

S T U D I E S A N D R E P O R T S B Y T H E

EFSA INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL &
INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

ECUMENICAL FOUNDATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (EFSA)

THE LAND IS CRYING FOR JUSTICE

A discussion document on

Christianity and Environmental Justice

in South Africa

June 2002

Development Forum

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EFSA INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL & INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

Ecumenical Foundation of Southern Africa (EFSA)

EFSA is an independent Ecumenical Institute which functions under a non-profit trust. It consists of a unique network of participating institutions: representatives of the Faculties of Theology and the Departments of Religious Studies of the Universities of the Western Cape (UWC), Cape Town (UCT) and Stellenbosch (US), as well as the Western Cape Provincial Council of Churches (WCPCC) are represented on the Board and Executive of EFSA.

Basic approach

Generally speaking, EFSA tries to promote consensus between different sectors, interest groups and stakeholders on the challenges and problems facing our society. EFSA strives to play a facilitating role by providing a platform for public debate on even controversial issues.

Both in its structure and function there is a dialectic tension between an academic (research-based) approach and the need to address specific needs of the Church and other religious communities. This is imbedded in the main issues facing the churches in our society. In a general sense EFSA tries to focus public attention (and the attention of the Church or academic institutions) on specific problems in society.

General priorities

Firstly, the *development role of the Church* and other religious communities in the eradication of poverty in South Africa; the role of religious networks in community development; in social and welfare services, and the development of community and youth leadership.

EFSA has successfully hosted several international conferences on the role of the church and other religious communities in community development and the delivering of social services. This has contributed to the founding of the "National Religious Association for Social Development" (NRASD) – a national coalition of faith-based social and welfare services. The NRASD has

concluded formal agreements with the national Department of Social Development and the national Department of Health to play a facilitating role with regard to the following:

- The role of religious communities in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS, as well as caring for those already infected and affected;
- The role of religious communities in poverty-alleviation programmes.

Secondly, the *healing and reconciliatory role of the Church* and other religious communities: this includes a project on the role of women in the healing of our violent society; the mobilisation of church and religious communities against crime and violence; and the breaking down of stereotypes (racism) in our society.

Thirdly, *the formation of values in the strengthening of a moral society by the Church* and other religious communities: this entails the promotion of moral values such as honesty, support for the weak, respect for life and human rights.

These priorities cannot be separated from one another, since many of the complex social issues are interrelated.

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Preface

A debate on the relationship between Christianity, environmental justice and development policy in South Africa is long overdue. The forthcoming "World Summit on Sustainable Development" of the United Nations, scheduled for August this year, provides an opportunity to reflect on this important theme. I would like to express a special word of gratitude to the editors of this document, who did most of the preparatory and final work, namely Prof. Ernst Conradie, Rev. Siphso Mtetwa and Rev. Andrew Warmback.

Renier Koegelenberg

The Land is Crying for Justice

A discussion document on Christianity and Environmental Justice in South Africa

Background

The Land is Crying for Justice reflects on the role of Christians in the struggle for environmental justice in the South African context. This document is the product of an extensive process of consultation and was finalised at a workshop that was held on 29 April 2002 in Johannesburg. The workshop was administratively organised by the Ecumenical Foundation of Southern Africa (EFSA) and was attended by church leaders, representatives from various ecumenical organisations and consultants with a specific interest in the environmental responsibility of the church. A list of the participants at this workshop is added as an Appendix to the document.

The Land is Crying for Justice should be understood as a discussion document rather than as a finished product. The purpose of the document is to invite Christians in South Africa to participate in a process of reflection, discussion, education, confession and action on issues of environmental justice. It offers a resource and a stimulus that may help Christians to engage in the struggle for environmental justice.

In using the first person plural ("we") to refer to Christians in South Africa collectively, the document invites everyone to interact with it critically, to accept ownership of its formulations where appropriate and to reflect on its implications within their own contexts. All Christian churches, Christian organisations and individual Christians in South Africa are invited to respond to the document and to the issues that it raises by sending feedback to either the EFSA Institute or the Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa (NECCSA). Contact details are provided in the Appendix.

Introduction

South Africa is a land of extraordinary beauty, ecological diversity and abundance. However, the land that God has entrusted to us is crying for justice.

During the years of struggle against apartheid several ecumenical documents addressed the issues of the day. The Letter to the People of South Africa (1968), the Kairos Document (1985), the Evangelical Witness in South Africa (1986), the Road to Damascus (1989) and the Rustenburg Declaration (1990) may be mentioned in this regard. In the same ecumenical and prophetic spirit, this document seeks to address the escalating destruction of our environment that results in immense suffering for people, for other living species and for our land as a whole.

In responding to this challenge Christians in South Africa may recognise, acknowledge and learn from the many voices and contributions on environmental concerns coming from all over the world – from churches and ecumenical movements, from the Earth Charter movement, from other religious traditions and from environmental organisations. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) - 26 August to 4 September 2002, Johannesburg - also challenges the churches in South Africa to respond to these concerns.

The overwhelming social agenda of the church in South Africa

The church in South Africa is already stretched to the limit by the social challenges it has to face. For many years we have been preoccupied with the struggle for political liberation, democracy, social reconciliation and economic reconstruction. In addition to the classic responsibilities of attending to those who are poor, sick, hungry, homeless, abused, elderly, orphaned, illiterate, deaf, blind or handicapped, the church in South Africa has to address numerous social problems such as poverty, unemployment, violence against women and children, education, housing, health services, corruption

and crime, racial discrimination and now, most pressingly, the HIV/AIDS pandemic. As the stark and daunting realities of HIV/AIDS are dawning on us, we may well feel overwhelmed by such a formidable social agenda. Many local churches are completely engulfed in counselling and comforting those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, and burying those who have died of the disease.

In addition to all these social and institutional problems, we will be confronted in the future, probably with increasing urgency, with several lurking environmental hazards. In spite of decades of scientific and media reporting on environmental destruction, we are only now beginning to realise that many of the everyday problems in the lives of the poor and marginalised in South Africa are intricately intertwined with environmental problems.

- *In general*, the poor and marginalised are driven to live in physical conditions that are often of a shocking environmental quality. The poorest often live (and work!) in urban waste dumps. Others accept employment in appalling environmental conditions with grave risks to health (e.g. smoke, toxic gases, pesticides).
- *In rural areas*, the scarcity of clean drinking water and firewood is at the root of environmental problems. Forced removals under apartheid led to over-population and thus to overgrazing, soil erosion and the exhaustion and depletion of water supplies. Many rural people resort to poaching and forms of deforestation as survival strategies. This causes further environmental damage and increases poverty, thus exacerbating the vicious circle.

- *In urban areas*, people are often the victims of environmental degradation caused elsewhere, for example by nearby industries. Before 1994 townships were often deliberately located on land that was not in demand. In fact, most of the problems confronting people living in previously disadvantaged areas are environmental problems — even though these are usually not recognised as such. This is illustrated by the following examples:
 - The health hazards caused by air pollution - either through nearby industries or through braziers, and the burning of coal;
 - The pollution of water supplies;
 - The very high population density that characterises informal settlements;
 - Inadequate sanitation;
 - A high incidence of contagious diseases;
 - The visual ugliness of pollution, leading to a lack of basic human dignity;
 - Regular flooding or landslides;
 - A lack of basic infrastructure;
 - Cutting of trees for;
 - The struggle for political control over ever-scarcer resources.

Although environmental degradation affects all human beings, it does not do so equally. There is a growing recognition that the victims of environmental degradation are also the victims of socio-economic injustice. These include various groups of marginalised people on the economic periphery, e.g. indigenous peoples, environmental refugees, women, children, the poor and workers in mines, factories and on farms. Environmental injustices are indeed aggravated by practices such as exploitative economic policies, racial polarisation, gender discrimination and class inequalities.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that the earth's health has not been a major concern of churches in South Africa. For many of us other social problems seem to demand far more urgent attention than the

hidden, often indirect and all too long-term environmental concerns. Therefore we still speak of the environmental crisis as a distant possibility that does not affect us directly and may even go away. Many socially and economically marginalised South Africans view issues of nature conservation as the hobby of an affluent, leisured minority who would like to preserve the environment for purely aesthetic reasons and who seem more concerned about wildlife than about the welfare of other human beings. The nature conservation policies of the apartheid era provoked the suspicion that conservation boils down to the establishment of game reserves for a privileged few, often at the expense of the dislocation of local people. Others fear that attention to environmental concerns may divert scarce human and financial resources from the more pressing issues of poverty, HIV/AIDS, hunger and employment. Indeed, finding employment now may seem far more urgent than the long-term environmental impact of mining, manufacturing, business, farming, forestry or fishing.

There is, however, no need to add environmental concerns to the already over-crowded agenda of local churches and ecumenical bodies. We need to realise that the problems that we are faced with are all interconnected. When one starts to address a specific concern, one is soon confronted with the impact of many other concerns. The linkages between HIV/AIDS, poverty and the environment may serve as an example. The ability of the immune systems of HIV-positive persons to restrain the deadly virus is severely hampered by unhealthy living conditions associated with poverty. All too often such living conditions are aggravated by environmental factors. Perhaps it is more appropriate to regard the environment as a dimension of all other social concerns. The entire vision, life and praxis of the church must therefore include an ecological dimension.

We have to hear the cries for life ...

We have to hear the many cries for life clearly. We have to recognise that many people are dying as a result of an unhealthy environment – even if the cause of the problem is not always identified as such. We

have to realise that we are on a road to self-destruction. Already we see and experience the impact of ecological destruction:

- We breathe polluted air in most of our cities. Air pollution in some provinces is, at times, as bad as the worst in the world. Instead of being a revitalising breath of life and energy, such polluted air causes respiratory diseases. We are particularly concerned about the health of our children.
- We realise that many South Africans still do not have access to clean, safe drinking water. All too often our rivers are polluted with toxic substances. Again, this has a direct impact on the health of millions of South Africans.
- We know that many of our people have been estranged from their ancestral lands through colonialism, apartheid and economic hardships. Others have been forcibly removed to overcrowded rural lands. The population density is often too high to sustain the livestock and cultivation taking place. People are longing for land and the land itself is crying out for life.
- We realise that our precious topsoil is being blown away by the wind and washed into our rivers. Our land suffers from many erosion scars. We are not sure that we will be able to produce enough food to feed all our people. Moreover, we are worried about the nutritional value of the processed food that we are buying.
- We acknowledge that the world's ever-growing population places increasing pressure on the provision of resources for life, such as clean water, air and soil. The land cannot support the increasing demands placed on it.
- We see the destruction of natural resources and ecosystems in the name of development and job creation, but which are actually motivated by greed and profit seeking.
- We see the ugliness of mountains of garbage in our backyards, streets, townships and rural villages. Everywhere we smell the stench of burning rubbish.

- We see rural women and girls walking ever-greater distances to find firewood as indigenous forests and bushveld continue to dwindle.
- We know about the many health threats such as toxic gases and pesticides to workers in factories, mines and on farms.
- We wonder what the lasting effect of all the poisonous substances around us will be on our own bodies.
- We acknowledge with alarm and growing concern that we are bringing about the extinction of countless creatures. Should we be leaving our children a world devoid of cheetah or rhino, to name a fraction of threatened species?
- We experience changes in our weather patterns and we wonder why.
- We fear the possibility of environmental disasters that we only hear about in the media: nuclear hazards, the management of nuclear waste, global warming and ozone depletion.

We now know that human well-being is dependent on the well-being of the land. We need to care for the land so that the land in turn can care for us. Most of us realise that something is fundamentally wrong. We know intuitively that many of our present practices will not be sustainable in the years ahead.

Indeed, we have heard the cry for life from our land and all the creatures who live from it. However, it is also true that we have not yet heard the cry for life of other living species clearly enough. We know that we have collectively, through commercial farming, urbanisation and other "developments", destroyed the habitats of other mammals, reptiles, fish, insects, birds, trees, plants and numerous micro-organisms. As a result many species are threatened with extinction. This has happened almost imperceptibly as the human hunger for land has been legitimised in the name of "development" and progress. We have been preoccupied with our need for food and profit and have not duly regarded the damage caused by commercial agriculture. We are

all too often oblivious of the plight of domesticated animals – not to mention the ill-treatment that household pets are often subjected to.

We realise that ...

We realise that these cries for life have to be understood within the context of the complex socio-economic realities of our times, which are strongly influenced by globalisation. While we recognise the reality of globalisation, it should not be driven just by a culture of greed for the benefit of the already affluent minority of the world's population. Other concerns also need to be addressed, such as the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the need for economic "development" in low-income countries, particularly in Africa, the legacy of colonialism, the dominance of neo-liberal capitalism, the role played by transnational corporations and by institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation, the debt trap, the legacy of "development" and development aid, and the current global economic order as a whole.

We realise that these issues are highly complex and that all analyses remain provisional. Nevertheless, there are a number of concerns that must be highlighted:

- *Environmental justice:* Concerned citizens all over the world have come to the conclusion that the current economic dispensation is exploiting people and the biophysical environment alike. It is indeed crucial to comprehend the link between economic injustice and environmental destruction. The struggle for environmental justice seeks to challenge the abuse of power that results in the situation that marginalised people have to suffer the effects of environmental damage caused by the greed of others, especially the powerful. It seems clear to us that the present economic order perpetuates the unequal access to natural resources and contributes towards environmental destruction.
- *Limits to growth:* There are ominous signs that the exploitation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources will continue well

into the future. Our land, once luxuriant and verdant, our most valuable natural resource, has been exploited ruthlessly. Few politicians and economists seem to recognise the reality of limits to (industrial) growth. Growth is seen as the key to creating sufficient wealth for the ever-increasing needs of our people, even when the demands are ever increasing with burgeoning population growth. They argue that the size of the proverbial cake must be enlarged or otherwise any discussions concerning the cutting and distribution of the cake will remain meaningless. The classic question as to how to provide justly for everyone in the face of a basic scarcity receives a simple answer in this paradigm: by producing more and more.

However, we have to realise that unlimited growth is ultimately not possible on a finite planet. It will simply not be possible for a growing population to enjoy ever-higher levels of consumption. The real limits to the earth's carrying capacity preclude both unlimited growth in human population and an increased consumption of the earth's resources. Moreover, there are limits to the earth's ability to absorb the waste products of our economic activities. It will not be possible for every person on earth to adopt the wasteful use of resources that the world's affluent minority currently enjoys. Of course, this assessment raises numerous issues of justice and equity. While the standard of living of the world's poorest billion people must clearly be raised, the affluent will have to accept living within planetary limits.

- *Sustainable development*: The World Council of Churches (WCC) helped to draw the attention of the global community to the need for sustainability. At its Nairobi assembly in 1975 the WCC called for a "Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society". The social agenda of the church was reformulated at the 1983 Vancouver meeting with the motto "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation". This emphasis on sustainability has to be understood within the context of the "limits to growth" debate at that time. Since the 1980s "sustainability" has become a key concept in environmental discussions all over the world. Against the myth that economic growth can be sustained without qualification, many

have called for "sustainable development". The word "development" helped to draw attention to issues of justice and to the plight of the world's poor. Sustainable development is, in the famous definition of the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development, "development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Unfortunately, the notion of sustainable development has often been abused. It has become a euphemism used by entrepreneurs for "business as usual", i.e. an emphasis on economic growth, qualified by some environmental cautions. When faced with a choice between development and a sustainable environment, the interests of developers and entrepreneurs (who can often provide short-term economic gain in terms of employment) regularly seem to be given priority. In the interest of economic growth, governments too tend to attach a higher priority to development initiatives than to environmental protection. Consequently a conceptual tension between "sustainability" and "development" has emerged. The question is whether development can be sustained if this rests on the assumption of continued economic growth. The notion of "sustainable development" cannot be clarified if the ongoing controversies around "development" are not resolved. This problem is made more complex by the sometimes destructive impact of development aid.

- *Conflicting voices:* The major cause of environmental destruction has often been disputed. Some argue that the increasing human *population* poses the most serious threat to the environment. Infinite population growth on a finite planet is certainly not possible. Several major environmental problems are indeed linked to a human population that exceeds the carrying capacity of the land, e.g. deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, the depletion of wildlife stocks, poaching, etc. This suggests that impoverished countries, especially in Africa, carry a special responsibility to check their birth rates. In response, it has to be emphasised that the poor are often not the cause but the victims of these forms of environmental destruction. In many cases the exploitation of the

environment by the poor is a consequence of their poverty and their being exploited by the economic structures that create the wealth of the rich and powerful. Others therefore argue that the most serious environmental problems are caused by the gluttonous *consumption* of those in affluent economic centres. Such high levels of consumption lead to a range of environmental hazards such as the depletion of resources, industrial pollution, mountains of garbage, toxic and nuclear waste, acid rain, ozone depletion, global warming, etc. They maintain that affluent countries have achieved their standard of living by depleting their own environmental resources as well as those of the countries that they colonised and exploited. It is estimated that the resources used and the waste produced by a child raised in an affluent context is up to 30 times that of a child raised in rural Africa.

These observations again raise major concerns of justice and equity. In South Africa the environmental impact of an affluent lifestyle needs to be highlighted, particularly in the light of severe economic inequalities and because of the potentially destructive economic power, technological sophistication and decision-making power of the affluent. The poor are often forced to exploit the environment to survive while the affluent can afford to be environmentally concerned, even though they have a far greater environmental impact than the poor. It is nevertheless clear that all forms of exploitation of our land have to be resisted. We have to address the pervasive industrial rape of the earth by the affluent *and* the crude deforestation and degradation of the land by the poor, especially in marginal rural areas.

- *Consumerist lifestyles:* We have to acknowledge that our South African society is characterised by a wastefulness of precious resources and the over-consumption of some alongside the deprivation of others. The insatiable demands of the affluent all too often lead to an egocentric lifestyle, over-indulgence and selfish pleasure seeking. Many of us have become preoccupied with money and with a demand for material possessions that is seemingly limitless and often insidious: the more one has the more one wants. Sadly, not only the affluent but also the poor are caught

in the trap of consumerism. Through exposure to the advertising industry, lucrative "competitions", lotteries and casinos, the poor long for material possessions that they have little hope of procuring. The desire to have, more often fuelled by the advertising industry, saddles those who can least afford it with mounting debts. Such a culture of consumerism can only lead to the fragmentation of community life and to spiritual emptiness. Moreover, it is extremely wasteful and environmentally destructive. We must realise that the earth can satisfy the needs of all, but not the greed of those bent on insane consumption.

We acknowledge that ...

We must admit that we have not fulfilled our responsibility and prophetic obligation to promote the well-being of the whole earth community. In fact we have each, wittingly or unwittingly, contributed to environmental destruction both in what we have done and what we have left undone. We have condoned or closed our eyes to practices that are harmful to people, other living species and the earth community. We confess that we have all too often, each in our own way, been part of the problem and seek God's forgiveness in this regard.

As South African Christians each of us has to examine his or her own conscience before God in considering the following questions:

- Have we polluted God's precious resources such as water, soil and air?
- Have we stood aside while some have been denied access to these gifts of God?
- Have we legitimised and allowed others to legitimise economic activities and policies that drained and destroyed the integrity of our natural resources (e.g. through mining, industries, agriculture and over-fishing)?
- Have we really allowed other living species the space to flourish?

- Have we become enticed by the lure of wealth and power and have we condoned the human greed and consumerism that so often govern our own lives?
- Have we been enticed by a throw-away society that pollutes the human environment with reckless abandon?
- Have we abused the land that God has entrusted to us?
- Have we shown disrespect for the sanctity of life, both human and other forms of life?

We have to re-examine our theologies ...

The challenges posed by environmental degradation also require us to re-examine our theologies. We must admit that we have not always remained faithful to the gospel in this regard. We have not remained prophetically alert to discern the signs of the time.

- We have adopted and defended a notion of stewardship that allows for an aggressive domination of the earth community. As keepers of the land we have to learn that we do not own the land, that we cannot use and abuse the land for our own purposes.
- We have usurped the authority of God and put ourselves as the centre of creation. We have regarded the created order as being there for the benefit of humans only. We have regarded ourselves as the crown of creation but we have brought misery, not joy, to the earth. We have to learn that a position of responsibility implies service, not domination.
- We have allowed theologies to flourish that disengage God from the world, that are preoccupied with the soul and that disregard what is bodily, that look for salvation from the world and not of the world, that long for what is heavenly and that do not cherish the gift of the earth. We have to learn to re-integrate the Christian doctrines of creation, sin, providence, salvation and the final destiny of creation with one another.

- We have legitimised male-centred attitudes and practices and have remained silent in the face of the exploitation and rape of women, children and the earth.
- In struggling to establish a culture of human rights we have not established a culture that considers the rights of other living beings.
- In our search for a liberating, contextual theology we have not given sufficient attention to developing an ecological theology. In our struggle for freedom we have neglected a concern for the liberation of all of creation.

We affirm our faith ...

God's creative, nurturing, redemptive and innovative love for the whole of creation forms an integral part of the self-understanding of the Christian tradition. Affirming that the earth belongs to God, the Old Testament prophets hoped that God's reign would be established all over the earth. This hope included God's dwelling with the people of God, the forgiveness of sin, the spiritual transformation of people, the conversion of nations, the establishment of justice and peace, and the transformation of nature. The New Testament proclaims that God has acted in Jesus Christ to fulfil this hope. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, God has overcome the effects of sin and evil to heal the broken creation. The church lives in the hope of the final redemption of creation in the new heaven and the new earth.

We will not be able to ensure a sustainable future in South Africa unless we ourselves are sustained and nourished by a new vision. For Christians, this has to be a vision of God's abundant grace. Perhaps the Christian conviction that "The earth belongs to God" may provide us with a beautiful and stimulating vision that can inspire us in our responsibility towards earthkeeping. The earth in all its beauty, splendour and fragility has an intrinsic worth as part of God's creation. All Christians in South Africa have to remind themselves of the radical implications of this vision.

- In the struggle for a democratic *political order* we are still challenged to maintain a vision of a free, non-racist, non-sexist society in which every citizen may participate and contribute towards decision making at all levels of society. If the earth belongs to God, domination of one person or group over another is unacceptable and has to be resisted.
- The vision that the earth belongs to God calls for a just *economic order*, free from greed, domination, exploitation and manipulation. The land and its means of production ultimately belong to God, not to any one of us. The produce of the land and the well-being of all its creatures are in God's hands. The rules that we establish for God's household through the economy have to reflect God's love for the whole earth and God's compassion for those that suffer.
- The resistance against all forms of human domination is important in every sphere of *social life*. If the earth belongs to God, then no one has the right to dominate and abuse other people. Instead, we are called to cultivate mutuality and equality in marriage relationships, mutual respect between parents and children, and free and open participation in social institutions. Our social well-being is dependent on the emergence of a vibrant *civil society*.
- The vision that the earth belongs to God has important *ecological* implications. It calls for a sustainable community of all living beings. This implies the need for a healthy ecosystem. It also requires a new vision of the place of humanity within the whole of nature. The relationship between humanity and nature cannot be

one of domination and exploitation. Instead, a new vision of mutual enhancement, respect and equity is called for.

- The vision that the earth belongs to God remains a thoroughly *religious* vision. It challenges any rival powers, authorities, ideologies, idols or gods, seeking to establish domination or control over others. The Christian vision is that the origin, life and destiny of the earth are in God's hands.

In a context of widespread anxiety about the future, the vision that the earth is not of our own making emerges with new power and significance.

We recognise our responsibilities ...

We recognise that the church as the carrier of this vision can make a profound contribution to foster a just and sustainable society. The church in South Africa in particular is in a unique position to play an important role in this regard. There are three important reasons for this:

- The church is one of the organisations in South Africa that can make a difference. This is because local Christian communities enjoy trust from people at grassroots level – more than any political party, labour union or community organisation. Together, Christian churches indeed form the largest, most influential and most active organisation in the country.
- The church is a unique source of moral leadership. From the time of the prophets, God has inspired men and women with moral vision and courage to call for the establishment of God's justice and righteousness. There have been notable examples in our own country of people who fearlessly stood for what is right. The same prophetic courage is needed today in the face of environmental destruction.
- The biblical roots of the church and the history of Christianity is full of examples which can be retrieved to support the kind of

ecological vision which is required today to face the ecological crisis.

We acknowledge that we have not always realised our responsibility and the enormous potential of Christian churches in South Africa, despite their many shortcomings, to make a difference towards the well-being of the whole earth community.

We commit ourselves to ...

We commit ourselves to revisiting every aspect of Christian life in the light of the challenges posed by our environment. We have to foster an ecological form of liturgy, spirituality, pastoral care, healing, mission, education, discipleship and stewardship of land, particularly church land. We have to help address numerous environmental issues at a personal, community, national and macro-economic level.

We call upon all Christians in South Africa to commit themselves ...

At a spiritual level:

- To an integrated spirituality that acknowledges God's creative, nurturing, corrective, salvific and innovative love for the whole of creation and not only for humanity;
- To attend to environmental concerns in the celebration of liturgy, Christian education, pastoral care and the stewardship of land, particularly church land or land owned by Christians;
- To read the Bible with an ecological sensitivity, to discover that the earth and all its creatures are intimately interwoven with God's loving concern for humanity;

At a personal level:

- To use and share the earth's resources wisely, to minimise the use of non-renewable energy sources and to search for alternative energy sources;

- To reduce pollution and to help recycle waste products;
- To educate people, especially children, to respect all forms of life and to consider the impact of their lifestyles on the environment.
- To rediscover the virtues of simplicity and frugality and to challenge the culture of greed, materialism, hedonism and consumerism;

At a local and national level:

- To contribute wherever we live and work towards the healing of the whole earth community;
- To speak out about local economic and environmental injustices, wherever they are caused by corruption and the economic exploitation of the poor and dispossessed;
- To collaborate actively with other local organisations that share similar environmental objectives;
- To call on local governments to address emerging local environmental problems immediately;
- To participate constructively in the debates in civil society on environmental controversies, including, for example, the re-launching of nuclear programmes, food security, the production of genetically modified foods and seeds, fishing quotas, the fluoridation of our water supplies, local waste management and the construction of various roads, dams and other "development" projects;

At a global level:

- To seek a more just, equitable and sustainable economic order;
- To speak out against and to resist economic and environmental injustices wherever they are caused by the forces of globalisation, unfair trade agreements, the management of Third World "debt" and Structural Adjustment Programmes;

- To confront those in positions of power in local and national governments, inter-governmental bodies, business and industry, trans-national corporations and institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation with the environmental impact of their decisions;
- To resist threats of militarisation, to help heal the damage caused by war and to work for peace and justice on earth;
- To nurture and foster the renewal of life and to resist the many threats to life;
- To pray for the healing of the earth.

We therefore pray ...

We give thanks to You our God for life
for the wonder of creation
and its amazing variety.

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created” (Revelation 4: 11).

So with all creation we praise you, Creator God,
for what you have brought into being
for its magnificence, wonder and variety.

We praise you:
for this universe of countless stars
for this planet earth and its abundance of life
for the oceans and sea creatures
for the deserts and their unexpected life
for the mountains and cascading waterfalls
for the plains and the grasses and flowers
for the forests with their prolific variety of life
for the beauty of birds and the wonder of wildlife

for domestic creatures
and for one another - our fellow human beings.

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord"
(Psalm 150: 6).

We thank You God for our own life and the lives of our loved ones
for the great variety of people and cultures in our land.

We pray that we may learn to live in harmony with God,
with one another and with nature.

As we commit ourselves in thanksgiving, as the body of Christ on
earth,

to preserve and care for one another and God's creation,

So we pray that justice may be established among us
that the exploitation of the poor, of women and children may be
ended;

That economic justice may be established
overcoming the gross inequalities of excess among some,
starvation among others.

*"Let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream"* (Amos 5:24).

We pray for a fair distribution of the resources of the world,
so that all may have access to:

clean water and sanitation

air free of pollution

soil in which to grow our crops.

We pray that we may use the resources of the world
for the benefit of people
and conservation of the natural world,

Rather than the gross misuse and abuse of resources and human energy
on weapons of destruction.

For it is through justice that our peace and security is found,
not in reliance on armaments.

"A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength" (Psalm 33:16).

We pray we may be instruments of peace and non-violence.

"Administer true justice, show kindness and compassion to each other..." (Zechariah 7:9-11).

We confess that we have frequently exploited and "ruled" one another and the natural world

for our own selfish ends,
failing to establish justice or show compassion.

May we know the sanctity that you have bestowed on all life.

May we accept the responsibility you have given us
to nurture, care for and protect the earth –
that it may be a better place for our having lived in it.

May we play our part in preserving the earth for the future
for the benefit of the children
and may we never be responsible for the extinction of a plant or animal.

So we pray that your reign of love may be established
that justice may be established in our land
that we may live in harmony with one another and with creation,

"making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

O God, may new life fill us all, through the gift of your Holy Spirit,
to know your wonder, your love and the abundant life you give.

May we live Christ's Love, Peace and Unity!

O God of eternal light, heaven and earth are the work of your hands, and all creation sings your praise and beauty. As in the beginning, by your Spirit, you gave life and order to all that is, so by the same Spirit redeem us and all things, through Christ our Lord.

Appendix

List of participants in the workshop of 29 April 2002 that discussed and finalised earlier drafts of *The Land is crying for Justice*:

Prof Denise M. Ackermann (Church of the Province of Southern Africa)

Rev Keith Benjamin (Methodist Church of Southern Africa)

Prof H. Russel Botman (Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa)

Sr Raymunda Brennan (Roman Catholic Church)

Prof Ernst M Conradie (Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa) (editor)

Bishop Geoff Davies (Church of the Province of Southern Africa)

Mr Paul Faller (Roman Catholic Church)

Rev Roger Hudson (Methodist Church of Southern Africa)

Dr Renier Koegelenberg (EFSA Institute)

Ms Dawn Linder (Roman Catholic Church)

Mr Eddie Makue (Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa)

Sr Shelagh Mary (Roman Catholic Church)

Bishop Patrick Matolengwe (Church of the Province of Southern Africa)

Father Richard Menatsi (Roman Catholic Church)

Rev Sipho Mtetwa (Uniting Presbyterian Church of South Africa) (editor)

Rev Dr Neill Stevenson (Uniting Presbyterian Church of South Africa)

Rev Andrew Warmback (Church of the Province of Southern Africa) (editor)

Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa

The Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa (NECCSA), constituted on 20 May 2002, seeks to provide a network for local Christian congregations, communities, groups and organisations as well as interested individuals to engage with one another on issues of environmental justice. It provides a communication network to share information, visions, stories, resources and creative suggestions with one another in order to support, encourage and inspire others to address environmental concerns effectively and from within a Christian orientation. The focus on "earthkeeping" suggests that Christian ministry includes the responsibility to attend to (to "keep") the well-being of the whole earth community (which includes but also transcends human well-being).

Following a request from the workshop participants and in order to facilitate an ongoing discussion of environmental justice, NECCSA invites anyone to respond to the document and to the issues that it raises by sending any relevant feedback to the following contact addresses:

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Fax: 021-697 4773

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EFSA Institute for Theological and Interdisciplinary Research

Email: efsa@iafrica.com

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