



EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK KATOWICE, OCTOBER 2018

A CALL FROM THE ASSEMBLY A FUTURE WITH HOPE

The 12th Assembly of ECEN met from 6 to 10 October 2018 under the heading ‘On the way to economic and ecological justice’ in Katowice (Poland), hosting 85 participants from 22 countries of Europe and overseas. Discussions of the Assembly were guided by the biblical words of the prophet Jeremiah 29:11 “*I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*”

We gathered to share joy in God’s creation, to remind ourselves that everywhere it is under threat, and that churches across Europe as well as in other parts of the world have a duty to care for creation; in worship, in action, and in advocacy.

In discussion with colleagues from churches, academia, and civil authorities in the region of Upper Silesia we learned about efforts to reduce air pollution and Green House Gas (GHG) emissions; and to transform the economy from coal mining to more sustainable energy production.

The focus of the Assembly discussions was the relationship between economy and ecology; ways to achieve a just distribution of available resources while respecting the principles of economic and ecological justice.

The Assembly offered an opportunity to celebrate the 20th anniversary of ECEN. Twenty years after ECEN met for the first time we can witness in Europe growing movements of green churches, eco-churches, and eco-congregations. In worship, practical action and advocacy for climate justice and a sustainable future, faith communities reflect the message: It is our responsibility and duty to care for creation. We celebrate this success and encourage all churches to join this movement.

What is the challenge?

In twenty years there have been momentous changes in our use of natural resources. In these decades we have seen the loss of biodiversity and habitats across the world to the extent that scientists talk of a new ‘mass extinction’. Massive deforestation contributes to climate change and humanity has added greenhouse gases to the atmosphere at an alarming rate, particularly through burning fossil fuels. As a result, the climate is changing; we know this beyond doubt.

As we met in Katowice the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published the report *Global Warming of 1.5°C* setting out what would be needed to limit global warming to 1.5°C and the impacts of failing to do so. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C will require rapid, far reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society. To avoid dangerous climate change and to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals a fundamental shift must start today.

In another twenty years, if we have not taken effective action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions global warming will not only exceed 1.5°C but also 2°C. This will happen if the parties of the Paris Agreement do not show higher ambition than is evident today.

We are now informed and we have no excuses! Also as people of faith we have a moral obligation to put the most vulnerable first in our calling to heal the earth. The theme of the ECEN Assembly is “To give you a future with hope”. It is not an option to ignore the science nor to become paralysed by fear.

From our faith derives hope; A hope that is not a naïve or wishful.

Why do we do this?

We want *a future with hope*. Science can tell us what is happening; faith tells us why we must respond. To give life on earth a future with hope we must act now.

In John chapter 6:1-11 we learn of the feeding of the five thousand and of the importance of sharing. It is a vulnerable child who brings loaves and fish. The act of sharing that comes from the child and is an inspiration and a path for us to follow. Sharing, not greed, is the way to climate justice.

Individually and collectively we must reduce our environmental impact and in particular our carbon footprints. The extractive economy and lifestyle we know and enjoy are not sustainable. Structures and patterns of consumption and production must change very rapidly to a low carbon economy with a more just distribution of resources.

We call governments and political decision makers to:

- Take situation seriously and act accordingly: to commit to reducing GHG emissions to align with the scientific data in the IPCC report.
- Work for sustainable future and adequate mechanisms to support the most vulnerable. No excuse is acceptable.
- In anticipation of the forthcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP24) in Katowice we call for a visible and determined action plans from all parties.

We call churches and faith communities:

- To initiate and sustain a broad dialogue among churches and in wider society on the necessary changes to bring about a more sustainable and equitable lifestyle; to respect Creation, promote a just transition to a low carbon economy and act for intergenerational justice.
- To support, encourage and mainstream environmental initiatives in faith communities and churches to respond to ecological challenges.
- To build a new narrative of hope that addresses the seriousness of the situation but also promises a vision of more just and sustainable future.
- To develop theological and liturgical resources on care for creation; including Season of Creation into liturgical calendars and sharing celebration of it in an open ecumenical spirit.