

COP21 PARIS 2015

France will be hosting the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP 21 from November 30th to December 11th.

COP21 will be a crucial conference, as it needs to achieve a new international agreement on the climate, applicable to all countries, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C.

The Conference of the Parties (COP), made up of all “States Parties”, is the Convention’s supreme decision-making body. It meets every year in a global session where decisions are made to meet goals for combating climate change. The COP in Paris will be the 21st, hence the name “COP21”.

Christians from Paris and the surrounding region, climate pilgrims from the UK and many other countries, faith leaders, agencies and NGOs will be taking part. The Council of Christian Churches of France is encouraging all Christians to support the conference through common prayer.

Full details of the faith programme can be found at » www.cop21religions.org

Representatives of the faith community will take part in a number of events including:

13 Nov 9.30am. Pilgrimage2Paris service for pilgrims and supporters St-Martin-in-the Fields before pilgrims set out to walk to Paris. Do please support if you are anywhere near the route which you can find at » www.pilgrimage2paris.org.uk

24 Nov 8pm Collège des Bernardins, Bishop of Salisbury lecture: *Nature and man in the image of God.*

27 Nov Welcoming event for Pilgrims.

28 November. Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Sikh pilgrims join together for Spiritual Moment.

28 and 29 November Marches for Climate various locations around the world.

3 Dec 7.30pm Ecumenical Service, Notre Dame Cathedral. The order of service will be available in English to help churches prepare their own ecumenical services from » www.cecef.fr

Faith leaders call for ‘zero carbon future’ » www.news.yahoo.com/faith-leaders-call-zero-carbon-future-003009681.html

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CLIMATE CHANGE a simple primer

The Earth is the Lord's (Psalm 24:1) is a foundational truth for Christians and God has uniquely entrusted the stewardship of creation to the human race (Genesis 1: 26-30). What we do, we do as God's agents; we have a privilege and a responsibility to act not only responsibly, but generously in this role. ***To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth*** is one of the Five Marks of Mission developed by the Anglican Communion. This care of creation is integral to evangelism and mission.

The issues to do with climate change are still debated by some and not easily simplified. There are no shortages of projections, but turning these into 'definites' is not easy. However, **the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** is unequivocal that climate change is occurring and confirms that there is 95% certainty that human activities are the principal cause. There is also a very high level of agreement that if we do not succeed in limiting global warming to less than 2 degrees C, it is likely there will be consequences which risk serious damage to the earth and human prosperity and wellbeing. Because this is a prediction rather than a certainty there are still those who suggest we do not need to make climate change a priority. Where there is such evident risk of danger we should act with great caution in our care for creation. To avoid exceeding the 2degree 'guardrail' we must stop adding carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. With only the equivalent of ten more years burning fossil fuels at our collective current rate, we urgently need to make the transition to a low carbon economy.

Health The UK's **Department of Health** has outlined a number of implications if climate change continues unabated. Negative health effects will not be evenly distributed. Poorer people and those living in inner cities are likely to bear the brunt of the burden.

Injustice Globally, many are already experiencing the effects of climate injustice as climate change alters the probabilities of extreme events. This has become a priority for development agencies such as Christian Aid, Tearfund and CAFOD. Hurricanes in the Philippines, farming communities in Fiji unable to grow crops as a result of salination of the land, the loss of hunting lands of North America's indigenous people now suffering the highest rate of suicides in the country, whilst the indigenous communities of Northern Argentina are torn apart by massive deforestation. There's flooding in Mozambique and Zimbabwe whilst the farmers of Namibia are losing their cattle in the drought.

Migration Scarce natural resources such as drinking water are likely to become even more limited. Many crops and some livestock are unlikely to survive in certain locations if conditions become too hot and dry, or too cold and wet. 'Food security will become even more challenging. People will have to try and adapt to this situation, but for many this will mean a conscious move to another place to survive.' UNHCR

Biodiversity is being heavily impacted and also has an important role in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Soils, forests and oceans hold vast stores of carbon. The way habitats are managed and protected to maintain healthy ecosystems is vital to human well-being.

What we can do

Carbon in its various forms is absorbed in a variety of **carbon reservoirs** such as forests and seas, but about half of the CO₂ remains in the atmosphere. The two major ways to **reduce** the amount of carbon being produced involve decreasing the amount produced generating energy by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and increasing our use of renewable energy such as wind and solar. We must also increase our energy efficiency. Remedial personal action can also be taken, reducing energy consumption, utilising renewable energy sources

(changing to a green energy supplier) and conserving energy all contribute to slowing the rate of climate change. Walking and cycling instead of motorised transport have health benefits and improve air quality. Changing our diet and eating less meat as well as reductions in food waste will reduce methane emissions, and save money.

Involving Faith

Climate change affects everyone. All Faiths care for God's creation. Among Christians there is an **ecumenical consensus** about Climate Change. The Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestants have developed similar theological statements. There are opportunities for us to work together with Christians of all denominations and worldwide. The Papal Encyclical 'Laudato Si' identifies the possibility of working with people of other faiths and with all people 'On the Care for Our Common Home'.

What the CofE is doing The Archbishop of Canterbury has made it clear that addressing climate change is a priority for the Church of England.

General Synod in July 2015 re-affirmed the Church of England's commitment to play a leading role in the effort to prevent dangerous climate change, including through the Church's ethical investment activities. The CofE's own national campaign **Shrinking the Footprint** aims to enable the whole Church to address – in faith, practice and mission – the issue of climate change. » www.shrinkingthefootprint.org

The **Church Commissioners'** policy on climate change drawn up by its **Ethical Investment Advisory Group** has a divestment and engagement strategy targeted at the highest polluting parts of the fossil fuel industry. The Commissioners have made significant **low carbon investments** including forestry, green office buildings and environmental investment funds.

The Lambeth Declaration is a CofE initiative supported by a large number of faith leaders which calls on faith communities to recognize the pressing need to make the transition to a low carbon economy and to fast and pray for the success of key international negotiations. The **Pilgrimage2Paris** will set out from St Martin-in-the-Fields on 13 November to walk the 200 miles to Paris to call on the world leaders to agree a fair, ambitious and legally binding climate change deal. » www.pilgrimage2paris.org.uk

Climate Change is a Spiritual issue

'I used to think the top environmental problems facing the world were global warming, environmental degradation and eco-system collapse, and that we scientists could fix those problems with enough science. But I was wrong. The real problem is not those three items, but greed, selfishness and apathy. And for that we need a spiritual and cultural transformation.'

Gus Speth, US Environmental lawyer and former Dean of Forestry at Yale addressing a group of religious leaders

'Science cannot say what is right and what is wrong. Science can inform but it cannot arbitrate. The whole point about climate change is that, despite having been revealed by science, it's not really an issue about science, it is an issue about what sort of world we want to live in. What sort of future do we want to create?'

Prof. Chris Rapley, University College London. Author: 2071 The World We'll Leave Our Grandchildren