

**Statement to The Anglican Communion
from
The Anglican Communion Environmental Network**

We send greetings from the environmental network conference of the Anglican Communion meeting in Canberra, Australia, April 2005. This second global Anglican conference on the environment was the first meeting since becoming an official network of the Anglican Communion. The focus of our meeting was the challenge posed by global climate change. We have met in the name of Jesus, the incarnate word of God, whose coming amongst us compels us to take seriously the whole created order made sacred in Christ.

He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and earth were created... all things have been created through Him and for Him” (Col. 1:15-17).

The Faith that Moves Us

Holy Scripture reminds us that, “the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” (Psalm 24:1). All of creation belongs to God, not to human beings. We are part of the created order and our first calling by God is to be stewards of the earth and the rest of creation (Genesis 1:28-29).

God has called us to stewardship of the world to ensure that it remains fruitful for the future. We are becoming increasingly aware that the world is being harmed by us and we know how to eliminate the harm we are doing. This is a breaking of the most fundamental commandments known to us, in that we are knowingly causing the degradation of the world’s ecosystems out of our greed and selfishness, rather than living with and protecting the design that issues from the Creator’s generosity. Adam (humanity) is explicitly told to be content with what is rightfully allocated (Gen 2:8) and not be tempted to take that which is appropriately denied. Ignoring this injunction continues to be our abiding sin. It is one matter to act out of ignorance, it is quite another to act out of □ecognize□. Wilfully causing environmental degradation is a sin.

It is clear from the reports of the represented Provinces, and the presentations of the scientists who spoke during the conference that humanity has failed to fulfil God’s will for creation. The earth and everything therein now face perilous and catastrophic environmental destruction, often as a result of human activities. The Archbishop of Canterbury has warned that our continued failure to protect the earth and to resolve economic injustices within and between societies will lead not only to environmental collapse but also to social collapse.

We met in the joy of Eastertide, celebrating our hope in the Risen Lord, a hope that makes us claim, “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation, everything old has passed away, see everything has become new”(1 Cor. 5:17). The mystery of His creation is still unfolding and, watching and waiting in hope, we call on the whole Church to respond. What is now needed is that the stewardship given to us by God be proclaimed and acted upon, for “all this is from God who reconciled us to himself for Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (1 Cor.

5:18-19). We must take the lead from the Holy Spirit to be instruments in the renewal of that “whole creation” which has been “groaning in labour pains until now” (Rom. 8:22).

We confess that the Anglican Communion as a whole has failed to promote its mission priority, “to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth.”¹ We commend our Anglican/Episcopal brothers and sisters worldwide who are contributing to the protection of the environment in response to the call of our baptismal covenant to serve Christ in all creation. “Just as you did it to one of the least of these... you did it to me” (Matt. 25:40, c.f. 45).

The Realities that Concern Us

We gathered to reflect on the current impact and threat posed by climate change both globally and locally noting that current global CO₂ levels have not been experienced for over 400,000 years and average global temperatures rose by nearly 1°C during the twentieth century, which represents an unprecedented rate of change in human history. These temperature changes are already causing severe environmental stress to vulnerable populations and fragile ecosystems. We also heard that the current scientific consensus predicts significantly increased CO₂ levels by 2100 with locally catastrophic consequences.

Climate change impacts are already being registered across the world and can be illustrated from the experience of the communities whose stories we heard at our meeting:

Sea level rise in the Pacific

Our delegates from Polynesia and Melanesia described how low-lying atolls in Tuvalu and Kiribati are experiencing coastal flooding and contamination of fresh water. Kiribati has lost one island already. Current sea level is rising at 6cm per decade and by 2100 this could increase to 4-11 cm per decade, presenting an even greater threat to other island nations.

Global warming and health

Our delegates from Kenya and the Philippines reported an increase in the range of mosquitoes, resulting in more widespread malaria. This is attributed in part to rising temperatures. Projected further increases of 1.5° C to 5.8° C by 2100 will further exacerbate this trend.

Melting of glaciers, ice sheets and frozen ground

Our delegate from Kenya reported melting snows on Mt Kenya mirroring the well-known reduction in glaciers on Mt Kilimanjaro. Projected further melting of the tundra in Canada’s frozen north could release catastrophic amounts of methane – an even more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂.

Enhanced climatic variability

Our delegates from Australia and Africa reported longer and more severe droughts, which, in the case of Kenya, are also coupled with uncertainty over the length and timing of the rainy season. Prolonged droughts across Africa are already affecting local food security, causing increased poverty and suffering. This trend is set to intensify under projected temperature rises.

Increased Storms and floods

Our delegates from the US, Canada, Oceania and the Philippines reported increased storm activity severely affecting vulnerable coastal populations. Further increases in atmospheric and sea level temperatures will intensify this trend throughout the century. In Scotland and Wales

¹ The fifth mark of mission, adopted by the 8th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in 1990.

(along with much of northwest Europe) widespread and severe flooding has occurred since 2000. Projected increases in rainfall by the end of the century will substantially increase current losses.

Many of these impacts on vulnerable populations are also being experienced by fragile ecosystems upon which the whole of human kind depends for food, shelter and well-being. Ecosystems in the Brazilian Amazon and in the Philippines are changing more rapidly and extensively than at any time in human history, resulting in an irreversible loss of the diversity of life. Degrading ecosystems locally increases poverty but also poses a major threat to future generations and to the achievement of UN Millennium Development Goals. Climate change will further intensify these threats.

The Responses We Propose

We see hope and rejoice in progress made. We heard at our meeting that:

The Kyoto Protocol is now legally binding in 128 nations.

Many provinces, dioceses and parishes within the Anglican Communion are actively pursuing actions towards environmental sustainability.

Task forces within the Anglican Communion are addressing inter-related issues, such as trade and poverty, and women's issues.

Parishes in some provinces have begun to use programs to help them reduce the environmental footprint of their activities (Eco-congregations / Footprint Files, etc).

In the light of these hopeful signs, we encourage all Anglicans to:

- recognize that global climatic change is real and that we are contributing to the despoiling of creation.

commend initiatives that address the moral transformation needed for environmentally sustainable economic practices such as the Contraction and Convergence process championed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.²

understand that, for the sake of future generations and the good of God's creation, those of us in the rich nations need to be ready to make sacrifices in the level of comfort and luxury we have come to enjoy.

expect mission, vision and value statements to contain commitment to environmental responsibility at all levels of church activity.

educate all church members about the Christian mandate to care for creation.

work on these issues ecumenically and with all faith communities and people of good will everywhere.

ensure that the voices of women, indigenous peoples and youth are heard.

press government, industry and civil society on the moral imperative of taking practical steps towards building sustainable communities.

There are specific steps which we believe must be undertaken urgently:

Include environmental education as an integral part of all theological training.

² Rowan Williams in the Independent, Sunday, April 17, 2005.

http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sermons_speeches/050417.htm

Take targeted and specific actions to assess and reduce our environmental footprint particularly greenhouse gas emissions. Such actions could include energy and resource audits, land management, just trading and purchasing, socially and ethically responsible investment. Promote and commit ourselves to use renewable energy wherever possible. Revise our liturgies and our calendar and lectionaries in ways that more fully reflect the role and work of God as Creator. Press for urgent initiation of discussions leading to a just and effective development beyond the Kyoto Protocol, which includes all nations. Support the work of the World Council of Churches Climate Change Action Group. Bring before governments the imperative to use all means, including legislation and removal of subsidies, to reduce greenhouse gases.

We express our gratitude to his grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury, for his outstanding leadership and his championing of this vital aspect of our Christian commitment. And call on Anglicans everywhere to follow this example.

We commit to pray for one another, especially our sisters and brothers who courageously set standards in developing countries, knowing that in the short term these very standards may slow the process of development.

We commit ourselves to maintain this global network, to share resources with each other, and to lift the Anglican Communion to new levels of both awareness and commitment to these aspects of our Gospel imperative. We call on all provinces to become involved in the work of the network.