its garden a centre for teaching people about growing their own food as a means of returning to a simpler lifestyle.

b) Land and Forests

The faiths own around seven to eight percent of the habitable land surface of the planet, and more than five percent of the forests. To what extent have you examined assets like farmland and forests, mines and quarries under your ownership, management or guidance, and asked whether they could be differently protected or managed to better contribute to sustaining our planet? Have you written, or do you have access to a theology of land from your own faith tradition, which outlines your faith's traditional understanding of land, and its understanding of the land's role in your faith today?

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East is creating a Geographic Information System database of land cover and use, in order to develop plans to introduce proper management of forested lands and sustainable agriculture, with pilot activities on Church lands.

Many faiths, led by the Shinto (major forest-owners in Japan), have joined a programme coordinated by ARC to create a Religious Forestry Standard for religious-owned and managed forestry to be run in ways that are:

- * Religiously compatible – based on values and heritage.
- * Environmentally appropriate, ensuring that biodiversity, productivity and ecological processes are maintained, and that employees pay attention to

recycling, not polluting.

- * Socially beneficial, helping the community, and giving incentives to sustain resources and keep to long-term management plans.
- * Economically viable and profitable.

The Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania is implementing an intensive tree planting campaign, with 8.5 million trees to create community forests across the region, at a cost of US\$2.5 million, of which two thirds will be raised locally.

The Church of South India has urged each of its four million members to plant a tree, as well as promoting the planting of ecologically significant species such as vetiver, jatropha and mangrove on all church land.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana will plant 200,000 trees in four areas and create community woodlands with 100,000 seedlings.

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon has already planted more than one million trees since the early 1960s; its seven year plan includes a further 100,000 seedlings and – critically – training people in looking after trees.

The Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church is replanting an ancient historical forest that used to grow near to the Mother See of Holy Etchimiadzin. This is part of a bigger plan to plant 1.5 million trees in the country, in memory of genocide victims.

In 1999 British Sikhs planted woodland on the outskirts of Nottingham. Ten years on, Khalsa Wood is a quiet place used for walks, picnics, ceremonies and meditation by many communities including Sikhs – and has become a model for faith-created woodland around the world. Oaks were chosen for their longevity, to be enjoyed by many generations to come; fruit trees for their blossom and beauty for today's generation. The initiative came at the time when Sikhs were beginning to distribute saplings at ceremonies, in place of the traditional prasad of sweets.

c) Water

To what extent are you aware of your faith's theology of water? And have you incorporated its teachings and wisdom into promoting environmentally responsible irrigation, desalination, showers, gardening, sewerage etc? Where there are rivers and marine environments running through or close to where you live, have you monitored how polluted they are, and if so, have you taken action to reduce that pollution?

As part of their Plan, Shanghai Buddhists have pledged to be more actively involved in the Mother River Project to protect the city's Suzhou River from pollution.

The Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions in Bangalore,

India, recently investigated traditional Hindu Ayurvedic teachings which instruct householders 'to store water in copper pots'. Scientists found that 99 percent of e-coli bacteria are killed within 12 hours of being placed into water stored in copper pots. Some four million under-fives die from diarrhoea every year; many from e-coli-related infections. The Sikh plan includes recommending that their gurdwaras – temples – use copper pots for storing water.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East is promoting water saving devices in all Church institutions and in all Orthodox homes. This is particularly important in water-scarce countries in the Middle East.

d) Healthcare

If you run medical facilities, have you made an environmentally sustainable management plan on the use of water, sanitation, cleanliness, supplies, buildings, transport, electricity, reducing waste, reusing materials etc? It can help the planet and – through creating cleaner air – it can directly help your patients. Have you looked at the sourcing of the food served to patients and visitors – and increased the amount of food that is grown locally, in season, without pesticides and according to natural, vital principles?

The Daoists are prohibiting the use of ingredients from endangered animals and plants in their healthcare, food and medicine.

The US Catholic Coalition on Climate Change will work with all Catholic healthcare outlets to reduce their energy usage, and incorporate green design into all new buildings.

e) Food, hospitality and retail outlets

Faiths run hotels, guesthouses, gift shops, cafeterias, retreat centres and restaurants. Rites of passage such as births, marriages and deaths often involve generous catering and gifts. Have you looked at your hospitality and retail outlets to see if the sourcing is ethically and ecologically sound, with green energy if this is workable? If you recommend catering companies for funerals, baptisms, circumcisions etc, have you asked them what their sourcing policies are? How about conferences and meetings? Improvements might involve introducing more Fairtrade and organic goods, cutting out disposable plates and cups, reducing meat use and recommending free range. The UK's leading organic organisation, the Soil Association, recommends the 70-50-30 principle as a realistic ration for ethical food sourcing, whether in teashops, restaurants, school meals or in your own homes. This is that food you buy should be at least:

- * 70 percent fresh or unprocessed,
- * 50 percent local, and
- * 30 percent organic.

Each country is different, but this is a good first point of discussion.

The Hindu plan includes the development of cruelty-free, environmentally-kind dairies, based on Hindu principles of animal husbandry.

The Jewish Plan pledges to cut communal meat intake by half by 2015. 'It's good for the world and good for us.'

The Shanghai Buddhists are recommending that Buddhist-owned restaurants do not serve meat from wild animals, and are promoting that followers eat a more vegetarian diet, to protect the environment.

In 2005 the managers of the Methodist International Centre – which combines a boutique hotel in London with hostel accommodation for students from around the world – was asked a simple question: why aren't your eggs free range? This led to internal discussions about living one's ethics, and the Centre is now a model of ethical and environmentally conscious sourcing – and is training other religious caterers to do the same.

In 2008 the Christian Women's Fellowship in Kottayam, Kerala, India set up a snack centre in the middle of their town. It was the first outlet in Kottayam to run on biogas. Set up costs were comparatively high – at 40,000 Rs (around US\$1000) – but they are confident that not only will they make it up within a year from reduced fuel bills, but that they will become an example of environmental excellence and an inspiration to other businesses and households.

The Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church will set up a new food regime in its Suprasl Academy to ensure that more than 70 percent of ingredients in the refectory kitchen will be fresh, local and organic. This is part of a wider plan to promote organic farming in Podlasie Region.

The ARC-UNDP Windsor Celebration, Many Heavens, One Earth, where these commitments were launched in November 2009, had a policy of no bottled water, more than 50 percent locally-sourced and organic ingredients, and an entirely vegetarian menu – including the first Vegan Banquet at Windsor Castle. Caterers were both challenged and excited.

f) Financial Investments and Micro-Finance

How fully have you examined your own financial assets and to what degree do you practice faith-consistent investment i.e. considering the positive ethical, social and environmental issues as well as the negative ones? How have you accomplished your investment goals? What kinds of projects worked well or poorly?

More than US\$300 billion is invested worldwide in Shari'ah-compliant (Islamic) investment products. While the funds have a strong reliance on oil stocks for historical reasons, the funds have a strong ethical basis, of which environmental viability is a key component.

The Church of Sweden diocese of Vasterås has helped create a fund, in which it has also invested, which grows sustainable timber in a deforested and impoverished area of Mozambique. As well as commercial forestry the 'Global Solidarity Fund' involves reforesting an equivalent area for wildlife, and building a timber mill in which a local labour force is employed. The Church of England diocese of London is also an investor.

The Interfaith Centre for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) in the USA has been a major force in ethical investment decisions since it was formed in the 1970s. One of its core values is to 'challenge ourselves to accountability for right relationships with all creation.'

In 2005, ARC helped launch an independent body, the International Interfaith Investments Group – 3iG – which works with faith communities world wide assisting them in exploring the issues behind ethical investing in order that faith held investments can be used in the most environmentally sustainable and socially just way.

Quakers in Britain are in the process of reaching an agreement with their investment managers Rathbones Greenbank to improve the environmental impact of companies with whom they have investment positions.

The US Catholic Coalition on Climate Change is working with its 18,000 parishes, 8,500 schools, 244 colleges and universities and dozens of hospitals to link with the US government's Energy Star programme to buy green energy, and is initiating conversations with treasurers of Catholic institutions to discuss how Catholic investment portfolios can encourage green energy technology and support environmentally careful companies. Some 25 percent of the US population is Catholic.

2. Education and young people

Some 50 percent of educational institutions around the world are founded, managed, or associated with faith institutions.

a) School Curricula

What potential is there in your educational work for incorporating more in-depth, and faith-consistent teachings about the environment into the curriculum? Do you, or can you, have vegetable patches where you teach pupils how to grow food? Do you look at and promote preparation of food grown without pesticides? Or go into nature to paint and study birds and wild plants, to help young people appreciate their beauty?

In 2006 alone some quarter of a million Baha'is participated in study circles, devotional meetings and school classes on the environment. Such courses, and the acts of service associated with them, are seen to 'represent a

significant transformative process for Baha'i communities worldwide.' The environment is the focus for the next five years of all such Baha'i education initiatives.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has pledged to 'develop a sense of awe and wonder for creation in our young people through all subjects and ground them in a spiritual awareness of the need to care for Creation.' For example, on 'Earth Day' in 2008 the timetable for the entire day at All Hallows Catholic preparatory school in Somerset, centred around ecology. It included cleaning a stream and having a lesson in the insect-life found in it; dyeing with natural ingredients; making prayer flags on which environmental prayers were written. That night several children prayed for it to be 'Earth Day' every day.

Over the last few years, Conservation International has worked with Muslim schools across Indonesia to help develop educational and practical activity programmes. Such educational partnership is part of the long term plans of MACCA – the Muslim Associations for Climate Change – which lies at the heart of the Muslim 7 Year Plan.

b) Informal Education

Often it is out of the classroom that children will learn some of their most important lessons.

Of the 'Big Six' youth organisations in the world, all of whom take the environment seriously, the YMCA and YWCA are explicitly faith-based, and two others (the Scouts and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) have considerable faith elements within them.

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference is actively practicing green living, gardening and food in all its schools and places of education. 'We encourage all to develop their ecological vocation', and introduce the concept of 'an ecological conversion.'

The New Psalmist Baptist Church in Maryland has introduced a Science Fair for children each year. It is part of an educational Voyage of Exploration Programme that includes entrepreneurship, environmental science and engineering training to explore creative ideas to preserve our living planet and celebrate God's creation.

c) School Buildings and Grounds

What potential is there in your educational work for making sure that all new builds and extensions are rigorous in their attention to environmental details, and that any playing fields and gardens pay attention to the needs of wild flora and fauna as well as children?

In September 2008, the UK's first Hindu Voluntary Aided State School opened in north London. It hopes to become a model for both education and

environmental awareness. Helping students ‘adopt conscientious lifestyles that help sustain our planet’ is one of the six ideals of the Krishna-Avanti primary school in Harrow. The school has solar panels, grass on the roof to keep buildings warm, and beautiful grounds to promote growing vegetables and teaching outdoors when weather permits, which is a key part of Hindu education. The model established here will form the basis for eco-Hindu buildings world wide as part of the Hindu 9 Year Plan.

The Church of England is working with schemes for Education for Sustainable Development, encouraging all 4,700 church schools to become sustainable schools by 2016, and promoting integration of environmental issues in our work with young people at all levels.

d) Conservation and Recycling Policy

Do you have policies of water and energy conservation for your educational buildings? What do you do about paper, food, sewerage and other waste? Do you encourage children to walk, cycle or take public transport to school?

The Kagyu Buddhist tradition in India and Tibet, under the guidance of its spiritual leader the Karmapa, has encouraged all its schools, as well as its temples and one million followers, to recycle all materials. They have set up boxes for all recyclable items, even in those remote places where there is nowhere to send the items yet – in the hope and faith that it will encourage local government to act. This is an example of where the faiths walk ahead, in the hope that governments will come and walk beside them.

The Baha’i Plan includes encouraging children to become aware of care of the earth through their actions – of conservation, of cleaning up streams, of planting gardens.

The EcoSikh Plan urges all Sikh gurdwaras – temples – to recycle, compost, use green energy, use eco-stoves, start rainwater harvesting, purchase reusable plates and cups, and host open gurdwaras to invite people in from the community to see their green practices. Gurdwaras feed 30 million people every day in India, regardless of creed or need, so this is a significant pledge.

e) Youth Organisations and Camps

Do you have faith-associated youth organisations where environmental ideas could also be integrated – for example, through running youth camps in nature, organising street cleaning projects, and forest schools?

The Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church is introducing camps on environmental protection through leading academies and youth fellowship associations: it will increase the participation of Orthodox children in forest cleanup actions organised by schools.

In 2000 the Maronite Church in Lebanon made its portion of the fragile and precious Harissa forest into a Maronite-Protected Area. The town of Jounieh

and three landowners all voluntarily joined the scheme, losing themselves the chance of considerable money being offered by developers. When asked why he had made that decision, one of the landowners said that he remembered back to when he was a boy, and had gone for a camping holiday in the forest, organised by the church. 'It was one of the happiest times of my life,' he said. 'That's why I want to protect the forest now.' Their long term commitment for the future is based in part around the Harissa forest, and the inspiration natural places can have in people's lives.

f) School Eco-Twinning

Could your youth groups and/or members of your diaspora community think about eco-twinning with environment projects where the effects of climate change are being felt first hand? This could be with projects of your own faith in another country, or in other regions of your own country. It could also be a development of existing twinning to include an environmental project.

St Joseph's Catholic School in Swindon, UK, was rebuilt entirely in 2006. As part of the rebuilding, the school made a link to a severely under-funded school in Uganda, and has been helping it with its own construction work. The materials, needs and finances are different in the two countries, but both schools have benefited from the collaboration and discussions of the shared concern they have to educate young people and be environmentally responsible.

g) Environmental Monitoring

As part of life's education, could you work with the natural curiosity, expertise and grassroots outreach of your faithful to organise environmental monitoring of the world around them? Sometimes it is only through compassionate mindfulness and systematic observation that scientific details will be collected, that rivers and eco-systems will be monitored for flora, fauna and pollution, and that early action can therefore be taken. If there are places that your faith values, perhaps because they are beautiful, perhaps simply because they are, then you are in a wonderful situation to watch over and protect them.

ROAR (Religious Organizations Along the River), initiated in 1996, is a network of religious congregations and organizations – including many Catholic Sisters – with property in the Hudson Valley of New York State. Their mission is to protect the Hudson River, through advocacy, networking, education, sustainable practices, and simply inspiring people to love it, know it and monitor it. This movement is inspired by the Catholic Bishops of the dioceses that span the Columbia River along the western seaboard of the USA who realised in the 1980s that their precious waterway was becoming polluted. They encouraged their faithful to monitor the river and feed that information back at all levels to the state government, to the polluting companies and to the communities.

3. Wisdom

Many faiths – and indeed many secular organisations as well – recognise that the environmental crisis is a spiritual issue, an external sign of deep malaise. And that therefore its solution can only be found through exploring the root causes of this degradation. In particular, in fostering an ethos or an atmosphere of compassion and care for the natural world. While many wish to legislate our way out of these crises, the faiths wish to guide, not with ethics and codes but by example and mindfulness, care and companionship rooted in their experience down the centuries and even millennia.

Theological foundations for environmental action and care have been around, in every major faith, for a long time. Environmental issues are now high on the public agendas in many countries. Yet many faiths must ask themselves why environmentalism is still a relatively marginal concern in their mainstream thought and practice. In addition, all faiths have a tradition of care for those who are going through suffering or crisis, and they have tried and tested ways of teaching their future leaders to pass on the wisdom of the ages, adapted to the requirements of the present day.

a) Training

How do you train your religious teachers and future religious leaders on environmental issues? Could the training curriculum for future priests, imams or rabbis be ‘greened’?

In 2007 the Armenian Orthodox Church introduced new approaches in the education process of the Vankenyanyan Theological Seminary: today all its students of theology, throughout the country, are trained on nature protection and ecology, and there are plans to set up a publishing unit for books on eco-theology.

The Plan for American Evangelicalism includes facilitating an annual Creation Care Leadership summit to inspire and equip evangelical leaders to support creation care in their community. All churches committed to creation care will be supported and identified through a Creation Care Churches Clearing House, which will enable the promotion of best creation care practices and ideas among the churches. Some 28 percent of the US population is Evangelical Christian.

The Regeneration Project, which runs Interfaith Power and Light in the US, has a vision of clergy being ‘visible and influential leaders in the effort to address global warning’ and that ‘congregations are seen as an integral part of the solution.’

b) Crisis and Adaptation

What is the role of crisis in your theology and how have you dealt with crises in the past? Does your faith see climate change as a crisis today? If so, what strategies or tools from your experience could you apply to responding to climate change? Have

you created a plan for your faith to care for those affected by climate change or environmental catastrophe, so that in case of flood, or famine or typhoon, you are as prepared as you can be?

Quaker Peace and Social Witness plans to establish a Sustainability and Peace programme exploring the links between conflict and climate change. It is exploring a joint project with its Quaker UN office in Geneva to facilitate and support an interfaith dialogue on climate-induced migration.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) was first alerted to the imminence of climate change affecting communities in the early 1990s when a group of Christian women in the Pacific Islands approached them and asked for help because their islands were sinking. Since then the WCC has worked with those communities to tackle climate change and, pastorally, to help the people adapt psychologically to the changes that are affecting – and will affect – them.

The Benedictine Order of Catholic monks and nuns have rediscovered that their Order helped pull most of Europe out of the ecological collapse caused by the Roman Empire which, by the 6th century AD, had destroyed much of the forestry and farm land of the Empire. The Benedictines replanted forests, recreated watersheds, dug streams and ponds and reintroduced composting for the land. Perhaps this strategy can help us out of this crisis too. (Listening to the Earth: An Environmental Audit for Benedictine Communities, Sister Joan Chittister)

c) Liturgies, quotations and orders of prayer:

Can your liturgies, study of the scriptures, services and orders of prayer and practice be developed in line with your theology to include not only your tradition of caring for the natural world but also your values of treading lightly on the earth and judging people by how they behave, not by what they own?

The Franciscan traditions are inspired by their founder, St Francis, whose spirituality was steeped in ecological wisdom. At the heart of their plan is communicating this wisdom to a wider audience, and remembering that it has an impact on how every Franciscan building, place and project should be managed.

Many Orthodox Churches have recently developed new liturgies to celebrate their Feast of Creation on September 1st. These new prayers and hymns reinforce the special role Orthodox Christianity gives, not just to protecting creation but to blessing it and making it even more wonderful. Protestants and Catholics around the world have taken this concept, and are now beginning to celebrate 'Creation Time' from September 1 to St Francis' Feast Day on October 4 – a period that for many in the northern hemisphere is also harvest-tide.

d) Sacred places

What role have your sacred places traditionally played in helping preserve habitats

for wildlife etc? For example, churchyards are often vital mini-eco-systems especially in urban areas; sacred mountains are sanctuaries for many endangered animals; holy water sources – wells, streams and lakes – can be the last refuge for creatures whose habitats have otherwise been destroyed or polluted.

The sacred mountains of China have been protected for millennia by Daoist nuns and monks. Now Daoism is actively developing protection programmes to ensure that the pressures of tourism, development and logging do not endanger these vital, spiritual and bio-diverse landscapes.

The Hindu plan includes developing gardens on their temple land, and growing produce there – food and flowers – for use in daily worship.

Churchyards, cemeteries and gardens beside temples and mosques etc are often rare wild areas in big cities. Some groups are allowing wilderness areas to grow, through reducing mowing and pesticides – and are producing educational material to remind visitors what natural wonders there are in their local area. For example, the ancient trees in the Eyup mosque in Istanbul are the last surviving breeding places for storks on the Golden Horn. Many of the Plans have this aspect of care built into them – for example, the Armenian Orthodox, Daoists, Hindus and Muslims.

e) Theology of Nature, Land, Forests, Water etc.

Every major faith has developed a statement about its relationship with nature (these can be found on the ARC website). However, have you read it? Has your faith or your faith tradition created and published a theological statement about the human relationship with water, with forests, with land or with pollution? Can you find these? Publicise them? Quote from them? Make them easily available in your libraries and on your website? If your own tradition has not created these, can it do so?

As part of the development of the Shinto Plan to help create Religious Forestry Standards for forest owning faiths, a programme to create in each faith such a theology is being undertaken. In China, the Government of Shaanxi Province is offering to fund an international conference in late 2010 at which these theologies will be presented.

f) Stories and Practices

Are there any stories or half-forgotten traditional practices that highlight how your tradition has always cared for creation/the natural environment, and can these be revived? Does your faith have prohibitions about what to eat (or not) and what to hunt (or not?), and can those prohibitions be applied to any pointless waste of resources?

Zoroastrians in India have recently begun to retell a traditional story of how, once upon a time, Mother Earth was in trouble. She asked God – Ahura Mazda – if He could send her a prince with warriors, to use force to stop the people from hurting her. But Ahura Mazda said he could not. Instead he would send

her a holy man, to stop the people from hurting her, using words and inspirational ideas. And thus was born the prophet, Zoroaster. Also, the Zoroastrians used to have a tradition of building houses with reservoirs into which rain water was directed to store it and keep homes cool. Perhaps some cutting edge Zoroastrian architects can work out how to start building like that again.

The Jewish Plan suggests recovering the ecological value of Shabbat, the Sabbath, as ‘a day to step back from shopping, manufacturing, flying, driving and technological manipulation of the work...we need to develop ways for Jews who currently observe Shabbat to deepen their sense of its ecological significance, and for Jews who don’t currently keep Shabbat in a halakhic sense to explore aspects of Shabbat observance, as an ecological value.’

g) Praying

Prayer is central to every faith. Can you pray for a better, more harmonious world: for human beings to find solutions to those problems they can change, and to accept those problems they cannot? Many people within many religions have occasions to pray for something to change, and occasions to be grateful for what they have. Can gratitude for, or mindfulness of, the abundant gifts of nature, and for example all the work involved in creating your food, play a greater part in your practice?

When asked what Buddhists should do in response to climate change, Buddhist teacher Thrangu Rinpoche said they should do two things. First they should inform themselves about how things are, to know what practical steps to take. And second they should make aspiration prayers to the Buddha. Perhaps that will not stop global warming directly, he said, ‘but it will gradually help to transform our minds, and then we will make efforts to help the situation’.

The Church of South India is creating new prayers and liturgies which include God’s Earth, and people working to protect biodiversity.

The Vineyard Churches will hold annual meetings of Evangelical pastors across the US and prayer is the first of the major activities that they will undertake.

4. Lifestyles

a) Green Audits

Almost all the Faith Commitments include going through a process of self-assessment. Have you carried out an environmental audit of your assets and use of natural resources, recycling, energy etc as a faith community, families and individuals? Have you or could you encourage your own faithful to do their own environmental audits and take action accordingly?

One of the outstanding features of most long-term plans is a commitment not only to audit their buildings, gardens, farmlands and energy use, but also to create eco-model places of worship.

b) Traditions of Simple Living

Are you encouraging, or could you encourage, your faithful to live more simply and in harmony with the environment – in the areas of food, travel, energy, personal investments, charity giving, businesses etc? If so, how are you supporting and assisting them? If not, then could this be a key area for development in your seven year plan? Can you draw upon any of your own traditions – monasticism, for example – to develop and promote a simpler lifestyle?

The tradition of fasting during the Muslim month of Ramadan has been taken up by many Muslim groups as the ideal time to reflect on what our lifestyle should say about the appropriate use of natural resources.

Jain youth organisations have long encouraged their members to advocate simple, non-meat diets. They believe this would not only reduce the negative karmic effects caused by the suffering resulting from killing animals on such a large scale, but would also improve the earth ecologically by reducing the grain needed to fatten livestock and the greenhouse gases emitted by cattle fed unnaturally on grain.

The Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD) has long promoted a campaign for Catholics to ‘Live Simply, so that Others May Simply Live,’ urging people to make pledges, before God, to be more generous by stepping more lightly on the earth.

The Church of South India has suggested its followers carry out Environmental Tithing, reducing their burden on the earth’s bounty by producing 10 percent less in waste, consuming 10 percent less in non-renewable resources, and contributing financial savings made to Earthcare efforts.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana is providing training in the manufacture of energy-efficient stoves, as well as providing training in fire fighting and in sustainable livelihood programmes like snail farming and bee keeping.

c) Families, Population and Choice

The size of the world’s population is clearly an issue for the future of the natural environment and the use of fuels and energy. Even in faiths where there is a tradition or teaching of a particular stance about the size of families, there is still considerable debate on this issue.

One of the most successful countries in voluntary curbing of population growth is Iran – and it was brought about as much through religious teaching as through economics and legal structures. Islamic leaders quoted the Prophet

Mohammed saying that a man should have only as many children as the earth can support, while issuing fatwas (or ‘permissions’) encouraging contraception. From 1986 to 2001 population growth decreased from 3.2 to 1.2 percent.

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon is planning to upgrade and improve family/population planning units in all its PCC health facilities.

d) Pilgrimage and Tourism

With their beautiful temples, monasteries, mosques, churches, synagogues etc, faiths own many of the most prized tourist destinations around the world. They are also responsible, in terms of pilgrimage, for much of the ‘tourist’ travel in the world. As a faith, have you looked at your role in tourism and pilgrimage within the countries in which you operate and asked if there might be more environmentally friendly ways to run this? Have you thought about how many pilgrims now travel by plane, coach and car where previously they walked, and considered ways of lessening the environmental impact of this?

The Muslim plan includes working towards a Green Hajj, with the Saudi Minister of the Hajj. The aim is to have the Hajj free of plastic bottles after two years, and to introduce initiatives over the next 10 years to transform this most important pilgrimage into one that is recognised as environmentally friendly. The vision is that pilgrims will take an understanding of care of creation as an act of faithfulness.

Both Chinese Buddhists and Daoists have pledged to continue to promote a new Three Sticks of Incense Programme as a response to the relatively recent practice – in newly affluent China, of people burning so many hundreds of incense sticks that it creates local pollution. By insisting that three incense sticks are enough, Daoist and Buddhist monasteries are not only protecting their own clean air, but are also sending a powerful symbolic message that wastefulness is not a good way to be faithful. This is part of creating an ethos of mindfulness and respect, which it is hoped will bring changes for generations to come.

As part of its Long Term Plan, the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church has pledged to encourage more people to participate in traditional walking pilgrimages to Holy Places.

In September 2007 the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People noted that tourism contributes to global warming, if only through the sheer movement of one billion people a year. It urged pilgrims and tourists to remember Genesis 1, in which ‘the earth is a garden, a place in which creatures praise the love of Him who created them and where equilibrium is the norm’ and that as tourists they can choose between being for or against the planet. ‘Perhaps we can travel on foot, opt for hotels and hospitality facilities that are closer to nature, and carry less luggage, so that means of transport emit less carbon dioxide... We can also eat more

‘eco-friendly’ meals, plant trees to neutralise the polluting effects of our journeys, choose local handicrafts rather than more costly and poisonous items and make use of recyclable and biodegradable materials.’

e) Purchasing Power

Are there areas where you and your faithful can use your joint purchasing power to help the environment?

The Muslim Plan will establish an Islamic eco label for goods and services that adheres to Muslim principles.

The Hindu Plan calls for Ahimsa – a faith-based eco label that adheres to Hindu principles.

In 2004 the green New York Jewish organisation, Hazon, launched a Community-Supported Agriculture programme called Tuv Ha’Aretz. It involves a synagogue entering a partnership with a local organic farmer, and committing to pre-purchase a share of the season’s produce. For the farmer this guarantees a market, for members this gives access to fresh, organic produce at affordable prices. In the wider context, it helps to preserve farmland, build community, and protect wildlife and water systems from pesticides. By 2009 there were 32 Tuv Ha’Artez locations in the US and Israel, putting more than US\$1 million of Jewish purchasing power behind organic farms. One member of Tuv Ha’Aretz was Rahm Emanuel, now chief of staff to Barack Obama, President of the United States.

In 2000, the million-strong Women’s Division of the United Methodist Church in the US launched an initiative to eliminate chlorine in paper products used by the church. United Methodist women in 34 states visited Kinko’s stores to request processed chlorine-free (PCF) paper and found that only two thirds of stores had PCF paper in stock, staff were badly informed about the product, and there was a surcharge. Within months, Kinko’s had eliminated the price differential, and had agreed to stock PCF paper in every store. In 2002 the Division had similar results with Staples, another major paper supplier.

5. Media and advocacy

a) Subject Matter

To what extent are your media outlets engaging in these issues? Do your newsletters, radios, newspapers, TV stations, websites etc have special sections on ecology? Are they using their editorial authority to promote simpler living, and looking after the natural environment with more care? Could your website have a special section, blog, picture galleries etc on the development of your Seven Year Plan?

The Armenian Orthodox Church runs the Shoghakat TV company which in 2010 is launching the Green Theology project to broadcast environmental programmes.

The Muslim Plan involves establishing a special Islam and the Environment TV channel, to be broadcast in different languages.

b) Influence

How do you influence your government on its environmental priorities? What extra influence could you wield? Do you have any level of media access to national broadcasting networks where you could raise these issues in, for example, a weekly religious affairs programme?

Baha'i communities use local radio stations throughout Latin America to broadcast in local languages, passing on environmental ideas and information on a weekly basis.

In the 1970s it became clear that the Batang Gadis river in Northern Sumatra was becoming polluted and access was threatened by gold mining and logging. Among the many people affected were the 15,000 Muslim boarding school students in the region, who need the water to perform wudhu – the ritual ablution before prayer. Conservation International had been fighting the pollution for some time, but it was only when they invited the imam of the biggest school to come to the upper part of the river to see the contamination, and after he used his influence in lobbying and negotiating, that a solution became possible. In 2003, 13,000 Muslim students gathered for the declaration of Batang Gadis National Park, protected from logging and mining, and the source of clean, spiritually sound, water.

c) Advocacy

The ARC-UNDP programme has been guided by a Confucian saying: 'First practice what you want to preach; then preach about what you already practice.' Now that you are active, you are in a position to ask others to be active as well and take these issues as seriously as you do. Could you lobby your politicians – whether local, national or regional – as well as your directors, head teachers, and religious leaders to help stop climate change and the destruction of the natural environment?

The Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa (in 53 countries throughout the continent) has pledged to work with secular groups, NGOs and governments to coordinate action for prevention, solving and supporting issues relating to the environment and refugees. It will advocate for no product of industrial material to be exported or waste discarded in Africa if its country of origin would not accept it. It will campaign for lowering taxes on insulation material and the abolition of subsidies on non-renewable sources of energy.

The Jewish Climate Change Campaign is targeting over half a million people, many of whom are influential in their countries and communities, to sign up to be part of its detailed proposals for change. 'Today we have no Sanhedrin, no single body that legislates for all the Jewish people. The success of this work will hinge not on our being told what to do, but rather on tens of thousands of people and of countless organisations and communities freely choosing to make change in the world.'

d) Guides and Handbooks

Could you draw together, from your audits and educational materials, guides or handbooks (on paper, on the web, on mobile phones or on audio or video) for the faithful on how to live more simply and environmentally – with practical suggestions drawn from your experience? How could these be developed through your publishing houses or through your websites?

Green Faith, in the US, is creating and developing on-line and distance education capacities for ordained faith leaders to integrate their experience of the sacred in nature into their teaching, public speaking, spiritual life and pastoral care. It is doing this through web-based videos, (including the popular Story of Stuff for teenagers), consumption resources, and a major web portal currently being planned.

The Benedictines have produced Listening to the Earth – a handbook for their monasteries in Latin America, and also distributed through Africa – explaining theologically and practically how to take action on environmental issues.

e) Materials

What more could your media – your newspapers, newsletters, radio stations, websites and printers of your holy books, pamphlets and brochures – do to protect the natural environment in terms of the materials they use? There are, for example, some 125 million New Testaments and 72 million full Bibles printed every year, so an environmental strategy in printing and distribution would have a powerful impact. If you have publishing houses have you examined their impact on the environment?

The Muslims plan to work towards printing all 15 million Qur’ans produced every year, on paper from sustainable wood supplies.

6. Partnerships, Eco-twinning, creating your own environment department, and funding the work

a) Dedicated staff, and a dedicated funding source

Do you have staff dedicated to developing environmental work? If not, could you consider developing an environment office? Can you put funds aside annually to fund this work and outreach?

The Muslim Plan recognises the importance of creating a Waqf, or Islamic fund, in order to implement the Climate Change and Environment plan.

Buddhists in Cambodia have set up their own environmental organisation – Association of Buddhists for the Environment. It is staffed and run by monks, and assisted by many secular agencies in reforestation, environmental education and sustainable housing. At first it seemed expensive and time-consuming to create an office, but the Cambodian Patriarch has realised it is

an important element of reaching out to young people. Living their faith in this way has required new skills – making documentaries and websites – as well as old skills like growing and caring for trees. It has also involved rethinking old traditions creatively, including holding ceremonies to ordain trees – as they ordain new monks – in order to encourage people to protect them.

In China, a Daoist alliance of temples has been established, with its headquarters at Louguandai temple and its daughter shrine of Taibaishan where ARC and the Dutch environmental foundation EMF have helped them build their first ‘eco-temple’.

The Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa in the Greek Orthodox Church, representing 10 million believers in 53 countries, is setting up a new Environmental Centre to promote the protection of the environment in Africa, organizing seminars and facilitating action, and constructed as an eco-friendly model for all construction within the Patriarchate.

The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) have decided to designate a percentage of grants to projects related to healing the earth, and to the setting up, locally or regionally of a specifically designated environmental fund.

The Shanghai Buddhists are setting up special funds to pay for environmental offices in each major temple.

The Church of South India already partners with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in tree planting, and plans to increase this significantly.

b) Lay people

Have you tried to involve lay people who are active in environmental fields to help you develop appropriate ecological responses to issues? Lay people often want to contribute but no-one asks them to do so. Try establishing an Advisory Group of members of your faith who are specialists in different fields related to the environment – law, water management, land management, education, waste management etc. The Advisory Group will not only offer you the most professional advice; it can also link your programmes into the wider work of local, national or international agencies and governments, and mean that your own efforts are multiplied, or leveraged.

The Board of Deputies of British Judaism established an environment group which drew together some of the greatest minds and most professional environmentalists in the UK. They had never before been asked to think about how their faith shaped their work or how their work could shape their faith. It led to many new initiatives throughout the UK.

The Muslim Plan includes developing an international prize for research related to environmental conservation.

c) Eco-twinning

Do you have existing links or twinings with other groups – churches, mosques, temples, dioceses etc in different parts of the world? If they are in places that are already experiencing climate change at a critical level then have you thought of partnering with them on an environmental basis? And if you are in a place that is experiencing climate change at a critical level then have you thought about bringing that into your twinning relationship? See ARC’s website on eco-twinning for more details and ideas.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana is coming into partnership with Interfaith Power and Light Ministries in the US as part of an eco-twinning project with congregations in America supporting faith-based eco projects in Africa and Asia.

The Church of England is working in partnership with Tearfund to promote the Climate Justice Fund across the whole Church: this is an adaptation fund for contributions by Church members to compensate those communities overseas who are suffering most from the impacts of climate change.

The New Psalmist Baptist Church has partnered with one mega church in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya with a network of 2,000 churches in Africa, and another of 70 or more mega churches in the US. This combined network has fostered water and sanitation projects in Africa. Overall both congregations support 17 schools, and have created partnerships with environmental entrepreneurs, providing solar-powered water purifiers and sanitation equipment to the Kenyan slums.

d) Other Partnerships

Look around and see who might partner with you because they share the same interest in organic farming, clean energy usage, recycling etc. There is no need always to reinvent the wheel. Have you made links with secular bodies that are working, environmentally, in the field? Have you made links with other faith bodies in your region that are interested in improving their environmental impact? Are there areas where you can share expertise and experience and avoid duplication? Are there any commercial groups involved in the environment who would work with you, and who might give you a significant discount because you would give their product a greater profile?

Interfaith Power and Light in the US is an interfaith ministry, which aims to: ‘mobilize a national religious response to global warming while promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation’. It began as Episcopal Power and Light in 1998 but found strength in numbers and in sharing information, consumer power and advocacy opportunities with other people of faith. It now covers 4,000 congregations and faith communities in 28 states.

Christian environmental group, A Rocha, has linked with hotels and tour companies operating around Kenya’s Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Mida Creek. The businesses – and tourists visiting the hide, trail and suspended walkway –

contribute funds for 'eco-bursaries' for more than 100 local children to attend secondary school. This reduces the need for families to exploit natural resources to pay for schooling, and local people come to value the preservation of the forest and creek, because they benefit from it.

7. Celebration

a) Traditional Festivals

Have you set aside a specific festival to focus on the natural environment – for example a tree festival or a Celebration of Creation?

In Judaism, the festival of Tu B'Shabat – the New Year of Trees – has become a major environmental festival with education kits, new prayers and projects helping to mobilise Judaism every year. Meanwhile the day of mourning – Tisha B'Av – marked every summer to mark the destruction of the two ancient Holy Temples in Jerusalem, has been extended in some Jewish traditions as a lament for the destruction of the earth. The Jewish Seven Year Plan involves recovering the ecological value of Shabbat as a day to step back from the processes of creation: manufacturing, flying and technological manipulation.

The Jain festival of Paryushana is a time of reflection and meditation on the actions of the past year – and some Jains are increasingly seeing it as a festival of reflection on our actions to the natural environment. Out of respect to that, in 2008 the Mumbai Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation decided to close down all city slaughterhouses during the nine-day festival period.

In 2008, the UK-based Operation Noah, recommended that families 'Reclaim Christmas' and 'put the waiting back into waiting' during the Advent period of December. With the motto 'shop less, live more, save the Earth,' the team promoted events encouraging people to experience Advent in the traditional sense of being a period of 'quiet reflection and eager anticipation.' Plans included a 'Buy Nothing Day,' a scheme for giving away things that have never been used, but which are still nice, and building services around the canticle of Daniel, the 'canticle of animals'.

b) New Festivals

If you have not got an existing festival of creation in your tradition, could you take an existing festival or custom and adapt its practices and rituals so that there is a deeper environmental message?

The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) are considering introducing a new annual environmental celebration to commemorate the anniversary of the inspiring French Jesuit priest, palaeontologist and environmental philosopher, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ, who died on April 10, 1955.

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon is organising Green Week Celebrations every year in all its schools and congregations.

c) Introduce new traditions and create a platform

Many religious leaders value tradition so much that they have no hesitation in introducing new ones. Perhaps you can introduce a new practice, which will be wonderful for Creation, as well as for people. Many faiths are expert at bringing people together: and their places of worship are often wonderful buildings for holding forums for events. Open up your place of worship for a party or fete on environmental issues; create a forum for debate; issue an invitation to people in your wider community inviting them to come and tell their story.

The Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania now has a programme of tree planting linked to key life events. For example, trees are presented to children at their baptism, for their parents to plant. Those children in turn must plant a number of their own trees before they can be confirmed. Women also have started campaigns to grow trees: 'they want to imitate the famous Wangari Maathai of Kenya in tree planting.'

In 1987, ARC worked with churches around the UK who wanted to make the Harvest Festival into a celebration of Creation. Many decided to invite the managers of their local supermarkets to give a sermon on what their stores were doing to help the environment. It was reported that head office telephones were ringing off the hook as regional managers called to find out what they should say. By the following year, they had programmes in place, and had something to talk about and be proud of. By 1993 it was estimated that around one-quarter of schools and 1,000 churches were doing Creation Harvest Festivals. Many Christian Plans include incorporating an annual Creation Day or Creation Time festivals into their calendar of worship and contemplation, both to celebrate the beauty of God's creation but also to focus attention on conservation and environmental issues.

The Lutheran Church of Norway will in 2017 be celebrating 500 years since Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to a church door in Wittenburg, Germany, and thus started the Reformation. The Church has pledged that by 2017 all parishes will be green parishes, and each joint church council will be certified as an 'environmental lighthouse'. This involves a 'new and profound reform' of basic values, attitudes and patterns of actions in the Church. It is a reform which, in its Ten Year Plan of environmental action, created in 2007, it pledged to commence. 'Let the eyes of your grandchildren be your confessional mirrors.'

d) Celebrate beautiful places and new developments

The world, despite all its problems, is still a beautiful place. Sometimes it is the role of faiths, within all the doom and gloom of ecological predictions, to remind people to celebrate the beautiful, good, heroic and brave things about the world and about life. Celebrate good new developments, the potential for better protection of habitats and eco-systems, and give thanks.