

For the Love of the Earth
A Letter on Creation from the Most Reverend Michael B. Curry

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. often said: “We shall either learn to live together as sisters and brothers, or we shall perish together as fools.” His words feel especially poignant today as we awaken to the chilling realities of global climate change. We *are* interconnected. We *are* tied into networks of mutuality as brothers and sisters on this fragile planet, and the truth is we need each other.

When it comes to climate change, what affects one part of the planet affects the whole planet, and what affects one part of the human family affects the whole family. As members of the Anglican Communion, we share a commitment to face the imminent threats to our climate and to the biodiversity that sustains all life. These threats know no national or natural boundaries.

During the 2008 Lambeth Conference, one day was devoted to bishops learning and sharing about the environment. I remember a Bishop from Tanzania talking about Mt. Kilimanjaro – its great snowcapped peaks, which he saw as a child, which now lie mostly bare. I remember a Bishop from Zambia talking about how the growing seasons have changed, and how people who depend on the harvest find themselves ever more food insecure.



Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and Bishop Marc Andrus of California lead an Eco-Confirmation in San Francisco.

I was most deeply moved by the Bishop from the Solomon Islands. He reminded us of the film *PT109* about John F. Kennedy. Long before he was President of the United States, Kennedy served in the Navy during the Second World War. He and his shipmates went into battle, sustained heavy losses, and were eventually they were rescued by the people of the Solomon Islands. As the Bishop recalled that story, he addressed us Americans:

Brothers, we were your friends. We were your allies during the Second World War. My people – my family – saved John Kennedy from the ocean so that he could become your president. Now the waters of the ocean are rising and will take away our home. America, we need you now, to be our friend.”

We today are presented with a simple choice: will we live as friends, as brothers and sisters, as Beloved Community, or will we be subsumed under the rising waters of chaos? If we choose community, we can move – and protect – mountains. I know we can do this because of the old spiritual that speaks of God’s relationship to God’s creation: “He’s got the whole world in his hands.” The whole world belongs to God, as Psalm 24 teaches us. God’s eye is ever on even the tiny sparrow, as Jesus teaches us (Luke 12:6). We human beings have been charged with being trustees, caretakers and stewards of God’s creation (Genesis 1:26-31).

This Anglican Communion is the third-largest Christian body on the planet. Surely we can do it. I’ve seen us work together and with our friends of other faiths and no faith at all. I’ve seen us intervene and provide education, recovery and healing following climate-based tragedies across this globe. We can maintain a vigorous and effective commitment, and empower Anglicans everywhere to undertake bold action to mitigate and reverse climate change.

My own Episcopal Church is growing in our dedication to this urgent movement. We can do it. Already, we have a unique place in the worldwide climate movement. As an international body representing 17 countries in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia and the Pacific, we have sent accredited observers and prayer partners to the UN Conference of Parties meetings in Paris, Marrakech and Bonn. People may wonder, Why would a church be present? We ask, How could the church be anywhere else?

We can do this. I know because, in the fall of 2017, our House of Bishops gathered in Fairbanks, Alaska, and stood with indigenous Episcopalians who claim the land and waters as their ancestors. Our whole House of Bishops slowed down, walked the land, listened to local stories. Together, we drew connections between protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and cleaning the drinking water in Flint, Michigan. As a House, we committed to new, renewable ways of living.



The House of Bishops made pilgrimage to Alaska and rallied to safeguard the Arctic Refuge.

We can do this. I know because I saw people of every nation, faith, age and race move to stand with the Standing Rock Sioux as they struggled to turn back a pipeline that threatened their sacred lands and their water supply. And I saw the Episcopal Church flag at the front of that procession. When crowds chanted “Mni Wiconi” (water is life), Episcopalians chanted with full voice because we have been given new life in Jesus Christ through the waters of baptism. Yes, water is life. Yes, we should honor it.

We can do this. I know because the evidence is so clear: caring for God's creation is not only good for the environment, it is also good for the economic well-being of a people. The clean, green jobs sector in the U.S. is currently growing faster than nearly every other sector of the economy. Other major economies are also experiencing this unprecedented and positive acceleration.



Holy Cross Episcopal Church in the U.S. Virgin Islands was devastated by hurricanes in the fall.

Friends, we Episcopalians have seen the devastation of surging storms and the ravages of climate change in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Florida Keys, Puerto Rico, California, Houston and beyond. We have seen too many of the children of God suffer the interconnected pain of economic, racial and environmental injustice. We can and must do this. With the policies we advocate on Capitol Hill, with the solar panels on our church rooftops, with the wholesome food grown on our church grounds, with the prayers on our very lips.

My prayer is that we in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion will follow the way, the teachings and the Spirit of Jesus by cultivating loving, liberating and life-giving relationship with God, with all in the human family, and with all of God's good creation. For it is certainly true that “he’s got the whole world in his hands.” It is also true that he has placed it in ours.

Your brother on the Jesus Way,

The Most Reverend Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church

A Prayer for Our Time and for the Earth

Dear God, Creator of the earth, this sacred home we share;
Give us new eyes to see the beauty all around and to protect the wonders of creation.
Give us new arms to embrace the strangers among us and to know them as family.
Give us new ears to hear and understand those who live off the land
and to hear and understand those who extract its resources.
Give us new hearts to recognize the brokenness in our communities
and to heal the wounds we have inflicted.
Give us new hands to serve the earth and its people
and to shape beloved community.
For you are the One who seeks the lost,
binds our wounds and sets us free,
and it is in the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen.

**From Bishop Carol Gallagher
Offered at the House of Bishops Fall 2017 Gathering in Fairbanks, Alaska**