

WORLD MISSION COUNCIL

May 2016

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the report
2. Give thanks for the life and witness of Mission Partners who have died, acknowledge with gratitude those who have completed their period of service overseas, and uphold in prayer all who continue to serve.
3. Encourage congregations to read and study the report, use the worship service and resources, and learn more about the life of the churches in other parts of the world, and the links with the Church of Scotland.
4. Encourage congregations and presbyteries to develop links, particularly twinings, with congregations and Presbyteries of other Churches around the world.
5. Encourage congregations and members to engage with, support, and promote the work of Christian Aid, especially in caring for creation.
6. Welcome the Council's plan, with the Church & Society Council, The Guild and Christian Aid, to organise a consultation with international partners on the theme of care for creation and encourage congregations to send a representative to a conference on 1 October.
7. Encourage all congregations to register as eco-congregations and discover how they can take practical action in their lives and communities to care for creation.
8. Encourage all congregations and Presbyteries to seek Fairtrade status and support the Fairtrade movement.
9. Thank all who have generously supported Let us Build a House and encourage those who have not to consider getting involved to help the United Mission in Nepal to offer support to those without shelter.
10. Welcome the support for the tripartite work with Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Malawi and the Evangelical Church of Christ in Mozambique (IECM), to help IECM foster stronger links beyond its own area, and to work cooperatively to enhance their capacity and develop their ministerial formation.
11. Urge all members and congregations to hold the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, and all the peoples of South Sudan, in prayer as conflict intensifies, and encourage the Council in its work with Presbyterian Church leaders in conflict transformation.
12. Thank all who have generously supported the Place at the Table initiative and encourage all to continue to hold the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, the wider Christian community, and all the peoples of Lebanon and Syria, in prayer as daily they confront the challenges of living in difficult and dangerous conditions.
13. Encourage congregations and presbyteries to host a 24th of the month event to learn more about and pray for the work of partners in the Holy Land.
14. Instruct the council to continue to support the Christian community, our Partner Churches, as well as our Palestinian and Israeli partners as they peacefully oppose the occupation and work to ensure there is fair access to water for all people.

15. Encourage members to visit the Tent of Nations farm and volunteer with them as they seek to develop environmentally friendly methods, crops appropriate to their location, and peace and justice education.
16. Encourage all members and agencies of the Church to read the WM report on Human Trafficking, use the Bible Study material and to engage with the issues raised, and seek ways to counter this modern slavery.
17. Encourage all members and agencies of the Church to read the WM report on gender based violence, use the Bible Study material and to consider inviting a speaker from WMC to explore the issue as it relates to our overseas partners.
18. Encourage presbyteries and congregations to continue to pray for and give to the work of the Church of Scotland HIV Programme.
19. Urge members and congregations to read the Pyongyang Appeal to support efforts to encourage dialogue and mutual exchange that might reduce tensions, promote respect for human rights and a culture of peace and reconciliation with North Korea.

REPORT

WE ARE THE VOICES FOR THE EARTH

1. The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. Psalm 24:1

"We honour our firstborn here in Malawi. The firstborn child has a special status. The earth is the firstborn of creation, created before the human beings, so we should respect the earth and hold it in a special status." Rev Maurice Munthali of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Livingstonia Synod shared these thoughts on the importance of caring for our whole created order, emphasising that those created last should show a particular care for all those created earlier.

Why the World Mission Council (WMC) should be interested in these issues is clear from its strategic framework, which sees the church around the world as participating in the Mission of God, who not only created the world and everything in it (seeing that it was good) but who also loves the world and seeks the redemption not only of humanity but of the whole created order (Rom 8:19-22). The WMC is privileged to hear the voices of the World Church and to be able to share these voices with the wider Church in Scotland. Among the most pressing

concerns for the world church is that of the whole created order, ensuring its sustainable future, and the responsibility of the human race to deal sensitively and gently with it. So many partners of the Church of Scotland are in the front line of changes which may see their lands experiencing desertification from the degradation of the plant and forest life, or inundated with water as sea levels rise, or taken from them by land-grabbers – all of which impoverish the lives of individuals and communities. This report comes at a critical time after the agreement at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in December 2015 (see the report of Church and Society Council). Partners in countries around the world have worked hard to help bring this about; and the lives and wellbeing of millions now and in the future depend on its effective implementation.

Graham Philpott, from the Church Land Programme in South Africa, reminded those present at Christian Aid's 70th Anniversary Conference in Edinburgh in October 2015 that, while much western thought has seen land as an entity which can be owned, fenced and exploited, and

those who live on and from it can be controlled or removed, there is also another view - in Scotland and beyond – which comes from those who have traditionally valued the land and carefully worked it and cared for it. For the people of KwaZulu Natal, land is a source of identity and of people's self-understanding, a "Storied Space". Graham told of how, when a child is born, its umbilical cord is buried next to the family home, and this emphasises a never-ending bond with the place of your birth. The earth is the Lord's; it is also where the identity of the individual born into community is quite literally buried, and where there is a deep respect for the earth and all its creatures. Instead of relentless exploitation, there must be the pursuit of harmony between all those who live on the earth and share its bounties.

The stories from WMC partners across the world speak powerfully of these issues. They become voices for the earth itself - voices seeking to challenge and change the way we live at home, so that our friends and neighbours around the world are not kept in poverty and ill-health because of our actions. These stories, shared with the Church in recent decades, have helped support and sustain the momentum in its climate justice work. Here we find stories of our partners' experience, interwoven with our involvement in their stories and ways in which the Church of Scotland walks the road of life in faith and love and prayer with the church around the world. Shirley Elena Murray's hymn for creation asks us to consider closely the groaning of creation, the sacredness of all created things, the responsibility we have for its ongoing life, and our partnership in God's designs for a full and abundant creation.

*Where are the voices for the earth?
Where are the eyes to see her pain,
wasted by our consuming path,
weeping the tears of poisoned rain?*

*Sacred the soil that hugs the seed,
sacred the silent fall of snow,*

*sacred the world that God decreed,
water and sun and river flow.*

*Where shall we run who break this code,
where shall tomorrow's children be,
left with the ruined gifts of God,
death for the creatures, land, and sea?*

*We are the voices for the earth,
we who will care enough to cry,
cherish her beauty, clear her breath,
live that our planet may not die.*

Church Hymnary 4, No 244. S.E. Murray

2. Where are the voices for the earth?

*Where are the voices for the earth?
Where are the eyes to see her pain,
wasted by our consuming path,
weeping the tears of poisoned rain?*

As part of the universal Church, the Church of Scotland seeks to walk the Emmaus road with other churches and Christians in every part of our world. In its attentive accompaniment of churches in other countries, the World Mission Council hears the cries of its partners and is asked to lift them up so that their cries and experiences may be amplified beyond their own locale. This year¹, the WMC lifts up the voices for the created world from partners around the world, and seeks to share with the Church at home something of how others experience and interact with the created order. The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it: the creation is a blessing, and it brings

¹ In recent years WMC reports have highlighted work in different areas of the world, in the Middle East, particularly Israel and occupied Palestine ('Invest in Peace'); in Asia, particularly China ('Love never Ends'); in Africa and the Caribbean ('Life in Fullness'); in Europe ('Together we walk'); and in WMC's engagement with the church at home (The Living Stones) and give a full and rounded picture of the Church of Scotland's involvement with the world Church. These reports remain useful tools for the church and are available on the Church website: www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/mission_worldwide

with it a responsibility and challenge to care for it, and sustain it.

It is often those who contribute the least to climate change who are affected the most. Pakistan contributes very little to global greenhouse gas emissions (on a per capita basis it ranks 135 in the world); however, the Climate Risk Index (CRI) for 2012 ranked Pakistan as the country third most affected by climate change. Pakistan is particularly vulnerable as it lies in a geographical region where temperature increases are expected to be higher than the global average. Pakistan is experiencing increasingly severe floods due to the unpredictability of monsoon rains and the rapid glacier melts in the Himalayas. Rural infrastructure, communication systems, transport networks and the agricultural economy have all suffered. WMC was able to send emergency support to its partners, who are in the frontline of responding, and continues to support a maternal, neonatal and child health centre in Thatta, Sindh which was set up following these floods. Conversely, other parts of the country have suffered from a lack of rainfall; in 2014, 132 children and 520 adults were killed in Sindh when severe drought hit the province for the third year in a row. These unpredictable extremes of climate are making life difficult for people who rely on the land to make a living and are pushing people into poverty.

A lack of peace has many consequences. Recent record breaking dust storms across the Middle East have been blamed, in part, on the civil war in Syria. The war has meant that farmers are unable to tend their land, which is becoming more and more uncultivated. Not only does that seriously impact on food production, it also means that the ground simply becomes dust, which is then picked up in storms and taken across the region, causing, amongst other things, health issues for those who are in its path.

The Presbyterian Church of South Sudan continues to minister in a situation of conflict. Despite the signing of an agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict by the Republic of South Sudan in August 2015, the population remains uprooted. 2.3 million people have been forced to

flee since the conflict began, thousands of homes have been ruined during the fighting, and many people have been displaced multiple times because of repeated attacks. The effects of this forced movement have had repercussions on food production, animal husbandry, soil erosion and tree planting. Desertification and flooding have become more pronounced and have added to the suffering of people already living on the edge. WMC's partners, including those living in UN camps, have shared stories of their inability to source firewood for cooking purposes and of their struggle to lie down to sleep during the rainy season. The WMC has set up a small group, including the Very Reverend John Chalmers, to work with the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS) to conduct mediation training to help address the issues of peace and reconciliation. This training will work at the grassroots level and those trained will then act as trainers of others. In time, it is hoped that this will help people address differences in new ways and thus reduce conflict. Violence causes immense harm to God's people, both physical and psychological. In addition, violence and war cause significant damage to God's earth. Whatever Christians can do to reduce conflict will play some part in preventing harm to people and damage to the earth, leading to a reduction in poverty and an increase in human wellbeing - life in fullness for all.

For the people of Malawi and Mozambique climate change is neither a theoretical possibility nor a minor inconvenience; it is an ever-present reality that often spells disaster. The economies of Malawi and Northern Mozambique depend almost entirely on rain-fed agriculture. When the rains do not come, or they come at the wrong time, or they are more severe than usual, the consequences are often catastrophic. The regular rainfall patterns that enabled a settled rhythm of planting and harvesting are being disrupted by extreme and unpredictable weather events. At the beginning of 2015, the north of Malawi faced drought whilst the southern part of the country faced unusually heavy rains that brought about devastating floods, destroying crops and livestock, and forcing at least 170,000 people to leave their

homes. Scores of people also lost their lives. Roads and railways were swept away, cutting off communities and making transport all but impossible at times. Aware of the floods affecting their partner in the Presbytery of Zomba, Melrose and Peebles Presbytery, amongst others, reached out to its twinned presbytery to offer their practical and prayerful support. Likewise, the Church of Scotland HIV Programme responded to an appeal to help the Livingstonia Synod AIDS programme (LISAP) and Ekwendeni Hospital AIDS Programme by providing funding for emergency food assistance. As a result, hundreds of vulnerable families, many consisting of children and adults living with HIV, were supported. The WMC has also recently been supporting closer cooperation between Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in southern Malawi and the Evangelical Church of Christ in Mozambique (IECM), which was originally established one hundred years ago by the former Church of Scotland Blantyre Mission. The partnership seeks to help IECM to foster better links, to develop their ministerial formation and to work cooperatively to enhance their capacity in areas such as health, education, agriculture food security.

A major concern for the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) has been the failure of the maize harvest in 47 of its 103 Districts in 2015 because of drought. The UCZ is working with partners and the Zambian Government to help alleviate increasing malnutrition and hunger, especially in the south west of its Western Province. There is a lack of both surface and ground water due to the non-inundation of flood plains from the Zambezi River and its tributaries. Mission Partners, Keith and Ida Waddell and Glen and Wendy Lund, have communicated through their partner plan letters that this has challenged financially insecure households with high commodity prices, and the collapse of local markets has forced people to sell household assets to buy food. They have written that food and water shortages, as well as erratic electricity supply, have had a detrimental impact on the lives of the people that they serve amongst and live alongside.

Droughts and crop failures have also affected the lives of WMC's partner in Sumba, one of the outermost islands in the Indonesian archipelago. The Gereja Kristen Sumba/ GKS (Christian Church of Sumba) ministers across the island and serves all the people of Sumba. Rev Charles Detha follows the issue of climate change in Sumba and writes: "A farmer in Makamenggit Village, Umbu Ndelu told us that typically the rains begin to fall in early September and end in early April. But within the last 6 years there have been significant changes. Rain has begun to fall in late December or early January and ended in March or April. This not only changes the cropping pattern but also leads to a decline in agricultural production." The drought has led to water shortages, with several streams drying up completely. People have to travel 3-4km to obtain the water they need for drinking and cooking. In early 2015, with support from the Council of Assembly, WMC was able to respond to an appeal from the GKS to help in purchasing and distributing food and water to families in Maubokul, East Sumba, who had experienced crop failure and water shortages.

3. Sacred the Soil

*Sacred the soil that hugs the seed,
sacred the silent fall of snow,
sacred the world that God decreed,
water and sun and river flow.*

September 1st was proclaimed as a day of prayer for the environment by the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople in 1989, and today his successor, Patriarch Bartholomew I, is perhaps the most outspoken church leader on climate change. The Orthodox Church year starts that day with a commemoration of how God created the world. On Oct 4, many other churches commemorate Francis of Assisi, well known for his love of the created order and his way of being at home with and in creation. The weeks in between have been declared as Time for Creation² by the World Council of Churches to remind us

² Worship resources are available here: www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/time-for-creation

of the sacredness of the created order and to help us, through prayer and action, to raise up awareness of the inherent godliness of the whole creation. Guillermo Kerber, a Uruguayan Catholic working on creation issues with the WCC, urges Christians to use this window to pray, fast, meditate, and so 'feed our faith and hope', deepening our sense of being part of creation and praising God for its beauty. Pope Francis has also played a role in helping to engage the world on environmental and ecological issues with the publication of *Laudato Si*, an encyclical which challenges the culture of consumerism and what the Pope sees as the developed world's indifference to the destruction of the planet in pursuit of short-term economic gains, or as Rowan Williams puts it, Christians need to regain a sense that our relationship to the earth is about 'communion not consumption'. The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.

PG George, a farmer and member of the East Kerala Diocese of the Church of South India remembers that in his childhood he did some work with a farmer in his fields, which gave him a "desire that I too have a piece of land which I could work hard to cultivate. There was a time when we could calculate the climate even before it started to be hot or cold. Now we are not able to calculate time and plan what has to be done on our farms as climate change has taken it into this disastrous phase." Care for creation is a spiritual motivation for Mr George, who sees finding a solution to the issue of the environmental crisis as a religious duty. He writes: "I have learnt, and taught from the Word of God, that man and woman are made from the earth and they have been given the duty to take care and keep it in its beauty that God created...it becomes a responsibility not only for Christians but for other faiths too."

The 2016 WMC Stamp Project supports the Church of South India's recently established Othara Eco-spirituality centre, which is planned as a centre of excellence in climate change education in Southern India.

The centre will use ecological practices such as rainwater harvesting and re-use the establishment of a bio-gas plant to power the kitchens, and the development of a small dairy and chicken farm that will only use native breeds. The knowledge and benefits gained from these developments will be shared with congregations and other partners and in turn encourage them to practise green theology based on the principle that "caring for the earth is not only a calling, but a lifestyle." The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.

In 2010, the Bolivian Legislative Assembly passed a law entitled "Ley de Derechos de la Madre Tierra" (Law of the Rights of Mother Earth) stating that the natural world has rights equivalent to human rights. It also proposed the establishment of the "Defensoria de la Madre Tierra" as a counterpart to the office of the ombudsman for human rights. The Bolivian law defines "Mother Earth" as "the dynamic living system formed by the indivisible community of all life systems and living beings who are interrelated, interdependent, and complementary, and which share a common destiny"; adding that "Mother Earth is considered sacred in the worldview of indigenous peoples and nations." The seven rights of "Mother Earth" are specified as the right to life, to the diversity of life, to water, to clean air, to equilibrium, to restoration of life systems and to freedom from contamination.

Dr Hans-Joachim Döring, Secretary for Environmental Affairs in the Evangelische Kirche in Mitteldeutschland (EKM) writes: "'God's creation – a house of life for all' is a motto that reminds us of the gift of life that comes from God. When God gave us the earth, our common planet, God entrusted us with great potential. It is our common goal to maintain the earth as a common house of life for everybody....We want to celebrate Creation Time with services not only in our church, but together with our sister churches so that ecology and ecumenism, which are linked by the idea of stewardship, can be fostered."

Graham Philpott makes a distinction between land seen as an entity and land seen as the source of identity, and says

this is crucial for deepening our understanding of many of the world's territorial disputes and land-rights issues. For many whose place on the land is threatened, in whatever way, the concern is more than one of ownership: it is about who they are as people. Relocation means not just the loss of land but also the loss of community and of shared identity.

The WMC continues to advocate for the Tent of Nations farm, near Bethlehem, and is working in partnership with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands to produce a book to celebrate 100 years of ownership and continuous presence on the Nassar family farm. At the Tent of Nations, the Nassar family is seeking to lessen their negative impact on the earth: they use renewable energy, and have developed composting toilets and rainwater harvesting systems. Traditional Palestinian farming methods show an adaptation to the environment and the weather: centuries-old terracing, rainwater harvesting cisterns, drip feed irrigation, and having crops appropriate to the climate, all help conserve scarce resources. Working with another of our partners, the Galilee Society, the Tent of Nations is currently developing the use of bio-gas. Life under occupation has also required adaptations to farming life. For example, in Jayyous the farmers whose land is behind the barrier moved from planting aubergines to olives and lemons, which do not require the same level of irrigation and attention, because with Israeli restrictions they can not tend the crops as regularly as is needed. When some land was returned to the village side of the barrier they started planting za'atar - a local herb that is popular and much used. Recently, sometimes with the help of international organisations or Israeli justice groups, some people have been able to introduce solar panels, despite the Israeli authorities refusing permission to Palestinians seeking to use renewable energy.

Bishop Munib Younan, of partner church the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), writes: "Water is not a luxury for human beings. It is a necessity! It not only cleans, it refreshes. It not only quenches thirst, it renews life. Water is always mentioned

as a source of life in the Bible...Our faith tells us water is a gift from God to be shared by all of creation. As baptised followers of Jesus, we believe that the waters of creation, the waters of justice, the waters of peace and the waters of equality are gifts from God for all of God's people. They flow from the heart of God. And they flow from the foot of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." As part of the WCC's Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the Lenten focus of the Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) in 2016 was on Palestine³, where the creation is groaning under the burden of occupation. "Jerusalem is a most significant destination for pilgrimages by people of all three faiths of the book, and a place where they live side by side. And yet, in this holy place, we have confronted a most unholy reality: the terrible suffering of the Palestinian people from lack of clean water and adequate sanitation. And what is lacking in Palestine is not water; what is lacking is justice." (**EWN Jerusalem statement**,⁴ June 2014).

The United Church of Zambia (UCZ) General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Peggy Mulambya Kabonde, emphasises, "It is too simplistic to portray climate change as the fulfilment of the biblical "end times" prophecy. Nevertheless, the UCZ has organised prayer meetings to address climate change and its visible impact. The Church must be a watch dog on behalf of the people and must understand and be involved in the climate change discourse, as it is a complex and moral struggle which requires political engagement to try and influence policy." A campaign called "We have faith – act for climate justice" collected over 200,000 signatures demanding a "just and legally binding climate treaty" at the UN Conference (COP17) in South Africa in 2011. The UCZ, with the Christian Council of Zambia, has worked through its Disaster Risk Reduction programme to encourage and help Church Committees to take on tree

³ <http://water.oikoumene.org/en/whatwedo/seven-weeks-for-water/2016/>

⁴ www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/justice-diakonia-and-responsibility-for-creation/climate-change-water/ewn-jerusalem-statement?set_language=en

planting, good forest management practices and sustainable agriculture.

The Church of Scotland is also committed to emphasising the duty Christian people have for caring for the whole earth. The WMC raised the profile of climate change throughout 2015 through cross-Council working, especially with Church and Society (WMC is a significant contributor to the work of the climate change programme), and in partnership with Christian Aid, and Eco-Congregation Scotland. Raising awareness and gathering church members for the climate rally in Edinburgh, the climate lobby in London and the climate talks in Paris, the WMC is dedicated to demonstrating its commitment to encouraging church members to raise their voices and advocate climate justice and a respectful attitude to all God's creation. Future actions include the upcoming Care for Creation conference in October 2016 in partnership with the Church and Society Council, the Guild and Christian Aid.

4. Where shall tomorrow's children be?

*Where shall we run who break this code,
where shall tomorrow's children be,
left with the ruined gifts of God,
death for the creatures, land, and sea?*

"Where shall we run who break this code" asks the hymn, highlighting how we are all dependent on the earth's bounty for our ongoing survival and flourishing. As children of God, we have a responsibility to care for the world and all that is in it, and to seek to ensure that people today and in the future have a living planet. How glorious to read Robert Louis Stevenson's description of looking out from his home in the Pacific Islands: *The morning was all blue; the sea blue, the horizon clouds a blue like a fine pale porcelain...I would stroll out and see the rocks and the woods, and huge ancient trees, jutting overhead out of the hanging forest, and feel the place at least belonged to the age of fables.* Fables may soon be the only way to encounter the wonders which Stevenson experienced in the South Pacific. Small islands are threatened with

inundation by rising sea levels and various lands face being swallowed up by sand as desertification advances. The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, and we want it to remain full and bursting with life for the generations to come. Working with partners who recognise the need to invest in sustaining the creation is a key role for the Council's partnership work today.

In the Caribbean, it is easy to celebrate the sovereignty of God. The sun-swept beaches, warmth of the islands and the people, delicious foods, and diverse cultures provide an amazing array of delights that are enthusiastically celebrated as being divinely designed. The Rev Adrian Sieunarine of the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago (PCTT), says that the human stewardship of creation has only recently begun to occupy the attention of communities and churches there. Today, the Caribbean seems to be "sinking" as ocean levels rise and coastal areas are gradually consumed. The weather sometimes seems frightful and fiercely hot rather than friendly. Churches have embarked on missions to draw attention to these issues and to call congregations and governments to be accountable to God and each other because everyone has a responsibility for environmental progress. The seventy-two Presbyterian primary schools and five high schools in Trinidad and Tobago engage in a variety of projects to clean seaside areas, rescue sea-turtles (the largest of which come to nest in Trinidad), and generally try to mend the broken creation in whatever ways possible. Schools have included environmental issues in their curriculum, teaching the students about the interconnectedness of creation and reminding them that when we care for the whole creation the "trees of the field shall clap their hands".

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana (EPCG) was awarded a UN Environmental award recognising its work in support of nursery development, tree planting activities and education and awareness raising on environmental protection and climate change issues in Ghana. The WMC has worked in partnership with EPCG to support this work and recently enabled its Environmental Officer, Charles

Agboklu, to attend the COP21 talks in Paris. The Municipality of Ho, where the Church Headquarters is sited, collaborated with the church in drawing up a climate change action plan for the city that includes the setting up of 30 eco clubs within primary and secondary schools. Tree planting is central to the EPCG's environmental work: between 2012 and 2014, 34,000 trees were planted in 15 communities in Northern Ghana. The average survival rate has been around 60%. Getting buy-in from the local community has been a key component of the success of each of these projects. A number of EPCG congregations have also joined the Eco-congregation movement, adopting sound environmental protection and sustainable development activities by planting and growing trees and extending support in the supply of educational materials to communities and basic schools. The congregations of St Andrews, Brussels and Adenten in Ghana have been working closely together on eco-congregation activities, supported by the WMC and Eco-Congregations Scotland.

North Korea has been isolated for decades. In October 2015, the Church of Scotland was one of the churches represented on a 12-person international ecumenical delegation (which included the South Korean National Council of Churches of Korea) that travelled (for the first time for such a meeting) to Pyongyang, and was hosted by the (North) Korean Christian Federation. Human rights, economic issues, military grandstanding, peace, reunification, solidarity and advocacy were all matters discussed and addressed in the "Pyongyang Appeal"⁵. The political situation is affecting the productivity of the earth and consequently the fullness of life, resulting in suffering for the people of the north. The visiting delegation concluded that supporting a respectful, patient and persistent dialogue between the two Koreas was a necessity. As one participant with long experience and involvement in this region noted, "This is an urgent task that cannot be resolved by North and South Koreans

alone. It requires renewed accompaniment by churches worldwide." WMC is committed to playing its part in this international and ecumenical accompaniment.

A partnership between the Church of Scotland and the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) led to the creation of Okogyulekezet (Eco-Congregation Hungary) on the model of Eco-Congregation Scotland. Okogyulekezet had its own meeting area during the 2015 Starpoint (RCH Youth Conference) to allow participants to join a special journey to meet the created world's miracles and know more about how they can live well and contribute to the future of the world. The final report noted, "If we will live like we do now, we will not have access to clean water, clean air and clean Earth. The Eco-Point helps us to learn how to live well and how the world can stay alive...if we do not take care of our home, (our children) will not be able to live on the Earth. It is God's creation, and as God trusts in us, we should trust in God and in other people, because without trust we cannot save the world."

At Christian Aid's 70th Anniversary Conference, Olver Vaca Ruiz spoke of the impact of solar ovens on Bolivian communities. Climate change is having a devastating impact on the indigenous communities who live in the Bolivian Amazon. Increased rainfall, coupled with mass deforestation, is resulting in increased flooding, making it harder for families to feed themselves. The Church of Scotland Guild project, "Caring for Mother Earth Bolivia", is supporting Christian Aid partners to provide solar ovens to families in some of the affected communities, as well as enabling people to farm differently, planting crops in movable bags that can be transported to higher ground when the water level rises. The solar ovens serve many purposes: they prevent women having to spend hours collecting firewood; they improve the health of the community as people, especially women and children, no longer have to breathe in smoke fumes; they allow the community to cook and boil water when all the firewood is wet; they enable the community in the Beni region to dry cocoa beans for selling; and, importantly, they are challenging traditional gender roles in communities as

⁵ www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other-ecumenical-bodies/pyongyang-appeal

women and girls have more time to take part in other activities and training. Already, this is changing men's attitudes to women. It is a holistic engagement which brings multiple benefits for individuals, communities and the earth.

There are around 1.6 billion women farmers in the world today, mostly in the global south, who produce more than half of the food grown. Research has shown that when women's incomes are improved, when they have better access to resources like education, infrastructure, credit, and health care, they tend to invest more in the nutrition, education, and health of their families, causing a ripple effect of benefits that can extend to the entire community. One example is from Madaliso in Northern Malawi: making ends meet was always a problem for Lucy Munthali. A widow, with a teenage daughter, she faced the constant challenge of feeding and clothing her family. The turning point for her came when she joined a local women's self-help group, supported by the Ekwendeni Hospital AIDS Programme (EHAP), which is a partner of the Church of Scotland HIV Programme. The ten women in her group meet weekly to support each other. They also act as a savings and credit group: the women pay an agreed amount each week into the group's account, and from this members can access loans at low rates of interest. Last year, Lucy took a loan of 10,000 Malawian Kwacha (approximately £12), which she invested in a small-scale business buying and selling beans and vegetables. Her business has been doing well, she has been able to pay back the loan to the group, she and her daughter now have enough to eat, and her daughter's school fees can be paid. Some of the challenges and opportunities faced by women can be read in the WMC 2015 report 'Gender Based Violence: Our Partners' Experiences' and the accompanying Bible study series 'Life abundant for all God's people'⁶.

It is not only the planet that God created that humans are currently damaging. Following the Israel/Gaza conflict in 2014, many homes, hospitals, schools, and much infrastructure, were destroyed and lives were left shattered. WMC recently provided a grant to our partner, the Near East Council of Churches, to ensure their refugee project (DSPR) in Gaza had enough fuel to carry on the vital services they provide. Much of the work of DSPR work is providing health-care, training opportunities and psycho-social support for children and families affected by the conflict to ensure that they are able to cope and recover from adversity.

In Syria the scale of destruction is much larger. The destruction of historic treasures such as Palmyra is a tremendous artistic and historical loss. Greater far, as Commissioners at the 2015 General Assembly heard from Rev Ibrahim Nseir, a Minister from Aleppo, is the destruction of whole towns and cities, creating an environmental disaster, with millions of tons of concrete rubble now covering the land. The work of clearing that rubble, let alone rebuilding what has been destroyed, will be immense. Even more important, though, the destruction has left seven million people internally displaced, and four million who have fled to seek refuge in neighbouring countries or further afield. Through its project A Place at the Table, WMC seeks to support the work of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL) as it seeks to serve Syrians displaced from their homes.

As we listen to the voices of our partners across the world, many of which are 'voices for the earth,' we can begin to build the vocabulary that enables us to change the unwritten narrative of our individualised culture that seeks only to exploit and consume as if there were no tomorrow — thereby making the lack of a tomorrow a real possibility. Promoting justice for the created order is a concern we share with churches around the world, and others like Christian Aid. Care for creation and care for others are now inextricably linked.

⁶ www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/reports_and_resources/gender_based_violence

5. We who care enough to cry

*We are the voices for the earth,
we who will care enough to cry,
cherish her beauty, clear her breath,
live that our planet may not die*

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. As followers of that Lord, we are the people who care enough to cry out for that whole created order. We are the people who take responsibility for refusing to be silent in the face of all the powers and vested interests which would prefer that God's people were silent on the great issues which confront our world and all who inhabit it. But we cannot be silent.

The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) has been working with communities affected by the Korean Government's Four Rivers project to dam these rivers for power generation. The Naeseong river is the one most affected, with the construction of eight dams. The river is characterised by its crystal clear water that is constantly cleaned in the sandy riverbed and is home to many endangered animal and plant species, such as the Korean Aster, the Eurasian Otter and various water birds. By the construction of the Yeongju Dam, large parts of the upper river course will disappear in a large water reservoir and the entire (until now quite pristine) ecology of the river will be altered dramatically. Opposition to the Four Rivers Project is one of the core issues of the PROK Eco-Centre, which has supported local farmers with a fasting prayer of more than 200 days, following which 700 church members made a pilgrimage of more than 600km along the four major rivers of Korea. It has not stopped the government action, but has been successful in raising awareness and challenging perceptions in Korea.

In Kenya, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), like other churches, fears how climate change is posing a daily threat to livelihoods. PCEA has however highlighted something positive: the benefit to farmers who are within the Fairtrade Co-operatives and who benefit by learning new techniques to help them adapt to climate change. Farmers now feel they can take more control and also

share their learning with others. When we drink or buy Fairtrade tea or coffee, as well as providing a fair price for these products, we are supporting a culture of learning which allows people to develop themselves, their businesses and communities. WMC encourages congregations and Presbyteries to gain Fairtrade status.

In Indonesia, the GKS (Christian Church of Sumba) has joined with others to support more active protection for the environment. GKS was supported by the community and eventually the gold mining activity stopped. The Month of Environmental Care is held every August and all the GKS members (60% of the total population in Sumba) are awakened and directed to stop forest fires, illegal logging, littering, open defecation, and encouraged to develop a variety of activities that contribute to environmental conservation. Rev Charles Detha writes, "The GKS will continue to fight, even though it lasts a lifetime, for the land which is God's gift must be properly maintained and championed to become a place in which the people of Sumba can live in peace, justice, dignity and respect the integrity of God's creation."

The Carpathian Mountains are one of Europe's last untamed wildernesses; however, deforestation is a direct threat. Romania is losing three hectares of virgin forests an hour, and half of this is lost in areas which have protected status, but which is not being applied by the authorities. The Reformed Church in Romania, Királyhágomellék District (Oradea), has been speaking out against the corruption which allows deforestations in protected areas, and protests against vandalism. Janos Antal, the Ecumenical Officer, writes, "Romanian media have reported that the Prince of Wales has been warning against deforestation in Romania, and lamenting the past deforestations throughout Scotland: the Scottish Highlands are undoubtedly beautiful, but they are barren. Yet this was once the ancient Forest of Caledon, with wolves, bears, lynx and European elk. The great-grandmother of Prince Charles⁷ was of Transylvanian origin, and he owns several restored properties in Transylvania and visits regularly." Today, in "compensation"

local parishes are re-planting trees on regained church properties. These congregations are investing for future generations to reap the rewards.

Katja Breyer, of the Evangelical Church of Westfalia (EKvW), Germany has emphasised the responsibilities of those of us in western societies: "As human beings, we are able to reflect on who and what we are and the consequences of what we do. We, therefore, bear a special responsibility for nature, for God's creation: the responsibility to cultivate and to preserve the earth in trust. The laws governing the Sabbath and the sabbatical illustrate this responsibility to "cultivate and preserve". These laws are based on the guiding principle that there should be no unrestrained exploitation of the soil, of animals or of human beings. They stand in opposition to boundless immoderation. In relation to climate change, this limitation means, firstly, a rapid reduction in the use of fossil fuels and the renunciation of growth in industrialised countries such as Germany, if this growth is at the expense of nature and people in other countries. Self-limitation also includes the equitable sharing of the goods God has provided for us, in order to make life possible for human beings as well as for nature."

Daoud Nassar at the Tent of Nations near Bethlehem often emphasises to visitors: "The land is our mother. How can we sell our mother?" He and his family have a vision for a vocational training and education centre on the farm which will provide a space for children and young people to learn about alternative energy, organic farming, and community building. The ultimate goal is, "to be able to prepare the young people of Palestine for a positive contribution to their future and culture by bringing values of tolerance and understanding into their life experiences, and to facilitate a respect for the environment by increasing awareness of our reliance on the land...and teaching hope and faith in action to an international community." This is living out Graham Philpott's emphasis

on the identity and belonging which develops on the land to which you belong.

We are all interconnected and interdependent. If the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, we need to recognise our responsibility for others. Changes to the climate as well as non-climate related natural disasters are not just challenges to particular places, they also impact the lives of people. Since the Nepal earthquake, people pushed into poverty, both by natural disasters and by climate change, have been vulnerable to people traffickers. The United Mission to Nepal has highlighted the rise in human trafficking in Nepal, and other affected areas, as people who have suffered severe trauma and have no place to live are deceived by traffickers and taken to other countries, like India, where they are held in modern day slavery. In October 2015 the WMC brought six international experts from its partner churches in Nepal, Bangladesh, Malawi, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, and the Czech Republic to participate in the Anti-Human Trafficking Conference and Symposium, convened by the Council and ACTS. The WMC has produced a report, "Anti-Human Trafficking: Our partner's experiences" and a complementary Bible study for congregations to learn more about human trafficking and to engage with the issue.⁸

The Environmental Education Centre (EEC) in Bethlehem, occupied Palestine, believes that no matter where you are or what you are doing, everyone can act for the betterment of the environment and society. Whether we are deciding what food to eat, what shoes to wear, where to take a vacation, or where to spend a little extra cash, our choices have repercussions that echo beyond the finite vision of our own personal needs. We have choices, and we must surely choose not to be complicit in the degradation of natural environments and human lives, and choose to seek innovative solutions to circumvent exploitation and improve the world around us. One example of this is how lobbying by local Christians has encouraged the

⁷ The Prince can trace his lineage back through his great grandmother Queen Mary, the consort of George V, to Vlad IV.

⁸ www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/reports_and_resources/an_anti-human_trafficking_bible_study

Palestinian Authority to adopt March 5 as a national environment day for Palestine.

The earthquakes which struck Nepal in April and May 2015 started with a devastating tremor lasting only 45 seconds, but their consequences have changed lives and destroyed communities. Following the earthquakes, and on hearing directly from the United Mission to Nepal, our Mission Partners Malcolm and Cati Ramsey and Joel Githinji, as well as Rev Ram Kumar Budhathoki at the 2015 General Assembly, the WMC has challenged Presbyteries, congregations, Guilds and other church groups to help rebuild homes and lives in Nepal through the Let us Build a House project. This is part of a three year initiative in partnership with the United Mission to Nepal, and the WMC is appreciative of the £60,000 raised by the end of 2015.

There is an element of enlightened self-interest in tackling the issues of climate change caused by global warming, or pollution and waste caused by over-consumption: but the Church around the world must go further than speak out about climate change and pollution — we must challenge attitudes (including our own) by practising, promoting and encouraging a renewed reverence and respect for the whole of creation and, in particular, the way we relate to our planet. Whether we think of the planet in a South American (or Franciscan) way as 'Mother Earth' or with an African emphasis as the 'firstborn,' or simply recognise the presence of God in the whole created order around us as Christ did, we need theologies and spiritualities which recognise that "the earth is the Lord's" and not ours. Christ reconciles the whole creation to God, not just humanity (Colossians 1:20). Jesus' resurrection is but the beginning of the restoration not only of humanity, but of all things. And we need to continue with the development of ways of living that are better attuned to the rhythms of the natural world and in harmony with the rest of creation.

The WMC encourages the whole church to commit itself to listening to our partners around the world, and offers

below some ideas for getting engaged in the coming year. We are the voices for the earth.

6. Resources

Pray/Worship

- Use Creation Time resources from the World Council of Churches. <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/time-for-creation>
- Use Creation Time resources from Church of Scotland. http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/starters_for_Sunday

<http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/>

- Ecumenical Water Network resources. <http://water.oikoumene.org/en>
- Gender Based Violence report and Bible Studies. http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/reports_and_resources/gender_based_violence
- Human Trafficking resource and Bible Studies. http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/reports_and_resources/an_anti-human_trafficking_bible_study

Do

- Invite Eco-congregation or Christian Aid to come and speak to you in more depth about climate change.
- Attend the climate conference on 1st October. Register with agrahame@churchofscotland.org.uk
- Ensure your church is registered as an eco-congregation; find out more at: www.ecocongregationscotland.org/get-involved/
- Work as a volunteer with the Waldensians or the Italian Protestant federation in their refugee programme or diaconal work. www.fedevangelica.it
- Become a Fairtrade congregation or presbytery. <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk>
- Become an Eco-congregation. <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/>

- Regularly visit the website of Christian Aid and Eco-congregation Scotland where you can find a range of opportunities and challenges for individuals and congregations to act for climate justice.
www.christianaid.org.uk/ActNow/climate-change/index.html
<http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/get-involved/campaigns/>

Read

- Song of the prophets, A global theology of climate change, from Christian Aid.
www.christianaid.org.uk/images/song-of-the-prophets-a-global-theology-of-climate-change-november-2014.pdf
- Tent of Nations - We Refuse to Be Enemies. Available from World Mission.
- Loving Creation: Christian Spirituality, Earth-centered and Just - Kathleen Fischer.
- A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming - Michael S. Northcott. Published by Christian Aid/ Darton Longman & Todd (DLT), London, 2007.
- 'Taken By Storm: responding to the impacts of climate change.'
www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/Taken-by-storm-climate-change-report-march-2014.pdf

- The Pyongyang Appeal. www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other-ecumenical-bodies/pyongyang-appeal

Learn

- Host a 24th of the month event on Israel and occupied Palestine and learn more about the work of our partners in the Holy Land.
- Engage with the WM Human trafficking report – arrange a meeting on the issue and invite WMC to send a speaker.
- Hold a Souper Sunday or invite a speaker from the Church of Scotland HIV programme.

In the name of the Council

IAIN D CUNNINGHAM, *Convener*
SUSAN BROWN, *Vice-Convener*
VALERIE BROWN, *Vice-Convener*
IAN W ALEXANDER, *Council Secretary*

Appendices (on the web)

Appendix I Deaths

Appendix II Mission Partners

Appendix III Faithshare Visits

Appendix IV Twinning