

The Earth is the Lord's – Reflection for Climate Sunday 19 September 2021

The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it!
How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.
Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts.
Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise.
As they go through the valley of Baca, the valley of tears, they make it a place of springs; the
early rain also covers it with pools. O Lord of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.
The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it!

Adapted from Psalm 84 and 24

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We are all aware that this is a critical year for the world to respond to the climate emergency. Churches are encouraged to mark Climate Sunday ahead of the international climate conference in Glasgow this autumn, COP26. As we do, we remember that in the words of our bible reading: 'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it!' We pray for a renewed energy to work for God's world at this pivotal time.

The report published last month by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change clearly states that human activity is changing the climate in unprecedented ways. It is recognised that rapid and drastic reductions in greenhouse gases are needed in the next ten years in order to prevent climate breakdown. There is little wonder that young people around the world are saying that they may not have children themselves because they are frightened for the future of the planet.

It's all too easy to feel overwhelmed particularly when we see so clearly the unprecedented effects of global warming: rising temperatures, extreme wild-fires, terrible floods and appalling droughts. The gravity of the situation cannot be over-stated and requires governments and businesses to act. Our individual response, even our response church by church, is so tiny – and yet it is so important too.

The organisation Green Christian focuses on four themes that decision-makers at COP26 need to address: the interconnectedness within nature, the importance of climate justice to protect the vulnerable, the potential for well-being without ever-increasing consumption and the significance of hope if change is to be achieved.

As Christians, faith plays an important role in motivating change. Christians believe that change is possible and that we are all called to be change-makers within God's world. In their Joint Message for the Protection of Creation, Archbishop Justin, Pope Francis and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew write: 'We must decide what kind of world we want to leave for future generations. God mandates: 'Choose life, so that you and your children might live.' (Dt 30:19) We must choose to live differently; we must choose life.'

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