

Shared Action book

.....
Inhabit Creation
differently

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Foreword



God, the Creator of the heavens, the earth and above all of man, created in his image, has entrusted him with the responsibility of protecting and maintaining this creation and not destroying it.

Pollution, global warming, deforestation, species extinction, water issues, and so many other factors are causing the deterioration of our entire environment.

God, who by pure grace brought about the creation of Cevaa, this Community of Churches in Mission, has sent it into the world with a view to its preservation, through its reflections and its actions.

Since October 2023, at its 12th General Assembly in Jacquville, Côte d'Ivoire, the Cevaa has given itself another watchword through a theme that is both topical and real: to inhabit Creation differently, cf. Genesis 2:15. A theme to invite all its member Churches and therefore all of humanity to a real, even concrete awareness of the destruction of Creation by man, yet charged by God the Creator to guard and maintain it.

To achieve this, in addition to all the relevant interventions made at the General Assembly, regional Shared Action seminars were organised around the theme: to inhabit Creation differently.

To further raise awareness of behavioural change, an activity booklet has been published.

May the spirit of this booklet and each word inspire every reader to adopt the behaviour needed to inhabit Creation differently. Let us give this booklet a warm welcome and make good use of it, in our personal interest, in the interest of all creation and to the glory of God the Creator!

Pastor Michel LOBO, President of Cevaa



Inhabit Creation
differently is now the
theme of the Shared
Action.

Introduction

Our era cannot ignore the ecological question, which is vital for the survival of mankind, nor reduce it to a purely political question: it has a moral and spiritual dimension that affects everyone, so that no one can ignore it. As disciples of Christ, we have one more reason to unite with all people of good will for the protection and defence of nature and the environment. Creation is a gift entrusted to us by the Creator. All of nature around us is a creation like us, a creation with us, and in our common destiny it tends to find in God itself its fulfilment and ultimate purpose: 'new heavens and a new earth' (cf. Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1). The ecological crisis is an even stronger incentive for us to have a responsible and respectful relationship with Creation: in inanimate nature, in plants and in animals, we recognise the imprint of the Creator, and in our fellow human beings, his very image.

Today, as Christians, we must ask ourselves whether we should participate in this action, not only on a personal level but also as a community in the Church. We must stimulate ethical reflection based on our biblical roots. All of us within the Cevaa can work together, as instruments of God, for the safeguarding of Creation, each according to their environment, culture, experience, initiatives and abilities.

Inhabiting Creation differently is a call to conversion. At the level of the Community, we want to respond to the pressing expectations of society and the Churches to help the various faithful to become more aware and more concerned about environmental issues.

This booklet, published by the Cevaa as part of the Shared Action 'Inhabit Creation differently', is intended as a tool for reflection, facilitation and meditation for communities.

It contains theological texts, ideas for Bible study, liturgical suggestions and courses of action.

This is not a finished work, but a stage. It is a tool, a collection of examples of biblical, liturgical and practical approaches to our relationship with Creation.

We hope that you too will be willing to make

other tools and examples available to the Community. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to this work.

Inhabit Creation differently is a call to conversion.

Secretariat team

Pastor Omer DAGAN, Executive Secretary of the Activities and Youth Pole



The Community Context

1. Shared Action?

'The Shared Action is the realisation of the desire to act together. It must be a truly international action of all the Churches of the Cevaa. It is joint because it responds to a reality experienced, no doubt to varying degrees, by all the Churches of the Community. It relies heavily on theological leadership to give it its indispensable spiritual and conceptual foundation. It implements projects to give it a concrete aspect through specific actions. It is built on the logic of networking and communication in order to link together the effectiveness, visibility and sustainability of the action taken by the Cevaa Churches.'

- extract from the minutes of

the 3rd GA, 2006 - Bouznika (Morocco) -

As a Community of Churches, the Cevaa challenges and encourages its members to engage in theological reflection and exchanges. The Shared Action activity strengthens community ties between churches at the regional and interregional levels. Following the example of Christ, the churches teach compassion, listening and support.

The Shared Action within the Cevaa mobilise all the member Churches of the Community; they must join forces to engage effectively and resolutely in actions and/or to debate themes they have chosen.



Women's Caravan for Peace
- 2006

The Shared Action within the Cevaa mobilise all the member churches of the Community.



Meeting our neighbours -
2006

2. The various Joint Action of the Cevaa

Women's Caravan for Peace - 2006

Women have sown seeds of hope and taken actions for peace, reconciliation and healing. These people have woven a chain of solidarity in the Church and in civil society.

- **Objective:** to address the theme of peace by highlighting the vital role of women as actors and promoters of peace in the world.
- **Actions carried out:** a caravan of women travelled to all the churches in the Community for training in mediation, the promotion of women, theological activities on the theme of peace and the creation of a scroll to record the contribution of the women of each church.

Meeting our neighbours - 2006

The Churches of the Cevaa have decided to reach out to the world around them, choosing three specific neighbours: the migrant neighbour, the sick neighbour and the neighbour of other religious beliefs

- **Migrants :**
 - **Objective:** to address the phenomenon of migration
'All human beings are migrants and have the right to migrate. Unfortunately, they are not all equal in the face of this right. This phenomenon, due to soulless globalisation and a lack of global governance, must be assessed in all its dimensions, including geographical, religious, political, social, economic and ecological.'
 - **Actions carried out:** Mosaic Project, Être Église Ensemble, Morocco-Congo Project, Congo-Gabon Project

- **Neighbours of other religious beliefs:**

- **Objective:** to emphasise the necessity of inter-religious dialogue
'To make the relationship with our neighbours who do not share the same faith one of the priorities of the action of the Cevaa.'
- **Actions carried out:** promotion of collaboration with the Program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PCMRA), seminars and publication of the work Christians and Religious Diversity

- **HIV/AIDS:**

- **Objective:** to fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic
'Need to evaluate and support the Churches in the actions they have already undertaken about HIV/AIDS, particularly with other religious and civil communities.'
- **Actions carried out:** seminars, project funding

Families, Gospel and Cultures in a Changing World - 2013



The Cevaa churches have chosen to address this topical issue in the light of the cultural and social diversity that the Community represents.

- **Objective:** to address the issue of the family by exploring avenues for dialogue between the Gospel and cultures. The changes that humanity is experiencing have given rise to new forms of families, attitudes, behaviours and living conditions.
- **Actions carried out:** seminars and publications



**SHARED
ACTION
2024-2028**

‘Inhabit
Creation
differently’

Human beings are part of Creation

a. Why the theme 'Inhabit Creation differently?'

According to Frédéric BAUDIN, ecological issues gained importance when we became aware of the devastating power of nuclear weapons and the consequences of the pollution caused by the industrial exploitation of the planet's natural resources. Since the United Nations Convention on Climate Change in Rio in 1992, there has been a long way to go towards a real change in mentality. The ecological emergency is causing a sea change that challenges us as a Church.

All creation is related to God and its beauty reflects the infinite beauty of the Creator.

Indeed, there is no creature that does not owe its existence to God in the Bible. All Creation is linked to God and its beauty reflects the infinite beauty of the Creator. For J. MOLTMANN: 'God is present in all things and all things are in God.'

The biblical authors often speak of Creation and bless the One who has made so well the visible and invisible things that surround us and from

which we benefit freely. That is why, from the beginning to the end of the Bible, man is asked to recognise His marvellous work and to draw the consequences.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

Today, the threats caused by a lack of care, or even by the abuse of the Earth and its natural resources, are becoming increasingly worrying.

• • •

Colossians 1:12-14:

And giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you[a] to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.



- What is happening to our 'common home' today: pollution, the throwaway culture, global warming, deforestation, species extinction, water problems, all these factors are causing the deterioration of our environment along with social degradation. Since the industrial revolution, the modernisation of factories and agriculture, human activities have begun to emit greenhouse gases on a large scale. The greenhouse effect has gone from acting as a filter to acting as a cloak. It is retaining more and more heat. This is what is causing global warming.

- There is a crisis of the spirit, of identification and of relationships: when we talk about the ecological crisis, we very often limit

The current ecological crisis is fundamentally a crisis of humanity.

ourselves to the damage caused by human beings to ecosystems, to the Earth and to the functioning of the cycles of nature. But for some theologians, the ecological crisis has deeper causes and disastrous consequences that go beyond the environment alone. These theologians believe that the current ecological crisis is fundamentally a crisis of humanity. As a result, the crisis we face today is a crisis of spiritual values, of our relationships with others, with the environment and with ourselves.

While it is therefore undeniable that the ecological peril threatens the planet and humanity, it is impossible for the Church and for the Cevaa to ignore the subject.





The Lord God took the man and established him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and to keep it

b. Biblical motivation

Throughout the whole of Chapter 2 of Genesis, questions relating to the origin of Man, of fauna, of flora, and therefore of the environment, are addressed: where does the world come from? Where does Man come from? Why work? What is Man's responsibility in Creation?

Genesis 2:15 speaks of a garden as God's work, which becomes the common space where human beings will live and grow.

According to the biblical account, the Earth was designed from the outset as a garden where God planted trees. Humans had two specific tasks: to work and to preserve the planet as a common garden. The two verbs in the verse clearly express these tasks. We must cultivate the garden (work, plough, plant, produce) and look after it (maintain, protect, preserve). The text invites us to look at our planet as a shared garden. To think of it as an open and dynamic world. While it is true that this garden has been given to us to transform, we must work it according to the rules and instructions of the original gardener.

Romans 8:20-21: *For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that[a] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.*

Creation, like humanity, is subject to sin. Genesis 3 tells of these various ruptures: of man with God, between man and woman, between man and nature, between nature and God. But this Creation, like humanity, is promised liberation. This hope motivates the Christian's commitment to be a witness for the creation of this reconciliation promised and acquired by Christ in whom and through whom all was created.

Luke 17:21: *because the kingdom of God is in your midst.*

The Kingdom is already here, acceptable in faith. It is, at the same time, a hope. It is awaited. It will come with the definitive victory of life over death.

Creation experiences this tension that mobilises the fight for justice, peace and the preservation of Creation.



c. The objectives of Shared Action “Inhabit Creation differently”

- Encourage reflection and action by the Cevaa Churches in favour of a way of life that respects Creation, God’s gift.
- Fight against the effects of everything that undermines biodiversity and the integrity of humans and the environment.

- Develop a Christian faith that takes Creation into account and discerns the presence of the Holy Spirit in it.

- Develop an attitude of responsibility towards our common home (OIKOS) and our fellow human beings.

- Cultivate and preserve a way of thinking, living, acting and hoping to develop in man the sense of his connection with all Creation.

It is important to reflect on this and to question the action (actions) of the Churches in terms of ecology and the safeguarding of Creation. This back and forth between the Word and Shared Action will be the guarantee of the quality of the results obtained and the effects and impacts that they may have.

It is important to engage in this reflection and to question the actions of the Churches.

d. What is the specificity of the Cevaa in addressing this subject?

The Cevaa enables us to act together and to multiply the impact of this action on an international scale in every region of the world where the Community is represented.

This breadth, this desire to live and act together will enable us to benefit from the expertise and experience of each of the member Churches.

e. The challenges

The sharp increase in greenhouse gases over the last few decades has

already led to a constant rise in sea levels, increasing acidification of



the world's oceans, and increasingly severe floods, droughts and famines, with an intensification of extreme weather events.

In a world with limited natural resources, we must promote a lifestyle that prevents any misuse of God's gifts

f. Conclusion

Inhabit Creation differently is a theme that calls for support.

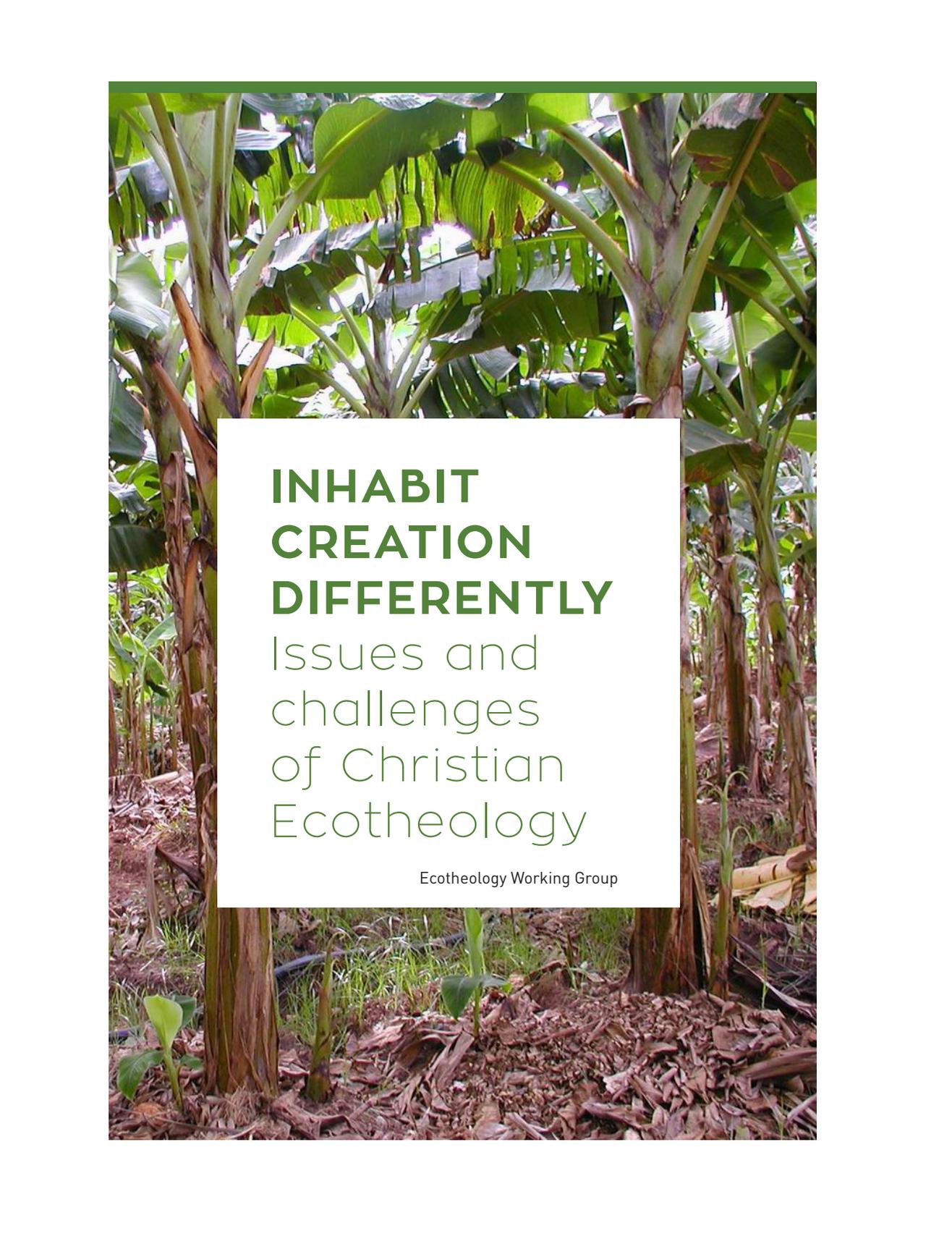
The adverb 'differently' invites mankind to sobriety in the daily management of Creation; it is a responsible challenge, a prophetic warning, a call for a different way of seeing Creation, a different way of collaborating with Creation, a change in behaviour for the sake of common happiness and sustainable and integral development.

Climate change brings with it a cascade of injustices, which have a particular impact on the most disadvantaged populations on the planet. These populations struggle to feed themselves and to make a decent living from their production.

and encourage good stewardship of all that God has given us in Creation. One of the challenges for humanity at the beginning of the third millennium may well be to find and maintain a just and vital balance between the two tasks assigned to human beings in creation: cultivating and protecting.

It is a responsible challenge, a prophetic warning, a call for a different way of seeing Creation, a different way of collaborating with Creation.

Through this theme, the Cevaa wants to encourage member Churches and Christians to reflect; it wants to encourage action in favour of a way of life that respects Creation, God's gift; it wants to question the action (or actions) of the Churches in terms of ecology and the safe guarding of Creation, while drawing on the teachings and guidance of the Bible.



**INHABIT
CREATION
DIFFERENTLY**

Issues and
challenges
of Christian
Ecotheology

Ecotheology Working Group

Historical overview

The whole of humanity is groaning in labour pains. This is not a question or an intuition, it is a concrete fact that heralds an inevitable turning point for our human reality.

At the start of the 21st century, the media alerts the whole world every day to the impact of the pressure that humans exert on their environment and vice versa: drying up of rivers, climate change, disruption of ecosystems, deforestation, extinction of animal and plant species, these are just some of the problems that challenge humans to review their relationship with the rest of Creation. On a global level, governments and certain organisations are taking action and demonstrating their will.

Indeed, from the Stockholm Earth Summit in 1972 to the present day, environmental issues have increasingly become a concern and fundamental data to be considered in the lives of both individuals and institutions. Religions are not remaining on the sidelines of this issue. They are making their contribution through

The WCC has resolved to enter 'into a process of commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation.'

meetings and statements on the subject. At a global level, the commitment of the Churches was emphasised at the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) which took place in Vancouver in 1983. Under the theme of 'Jesus Christ, the Life of the World', the Assembly dealt with many sub-themes, including the nuclear threat and neocolonialism as challenges to peace and survival.

From then on, the WCC resolved to enter 'a process of commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation'. From this Assembly to the 10th, which took place in Busan in 2013 with a social focus on the theme 'Justice and Peace', via the 7th, which took place in Canberra, Australia (1991) under the theme: 'Come, Holy Spirit, renew the whole Creation' and especially the 9th, held in Porto Alegre in 2006, with the theme:





'God, in your grace, transform the world', the commitment of the Churches to the safeguarding of Creation has increased considerably, to the point of generating regional gatherings and movements among the faithful against the threats to the harmony within Creation.

In its assemblies, the WCC has consistently called on its member churches to make a public commitment and to act together to address the challenges of justice, peace and the integrity of Creation. This is the reason for the WCC's determination to choose the theme 'Inhabit Creation differently', to encourage its member Churches to get involved

concretely in this complex struggle in the light of Genesis 2:15. This is evident from the fact that these Churches are among those that have signed the ecumenical declarations on the safeguarding of Creation.

Why should the Churches of the WCC be involved in ecological issues through the theme 'Inhabit Creation differently'? How can this theme help the WCC to involve its member Churches in ecological issues? How can the member Churches of the WCC orient this theme to help make the whole of Creation liveable, viable and worth living? These are the questions that guide reflection on Ecotheology.

Why should the Cevaa churches get involved in ecological issues?

Creation: an ecumenical concern

Safeguarding Creation has never been so urgent. It has become necessary to devote time to it.

In 1989, the Orthodox Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople proposed that the 1st of September be dedicated to the preservation of the environment.

In 2015, Pope Francis chose 1 September as the date for the Catholic Church to institute a 'World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation'.

Every year from 1 September to 4 October, Christians around the world are invited to listen to the cries of the world and to commit themselves more fully to the path of ecological conversion. Individuals and communities participate in this during the time of safeguarding Creation through several activities:

Prayer: organisation of ecumenical prayers that unite Christians in the protection of our common home.

Sustainability: organising planting or waste collection activities that will help Creation to flourish.

Advocacy: making the voice of Christians heard for climate justice by participating in or leading an existing campaign.

The Season of Creation is a great opportunity for the Churches of the Cevaa to intensify their efforts.

They are now highlighting activities to care for Creation according to Genesis 2:15: 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.'



Ecotheology in five areas

I. Re-reading the Christian sources relating to the ecological crisis

As announced in the introduction, Christian resources contain the biblical and historical foundations.

A - Biblical foundations relating to the ecological crisis

This point aims to understand the biblical texts that guide the behaviour of Man towards/ in Creation. In addition to the text of Genesis 2:15, which is the basis of the theme 'Inhabit Creation differently', it is a question of visiting other resources according to the different subdivisions of the Bible. How does the question of Man and his environment arise and what are the different issues at stake?

Can we find the limitations, even the weaknesses, of certain theologies developed in biblical texts relating to how Man should inhabit Creation? What Christian discourse should be held today in light of these texts in the face of the current 'groanings of Creation'? To answer these questions, certain points will be addressed:

- Exegesis of Genesis 2:15

and its outlines;

- Ecological crises and *Inhabit Creation differently* from the perspective of the Pentateuch;

- Ecological crises and *Inhabit Creation differently* according to the prophets of the Bible;

- Man and Creation in the Scriptures;

- *Inhabit Creation differently* from the New Testament perspective (Gospels, Epistles and Apocalypse).

B- Inhabit Creation differently from a historical-Christian perspective

This point deals with the way in which the relationship between Man and Creation has been treated throughout the history of Christianity, from the Fathers of the Church to us, including Christian mystics, Reformers, Green Popes, the World Council of Churches and certain contemporary theologians.

Methodological approach

Starting from the multiplicity of biblical texts relating to the

How does the question of man and his environment arise, and what are the issues at stake?

general theme of 'Inhabit Creation differently', the methodological approach leaves it up to each person to deal with a certain number of texts with a theological sub-theme in the sense of the general theme. For example, without claiming to be exhaustive, it is possible to work on:

- Psalm 103 as an alternative to Genesis 1-2;
- an ecotheological reading of the Cross: accounts of the Passion, the crucifixion and the resurrection;
- revisiting the concept of the Covenant and reviewing the transition to a meat-based diet according to Genesis 9:1-10;
- pollution of land and water in the light of Numbers 35:34 and Deuteronomy 3:13;

The methodological approach leaves room for text processing.

- new heavens and a new Earth according to Revelation 21 and Isaiah 65;
- the groaning of Creation in Romans 8.

As for the historical-Christian perspective, it is possible to proceed in the same way by choosing a Church Father, a Christian Mystic or a theological current to deal with a specific sub-theme. For example:

- Inhabiting Creation differently according to St Theresa of the Child Jesus;
- Man and nature according to Thomas Aquinas;
- Inhabiting Creation differently: the historical data of the WCC.

Some Protestant theologians:

- Jacques ELLUL, *Théologie et Technique. Pour une éthique de la non-puissance. Textes établis par Sivor, Danielle et Yves ELLUL, introduction de Frédéric ROGNON, Genève, Labor et Fides, coll. Philosophie, 2014.*
- La crise écologique selon Jürgen MOLTMANN (un des plus importants théologiens réformés allemands). Il élabore une théologie de la création sur fond de crise écologique à partir de la communion trinitaire.
- Frédéric ROGNON, *Le Chemin tortueux du protestantisme français vers la théologie verte, Labor et Fides, 2020.*
- Martin KOPP, *Vers une écologie intégrale, Théologie pour des vies épanouies, Labor et Fides, Paris, 2023.*

II. Sharing the wealth of contextual theologies

This point, linked to the previous one, deals with subjects related to the general theme according to specific contexts. For example, it is possible to deal with the issues of immigration and hospitality; identity and borders; production and consumption in a given territory. It makes it possible to move from the general to the particular by dealing with the specific

problems related to the theme 'Inhabit Creation differently'. The objective here is to explore the different ways of living with, in, through and for Creation, considering the personal, interpersonal and collective dimensions. All this is done with the aim of forging multidimensional convictions in promoting inter-convictional dialogue, especially in the face of new challenges.



III. Responding to new ethical and political challenges

The theme of 'Inhabit Creation Differently' is important not only in relation to the way in which humans live in Creation, but also in relation to new challenges. It is therefore a question of going beyond 'cultivating' and 'keeping' the garden in the sense of protectionist environmentalism, and moving towards the promotion of the human vocation and life. However, this

transition is not without its limitations, especially when it comes to addressing issues relating to climate justice, bioethics, inter-convictional dialogue and political ecology. Nevertheless, the complexity of these debates does not in any way prevent the possibility of innovating, inventing and deploying practices that help us to inhabiting Creation differently.

IV. Inventing and deploying new practices

We have outlined the three strands of Ecotheology and its seven areas of intervention. This point consists of signaling some orientations that link discourse to practices with the aim of promoting the theme 'Inhabiting Creation differently' within the member churches of the Cevaa.

We recognise that each context has its own realities, which require a diversity of content,

approaches and objectives. For example, some areas face famine, others overproduction! Some countries face a brain drain, others the integration of immigrants! Starting only from these cases, how are the different fields of Ecotheology concerned? At what level do some people enter into dialogue with others? What practices at the level of individuals, groups, communities and institutions?

• • •

Prayer for Creation

God, Creator of the universe, all life and all goodness come from You. You made us in Your image and likeness, and entrusted us with the care of the earth's resources in moderation. Yet, we have sinned against You by exploiting the natural resources with greed and selfishness, causing great harm to life on our planet. Forgive us, Lord! Help us change our habits and become more responsible stewards of the gifts entrusted to us, mindful of the needs of future generations. Come, Holy Spirit, and renew the face of the earth! We ask this through Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.
Amen.

What contextual pedagogies should be applied? These are all questions that can guide the various 'Shared Action' think tanks.

Starting from the what, the why and the how implies the deployment of new pedagogies and ways of working. This new pedagogical orientation goes as far as working on the imaginary (writing and arts: narrative in the broad sense); the popularisation of basic scientific data (overview of the climate, biodiversity, documentaries,

etc.) in a Christian environment; the work that links ecological transition to resources of inner transition; integration of ecological gestures and practices in the life of communities and individuals.

In order to carry out this complex mission, Ecotheology will involve theological training centres, faith-based schools, informal training for parish groups and formal organisations for theological reflection.

V. Places where the theme of Inhabiting Creation Differently is applied

Aware of the urgency, the member churches of the Cevaa are uniting to listen together to the cry of Creation and respond with actions and prayers. Thus, the places where the theme is applied are diverse:

- families;
- local communities;
- theological training centres and

denominational schools;

- Sunday schools (curriculum design: *Enfant Vert* and *Les Amis de la planète*);
- parish groups (men, women, youth);
- adherence to the various labels: Green Church or *Coq Vert* depending on the region;
- not to mention hospitals and social work centres belonging to the Churches.

Question of semantics

Several pairs of verbs are used in the book of Genesis to define the cultural mandate given by God to humanity. The two pairs of verbs that summarise this mission are: 'to cultivate and to guard'.

What do these verbs mean in Genesis?

The verb **to cultivate** means to work, to plough, to plant, to sow. The land is worked to make it produce plants useful for human needs. In a figurative sense, it means

to develop and to preserve, in terms of the relationships and feelings that bind people

The two pairs of verbs that summarise this mission are: 'to cultivate and to guard'.

together. A relationship must be cultivated. The verb cultivate is also used to refer to the activity of the Levites in the tabernacle set up in the desert or in the temple of Jerusalem. It can thus have the meaning of 'to worship' or 'to serve God'.

The Hebrew word for **to guard**, *shamar*, has several meanings: to accord someone or something attentive and diligent protection. To provide someone or something with attentive and diligent protection. To ensure that something

does not suffer any damage. This brings to mind the care that the farmer takes of his land so that it bears fruit and that this fruit is shared.

The two verb pairs that summarise this mission are: 'to cultivate and to guard'.

The two verbs **cultivate** (*avad*) and **keep** (*Samar*) have a religious connotation: 'Keep the commandments of God', 'worship' or 'serve God'. For this reason, God denies any claim to absolute ownership: 'The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers' (Leviticus 25:23). For many of our contemporaries, it is the fault of Christianity (at least in large part) that humanity has reached the ecological crisis we are experiencing. See

for example Lynn WHITE, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis', *Science*, 155 (1967).

According to Genesis 2:15, man has an original role, which is to 'cultivate and guard the Earth', the garden: this order must also be read in the perspective of the covenant with God.

Man is created as a co-builder within the framework of the Covenant. If we are in a state of broken covenant with nature, it is probably because we are in a state of broken covenant with ourselves, with others and with God. This can be called 'ecological sin' or collective sin. The Earth was given to us not to become its owners, but to become its co-inhabitants, to make it grow and flourish. And to 'keep it' by keeping the covenant.

Just synonyms

Genesis 2:8-17

God, in creating man, carefully put him in a garden.

In reading this text, we can see that this space was prepared with good irrigation and a variety of fruit-bearing trees, in order to provide for the needs of human beings. What kindness, what foresight on the part of the Creator!

He then simply asks man to take care of it.

Cultivate and keep. A simple commandment, that of watching over the garden, putting humans and nature in a relationship of reciprocity. Yet man fell by defying the prohibition of the tree of knowledge.

God then pronounced a sentence.

Genesis 3:17-19

The fall of man led to the fall of nature. This garden, so prolific and a source of food for man, would no longer be a safe haven. Cultivation

became difficult, as had been foretold.

The rest of the Bible shows how much more changeable nature became afterwards. Famine, drought, barren trees and plants that wither away are regular features and strong markers throughout the biblical narrative, reflecting the insecurity and discomfort of human beings.

Cultivating and guarding

Those who have ever cultivated a piece of land know that many factors come into play: the quality of the soil, which must be nourished with compost and sometimes needs to rest, the amount of water, the amount of sun, the temperatures, the presence of pollinators, etc. Without these various elements, without special care and attention, it is challenging to grow food.

The seeds need care, they are planted at a

specific time and will only bear fruit several weeks or months later. You have to take your time and be patient before you can benefit from the produce. That is why the knowledge of the vegetable garden has been carefully passed down from generation to generation for centuries, even millennia.

When you live in a garden, you eat what is in it, what is in season; you don't pick what you don't need. Fruit grows and ripens on the tree, then spoils and falls off when it is no longer good to eat. That's the way nature is, with life cycles. No transport, no preservatives... It also requires diversity in the garden, not for a question of taste and freedom to consume, because trees and plants are not adapted to all environments, but so that there are fruits all year round, which ripen successively over the seasons.

We therefore need to get to know and understand this garden and pay it constant attention in order to give it what it needs to give us what we need.

Producing and preserving

Since the garden was abandoned and with the path taken by humanity, the system of consumption has evolved considerably. Shepherds and farmers, who once produced the raw materials for the people in their region, have now been replaced, overwhelmed by mass producers who operate over thousands of kilometres. Knowledge about vegetable gardens and fruit trees is being lost, because who can grow their own fruit and vegetables in a big city? Who still has the time to wait for the seed, the flower, the fruit?

The consumer society wants everything to be available everywhere, at any time and in any season, committing the necessary amounts of money to achieve this objective.

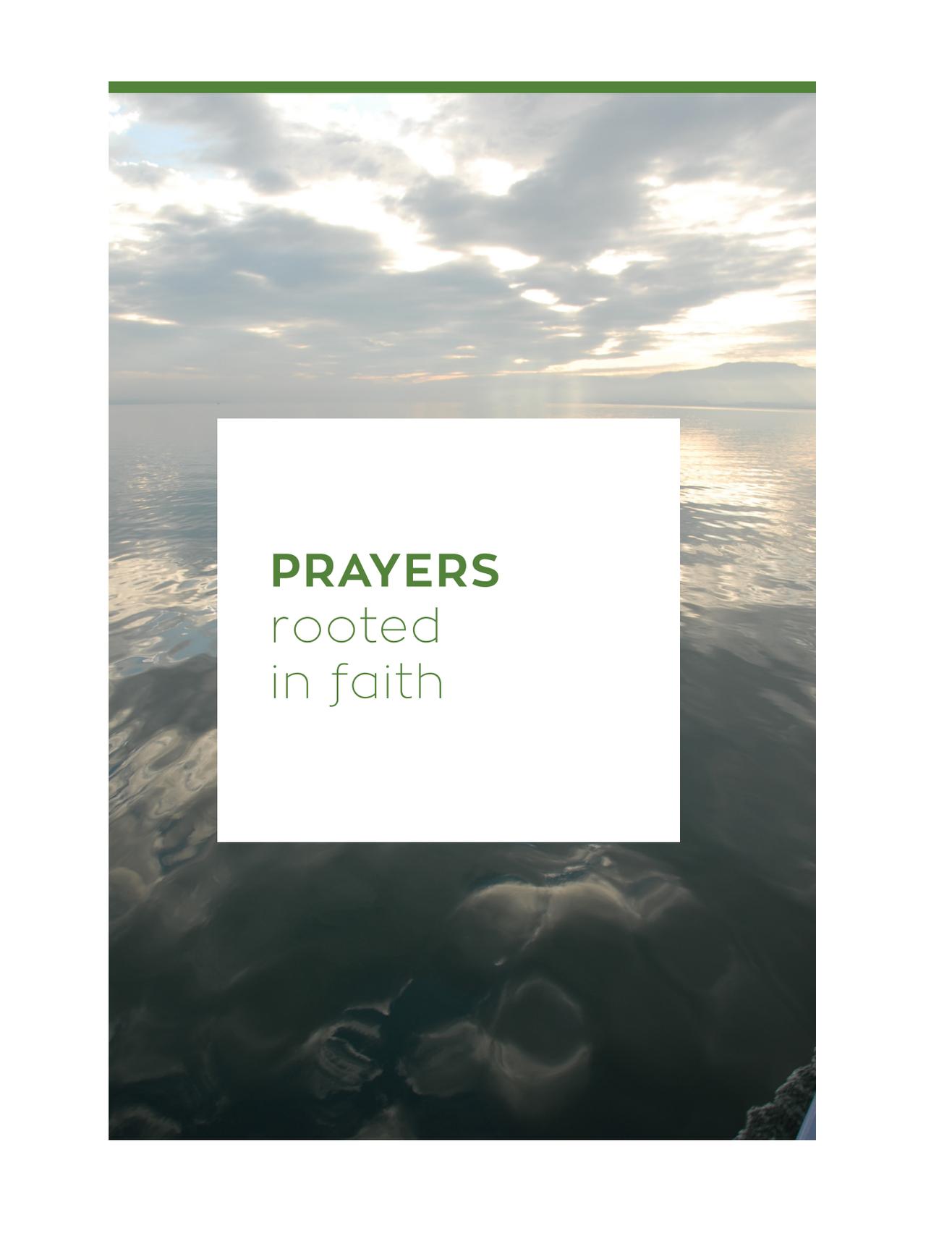
Fruit and vegetables are picked before they are ripe, to be transported and exported at the expense of taste and nutritional qualities.

The industry has developed numerous means of preserving food: preservatives, salting and drying techniques, but also food packaging such as glass, aluminium and plastic. They extend the use-by date of foodstuffs, thus enabling production on a larger scale and easy storage in all cupboards, 'I'll keep it for later'.

This packaging, which increases and accumulates as the raw material is denatured into a ready-made meal, is proving to be a powerful accelerator of this distancing from nature. The link from plant to plate is no longer visible to the naked eye; we pick our food at the supermarket.

The reciprocal relationship between the garden and man now appears theoretical. Because, although farmers and breeders take care of their farms (to maximise production), the consumer only wants to have what he wants, when he wants it.

As we peel the packaging of an applesauce, these new non-compostable peels are spreading into the environment like so many seeds sown at the whim of the wind by a human being who no longer knows what and why to plant. Who does not understand that this is indigestible food for an already tired soil. Who is not worried about the impact of waste in the middle of the trees and in the waterways of their nurturing garden.

A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, with the sun breaking through in several places, creating bright, glowing patches. The sun's light reflects on the water's surface, creating a shimmering path. In the distance, a range of mountains or hills is visible under the hazy sky. The foreground shows the dark, rippling water of the sea. A white rectangular box is centered in the middle of the image, containing the text.

PRAYERS

rooted
in faith

These prayers are taken from services about Creation that were held in our Churches and at the last General Assembly of the Cevaa. They are made available here so that you can use them in each of your parishes.

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Prayer for Creation

God, creator of the universe, all life and goodness come from you. You made us in your image and likeness and you entrusted us with the care of using the goods of the earth in moderation. However, we have sinned against you by exploiting natural resources with greed and selfishness, thus causing tremendous damage to life on our planet. Forgive us, Lord! Help us to change our ways and to become more responsible stewards of the goods entrusted to us, mindful of the needs of future generations. Come Holy Spirit and renew the face of the earth! We ask this through your son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.
Amen.

• • •

Greeting prayer

Officiant: In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Officiant: Our help comes from God.

All: Who made the heavens and the Earth.

Officiant: Peace be with you.

All: And with your spirit.



• • •

Invocation prayer

Lord, be in our midst!
Blessed are you, O Christ, King of kings! Praise be to you, Lord of lords!

• • •

Opening prayer

In the beginning, God created the Earth,
Women: He created it and nurtured it as a mother nurtures her child.
Men: He formed it and took responsibility for it, as a father does.
Women: He filled it with seeds and fertility.
Men: He filled it with love and showered human beings with gifts. Everything that grows, everything that is tall or deep, green or blue:
All: It was created by the hand of God.
Everything that is soft or firm, that smells good or is strange:
Everyone: It was created by the hand of God.
Everything that crawls, flies, swims, walks or stands still:
Everyone: It was created by the hand of God.
Everything that speaks, sings, shouts, laughs or is silent:
Everyone: It was created by the hand of God.
All who suffer, who lack something, who limp or who can no longer bear it:
All: It is the hand of God that created them.
The Earth belongs to God.
All: The Earth and human beings are God's.
Glory be to the Creator! Amen.

• • •

Prayer of Praise

O Lord, our Lord,

How magnificent is your name throughout
the Earth.

When I see the heavens that you made
with your fingers,
I am amazed.

Assembly: The Earth resembles a large
blue orange, a source of life.

The moon tells me of the passing of time,
it turns into a silver button.

Children: Thank you, Lord, thank you.

When I see the animals that you made
with your fingers, I am amazed every time

...

Assembly: By the fragile lamb
in the green meadow, by the mighty lion
in the savannah, by the cow so precious in
our lives.

Children: Thank you, Lord, thank you.

When I see the oceans that you made with
your fingers,

I am amazed every time ...

Assembly: The corals are so colourful,
the whales so gigantic, the dolphins so
intelligent.

Children: Thank you, Lord, thank you.

When I see the human being you made
with your fingers,

I am amazed every time...

Assembly: He has so many different skin
colours, he can imagine and create so
much, he can change everything when
he loves and respects. You have put him
above everything, you crown him with
glory, you have put everything at his feet.

Everyone: Thank you, Lord, thank you.

Praise

Listen to the Earth complain about us, about what
we do to her: I am the Earth, Mother Earth; my
wounds bleed with pain.

The aggressive behaviour of humans is destroying
my rhythms, increasingly destroying my life.

Brutal technologies are poisoning the water, the
soil, the air, and killing the children I bear within
me. The man of the industrialised society thinks
only of dominating and exploiting me, as if I had no
rights. In his greed, he wounds my maternal body,
he despoils and violates it, this body without which
no earthly creature can live, this body which is the
home of countless vulnerable creatures.

Silence

Listen to the complaints of an inhabitant of the
Earth: (A man is invited to speak)

I am one of the children of the Earth, one of those
closest to her. The hearts of indigenous peoples
bleed when the Earth is destroyed, when forests
are massacred for profit alone. When we undertake
giant projects, we disrupt our life, we deal a mortal
blow to our ties of kinship with nature. The trees
that sustain us are stolen from us. The humus that
covers the mountains is then carried away by the
waters, and the children of the Earth are the first to
suffer.

Silence

Listen to the reply of a woman:

(A woman is invited to speak)

And all those who have lost touch with the life of the
Earth, how will they be able to share the abundance
of its riches with their fellow human beings? Have
not those who have violated the Earth also violated
its children?

Silence

• • •

Prayer of contemplation

Officiant: Look how the tree by the stream prospers. It grows tall and strong, and its branches are full of green leaves. Nor do they wither in the summer heat because its roots have an abundance of water; good soil is its nourishing breast.

All: It bears fruit in its time, and it gladdens the heart of whoever sees it.

Officiant: Look, so it is with the man who lives close to God. He finds his salvation with him, when he listens to his Word and considers it in his understanding and in his heart, when he has confidence in his promise and takes into account the instructions that others have received from God.

All: The human being remains steadfast, and grows inwardly day by day.

Officiant: Look, you have a place with God, you can live there, you will find fulfilment there, you will be at home.

All: Amen.



• • •

Intercessory prayer

Officiant: Because you, God, make us grow and you are our nourishing breast, because you root us in you like a tree in the ground, for this we bring before you what saddens our hearts and our thoughts. Sometimes it is also difficult for us to grow tall while being firmly rooted. Lord, have mercy.

All respond: Lord, hear us.

Officiant: Sometimes we lack strength. Like withered leaves, we become discouraged, and easily give up. Often, it is also the older ones who surprise us without us understanding why. Sometimes it is difficult for us to let others grow. You know our mistakes and you hear us when we call on you, Christ, have mercy.

All respond: Christ, hear us.

Officiant: God, your heaven covers all things. You protect us like a great tree in whose branches we find our protection; like little birds, in you, we have a home. We entrust to you all the things of the Earth. That is why we say to you: Lord, have mercy.

Confession of sins

Holy God, our Creator, because we have sinned against your Creation. For this, Father,

All: We ask your forgiveness. We have laid waste the life of the Earth through our violence and our wastefulness, damaging the nature that sustains us with its gifts. For this, Father,

All: We ask your forgiveness. We have stripped the Earth of the protective cover of its trees; we have destroyed its precious soil, along with countless creatures; we have upset the delicate balance of its vital

systems. For this, Father,

All: We ask your forgiveness. We have looked on as the Earth and its children have slowly choked on poison, water and air, and have withered from pollution. We have closed our eyes to the wounds inflicted on Mother Earth, believing that we had enough to deal with our own suffering. For this, Father,

All: We ask your forgiveness. We have plundered the Earth's resources, forgetting that our own freedom needs limits. For this, Father,

All: We ask your forgiveness. Forgive us, Holy God, our Creator, for not having known how to live in harmony with you and your Creation; we have failed and have not known how to protect or safeguard the Earth. For this, Father, We implore your strength that heals, that restores wholeness, that gives peace. Amen.

Announcement of forgiveness

In Christ, God shows us that he participates in our alienating life and that he bears our pain. May his beneficent hand, may his cross be our hope. In him, we now have the forgiveness of our sins. Amen.

Forgiveness

Sometimes Lord, often Lord, we think so much of ourselves that we forget that your Creation is entrusted to us. We do things without worrying about the consequences of our actions. Today, it is your entire Creation that speaks to us and questions us. Earth, what do you want to tell us?

'I'm fed up with you pouring so many chemicals on me. I'm fed up with you not letting me rest when my soil is tired. I get scared when you cut open my stomach to put the radioactive waste you created in it.'

All: Lord, we are not taking care of what you have entrusted to us.

Today, it is Your Creation that denounces our behaviour. Air, what do you want to tell us?

'Will you continue to send me toxic gases, dangerous vapours that slowly suffocate me? I give you life, do you think about saving mine?'

All: Lord, we do not take care of what you have entrusted to us.

Today, it is Your Creation that calls us to share. Animals, what do you want to tell us?

'Human, every day you encroach on our living space, you cut down my trees, you kill us to enrich, beautify and grow yourself.

You confine us and you take up all the space. Why not live by sharing?'

All: Lord, we do not take care of what you have entrusted to us.

Lord, forgive our selfishness, forgive our acts of destruction, forgive our desire for comfort and ease. Everything comes to us from You, and we live as the only master on board who cares little for the Life around him. Amen.

Word of grace

God says: 'I have placed everything at your feet, it is true, but I have also made you imperfect, capable of error and selfishness. But when you see that you need others, that you need the earth, the water, the air to live, then your heart opens to my forgiveness. Go, and live in this world that I give you, for I have promised it to you: with the bow in the sky, I make a covenant with all living beings on this Earth. Never again will I destroy the Earth.

Freed from your errors, go, and live in this world that I give.

You have within you all the resources for the Earth to live. Amen."

Confession of faith

We are partners with God.

We live in the world that belongs to him. We are stewards of Creation, by the grace of Jesus Christ.

We will give an account to him of our works towards Creation.

We agree with the Holy Spirit who gives us the

measure of responsibility. We owe him the renewal of the mind.

God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit trust us to give back to the whole of Creation what we hope with faith to receive from his Kingdom

when we enter his reign.

We will endeavour to give back to Creation what it should be for ourselves, today, and for our descendants, a haven of life, well-being and peace. We believe it. Amen.



Intercessory prayer

Almighty God, God of Creation, Most High God, Master of the Universe, we turn to you today about climate change, a defining issue of our time, at a moment when we have reached a turning point.

All: God of Creation, as concerned as we are, we turn to you. Amen.

From the changing weather conditions that affect agricultural and food production to rising sea levels that increase the risk of flooding, the consequences of climate change are global in terms of their effects and scale.

All: God of Creation, despite the threats we face, grant us your help. Amen.

The greenhouse effect, a natural phenomenon essential to human life and that of other species, trapping in a layer of gas in the lower atmosphere some of the sunlight that would otherwise reflect

off the Earth, and placing us in an extremely sensitive and dangerous situation,

All: God of Creation, as concerned as we are, preserve us. Amen.

After more than a century and a half of industrialisation, particularly deforestation and large-scale agriculture, the quantities of greenhouse gases present in the atmosphere have reached levels not seen in three million years,

All: God of Creation, despite our distress, save us. Amen. For the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), created in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and UN Environment with a view to detailed assessments of the state of scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge on climate change, its causes, potential repercussions and counter

strategies.

All of us: God of Creation, as alert as we are, inspire our scientists. Amen.

For the evolution of the climate and the scientific basis indicating climate change on Earth in every region and in the climate system as a whole, with many changes unprecedented for thousands, even hundreds of thousands of years and the point of no return for certain phenomena already under way, such as the continuous rise in sea level.

All: God of Creation, despite our vulnerability, protect us. Amen.

For what we know, based on IPCC reports, on the evidence of observed changes in extreme events such as heat waves, heavy precipitation, droughts and tropical cyclones, and, in particular, their attribution to human influence, exposing more than three billion individuals living in contexts highly vulnerable to climate change.

All of us: God of Creation, as informed as we are, come to our aid. Amen.

For the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), with 197 contracting parties and thus enjoying universal membership, with a view to considering what can be done

to reduce global warming and to cope with any unavoidable rise in temperatures, with the establishment of a global framework for intergovernmental efforts to meet the challenge of climate change.

All: God of Creation, as aware as we are, engage us. Amen. For the Kyoto Protocol, adopted in Japan on 11 December 1997, setting a limit on the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of the world's major economies, the conclusion of which ended in 2020.

All: God of Creation, as enlightened as we are, make us aware of what can be done. Amen. For the Paris Agreement, opened for signature on 22 April 2016 and entered into force on 4 November 2016, described as historic in that it brings together all its signatories in ambitious efforts to combat climate change.

All of us: God of Creation, as committed as we are, free us and save us from danger.

Unite us in our struggles and revive in us, always, our vocation as stewards of the world, to give us the ability to 'Inhabit Creation differently'. Hear our prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Our Father...



We thank the UPAO and UPAC faculties, as well as Pastor Florence CLAUSS (UEPAL parish) who was inspired by the work of the EUL (Lutheran Unionist Teams).



Prayers from the Regional Seminars on Shared Action

Southern Africa and Indian Ocean- Madagascar Region

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Prayer of thankfulness

Lord, we praise you for the abundance of goodness and love that you give us. We also thank you for the magnificence of your Creation. A Creation of grace that fully provides for our needs. You have given us life, love, health and work. You have placed your trust in us in the management of your Creation and we will always be grateful to you for this mercy you grant us. Finally, we praise and glorify You for all that You have already done and will do for us.
To You alone be glory, amen.

Confession of sins

Lord, we ask your forgiveness for failing in your first commandment. That of cultivating and preserving your Creation. We have not been able to listen to you or respect the mission you have entrusted to us. We have not learnt from the sins that our predecessors Adam and

Eve committed. We have given in to our sinful nature by giving free rein to our greed, avarice and selfishness through the overconsumption and suffering inflicted on your children and your Creation. We have not lived up to your image. That is why we appeal to your infinite goodness by giving us a new opportunity every day to make up for our mistakes and become better at carrying out your word. Amen.

Prayers for vulnerable people

We place in your hands the vulnerable, those stricken by disease, pollution, famine, poverty, cultural and social segregation, and injustice. People are victims of fire, natural disasters and flooding. They have to leave their countries because of war or lack of water and food due to the evil actions of Man. Please Lord, hear our prayers. We ask you to keep them, to protect them, and to guide them to find hope in you. Amen



Central Africa Region

Prayer

Blessed are you, our Father, for the life and the blessings that you give to Africa every day. Lord, lend us an ear, listen to the prayer of Your People. They are in the street, young and old, they are Your People. A people hungry for freedom, a people thirsty to be heard. Listen to the silence of these people who, on some days, despair.

Lord, hear the cry of Your People, who hope for tomorrow. Look, Lord, at these hungry children, look at these anxious children, look at these unemployed young rebels, look at these discouraged students. In most parts of Africa, populations are experiencing a sharp decline in several animal species as a result of the large-scale use of plastic, pesticides, deforestation, in short, the fragmentation of natural environments.

We dare to denounce injustice, for our God is a God of justice. We cry out about our suffering because our God is a God of hope. Lord, hear our prayer, hear the prayer of your people, and help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Heal our lives, so we may be protectors of

the world and not predators, so we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Grant us the will to actively participate in the happiness of all.

Lord God, grant us the ability to open our eyes to this world which you have created through love, and to recognise all that you have made good and beautiful. Grant us the ability to see this world through the eyes of your Son and that we may look at all beings through eyes which go beyond appearances and help those beings to grow.

Finally, Lord, you have placed us in this beautiful Creation and you have given us your trust to take care of it and to continue to co-create with you. We have not been worthy of the trust you have placed in us. We recognise that only you can restore what has been destroyed. Come and bless the projects and actions that help to preserve your Creation according to your will. Make them bear fruit so that we too may witness your power.

Listen to your people, Lord! Amen!

Liturgy of worship for Creation

Western and Northern Africa Region

Praise for the beauty of Creation (Sing a hymn in the language of the local country or region)

Prayer of thankfulness

Lord, we thank you for the birds that praise you with their song every day. Thank you because it reminds us every morning that the first thing we should do is praise you.

Blessed are you for the beauty of the landscapes that surround us. Thank you for their diversity and for our different sensitivities. Allow everyone to marvel at your Creation. Help us to look at these landscapes in a new way and see your goodness and your love for us.

The suffering of Creation and the request for forgiveness

Reading from Romans 8:18-25

Silent meditation

Confession of sins

Almighty Father,

We entrust to you this Creation which suffers because of our lack of reason. We ask for your forgiveness because we have driven you from your Creation and, growing up without your wisdom, we have destroyed it. We ask for your forgiveness because we have grown rich and have lost the notion of moderation, need, and comfort. Come and take back your place and may your Spirit roam the world to open hearts closed to you.

Assembly: Lord, hear us, Lord, answer us, hallelujah!

Intercessory prayer

Lord,

You are the living water, but many people do not even have enough water for their crops, their animals, to wash themselves or to drink.

Today, we think in particular of the countries where there has been a lack of rain and where heatwaves have made the situation worse.

Lord,

In some African countries, land degradation, deforestation and flooding are causing dramatic difficulties. We pray to you for the people concerned that you may come to their aid, and we thank you for what the Community of Churches in mission Cevaa and its churches are doing to raise awareness and to live differently with and respect for Creation.

Assembly: Lord, hear us, Lord, answer us, hallelujah!

Lord,

Today, we want to entrust to you the people who must flee their region because of climate change. May they find a place of welcome, a place where they can rebuild their lives. Shield them and guide them on this terrible journey. We pray that this issue will be debated in international forums and that a fair solution will be found. Following your example, may we show mercy to the most disadvantaged.

Assembly: Lord, hear us, Lord, answer us, hallelujah!

On our responsibility

Intercessory prayer

Lord,

You have called us to cultivate and tend your garden. We hand over to you all the cultivated land that suffers so much in these times of brutal climate change. We also hand over to you the peasants, farmers and all those who work the land so that they too may be guardians and that their agricultural practices

reflect the dual mandate of cultivating and guarding.

Lord,

We pray to you for our governors and all those to whom you have given a share of authority in our region. Inspire them in their desire for development and industrialisation so that the past mistakes that led to the destruction of the environment are not repeated.

We implore a new intelligence for sustainable development actions in perfect harmony with your Creation. Lord, hear us.

Assembly: Lord, hear us, Lord, answer us, hallelujah!

Lord,

You welcome every sincere prayer and through your Spirit, you take care of us. May your

Pacific Region and Latin America

God of nature and of life, we present to you the words that resonated in our hearts during our seminar.

Prayer with the elements of nature

The football, which evokes play, encounter and movement.

The wood and the pandanus, which recall solidarity and shelter,

Thank you for the mat, which offers rest and connection in our homes.

*Thank you for the ùru, the fruit of the breadfruit tree, a precious gift from the earth,
For the coconut tree and its many life-sustaining riches.*

Thank you for the banana, a generous fruit of the earth, And to the Tiare Maurua flower, the scent of beauty and delicacy.

blessings always sustain our faith, through Jesus our Lord and Saviour. Amen!

Final song: (Choose a song of hope and Christian commitment)

Lord's Prayer

Sending forth

Give strength and stability to your commitment to the safeguarding of Creation; do not confine it to lifeless formulas or habits. Move towards the God of life, the ever greater God, the God without borders.

May Our God be with each and every one of you! Amen!

And for all of nature, so fragile in our hands.

We think of the turtle, symbol of wisdom and perseverance,

Of the bird, messenger of freedom and lightness,

We thank you for the sea, vast and mysterious,

For water, the source of life.

Even the rejection of a plant's new growth reminds us that life is always ready to spring forth again.

Despite the wounds and obstacles, we ask you,

Father, creator God, source of all life, now and

forever to give us the wisdom to inhabit creation differently.

'God, you remain fully God. And you, earth, remain faithful to your calling! You, man, fully embody the humanity of God. Yes, thank you, Lord, for creating everything perfectly good and everything is profoundly good.'

'IA Atua te Atua, la fenua te fenua, la taata te taata, ua Maitai Roa' Amen

Prayer for the preservation of creation in the Pacific

Lord God, we give you thanks for your love and truth, for you are above all else. You bless with great generosity, incomparable will, and great patience. You always watch over us, and we are very grateful. Even today, we are amazed by the force that drives us.

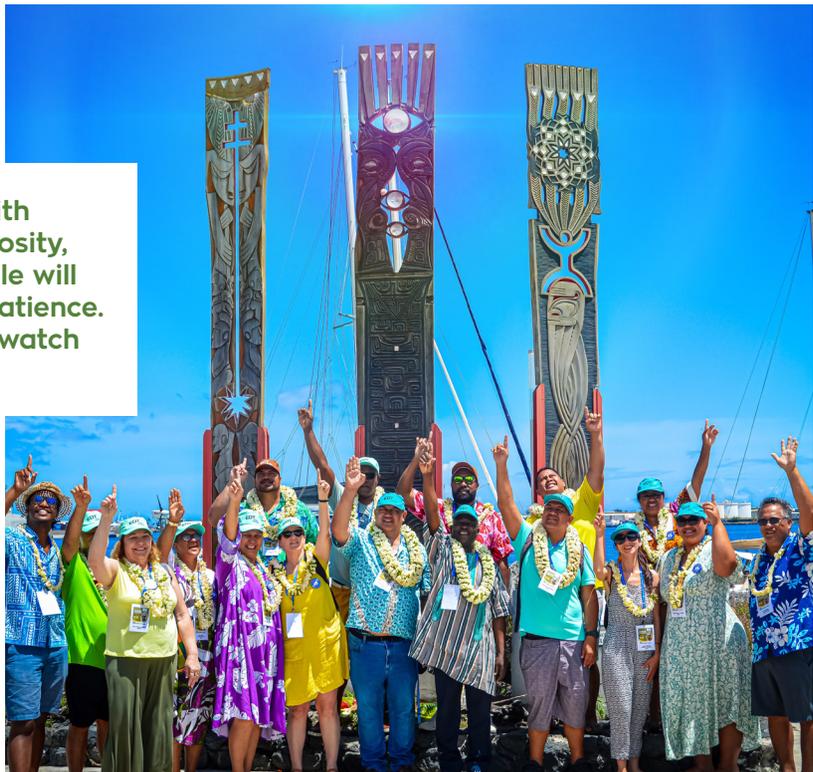
This force does not come from us, this hope makes us understand that nothing comes from ourselves, but from You alone.

During this seminar on JointAction, we heard and received teachings on 'how to inhabit creation differently'. Grant that we may share these teachings in our Churches and in our respective countries.

Give us the opportunity to share these experiences and exchanges with those around us.

God our Father, creator of the universe of the heavens, the sea, and living beings, both marine and terrestrial, we pray to you that you may give us a spirit of discernment, a spirit of wisdom and humility in relation to the cries of your children who live on this earth.

You bless with great generosity, incomparable will and great patience. You always watch over us.





In Kanaky, we are struck by injustice, inequality and the various forms of pollution of the land, the environment and the sea by mines and nickel. Our marine animals are endangered, the corals are dying. The cries of the people in the Pacific reveal the extent to which the great powers and multinational countries are destroying and continuing to pollute our natural resources.

We pray for this suffering world, for our respective regions (Kanaky, Uruguay, Argentina, the peoples of the Rio de la Plata and Māōhi Nui) struck by the effects of global warming due to the exaggeration of human activities.

Give us the strength and courage to build a sustainable way of life, to initiate actions to safeguard our **Fenua**, our islands and all of Creation.

May your love and spirit of wisdom be among us so that we may work and preserve our resources in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen!

The Echo of the Soul of Māōhi Nui

Ms VAEVA PUARAI
OPMa Youth Association
"Moruroa e Tatou"

la ora na to all my dear brothers and sisters in Christ of the Cevaa, take in all the wisdom of our History, I share it with you, so that it may echo the soul of Māōhi Nui and of my people Māōhi.

I am Māōhi, daughter of Māōhi Nui, a sacred land of infinite generosity, a nurturing mother who, with love and kindness, welcomed my placenta at birth, the seat of emotions and the memory of my history. Passed down from generation to generation, this tradition has marked and sealed forever the sacred bond that connects me to my mother earth, symbolising our deep spiritual connection. Within her, virtues and wisdom have taken root, nourishing my being. This land, guardian of my essence, is not only a source of life, but also a spiritual guide that shapes my path to wisdom and understanding of the world. I am the legacy of my Ancestors. Those who



have paved the way, guiding each generation along this sacred path steeped in love, respect and humility towards Creation. Our ancestors who have passed down to us, through the ages, an ancestral wisdom that constantly reminds us that the earth is not just a place, *but a living entity steeped in history and spirituality.*

Each step on this trail is a tribute to this heritage, a continuation of this sacred relationship between humans and their environment, where each element of Creation is honoured and respected as part of a harmonious and divine whole.

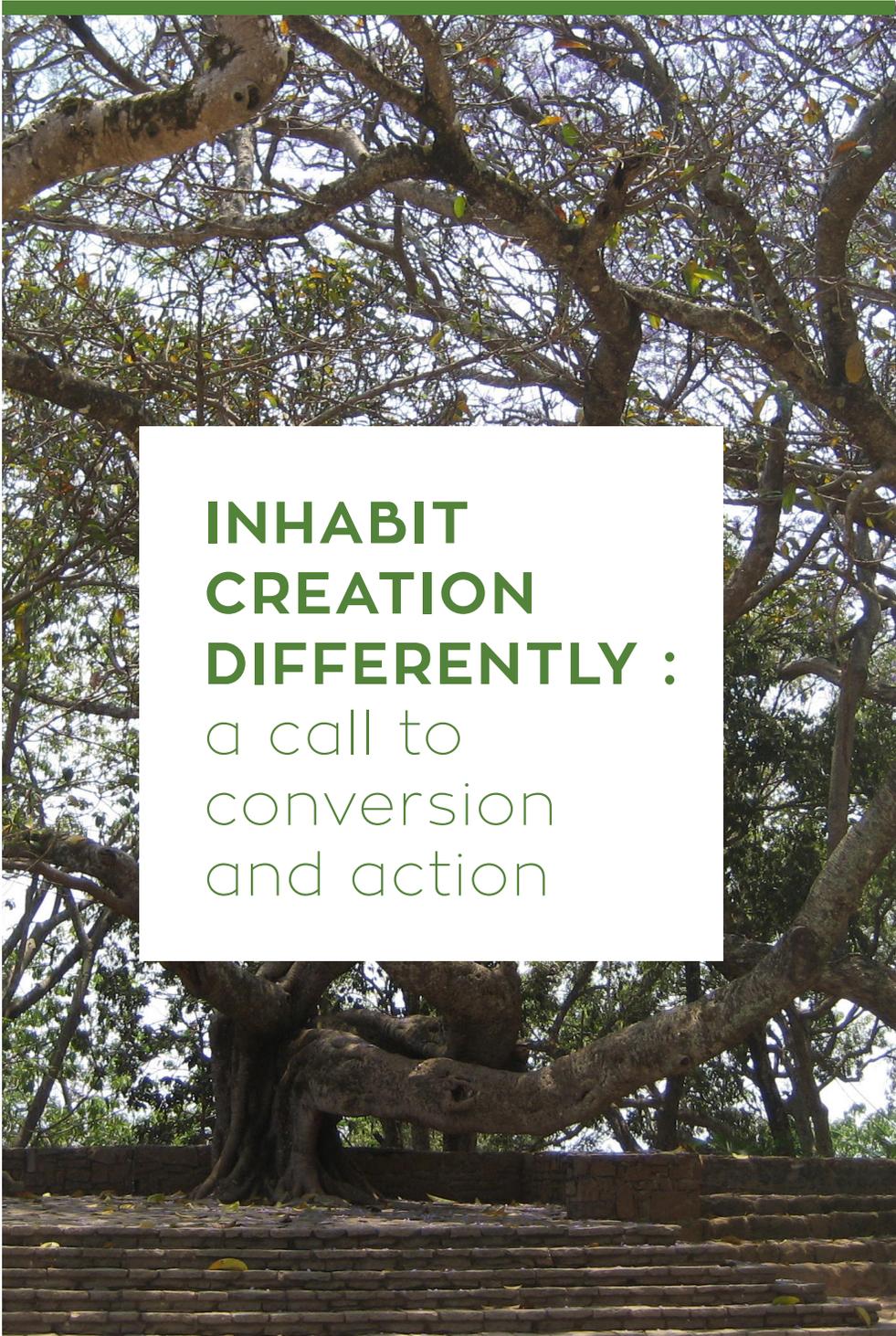
On behalf of my Māōhi Protestant Church, of the people of Māōhi Nui, Dear brothers and sisters, the youth would like to express their deep gratitude to the Cevaa for organising this seminar in Māōhi Nui on the theme 'Inhabit Creation Differently', as well as for the invitation to participate. Your commitment to bringing the Churches together in a collective reflection on our responsibility towards Creation is a source of inspiration.

This theme, which resonates deeply with environmental and spiritual challenges, urges us to renew our way of inhabiting this world that God has entrusted to our care. May we, together, draw from these exchanges a common wisdom and solutions that bring hope, in order to better respond to our calling as disciples of Christ.

With all our gratitude and in fraternal communion, we say a big Māuruuru to the Cevaa, its member Churches in Europe, Central, Western and Southern Africa, in the Indian-Pacific Oceans and in Latin America. Finally, I will leave you with this little prayer:

'May the Eternal God remain fully God, may the earth remain true to its calling, may humanity fully realise its humanity: all is profoundly good.'
IA ORA NA

Shared action seminar
Inhabit Creation differently



**INHABIT
CREATION
DIFFERENTLY :**
a call to
conversion
and action

Quiet simplicity: Man's relationship with material things

Matthew 6:25-34

Through his words, like nature, Jesus invites us to wonder, but also to trust in providence. He asks us not to worry about what we will eat or drink, or about the clothes we will wear. 'Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?' This passage challenges us fully on our relationship to material goods, money, work and the essential choices of our lives, particularly through this well-known phrase: "You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matthew 6:24). How can we hear and embody these radical words in our world, which is based on profit, the accumulation of goods and over-consumption? How can we nurture this inner attitude of calm sobriety, going against the tide of greed to which we are almost constantly exposed?

Reducing our needs seems easy to conceive when we talk about superfluous comfort, but much more perilous when it comes to basic needs such as eating, drinking or clothing.

But perhaps it is not so much a question of not eating, drinking or clothing, but of not worrying 'overmuch'?

A call to conversion

What Jesus asks of us is to stop worrying and not to try to control everything, that is to say to impose our will on God's will. Jesus calls us to radical trust, to total abandonment to the providence that allows abundance. What we must seek is His Kingdom, his presence.

'Look at the birds of the air.' It is a call to increase our faith, not to accumulate, not to speculate... In a word, to move from calculating what we can expect to providence that provides. Of course, this invitation to voluntarily limit our needs does not stop at material things, but also affects those of the spirit, stubborn habits, fears of lack, the way we look at others, the lack of connection. All things that are also the causes of our addictive behaviour. In these times of uncertainty and ecological crisis, cultivating trust, opening ourselves to God, allowing ourselves a form of sobriety that is beneficial in



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prayer

Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

sharing, ultimately opens us up to more freedom, resilience and joy.

A call to action

So, as a Christian, what are we waiting for? What are we doing?

Even if the positions taken by our Churches are very late in coming, and they have only followed the evolution of public opinion in the realisation of ecological dangers, today's challenges demand a broad individual mobilisation of everyone, including Christians. Hence the need for a call to change our outlook.

The environmental challenge we are experiencing and its human roots concern us all. A vocation to protect God's work requires us to take action on several levels, both personally and as a community:

- 'to keep' it, a duty of responsibility;
- to cultivate it rather than exploit it;
- to learn to live in communion.

Letting go

In the Gospel, Christ invites us to trust. He encourages us not to want to control everything or accumulate possessions. To overcome the fear of scarcity and live

a life of simple moderation. Avoid waste by living a simple life. Moderation forces us to rethink our consumption patterns. It is essential to understand the need for limits, the limits beyond which we would produce or buy too much, far too much, more than we need.

It will not be easy: the 'hyper-consumerism virus' is inoculated into us through advertising and social models. We must have the ability to be able to live with moderation in an acceptable way, that is to say without compromising the satisfaction of basic needs: moderation has nothing to do with suffering poverty. Pierre RABHI and the Colibris movement talk about 'happy sobriety', Martin KOPP about 'from responsibility to joyful simplicity', Patrick VIVERET about 'living at the right time' and the 'degrowth' movement about 'frugal abundance'.

'We must learn to live more simply so that future generations can simply live.'
GHANDI.



An enlightened perspective

Matthew 5:15

When Jesus used this metaphor, a lamp was an asset that had to be used wisely. Being powered by oil, lighting a lamp was an economic responsibility in the consumption of a household.

It was therefore not used as a decorative element, nor in a room lit by daylight. On the contrary, it made it possible to extend the length of the day if a particular task or event required it.

The need to be responsible for the use of the lamp and its supply of oil is also found in the narrative meaning in the parable of the ten young girls who fall asleep while waiting for the bridegroom on the wedding night (Matthew 25:1-13).

Suffice to say that, even in those days, being responsible in the use of lighting was a matter of course for people at that time. Jesus sought images that spoke to them in order to convey the theological teachings hidden in the parables. For centuries, the construction of various buildings, from houses to cathedrals, was designed to let in daylight.

But since the invention of incandescent light bulbs at the end of the 19th century, electric lighting has become widespread. Initially utilitarian, like an oil lamp, it then became the subject of numerous decorative objects, no longer having the function of lighting the room, but rather of creating an atmosphere, of drawing the eye to art, of being a decoration.

Whereas, in the parable of Jesus, hiding the light under a bushel means 'hiding what should

be revealed to all', in this new use of light, it is hidden to highlight a particular object or a dark room.

In this profusion of lighting possibilities, which increases as Christmas approaches, the time of the coming of true light to Earth, we quickly forget the cost and the responsibility of electricity consumption. The incandescent light bulb, initially expensive and reserved for the wealthy, quickly became a common consumer item, gradually replaced by less energy-consuming technologies such as the recently-invading LEDs.

When energy efficiency increases, the temptation is strong to be less vigilant. If it costs less, if it consumes less, why not add a little more... This is called the rebound effect.

My Church, house of God

With the progress in efficiency, the temptation is great to consider abundant, even sumptuous lighting.

Sobriety is a state of mind that should influence all aspects of our consumption. Let us not allow this flood of lighting, this profusion of light in which we are increasingly immersed, to be imposed on us. Turning off the light when leaving a room will always be one of the reflexes that we must pass on.

It is a question of remaining reasonable and aware that every lamp that is lit must serve a purpose. It should not remain lit 'in anticipation', nor should it light up an empty establishment. This lack of vigilance is a demonstration of negligence towards 'our house' and its resources.

Water...today



In the first account, the state of the world before God's Creation is depicted as a watery chaos.

In biblical times, water was precious. It was therefore regularly used by the various authors for its symbolic value and illustration in the text, as well as for its real value in Jewish rituals.

In the First Testament, water is found at the beginning of the two Creation stories, according to two opposing symbolisms. In the first story, the state of the world before God's Creation is represented by watery chaos. In the second story, the world is a barren desert and God's first creative act was to make it rain so that life might

appear. This ambivalence is the mark of water in the Bible.

Water, the source of life

Genesis 1:1 tells us that before God's intervention, the world was a mix of day and night, water and water. He created by His breath, bringing order to the watery chaos and setting limits on the floodwaters. Water holds a significant place here because it is essential for the life of every living creature. It exists not only in the vast expanses of the earth but also in every living being: the grass, the fruit, the animals, and humankind. Water is vital, and all life must continually be

nourished by it.

In Genesis 2:5-6, water is also described as vapor and condensation, replacing the rain from the sky and preparing the ground for vegetation. The water that gives life flows from God.

John 4:13-14

Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Water, the source of gathering

It was around water sources that cities were established; it was by wells and springs that nomads organized their pilgrimages. Without water, there is no life. A well or a spring was like the bar of the time— a place of gathering, where markets were concluded and family agreements made. It was at a well where Moses met his future father-in-law. Jesus would meet the Samaritan woman at a well and talk to her over a cup of water.

Water, a source of power in Creation

For life to exist, God's creative act involved placing a limit on the threat posed by the

waters. He separated the waters above from the waters below. It is through the liberation of the waters that God destroyed the wicked in Noah's time and drowned Pharaoh's army during the Exodus. Water, when absent, leads to dire consequences. Periods of drought are frequent in the Bible, typically bringing famine, desolation, and despair, as there are times when rain ceases to fall from the sky for extended periods. When rain returns, it becomes a symbol of blessing, for it restores life.

Psalm 6:10-11

"You prepare the earth, soaking its furrows and watering its ridges, softening it with showers and blessing its crops."

Water, the source of purification

Many rituals in the Bible involve water for purification purposes: Naaman the Syrian, healed of leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-19), the blind man sent to wash in the pool of Siloam (John 9:7), and the foot washing tradition in Judaism (John 13).

Living water, the source of fulfillment

Living water: water as the Holy Spirit, moving, which cannot be contained. While the people were thirsty and began

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Prayer

'So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.' Matthew 6:34

to murmur after being delivered from Egypt, God sweetened the waters of Mara through the action of Moses. Later, He caused a spring to flow from a rock to calm their tensions. A place by the water also symbolizes a promise of rest (Psalm 23:2).

Water, the source of desire and discord

Access to a well or ownership of a well was a sign of wealth; it allowed one to care for their family and their flocks. Disputes frequently arose between shepherds and, consequently, between clans.

Genesis 26:20: *"The water is ours."*

Water... Today

- Since ancient times, man has sought to control water—from wells to water stagnating in a bottle. Rivers are diverted, bodies of water are held back by dams to be distributed at will. No longer must one wait for rain to provide water to nature. Springs and underground aquifers are controlled so that water can be sold to those who are thirsty.
- With the installation of water distribution networks, cities have expanded, concentrating populations far beyond natural capacities. Marshy areas are drained to make them suitable for construction. Consumption has grown exponentially, alongside a diminished awareness of waste.
- Man's actions cannot control water, and all human attempts have consequences. Drylands that become impermeable cause flooding during heavy rains, as the ground can no longer absorb and filter the water. Dikes disrupt the natural currents of seas and oceans, causing coastal erosion...
- Water must be purified before it is consumed; as a result of its widespread use, it bears the brunt of pollution.

Living water: water like the Holy Spirit, moving, that cannot be contained.

- Water has become a source of concern, both during the monsoon and in times of drought. It is scrutinized in all its states worldwide, with its instability and inconsistency measured and analyzed to highlight that it does not behave according to established patterns.
- The morphology of the world has changed, with water providing economic and commercial power to countries rich in sources. Water must be controlled, used at will, made available, sold, etc.

It is important to remember now that water is precious. A source of life, it is a gift from heaven and must be shared. We must respect its power, be conscious that we cannot retain it because it has its own cycle, and avoid polluting it for our own well-being. Above all, we must seek peace of mind and harmony with our neighbors in our relationship with water.





Water and wind

Prayer: the Presence of God

The wind symbolizes the presence of God. When a person feels the breath of the wind, they are reminded of the magnificence and power of our God! Who can ignore or dismiss the marvelous song of the birds? They announce with their song hope and new life, each morning.

Can humans truly understand what the song of the waves means? There exists the unknown: the presence of God. (Henrique MABLALELA 91, adapted by Jean ALEXANDRE in Paroles lointaines – paroles si proches, Défap, p. 47)

A tropical cyclone with its strong winds and torrential rains is the intense experience we lived through during the coordination efforts in Mauritius, and for me personally, in Reunion Island. The rain infiltrates everywhere, entering houses through terrace doors, and the gusts of wind propel the water inside the rectory in Saint-Denis. The flat roofs can't absorb the large volume of water; they fill up, and then the water drips through the ceilings into the church, into the meeting rooms, and even into the hotel, cutting off electrical circuits.

The pipes overflow and break. Streets quickly turn into fast-flowing rivers, swirling violently. It's impossible to travel by any means. Water with its destructive power! The flood!

The prophet Isaiah certainly witnessed violent weather phenomena as well. He compares the nations, particularly the Assyrian armies, who wish harm upon the people of Israel, to the unleashed forces of nature. He compares their devastating actions to the myths against the waters of Chaos.

Isaiah 17 :12-14

Woe to the many nations that rage— they rage like the raging sea! Woe to the peoples who roar— they roar like the roaring of great waters!

Although the peoples roar like the roar of surging waters, when he rebukes them they flee far away, driven before the wind like chaff on the hills, like tumbleweed before a gale.

In the evening, sudden terror! Before the morning, they are gone!

The winds have swept through the landscapes, the cities. The inhabitants of Reunion were confined to their homes by order of the prefect. Wind speeds reached 150 to 200

km/h for an entire night and day. We closed the heavy wooden shutters of the windows and doors. We were in complete darkness until the storm ended. All we could hear was the sound of the wind banging the branches against the shutters and the walls of the house. No other noise existed. Electricity was cut off, and then running water stopped as well.

Night falls upon you, and you can see nothing. You feel as if you're drowning under a massive wave.

Job 22:11 - Word of Eliphaz

The next day, we wake up to silence. No more wind, no more rain. It's as if the rumble and roar had never existed.

By the evening, it's terror, and before the morning, there is nothing left.

Isaiah 17:14

Then we discover the damage caused by the cyclone: broken branches, fallen trees, uprooted and laying across the path. It's impossible to leave the property. In Mauritius, the same scene plays out, but the locals explain that none of this is extraordinary or severe. On the contrary, they are thankful to God that the storm only caused a few material damages.

As if the rumbling and roaring had never existed.



Inhabiting Creation differently

What if it's about becoming aware of the force of nature in a resilient way? Local plants bend and lean under the force of the wind but rarely break. Even coconuts stay firmly attached to their trees at height, just like pomegranates and other fruits. Birds find shelter and, once the storm is over, emerge to sing a polyphonic concert in praise of God. The sky and the sea are a pure, washed blue. Nature rejoices. Everything is purified as if after a baptism. God remains victorious over the unleashed forces of nature.

We are invited to recognize the proper adaptation of nature—local plants and animals—to the climate and weather of the islands. Have we been wrong to import plants and animals from elsewhere, which may not be suited to the environment and could cause more damage in the event of extreme weather?

Inhabiting Creation differently

It's also about becoming aware of our deep dependence on water! A destructive element, but also absolutely vital. How could we drink, wash, or dispose of our bodily waste without water? During the days of the cyclone, we became very creative, reusing the same water multiple times for different purposes.

We are called to have great respect for water and its power, not to build on old marshlands or wetlands, for water will always return during powerful weather events, threatening those who have settled there.

It is necessary to know and understand the fauna, flora, and climate, and its changes, in order to love this Creation that God has put in place, which we benefit from every moment of our lives.



So much time

Ecclesiastes 3

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven... There is a time for everything. What is our consideration of this time that is given to us?

Medicine, which pushes death a little further each day, leads us to believe that death is a hypothetical deadline, somewhere far in the future. We think we have all the time in the world to live a fulfilling life.

So, we fill it to the brim, maximizing every moment. We seek all sorts of ways to gain more time, to stretch the days, to speed up every action so we can rush to the next.

Who cares about the season for planting seeds, for harvesting, for pulling up the plants and letting the soil rest? What we want is the fruit. And what fruit? Our consumption has become selective, according to our desires—enjoying whatever we want, whenever we want. When we are ready, everything must be available.

Daily travels for our activities, or simply for pleasure, multiply. And they must be easy and fast because there's

no time to waste on the journey!

Encounters and exchanges with others are essential, but fortunately, we can carry our social circle in our pocket, just a click away on our phone, as long as the battery is charged. A meal, a piece of clothing, a gift, a meeting, a movie session? We don't even need to move anymore. More time saved!

No time left to wait—when the days are so full, it's urgent to accomplish everything while still indulging ourselves before going to sleep.

And as long as we want to consume our lives with abandon, ease will always come at a price. Society responds to this urgency, and enjoying life becomes profit.

This gain of a few hours, a few minutes requires an indigestion of technology, fuels, plastics that are then scattered under the sky of our Earth and, to save time, we have accelerated the fall.

Ecclesiastes 3:14-15

Today, humanity finds itself at



How much consideration do we give to the time that is offered to us?



a peak of consumption. Looking back, we are all struck by dizziness when confronted with the mountains of waste accumulated in the open air, flying in the wind, gathering to form a sixth continent, disturbing the ecosystem, and upsetting the balance of nature.

It is urgent, then, to change our habits, though we cannot truly find a solution that does not require us to sacrifice time.

And, overnight, nature becomes the victim. Creation must be saved, and only humanity has the power to change everything.

It is urgent to act; we must hurry because the end is coming. We are asked to commit time to rational consumption, which society once again seeks to profit from. To have healthier products, we must care for them more; hence, the price is now the cost of quality.

We arrive, breathless, at the end of this race against time, sometimes forgetting the power of the Creator.

Yet, everything has a beginning, and everything has an end, but every end is a new beginning.

Ecclesiastes 3:19-22

And Ecclesiastes reminds us that we are but a fleeting presence on this Earth. It is sometimes necessary to put ourselves into perspective in front of the God of life.

As we look around, we glimpse just how marvelous He is. The beauty of Creation deserves that we slow down, take the time to admire it, to enjoy it. That we rediscover the pleasure of planting a seed and harvesting its fruit, sacrificing a little of our productivity.



**SHARED ACTION
SEMINAR EUROPE
REGION**

**BIBLICAL
ANIMATION**

**CHIESA
EVANGELICA
VALDESE DE ITALIA**

Start of the animation

Candles

- 1) We light the first candle to remind us that God is like a father or a mother, a creator who loves His creatures.
 - 2) We light the second candle to remind us that God chose to become our brother in Jesus.
 - 3) We light the third candle to remind us that God is Spirit, the force of union and reconciliation.
- Amen

Psalm 8

2. *Our Lord, how magnificent is Your name over all the Earth, You who make Yourself more radiant than the heavens!*
3. *Out of the mouths of children and infants, You have established strength because of Your adversaries, to silence the enemy and the avenger.*
4. *When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars that You have set in place,*
5. *What is mankind that You are mindful of them, human beings that You care for them?*
6. *You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.*
7. *You made them rulers over the works of Your hands; You put everything under their feet:*
8. *All flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,*
9. *The birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.*
10. *Our Lord, how magnificent is Your name over all the Earth!*

To imagine how we can 'inhabit your creation differently'

Prayer

Lord, our Creator, we thank You for gathering us this morning, as Churches of Your Church!

As a plural community, as a part of the family of Cevaa, we thank You for the time we can spend together to get to know one another, to reflect, and to imagine how we can "inhabit Your Creation differently."

Thank You for entrusting us with the care of the work of Your hands and for the privilege of working in it. We look at the wonder of Your Creation with awe, fearful of our insufficiency, but at the same time grateful for Your trust.

You are also present in this house, which cannot contain You, but in which we find brothers and sisters who share with us anxieties and hopes, suffering and joy, loneliness and the desire to hear new words, words of encouragement and comfort.

Today, You welcome us, and we welcome one another.

Give us Your presence and Your joy.

Amen

Exodus 3:7-8

The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.

So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey

Preaching

Daniel was born in a concrete hospital, he grew up in multi-storey buildings and, from his smog-stained windows, he saw other buildings obstructing the view of the mountains. He played in asphalt courtyards and learnt to climb high-voltage pylons.

He learnt the greatness of human technology, capable of drawing energy and raw materials from the earth, of moving rivers and lakes, of optimising agricultural production.

He received the testimony that existence can be centred on a personal relationship with God, who created man and woman in his image, giving them the power and responsibility to dominate the Earth and the other creatures that live there. He knew God as the God of the sky, totally different from us, who created the world from nothing and who loves us like a father, unlike the gods and goddesses of the Earth, who enclose us in the cycle of fertility and wealth.

He learnt the greatness of human technology.

Daniel does not deny his origins; he has accepted and asserts his identity as a son of the modern, Protestant West, a son of the city. However, he has learnt to listen to those who have been around the Earth more than he has. So when Anita tells him that the Earth is a teacher, that working the land can and should be a school of life and faith, he stops and listens.

A reader

Worrying about the future and taking care of the future are two very different things. The farmer sows in the autumn to harvest the following summer; if he doesn't do the work, he obviously won't harvest the following summer: so the believer works and strives to do his duty. In particular, those who work the land have less frenetic rhythms than those who engage in other

activities; they follow and appreciate the phases of the day and the seasons to which they are closely linked.

Working the land requires patience; it is a law of nature that the grain thrown into the ground must dissolve, that is to say die, and that many days must pass before it germinates. Jesus also said: 'Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a single grain. But if it dies, it produces much fruit'.

So all the time that our field appears desolate and bare, in reality life is at work underneath. The same goes for our life, which is in God's hands. We don't know what awaits us; we may be going through a period of deadlock where everything seems flat and monotonous. Who knows what God has in store for us? Just as it takes a lot of care to work the land and obtain its fruits, so faith must be nurtured every day. In this way, life, like a precious field, will give us its harvest.

Daniel realises that he has missed something important in his education, so rich in books and encounters. He has been taught to seek God in history and in relationships with people, but now he feels the need to learn to seek him also in Creation, of which we are a part as humanity, in the earth from which he was taken and to which he will return.

And when Sandro tells him that one can belong to the earth, that identity can come from the earth, that it can represent the origin and the purpose of existence, he stops and listens.

A reader

The word 'land' can mean many things. Land as a generator of life and land as a place of burial. A simple place of production or a living space for which one must dream and fight. Land to be conquered and land to be defended. For some, it



• • •

prayer

4. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have set in place,

5. What is man that you should remember him, what is human beings that you should care for him?

Psalms 8, 4-5

can be synonymous with 'dirt', for others, it can personify the inevitable companion of a lifetime.

Peasant tradition has taught me that as long as possible 'the land is not for sale' and the Brazilian Landless Movement has taught me that 'the land is what we are fighting for'. In both cases, in two realities so far apart from each other, one perceives a clear and strong attachment. In the current political and economic system, millions of people do not have access to land or are being driven off the land they have always lived on in the name of modernisation. This right, like the right to water, is a fundamental and primary right that no one should be able to manage arbitrarily. I don't believe that land is property; it may be inherited and passed

down from generation to generation, and in a broader perspective, land therefore remains something entrusted to us, a gift from God. And the best way to receive and care for a gift is to ensure that it is not used for the interests of the few, but that it is shared so that many can benefit from it.

Daniel understands how much man's claim to appropriate the land, by taking it from the neighbour who grew up on it and from the Lord, its only legitimate owner, how much this claim is a lack of respect towards humanity and towards God. Similarly, he pauses to listen to his friend Érica, who loves biology, as she explains that the earth is a living organism, a travelling companion, the partner in a fundamental relationship.



A reader

The earth is a living organism. We forget this too often when we are tempted to use a product that is toxic, not only for the parasites, but also for the earth, for us and for our children. We often lack patience and make no effort to understand the reasons that have led to a negative situation.

The earth is the source of our life, it must be treated with respect, and we must understand the messages it sends us through fungi, mould, insects and parasites. It is important to consider it not as a slave without worrying too much about the consequences, but as a living being to whom we owe respect, whose laws and needs we must know and try to satisfy: in this way, we will learn to recognise and appreciate ripe fruit at the right time and we will not forget to give thanks for every fruit or flower that

ripens, even with our work, for our sustenance.

And Daniel understands the tenderness with which his grandfather touched the fruits of his garden, and the emotion he felt during certain walks in the mountains.

Daniel has conflicting feelings: he is distressed by the violence that our development is having on the Earth, but at the same time he glimpses new intertwining in his relationship with the Creator of humanity and the Earth.

Daniel thinks back to the text of Exodus in which God promises 'a land flowing with milk and honey'. A land that offers these foods is a land of rebirth. Where there is milk and honey, there are mothers and bees, nourishing bodies. There is the possibility of starting over, of working

the land as free people and not as owners. Free as milk and honey: common goods, not commodities! Honey and milk, foods linked to nomadism and usable even in poor conditions: if the pasture is meagre, the cow survives and can give milk, and the bees can produce honey. Milk and honey are everyday foods, not luxury foods like wheat, wine, oil or meat. But they are also a possible food source in situations of conflict and forced mobility, such as those Israel would experience upon its arrival in the land beyond the desert, and those we ourselves experience at any time of crisis.

The promise, for all, is therefore that of a land where the minimum material needs are met. We are invited to seek a positive relationship between human beings and the Earth, both creatures. Only under this condition will life be possible and sustainable for both.
Amen.

Song

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as
it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive
us our trespasses, as we forgive those who
trespass against us. And lead us not into
temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the
glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

May the LORD bless you and keep you!
May the LORD make his face shine upon you
and grant you his favour!
May the LORD lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace! Amen
We blow out the three candles in the name of
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
by Stéfano D'AMORE



A photograph of a tall, slender tree with a thick trunk and a dense canopy of green leaves, standing in a forest. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the image, containing the text 'THEOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT' in green, bold, uppercase letters. The text is centered within the white box.

THEOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

Focus on and reconnection with nature

Excerpt from the Laudato Si' Appeal (by Eric CHARMETANT and Jerone GUE)

Read the following biblical texts aloud to the whole group:

John 1:35-39 (Come and see)

Psalm 104 (The splendours of Creation)

Objective of the activity

To prioritise time spent in nature as much as possible. To this end, you will find below exercises to reconnect with your body and nature.

Exercises

• Attention and reconnection with the natural world around you

 30 – 60 min

Position:
sitting on a bench or on the ground

1. Look at the ground, the plants, the insects and the other animals around you. Bring back to life within you an attentive view of the details, the small differences in your immediate environment (colours, shapes, reliefs, lines, lights, contrasts, movements, etc.).
2. Listening to the sounds of human activity, the sounds of insects, birds singing, barking, the rustling of the wind, the sound of my footsteps (if I start walking), echoes, etc., closing my eyes and taking my time.
3. Feel the contact of the air, of the wind on my skin, its strength, its warmth, its refreshing or heavy effect on my body.
4. Touch the earth, the plants in front of me, welcome the effects of this touch on my fingers and what they make me perceive (softness, roughness, warmth, freshness, dryness, humidity, etc.).

5. At the end of the exercise, stand up and walk slowly. What differences, what new sensations, what small changes do I feel in my body, in my contact with nature as a result of this exercise?

• Attention and reconnection with more distant nature

 15 to 30 min

Position: sitting, standing still
or walking slowly

1. Look at the landscape in front of me (hills, mountains, sea, lake, sky, sun, moon, buildings, etc.), going from the whole to the parts
2. Let myself be affected by the shapes, movements and differences.

At the end of these exercises, the participants read the biblical texts together: Ps 104, Matthew 6:25-34 and John 1:35-39.



Visible or invisible?

Educational objectives

- To ask oneself the question 'Who am I?'
- To question the inner and outer self. Finally, how can one be happy? What exactly is happiness?
- To reflect on how to work on what is not seen? What is this "what is not seen" for them?

Materials

- 2 large white sheets of paper, each with a question on it:
- What is ephemeral in you?
- What is eternal in you?
- Markers/pencils
- 10 envelopes
- 10 sheets of paper

Procedure

This activity is carried out in small groups of about ten people.

First stage: silent dialogue

 10 min

Two questions are written on sheets of flipchart paper placed on tables and participants are invited to go around the tables and debate/discuss in writing:

- What is fleeting in you?
- What is eternal in you?

Second stage: reading of the biblical text

 2 min

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even if our physical being is gradually destroyed, our spiritual

being is renewed from day to day. 17 The distress we experience is temporary and light, but it produces for us, beyond all measure, its weight of eternal glory. 18 For we focus not on what is visible, but on what is invisible. What is visible is temporary, but what is invisible lasts forever.

Third stage: discussion

 15 min

To facilitate this discussion time, the participants stand in the middle of the activity space; you will ask them a question and they are invited to position themselves according to their opinion:

TO THE RIGHT = I do not agree

TO THE LEFT = I agree

IN THE MIDDLE = I have mixed feelings

Once they have taken their position, those who wish to can explain their choice (they can change places during the discussion). Make it clear before you start that kindness, respect and trust are paramount. We speak in the first person.

Questions for them to take a position on:

- What doesn't kill us makes us stronger?
- Am I the same as I was yesterday? And will I be the same tomorrow?
- We are often more attentive to what is invisible than to what is visible.
- What matters most to me is what is invisible.
- What is visible is temporary, what is invisible lasts forever.
- Our spiritual being is renewed day by day.

Then you can resume the silent dialogue from the beginning to make it resonate with the biblical text and the discussions.

Fourth stage: creation of an envelope

20 min

In pairs, each person draws the other (either figuratively, using symbols or words) on the outside of the envelope, then each person individually writes down what is inside them (what is invisible but characterises

them: qualities, faults, values, character, skills, important relationships) on a piece of paper and puts it in the envelope. Each person keeps the envelope for the person they have selected.



Promised land? Relationship between God, humans and the Earth

In the Old Testament, the evaluation of successes and happiness and failures and misfortunes in the experience of the environment by humans is part of the relationship with God; the language is that of blessing and cursing. Although not exclusively, blessing is most often understood in a material sense, as is the case with cursing. There is undoubtedly a metaphorical element to these representations, and biblical texts should not be

caricatured: nevertheless, blessing is often presented in terms of prosperity, fertility, yield, etc. See, for example, Deuteronomy 7:12-14.

In the Bible, there are milestones that express the relationship between God, humans and the Earth: Creation (the Garden of Eden), the promised land as an inheritance, and the Exile (how to live the relationship with God in a foreign land?). These elements can be taken as the expression of the

• • •

Leviticus 25:3-5

For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops.

But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord.

specific identity of the people of Israel, or as a paradigm of the experience of all humanity in its relationship with God and its environment. The Old Testament texts on the relationship between humans and the environment must be read taking into account the general biblical perspective.

One of the interesting texts on the relationship of people with the Earth, often quoted in debates on faith and ecology, is Leviticus 25:1-22, where the motives of social justice and respect for the Earth are intertwined (see also Leviticus 18:28, 26:34-35). This text reflects the idea that the Earth does not belong to people, but to God. The Earth does not only have a utilitarian function;

The evaluation of successes and happiness and of failures and misfortune in the experience of the environment by humans is part of the relationship with God.

people must not exploit it excessively. The Earth is the given place, the place of life, the territory in which the people can rest. To rest means to live in relationship with God and the community: to cease human activity in order to enter a time of contemplation and gratuitousness, made up of fraternal and non-commercial relationships. Note the link with the seventh day in the first account of the Creation (Genesis 2:1-3 cf. Exodus 20:8-11). It is likely that this economic system was never put into practice. It is a theological ideology that is difficult to reinforce because of the allure of wealth and the commercialisation of human life in its environment.

The lack of recognition of the Creator's authority leads to injustice and corruption

Reading: Jeremiah 5:20-31

The facilitator introduces the text: it is taken from a prophetic discourse and is presented as a direct speech from God. It is God who is speaking! He/she reads the text aloud.

Personal re-reading

One of the things that makes reading the biblical text complicated is that it can arouse quite strong emotional reactions in us that prevent us from taking a step back. To identify these reactions from the outset, the facilitator invites everyone to reread the text while listening to how they feel. As they read the text, they stick

stickers according to the colour code suggested by the facilitator:

- **yellow** for what is bright, what makes me feel good;
- **green** for what makes me hopeful;
- **red** for what is too difficult for me to hear today;
- **blue** for what seems ambiguous or unclear to me;
- **beige** for what makes me sad;
- **purple** for what motivates me to change my behaviour.

The facilitator ensures that this rereading takes place in silence.

When everyone has finished rereading, the facilitator invites the participants to get together in pairs or threes on the spot and find out what each other has marked in yellow, green, red, etc.

Group work

The facilitator distributes a sheet of questions about the text to be discussed in groups:

1. Note the words and phrases used to describe the people (v. 20-25).
2. According to the text, what should their attitude be before God? List the reasons given.
3. Read Job 28:20-28. What connection do you see between the two texts?
4. Note the words and phrases used to describe

the 'wicked' (v.26-29)

5. What are their faults according to your reading of the text?
6. What perspectives do the last verses (v.29-31) give to the text?
7. What are your thoughts on reading this text?



New Creation

At first glance, there is less reference to Creation in the New Testament. A broader, more cosmic perspective is established, where God's action for the salvation of Humanity in Jesus Christ seems to transcend the Earthly scene, with emphasis on the resurrection, eternal life, the Kingdom, the new Creation, etc. However, we tend to dematerialise some of these references even more under the influence of Greek philosophy and the cosmology of the medieval Church where God's salvation is played out in heaven. Note, however, that the relative absence of references to Creation can be explained by a presupposition of OT theology of Creation. In the Acts of the Apostles, when Paul speaks to a pagan audience, the theme of Creation returns (Acts 14:15-17, 17:24-28).

The relationship with Creation is effectively reinterpreted by the death and resurrection of Christ. Christ is presented as the agent of Creation in two important Christological texts:

John 1:1-5, Colossians 1:15-20. These texts are based on Proverbs 8:22-31 where personified Wisdom is found alongside God during Creation. In the New Testament, Wisdom becomes the Son (the Word), present at the beginning with the Creator, the agent and the purpose of Creation! The theology of Creation then becomes rather overloaded in the NT – it becomes Christological and eschatological, evoking the theme of the new Creation (Revelation 21:1-4).

However, it should not be concluded that the Christian faith is not interested in this Earth! It should also be noted that the theme of the new Creation is based on texts from the OT, Isaiah 65-66 in particular; there is undoubtedly more continuity between the old and the new Creation in biblical thought than in ecclesiastical thought!

Introduction to Romans 8:18-25

This text is the culmination of a long development

by the Apostle Paul concerning the Gospel of Christ. Paul exposes the 'problem' of sin and God's judgement against the wickedness of men, but he celebrates the superabundant grace of God in Jesus Christ who died and rose again for the forgiveness and justification of all, through faith in Christ.

In the verses preceding our text, Paul says that those who are in Christ through faith are children of God according to the Spirit: children,

and joint heirs with Christ, 'if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him' (Romans 8:17).

Gap text: Romans 8:18-25 (NRSV)

The facilitator distributes the cloze text. He/she explains that the objective is not to find the correct answers, but possible answers according to the logic of the text. It is an exercise that draws attention to the vocabulary and the structure of the text. The work is done in groups.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the _____ that must be revealed in us. 19 For Creation waits with _____ for the revelation of God's _____: 20 delivered to the power of nothingness – not of its own free will, but by the authority of the one who delivered it –, it keeps _____, 21 for it too will be set free from the slavery of _____, in order that we may obtain the _____ and _____ of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation _____ even now in pains. 23 Not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the _____, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption, the _____ for our bodies. 24 For we have been saved, but only _____. Now, _____ what we hope for is no longer hope: what we _____, how can we still hope for it? 25 But to hope for what we do not _____ is to wait for it with _____.

When each group has filled in the blanks, the facilitator reads the full text. He or she then distributes it. The participants then express their surprises and discoveries by comparing their text with the text read out.

Work on the text in groups

The facilitator distributes a sheet with the following questions to the groups:

1. Note the 'attitudes' and perspectives that Paul attributes to Creation.
2. Note the statements in the text concerning the current 'situation' of God's 'children'.
3. Paul has already referred to Creation in his argument. Read Romans 1:18-23. Compare the interaction between Creation, 'people' and God in this text with the relationship between

Creation, 'children' and God in Romans 8.

4. How can such a text contribute to Christian reflection on climate change?



Endless well

Theological Empowerment working group

Educational objectives

- To initiate a reflection on the theme 'me in the world, on Earth'
- To raise awareness, question and problematise the crucial issue of the sharing of vital resources, essential elements for life, whose preservation and distribution are necessary for the common good of humanity.
- Present the issues of the well as a meeting place in the biblical context

Materials

- 1 activity guide for the facilitators
- 1 pack of biblical texts
- Post-it notes
- 1 board on an A3 sheet of paper
- Pens

Activity guide

First stage: dialogue; questioning each other

 15 min

- What resources are vital for you today?
- Which ones do not everyone have access to?
- How do you have access to these resources? (→ interdependence of people and countries on the supply of food, water, etc.)
- What are the issues

surrounding these resources? And beyond the human issues? Are they all unlimited?

Second stage: reading of the biblical text

 5 min

John 4:4-15

4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

6 Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.'

8 His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

9 The Samaritan woman said to Jesus, 'But you are a Jew! How dare you ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?' For Jews have nothing to do with Samaritans. 10 Jesus replied, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink," you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

11 The woman replied, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep.

Where, then, would you get this living water?

12 Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us



the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his flocks and herds?'

13 Jesus replied, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again;

14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never be thirsty again. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'

Third stage: discussion



10 min

- How does this text resonate with the previous discussion?
- What is this water that Jesus is talking about?
- Do you think there are spiritual resources? What are yours? Do you need them? In what circumstances?

Here, the water, the well, is an opportunity for encounters between sometimes different communities. These encounters can happen in many ways.

Even today, all these resources create encounters that can go more or less well. Just think back to the first lockdown: on the one hand, supermarkets were sometimes the scene of fights for toilet paper, and on the other hand, solidarity was shown, for example, in feeding healthcare workers and supporting local producers. Let's think together about the different strategies that are possible when there is a good to be shared.

- Imagine that you have three litres of water to share between three people. You are one of the three people. What solutions can you propose? In groups of three or four, think about and write on post-it notes at least five possible strategies/solutions for three people to share three litres of water. As you come up with these strategies, consider whether they favour the relationship or personal interest. In other words, consider which solution benefits whom.

(10 min)

- Come back together as a group and share these strategies. Try to organise them in the table according to their relationship to the relationship or personal interest.

(15 min)



The responsible one is God!

Anne-Christine HILBOLD-CROISET,

A Theological and Ecological Short Story on Creation by Caroline BAUBEROT (EELF)

A skit for about 8-15 people

Pastor: A few days ago, while I was meditating on Creation with a view to preaching, I fell asleep at my desk. Sleep had suddenly overcome me, and I soon entered a strange dream... I suddenly found myself in a huge, fleece-covered room that looked a bit like a big courtroom. Inside this room, there was a strange commotion.

You can hear the judge's gavel tapping.

Judge: Silence! Silence! Or I'll clear the room!

Silence is imperative. The judge stands up:

Judge: Accused, rise! (The accused rises) Your name?

God: God

Judge: First name?

God: The Father

Judge: Profession?

God: Creator and Saviour

Judge: Domicile?

God: Wherever I am allowed to enter...

Judge: You may sit down! We will now proceed to hear the charges against you.

I ask the accuser to come forward.

A strange-looking fellow with

unkempt hair and a somewhat dubious air approaches and says:

Prosecutor: Having carefully listened to and recorded the numerous complaints emanating from the earth, we have retained the following: your Creation, Lord, has a number of defects and irregularities which are the cause of many evils on earth. The air you created is polluted, so many men and women complain of bronchitis, asthma and cancer. The ozone layer has been perforated, and the sun's rays have become dangerous. Some species that you created are disappearing, and spare parts to regulate the ecosystem cannot be found. Forests have an unfortunate tendency to shrink; it seems that they are being affected by a very powerful parasite called 'concrete'. Cows and other animals have gone mad.

A parade of evidence (images, testimonies, etc.)

The accuser: The evidence is overwhelming! Yes really, Mr Creator, what do you have to say to all this?

Characters

- God
- The Judge
- The Accuser
- X
- The child that plants trees
- The jurors
- Extras for the parade of evidence

Great silence. Everyone turns to God. God stands up and says:

God: In the beginning, when I created the heavens and the earth, there was nothing, no possible life in this original chaos: no air, no land, no sea, no water. Some of you must still remember. In the beginning, when I created, I had only one concern: life. Yes, I wanted life to be able to be born and flourish on this planet, plant life and animal life of course, but above all human life. That is why I created the air, the water, the sky and the sea, the earth and then the trees. I created the species so that there would be everything on this earth, so that life would not be boring but varied, colourful, full of surprises, so that it would renew and regenerate itself. And then, when all that began to resemble something, something good, I created the human being. I created him in my image, so that he could be my counterpart in Creation, so that, following in my footsteps, he could create, bring order, make and transform the world. I gave him the power of judgement so that he could recognise what was good and what was not. And then I gave him free rein to administer my Creation as he saw fit. Today, I must admit that this freedom comes at a price, and human beings often forget to give me an account.

The accuser can no longer sit still and with a leap, he stands up and points his accusing finger:

Accuser: There we go, here we are again, it's always the same thing. How many times have I told you not to trust your creatures. They're just creatures, for goodness' sake! Men, women, pigs, mosquitoes, creatures...

God: Stammering: But...but...that is...that is... that is...

He sits back down.

Accuser: (increasingly annoyed): How can you trust them? They're going to end up destroying

everything - mankind. They spend their time complaining but in reality they are the ones responsible for the damage. And you, yes YOU, are guilty of trusting them. It's not the first time; we already told you when you sent your Son into harm's way.

Once again, all eyes turned to the Lord. There was a great silence. God hesitated, then finally got up. He went to the middle of the room and dug a hole in the clouds. He called out to them to come and see. Through the hole he had dug, they could see a garden somewhere on earth.

X: Come and see! Look! What on earth is that human being doing?

There was a little boy planting a tree in the ground, carefully, with his hands. When he had finished, he filled a bucket with water and watered his tree. And he stood beside it, amazed and proud. The whole court then let out a general admiring 'Oooooohh'.

God: Yes, I plead guilty! Because every time I see a child planting a tree, or men and women taking care of Creation, every time I hear them giving thanks for the land they live on, I tell myself that I am right to trust and love humanity Timid applause. Then cheers fill the court. The accuser takes advantage of this moment of general jubilation to make a quick getaway.

Only then did we see a small piece of a very black and hairy tail emerge from under his yellowed angel's robe.



Proposed biblical meditations

1. Genesis 11:1-9 - "The Tower of Babel"

- Illustrate the Tower of Babel.
- Reflect deeply on the aspirations of humanity. What place do they give to God?
- Using the details of the text, imagine the scene with all its technical details and human organization, considering the subtlety of God's response and the benefit of His intervention.

2. Genesis 6:5-22 - "The Violence of Man and Noah's Ark"

- Measure God's feelings in response to the spread and overabundance of evil.
- Imagine what it must have been like for Noah to remain just and upright in such an atmosphere.
- Contemplate the practical aspects of the ark project. What role do all these animals play?

3. Luke 13:1-5 - "The Tower of Siloam"

- Imagine the story and the emotions of the people after the massacre of the Galileans by Pilate. How do they distance themselves from it?
- Similarly, after the collapse of a tower in Jerusalem that killed eighteen people, see how Jesus uses these dramatic events to awaken His listeners and call them to conversion.

4. Psalm 52

- Using the words of the psalm, feel internally what the psalmist experiences when he looks at humanity.
- Imagine the situations that God sees, with our understanding of the biblical world.

The preservation of Creation has never been as urgent as it is now. Dedicating time to this cause has become necessary.



YOUTH

Witness Relays



This project aims to foster reflection and action in the various Churches within the Community, and to bear witness to a commitment that engages us for the world. It is part of Cevaa's Youth Strategy.

The principle

Witnesses (or relay batons) will circulate within and between the various Churches of Cevaa.

The Church receiving the relay will organize an activity related to the theme "Inhabiting Creation Differently." Before passing the relay to another Church, the activity will be recorded on the interactive map (details below).

The witnesses

There will be two types of witnesses:

The main witness: the book "relais de témoins"

This witness will make the rounds of all the Churches in the Community, symbolizing the community and international relationships of Cevaa. Each Church will hold the witness for a maximum of one month.

The activity will be carried

out before receiving the book, so the witness does not stay too long in any one national Church.

Following a pre-defined route, the main witness will be passed from Church to Church. The Church leaders will be responsible for this solemn activity.

As it travels, the book will be filled with photos, accounts of the activities carried out, and a collaborative prayer for Creation.

The secondary witnesses: the relay batons

These witnesses will take the form of real relay race batons. They will be hollow, designed to contain instructions, a collaborative prayer, and a participation witness sheet.

These secondary witnesses will not follow a pre-defined route; they will be autonomous.

Each Church will receive three relay batons to bring the activity to life within local communities. Through the national youth coordinator, the Church will distribute these batons to three local youth groups.



Once the activity is completed, the youth group signs the participation witness sheet and can then pass the baton to another local church or youth group. The goal is for these relay batons to circulate as much as possible within the country... and even cross borders.

Activities

The groups are free to propose activities and be creative, but they must remain connected to the theme of Joint Action.

Here are some examples or sources of inspiration for activities:

- **A drawing or photography contest on the theme**

The youth could be encouraged

to create works of art that illustrate various ways of inhabiting Creation differently. They could choose specific themes such as biodiversity, climate change, responsible consumption, living Genesis 2:15, etc. This contest could be organized within the local church and expanded by publishing the submissions on social media to reach a wider audience. Afterward, an exhibition where the youth present their creations could be organized.

- **Clean-up days**

The youth organize themselves to collect waste. They could join local organizations such as gardening clubs, environmental groups, or

public services to gain advice on the best ways to plan the event. The youth can be encouraged to invite their friends and family to join in, making the day both fun and engaging.

- **A recycling challenge to find new uses for items normally thrown away**

The youth are encouraged to come up with new ways to reuse common items such as plastic bottles, cardboard boxes, newspapers, etc. An exhibition where the youth present their creations could then be organized.

- **A film festival related to the theme**

Screenings followed by a discussion on ways to inhabit Creation differently.

- **A nature hike**

The youth explore a local natural area and take time to appreciate the beauty of Creation. This activity could also help them better understand their role in preserving Creation.

- **Tree planting**

This sustainable gesture can be done on land provided by the Church. It offers the opportunity to learn about the life cycle of a tree, its importance in biodiversity, and its value as a natural resource for the community.

The essential element: take a photo with the witness at the moment of the activity

What to do once the activity is completed?

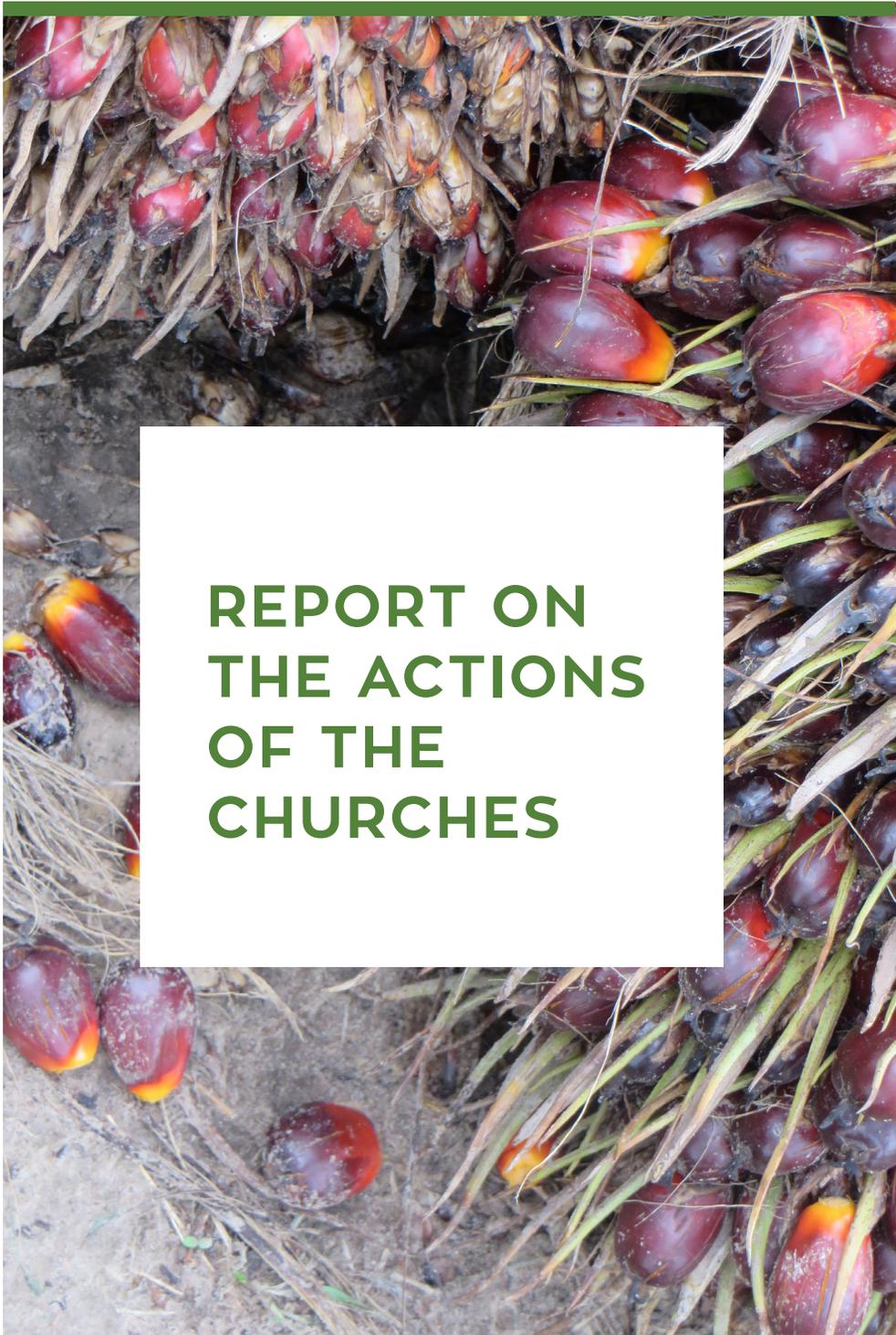
Simply follow the instructions inside the witness relay, which will allow you to share your activity on the "Witness Relay" website.

Publication: Produce a relay sheet for the activity, which includes a title, an identity photo, and a description of the activity and its execution (photos, reports, testimonials, etc.).

Once the sheet is recorded, simply pass the witness to another group!

The goal is for this witness to travel as much as possible during the Joint Action!





**REPORT ON
THE ACTIONS
OF THE
CHURCHES**

Église Protestante de l'île de la Réunion

Two years ago, the arrival of a new pastor at the Protestant Church of Reunion Island breathed new life into our parish. Over the days and weeks, various ideas were put forward, particularly concerning the need to improve the church environment.

It was then decided that the property's garden would be redeveloped. And so it was that one day a retired parishioner took the first spadeful of earth from the barren ground of our church in La Source and never stopped. Today, thanks to the small team of volunteer gardeners, the garden of La Source is taking on the appearance of the Garden of Eden (in miniature).

When we asked the head gardener how she manages to get plants to grow so quickly, she replied: 'Every day, every time I go out, I have my secateurs in my basket and, wherever I go, when I see a beautiful plant, I cut one or two stems. When I get to the Source (our church), I lovingly plant my cuttings, I water them, I take care of them and I talk to them. They grow and become the beautiful plants you see there'.

And when we told her that she stole those cuttings, she looked at us and, with a big childish laugh, said: 'I cut them because they were sticking out of people's fences.' 'And how did you get the papaya trees here?' She replied:

'I brought the papaya seeds from my dessert here and sowed them...' 'And the banana tree, how did you do it?' 'I took a small one that was at the foot of the big one and planted it further away so that it too could grow, bear fruit and make little ones of its own.' 'Quite simply?' She replied: 'No, every day I water them, I talk to them, I remove the little creatures that tease



them.' 'And it grows?' 'Yes, and it bears fruit...' 'And that's Creation, a gift that God gives us every day...'

The new Eden or the garden of the Source has become the symbol of rediscovered innocence and inexhaustible hope. In two years, our church has become a place of contemplation, conviviality, a 'garden of playful and spiritual exchanges as well as intergenerational activities' that have consolidated the fraternity that has existed in this church since its creation. 'To God alone be the glory!'

Novel the sacred tree -Benin

Presentation by Timothée Gandonou



In the urban planning of the royal and historical city of Abomey, located at the heart of the Republic of Benin, the writer Jean PLIYA recounts the drama that followed the felling of a sacred tree in his novel *L'arbre fétiche*. In the story, we are confronted with a society in the midst of development. However, as with any development, there is unfortunately a price to pay. We are faced with a society that demands immense sacrifices to progress. This sacred tree finds itself standing in the path of that very development.

The mayor, Lanta, a representative of the colonial government, takes a firm stance when he declares, *"In the twentieth century, we can no longer believe in fetishes. Without this, despite our independence, we will never build a modern, civilized nation. We must cut down this tree for the sake of public utility. Abomey must take on a fresh, modern appearance."* These words are delivered with conviction. But the mayor is careful to add, *"And nothing will stop us."*

Despite the positive testimonies in favor of the tree and the clear concerns expressed by some, such as: *"Our comrades have sent us to tell you that, in this case, it is an iroko tree, a sacred tree, and that there is grave danger in attacking it; this tree is sacred, and no branch should ever be cut; no one has the right to touch this sacred tree, under penalty of severe retribution; in memory of the great services it has rendered to the kingdom of Danhomè, it has always been*

respected; therefore, we should spare it," no real discussion or negotiated debate took place with the city's elders, who also recognized the need for development.

In this manner, the powers of ancestral customs and fetishes were ignored. The tree was felled, and, as was inevitable, the consequences followed. Dossou, the brave woodcutter who did not believe in the many fetishes that the elders revered and who disregarded their prohibitions, convinced that worshipping a tree was an undignified superstition, paid the ultimate price. He alone bore the consequences of disregarding a development that ignored the very people who were meant to benefit from it. The novel ends with the tragic fate of Dossou: *"Ultimately, Dossou's corpse was thrown to the jackals and vultures. For the fetishists, even death could not atone for the crime of deicide."*

Was the vertical urbanization plan ever fully realized? The novel does not address this question. However, the story suggests that the path of development can be negotiated through a more horizontal approach, even with the most despised groups. We belong to nature and the environment; but they also belong to us, and each person has a role to play in ensuring their survival. A different way of inhabiting Creation is possible, one rooted in dialogue and negotiation, where every participant in the process of Creation is considered.

Excerpts from *L'arbre fétiche*, Jean PLIYA – Editions CLE, Yaoundé, 2004

I Fight Plastic

Poetry by Primary School Children, part of the Green Child Program – UPAC

Plastic has become endemic!
 Used systematically,
 It's a toxic waste.
 Indestructible, a petrochemical product,
 Thrown away haphazardly,
 It turns into an epidemic pollutant,

 I fight plastic.

It lives in unusual landfills,
 It covers the oceans and rivers on the surface,
 Fish feed on it in a pathetic way,
 The earth and its worms suffer tragically.
 It is not ecological,
 And its production is electric,

 I fight plastic.

If all these plastics,
 Are sold in stores,
 Even in cosmetics,
 If they're used without ethics,

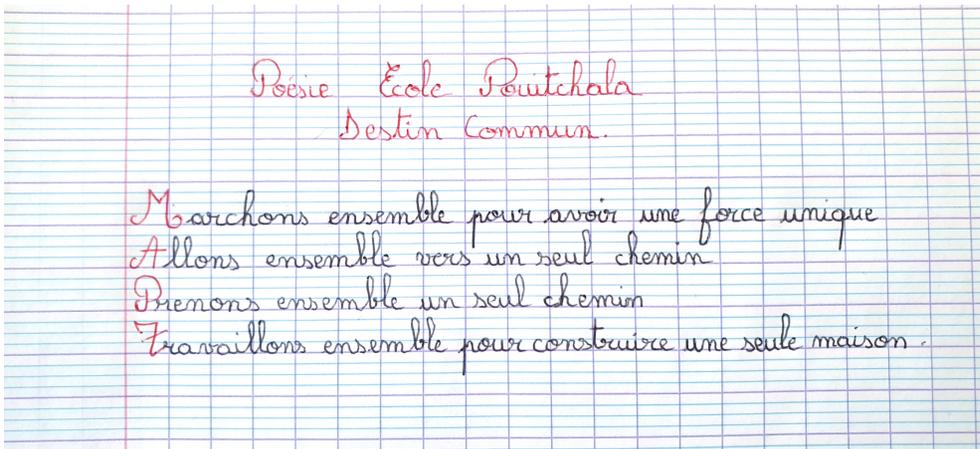
Or without proper politics,
 Isn't that a chaotic disorder?
 I fight plastic.

If we value plastics,
 In an artistic way,
 Or even humorously,
 Emphasizing practices,
 That favor aesthetics,
 Isn't that good politics?

I fight plastic.

This fight against plastic,
 Is none other than strategic,
 Let's sort at home,
 Avoid single-use plastics,
 Choose ecological packaging,
 And that's the political will.

I fight plastic – do you fight
 plastic?





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The Cevaa Secretariat
Claudia SCHULZ, General Secretary

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