

International Anglican Family Network
Anglican Communion Environmental Network
The Anglican Alliance



A joint newsletter March 2020

Families and the Climate Emergency



Stories of grief, faith, hope and action for
God's creation



Families and the Climate Emergency

Editorial: Looking ahead—what gives us hope?

By Bishop Philip Huggins, Anglican Church of Australia

‘God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good’ *Genesis 1.31*. In Madrid, a youngster of faith gave me a banner with this Genesis text as we rallied outside the wonderful Prado Museum during the 25th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25) last December.



The focused vitality of our young people is one source of hope as we now do all we can to protect and sustain God’s good creation. Certainly, the well-being of our young and of vulnerable species is a crucial motivation for us older folk.

I was in Madrid with a photo of our grandchildren on my heart. Though under five years old, they have the child-like wisdom Jesus invites us to notice. ‘Truly I tell you, you must become as children...’ *Matthew 18.3*.

Said one grandchild before I went to Madrid, as we walked by the sea, seemingly out of nowhere: ‘Everything is connected’. ‘Yes, it is’, I said, as we quietly walked on. She also knows how plastics in the ocean suffocate and infect marine life. She drives change to family consumption patterns!

Another source of hope is vivid in the articles of this Newsletter. People of faith are making imaginative and practical plans in new partnerships, all for the common good. Newsletters like this one help us share ideas and gain encouragement.

This nurturing of hope is necessary because we now have to sustain a quite unprecedented level of co-operation to prevent global warming.

This is where the hope of our resurrection faith is so vital. We follow the One ‘in whom all things hold together’ *Colossians 1.17*. The way the Holy Spirit has guided, and is guiding, our response to this ‘climate emergency’, shows how much our God wants us to protect and sustain God’s good creation. Yes?

In Australia, as elsewhere, amidst extreme events like our summer bush fires, people have responded with wonderful generosity, courage and sacrifice, all quite Christ-like. The need now is to sustain this level of co-operation so as to prevent further climate change. This is the energy we must pray for, in resurrection hope—especially as 2020 draws us to COP26 in November, when the nations bring their ‘nationally determined contributions’ to the table.

What has to happen is that the diverse national contributions ensure global temperatures, as per the Paris Agreement, do not rise more than 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. This is the kind of unprecedented co-operation we must encourage through our prayerful advocacy. *(...continued on page 3)*

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As in the evocative Micah 6.8 text, the call is to kindness and justice as we walk humbly before God. The ‘kindness’ involves attention to our personal way of life, so we become people of zero emissions ourselves, as soon as possible!

The ‘justice’ involves the ‘developed’ nations helping others to finance their well-being, free of poverty and full of equivalent opportunities; the ‘developing’ nations being transparent and equitable with their own people and before international forums.

All this involves complex trust-building, step by step, at a time when there is little time to lose!

How important, in this challenging context, is our multi-national Anglican Communion and our wider ecumenical partnerships as we foster together the trust and affection needed, including for a successful UNCOP26! Such is our opportunity and our profound responsibility!

Our every thought, word and action must try to help the character and destiny of our one human family on this beautiful planet in God’s wondrous creation.

In closing, recently we saw a presentation of Mozart’s Requiem, a co-production of Festival d’Aix-en-Provence and the Adelaide Festival. Mozart’s sublime music of life, death and the resurrection hope of heaven was juxtaposed with imagery and dance that told of extinction—all that has already been lost or is now at risk.

With poignant beauty, the arts inspire our best; as do the insights of grandchildren by the sea, youngsters of faith with their biblical banners, and also the stories told in this splendid Newsletter.

With prayers of gratitude, in Jesus’ holy name,
Bishop Philip Huggins

Climate grief among the young

This article has come from a contributor in the UK. Their name has been withheld to protect the anonymity of the young people mentioned.

Recently, a friend told me about how their daughter had come to them in floods of tears, saying she had decided not to have children because she couldn’t bear to bring a new life into a world in such environmental crisis and with such an uncertain future.

My own child is less forthcoming, but has likewise spoken of the despair they feel because of the state of peril the earth is in. I’m pretty sure that anguish is a factor in their depression and withdrawal from the world.

These two young people are not alone. Eco-anxiety is a growing phenomenon – so much so that Green Christians in the UK are setting up a climate grief project called ‘Borrowed Time’ (more information at <https://bit.ly/2VBntMB>). Indeed, the father of the young environmental activist Greta Thunberg has spoken of Greta’s depression before embarking on her school strikes.

As a parent, it is heart-breaking to see your child in early adulthood trying to cope with the existential threat of climate change. Rather than journeying along their lives with excitement at future possibilities, they are experiencing dread and a profound sense of grief. And betrayal. It is no wonder that young people the world over are taking part in the ‘Fridays for Future’ school strikes and finding a home in Extinction Rebellion, the global environmental movement that uses civil disobedience with the aim of compelling government action.



The Church should be engaged in combating climate change simply because this is God’s world and the right thing to do; the Anglican Fifth Mark of Mission calls us to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. But we also absolutely have to make creation care a core part of our faith and witness if we want to have any credibility with young people.

Such engagement, speaking and acting for climate justice, is also a pathway through grief to hope – for our young people and for us all.

Drought and loss in Namibia

My name is Nangula Eva-Liisa Kathindi, an Anglican Priest in the Diocese of Namibia. I live in Oshakati, northern Namibia. I am one of the first two women who were ordained priests in the Anglican Diocese of Namibia in 1994. Currently I am supervising six parishes in northern Namibia and coordinating a Diocesan School for Ministries, guiding people to discern their vocation to ministry.



Drought in Namibia. Photo: Marion, Pixabay

Namibia's climate is mostly subtropical; a desert climate characterised by great differences in day and night time temperatures. It has a low rainfall and overall low humidity. In Namibia we experience winter and summer at opposite times to Europe and North America and they correspond to the dry and wet seasons.

It is in this context that I am writing about the challenges our country faces with climate change. As far as I can remember drought has always been part of our lives. There was hardly a year when farmers were not concerned about their crops and how to save their animals from dying from hunger and lack of water.

In 2019 we experienced the worst drought. The whole of Namibia did not receive much rain for people to grow crops. Only a few areas have been able to harvest some crops. Rural church communities could not celebrate in style the usual harvest thanksgiving due to the lack of their own produce. They had to buy goods from local grocers for a thanksgiving service.

Historically some men in my culture have succumbed to death because of the loss of their cattle. Doctors and chaplains from our hospitals have shared their experiences that male patients enumerate their dead cattle instead of stating bodily ailments. Counselling such patients has been very challenging.

Ecumenical prayers for rain have been organised especially in the bread basket of the country. Climate grief is now as prevalent as grief caused by gender-based violence. This has posed serious theological and ethical questions for the Church.

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Indigenous families and the climate crisis

Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Archbishop in the Anglican Church of Canada, describes how Indigenous Canadian churches are ministering among families affected by the climate emergency

In recent years, the living relationship of Indigenous Peoples to the Land has been recognised, in many ways and in many places, as a prophetic word of correction to a world on the verge of ecological collapse. Pope Francis, for example, gives special notice to this in his 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* (<https://bit.ly/3caBNS1>).

This recognition of prophetic ecology is coupled with a growing awareness of the historic global phenomenon of Indigenous Peoples' vicious dispossession from the Land by colonialism. Though lamented in its historical manifestations, the global community shows little will or effort to disrupt its contemporary manifestations, witnessed in the crisis of the Amazon, as well as in the worldwide conflict between Indigenous Peoples and extractive industries. These historical and contemporary experiences of dispossession are the

background of the present day crisis of global climate disruption and injustice.

The dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from the Land has had a catastrophic and, at times, genocidal impact on Indigenous family life. This is, to Indigenous Peoples, so stark, so immediate, and so destructive that Indigenous elders have called colonisation a war to destroy Indigenous families.

The scope of the problem is too large to treat here comprehensively. We can say, however, that the colonial churches, government, education, and even so-called social services have, knowingly and unknowingly, damaged and defiled the structure of family and clan in Indigenous life.

These family and clan structures are so important to Indigenous life that it is an essential and primary element of both traditional Indigenous ethical and spiritual practice. The spiritual practice of Indigenous Christians, despite the efforts and teaching of the colonial churches, shows the greatest of respect and reverence for traditional extended family and clan structures and has resisted attempts to damage them.

The dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from the Land and its massively corrosive effects on families has accelerated under climate disruption. Ever adaptable, Indigenous wisdom and technology is stressed as it meets the avalanche of change that accompanies global climate injustice.

In the Arctic, for example, the pace of climate change is two to three times faster than elsewhere on the planet. This is making living on the Land increasingly difficult, disrupting culture, family life, and forcing Indigenous Peoples into urban life where their clan and family-based social structures are not recognised and, for the most part, not tolerated.



St Jude's Cathedral in Iqaluit, Nunavut, in the Anglican Diocese of the Arctic. Photo: Anglican Journal

More and more, the Anglican churches that serve in Indigenous communities are under Indigenous leadership or making a transition to Indigenous leadership, both in personnel and in cultural approach. They now play a pastoral and prophetic role among and for Indigenous families. Pastoral care is offered directly to the poor and displaced. Once a partner in the attempt to disrupt Indigenous extended family systems, the churches are generally now a place where Indigenous family structures are affirmed and strengthened, both in the delivery of the rites of the Church and in the preaching of the Church.

It could be said that, in all of their ministries, the Church now puts its highest priority on the affirmation and protection of Indigenous family life.

Churches have developed a number of vehicles for the support of Indigenous family life. Gospel Jamborees, generally three nights of music, healing prayer, and teaching, have been a popular way of speaking to and including all the generations and all family members. Teaching gatherings in the summer include all family members. Regular Sunday liturgies and teaching around the sacraments throughout the year are all sensitively aware of the importance of Indigenous family life. Some communities have developed events that focus on life on the Land, promoting survival knowledge and food gathering skills. The latter is important, since the high cost of food in stores in these communities is an issue for all. Finally, especially in remote areas, the churches are well aware that they are the only social service agency in the community that is available 24/7.

At the level of advocacy, the churches and their diocesan leadership have worked with other groups to change public policy and create more Indigenous friendly infrastructure in remote communities and among Indigenous Peoples in urban areas. This has included promoting Indigenous authority over extractive industry projects in their territories. It has been a struggle, but churches have tried to educate their members and the larger society on the culturally distinctive aspects of Indigenous life, both in its extended family structures and in the way Indigenous communities view the Land and all its aspects as a part of the family. This has proven to be prophetic and positive in the contemporary context of stressed families and a troubled environment.

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Archbishop Mark MacDonald is a member of the Anglican Communion Environment Network and, as an 'Eco-Bishop', contributed to the statement 'The World is our Host: A call to urgent action for climate justice'; download in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French at <https://acen.anglicancommunion.org>.

Download the African Eco-Bishops' 'Urgent Cry for Ecological Justice: Reclaiming the Gospel imperative for all creation' in English and French at <https://bit.ly/3clA2l2>.

Indigenous women forced from the forest, fight for survival

Marinez Bassotto, bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Amazon in the Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil (Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil) tells the story of Deolinda, an Indigenous woman whose life has been shaped by the environmental destruction of the Amazon. Forced to leave her family and forest home in childhood, Deolinda has made a new life and family, fighting to retain and preserve her heritage.

Deolinda Freitas Prado was born in the Turi Garapé Santa Cruz Indigenous Village (Santa Cruz Community), Yaueretê District,

São Gabriel da Cachoeira Municipality, Amazonas State, on 15 May 1950. From the Dessana ethnicity, Deolinda has had to leave and return to her home community many times.

The first time she left she was 10 years old. Like many other girls her age, she was forced to leave because of the lack of subsistence in her community, caused by deforestation and the predatory use of natural resources. The presence of mining companies in the region and the consequences of climate change were some of the factors causing her to leave her home territory. For Indigenous people, land and territory are their life, not simply a means to survive.



Deolinda went to live in a boarding school in a convent of nuns in the district of Yaueretê, where she lived for three years. At 13 years old, Deolinda wanted to return to her village and to her home because she was homesick and missing her family, especially her parents. However, although she wished to stay with the family, living conditions were precarious and in 1972 she returned to the convent to learn domestic chores and work.

In 1974, Deolinda moved to São Gabriel da Cachoeira, to work as an artisan making rugs, bags and other objects. Life in the forest was no longer viable for her. In 1976, she moved to Issana Community to teach crafts to Indigenous girls. Soon after she thought about returning home to take care of her very sick father, but ended up working as a nanny in Manaus. The work was hard, the conditions precarious and the pay was very low, but she needed to stay in Manaus to be able to help her family financially. After that, she worked in several other houses. During this time, she became pregnant and had to work in some houses just to get her daughter's milk.

Deolinda was not alone. Many Indigenous women came to Manaus in search of better living conditions, just as she had. They had to leave their homes, families and villages because loggers, prospectors and ranchers destroyed the woods, killed the rivers and made hunting scarce, fishing impossible and survival almost impossible. The women faced many difficulties including prejudice, unpaid work, exploitation and violence of all kinds.

In 1984, Deolinda learned that there was a person named Janete Jernela, who was a North American Anthropologist and was researching the Upper Rio Negro region. Janete had accumulated much knowledge of the reality of Indigenous women living in Manaus. From this Janete had the idea of

bringing these women together in order to create an association of artisans, to contribute to family income and also to be a place of reference for the Indigenous women of the Upper Rio Negro, living in Manaus. At first, they met in a rented house.

And that was the beginning of the Upper Rio Negro Indigenous Women's Association, a story of the many challenges, struggles, and achievements for these warrior women, proud that even in the face of many difficulties they do not give up fighting for their dreams and for keeping their identity and customs alive. Deolinda became part of the founding group of the Association, and since then has been one of the main leaders of this venture. The anthropologist later bought the house where the Association's current headquarters is located. To this day these women meet periodically and make crafts to survive.

In 1985 Janete handed the care of the house over to two Indigenous women who lived on the premises. In 1986 she initiated a project for women to start working as artisans. It was the women's first work as an Association.

In 1987, Indigenous women defined the name of the Association as the Upper Rio Negro Indigenous Women Association, the Tukano-language name is *Numiá Kurá*, which means women's group. Deolinda is among the pioneers in this journey of much struggle and conquest and to this day she continues to fight for the guarantee and fulfilment of their rights and for their space in a society that historically marginalised Indigenous women to a peripheral place.

Today, aged 69, Deolinda remains active in the Association's work as deputy coordinator. She is therefore one of the main leaders of the Association she helped to create, thus passing her knowledge to the new generations. Every day from Monday to Saturday, she is working in an exemplary way on the activities of the Association; a born activist, a fine example of life, struggle and hope—a woman who puts her life at the service of the cause of Indigenous peoples.

Deolinda, despite her longing and desire to return, never returned to live in her home village. She married an Indigenous man from the Iauaretê ethnic group, has a couple of children and also has grandchildren, her entire family still living on the outskirts of the large city of Manaus.

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Living through Dorian – a 'freight train' of a hurricane

Kristoff Ayala-Strachan is a young Anglican who lives in Grand Bahama. In 2019, Kristoff and his family lived through Hurricane Dorian as it tore through the Bahamas. Here, Kristoff describes that experience, reflects on the implications of increasing storms for people's ability to raise families in The Bahamas and speaks about the need for the Church to act to combat climate change.

I and many other Bahamians were no strangers to hurricanes

as we prepared for Hurricane Dorian. Having experienced so many hurricanes before, while taking the threat that Dorian brought very seriously, I still imagined that though there would be damage, things would be back to normal soon.

Naturally, my family and I prepared by stocking up on food, water and other supplies such as batteries, candles, flashlights and materials to safeguard our actual home. However, there was nothing really that could have prepared anyone for what we actually went through.

Hurricane Dorian rushed through the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama like a freight train. I remember watching weather bulletins and seeing that the hurricane continued to strengthen as it moved closer and closer to The Northern Bahamas and feeling as if I was being punched in the gut. As Dorian crept across Abaco, and images and videos of the damage being wrought there began circulating, I became so nervous, thinking that I needed to expect the same. I wasn't far off.



The devastation of Marsh Harbour, Abaco, caused by Hurricane Dorian. UN photo/OCHA/Mark Garten

Throughout the entire ordeal, for almost three days, I wondered when it would be my time to leave, like thousands of other people who had to leave their homes when they became compromised. Fortunately, this was not the case for me and my family in our home. However, my grandmother was not as fortunate, and she had to leave her home in the middle of the worst of Hurricane Dorian when several feet of water from the ocean inundated her neighbourhood. We wouldn't be able to get to her for several days after Dorian passed and this was also the case for the other family members who lived in severely impacted areas. Flood waters took days to recede and the roads that remained dry were impassable due to fallen trees, lamp poles or even rubble from buildings that were damaged or destroyed.

The Bahamas, like most countries in the Caribbean, is susceptible to hurricanes. On average, The Bahamas has been hit by a hurricane every two years and by a major hurricane every four years. But over the past ten years, The Bahamas has been hit by a hurricane almost every year. This change is believed to be a result of global climate change, which is also resulting in rising sea levels.

Together, intense tropical cyclones and rising sea levels wreak havoc and leave families distraught and fractured in a myriad

of ways. Very often, families - regardless of their composition or social class - lose all of their physical possessions. All physical mementos of the lives they have created with the people they loved are lost within a moment. Financially, these storms continue to be an immense burden. Many persons have to undertake the cost of replacing valuables like cars, repairing their homes and even completely rebuilding them. With rising sea levels a constant threat, many persons opt to leave the place of their homes for decades in favour of an area believed to be safer, or perhaps even another island.

Climate change at this point seems irreversible. However, there are myriad ways that its effects can be mitigated. I imagine that, frankly speaking, my children will grow up in a country and region very different from where I grew up, if it is even safe for them to do so. I say that because if we do not work arduously to slow down the effects of climate change, hurricanes will be more frequent and even stronger than what we experience now. In a country like The Bahamas that already experiences so many storms, it may simply prove to be unsafe to raise a family. This thought is one that saddens me, but one that I may have to become comfortable with as it may be my reality and the reality for millions of other people around the world who live in island states and are impacted by tropical storms.

The Church has played an interesting role in The Bahamas as it relates to hurricane preparation and relief efforts. Throughout each island, the overwhelming majority of designated hurricane shelters are churches fulfilling their purpose of not only being a place of spiritual refuge and salvation, but also physical. In the case of Hurricane Dorian, churches like the Anglican Pro-Cathedral of Christ the King and the Anglican Church of the Ascension became centres of food and clothing distribution despite, in the case of Christ the King, also sustaining damage from the hurricane.

I do believe that the Church should be more vocal about the damage that climate change is causing throughout the entire earth. Christianity, across all its traditions, attracts the most followers throughout the world. Over a billion people, collectively, believe that the earth and everything therein was created by God. Thus, the earth and all of its life forms should be treated as gifts from God. To destroy them purposely should be treated as an act of ungratefulness towards God, the creator of heaven and earth. It should be the duty of humankind to maintain the earth in a state that is pleasing to God, and the Church should be at the forefront of conversations about climate change and mitigating it.

While the church is present in the aftermath of natural disasters as it relates to relief efforts, the church should also be present trying to prevent many of the disasters from being as detrimental to human life as they are becoming due to the effects of climate change.

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To find out how the local church and the international Anglican community responded in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, see <https://bit.ly/2TE8kYj>

Churches and families respond to cyclone disaster

This story describes the devastating impact of Cyclone Idai on one specific family in Zimbabwe. When numbers affected by storms and other so-called 'natural' disasters are so huge it is easy to lose sight of the trauma experienced by individual families. Mary's story conveys the chaos and terror of being caught up in a disaster and of not knowing what happened to beloved family members. The names of individuals have been changed to protect anonymity.

In March 2019, parts of Manicaland, rich agricultural lands in eastern Zimbabwe, were devastated by Cyclone Idai. The cyclone brought rain, flooding and landslides. A dam burst its banks sending huge rocks, some over 10 tons, down the valley, destroying homes, crops and livelihoods.

The Diocese of Manicaland provided shelter in its schools and churches in the aftermath, bringing comfort to the bereaved, care for the injured, and food for those who had lost everything, before the larger agencies came with support. The church has worked closely with other agencies to ensure the most vulnerable were not left out.

Mary and her husband had a dream for a strong and solid home where their children could grow up in safety. Mary was living in a temporary house with her husband and two children when the terrible cyclone struck their village in Manicaland. Mary's husband used to travel to South Africa to earn money and bit by bit they were gathering the materials to build their home. They had got as far as the foundations when the cyclone came. It swept away all the building materials the family had bought.

Mary doesn't know what happened at the time of devastating winds, rains and floods. Tragically her husband and two children are still missing. She fears they are dead.

Since the disaster, Mary has been living in a tent. The local church and community have tried to help, contributing food and comfort. But Mary is fearful and longs for safe shelter.

Others have similar stories of loss and trauma. Anna and her husband and children were sheltering in their mud and thatch



Cyclone Idai in Zimbabwe. Photo: ACT Zimbabwe Forum

house when the storm struck. With wind and rain for two days the house collapsed. Anna's husband and one son were killed. The local church has been supporting her with food and helping her surviving child stay in school, but they are traumatised and feel desperately insecure living in a tent.

The local government officials say that the communities are now in recovery stage. They have food and are beginning to get back on their feet, but they desperately need good shelter as many vulnerable people are still living in tents.

The Bishop of Derby in the Church of England held a Harvest Appeal to help Mary and other vulnerable people to get safe shelter after the cyclone. The Diocese of Manicaland is working with the local churches and communities to build new houses for the elderly, widows and orphans. The local church will work with community leaders to identify the most vulnerable families.

With support from the Derby Harvest Appeal, the Diocese of Manicaland has provided six bags of cement and roofing sheets. The community uses local materials and water for mixing the cement and is constructing the houses for their neighbours in need.

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Water stress and displacement

Joel Kelling, the Anglican Alliance's Middle East facilitator, describes the growing pressures on the region caused by climate change and its impacts on water, increasing temperatures and displacement – all adding to an already febrile environment. All have profound implications for families in the Middle East and North Africa.

The Middle East is often described as the cradle of civilisation, with the Fertile Crescent running from the Euphrates-Tigris rivers in the east to the Nile in the west providing the water supplies that helped birth the Babylonian empires and the Egyptian kingdom, and from where Judaism, Christianity and Islam emerged.

However, the fertile nature of this region is under serious threat due to climate change, with predictions of reduced rainfall of between 20 to 25% from 2000 levels by 2050 (Ragab & Prudhomme, 2000) and a temperature rise of 2 to 2.75°C. The Euphrates is conservatively predicted to have a 29 per cent reduction in stream flow up to the period 2081 to 2100, whilst the Jordan River is predicted to have a reduction of 82 per cent in stream flow over the same period (Kitoh et al, 2008).

The knock-on impact of climate change is thus massive reductions in the availability of freshwater and rising temperatures, which will hugely reduce the agricultural capacity of the land. And that is without taking into account the pressures of an increased population, caused both by natural growth—with an anticipated doubling of the region's population from 2000 to 2050 (Clawson, 2009)—and the likely displacement into and across the region from rising sea levels;

for example, 10.5 per cent of Egypt's population could be displaced by rising sea levels by 2050 (World Bank, 2007).

Additionally, the competition for water has raised tensions between those with upstream access to water sources, and their downstream neighbours. The construction of the Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia is causing consternation in Egypt, because the rate at which the Ethiopian government decides to fill it will potentially have a great impact on their own agriculture if the Nile's flow decreases too dramatically. In the Jordan River basin, 96 per cent of the 1950 flow rate has been diverted, leaving Palestinians with no access to the Jordan River. Fifty per cent of the valley's biodiversity has been lost in that period (EcoPeace, 2014).

Meanwhile, the wealthier countries of the region and those with access to the sea, such as Bahrain, have begun building expensive desalination plants, whilst those with more limited resources, such as Jordan, are depleting their ancient aquifers faster than they are being replenished by the reduced rainfall. Today, Bahrain is able to consume 400 litres of water per capita per day, whilst Jordanians have access to only 80 litres per capita.



Depleted waters of the River Jordan. Photo: Joel Kelling

In a region that is home to long-standing and seemingly intractable conflicts over land and religion, and where there are currently at least 5,644,769 Syrian refugees, let alone Iraqis, Yemenis and Palestinians displaced by ongoing conflicts, the spectre of climate-related displacement looms large. This is where the human face of the climate crisis resides, not in the geopolitics of conflict between riparian boundaries, but in the lives of those displaced and having to look elsewhere to survive.

War over ideology is tearing families apart and depopulating the ancient Christian communities of Syria and Iraq, as well as other persecuted minorities. Continued overconsumption of water in the region alongside the effects of climate change will displace people into countries already overburdened with refugees and generate further animosity and violence. Indeed, climate change exacerbated drought in Syria between 2007 and 2010, leading to crop failure and encouraging displacement of farming families into Syria's cities. Researchers theorise that this mass movement into urban areas was a contributing factor in the explosion into civil war in the country in 2011 (Kelley et al, 2015).

As Christians, we remember that we are dwelling between the river in which Moses found refuge and the waters of Babylon, where the displaced Jewish leaders wept in remembering Jerusalem. At the banks of the Jordan, Jesus was baptised and in this symbolic act we were made aware of our impending redemption, commemorated in our own baptism with holy water. Water is sacred in our sacraments and in our scriptures, and yet we are not doing enough to protect it for future generations. Christians often act as peacemakers in this region, echoing the reconciliation with God offered to us in Christ. Restoring the flow of these ancient rivers is a sacred duty for us as Christians, as part of our wider effort to halt climate change and as a pre-emptive act to halt suffering before it starts, to attempt to reduce the need for millions to flee in search of water and away from the scorching heat and rising tides.

We all have a responsibility to live as stewards of creation and bearers of Christ's message of reconciliation.

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Climate change: unforeseen effects on diet and health

The impacts of climate change can be surprisingly far-reaching, affecting families in unexpected and complex ways. Here, Tagolyn Kabekabe, the Anglican Alliance's Pacific facilitator, talks about some of these impacts in the Solomon Islands, describing a chain of consequences that include a change in the types of diseases affecting communities.

The whole of the Pacific is affected by rising sea levels but it is worst for the low-lying islands. We have had instances when a spring tide has washed through the islands taking everything with it: the chickens, the pigs; it washes through the kitchen taking the pots, the pans; everything into the sea. These are phenomena that people are now experiencing, which they say never happened in the past. They used to have high tides, but they know it was only half a metre - but that has changed so much in the last 15 years.

When we have this rising sea level and unusual high tides and things like that, it actually destroys whatever crop is grown - not necessarily just along the beach or coastline, but it also affects inland. A lot of people plant swamp taro and this needs a certain salinity to be able to grow well and produce tubers. But when you have extra salt it disturbs the level of salinity - it becomes too salty and it affects the crop. It rots the tubers and in the long run it kills off everything. This affects not only the current harvest but also the ability of people to replant the following season. Too much salt in the soil also affects the growing of bananas, bread fruit, even coconuts. A certain level of salt is suitable for these plants but too much kills them.

Our rainfall patterns have changed too, in two major ways: one is that we don't get the rains when we expect them and the second is that when we get the rain it is too much - or maybe too little. The unusual rain pattern also affects crops. Too much rainwater disturbs the balance. So it is both ways, and these are things our people have no control over. We

cannot control sea level rise and we cannot control how much rain falls onto the crops. Our people cannot protect themselves from these things and so the people simply go with what happens.

The adverse impact of these changes on people's health is steadily increasing, especially among grassroots and rural communities living on lower lying islands.

Swamp taro is the staple food of these islanders. As swamp taro has declined due to increasing soil salinity the diet of the community has changed drastically. People start to depend on imported foods such as rice, flour, noodles, sugar, tea, and canned meat and fish. And for these, people are dependent on supply boats. There is a time known as the time of 'hunger' when the boats that bring the imported foods, medicines, etc, do not follow the monthly schedules and this is a very common occurrence, especially when it is not *bêche-de-mer* (sea cucumber) season. People then, for a month or more, eat only fish and coconuts, which greatly affects their wellbeing - especially young children. Malnutrition then becomes an ever-increasing issue among children, and under-nutrition among adults.

The change from a very traditional concentrated and nutritious diet to a foreign and less nutritious one has resulted in many problems for the islanders. Traditionally, our people are very healthy but now we are seeing increased levels of obesity and non-communicable diseases. There is an increase in diabetes and high blood pressure, diseases that we did not know of in the past. These problems are further compounded

"The main impact of climate change in the Central America region has to do with drought and flooding; it has to do with farmers not being able to identify the time to harvest and when to plant. It is also having an effect on women and children who are usually the most excluded people in society, who usually fall through the cracks. It also has an effect on forced migration, because if people don't have places where they can work or produce for their families, they are forced to move to places seeking somewhere they *can* be productive and provide a future for their families."

Archbishop Julio Murray, Primate of Central America and Bishop of Panama



Drought in Nicaragua. Photo: ACT Alliance/Sean Hawkey

by the lack of basic medicines, diagnostic equipment, technicians and qualified medical staff in rural areas, resulting in patients not knowing their statuses and so succumbing to disease. The fact that rural health facilities lack trained nurses means referrals of patients is virtually non-existent and many people do not have the money to pay for the boat fares to Honiara because of their limited resources. In these situations, people die of treatable diseases in the islands.

The forced change in diet affects families in other ways too. For our very rural people who are subsistence farmers and who live off the land, it is a struggle to be able to buy the rice, which means that what little crops they have, they have to sell or, if they have children who are working in towns and cities, they depend on them. That is one of the patterns we are now experiencing—that our families who live in the villages now depend on the children who are working and earning money to actually supply the rice for them. And this puts a strain on our community.

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Hazy days are here again!

This first-hand account of the human cost of the smog caused by burning forests in East Asia is from Annam Arumanayagam, the Anglican Alliance's East Asia facilitator. One of the striking features of Annam's piece is how far-reaching the detrimental impacts of an action taken in one place can be in another. Families are paying a very high price for other people's economic gain – and that is in addition to the catastrophic impact of forest clearance on the environment.

“The annual recurrent haze has caused great discomfort and disruption to businesses and schools and the nation. We are so casual and indifferent that in general, most of us do not take the haze hazard as an issue at all. This ‘take for granted’ attitude is commonly known as ‘tidak apa’ attitude.”

Archbishop Ng Moon Hing in his presidential address at the Synod of the Diocese of West Malaysia.

In South East Asia, there is an annual phenomenon called ‘haze’. This is a gentle word for the smog which shrouds our nations for a couple of months or so. Generally, it is worst between July and October.

This haze is a ‘fire-related large-scale air pollution’, usually caused by burning forests and land in Indonesia. The south-easterly winds blow the smoke towards Malaysia, Singapore and parts of Thailand, causing it to be a trans-boundary haze.

In Malaysia, as the air pollution gets worse, schools are told to keep the children indoors (no outdoor activities). And when the Air Pollution Index soars high, schools are closed. While children rejoice in the extra holidays, it is a problem for working parents as they have to find suitable baby-sitters or carers while they are at work.

The smog also has health impacts, causing an increase in respiratory illness. People with medical conditions such as



Forest on fire. Photo: Pixabay

asthma, chronic lung disease, chronic sinusitis and allergic skin conditions experience more severe symptoms because of the irritant effects of fine dust particles in the air. Naturally children and the elderly are the most affected.

On days when the haze is bad, some flights are cancelled due to poor visibility. Naturally, tourism is affected because of the poor air condition. It also affects the business of hawkers who peddle their wares in the open air at our morning and night markets. There are fewer patrons braving the air pollution.

Although the haze affects all of us, generally people are not doing much except to stay indoors and bemoan the situation. Blame is put on the Indonesian government for not taking enough action. In turn the Indonesian government blames Malaysian and Singaporean companies with interests in Indonesia, who are complicit in causing the fires.

As Archbishop Moon Hing has said, “We are so casual and indifferent that in general, most of us do not take the haze hazard as an issue at all”.

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After the flood: A local church opens its doors

The Revd Gary Crellin, Vicar of Powick, Old Hills Malvern benefice in the Church of England, describes what ‘building the ark’ has looked like in his local setting:

The village of Powick in England nestles in the hinterlands between the Malvern hills and Worcester. It also straddles the flood plains of the Rivers Teme and Severn. As this winter has been more wet than frosty, the main road has flooded intermittently since the middle of last year, but not at the scale and duration as this past February.

The last time the River Teme flooded in such a dramatic fashion was in 2007, but local residents could not have predicted that February's floods would be worse than then. Sixteen houses in this small community were affected, with residents being put up in local hotels or hosted by families. Roads were closed though the village, including the main

arterial road between Worcester and Malvern. Only now can damage and the extent of loss, both physically and spiritually, be assessed.

St Peter's Church was keen to help. The church in Powick commands a clear view of the flood and my first reaction was to sell everything and cash in our investments—we need wood and tar to build an Ark! In the end, an ark was what we provided. In response to community need, I opened the church to receive donations of food, cleaning materials and bedding to help those that really needed our help.

Over a hundred people arrived with donations over two nights and the church was given over to a big 'Bring and Share' opportunity. As well as donations, we heard people's stories and provided opportunities just to hold in prayer those families so afflicted by this painful experience.



Powick village centre, flooded. Photo: Dale Humphries

The pastoral need in one part of the village can only now be assessed because the roads are again passable and access to the scene is possible. I have heard of families that had to be rescued by Fire and Rescue by pontoon barge. The damage is extensive—some families have lost such a lot in terms of possessions and livelihood.

I know that the churches can be used to support those in need after the initial burst of helpful support has passed and the cold realisation of what lies ahead becomes apparent. We need to be there to journey alongside these people who will be journeying through the shock, pain and stress of this predicament, not just this week but in the months to come.

Contact: See <https://www.oldhillsmalvern.co.uk/whos-who-old-hills-malvern> for details

'Cyber warriors' aid flood rescues

In August 2018 severe floods affected the south Indian state of Kerala. The crisis began with a wave of monsoons, leading to swollen rivers. Thirty-five of the 36 dams in the region broke, causing landslides, flooding homes and blocking roads. Hundreds lost their lives and a million people were evacuated. People from across religious faiths joined in rescue operations.



Family rescued from the flood. Photo: Church of South India

Churches mobilised, turning parish halls, schools and administrative buildings into relief centres, providing medicine, food and clothing.

Among those responding to the tragedy were the 'Cyber Warriors' of the Church of South India Madhya Kerala Diocese. Young members of the Diocese came together to operate a rescue helpline/call centre from the Church of South India Retreat Centre in Kottayam. As the tragedy unfolded, the group received mobile phone messages from people stranded by the floods. They used GPS signals and Google Maps to locate them and passed on this crucial information to the rescue teams. Thousands of people were helped, including elderly and sick people, pregnant women and children.

The Cyber Warriors also set up the 'Kerala Flood Rescue Facilitating Group' on Facebook to bring together those in need of help and those offering it. In the first three weeks of its operation there were over 2,000 posts and 1,000 members.

When the floods began to recede, the team focused on informing the volunteers about specific needs of medicine, food and clothes at the relief camps.

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The youth call centre 'Cyber Warrior' team. Photo: Church of South India, Diocese of East Kerala



A grave in Carriacou, one of Grenada's three islands, where the cemetery is being lost to the rising seas

"Carriacou is a place where people feel particularly connected to their ancestors. I can understand, in that context—where people feel that close and that connected—how painful this must be. You can see the date on this gravestone is 2014. This is not somebody who died two hundred years ago, whom somebody alive today might not actually remember. This is someone who was held by a person who is living now, someone they knew, someone they loved. Who speaks for them?"

Clifton Nedd, Anglican Alliance Facilitator for the Caribbean



Find out how Anglicans from dioceses throughout the Caribbean have been sharing their experiences of disaster preparedness and resilience and learning best practice using the 'Pastors and Disasters' toolkit, looking at how to adapt it to the Caribbean context.

'Pastors and Disasters' is a resource for community-based disaster risk reduction and management created by Episcopal Relief & Development in collaboration with other Anglican agencies. It provides tried and tested practical tools for churches to respond effectively. See the resource at <https://go.aws/2wYBxFz>.



Caribbean regional training in disaster response and preparedness using the Pastors and Disasters toolkit

The International Anglican Family Network networks across the Anglican Communion to celebrate the God-given potential of the family as a source of thriving relationships, identity, belonging, discipleship and reconciliation. Out of this celebration IAFN is an advocate for the family in the face of behaviours which diminish this potential, sharing stories of hope, promoting family care and sustaining the family as the cradle for human dignity.

The Anglican Communion Environmental Network Anglicans worldwide have long been concerned with environmental issues. From extreme weather to food shortages all of us are affected. Guided by the Fifth Mark of Mission members of the Anglican Communion Environment Network strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation and sustain and renew the earth.

The Anglican Alliance connects, equips and inspires the worldwide Anglican family to work for a world free of poverty and injustice and to safeguard creation. The Alliance provides a convening platform for Anglican churches and agencies to work together in the aftermath of disasters, many of which are climate related. Helping build resilience to disasters and building partnerships for response and resilience is an increasingly important part of our work.

Creator God,

how deep are your designs!

You made a living earth, cloud, rain and wind, and charged us with their care.

We confess that the way we live today is changing the climate, the seas and the balance of life, dispossessing the poor and future generations. Build our lives into an Ark for all creation, and, as you promised Noah never to repeat the flood, so make us heralds of a new rainbow covenant:

Choosing life for all that is at risk – for creation, neighbours near and far, our children and ourselves. Amen.

An Operation Noah prayer,
<https://operationnoah.org>

