

Liturgical Transformation – Playing the Fiddle While the Planet Burns?

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is the greatest challenge of our time, demanding urgent and rapid action. It may appear that to spend time on liturgical transformation at a time like this could be likened to ‘fiddling while the planet burns’. However, after more than thirty years of political and scientific action, our carbon emissions are still increasing. The causes of climate change are moral and ethical, and to turn it around we need to harness the power of the faith communities. One of the ways in which the Anglican Church of Southern Africa has been able to inspire action has been through liturgical transformation in the area of creation care. This article explores the impact of the adoption of the Season of Creation.

It is code red for humanity. The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable: greenhousegas emissions from fossil-fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk. Extreme weather and climate disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity.¹

Southern Africa is one of the regions most vulnerable to climate change. In the past years we have clearly seen the results of the rising temperature. In South Africa, Cape Town was close to becoming the first global city to run out of water, facing “Day Zero”, when all the taps would be turned off and people would have to queue for buckets of water. KwaZulu-Natal has seen increasing unseasonal devastating floods. Hurricane Idai ravaged Mozambique and Zimbabwe, and Namibia declared an emergency in the face of unprecedented drought. The predictions are bleak – we will face more intense drought, more severe storms and sea level rise.

We face a climate emergency – it is code red not just for humanity but for the whole planet. The web of life is disintegrating – we face leaving a bleak and desolate future for our children and grandchildren.

1 Secretary-General Calls Latest IPCC Climate Report ‘Code Red for Humanity’, Stressing ‘Irrefutable’ Evidence of Human Influence, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20847.doc.htm> [accessed 24 Aug 2021].