

Bishops call for urgent prayer and action on the climate crisis

South Africa, March 30, 2015 — A group of 17 Anglican Bishops from all six continents have called for urgent prayer and action on the “unprecedented climate crisis”. Their Declaration *The World Is Our Host: A Call to Urgent Action for Climate Justice* released today sets a new agenda on climate change for the 85 million-strong Anglican Communion.

The group met in South Africa in February to build on months of conversations carried out via the internet. The group involved bishops both from cultures and nations that are major contributors to climate change, and those producing low levels of CO₂ but disproportionately affected.

The Archbishop of Cape Town and Primate of Southern Africa, the Most Revd Dr Thabo Makgoba, who brought the group together, said:

“We accept the evidence of science: Human activity, especially in fossil-fuel based economies, is the main cause of the climate crisis. We heard of extreme weather and changes to seasons; rising sea levels; acidification of seawater; depleted fishing grounds; and displaced people who are climate refugees.

“The problem is spiritual as well as economic, scientific and political. We have been complicit in a theology of domination. While God committed the care of creation to us, we have been care-less – but not hopeless.

“In the words of St Theresa of Avila, we are God’s hands and feet on earth – now is the time for us, rooted in prayer, to step up and take action on the climate crisis.”

The Declaration commits the bishops to specific first actions including: energy conservation measures in church buildings; more renewable energy; nurturing biodiversity on church land; supporting sustainability in water, food, agriculture and land use reviewing churches’ investment practices including a call for divestment; and closer ecumenical and interfaith co-operation.

The bishops commended the Fast for the Climate initiative, where they join many others in fasting and praying for the climate on the first of every month.

The bishops argue for ambitious and binding climate change agreements at national and international levels, and assistance for climate refugees.

Women, who make up the majority of the world’s poorest are hit harder by climate change. The Rt Revd Ellinah Wamukoya, Bishop of Swaziland and Africa’s first woman Bishop said:

“Women are more often dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, so the contribution of women is essential in decisions around climate change. Our communities must be equal, as in the Eucharist.”

Canon Ken Gray, a Canadian priest who is Secretary of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, said:

“It was a remarkable gathering, representative of the Communion’s diversity. The Declaration is a unique and authoritative document which will pave the way towards greater collaboration amongst lay and clerical leaders as the communion as whole comes to terms with the present climate crisis and our Gospel-driven need to respond compassionately.”

Notes

The World Is Our Host: A Call to Urgent Action for Climate Justice with a gallery of images will be available for download at the ACEN site

at <http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/>

Enquiries should be directed to Canon Ken Gray

grayintheforest@shaw.ca

Text of Statement

[link to Word file Bishops’ Statement..]