

**CONSTRUCTING AN *OIKOTHEOLOGY*:  
THE ENVIRONMENT, POVERTY AND THE CHURCH  
IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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## ABSTRACT

South Africa is a country of great natural resources yet suffers from high levels of poverty. This study looks at the relationship between the environment and poverty in South Africa and the role of the church in this context. There is a focus on the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA) and on one of its dioceses, the Diocese of Umzimvubu.

While the church in South Africa has been conscious of its responsibility in eradicating poverty, it has not expressed a strong concern for the environment, less still has it been conscious that this concern is closely connected to the task of eradicating poverty. The metaphor of the *oikos* (or household) of God is explored as a metaphor that may be usefully employed to help describe the relationship between the environment and poverty. It is proposed that an *oikotheology* be constructed to enable the church to engage with both the ecological and the economic aspects of the environment.

This study asserts that the preservation and enhancement of the environment impacts positively on the alleviation of poverty. What is also needed, and often neglected, is to ensure that the resources of the environment are accessible to all and equitably distributed.

Theological resources that articulate an *oikothology* for the South African context are explored, and possible actions for the church promoted.

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## DEDICATION

Alison Gail Warmback

## DECLARATION

I declare that the whole thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

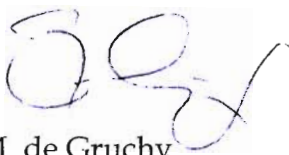


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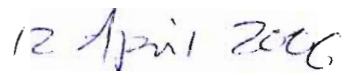


Date

As supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis.



Prof S. M. de Gruchy



Date

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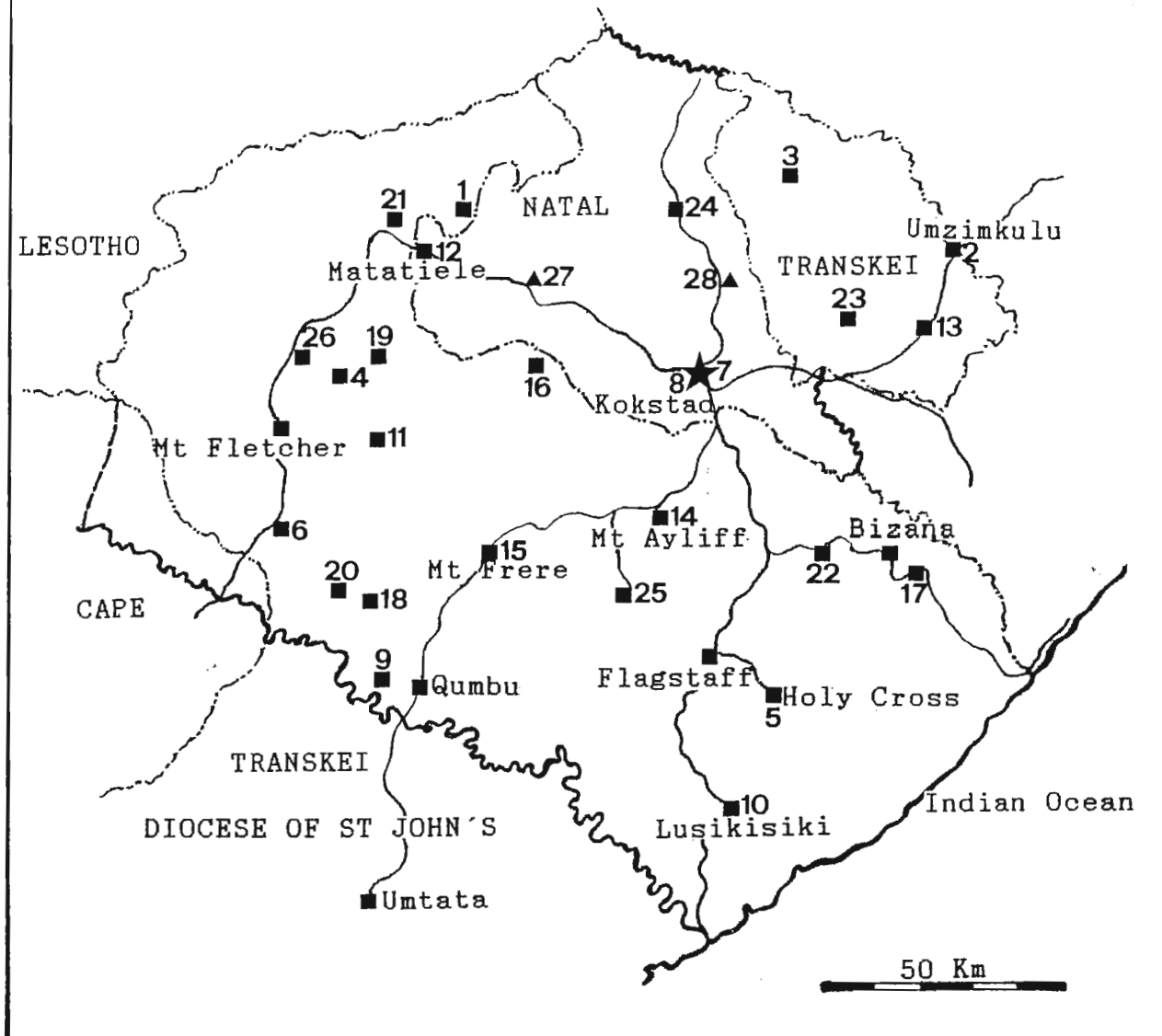
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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACC	Anglican Consultative Council
CPSA	Church of the Province of Southern Africa
DWAF	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
EE	Environmental Education
EJNF	Environmental Justice Networking Forum
ESSET	Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation
ICT	Institute for Contextual Theology
JPIC	Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation
RCDC	Regional and Community Development Committee
SACBC	Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SAFCEI	Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute
UNISA	University of South Africa
USAEEP	Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Programme
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WCC	World Council of Churches

# MAP OF DIOCESE OF UMZIMVUBU



## KEY TO PARISHES IN NEW DIOCESE

- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Cibini                 | 15. Mount Frere            |
| 2. Clydesdale             | 16. Mvenyane               |
| 3. Ensikeni               | 17. Mzizi                  |
| 4. Fobane                 | 18. Ncoti                  |
| 5. Holy Cross             | 19. Nyaniso                |
| 6. Katkop                 | 20. Qanqu                  |
| 7. Kokstad - Holy Trinity | 21. Ramohlakoana           |
| 8. Kokstad - St Francis   | 22. Simakadeni             |
| 9. Lower Tyira            | 23. St Faith's             |
| 10. Lusikisiki            | 24. Swartberg              |
| 11. Mandileni             | 25. Tabankulu              |
| 12. Matatiele             | 26. Xaxazana               |
| 13. Mfundweni             | 27. Merino Walk (Chapelry) |
| 14. Mount Ayliff          | 28. St Aidan's (Chapelry)  |

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

During 2005 South Africa celebrated the Jubilee of the Freedom Charter.<sup>1</sup> Echoing the theme of this document, the government chose as its theme for World Environment Day “Our environment belongs to all who live in it.” If this claim is true then 10 years of democracy has indeed bought us to a good understanding of our environment.

This study provides us with an opportunity to look at the change in attitudes towards the environment in South Africa that has occurred since the move towards democracy in the early 1990s. It focuses on the responses that the church has made to these changes. During this period much progress has been made towards the alleviation of poverty in South Africa. However, many people still experience high levels of poverty. While South Africa is a land of extraordinary beauty and diversity it has experienced widespread environmental degradation. South Africa is a country still struggling to engage in the process of reconstruction and nation building; our past has divided us. We have become separated not only from each other but also from our natural environment. We are beset with a crippling high rate of HIV/ AIDS which has exacerbated these problems. The construction of an *oikotheology* is proposed as a way of helping us in this context.

## 1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to show that there is a close connection between concern for the environment and the eradication of poverty and that the church, by caring for the environment, contributes to the eradication of poverty. This connection between the environment and poverty is not always obvious. It may be most clearly seen in instances where those who are poor are directly dependent upon the natural resources of the environment for their food and shelter. The preservation and enhancement of these resources therefore enhances the livelihoods of these people. While, in this study, it is argued that the environment needs to be preserved for the value that it has for human beings it is also assumed that it needs to be preserved for its own sake.

The problem being researched, therefore, is that the state of the natural environment is seen as separate from the well-being of people and not related to their levels of poverty and that the theology of the church in South Africa tends to reflect this view. The hypothesis put forward is that a concern for the environment is at the same time a concern for poverty eradication and that an *oikotheology* sustains this analysis.

While it is argued that the resources of the environment are sufficient for the sustenance of all life, the accessing and distribution of these resources to those who need them is a problem. The metaphor of the earth as a house or household is used. It helps us to see more clearly the connection between a concern for the environment (natural resources) and the eradicating of poverty (the equitable distribution of these resources). The metaphor points us towards both the ecological and the economic aspects of the earth community.

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<sup>1</sup> An historic document drawn up by the Congress of the People meeting in Kliptown in 1955.

In our approach we try to overcome the so called “green divide” in which a concern for the environment and the well-being of people and poverty eradication have been seen as mutually exclusive. On the one side there are those that have a strong interest in environment matters, and particularly “green” issues, those of conservation and biodiversity preservation and tend to be less interested in poverty issues. On the other side there are those who tend to show greater interest in the well-being of people and the effect a degraded environment has on them and less interest in preserving the very biodiversity that sustains life.

On the whole the church in South Africa has been slow to respond to environmental issues. The construction of an *oikothology* is a means of encouraging church engagement in environmental issues, which at the same time leads to the eradication of poverty.

### **1.3 The Title**

Some preliminary comments on the title as a way of introduction to this study are offered.

#### **1.3.1 Constructing an *oikothology***

The Greek word *oikos*, occurring a number of times in Scripture, means “household” or “home”. From it we derive the English words “ecology” and “economy”. Seeing the earth as a global household, constructing an *oikothology*, is proposed as an effective way of helping us integrate environmental concerns with poverty eradication. It helps us to overcome this false dichotomy between the two.

The task of constructing this theology is that of the whole church and not just the hierarchy.

### **1.3.2 The Environment and poverty**

The use of the term "environment" is problematic in the South African context. Our history has left us with skewed understandings of this term. The definition and scope of the notion of the environment will be explored. "Poverty" too is a contested and complex term. Attempts are made to clarify it. As indicated earlier, this study explores the relationship between the environment and poverty which have been seen as being separate from one another. It asserts that concern for the environment contributes towards the eradication of poverty.

### **1.3.3 The Church in South Africa**

The church is a significant institution in South Africa and is well placed to play a significant role in poverty eradication. It is, however, difficult to speak of "the church" as though it is a homogeneous unit. Within South Africa the church varies greatly, both in its composition as well as its structure. Race, class, geography and theological tradition play a role in determining the nature of the church in a particular context. Also these different members of the church have differing perspectives on the environment and poverty. We need to be aware of those differences in both evaluating the extent of the church's response as well as in suggesting actions that the church can take.

This study does not look at the motivation for the church to be involved in the eradication of poverty. It is assumed from the very nature of the church that it should be involved in eradicating poverty. While the focus is on South Africa and its particular context, this study records learnings that may be adopted in other contexts.

## **1.4 Chapter divisions**

An overview of the division of material of this study is given.

### **1.4.1 The Environment and poverty**

This chapter traces the relationship between the environment and poverty in South Africa historically. It offers a critical analysis of the relationship between the two.

### **1.4.2 The Church's response**

In chapter three, an overview of the church's response to the environment and poverty is provided. The response of the church's engagement with environmental issues is covered with a strong evaluative focus on the extent to which these responses have incorporated poverty eradication dimensions, and in so doing pointed us towards an *oikotheology*.

### **1.4.3 The Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA)**

This chapter looks at the particular response of the CPSA. It begins with a focus on worldwide Anglican developments, and then looks at the Anglican Church in Southern Africa specifically.

### **1.4.4 The Diocese of Umzimvubu**

Chapter five focuses on the work carried out in the Diocese of Umzimvubu, a particular diocese within the CPSA. There are two main reasons for focusing on this particular diocese within the Anglican Church. Firstly, it is situated in a largely rural area and it is in one of the poorest regions of the country. Secondly, during the

period of the study, the person who was bishop of the diocese, Geoff Davies, had a strong focus on the environment and was concerned with relating this interest to the eradication of poverty in the area.

#### **1.4.5 Theological resources**

There is a wealth of biblical, theological and ecclesiological resources that may be drawn upon to enable us to see the strong link between the environment and the eradication of poverty. In chapter six we focus further on constructing an *oikothology*, drawing on these resources as well as on reflections on the actions of the churches generally and of the Diocese of Umzimvubu particularly.

#### **1.4.6 Strategies for the church**

In chapter seven we look at the strategies that the church could engage in. The suggestions arise from the previous successes and failures of the church and the implications of adopting an *oikothology*. This concept of the earth as the household of God remains an undergirding concept in guiding the actions of the church. While we look at the concern of the church for the environment generally, the more important considerations are the actions of the church that are also intended to eradicate poverty. It is those actions that recognise that the earth is our home, that it needs to be well managed, that form the basis of this section of the study.

#### **1.4.7 Appendices**

At the end are six documents which are referred to in the text, and which may not be readily accessed. They are included for easy reference.



## **1.5 Precedents**

While there has been a large amount of theological literature emanating from South Africa over the last 15 years that has analysed, separately, the role of the church in respect of the environment or poverty there has been very little that has analysed the interaction of all three. There has been no comprehensive study of the work in the Diocese of Umzimvubu which forms the core of this study.

The use of the *oikos* metaphor to help us understand the relationship between the environment and poverty is not a new one. For example, it has been used widely within the World Council of Churches. However, the term *oikotheology* is coined as a term which refers to a theology which is based on the *oikos* metaphor and expresses a deep concern for the natural environment as well as people, especially in the eradication of poverty.

## **1.6 Research methodology**

The different chapters involved different approaches to the material and various sources were consulted.

In chapter two, which focuses on the environment and poverty, works giving a critical historical perspective on these two issues were consulted. Chapters three and four, which look at the response of the church, and the Anglican Church in particular, record this response by drawing on church statements, resolutions and other documents.

In the chapter on the Diocese of Umzimvubu data for this research was gathered through a variety of means and from different sources. The diocese was visited by the author on a number of occasions between 2001 and 2003, to get a feel for the

diocese, to interview people, including the Bishop, and to conduct a survey. The survey was conducted during a Diocesan Synod in order to try to verify that the actions taken by the hierarchy of the church matched the views of clergy and laity in the diocese.

Much time was also spent consulting the diocesan records. Written records included the minutes of the meetings of Diocesan Synod, Diocesan Council and the Regional and Community Development Committee. The CPSA archives, housed in the Historical Papers, William Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand, were also consulted. While the material presented here draws on a variety of sources, the main source of this study was the formal records of the diocese.

Chapter six draws particularly on the theological resources from Africa and South Africa concentrating on literature that focuses on both the environment and poverty. Chapter seven draws on practical experience, both of that of the author as well as of others who have been engaged in this work.

### **1.7 Limitations of this research**

The focus is on the church in South Africa. However, at times, reference is made to the wider church. For example, in chapter two the World Council of Churches' *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* programme is referred to as being instructive in terms of relating environmental and poverty concerns. In chapter four the Worldwide Anglican Church is referred to as giving a context for the Anglican Church in South Africa.

### **1.7.1 Anglican focus**

While we look at the church generally, there is a particular denominational focus - that of the Anglican Church (the Church of the Province of Southern Africa). The Diocese of Umzimvubu that is used as a case study is an Anglican Diocese. While the Anglican Church is not homogenous, it at least has a common denominational identity. It is a large church and represents a wide cross section of the Christian population.

### **1.7.2 Time frame**

This study focuses on the period between 1990 and 2003. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, in 1990 there were radical political developments in South Africa, and these changes were accompanied by changing attitudes towards the environment and poverty. As the response of the church to environmental issues has generally mirrored that of the response of civil society, it seemed an appropriate stage from which to record the church's responses. Secondly, the focus on the Diocese of Umzimvubu is confined to the time period that Geoff Davies was bishop of this diocese. This was from 1991 to the end of 2003.

The second chapter, however, provides an historical overview which includes the period from the early 1900s through to the apartheid years. Also considered are developments and materials after 2003, where this is helpful.

## **1.8 Recurrent themes**

There are two recurrent themes which we trace throughout the research.

### **1.8.1 Justice: Race and gender**

The concept of justice, particularly environmental justice, is used to help us understand the interrelationships involved in this study. Racism and sexism are still major factors that have a significant impact on both society and the church and influence our understanding of both the environment and poverty. A concern for the environment that is not sensitive to the different treatment of people according to race and the different position and role of women to that of men in respect of the environment is really not concerned with people, and therefore poverty. We will trace the impact of these factors.

### **1.8.2 Land**

Land is a significant factor in any consideration of poverty eradication in South Africa. Landlessness is a major cause of poverty. Within the study land is a thread that is woven throughout. Not only are issues of ownership and control of land important but also its sustainable use.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This study is about seeing the interconnections between different aspects of life. It recognises that the causes of poverty are complex and that the manner of eradicating it is similarly complex. It is asserted that by showing a stronger commitment to the environment the church can make a positive difference in the lives of those who suffer degrading poverty and feel excluded from the household of God.

## CHAPTER 2

### HOME FOR ALL: THE ENVIRONMENT AND POVERTY

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the historical relationship between the environment and poverty within the South African context. It concentrates on looking at how enhancing the environment impacts on the eradication of poverty, and how a neglect of it increases poverty. We explore the meaning of the terms “environment” and “poverty” and suggest ways that may help us to understand the relationship between the two. We consider the response of the government and environment organisations to the environment and poverty in South Africa. In the next chapter we focus specifically on the response of the church.

Colonialism and apartheid destroyed a sense of community, of belonging to one household. In fact, it promoted the ideology that people could not live together, that they needed to have their own homes, or “homelands” as they became known. Through this system the natural environment was further destroyed and people’s unequal access to these resources became entrenched. Racism and sexism became institutionalised in South African life.

In constructing an *oikotheology* one needs to take these realities seriously. There needs to be a conscious effort to overcome these patterns which deprive both people and the earth of life, destroying both the environment and increasing poverty.

## 2.2 The Environment

As we will see from the historical analysis of the South African context the term “environment” has meant different things to different people. We start with a comprehensive view of the environment, which has been set out by Conradie and Field. For them the word does not only refer to “the world of nature.” In their assessment it includes at least the following aspects:

- the biophysical environment (water, air, soil, plant and animal species),
- a built environment (houses, offices, urban planning)
- the social environment (civil society, community, neighbourhoods),
- the economic environment (ownership of production, access to opportunities),
- a cultural environment (traditions, arts, crafts, drama).<sup>2</sup>

In the context of this study, with its focus on constructing an *oikotheology*, the term “environment” is understood in a broad, yet specific way. It is used as a term that embraces specifically two dimensions – “the world of nature” or “the biophysical environment”, and the “economic environment” which looks at access to and distribution of this aspect of the environment. The former dimension is referred to in this study as “ecology” and the latter aspect “economy”. For convenience, at times, we separate the terms; together they constitute the environment.

It is useful to expand a little on the term “ecology”. Ecology refers to the ways in which different aspects of the environment relate to one another, the dynamic systems of interdependence and interrelatedness that exist in the environment to ensure its on-going survival. In this study it refers primarily to the natural resources that constitute the fundamental part of the environment. The water, air, soil and plant life are significant in this. It is the economic factors that determine how these resources are distributed and how people can benefit from them.

In constructing our understanding of the environment it is helpful to have an understanding that incorporates human beings, for it helps us understand that the wellbeing of human beings is closely connected to the wellbeing of the rest of nature; and that enhancing the environment benefits people. In this respect the broader term “earth” is sometimes used in referring to this understanding of the environment as including human beings and the natural resources. The term “earth” is at times also referred to as the “earth community”. In theological writings the term “creation” is often used. It has connotations of a limited definition of the environment as “unspoilt nature”, yet it also seeks to emphasise the value and specialness of all of life, including people as having been made by God.

The inclusion of people in our understanding of the environment is more clearly understood in the use of the term “environmental justice”. “Environmental justice” is a term used to convey a sense of the need for justice both for the environment as well as for people, and in countries like the United States has become a strong movement.<sup>3</sup> It is a concept that has also come to be used in South Africa, particularly over the past ten years.<sup>4</sup> It is a useful term in helping us better understand the relationship between the environment and poverty. It reflects a rights based approach, so that in a country like South Africa, where rights have been neglected, it provides a key to restoring justice. In relation to poverty eradication it can be helpful in providing a clearer understanding of the different dynamics involved in tackling poverty.

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<sup>2</sup> Ernst M. Conradie & David N. Field (eds), *A Rainbow over the land: A South African guide on the church and environmental justice* (Cape Town: Western Cape Provincial Council of Churches, 2000), 12.

<sup>3</sup> The principles of environmental justice were most clearly and forcefully articulated by delegates of the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit which met on 27 October 1991. The document has been widely published and may be found, for example, on pages 42-44 in the work of Dorceta E. Taylor, “Women of color, environmental justice and ecofeminism”, in *Ecofeminism: Women, culture, nature* edited by Karen J. Warren (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 38-81.

<sup>4</sup> It has been used by a number of environmental groups that have been established during this time period. They include Earthlife Africa, the Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF), the Group for Environmental Monitoring (GEM), the Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG) and groundWork.

It is important to understand this relationship of people to the rest of the environment. Hallowes and Butler provide a definition of environmental justice that helps us to further understand this relationship when they explain the term as meaning “empowered people in relations of solidarity and equity with each other and in non-degrading and positive relationships with their environment”.<sup>5</sup> People and their relationship to one another are valued as well as the way in which people relate to the natural world. This approach views the environment primarily as a set of relations, and so alleviating poverty is “concerned with understanding how relations are established and maintained, what powers and interests they express and serve, and how they enhance or inhibit the possibilities of ‘a better life for all’.”<sup>6</sup> As we shall see, the history of South Africa has been one of environmental injustice, in which there have been oppressive and alienating relationships: the oppression of people and their alienation from the land and their natural environment generally.

McDonald describes environmental justice as encompassing “the widest possible definition of what is considered ‘environmental’ and is unrepentantly anthropocentric in its orientation – placing people, rather than flora and fauna, at the centre of a complex web of social, economic, political and environmental relationships.”<sup>7</sup> Despite this claim the term is perceived by some as being ultimately concerned with the natural environment rather than the wellbeing of people as well. We nevertheless use this term as it helps convey the essence of our approach to the environment which contains the dual aspects of its resources as well as access to and the just distribution of them.

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<sup>5</sup> David Hallowes and Mark Butler, “Power, poverty, and marginalized environments: A Conceptual framework”, 51-77, in David A. McDonald (ed), *Environmental justice in South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2002), 52.

<sup>6</sup> Hallowes and Butler, “Power, poverty, and marginalized environments”, 52.



Some writers in this study refer to the term “eco-justice”. This is a helpful term as “eco” should refer to both the ecological as well as the economic aspects of justice. That these two aspects are included, however, is not always understood by some readers and so while the term is used in this study it needs to be known that it has some difficulties associated with it.

The term “sustainable development” is commonly used as a way of indicating the ecological aspects of development or poverty eradication. It refers to the use of resources in a way and to an extent that they are able to regenerate. Some have questioned the extent to which any “development” may really be called “sustainable”. The term is often used by business and government agencies that “develop” property and communities through the construction of buildings and the installation of infrastructure on land that is ecologically sensitive, to indicate that in this process the natural integrity of the land is still being preserved. In many cases this has not been the case. The term is, therefore, not used much in this study.

The term “sustainable communities” is a useful term. While focusing on people and communities it helps to convey the idea of the maintenance of the conditions for healthy living. With the focus on the communal the emphasis is on the surrounding conditions for the sustenance of life for all.

### **2.3 Poverty**

Poverty eradication is at the core of development. There are, however, different ways in which poverty can be understood and measured. Traditionally, poverty has been measured against income levels. In international documents like the Millennium Development Goals, for example, poor people are those who live on less than \$2 per

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<sup>7</sup> David A. McDonald, “Introduction: What is environmental justice?”, 1-12 in David A. McDonald (ed), *Environmental justice in South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2002), 3.

day.<sup>8</sup> However, in some contexts, like rural areas, this is not an effective indicator to use in measuring poverty, as Hallows and Butler point out:

[T]he simple equation of poverty with cash incomes legitimizes forms of development which dispossess people of their remaining access to environmental resources and forces them into total reliance on a market economy which will not adequately provide for most of them.<sup>9</sup>

So being poor is not necessarily about having no money to buy goods. Those who are poor often sustain themselves through non-income means. Power relations, including those in respect of race and gender relations, the political climate and historical factors also impact strongly on poverty.

There is a dialectical relationship between the environment and poverty. Hallows and Butler have put this succinctly in the context of degradation: "Not only does environmental degradation result from the concentration of poverty, it becomes a cause of further impoverishment."<sup>10</sup> We will look at the impact that the environment has on poverty and we will also consider the impact of poverty on the environment. Those who are poor, especially those living in rural areas, often depend directly on natural resources to survive and to sustain themselves. A healthy environment, therefore, can contribute many resources to promote their well-being. A degraded environment, on the other hand, restricts the resources that the environment can produce and provide, and that people can, accordingly, access. As poor people are generally more exposed to changes in the environment they are more affected by its degradation than those who are less poor. For example, those who are poor suffer disproportionately from disease and premature death as they are more likely to be exposed to polluted water and air. Also, they are more vulnerable to environmental disasters such as floods, fire and drought.

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<sup>8</sup> The Millennium Development Goals were set at a United Nations summit held in 2000. They have been widely used as indicators of development, including poverty alleviation.

<sup>9</sup> Hallows and Butler, "Power, poverty, and marginalized environments", 60.

Poverty often has a detrimental effect on the environment. This may be seen in a number of areas. For example, the need to collect firewood for poor people may lead to widespread deforestation. Inadequate provision of sanitation may lead people to pollute water sources, and farming a piece of land too intensively will lead to soil degradation.

It is often those who are poor who are blamed for environmental destruction. We need to remember, however, that it is those who are wealthy, through their unsustainable production and consumption, who destroy the environment to a greater extent than poorer people. Hallowes points out that among “mainstream environmentalists” there has been a tendency to be quick to “denounce the environmental consequences of poverty as the fault of the poor and slow to identify the environmental consequences of wealth. It is hardly surprising then, that the environment has been thought of as the concern of privileged whites.”<sup>11</sup>

## **2.4 Poverty eradication**

The need to eradicate poverty has been recognised in a number of recent international gatherings. See, for example, the United Nations’ Millennium Summit (2000) or the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) (2002). The goal of poverty eradication is no less important in South Africa. Since 1994 the government has been aware of the high levels of poverty in the country and have tried to devise policies to respond to these needs. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), as a particular response, was characterized by high government spending, particularly on public works programmes and a greater provision of social services. The emphasis was on addressing the imbalances of the past and concentrated on

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<sup>10</sup> Hallowes and Butler, “Power, poverty, and marginalized environments”, 67.

<sup>11</sup> David Hallowes, “Preface”, 1-7, in David Hallowes (ed), *Hidden faces, environment, development, justice: South Africa and the global context* (Natal:Earthlife Africa, 1993), 2.

providing infrastructure for areas and communities under resourced in the past. In 1996 this policy was changed to the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, which relies on attracting foreign investment and a greater integration into the world economy. It has meant that those with resources, with capital, have tended to increase their personal wealth, while those with little have tended to become poorer.

Understanding this interdependent relationship between the environment and poverty guides us in formulating appropriate responses to poverty eradication. Enhancing the environment should therefore facilitate the eradication of poverty. It is nevertheless important to bear in mind that the causes of poverty are complex and varied and that the eradication of poverty is similarly a multifaceted task. In this study we concentrate on the contribution that environmental factors can make towards the eradication of poverty. It is argued that it is the contribution of environmental factors towards poverty eradication that has not been sufficiently acknowledged. As well as being neglected by governments and other organisations, it has also been neglected by the church.

This environment-poverty relationship is illustrated by looking at a particular model, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF).<sup>12</sup> It is an approach to poverty eradication that acknowledges this interrelationship of factors that cause poverty and takes seriously the environmental dimensions. This approach correlates closely with the approach that is adopted of viewing the world as a global household. The livelihoods approach looks at individual households and the choices made.

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<sup>12</sup> Useful information on this approach is provided in the following works: Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway, *Sustainable rural livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. (Institute of Development Studies Discussion Paper 296; University of Sussex, Brighton: IDS Publications, 1992). Mark Butler and Ran Greenstein, *Sustainable livelihoods: Towards a research agenda for the Church Land Programme* (Johannesburg: Agency for Social Enquiry, 1999).

At the core of the SLF approach lies an analysis of different types of assets upon which individuals can draw to build their livelihoods. They have been labelled as social, human, financial, physical and natural assets. A household is said to have a sustainable livelihood when it can cope with and recover from shocks and stresses and can maintain its capabilities, assets and existing livelihood activities without undermining the natural resource base. This approach acknowledges that poverty results from a variety of interrelated factors. Thus, by diversifying their activities in order to reduce their vulnerability, poor people improve their quality of life. It is clear from the framework that to ensure that rural livelihoods are sustainable, the natural resources on which they depend need to be managed properly. In the framework this is referred to as natural capital which includes the natural stocks from which resources useful to livelihoods are derived, such as land, water and wildlife. Those in rural areas, in depending upon natural resources for a range of inputs for their welfare, directly use resources such as soil, water and vegetation, as well as indirectly use natural resources via the services that these ecosystems provide. This approach provides an integrative framework drawing on traditions and value systems of structures and processes that impact on people's struggles to improve their livelihoods.

The framework starts from an understanding and analysis of the resources and strategies that people are already using to achieve their livelihood goals. The approach respects the freedom of people to make choices between different strategies available to them and empowers them in the process of identifying and addressing livelihood strategies. It builds on people's strengths rather than focusing on their problems or needs. Those who are poor are to be the agents of their own development. This framework reflects closely the asset-based approach to development expressed in the work of Kretzmann and McKnight.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> John P. Kretzmann and John L. Mc Knight, *Building communities from the inside out: A Path toward finding and mobilising a community's assets* (Chicago: ACTA Publications, 1993).



While this framework covers a number of strategies for poverty eradication, for the purposes of this study we will focus mainly on the environmental factors. The following are some of the strategies that need to be taken into account: strengthening the access to natural resources, including land, ensuring access to environmentally sound and locally appropriate technologies, including the promotion of indigenous technologies, and strengthening those who are poor in their resistance to environmental vulnerability.

## **2.5 The Environment and poverty within the South African context**

In order to understand more fully the state and nature of the environment and poverty within South Africa, and in order to formulate strategies to eradicate poverty, an historical perspective on these issues is necessary. This perspective helps us to see the effect that colonialism and apartheid had on our understanding of the environment. Apartheid worsened poverty in the country and contributed to a warped understanding of the environment. While the effects of apartheid on poverty are perhaps more obvious and not contested, its environmental impact has been less well documented and acknowledged.<sup>14</sup> It is this aspect that we concentrate on in our historical analysis.

## **2.6 Poverty in South Africa**

As we have noted, poverty in South Africa has been shaped strongly by historical factors. Our democracy is now more than ten years old, yet the legacy of colonialism and apartheid continues to impact on our society. The historical perspective focuses

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<sup>14</sup> For background material on poverty in South Africa see, for example, Colin Bundy, *The Rise and fall of the South African peasantry* (London: Heinemann, 1979).

firstly on the impact of AIDS, race and gender on poverty, factors that are seen to have a major on-going effect on poverty.

HIV/ AIDS in South Africa is a significant factor in any consideration of poverty. HIV continues to spread rapidly, and it is estimated that over five million South Africans are infected with the virus. The existence of widespread poverty contributes significantly to the spread of the virus. The lack of access to clean water, nutritious food and adequate health care compromises the immune system and hastens the spread HIV. HIV/ AIDS also worsens poverty, particularly through its devastating impact on those who are economically active. So, in any consideration of poverty eradication and environmental action the close relationship between poverty and HIV/ AIDS needs to be borne in mind.<sup>15</sup>

Race has played a significant role in the history of South Africa and racism has been part of and continues to permeate all aspects of South African society. Racism has certainly been a factor that has impacted negatively on poverty, causing the further impoverishment of people. There is also a close connection between racism and the environment. This has given rise to the use of the term “environmental racism,” in terms of which black people suffer proportionately from the effects of environmental degradation.

The apartheid ideology produced a particular understanding of what constitutes the environment which seemed to strongly reflect the view it had of the need for the separateness of people from one another. It viewed human beings as distinctly separate from their natural surroundings. People were not seen to be related to or

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<sup>15</sup> The following three books are helpful in giving an overview of the AIDS pandemic. The first concerns South Africa, the second the world and the third faith communities: Alan Whiteside and Clem Sunter, *AIDS: The Challenge for South Africa* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau and Tafelberg, 2000); Alan Whiteside and Tony Barnett, *AIDS in the twenty-first century: Disease and globalisation* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Isabel Apawo Phiri, Beverley Haddad and Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphalilele), *African women, HIV/AIDS and faith communities* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003).

dependent upon their environment and could therefore be easily uprooted. Furthermore, like the discrimination reflected in apartheid, certain aspects of the environment were privileged above others. There was a strong focus on protecting wild animals in nature reserves. This was to have the effect of serving the economic interests of white people. In support of this, Khan argued that “[u]ntil fairly recently, the dominant environmental ideology in South Africa was characterized by a wildlife-centred, preservationist approach which appealed to the affluent, educated and largely white minority.”<sup>16</sup> She explains the different perspectives that are held: “It is still a country in which development and conservation are viewed by many historically disadvantaged communities as two diametrically opposed options because a history of black alienation from environmental issues, together with a legacy of underdevelopment, has made this almost inevitable.”<sup>17</sup> In subsequent sections we explore further the process of alienation of black people from the environment. A result of this has been a skewed perception of the environment as being something separate from poverty concerns.

Apartheid also bequeathed other life denying factors: the destruction of family and community life, a sense of not belonging to the country, and the entrenchment of discrimination in many levels of society. The money spent on social engineering could have been used much more productively in alleviating poverty.

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<sup>16</sup> Farieda Khan, “The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s, 15-48, in David A. McDonald (ed), *Environmental justice in South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2002), 15. The chapter draws extensively on the research of Farieda Khan who grapples closely with the issues this thesis address, namely the relationship of the environment to poverty. Her unpublished M.A. thesis (University of Cape Town, 1990) was entitled “Contemporary South African environmental response: An Historical and socio-political evaluation with particular reference to blacks.”. Other works include: “The involvement of the masses in environmental politics.” *Veld and Flora* 76: 2, 1990; “Beyond the white rhino: Confronting the South African land question.” *African Wildlife* 44: 6, 1990; “Targeting environmental poverty: The Role of community- based greening projects.” *Veld and Flora* 78: 1, 1992.

<sup>17</sup>Khan, “The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s”, 42.



Gender is also a significant factor in approaching development and poverty alleviation. Beverley Haddad has correctly expressed the view that “development as theory and practice is a gender issue and all our analysis needs to be undertaken from the standpoint that unequal power relations exist between men and women.”<sup>18</sup> South African society is strongly patriarchal, with high levels of discrimination against women. On the whole this has caused women to be poorer than men. Compared to men, women generally have lower levels of education, share a greater responsibility for child rearing, and have greater obstacles to accessing employment. Apartheid entrenched poverty in the lives of women, and poor women both in rural areas as well as in informal housing areas, continue to bear the brunt of poverty in South Africa.

In order to effectively alleviate poverty, gender considerations need to be taken seriously. Through apartheid, race and gender were to come together in significant ways in South Africa. It has meant that black women are the most oppressed and therefore poorest group in society. They are also the group that has the most contact with the natural resources of the environment, in the farming of crops, the collection of water and firewood, the provision of food, and the maintenance of the health of their families. As these resources have become further depleted so has the burden on the women increased. Mamphela Ramphele notes further risks imposed on women from the degradation of the environment:

Black women have long been at the receiving end of environmentally unsound policies. The “rape of the land” has often exposed poor rural

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<sup>18</sup> Beverley Haddad, “Theologising development: A Gendered analysis of poverty , survival and faith”, 5-19 (*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 110, 2001), 6. Other works by Haddad, most helpful in this respect, include *African women’s theologies of survival: Intersecting faith, feminisms and development* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Natal, 2000); and “Gender, development and faith: The Church and women’s struggle to survive”, 427-450 (*Missionalia* 31:2, 2003).

women to the danger of actual rape as they are pushed further and further away from their homes in search of wood for fuel.<sup>19</sup>

Belinda Dodson has pointed out some of the detrimental physical effects of the work of women providing energy and food for their families as being “neck and spinal injuries as a result of carrying heavy loads of wood; lung and eye problems from exposure to smoke; burns from paraffin stoves.”<sup>20</sup>

It is clear that in constructing an *oikotheology* issues of race and gender need to be accounted for. Increasingly, in South African society, class is becoming a factor in determining poverty levels.

## **2.7 Historical overview**

This section looks at different time periods in the history of South Africa, particularly its recent history and tries to discover the attitude, particularly of the government, towards the environment and poverty eradication. It will be seen that the changing political developments brought different attitudes towards the environment. It will also be seen that the apartheid legacy of what constitutes the environment has been a strong one, one from which we are still trying to free ourselves.

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<sup>19</sup> Mamphela Ramphele, “New day rising”, 1-12, in Mamphela Ramphele with Chris McDowell (ed), *Restoring the land: Environment and change in post-apartheid South Africa* (London: Panos Institute, 1991), 11.

<sup>20</sup> Belinda Dodson, “Searching for a common agenda: Ecofeminism and environmental justice”, 81-108, in David A. McDonald (ed), *Environmental justice in South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2002), 95.

### 2.7.1 Colonial period

"[C]olonialism appropriated the landscape in South Africa and alienated Africans from it."<sup>21</sup> This comment provides an overarching perspective that was proved true in subsequent apartheid policy. We will trace these developments to gain a greater understanding of the problem that emerged. We will see that it was to a large extent the influence of racist thinking that determined policies toward people and the environment. As a starting point, we need to acknowledge that the early conservation movements were "protecting nature for the privileged."<sup>22</sup> In an attempt to preserve the environment, colonial governments established a system of protected natural areas which later developed into national parks and provincial game and nature reserves. While this may be lauded in terms of the maintenance of biodiversity, these areas were often formed by forcibly evicting local people who had been living in the areas. It has been stated that the local people were perceived as "environmentally destructive competitors." Khan comments on this view and points to its roots:

The fact that this perception was rooted more in racial bias and greed than in reality did not prevent the acceptance of a concept of the ideal protected natural area as one which was uninhabited, which catered to mobile, affluent visitors, and from which the indigenous people were excluded, except to serve in menial roles.<sup>23</sup>

She goes on to comment that this was not untypical of the period in which "the conservation ideology forged in Africa at the time incorporated the Eurocentric focus

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<sup>21</sup> Gregory Maddox, "'Degradation of narratives' and 'population time bombs': Myths and reality about African environments", 250-258, in Stephen Dovers, Ruth Edgecombe and Bill Guest (eds), *South Africa's environmental history: Cases and comparisons* (Athens: Ohio University Press; Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2002), 251.

<sup>22</sup> Khan, "The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s", 17.

<sup>23</sup> Khan, "The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s", 18.

of colonial society, along with its tendency to idealize and preserve the natural environment.”<sup>24</sup>

During this colonial period, through military conquest and economic pressures, black farmers and pastoralists were dispossessed of most of their land. The implications for poverty were enormous. The loss of the land, as a resource of livelihood, was also devastating.

### **2.7.2 Union of South Africa and apartheid**

Since the union of South Africa in 1910 there has been increased land dispossession and the political marginalisation of blacks. The Land Act of 1913 restricted African ownership of land to only 7% of the total land. In 1936 this was extended to 13%. This land was fragmented and not necessarily productive. These laws continued the physical estrangement of blacks from the land. With the victory of the National Party in 1948, Khan remarked that attitudes towards the environment also changed as the “victory of the ideology of racial separation ... also marked the beginning of a period of extreme politicization of environmental conservation and the institutionalization of environmental racism”.<sup>25</sup>

An important feature of the South African economy was the growth in mining. It was to be there where environmental degradation and poverty were to come together. Mining is detrimental to workers’ health as well as the environment, where waste pollutes land, air and water. This was made worse by the fact that “[u]nder apartheid, mining and industry were also virtually immune to effective environmental regulation and workers suffered from the neglect of health and safety standards.”<sup>26</sup> Workers were further exploited by low wages. Catastrophes caused

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<sup>24</sup> Khan, “The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s”, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Khan, “The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s”, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Hallows and Butler, “Power, poverty, and marginalized environments”, 63.

by ecologically careless mining, farming, and industrial production and power generation were also serious problems.

There was, however, a phenomenon that was even more scandalous: “[P]erhaps the starkest form of environmental degradation in South Africa is the effect that the “homeland” or Bantustan system had had on the land.”<sup>27</sup> An important feature of the Nationalist government’s apartheid policy was the establishment of “bantustans” or self governing “homelands” for Africans. It was to these ethnically divided areas that the government aimed to move Africans. This policy played a major role in still further alienating blacks from the land. Generally, the homeland governments were authoritarian and also tended to neglect environmental considerations.

Within homelands Africans were confined to small rural areas. While they consisted of only 13 per cent of South Africa’s surface territory, homelands were occupied by more than one-third of the country’s population. Here, concentrated poverty and the lack of basic services were a cause of extensive environmental degradation.

Ramphele has supported this by claiming that “massive removals of communities from productive to unproductive land increased the pace and extent of environmental destruction.”<sup>28</sup> These problems have been well documented.<sup>29</sup> The development of the homeland system was closely linked to capitalist development and so became entrenched in the fabric of the political economy.

There were many other ways in which apartheid laws were to entrench the poverty of black people. These included limited education, job reservation and seeing blacks

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<sup>27</sup> Eddie Koch, Dave Cooper and Henk Coetzee, *Water, waste and wildlife: The Politics of ecology in South Africa* (Penguin Forum Series; London: Penguin Books, 1990), 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> Mamphela Ramphele, “New day rising”, 3.

<sup>29</sup> A helpful resource is the work by Alan B. Durning, *Apartheid’s environmental toll* (Worldwatch Papers, 95; Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute, 1990). His earlier, more general, works had also dealt with the relationship between the environment and poverty; see for example, *Action at the grassroots: Fighting poverty and environmental decline* (Worldwatch Papers, 88; Washington, DC:

merely as cheap labour. By limiting development and employment opportunities, apartheid led to the greater impoverishment of blacks. Not only were blacks dispossessed of the land and its environment but they were further alienated from it through a variety of other means. This paved the way for the environment to be seen as an elitist concern of whites. Bantu education, entrenched in the Bantu Education Act, No 47 of 1953, resulted in widespread illiteracy and semi-illiteracy. This was to hinder the development of an informed public who could participate in environmental decision making, let alone in making progress in areas of economic activity.

Legislation restricting movement was to hinder the ability of blacks to explore the broader environment. Furthermore, the Separate Amenities Act, No 49 of 1953, made it difficult for blacks to gain access to nature and game reserves, hiking trails, picnic and camping sites which would have given them a closer encounter with natural areas and a greater appreciation of it. The Group Areas Act, No 41 of 1950, paved the way for the establishment of separate residential areas to which members of various population groups were restricted. Furthermore, the townships, to which blacks were restricted, led to further alienation from the environment. Khan describes the townships in some detail as being:

bleak, hostile environments, frequently lacking community facilities, cultural amenities, or green open space which could be used for social activities....often devoid of any natural or scenic attractions, since environmentally desirable urban areas were usually preserved for whites (McCarthy and Smit 1983). African townships in particular, having been created on the premise that their inhabitants were temporary residents who would one day return to their "homelands" (Beavon 1982), were monotonous, dormitory-like environments.<sup>30</sup>

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Worldwatch Institute, January 1989) and *Poverty and the Environment: Reversing the downward spiral* (Worldwatch Papers, 92; Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute, November 1989).

<sup>30</sup> Khan, "The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s", 22.



To this policy of segregated living areas was added the burden of environmental injustice. Not only did those who were poor experience a disproportionate share of the resources of the environment but also bore a disproportionate burden of the degradation of the environment. This practice of environmental racism has become increasingly entrenched in the South African context. Khan explains this by asserting that “since all blacks lacked meaningful political power they were powerless to prevent the location of noxious facilities such as sewage plants, polluting industries, and landfills in close proximity to black residential areas.”<sup>31</sup> This sense of powerlessness affected a number of areas. On the whole black people were excluded from any effective decision making processes over the management of environmental resources and became hostile to conservation issues.

Hallowes and Butler concur and pointed out the economic implications of this trend: “Imperialism initiated a long and continuous process of alienating people from their environments, both economically and psychologically, and of coercing them into a subordinate relationship with the modernizing economy.”<sup>32</sup> This led to a situation of increased and continued estrangement from the environment:

For black communities reeling under the impact of apartheid laws, struggling to survive in the harsh socioeconomic and political climate created by these laws, and with few opportunities for quality education, leisure time, and recreational enjoyment of the natural environment, environmental issues *as defined by the mainstream environmental movement*, were perforce regarded as issues of extremely low priority (if indeed, they were thought of at all).<sup>33</sup>

While apartheid was based on and strove to entrench racism, it was also about economics: the need to ensure the maintenance of capitalism, especially racial capitalism to serve the economic interests of the minority of the population. We also

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<sup>31</sup> Khan, “The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s”, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Hallowes and Butler, “Power, poverty, and marginalized environments”, 67.

<sup>33</sup> Khan, “The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s”, 24.

need to recognise that apartheid has made some people artificially wealthy. And the wealthy bear a huge burden in the overconsumption of the resources of the environment which leads to its destruction.

### **2.7.3 Towards the “new South Africa”**

Following international trends, in the late 1980s there was a steady growth in environmental awareness in South Africa. A prominent example is that of the plan in 1989 by Richards Bay Minerals, a foreign owned mining consortium, to stripmine the dunes north of St Lucia for titanium. This area was recognised as one of the best preserved wetlands in the world. The significant opposition that was mounted met with success, as Koch, Cooper and Coetzee explain: “Popular protests united a wide range of environmentalists. The government, presented with one of the biggest petitions in South Africa’s history, was forced to suspend operations until the impact of mining was properly assessed.”<sup>34</sup>

With the momentous socio-political changes that took place during the period of transition in South Africa, beginning with the unbanning of extra-parliamentary organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) in February 1990, to the election of a democratic government in April 1994, there was a change of attitudes toward, and perceptions of, the environment. Khan describes this change and points to the direction in which the new thinking was going:

This not only created the political space for organisations to broaden their horizons beyond anti-apartheid politics but resulted in a more flexible and relaxed political climate that added impetus to the dissolution of the formerly strict boundaries between politics and conservation....the traditional notion that that equated “conservation” with the protection of wildlife and the preservation of the natural

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<sup>34</sup> Koch *et al*, *Water, waste and wildlife*, 2.



environment began to give way to a more holistic approach embracing economic and political aspects as well as ecological concerns.<sup>35</sup>

This embracing of the “economic” and “ecological concerns” certainly indicates a shift in thinking to a reality that an *oikotheology* seeks to embody. The environment came to be seen less as something that should be separate from people’s lives, and more integral to them. This change in political climate has been described by Kock *et al* as “infused with green awareness”, in which “[p]olitical organisations, ranging from the ruling National Party to the ANC, have begun to add ecological concerns to their political programmes.”<sup>36</sup> One may ask why this “green awareness” seemed to flourish during this particular time. As noted earlier, there had been a growing international trend towards greater environmental awareness. However, as Hallows indicates, “critical environmental issues were suppressed during the years of political repression when resistance focused on political power.”<sup>37</sup> This new found political space provided an opportunity for attention to be given to issues other than the quest for political freedom or the resistance to it. Another interesting development at this time was that trade unions began to move into the environmental sphere, in accepting that industrial health and occupational safety were legitimate environmental issues and therefore of concern to them in their commitment to creating working areas that were safe both for workers and for the surrounding communities.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Khan, “The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s”, 28.

<sup>36</sup> Koch *et al*, *Water, waste and wildlife*, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Hallows, “Preface”, 1.

<sup>38</sup> The following works are helpful in this regard: Rod Crompton and Alec Erwin, “Reds and greens: Labour and the environment”, 78-91, in Jacklyn and Eddie Kock (eds), *Going Green: People, politics and the environment in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991); Peter Lukey, “Workplace environmental justice: Trade unions and the struggle for an ecological platform”, 274-288, in David A. McDonald (ed), *Environmental justice in South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2002); P. Magane, S. Miller, M. Goldblatt and L. Bethlehem, “Unions and the environment: Life, health and the pursuit of employment”, in L. Bethlehem and M. Goldblatt (eds), *The Bottom line: Industry and the environment in South Africa*. (Johannesburg: International Development Research Centre, 1997).

Accompanying the increased awareness of environmental problems was increased environmental action at a grassroots level, brought about by the formation of community based organisations. Earthlife Africa was one such organisation that played a significant role in environmental matters and epitomised the integration of green issues with political activism. The changing context and the formation of Earthlife Africa is described by Khan in the following way:

The environmental sector was further energized by the emergence of a small number of more radical organizations that, unlike those in the mainstream, acknowledged the inextricability of conservation and politics, and were willing to adopt a confrontational stance against the authorities (including the government) on behalf of the poor. One of the most important of these new organisations was Earthlife Africa, which had been established in 1988, and which had grown quickly, drawing upon the membership of existing anti-apartheid and activists organizations. Unlike the mainstream sector with its nature-oriented bias, Earthlife concentrated on “brown agenda” issues – those environmental issues which were relevant to the creation of a safe and healthy environment for all, but especially the poor. A defining characteristic of Earthlife’s highly politicized approach was its willingness to form alliances with trade unions and international environmental NGOs in order to effect change.<sup>39</sup>

In these early days of its existence, Earthlife Africa provided a model of the kind of environmental awareness and action that an *oikotheology* seeks to embrace, one in which there is a strong realization of the interconnectedness between environmental factor and a range of issues that affects the lives of poor people. Earthlife Africa was to form another organisation committed to environmental justice – the Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF). In September 1992 the Earthlife Africa International Environment Conference was held at the then University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. It brought together a variety of people representing 17 countries,

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<sup>39</sup> Khan, “The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s”, 29.

with a strong emphasis on those from Africa and the South.<sup>40</sup> The conference resolved that “a national body should be established to coordinate the work of NGO’s concerned with the environment”.<sup>41</sup> This was to lead to the establishment of EJNF in 1993. This national environmental coalition has, since its formation, grown to encompass a large number of community based organisations and formed a number of provincial branches. EJNF’s mission is

to establish an environmental justice movement which seeks to cultivate a culture of environmental justice and sustainable development through networking, solidarity and capacity building programmes *nationally and internationally*. It seeks to advance the interrelatedness of social, economic, environmental and political issues to reverse and prevent environmental injustices affecting the poor and the working class.<sup>42</sup>

Organisations like EJNF and Earthlife Africa provide good models of how the church could engage in environmental issues, forming alliances and collaborating with organisations that integrate both a concern for poverty alleviation and the environment.

#### **2.7.4 Facing the challenges**

When we consider the state of the environment in South Africa, we need to recognise that the apartheid legacy has left the environment severely degraded, compounding the problem of poverty. Mamphela Ramphele recognises this legacy when she acknowledges the “fragility of the environmental base on which South Africa has to forge its future is all too obvious. Vigorous attempts will be needed to repair the

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<sup>40</sup> The proceedings of the conference were published in David Hallows (ed), *Hidden faces: Environment, development, justice: South Africa and the global context* (Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg: Earthlife Africa, 1993).

<sup>41</sup> Hallows, *Hidden faces*, 323.

<sup>42</sup> Environmental Justice Networking Forum, brochure.

damage of the past and great care must be exercised to avoid further undue strain.”<sup>43</sup> In South Africa there continues to be evidence of extensive environmental degradation. Land degradation resulting from poor farming techniques and overcrowding on land is widespread. A number of species of flora and fauna have become endangered; rivers have been threatened and coastal areas degraded.

Democratic changes have brought environmental justice to the fore and have led to a corresponding positive response. These changes not only heralded the dawn of a new political era, but “also brought about a political climate in which the concept of environmental justice could flourish.”<sup>44</sup> With a greater respect for people emerging, a greater respect for the environment was becoming evident. This trend shows something of the sense of mutuality that exists, a sense in which life is indeed part of one household, with strong connections between them.

The government attempted to strengthen both the country’s ecological resources as well as the access of people to these resources. The Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution provides that “everyone has the right... to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being.”<sup>45</sup> In addition to this, people have socio-economic rights that ensure that pollution and ecological degradation are prevented, that conservation is promoted and that ecologically sustainable development is secured together with the use of natural while justifiable economic and social development is promoted.<sup>46</sup>

South Africa has passed environmental legislation to protect its natural resources and support international environmental accords: the Convention on Biological Diversity

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<sup>43</sup> Mamphela Ramphele, “New day rising”, 6.

<sup>44</sup> Khan, “The Roots of environmental racism and the rise of environmental justice in the 1990s”, 31.

<sup>45</sup> Subsection 24(a), The Constitution of South Africa.

<sup>46</sup> Subsection 24(b), The Constitution of South Africa. For further matters relating to issue of environmental law see Jan Glazewski, “The Rule of law: Opportunities for environmental justice in the

(1992); the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1994); and the Convention to Combat Desertification (1994). South African legislation encourages public participation in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies and programmes. Also important has been the incorporation of the needs of people in conservation efforts. Attitudes have changed in many areas. In relation to parks, for example, there is a new approach: "Conservation authorities have uniformly rejected the punitive style of the old in favour of an approach in which adjacent communities are regarded as 'partners' in implementing a more socially responsive solution to conservation issues."<sup>47</sup>

There have been other areas in which the new democratic government has made changes which have contrasted with the old political system which sought to control people and control their access to the resources that sustain their lives. These developments have reflected a perspective that sees the need to share resources equitably, that recognises that all inhabit one earth, and derive nourishment from the same source of life. There have been improvements in the supply of water and power, including mass electrification programmes. The Marine Living Resources Act of 1998, for example, was a major step in the process of bringing justice and ensuring fairer access to marine resources by communities who subsist off these resources. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's (DWAF) Working for Water programme which looks at the removal of alien vegetation and incorporates an extensive job creation and training component for poor local communities is a good example of mutual benefit that may be derived from good management of environmental resources. Referring to the work of DWAF, Dodson states that the resultant environmental and social improvement

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new democratic legal order", 171-198, in David A. McDonald (ed), *Environmental justice in South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2002).

<sup>47</sup> Khan, "The Roots of environmental racism", 34. For a case study on the changing attitudes to South African Parks see Jacklyn Cock and David Fig, "From Colonialism to community-based conservation: Environmental justice and the transformation of National Parks (1994-1998)", 131-155, in David A.

has been especially significant in the lives of black women. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has taken the lead in a concerted campaign to achieve “water for all.” Among its more innovative strategies have been the implementation of scaled water tariffs based on consumption; the employment of people (many of them rural black women) to clear alien vegetation in order to enhance catchment water yield; and the establishment of community bodies, also involving African women, to take responsibility for post-delivery maintenance of water supply infrastructure. While such interventions leave unchallenged the gender division of labor that makes the provision of household water and energy “women’s work,” they have freed women from hours of time-consuming and back-breaking physical labor, as well as giving them new skills and opportunities.<sup>48</sup>

There need to be more creative projects like this that give concrete expression to the linkages between environmental sustainability and livelihoods sustainability.

Working for Wetlands, a similar project to Working for Water, has also been developed. Through it there is the recognition that water is fundamental to life and that there is a need to preserve the ecological systems that purify water. There needs to consideration given to “power in the home”. The use of unrennewable sources of energy both pollutes the environment as well as damages human health.

Government programmes need to encourage the just transition to renewable energy.

### **2.7.5 Avoiding the challenges**

While progress has undoubtedly been made by the government there has nevertheless been criticism of aspects of their policy. We look at issues of ownership of the environment, water, pollution and climate change.

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McDonald (ed), *Environmental justice in South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2002).

<sup>48</sup> Dodson, “Searching for a common agenda”, 96-97.

Patrick Bond is critical of the government's lack of commitment to face what he sees as the real issues. He expresses his views, contained in his book on the environment and development, as follows:

This book argues that during the first period of democratic rule in South Africa, until the Johannesburg Summit [2002], Pretoria's attempts to improve the environment and development failed miserably. Certainly some delivery could be claimed. Yet profound contradictions emerged during the transition from the formal system of racial, class, gender and ecological exploitation known as apartheid, to informal systems based on neoliberal policies.<sup>49</sup>

He goes on to express his concerns with the manner of state control, corporate power and the government's engagement in respect of ecological processes. Certainly, the government's macroeconomic policy of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) has embodied neo-liberal policies that tend to support the commodification and privatisation of the delivery of basic services, with its emphasis on cost recovery. This trend became particularly obvious in the privatisation of the delivery of basic services in municipalities. This is clear in the case of water. The consequence of this policy is that market forces also deprive poor households of water and basic energy needs.<sup>50</sup> The problem is described by Hallows and Butler:

Where a monetary value is placed on the resource, the poor are excluded. In short, it becomes a commodity, and access is conditional on individual purchasing power in the market. Privatization is an increasingly common means of commodification. Commodification also tends to undermine ethics and customs that previously regulated the use of the resource. As a commodity, its trade and exchange is more likely to be subject to the rules of the marketplace."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Patrick Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa: Environment, development, and social protest* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press; The Merlin Press, 2002), 18.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, David A. McDonald, "Up Against the (crumbling) wall: The Privatization of urban services and environmental justice", 292-324, in David A. McDonald (ed), *Environmental justice in South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2002).

<sup>51</sup> Hallows and Butler, "Power, poverty, and marginalized environments", 55-56.



This trend denies that fact that life-giving resources are to be shared amongst all. The privatisation of the means of survival denies that everyone has equal access to the pantry of the household. It points to the fact that acquiring sufficient of these resources is dependent upon having sufficient financial means to buy them.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that there is a severe shortage of water in South Africa. This has led to the comment that the "water resources of the poor have also dried up as a result of the heavy water consumption of formal sector industries. Irrigation agriculture, plantation forestry, and mining all have a direct impact on local water sources."<sup>52</sup> Over the last few years a number of municipalities in South Africa have introduced the supply of a certain monthly quantity of water for free. In the eThekweni Municipality, for example, households receive the first six kilolitres for free. While this is to be welcomed the experience of communities who are most in need of this free supply find this amount to be far too little to provide for the water needs of those who form part of their households and as a consequence of non-delivery their water supplies are cut off. A further concern is that individual households pay more per unit for water than industries do.

Not only is water pollution a problem but so too is air pollution. Many rural people still rely on wood for fuel, causing continued health hazards:

Burning of solid and liquid fuels in poorly ventilated houses creates a high level of indoor pollution and contributes to outdoor air pollution....The effects on health relate primarily to the respiratory system, including asthma, bronchitis, and lung cancers.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Hallowes and Butler, "Power, poverty, and marginalized environments", 51-77. For a useful discussion of the degradation of water through pollution see Henk Coetzee and David Cooper, "Wasting water: Squandering a precious resource", 129-138, in *Going Green: People, politics and the environment in South Africa*, edited by Jacklyn Cock and Eddie Koch (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>53</sup> Hallowes and Butler, "Power, poverty, and marginalized environments", 70.



With already high levels of malnutrition and tuberculosis make those who are poor become particularly vulnerable to infection. Air pollution also affects those who are poor in urban areas, a good example of this is the South Durban area where poor people live next to oil refineries.

Our history has bequeathed us a grim legacy in respect of climate change. The effects on the land and food production will be potentially devastating. Some of the problems have been spelt out in the following way: "South Africa's energy intensive production makes it a significant contributor to global warming and climate change. The local consequences for rainfall are not well understood but it seems reasonably certain that weather patterns will become more erratic and extreme."<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, it is clear that "climate change will increase the risks of rural production, further undermining a crucial element of the household economy in many rural and peri-urban communities."<sup>55</sup> Climate change, as well as leading to ecological damage, clearly also impacts negatively on people's livelihoods.<sup>56</sup>

## **2.8 Reasons for a lack of concern for the environment**

While the apartheid policies were responsible for engendering an abusive attitude towards the environment, generally there has been widespread disrespect for the environment. There are a number of other reasons for this.

Historically, the western worldview, rooted in the enlightenment and the industrial revolution, has regarded the non-human natural environment as inferior to human beings. It has been seen as merely an instrument to achieve what is seen as human progress. Characteristic of this worldview is an anthropocentric view accompanied

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<sup>54</sup> Hallowes and Butler, "Power, poverty, and marginalized environments", 72.

<sup>55</sup> Hallowes and Butler, "Power, poverty, and marginalized environments", 73.

<sup>56</sup> In October 2005 the government held its first conference on climate change and in the process gained wide support from within its own ranks as well as from within civil society.

by strong Cartesian dualistic thinking, seeing a strong separation between the spirit and the body, history and the environment etc. Life is not seen as a whole, but is rather viewed as fragmented. The interconnectedness of all of life is not recognised. This lack of respect for the environment has been responsible for the implementation of development and poverty alleviation schemes that have been destructive to the earth, and undermine their intended purpose. The household of life has been destroyed.

Furthermore, in the light of the struggle against apartheid concern for the environment was regarded as escapist. Also, for some, the environment was seen only as a place of enjoyment. In any case, for those in an urban context, the concern of environmental degradation has not been very obvious.

## **2.9 The way forward**

We have identified various factors that have led us in South Africa to be in the position we are in. They include racism and racial capitalism developed through colonialism and apartheid and the resulting poverty and environmental degradation. This analysis points to the need for the fundamental inequalities in society to be addressed before poverty can be seriously tackled and respect for the environment restored. This view is confirmed in the following:

As Ramphela and McDowell pointed out in 1991 (p.1), 'the formal demise of apartheid ... leaves the structures largely intact. As long as endemic inequality and poverty persist, people will be forced to go on using their environment in an unsustainable way.' Yet if links between poverty, inequality, and the environment provide the clue to understanding South Africa's environmental problems, they also provide the key to their solution.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Dodson, "Searching for a common agenda", 98.

It is precisely these linkages that characterise an *oikothology*, and indeed assist us in making a real difference in the lives of people and their environment. One aspect cannot be considered without the others. It is not possible to compartmentalise different dimensions of life and then think that by dealing with one such area one is effectively dealing with the others. We have tried to understand the position of women in respect of poverty and the environment. Women are most often responsible for providing for the basic food needs of others and who also deal most with the resources of the environment. Empowering women has positive consequences for poverty and the environment. Dodson goes on to focus on the particular necessity for this gender justice:

As Ramphele and McDowell (1991, 201) go on to say: 'the first principle guiding future action must be that the struggle against abuse of the environment and the struggle against poverty and social injustice are inextricably linked.' This is essentially an argument for applying the principles of ecofeminism and environmental justice: for the social upliftment of women, the poor, and other disadvantaged groups as the only meaningful basis for environmentally sound development.<sup>58</sup>

The change in economic policy in South Africa has had an effect on both poverty and the environment. If the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is considered, we see that it was people-centred and more sensitive to environmental considerations. However, it was changed in 1996 to the GEAR policy, which is a macroeconomic policy focused on attracting international investment and private sector growth. This policy has led to increasing poverty and market driven development which has been more ecologically insensitive.

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<sup>58</sup> Dodson, "Searching for a common agenda", 98.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This chapter begins with an explanation of the term “environment”, and related terms. It then considers what poverty is, and how it relates to the environment. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework is put forward as a model that integrates these two dimensions. By viewing poverty and the environment in South Africa historically we have been able to gain a greater understanding of each of them. The neglect of this historical perspective often leads people to act ineffectively in tackling poverty eradication.

The overview provided in this chapter is an important one and establishes a basis from which we can evaluate responses. In the next chapter we examine the church’s response.

## CHAPTER 3

### DISCOVERING THE HOME: THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the relationship between the environment and poverty in South Africa was traced. In this chapter the response of the church to these two issues is the focus. The emphasis will be primarily on what position the church has taken in respect of the environment. The focus will be particularly on the church's statements and actions that acknowledge and express an understanding of the relationship between a concern for the environment and poverty eradication. We will look for signs of the emergence of an *oikotheology* in the church's life. The church's concern for the eradication of poverty, mostly expressed in its opposition to apartheid, has been expressed elsewhere.<sup>59</sup> In working to eradicate poverty the church has tended to have little regard for the ecological dimension. In those cases where the church has had a focus on the environment it has directed its concern primarily at preserving the earth's ecological base for its own sake rather than at ensuring there are economic policies in place to ensure that these resources are most effectively preserved and that all in society may just access to them. The focus in this chapter, therefore, is on the church's response that shows an appreciation of both these aspects of life's household.

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<sup>59</sup> See, for example, John W. de Gruchy and Steve de Gruchy, *The Church struggle in South Africa: The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition* (SCM Press: London, 2004); John W. de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (eds), *Apartheid is a heresy* (Cape Town: David Philip; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: SPCK, 1983); Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (eds), *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, social and cultural history* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997); Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in apartheid: A Socio-theological history of the English-speaking churches* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988).

In this chapter we look at the response of the church, generally, and in the next chapter we concentrate on the Anglican Church specifically. While we focus on church statements and other publications of the church we need to recognise that these expressions do not always lead to action by the church. In chapter seven we look more specifically at what actions the church can take to make its commitment a reality. In looking at the church in South Africa we need to recognise that it is very diverse. For the purposes of this study, we will focus on the mainline churches and ecumenical organisations. By mainline churches we refer to those churches that, on the whole, were established by missionaries abroad. They tend to have formalised structures, usually of a hierarchical nature, and the local congregations of these respective denominations have a common identity throughout South or Southern Africa. These churches also tend to be open to participation in ecumenical activity.

We begin this chapter with an historical overview. As in the previous chapter, we find that during the apartheid years the church did not have a strong focus on the environment, but that as the political changes occurred so the attitudes and actions of the church changed. In introducing the positive actions of the church we consider the work of the World Council of Churches (WCC), focusing on the *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* (JPIC) programme. This programme has been a significant one in that it has been able to integrate both a concern for the preservation of the ecological integrity of the earth as well as a concern for the wellbeing of people. The work of the South African Council of Churches and other church groupings picked up on some of the insights from this programme.

### **3.2 The Inactivity of the church**

When we consider the response of the church to environmental issues before 1990, we notice that the church seemed to show little interest in making any response to these issues at all, let alone incorporate a concern for poverty eradication as part of

environmental concerns. Sociologist Jacklyn Cock has looked at the church's response during this period of time and labelled it as one of "silence". She came to her conclusions after conducting a number of surveys among church leaders, including those of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. Her first finding considers the documentation of the Roman Catholic Church:

As regards policy resolutions, an analysis of the minutes of the annual South African Catholic Bishops' Conferences of the last ten years reveals an absence of resolutions or even a discussion on environmental issues. The reports from the Commission for Justice and Reconciliation give attention to social and political concerns such as militarization, political detainees, rent boycotts, negotiations, AIDS and conscientious objection, but there is nothing on the exploitation of the environment. In major church documents such as *The Pastoral Plan* issued by the Catholic bishops in 1989 there is likewise no mention of environmental issues.<sup>60</sup>

Her assessment of the CPSA is similar:

The same silence emerges from an analysis of the resolutions of the Provincial Synod of the Church of the Province of South Africa (the Anglican Church). Over the last ten years synod resolutions have been passed on a number of social issues such as political detainees, capital punishment, conscription, AIDS, sexual abuse, torture, racism in church schools, conscientious objection and violence, but there is a silence on the environment.<sup>61</sup>

In her analysis of the publications of these two churches she is no more positive:

Both the Catholic and Anglican Churches issue a great number of publications. A content analysis of some of the regular publications with wide readership such as *The Southern Cross*, *Trefoil*, *Diocesan News*, *Flashlink* and *Justice and Peace News* in the case of the Catholic Church or

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<sup>60</sup> Jacklyn Cock, "Towards the greening of the church in South Africa: Some problems and possibilities", 174-185 (*Missionalia* 20:3, 1991), 176.

<sup>61</sup> Cock, "Towards the greening of the church in South Africa", 176.



*Seek* in the case of the Anglican Church, reveals no mention of environmental issues over the last five years.<sup>62</sup>

For churches that were arguably in the forefront of challenging the injustice of the state it is surprising that they did not refer to the injustice committed against the environment nor the impact that this, in turn, was having on people.

An analysis of the Rustenburg Declaration confirms her earlier conclusions on the silence of the church, also despite its outspokenness in other areas of injustice:<sup>63</sup>

The Rustenburg Declaration is famous for its confession and rejection of apartheid as a sin. It reflects a strong concern with social justice, and refers to political issues such as violence, the crisis in black education, unemployment and inadequate housing. There is reference to the land but this is limited to the question of ownership, of "restoring land to disposed people" (Section 4.1). There is no mention of any concrete environmental issues such as air pollution, soil erosion or desertification. However, the section on peace contains a reference to exploitation of the environment.<sup>64</sup>

Even church organisations were not responsive to environmental issues. The *Institute for Contextual Theology* (ICT) had been a significant organisation in promoting liberation theology in South Africa in the 1980's, and had been closely associated with the *Kairos Document*, published in 1985, which provided a strong critique of both the theology of the state as well as that of the church. It condemned the injustice of "cheap reconciliation" and called for

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<sup>62</sup> Cock, "Towards the greening of the church in South Africa", 176.

<sup>63</sup> The Rustenburg Declaration emerged from the November 1990 National Conference of Churches in South Africa, which was attended by 230 representatives of approximately 100 Christian denominations, church associations and interdenominational agencies. It was held at Rustenburg.

<sup>64</sup> Cock, "Towards the greening of the church in South Africa", 176.



the establishment of prophetic theology.<sup>65</sup> However, as Cock points out, ICT was quiet when it comes to the area of the environment.

Church programmes such as the Institute for Contextual Theology have – during the 10 years of its existence – had no record of involvement on environmental issues. Looking back the General Secretary of ICT, Smangalis Mkhathshwa .... writes that during ‘the latter part of the eighties, “through its publications, workshops and lectures, ICT dug out the truth and defended it”. (Mkhathshwa, 1991:2). However environmental degradation was omitted from this ‘truth’.<sup>66</sup>

Cock tries to provide an explanation. In an end note she mentions that “[t]hese responses should be understood in the context of the extremely fragmented arena of struggle in South Africa.”<sup>67</sup> When we consider the reception of the *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* (JPIC) programme in South Africa we will explore further reasons for the church’s inactivity.

It is important to note, however, that at the annual meeting of ICT in July 1991 there was a much more positive note in the following resolution which was passed:

This ICT AGM, noting with concern the fact that the environmental crisis in South Africa has not been sufficiently linked to our struggle for the transformation of our society, call on ICT to:

- 16.1. undertake research into the theology and spirituality related to the environment;
- 16.2 disseminate the fruits of that research in the form of workshops, articles, publications etc.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Challenge to the church: The Kairos document* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

<sup>66</sup> Jacklyn Cock, “Towards the greening of the church in South Africa: Some problems and possibilities”, (GEM discussion document, 1991; no publisher), 3.

<sup>67</sup> Cock, “Towards the greening of the church in South Africa”, 177.

<sup>68</sup> Cock, “Towards the greening of the church in South Africa”, (GEM discussion document), 13.

While the church may be excused from formulating its own response to environmental problems it should have at least lent its support to existing campaigns. However, this was not the case. Cock observes:

There has been no formal church involvement of in any of the crucial environmental campaigns of recent years such as the *Save St. Lucia* campaign (provoked by the threat of Titanium mining to an internationally recognised wetland) or in any of the environmental controversies such as that over the Dukuduku Forest.<sup>69</sup>

Neither did the church collaborate meaningfully with other organisations: “There have been no formal alliances between church and environmental leaders, although church leaders have formed significant alliances to deal with other problems.”<sup>70</sup> This is particularly strange in the light of the strong alliances the church formed with other organisations in the liberation struggle. In organisations like the *United Democratic Front* (UDF) the church leaders were to play an important and strategic role. Furthermore, because of the existence of the armed struggle and the fact that the opposition to apartheid was overwhelmingly non-violent, the church in South Africa has engaged intensely in the debates around violence. Yet this was debated chiefly in the context of violence towards people only. Cock observed:

Even though the church in South Africa has increasingly paid attention to violence and injustice, their predominant conception of “violence” has excluded ecological damage (e.g. Villa-Vicencio 1987).<sup>71</sup>

While our historical overview has pointed to the silence of the church on environmental matters, there is a notable exception that we need to record. In his biography of Joe Wing, a former moderator of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, Steve de Gruchy records that “long before any significant public or

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<sup>69</sup> Cock, “Towards the greening of the church in South Africa”, 177.

<sup>70</sup> Cock, “Towards the greening of the church in South Africa”, 177.

ecclesial concern with ecological matters, ...Wing was calling on the church to focus on the earth."<sup>72</sup> De Gruchy quotes from Wing's first Church and Society report of 1974 in which he writes that '[o]ur prodigal use of the basic resources which God has placed in the world together with the tendency to pollute the atmosphere and thus destroy our own environment are trends which call for the exercise of Christian responsibility.'<sup>73</sup> In the Church and Society report of 1975, Wing states that

it is clear that the congestion of our cities, the destruction of living creatures, the plunder of fuel and minerals and the erosion of the soil hold out frightening possibilities for the future unless we are prepared to curb the excess, manage on less and use the earth's resources to promote the health of all and not just the wealth of the few.<sup>74</sup>

This leads de Gruchy to comments on Wing's ability to "weld together questions of ecology with issues of economic justice and health" <sup>75</sup> as being "way ahead of his time".<sup>76</sup>

### 3.3 Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

In trying to trace the response of the church to environmental issues, particularly to issues that were intended to eradicate poverty it is helpful to consider the work of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in respect of their *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* (JPIC) programme. It is helpful for two reasons. Firstly, the JPIC focus provides a useful framework within which to understand aspects of an *oikotheology*.

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<sup>71</sup> Cock, "Towards the greening of the church in South Africa", 177.

<sup>72</sup> Steve de Gruchy, "A Remarkable life: The Story of Joseph Wing", in Steve de Gruchy and Desmond van der Water (eds), *Spirit undaunted: The Life and legacy of Joseph Wing* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2005), 64.

<sup>73</sup> Steve de Gruchy, "A Remarkable life", 64.

<sup>74</sup> De Gruchy, "A Remarkable life", 65.

<sup>75</sup> De Gruchy, "A Remarkable life", 65.

<sup>76</sup> De Gruchy, "A Remarkable life", 65.

Secondly, it is a focus that the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and, to some extent, other churches took up in South Africa.

The WCC had over time developed a focus on a just and participatory society. This was extended at the Fifth Assembly (Nairobi, 1975) when it expressed the concern for “a just, participatory and *sustainable* society.” At the Sixth Assembly (Vancouver, 1983) there was a call for member churches to be engaged in a “conciliar process (covenant) for justice, peace and the integrity of all of creation.”<sup>77</sup>

In March 1990 in Seoul, South Korea, the WCC called the *World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*. At the Seventh Assembly (Canberra, 1991) with the theme “Come Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation” there was further affirmation of this focus, so strengthening the links between economic and ecological issues.<sup>78</sup>

This approach by the WCC has been taken up at subsequent meetings by WCC member churches in various countries and applied to local contexts. The emphasis is on making connections and showing the interdependence of all of life. This JPIC focus has continued in the *Justice, Peace and Creation Unit* of the WCC. There have been a number of documents that have been produced in the intervening years. The most recent document is called the “Alternative Globalization for People and the Earth (AGAPE)” which has been prepared in preparation for WCC General Assembly to be held in Porto Alegre in February 2006.<sup>79</sup> We will look at it in some detail in chapter six.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> D. L. Chial, “The Ecological crisis: A Survey of the WCC’s recent responses”, 53-62 (*Ecumenical Review* 48:1, 1996) .

<sup>78</sup> For an historical overview of the main events of the JPIC process from Vancouver to Canberra assemblies see D. Preman Niles(ed), *Between the flood and the rainbow* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992), 2-7.

<sup>79</sup> Available at <[www.wcc-coe.org](http://www.wcc-coe.org)>

<sup>80</sup> For a more in depth overview of the JPIC process and the literature in the field, see, for example, Ernst Conradie, Conradie, Ernst M, *Ecological theology: A guide for further research* (Study Guides in Religion and Theology 5. Bellville: University of the Western Cape, 2001), 97-104.

### **3.4 Positive church engagement with environmental issues**

Until about 1990 the church's voice on environmental issues appears to have been almost absent, despite their strident voice on other issues, particularly where injustice was concerned. It seems that the church did not consider environmental issues to be issues of justice that related to the wellbeing of people. With the change in political events in South Africa in the early 1990's the church began to be more responsive to environmental issues. While any church response to the environment is significant, statements and actions that point towards the church's embodiment of an *oikotheology* are of most concern.

The church's voice is heard in a number of ways. These responses are grouped into three categories: statements, sermons and pastoral letters; conferences; and organisations. The chapter concludes by looking at the church's engagement in the *World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD)*, a major United Nations conference held in 2002 in Johannesburg.

The next section begins with a consideration of the SACC, which made some early positive responses, and then proceed to consider the responses of other churches.

#### **3.4.1 South African Council of Churches (SACC)**

The SACC is the national council of churches in South Africa, which includes in its membership a wide range of different denominations.<sup>81</sup> As far as church bodies are concerned, it played a significant role in mobilising the church's opposition to apartheid. Former general secretaries of the body have included Archbishop

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<sup>81</sup> For further details consult their website: <[www.sacc.org.za](http://www.sacc.org.za)>

Desmond Tutu, the late Beyers Naude and Frank Chikane, presently a Director-General in the President's Office.

In looking at the early response of the SACC to environmental matters, we follow an article written by Dr Malesela John Lamola, one time head of the department of *Justice and Social Ministries* of the SACC, and from which we quote various sections.<sup>82</sup> It helps provide an insight into the positive contribution the SACC saw themselves making. Lamola asserts that "[a] concern with the abuse of the environment and the imperatives this generates for the mission and practice of the Christian Faith stands out as one of the historic theological developments of the 1980s".<sup>83</sup> From our earlier examination of the church's attitudes this seems a rather optimistic statement as far as the church in South Africa is concerned. We nevertheless consider these perspectives that he portrayed.

Lamola traces the SACC's response, showing that relatively early on in the work of the SACC a significant link was made between the environment and justice in their work:

Within the South African Council of Churches (SACC), this concern and response to the challenge posed, was manifested by the establishment in 1985 of the Covenant Project, and during 1989, the JPIC/Human Rights programme. Primarily, the Covenant Programme works for the creation of linkages of commitment between grassroots Christian groups in countries of the North, and communities in South Africa who are victims of the apartheid regime's policy of forced removal of black people from their traditional land. As such, it is a demonstration and application of the observation that the problems of justice and survival faced by humankind today demand a global consciousness which leads to mutual commitment to the preservation and enhancement of all life on planet Earth....

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<sup>82</sup> Malesela John Lamola, "Introduction: Toward a national Convocation on the environment in South Africa", in *The Church and the environment*. (Ecumenical Task Force on Economic Matters. Report No.1) by SACC. no date, publisher, place of publication.

<sup>83</sup> Lamola, "Introduction: Toward a national Convocation on the environment in South Africa."

Strong connections were made, particularly with land. While there was an engagement with the JPIC process it was acknowledged that other issues were regarded as of a “more urgent nature than ecological concerns”, as expressed below:

Within the JPIC/Human Rights programme, the aspect of human rights which is encapsulated in the thematic notion of “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation”, rapidly commanded an overwhelmingly dominant attention. This, invariably, was a reflection of the reality of South Africa. Concerns around the illegitimacy of the ruling political authority, the obnoxiousness of its racist policies and the extent of repression used to defend and justify all these, were accepted as life-threatening matters of a more urgent nature than ecological concerns. However, the justice questions such as those arising from the patterns of land ownership in South Africa, and the plight of victims of forced removals ensured that a brief on matters typical to an environment agenda remained the focus of the SACC’s Justice and Social Ministries (JSM).<sup>84</sup>

Lamola describes the value of a consultation convened together with other ecumenical partners in February 1992 on the theme “Towards a Code of Investment: Ethics for South Africa’s International Economic Relations”. It is interesting to see the value placed on the environmental dimensions of ethical investment:

In deliberating a code of investment and corporate responsibility, the consultation isolated the need of a clause and process which would commit business and State in South Africa to environmental protection as one of the crucial elements of an ethical economic practice. One of the major resolutions of this consultation was a decision on the formation of an Ecumenical Task Force on Economic Matters which would consider and catalyse Church action on a broad range of economic issues facing South Africa during the period of political transition and beyond. The environmental question became one of [the] issues [to] which the task [force] devoted itself and produced work

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<sup>84</sup> Lamola, “Introduction: Toward a national Convocation on the environment in South Africa.”



of outstanding quality. This work eventuated in a motivation and work on a design of a programme on the environment within the SACC.<sup>85</sup>

In June 1992 a recommendation was accepted that the JPIC/Human Rights programme should be dissolved so that there could be established a separate programme which would ensure that there would be a specialised and concentrated focus on environmental issues. A further development occurred with the decision to establish a *Land and Environment Task Force*. In January 1993 this was implemented with the institution of a *Land and Environment Programme*. The following were set as operational objectives of this Programme:

- i) To serve as a link within the international ecumenical network between the SACC and the JPIC campaign as co-ordinated by the World Council of Churches (WCC).
- ii) To conscientise the Church and the South African public on ecological issues, and to catalyse and co-ordinate efforts on these issues by SACC member churches.<sup>86</sup>

The overall objectives were as follows:

1. An identification of issues within the broad field of ecological concerns which should be set out as priorities for the Church in South Africa.
2. A formulation of a conceptual framework on the environmental question which is appropriate to the Church's mission.
3. A formulation, listing, and elaboration on strategies for involving the Church (at all levels), and through the latter, the public, in a programme of environmental awareness which is aimed at eliciting a concrete commitment to protect and nurture the environment.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Lamola, "Introduction: Toward a national Convocation on the environment in South Africa."

<sup>86</sup> Lamola, "Introduction: Toward a national Convocation on the environment in South Africa."

<sup>87</sup> Lamola, "Introduction: Toward a national Convocation on the environment in South Africa."



The SACC did not appear to sustain their environment focus. In helping contextualize the influence of the JPIC's work on the SACC, it is instructive to look further at the context of the reception of the Programme. Neville Richardson in his article on the reception of the JPIC process in South Africa points out the difficulties that confronted church leaders. They felt that they were too embroiled in saving people's lives, literally, that they could not concern themselves with matters that related to the environment.<sup>88</sup>

In 1991 the then General Secretary of the WCC, Dr Emilio Castro, visited South Africa. He addressed a number of meetings throughout the country and in Cape Town he delivered the *Seventh Desmond Tutu Peace Lecture*.<sup>89</sup> In his visit to Durban he was complimentary about the churches role: "I would like to thank the churches and the people of South Africa because they have provided a fabulous model of covenanting for justice, peace and the integrity of creation."<sup>90</sup> While he may have been commenting on some of the initiatives of the SACC, his statements certainly did not reflect the church generally in South Africa.

One further activity by the SACC is worth noting. A group of South Africans, including the general secretary of the SACC participated in the October 1998 conference "Ecumenical Earth" focusing on justice, ecology, and church held at Union Seminary New York.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Neville Richardson, "The Ecumenical roots of JPIC and its significance of South Africa", 50-64 (*South African Journal of Theology* 80, 1992).

<sup>89</sup> Emilio Castro, "The Search for commonality in the struggle towards justice, peace and the integrity of creation" (The Seventh Desmond Tutu Peace Lecture, 22 October 1991, Cape Town), in Gerrie Lubbe (ed), *A Decade of interfaith dialogue: Ten Desmond Tutu peace lectures and responses* (Johannesburg: The South African Chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, 1994), 83-93.

<sup>90</sup> Emilio Castro, "Address by Dr Castro during a visit to Durban", 37-45, in WCC, *From Cottesloe to Cape Town: The WCC visit to South Africa, October 1991. Challenges for the church in a post-Apartheid South Africa*, PCR Information, 1991/No. 30, (Geneva: WCC Publications), 44.

<sup>91</sup> Those who attended from South Africa were Ernst Conradie, Charity Majiza, Welile T. Sigabi, Victor Molobi and David Field. The paper delivered by the South Africans is in the following: Conradie *et al*, "Seeking eco-justice in the South African context", 135-157, in Dieter Hessel and Larry Rasmussen (eds), *Earth Habitat: Eco-injustice and the church's response* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001).

### 3.4.2 Church statements

Having looked at the engagement of the SACC we now consider the response of other parts of the church, expressed in statements of various forms, conferences and organisations. In the next chapter we look at the response of the CPSA specifically.

The *Congregational Church of Southern Africa* (UCCSA) passed a resolution at its Twenty Fifth Assembly (1991) which reads:

Assembly notes with concern the threat to the environment and our responsibility as its stewards. It therefore resolves:

- a) to refer the reports to Synods, regions and local churches for their urgent attention, appealing to them to find ways to promote caring use of the environment in their area by example and prophetic ministry;
- b) to remind local churches of their commitment to celebrating Conservation Sunday as soon as it is practical;
- c) to call on the governments of countries within the UCCSA to allow no further development of nuclear power on the basis of its danger to the environment. It further urges them to enforce strictly their conservation laws, and when in doubt to protect people and the environment rather than favour the rich.<sup>92</sup>

In a number of respects this was a significant statement for its time. It is interesting to note the link of care for the environment to “prophetic ministry”, an acknowledgement of the need to work for justice even in this area. The reference to nuclear power is also insightful. Challenges to the energy policies of the government were not at all common by the churches at the time. Furthermore, the reference to protecting people and the environment rather than favouring the rich reveals problems in the legislation at the time, and an affirmation that the environment belongs to all and not just those who are rich.

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<sup>92</sup> Ernst M. Conradie and David N. Field, *A Rainbow over the land: A South African guide on the church and environmental justice* (Cape Town: Western Cape Provincial Council of Churches, 2000), 108.

The following two statements, while urging a concern for the environment, do not link this concern to any broader considerations. The *Uniting Reformed Church* (URC):

The synod of the URC, Cape region (1994) requested its Commission for Public Witness to establish a sub-commission for ecology with the task:

- 1) to inform the church about the extent of ecological problems in South Africa and of the pressure exerted upon our natural resources;
- 2) to conscientise the church about its stewardship towards creation;
- 3) to inform the church about actions undertaken by various organisations and bodies in this regard;
- 4) to provide the church with practical guidelines for meaningful participation in these actions by members and congregations.<sup>93</sup>

The *Dutch Reformed Church* (DRC):

The synod of the DRC in the Western Cape took the following decision in 1995:

The synod decides to make an urgent appeal on all members to support the cause of environmental conservation in a responsible manner and in so doing to obey the Scriptures which teaches us to rule over creation and preserve it.<sup>94</sup>

While these statements express quite a strong commitment of the churches to see the importance of the environment there is no clear evidence from examining the later activities of these churches that any decisive action was in fact taken. This is a general problem with church statements and resolutions made by church leaders, even with other issues of justice.

Sermons are preached in most churches at least on Sundays. They are an important indication of the thinking of the church expressed through the preachers. In 1991

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<sup>93</sup> Conradie and Field, *A Rainbow over the land*, 108.

<sup>94</sup> Conradie and Field, *A Rainbow over the land*, 108.

John de Gruchy, professor of Christian Studies at the University of South Africa, preached a significant sermon on the environment.<sup>95</sup> In it he emphasised the

interconnectedness between the struggle for justice, the struggle for human life, freedom and dignity, the struggle against apartheid and a concern for the environment. If there is no care for the earth there will be no resources for human life, but only a barren earth, a treeless desert in which everyone will eke out a living.<sup>96</sup>

It was important in that it was one of the first public efforts by a well known South African theologian to closely link environmental issues to the broader struggle for liberation.<sup>97</sup>

Pastoral letters, on the other hand, issued by church leaders are usually widely distributed. We look at two such pastoral letters, which serve as an indication of the views of church leaders. In 1999 the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference issued a short but significant pastoral statement on the environment.<sup>98</sup> The following captures the essence of its understanding of the environment. "Environment is not only about landscapes and the survival of endangered animals, but it is also about the life of the people, the conditions in which women and men are living, working and recreating."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> It was preached at the Rondebosch United Church and broadcast by the South African Broadcasting Company on Earth Day, 22 April 1990.

<sup>96</sup> John W. de Gruchy, "Easter and the environment", 73-78 (*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 72, 1990), 75. This sermon was also published in John de Gruchy, *Faith for a time like this: South African sermons* (Cape Town: Rondebosch United Church, 1992), 44-50.

<sup>97</sup> At the time of preaching this sermon Prof de Gruchy was supervising David Field's PhD thesis, "Reformed theology, modernity and the environmental crisis" (University of Cape Town, 1996), which was a pioneering work in this field.

<sup>98</sup> It was distributed as a single sheet and was also published in *Challenge Magazine* 56, 1999, 22.

<sup>99</sup> SACBC, "Pastoral statement on the environment", 1999.

This was a significant statement by a church in its engagement with the environment and in its concept of what constitutes the environment. Both 'nature' and the life and livelihoods of people are incorporated. The SACBC's long tradition of engagement in economic justice issues helps explain this understanding of the environment. The statement goes on to refer to the actual experiences of people:

In the past year the Hearings on Poverty have highlighted the serious injustices perpetuated against poor people through the deterioration of the environment. We have learnt from people's submissions about the massive health problems millions of people are facing as a result of the dumping of hazardous waste next to their homes. Such waste is contaminating the air and poisoning water supplies.<sup>100</sup>

This expresses clearly the impact of environmental destruction on people's health. It also makes explicit the widespread existence of environmental racism. The link is made between injustice to both human and non human life. This injustice is destroying the air and water, the very building blocks of life. This view is expanded on in the following paragraphs of the statement:

We have learnt how overcrowding in poor restricted living conditions has resulted in the violation of nature in both rural and urban areas.

Overgrazing the land and cutting down trees for energy and industrial purposes are some of the causes of our massive soil erosion. Workers in mines, industries and farms have become ill, some have even died, as a result of exposure to chemicals.

Communities in overpopulated urban and informal settlements sometimes live where air pollution is above acceptable international health standards. People become sick because there is no clean water, and because sewerage and waste management is still totally inadequate.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> SACBC, "Pastoral statement on the environment", 1999.

It is recognised that unjust social policies, industrial greed, and the exploitation of labour leads to the impoverishment of both people and the environment. The document concludes with a call to action "because it is not just the beauty of the environment that is at stake but the survival of the human race and of creation entrusted to its stewardship."<sup>102</sup>

On the occasion of World Environment Day, 5 June 2004, the KwaZulu-Natal Church Leaders' Group (KZNCLG) issued a pastoral letter on the theme of the environment.<sup>103</sup> The letter contains the following sections: "Environmental degradation and its effects," "Why is the environment being threatened?", "The response of the church," "The need for environmental justice," and "Steps the church can take". In looking at environmental degradation it is emphasised that "it is those who are poor who suffer most from the effects of the destruction of the environment."<sup>104</sup> Injustice, expressed in the form of political violence is seen as having affected both people and the environment:

We acknowledge that the political violence that has torn our Province apart in the past has left deep scars on our people and the land itself. The struggle for power, human greed and selfishness continue to destroy much of our natural heritage.<sup>105</sup>

There is a clear reference to the destruction of the environment as a result of economics: "We recognise too that economic policies perpetuate the unequal distribution and ownership of natural resources and contribute to environmental

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<sup>101</sup> SACBC, "Pastoral statement on the environment", 1999.

<sup>102</sup> SACBC, "Pastoral statement on the environment", 1999.

<sup>103</sup> The KZNCLG is an informal group comprising heads of churches in the KwaZulu-Natal Province that meets about quarterly.

<sup>104</sup> KZNCLG, "'How beautiful is God's creation': Pastoral letter on the KwaZulu-Natal Church Leaders' Group on World Environment Day, 5 June 2004". The full text is in Appendix 4.

<sup>105</sup> KZNCLG, "'How beautiful is God's creation'", 5 June 2004.



destruction.”<sup>106</sup> Human beings are considered part of the environment, and the interdependence of all life is stated:

As human beings it is important that we view ourselves as integral to the community of life. Our very survival depends on maintaining a healthy environment and protecting the biodiversity that maintains our ecosystem.<sup>107</sup>

The context of AIDS is inevitably mentioned: “With the high rate of HIV and AIDS in our Province now more than ever we need to promote a healthy environment, to enable the production of nutritious food to secure food security for all.”<sup>108</sup> This statement makes bold connections between people and the environment, which points to a clear understanding of the role of the environment in eradicating poverty.

Both pastoral letters state very significant perspectives to their respective constituencies. They certainly have great symbolic value and provide a solid basis for the church to embark on meaningful action. As with the formulation and issuing of other church statements one may question the impact that these documents have on church members and local congregations.

### **3.4.3 Conferences**

There have been a few theological conferences dealing with environmental issues. They indicate some of the thinking of the church or, probably more accurately, theologians. Some of the significant conferences are mentioned. A pioneering conference was held in 1987. The title of this eleventh symposium of the *Institute for Theological Research* at the University of South Africa (UNISA) was “Are we Killing

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<sup>106</sup> KZNCLG, “‘How beautiful is God’s creation’”, 5 June 2004.

<sup>107</sup> KZNCLG, “‘How beautiful is God’s creation’”, 5 June 2004.

<sup>108</sup> KZNCLG, “‘How beautiful is God’s creation’”, 5 June 2004.

God's Earth? Ecology and Theology".<sup>109</sup> In the Preface to a collection of the papers published, the editor of the volume writes:

We are presenting this book as an effort by a number of people who come from different walks of life to address a very important and also difficult issue. All the contributors have a deep concern for the important place of man [sic] in the world. They are also aware of the responsibility of man [sic] towards God's world. The contents of the papers is their responsibility, but their views are also our concern as theologians.<sup>110</sup>

As we can see from the title and a section of this introductory preface there was no intended connection being made between the fate of the environment and the welfare of all of life. The contribution by Nürnberger did, however, consider economic issues and their impact on the environment.<sup>111</sup> Also of interest was a contribution on interfaith issues, and a reflection on the Assisi celebrations, the international celebrations of the World Wide Fund for Nature held at Assisi, Italy.

The *Missiological Society of Southern Africa* held its January 1991 annual Congress on the theme of "Mission and Ecology". It was attended by about 80 participants and many of the papers presented were published in the 1991 issues of its journal *Missionalia*. In 1991 the *Theological Society of South Africa* (TSSA), holding its conference in Pietermaritzburg, focused on JPIC, and in 1997 on creation theology.

In January 1997 the Research Institute for Christianity in South Africa (RICSA) of the University of Cape Town convened a watershed conference on the environment entitled "Theology, the Churches, and the Environmental Crisis".<sup>112</sup> Their invitation, announcing the theme, indicates the direction in which it was indented that the

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<sup>109</sup> It was held at UNISA Pretoria from 2 – 3 September 1987.

<sup>110</sup> W. S. Vorster, (ed), *Are we killing God's earth?* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1987), v.

<sup>111</sup> Klaus Nurnberger, "Ecology and Christian ethics in a semi-industrialised and polarised society", in W. S. Vorster (ed), *Are we killing God's earth?* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1987), 45-67.

<sup>112</sup> It was held from 20-23 January 1997 at the Centre for Africa Studies, University of Cape Town.



gathering move: "The environmental crisis has been identified as a new Kairos for Christian action in a post-Apartheid, post-colonial context."<sup>113</sup>

It was from this workshop that an important publication later emerged, *A Rainbow over the Land: A South African guide on the church and environmental justice* by Ernst Conradie and David Field.<sup>114</sup> The authors of this book indicate that those participating in the workshop "expressed a strong need for a publication that will empower local Christian communities in the South African context to respond to environmental issues."<sup>115</sup> They further note that "[t]here are several excellent examples of similar publications elsewhere in the world but these are not readily available and often respond to predominantly affluent circumstances."<sup>116</sup> The intention was to produce a resource book which would assist in engaging environmental issues in the new political context with its need to tackle poverty, and work for reconstruction, reconciliation and healing.

While these conferences were to bear some fruit in the publication of their findings, there is little evidence of their impact on the church being substantial. It is in the establishment of organisations that the potential exists to most effectively express the church's views.

#### **3.4.4 Organisations**

There have been a number of organisations that have been formed to promote environmental awareness and action. At times it has been denominations that have responded and at other times ecumenical organisations. We consider briefly the

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<sup>113</sup> A5 invitation.

<sup>114</sup> Ernst M. Conradie and David N. Field, *A Rainbow over the land: A South African guide on the church and environmental justice* (Cape Town: Western Cape Provincial Council of Churches, 2000).

<sup>115</sup> Conradie and Field, *A Rainbow over the land*, 1.

<sup>116</sup> Conradie and Field, *A Rainbow over the land*, 1.

Roman Catholic Church, then three ecumenical organisations: the *Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa*, *A Rocha South Africa* and the *Church Land Project*, and finally two interfaith organisations: the *Gold Fields Faith and Earthkeeping Project* and the *Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute*. In each case we present their aims and objectives and then comment critically on the focus of the respective organisations.

The Roman Catholic Church in Southern Africa formed an Eco Group to advise the *Southern African Bishops' Conference* (SACBC) and have been active in a number of activities. In 2001 the SACBC formed an Environmental Justice Desk, which is located within their Justice and Peace unit. Since 2003 they have employed a person working full time in this position. The work of this Desk has shown a commitment to showing the connection between ecological and economic issues. In 2005, for example, they concentrated on issues of GMOs, water justice issues and nuclear power. The Lumko Institute, a Roman Catholic training organisation, has had a focus over the years on environmental issues, and has been wholistic in its approach holding courses, holding courses on environmental themes.

#### **3.4.4.1 Ecumenical environment organisations**

Before the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), in May 2002, a church environment organisation called the *Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa* (NECCSA) was established to respond to environmental concerns, particularly the growing destruction of the environment.<sup>117</sup> Its main purpose is to stimulate a concern for the environment and, more specifically, environmental justice amongst Christian churches in South Africa. The focus of the network on "earthkeeping" suggests that Christian ministry includes the

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<sup>117</sup> See Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities (NECCSA) brochure, NECCSA, undated. NECCSA's website may be accessed at <[www.neccsa.org.za](http://www.neccsa.org.za)>

responsibility to attend to (to "keep") the well-being of the whole earth community (which includes but also transcends human well-being).

NECCSA is essentially a communication network and encourages the sharing of stories. The emphasis is also on personal commitment, with expectations to celebrate Environment Sunday on an annual basis (the Sunday closest to 5 June); to include environmental concerns in programmes for Christian education; and to cultivate an environmental sensitivity in the management of church land and church property. While within NECCSA there has not been an explicit commitment to eradicate poverty, its commitment to environmental justice of necessity indicates that its commitment is to the wellbeing of the environment as well as of that of people.

*A Rocha*<sup>118</sup>, "an international conservation organisation working to show God's love for all creation," started about 20 years ago and has branches in 15 countries including Kenya and Ghana in Africa. In 2004 it was officially recognised in South Africa. The organisation is identified by five core commitments and to a practical outworking of each: Christian, conservation, community, cross-cultural and co-operation.<sup>119</sup>

In South Africa the organisation has formed a partnership with the *Students' Christian Organisation*, and run the "Phila Endaweni – Creation Alive! Programme." It has engaged in re-greening projects in a township outside Pietermaritzburg called Sobantu. As part of an International Time Out weekend meeting, *A Rocha South Africa* held a meeting at Kenosis Retreat during the weekend of 10-12 September 2004, attended by about 15 people from four provinces in South Africa.

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<sup>118</sup> "A Rocha" is a Portuguese word meaning "The Rock".

<sup>119</sup> *International A Rocha News*, "Christians in Conservation", Issue 35, July 2004, 8. For further information visit the international website <[www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org)>

Land issues are important and sensitive issues that connect ecology and economics in South Africa. The church has responded in various ways. A particular response has been the formation of the *Church Land Project* (CLP). In 1996, in response to the broader land reform process taking place in South Africa, the CLP initiated a one-year joint venture between the *Association for Rural Advancement* (AFRA) and the *Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness* (PACSA). This led to the establishment of the CLP as an independent organization in 1997. Based in Pietermaritzburg, the CLP initially focused exclusively on the province of KwaZulu-Natal but extended its work to be engaged in research and policy work nationally. According to its Mission Statement, the CLP

seeks to improve the quality of life of communities living on church owned land, with particular attention on marginalized groups, including women and the poorest. It works towards the sustainable use of church owned land for the benefit of the various stakeholders and their future generations. CLP attempts to promote a just and moral land reform programme, both at regional and national levels of church and government, by initiating and facilitating critical reflection on the ministry of the church in relation to land and development issues.<sup>120</sup>

The CLP's goals are to see that communities are assisted in enhancing their capacity to gain secure tenure, to develop, implement and manage plans for sustainable use of the land. Churches are also to be made aware of the issues around land issues.<sup>121</sup>

Land is a crucial resource for the eradication of poverty. While it provides the ecological resources for economic activity, its distribution and management through good economic and political policies is important for people's livelihoods. Church land is no less significant. We will see in the Diocese of Umzimvubu the value of land and its correct use, as a source of food and survival for people.

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<sup>120</sup> Church Land Project pamphlet, undated; no publisher.

<sup>121</sup> Church Land Project pamphlet.

#### 3.4.4.2 Interfaith environment organisations

Although an interfaith initiative, the *Gold Fields Faith and Earthkeeping Project* was a significant one for the churches. It started as a project with a grant received from the mining house, Gold Fields through the *Gold Fields/World Wide Fund for Nature (South Africa)*. It was located within UNISA, under the administrative wing of the *Research Institute for Theology and Religion* in the *Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies* and was launched in the Anglican Diocese of Umzimvubu at the celebration of World Environment Day, 4 June 1995. Its principal objective has been described as being

to help religious organisations and bodies in South Africa to conscientise their members as to the local, regional, national as well as global environmental needs and the positive role religious persons and organisations can play in the furtherance of environmental protection, conservation and sustainable resource use.<sup>122</sup>

To achieve this objective a variety of methods have been used, which have included courses, lectures, retreats, workshops, celebrations, seminars, and various publications as well as the exposure of religious groups to existing environmental projects or the establishment of environmental projects that would address environmental needs and promote environmental care.

While it is not particularly clear from their objectives and *modus operandi* that their concern was beyond “environmental protection, conservation and sustainable resource use” we will see in chapter five that from their work in the Diocese of Umzimvubu the intention of their work has been also to focus

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<sup>122</sup> David Olivier, “The Gold Fields Faith and Earthkeeping Project”, 26-29 (*Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Africa*, Double Issue in partnership with the SACC: Church, environment and the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), Vol 8, No 2 & Vol 8, No 3, April & August 2002), 26. For further information of the project see, for example: David. F. Olivier, “The Gold Fields Faith and Earthkeeping Project: A Theological and ethical discussion”, in Louise Kretzschmar and Leonard Hulley (eds), *Questions about life and morality: Christian ethics in South Africa today* (Pretoria: JL van Schaik, 1998).

also on the eradication of poverty. The project was closed in about 2002 when funding came to an end. In some respects a successor to this has been the *Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute* (SAFCEI).

The SACC convened the *National Ecumenical Environment Conference* at the Good Shepherd Retreat Centre, Hartbeespoort from 12-17 March 2005.<sup>123</sup> It brought together about 75 delegates from around South Africa, including not only those from the church, but representatives of other faith communities, including Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Bahai's. The input reflected the following understanding of the environment, which was set out in the programme:

The environment – our planetary life support system – is showing increasing signs of stress and damage from the impact of humankind. The greatest of this, albeit indirect, is our present economic system. Our lifestyles, based on rampant greed, inequality and economic injustice are not sustainable. The only way to change our economic system will be through a change of values. This, surely, is where faith communities can play a significant role.<sup>124</sup>

Topics addressed included biodiversity and extinction, natural resources, climate change and energy, genetically modified organisms, environmental justice, nuclear energy, economic justice, theology for earthkeeping, environmental ethics, public participation, environmental education, pollution, waste and ecological debt, and gender and food security.

At the conclusion of the Conference there was consensus that a national organization be established to continue to promote environment issues among faith communities. It is called the *Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute* (SAFCEI), and Anglican Bishop, Geoff Davies, was appointed as its co-ordinator.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> The Global Environmental Facility Small Grants Programme of the United Nations Development Programme funded the event.

<sup>124</sup> Excerpt taken from the official programme for the conference.

<sup>125</sup> SAFCEI's website is <[www.safcei.org.za](http://www.safcei.org.za)>



In a media release a number of points were made, expressing the intention of the new Institute to deal with a range of environmental issues. It noted the “potential devastation of climate change” and “the long-term dangers of nuclear energy.” It called for a “moratorium on the further use of GMO seeds and crops” and expressed its concern about the privatisation of water. In respect of the economy there was strong criticism:

We have realized that much social and environmental destruction is a result of our grossly unjust and immoral economic system. We find that we have moved from the worship of God to the worship of money and the “god” of profit.

The present economic system with its inequalities, unfair trade practices, agricultural subsidies and WTO regulations favour the already wealthy. It is the cause of massive suffering and poverty among people and the destruction of our natural environment.<sup>126</sup>

A Steering Committee was elected to take the process further. This committee met at Koinonia Conference Centre, Botha’s Hill, KwaZulu-Natal from 26 – 28 May 2005 and formulated the vision, mission and objectives of the Institute, as follows:

**VISION:**

Faith communities committed to cherishing living earth.

**MISSION :**

We are an institute of people of many faiths, united in our diversity through our common commitment to earthkeeping. Our aim is to support the faith communities in fulfilling their environmental & socio-economic responsibility.

**OBJECTIVES:**

In the spirit of our respective faiths, through collaboration, networking, research & action, our objectives are to:

1. raise environmental awareness

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<sup>126</sup> SAFCEI Media release 17 March 2005.

2. engage in formulating policy & ethical guidelines within our faith communities
3. facilitate environmental responsibility & action
4. confront environmental & socio-economic injustices
5. support environmental training and learning.<sup>127</sup>

It goes on to say that it upholds as core values the principles of the Earth Charter.

The Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute was formally launched on 20 July 2005 by Prof Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate at the Delta Environmental Centre, Johannesburg. The launch, following the delivery of the Nelson Mandela Lecture the previous day, was attended by a wide range of religious leaders and environmentalists.

SAFCEI has the potential to embody and act out a concern for the environment that has impacts positively on poverty eradication. It intends to “confront environmental & socio-economic injustices.” It is still in the early stages of its formation; it may well become a significant role payer that can mobilise the religious community, including the church constituency. However, it still needs to develop the capacity to function effectively and make a difference.

While it was mentioned that organisations assist the churches in fulfilling their responsibilities, they also tend to let the churches off the hook of their own responsibility. The formation of some of the organisations mentioned above arose out of a concern for the church itself not doing its job. Hopefully, though, they have the potential to prompt the church to assume its responsibility in this sphere.

We now look at a specific example of the church’s engagement in a particular process, that of the *World Summit for Sustainable Development* (WSSD).

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<sup>127</sup> Minutes of SAFCEI Steering Committee, 26-28 May 2005.



### 3.5 World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD)

The United Nations have been involved in arranging meetings over the past few decades to consider the welfare of people and the state of the planet. As well as mobilising governments to respond to the challenges, these events have also elicited responses from the churches. The South African church's participation in the 1992 Summit was minimal. The WCC, however, had a significant involvement. As a way of indicating a sense of urgency in the Church worldwide at that stage, we refer to one of the documents from the WCC, a letter written to the churches of the world.

In a pastoral letter written to "our brothers and sisters in all our churches" from Baixada Fluminense, Brazil, at Pentecost, 1992 the following was written:

Dear sisters and brothers, we write with a sense of urgency. The earth is in peril. Our only home is plainly in jeopardy. We are at the precipice of self-destruction.

We have come inevitably to the conclusion that the prevailing system is exploiting nature and peoples on a worldwide scale and promises to continue at an intensified rate. You will understand why our hearts are heavy and why it is extremely urgent that we as churches make strong and permanent spiritual, moral and material commitments to the emergence of new models of society, based in deepest gratitude to God for the gift of life and in respect for the whole of God's creation.<sup>128</sup>

At their *Triennial National Conference* in August 2001, the SACC passed a resolution in which they committed themselves to prepare for the Summit believing that it is important that the "faith communities participate, make a contribution and learn" from the Summit. In order to help with mobilization of the churches the SACC, with funding from the WCC, employed a full-time worker, Sipho Mtetwa, an ordained

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<sup>128</sup> Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *Redeeming the creation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992).

minister of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. He was appointed *National Programme Co-ordinator of the Environmental Justice Unit* at the SACC.<sup>129</sup>

There were a number of meetings held to prepare the churches, both in terms of formulating a position and preparing for participation. As part of a process of mobilising churches there were two meetings held in Johannesburg. The second meeting took the form of a two day workshop in May at the Kempton Park Conference Centre and culminated in the production of a statement, *This is God's Earth*.<sup>130</sup> We will look at this and other statements referred to below in some detail in chapter seven, when we consider the theological resources for an *oikotheology*.

At a meeting of the Central Committee of the SACC Bishop Geoff Davies was asked to co-ordinate church leaders in their response. A statement was produced from this group called "A Call by Representatives of Member Churches of the South African Council of Churches to the World for Environmental Justice, dated 5 July 2002."<sup>131</sup>

Sipho Mtetwa attended the WCC conference on India, the UN Preparatory Meeting II in New York and the UN Preparatory Committee IV in Bali. He also held meetings with church groups to assist them to prepare for the conference. For example, the *Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness* (PACSA) invited him to their Annual General Meeting to speak on the theme "One World: Relating the Environmental Justice Agenda to the Church as a Community of Faith."<sup>132</sup> The SACC, who had made arrangements for the WCC to participate, had a base at the Cedar Park hotel. Delegates organised themselves to attend and participate in as wide a selection of events as possible, to enable them, ultimately, to influence the proceedings. The SACC hosted an exhibition and they arranged a series of talks.

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<sup>129</sup> Revd Mtetwa was employed from September 2001 until the end of March 2003.

<sup>130</sup> SACC, 2002. The full text is in Appendix 1.

<sup>131</sup> SACC, 2002.

<sup>132</sup> 29 June 2002.

There were attempts by Christians to initiate discussions around the church's positions regarding the environment. One such initiative was the production of a statement by a group of Christians which was drawn up by a process of consultation and a meeting, called *The Land is Crying for Justice: A Discussion Document on Christianity and Environmental Justice in South Africa*. It aimed to reflect on "the role of Christians in the struggle for environmental justice in the South Africa context."<sup>133</sup>

In preparation for the Summit the *Environmental Justice Desk of the Justice and Peace Department* of the SACBC produced a small pamphlet entitled "Church and Sustainable Development." Also significant was the production of the paper entitled "Choose Life! A Discussion Paper on the World Summit on Sustainable Development by the Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa."<sup>134</sup> It gave an overview of developments since the 1992 Summit, analysed the causes of unsustainable development, looked at issues of fair trade and food security, the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD), sustainable financing for sustainable development and sustainable development generally. At the Summit the SACBC hosted an exhibition and arranged a series of lectures. On Sunday 1 September, Albert Nolan, OP, preached at a mass for delegates. It focused on the need to listen to others/the world.

### 3.6 Conclusion

The church's concern for the environment has not been high on its agenda. In many respects this has mirrored the perspective of society in general, but in other respects it

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<sup>133</sup> EFSA, *The Land is crying for justice*, 2002, 1. The full text is in Appendix 5.

<sup>134</sup> 11 June 2002. The Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa is a Southern African regional forum of Catholic Justice & Peace Commissions representing eleven countries: Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, Namibia, South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia, as well as the Justice & Peace Desk of the Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops in Southern Africa (IMBISA). The Alliance also includes European and North American development and relief agencies present in Southern Africa such as Catholic Relief Services (USA), Misereor (Germany), and CAFOD (UK). The full text is in Appendix 2.

has lagged behind the changing perceptions brought about by the political changes in the early part of the 1990's.

The church has struggled to grasp the connection between a concern for the environment and the eradication of poverty. In considering the environment it tends to think solely of ecological issues, and these issues in isolation from a concern for human beings and their welfare. A further problem occurs when the church has made significant statements about the environment: these have generally been from the hierarchy and have not had a significant impact on the ordinary members of the church. The "mass mobilization" of the church membership in this sphere has not been achieved. In chapter seven we will consider strategies to achieve this.

In this chapter we have, however, identified a growing trend, in which the church sees the environment in a way that regards it as related to all of life. The JPIC process certainly has an effect on some of the church's responses but not on others. There seems to have been no real consistency among the different responses made in terms of language and the thrust. This highlights the need for the development of a theology - an *oikothology* - which can guide the churches in South Africa.

In the next chapter we look at the response of a particular church denomination, that of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA).

## CHAPTER 4

### SEARCHING FOR HOME: THE CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (CPSA)

#### 4.1 Introduction

The Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA), commonly called the Anglican Church<sup>135</sup>, is one of the major church denominations in Southern Africa with a large membership. According to the 1996 census it had at that time almost one and a half million members, one of the largest denominations in South Africa.<sup>136</sup> The CPSA is made up of 23 dioceses covering the countries of South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Angola and St. Helena. While the CPSA extends throughout Southern Africa, for the purposes of this study we are concerned particularly with the Anglican Church in South Africa.

Before we look at the CPSA in any detail we will look at the worldwide Anglican Communion, for the CPSA is closely connected to the wider Anglican Church and is influenced by it in many ways in its practice and theology. As we shall see, apart from on one or two occasions – most notably in a speech by the current archbishop of Canterbury – the Anglican Communion tends to fall into the trap of separating the economy from the ecology. Thus, while it offers a strong tradition in both, it is in need of an *oikotheology* to help it integrate the two.

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<sup>135</sup> The 2005 Provincial Synod accepted a proposal to change the name of the church to the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA). It will take another three years before this change of name can come into effect.

<sup>136</sup> Jurgens Hendriks and Johannes Erasmus, "Interpreting the new religious landscape in post-apartheid South Africa, 41-65 (*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 109, 2001), 46.

## 4.2 Worldwide Anglican Communion

The Anglican Church exists in many part of the world today. It has its roots in the events of the reformation; it is both Catholic and Protestant. There have been a number of recent works that highlight various aspects of its history, theology and practice.<sup>137</sup> Understanding the structure of this church provides an insight into the way in which it operates. The Anglican Church is a hierarchical church, and so understanding its structure helps one in understanding where decisions are made and how it functions. We describe its structure, including the position of the

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<sup>137</sup> The following are a selection of books published over the last decade that provide some useful insights into Anglicanism: Paul Avis, *The Anglican understanding of the church: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: SPCK, 2000) which is a concise treatise on Anglican ecclesiology, its spirit, sources, shape and appeal, and contains a useful up-to-date bibliography; Paul Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (London: T & T Clark, 2002) contains a detailed historical discussion from the sixteen century, with a focus on the development of the Anglican doctrine of the Church; T. Bradshaw (ed), *Celebrating the Anglican Way* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996) contains a collection of essays that look at aspects of Anglican belief, ethos, worship, sacraments and prayer; I.T. Douglas and Kwok Pui-Lan (eds), *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism* (New York: Church Publishing Inc., 2001) contains a wide-ranging set of essays on the issues that have to be rethought if Anglicanism is to relate meaningfully to the new reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; R. Hannaforde (ed), *The Future of Anglicanism* (Gracewing, 1996) contains essays on themes of faith, order, ecclesiology, Christology and orthodoxy; Mark Harris, *The Challenge of change: The Anglican Communion in the post-modern era* (New York: Church Publishing Inc., 1998) written by an Episcopal priest this book looks at the Anglican Church's understanding of the church, its vocation, its incarnational theology and its estrangement from the world; D.R. Holeton (ed), *Our Thanks and praise: The Eucharist in Anglican theology today* (London: Anglican Book Centre, 1998) contains papers from the Fifth International Anglican Liturgical Conference on a wide range of theological issues including contextual theologies; W.M. Jacob, *The Making of the Anglican Church worldwide* (London: SPCK, 1997) is an historical survey of how Anglicanism evolved into a Worldwide communion from the Reformation, focussing particularly on episcopacy and unity; E. Johnson and J. Clark (eds), *Anglicans in mission: A Transforming mission* (London: SPCK, 2000) summarises the work of the Mission Commission of the Anglican Communion with a reflection on the "five marks of mission"; Alister McGrath (ed), *The SPCK handbook of Anglican theologians* (London: SPCK, 2000) in which every significant theologian in Anglican history is reviewed and a survey of Anglicanism in Britain is given; John Pobee, *Invitation to be an African Anglican* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2000), examines all the basic foundations of Anglicanism from an African perspectives and challenges the Church to indigenise the traditions so that its identity is authentically African; Alastair Redfern, *Being Anglican* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000) is a short reference work on issues in Anglicanism; Geoffrey Rowell, Kenneth Stevenson, and Rowan Williams (compilers), *Love's redeeming work: The Anglican quest for holiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) is a comprehensive compilation of writing from Latimer to the present on prayer, spirituality and holiness; S. Sykes, J. Booty, J. Knight (eds) *The Study of Anglicanism* (London: SPCK and Fortress, rev ed, 1998) focuses on the history, authority, method, standards, ministry and prospects of Anglicanism; Rowan Williams, *Anglican identities* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004) is a set of essays based on leading Anglican theologians from William Tyndale to John Robinson; Andrew Wingate, Kevin Ward, Carrie Pemberton and Sitshebo Wilson (eds), *Anglicanism: A Global communion* (London: Mowbrey, 1998) covers worship, spirituality, theology, church life, social issues, mission and a vision for the future.

Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, and the *Anglican Consultative Council* (ACC).

The Archbishop of Canterbury, apart from being Bishop of the Diocese of Canterbury in England, and Archbishop of the Province of Canterbury, which includes the dioceses of central and southern England and the Diocese of Europe, and Primate of All England, also has a significant position in the world wide Anglican Church. The archbishop calls together all Anglican Bishops for the ten yearly Lambeth Conference, the most senior Bishop in each Province of the Anglican Church for the Primates Meeting and representatives from every Province for the ACC meetings.

These meetings of the worldwide Anglican bishops used to take place in Lambeth, in London, the official residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury. However, since 1968 they have met at the University of Kent. The most recent meeting was held there in 1998.

The ACC was formed after the 1968 Lambeth Conference, in order that there would be more frequent and more representative contact among Anglican churches than was possible through a once-a-decade conference of bishops. The Council's membership includes up to three members, both lay and clerical, from each Province of the Communion. The President is the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>138</sup>

#### **4.3 Anglican perspectives on the environment**

While much has been written about the Anglican Church, as indicated earlier, there is very little that has been written about its perspectives on the environment. We



therefore turn to an Anglican understanding of mission to assist us, for it is out of this framework that the church has begun to develop an environmental perspective.

#### 4.3.1 Understanding of mission

The Anglican Church has always had a broad understanding of mission. Over time the ACC and the Lambeth Conference have developed the following definition of the mission of the church:

1. To proclaim the good news of the kingdom;
2. To teach, baptise, and nurture the new believers;
3. To respond to human needs by loving service;
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society.<sup>139</sup>

In 1990 the ACC, meeting in Wales, agreed to a fifth affirmation, namely:

5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.<sup>140</sup>

This “Ecology Clause” as it became known added a significant dimension to the Anglican view of mission. The influence of the WCC is clearly seen in the choice of the phrase “integrity of creation”. Kenyon Wright describes the significance of this clause as “not a trendy addition tacked on in an attempt to be fashionable or to jump on the green bandwagon,” or the “expression of some passing contemporary concern, somehow peripheral to the central truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” He regarded it rather as “the belated recognition that, for our time at least, our ‘cry for creation’ might well be the very central test of our obedience, of the reality of our faith, and the validity of our mission.”<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> A useful guide to aspects of the worldwide Anglican Church is contained in *The Anglican Communion: A Guide* (London: Church Publishing House, 1991).

<sup>139</sup> Kenyon Wright, “Integrity of creation”, 46, in Colin Craston (ed), *By Word and deed: Sharing Good News through mission* (London: Church Publishing House for the Anglican Communion, 1992), 45-60.

<sup>140</sup> Wright, “Integrity of creation”, 46.

<sup>141</sup> Wright, “Integrity of creation”, 46.



### 4.3.2 Archbishops of Canterbury

We consider some of the statements on the environment made by the two archbishops of Canterbury who held office during this period under review: George Carey (1991-2003) and Rowan Williams (2003-present).

Speaking on 4 June 2001, on the eve of World Environment Day, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey launched a church seminar on environmental issues. In his speech he called for greater attention to be paid to the links between poverty and the environment:

[T]he interaction between environment and poverty is twofold. Clearly environmental degradation causes poverty. An obvious example is the link between climate change and expansion of deserts, such as the Sahara with the resulting loss of both arable and grazing land for herds. On the other hand, poverty can be the cause of environmental damage....Poor people are forced to create conditions that imperil themselves and our world. It is thus very much in the interests of richer countries to bring poorer nations out of extreme poverty to share in the fight against environmental damage.<sup>142</sup>

Archbishop Rowan Williams, during his time as archbishop, has made some speeches in which environmental issues feature.<sup>143</sup> In a wide ranging lecture on the environment he highlighted a number of current issues, particularly the peril of climate change. He advocated reasons why he regards "ecology as essentially a matter of justice for the human as well as the non-human world." Seeing "creation as a gift from God" also enables us to "let go of the idea that it is just there for our use."

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<sup>142</sup> George Carey, "Opening address, Environmental Seminar, Bishops' Meeting" (4 June 2001). <[www.archbishopofcanterbury.org](http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org)> accessed 28 November 2005.

<sup>143</sup> See, for example the following: "Speech in debate on the environment" (17 February 2005) given during the General Synod in the context of the debate on climate change in which he states that issues around ecology are "inseparably bound up with issues of development and economic justice." "Lecture at Chatham: Sustainable Communities" (16 March 2005) in which he refers to "sustainable community as the sort of social environment that does not wreck and deplete human capital so much that there is no energy left for initiative and discovery." <[www.archbishopofcanterbury.org](http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org)> accessed 28 November 2005.

[F]or the Christian the connection between ecology and justice is axiomatic; it is no surprise to read in much contemporary writing on ecology that the irresponsible treatment of the environment both reflects and encourages an oppressive politics. To conscript the resources of the natural world into the struggle for power between humans is nothing new; but what recent decades have made clear is that this process has now reached a point at which the offence against the nature of things is no longer just a matter of moral and theological judgement: it has reached a point at which an offended natural order 'rebels', is no longer able to co-operate with undisciplined human will.<sup>144</sup>

The Archbishop goes on to commend some church practices and to sound a warning about the pronouncements that the church makes:

A recent and welcome development has been the growth of 'eco-congregations', local churches or church groups signing up to a set of environmentally responsible policies for their day to day work as individuals and as communities. But there is still a gap in speech and practice at the level of our institutions as a whole."<sup>145</sup>

In a lecture entitled "Ecology and Economy" delivered at the University of Kent in Canterbury Archbishop Williams addressed directly the relationship between ecology and economy.<sup>146</sup> This is a remarkable speech in its containing of the essence of an *oikotheology*. Here one paragraph only is quoted:

The two big "e-words" (ecology and economy) in my title have sometimes been used in recent decades as if they represented opposing concerns.... But this separation or opposition has come to look like a massive mistake. It has been said that 'the economy is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the environment'. The earth itself is what ultimately

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<sup>144</sup> Rowan Williams, Environment Lecture, "Changing the myths we live by", Monday 5 July 2004. Accessed on 30 June 2005 at the Anglican Communion website <[www.aco.org](http://www.aco.org)>.

<sup>145</sup> Rowan Williams, Environment Lecture, "Changing the myths we live by".

<sup>146</sup> The lecture was delivered on 8 March 2005. <[www.archbishopofcanterbury](http://www.archbishopofcanterbury)> Accessed on 28 November 2005. The full text is contained in Appendix 3.

controls economic activity because it is the source of the materials upon which economic activity works.... Economy and ecology cannot be separated. We should not be surprised; after all, the two words relate to the same central concept.

While statements by archbishops and even the resolutions of Lambeth Conferences (discussed below) are not binding on the Provinces of the Anglican Church they carry moral authority and have a strong influence within the church.

#### **4.3.3 Lambeth conferences**

Over the past few decades the Lambeth Conferences have passed a number of resolutions on the environment. The tenth Lambeth Conference of 1968 raised the issue of pollution. In 1978 they made an appeal to leaders and governments of the world on environmental issues, conscious “that time is running short.” In 1988 a resolution on the environment was passed in which the bishops called on each Province and diocese “as a matter of urgency” to inform the faithful about “what is happening to our environment and to encourage them to see stewardship of God’s earth for the care of our neighbours as a necessary part of Christian discipleship.”<sup>147</sup>

At the most recent Lambeth Conference, held in 1998, the stress on the environment was even more evident in the section titled “Called to Full Humanity” there is a section on the environment.

We give an example of the thinking at this meeting by giving excerpts from resolution 1.8 on “Creation”: This Conference:

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<sup>147</sup> R. Coleman (ed), *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1992). Lambeth Conference Resolutions are also accessible on the Anglican Communion website <[www.aco.org](http://www.aco.org)>

(a) reaffirms the Biblical vision of Creation according to which: Creation is a web of inter-dependent relationships bound together in the Covenant which God, the Holy Trinity has established with the whole earth and every living being....

(b) (ii) that the loss of natural habitats is a direct cause of genocide amongst millions of indigenous peoples....

(iii) that the future of human beings and all life on earth hangs in balance as a consequence of the present unjust economic structures, the injustice existing between the rich and the poor, the continuing exploitation of the natural environment and the threat of nuclear self-destruction;

(iv) that the servant-hood to God's creation is becoming the most important responsibility facing humankind and that we should work together with people of all faiths in the implementation of our responsibilities."<sup>148</sup>

#### **4.3.4 Global Anglican Congress on the Stewardship of Creation**

So far we have considered particular, official pronouncements on the environment. We now consider other initiatives in which a strong focus on the environment has been promoted. Prior to the WSSD in 2002, the Anglican Communion held a conference at the Good Shepherd Retreat Centre, Hartbeespoort, outside Pretoria. Impetus for the event came from Canon Jeff Golliher of St John's Cathedral New York. Practical arrangements were made by the Anglican Observer's Office at the United Nations and Bishop Geoff Davies. This was the first international gathering of Anglicans to look specifically at issues of the environment. Delegates were invited from all provinces of the Anglican Communion. About 90 people attended. In the presentations there was a strong focus on development and poverty eradication.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998, Transformation and renewal, July 18 – August 9, 1998, Lambeth Palace; Canterbury, England*, published for the Anglican Communion, Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA.

<sup>149</sup> The proceedings of the congress were published in *Healing God's Creation: The Global Anglican Congress on the Stewardship of Creation* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2004). It was compiled by Archdeacon Taimalelagi Fagamalama Tuagaloa-Matavea, Anglican Observer to the United Nations,

The Congress produced two statements. The one was presented by the Anglican Observer to the WSSD, and the other was in the form of a pastoral letter to the Anglican Communion.

The following was amongst the concerns highlighted in the “Declaration to the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development”:

We desperately need a change of spirit. The environmental debate is as much about religion and morality as it is about science. Sustainable development is one of the most urgent moral issues of our time. It begins in sustainable values that recognize the interrelatedness of all life. Sustainable development cannot be defined in economic terms alone, but must begin in a commitment to care for the poor, the marginalized, and the voiceless. Therefore it is sustainable community that we seek. The ecological systems that support life, the qualities that sustain local communities, and the voices of women, indigenous peoples and all who are marginalized and disempowered must be approached from this perspective.... [W]e believe that a better, more holistic, and religiously informed understanding of Creation, which recognizes that human beings are part of the created order not separate from it, will make a major contribution to the transforming change of spirit that is essential in the third millennium. We are committed to putting our faith into action.

- Many different religious traditions start from the belief that the world primarily belongs to God and not to human beings. Land, sea and air belong first and foremost to God.... We value life.<sup>150</sup>

In the “Declaration to the Anglican Communion” the following issues were highlighted:

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and edited by The Revd Canon Jeffrey Mark Gollhofer, Program Assistant for the Environment and Sustainable Development, the Office of the Anglican Observer at the United Nations.

<sup>150</sup> “Declaration to the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002, from the Global Anglican Congress on the Stewardship of Creation”, <[www.aco.org](http://www.aco.org)>



Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we greet you and speak to you in the name of our Trinitarian God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Creator, Redeemer, and Life Giver.... We have come together as a community of faith. Creation calls us, our vocation as God's redeemed drives us, the Spirit in our midst enlivens us, scripture compels us.... Our planetary crisis is environmental, but it is more than that. It is a crisis of the Spirit and the Body, which runs to the core of all that we hold sacred. It is characterized by deep poverty: impoverished people, and impoverished Earth. As people of faith, Christ draws us together to share responsibility for this crisis with all humanity.... Unjust economic structures have taken from people and the land without giving in return, putting at risk all life that is sustained by the planet. Greed and over-consumption, which have dictated so much of economic development in the past, must be transformed into generosity and compassion."<sup>151</sup>

The views presented in these two statements express a strong commitment to both caring for the whole earth community. The initiative of the conference was taken further into the Anglican structures worldwide as reporting back was encouraged. A particular follow up action is described below.

#### **4.3.5 Anglican Consultative Council (ACC)**

Following on soon after the Global Anglican Congress on the Stewardship of Creation and the WSSD, the ACC meeting in Hong Kong in September 2002 passed two resolutions in support of environmental issues.

In a resolution on the WSSD it showed its support in the following way:

This Anglican Consultative Council, following the recent World Summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa:

1. supports actions in the five key areas identified by the Summit, namely water and sanitation, energy, health, agricultural productivity, and biodiversity and ecosystem management;

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<sup>151</sup> "Declaration to the Anglican Communion", <[www.aco.org](http://www.aco.org)>

2. adds its voice of concern and support to those calling for a renewed and committed international approach to the control of those processes which increase global warming and affect climate change;
3. urges each member church of the Anglican Communion to celebrate the Sunday nearest to ...[5] June, World Environment Day, as Environment Sunday in order to raise environmental awareness across the Communion.

In the first resolution under “UN Observer and Environment Network” there is the following:

This Anglican Consultative Council:

- a) asks all churches of the Anglican Communion to place environment care on their agenda;
- b) asks all Anglicans to make their own personal commitments to care for God’s world, respecting all life, for “the Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it” (Psalm 24:1);
- c) establishes the Anglican Environmental Network as an official network of the Anglican Communion; and,
- d) endorses for immediate action, the declarations of the Anglican Congress to the United Nations and to the Anglican Communion.

#### **4.3.6 Establishment of the Environment Network**

Within the Anglican Communion there are a number of special networks. These groupings consist of people who have a particular interest or concern which they wish to make known to the wider Anglican Church. These networks are co-ordinated through the ACC. These networks are essentially self-funded yet have the ACC Secretariat to give assistance to setting up and maintenance of these networks. Those in existence are: Peace and Justice Network, Youth Network, Refugee Network, Family Network, Urban Network.

For some time there has been a feeling that there should be a specific network for the environment. After some initial work done towards setting up this Network in 1999 at ACC-11 in Dundee, it was as we have seen, the Anglican Congress on the Stewardship of Creation which put forward a resolution to the ACC-12 meeting in September 2002 in Hong Kong which lead to the Environment Network receiving official recognition as an official network of the Anglican Communion.

The aims, as set out on the Anglican Communion website, are as follows:

- To encourage Anglicans to support sustainable environmental practices as individuals and in the life of their communities.
- To provide information about policies embraced by synods, councils and commissions, and especially by the instruments of Unity (Statements by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Resolutions and Reports of the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Consultative Council)
- To support local initiatives by providing information about ideas and best practices developed around the communion.
- To share information about resources and initiatives that may be of value to Anglicans everywhere.
- To provide an opportunity for interested Anglicans to meet both as a formal network, and informally via electronic media.<sup>152</sup>

Apart from the aim to support “sustainable environmental practices”, the focus of the Network does not seem to be one that reflects an *oikotheology*, where issues of the environment of economics, ecology and justice are integrated. In looking at a motivation for the Network we gain a clearer understanding of the motivation behind the Network’s formation, which was to get the issue of the environment on the agenda of the Anglican Church.

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<sup>152</sup> Accessible on the Anglican Communion website <[www.aco.org](http://www.aco.org)>



Eric Beresford, who was employed by the Anglican Communion as a Consultant on Ethics wrote a paper on the rationale for the establishment of an environment institute.<sup>153</sup> In it he argues that Anglicans are committed to “environmental stewardship.” He notes that over the last few years environmental issues have been high on the religious agenda, and he notes the joint declaration signed by Pope John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I in which they stated that Christians has a role to play in educating people in “ecological awareness.”<sup>154</sup> Beresford draws support from the 1998 Lambeth conference which called for the establishment of a commission on the environment. He acknowledges that while environmental issues have been actively pursued in several provinces of the Anglican Communion, these have not been adequate. He argues that:

We have to face the fact that often those Provinces where issues are most urgent are least equipped to deal with them. Such provinces need the help and support of the wider communion. They need access to information about the best strategies for environmental action and advocacy. They need information about the sorts of issues that are being addressed in other parts of the communion. Most of all, they need a means by which to communicate their stories and seek the support and assistance of the wider church.<sup>155</sup>

He considers various issues that cannot be dealt with on a province-by-province basis, included amongst them is climate change. Beresford argues that none of the existing networks has been able to fulfil this function. He acknowledges that the most likely place amongst the existing networks for the environment to be located would be the Peace and Justice Network. He notes, however, that “while it reflected

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<sup>153</sup> Eric Beresford, “Proposal Re: Anglican Communion Environment Network, Prepared by The Rev. Canon Eric B. Beresford, Consultant for Ethics: Anglican Consultative Council, To Strive to Safeguard the Integrity of Creation, and Sustain and Renew the Earth (From, Five Marks of Mission, Adopted at ACC-6)”, unpublished, 2002.

<sup>154</sup> This joint statement is published in Sister Marjorie Keenan (ed), *From Stockholm to Johannesburg: An Historical overview of the concern of the Holy See for the environment, 1972-2002*. (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2002). This publication also gives an overview of the Roman Catholic Church’s engagement with issues of the environment, following official statements issued.

briefly on environmental issues at its first meeting, the range of issues pressing for the attention of this network is vast and the environment quickly, and predictably, fell from the agenda.”<sup>156</sup> This comment reflects something of the divide in thinking of issues of the environment. Those who are familiar with justice issues within the church do not consider the environment to be one of those issues, and those who tend to work in the environment sphere do not easily see the connections between justice and the environment.

#### **4.3.6.1 Canberra meeting**

The first official meeting of the Network took place in Canberra in April 2005. A number of presentations were made and resolutions passed. A strong focus was on climate change. A report was given to the ACC meeting in Nottingham, England in June 2005 for approval. The emphasis on climate change was in keeping with a strong push for this issue to be taken seriously by the G8 governments meeting in July and also in preparation for a major climate change conference to take place in Montreal in December that year.

#### **4.3.7 Conclusion: Still searching for an *oikotheology***

We have covered a number of statements and resolutions of the Anglican Church. Clearly one cannot conclude that the Anglican Communion has developed an *oikotheology*. There are signs of hope, yet no systematic theology that has been developed to assist it in integrating the environment and poverty.

Having looked at the context of the Anglican Church worldwide we now turn our attention to the Church of the Province of Southern Africa.

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<sup>155</sup> Beresford, “Proposal Re: Anglican Communion Environment Network”.

<sup>156</sup> Beresford, “Proposal Re: Anglican Communion Environment Network”.

#### 4.4 Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA)

There have been a number of books and articles on the Anglican Church in Southern Africa published in recent years which give us insights into the life and practice of the church. There is, however, little on its environmental dimensions.<sup>157</sup> In terms of the decision making structures of the church, there is an Archbishop who oversees diocesan bishops. The Synod of Bishops meets twice a year, the Provincial Synod every three years and the Provincial Standing Committee annually between Provincial Synods. Both the Provincial Synod and the Provincial Standing Committee comprise clerical as well as lay representatives.

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<sup>157</sup> The *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 101, 1998 includes "Special section: The Anglican Church in Southern Africa at 150." The following articles are included: Luke Lungile Pato, "Anglicanism and africanisation: The Legacy of Robert Grey," 49-57, looks at "the legacy of Anglicanism against the contemporary contextual imperative to embrace the process of Africanisation;" Beverley Haddad, "'Neither Hot nor cold': The CPSA as an agent of social transformation in the Western Cape, 1960-1990," 59-68, considers the potential of the Church to engage in social transformation through an examination of the role of the Board for Social Responsibility, a separate organisation based within the Church; John Suggit and Mandy Goedhals (eds), *Change and challenge: Essays commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Robert Gray as Bishop of Cape Town (20 February 1848)* (Cape Town: CPSA Publishing Committee, 1998) concentrates on historical perspectives covering areas like the interpretation of scripture, liturgy, church unity discussion, women, ethics, theological education and questions of indigenisation; Frank England and Torquil Paterson (eds), *Bounty in bondage: The Anglican Church in Southern Africa – Essays in honour of Edward King, Dean of Cape Town* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1989) incorporates historical perspectives as well as scripture, the role of bishops, mission, church-state relations, what it means to be African and Anglican and theology; Leonard Hulley, Louise Kretschmar and Luke Lungile Pato (eds) *Archbishop Tutu: Prophetic witness in South Africa* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1996) deals with a number of contemporary issues; Denise Ackermann, Jonathan Draper and Emma Mashinini (eds) *Women hold up half the sky: Women in the church in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991) is edited by Anglicans but includes contributions from a wide range of people with a focus on the history and experience of the women in the church, including in the Anglican Church; Peter Hinchliff, *The Anglican Church in South Africa* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963) gives a concise overview of the Church's origins; Michael Worsnip, *Between the two fires: The Anglican Church and apartheid 1948-1957* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1991) gives an historical overview of a particular period; Alan Paton, *Apartheid and the Archbishop: The Life and times of Geoffrey Clayton* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1973) and

## 4.5 Provincial synods

We will trace the issue of the environment primarily as recorded at Provincial Synods, in the charges delivered by archbishops as well as in the resolutions. It will be noted that while there are a number of references to the environment, there are also a number that refer to economic matters. During the period that Geoff Davies was a bishop and member of the Provincial Synod (1989-2004) there was an integration of ecological concerns with economic concerns, in a way that is both a resource for the wider Anglican communion, and contextual grounding for constructing an *oikotheology*.

### 4.5.1 1973 Johannesburg

The first Provincial Synod at which there was a reference to the environment was that held in 1973. There was a resolution on "Pollution":

- (a) That this Synod supports all attempts to combat pollution, and draws attention to the serious responsibility placed on man to preserve the goodness of God's creation;
- (b) That Synod calls upon Provincial Standing Committee to set the necessary machinery in motion to establish:

- (i) the theological implications of pollution for South Africa;
- (ii) the practical implications of pollution as a problem for the various social, income and racial groups in South Africa;

and to make available, as far as possible, the educational facilities necessary to train Christians in the implications of the pollution problem and the necessary action to deal with it.<sup>158</sup>

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J.S. Peart-Binns, *Archbishop Joost de Blank: Scourge of apartheid* (London: Muller, Blond & White, 1987) are examples of studies of particular archbishops.

<sup>158</sup> Provincial Synod Resolutions, 1973.

#### 4.5.2 1985 Pietermaritzburg

The *Board of the Department of Mission* agreed to an environmental theme “The Earth is the Lord’s” for the CPSA Call to Mission for 1985. As it turned out political violence was to increase significantly from September 1984. Bishop Geoff Davies commented on this situation:

It is a long and hard haul for us to discover that we have to establish justice for the natural environment as well if we humans are to live together in peace. There will be no peace amongst us humans while we continue to abuse and rape the natural environment. As was abundantly clear under apartheid – and is clear in the world today with its gross economic disparities – we all suffer when injustices are perpetrated amongst us. So we all suffer when we treat the natural world with disdain – for we have to have clean water to drink, clean air to breathe and soil to grow our crops in if we are to survive.<sup>159</sup>

For the 1985 Call to Mission a slide show and prayer leaflets and a poster were produced which were sent to all the dioceses of the CPSA.

In that same year at the Provincial Synod Archbishop Philip Russell highlighted environmental issues in his charge. He highlighted issues facing the church in the sub-continent and after discussing the economy and political reform, he proceeded:

The third issue concerns the environment. I realise that this is the sort of thing which may well make many want to slip mentally into neutral gear, for the word seems to conjure up a picture of well meaning bird watchers worrying about the white-nosed rhino (or whatever it is called) and not really giving a button about kids of Soweto.

This is, of course, a caricature. I wish that more Anglicans, more Christians, would treat the matter of environment seriously, and

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<sup>159</sup> Geoff Davies, “Church and the environment: A Personal pilgrimage”, 30-34 (*Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Africa*, Double Issue in partnership with the SACC: Church, environment and the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), Vol 8, No 2 & Vol 8, No 3, April & August 2002).



encourage others to do likewise. It is not without significance that I do not recall one single resolution taken at any Provincial Synod, or even at a Diocesan Synod for that matter, dealing with the environment. I hope I am wrong.

That is why I am glad that this year's Call to Mission has taken the environment as its theme. We need to be reminded again and again of how fragile is the skin that covers the earth's surface, from which and in which the means of sustenance for the generations to come will have to be found.

Russell concluded this section with a reference to the Call to Mission:

The sub titles of this year's Call to Mission are:

Live in Harmony with it

Conserve it

Preserve it – for our children

Yes, that is the point: there won't be any kids in Soweto or anywhere else unless we care for the environment around about us.<sup>160</sup>

This was the beginning of a more sustained focus on the environment within the CPSA.

#### **4.5.3 1992 Swaziland**

In his charge to the Provincial Synod meeting in 1992 in Swaziland Archbishop Desmond Tutu made a brief reference to the environment. In the context of the *Partners-in-Mission* programme, he spoke of ensuring that "we have a proper stewardship of God's creation and carry out our ecological responsibility."<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> The President's Charge, Provincial Synod, 1985.

#### 4.5.4 1995 Kimberley

In 1995 Bishop Davies produced the booklet *Save our Future* a 16 page booklet with colour pictures, on the church's responsibility towards the environment, which was widely distributed within the CPSA.<sup>162</sup> An article describes it as follows:

To help Christians understand their God given responsibility to care for the earth, the Bishop of Umzimvubu, the Rt. Revd Geoffrey Davies, has produced a booklet entitled *Save our Future*, which draws our attention to the urgent need for a Christian response to this crisis [of our natural world]. "The environment is not just about saving a few animals or flowers," says Bishop Geoff "but about our survival and our responsibility to God."

The booklet is attractively produced and illustrated with vivid colour pictures. It explains and surveys the threats to life on earth under the headings: Injustice; Global Threats; Destruction of Natural Resources."<sup>163</sup>

In terms of resolutions at the 1995 Provincial Synod, Bishop Davies proposed one entitled "Save our Future" which called for the endorsement of the campaign by the same name. It begins by establishing the motivation:

the future of human beings and all life on earth hangs in balance as a consequence of the present unjust economic structure, the injustice existing between the rich and the poor and the continuing exploitation of the natural environment...and...we as Christians have a God-given mandate to care for, look after and protect God's creation....

The resolution endorsed the petition contained in "Save our Future" which calls on governments, particularly those of the countries of Southern Africa:

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<sup>161</sup> The President's Charge, Provincial Synod, 1992.

<sup>162</sup> Geoff Davies, *Save the future: A Christian response to the social and environmental threats facing humankind* (Report for the Southern African Anglican Theological Commission, Scottburgh: B. Poynter Printers, undated).

<sup>163</sup> Geoff Davies, "Down to Earth", in *Anglican New Life*, an ad hoc publication of the CPSA, Vol 1. No 4, May 1999, 8.

- to work for and create a sustainable society in a sustainable world,
- to recognise the dignity and rights of all people and the sanctity of life,
- to seek to ensure the responsible use and recycling of natural resources.

The resolution expressed the belief that it is essential that governments undertake the following:

- Make environmental education a compulsory part of all school curricula
- Establish and enforce environmental laws in industry
- Establish fairer trade practices between North and South
- Ensure that the activities of transnational companies benefit rather than exploit people and the natural environment.
- Reduce military expenditure and control ownership of guns
- Prohibit production and use of CFCs
- Develop the use of renewable, non-polluting energy resources, such as sun, wind
- Protect indigenous forests, wetlands, marine environments and other threatened and sensitivity ecosystems.
- Discourage the use of non-returnable bottles and plastic bags
- Ensure that the activities of transnational companies and the Tourist Industry benefit rather than exploit the local people and their natural environment.<sup>164</sup>

A further resolution was proposed by Bishop Geoff Davies entitled “Fifty Years is Enough”, drawn from an NGO campaign marking the 50 year anniversary of the Bretton Woods institutions, institutions that, in their operation, have often worsened environmental problems through their lack of transparency in their operation or lack of consultation with the local people with whom they work. The following was endorsed to try to counteract this phenomenon:

3.1 Sustainable, equitable development will only be achieved through a redistribution of power and resources from the rich to the poor. This

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<sup>164</sup> Provincial Synod Resolutions, 1995.



will require a transformation of the international economic system. As international institutions whose policies shape economic systems and affect the lives of billions throughout the world, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and their member governments must work in support of global, social, political and economic justice by taking the following steps:

3.1.1 Replace Structural Adjustment Programmes with policies and projects which meet the needs of the poor and promote sustainable, participatory and equitable development.

3.1.2 Cancel or substantially reduce multilateral debt, especially for the poorest countries, and increase support for the reduction of commercial and bilateral debt.

3.1.3 Democratised the World Bank and IMF and make them accountable to the people affected by their policies and projects. This requires democratic voting allocations, increased transparency, access to information and participation at every stage of projects, programmes and policies.<sup>165</sup>

While there was a clear link made between poverty and economic injustice, in this instance there was no clear link made between the preservation of the environment and poverty eradication, once again illustrating how difficult it has been for the church in South Africa to think in terms of an *oikothology*.

Desmond Tutu, in his charge at that Synod, uses the stewardship image and referred to Geoff Davies' efforts:

We have the great privilege of being stewards of God's bounty through our tithing. We are constrained by our faith to be stewards of all of creation. We are unlikely to be allowed to forget that by the Bishop of Umzimvubu, whose Diocese recently hosted World Environment Day in Kokstad. We really must do something about the sinful scandal of littering and degrading of our township environment. It is a sin to litter and to pollute the environment.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Provincial Synod Resolutions, 1995.

<sup>166</sup> The President's Charge, Provincial Synod, 1995.

#### 4.5.5 1999 Durban

At the Provincial Synod in 1999, the following motion, entitled “Poverty, Debt and the Environment”, was proposed by Bishop Davies. It recognises the connection between poverty, debt and the environment. In the introductory sections it states:

mindful of the reports and resolution of the Lambeth Conference relating to the Environment and Economic Justice...and...being aware of...the alarming levels of economic injustice and inequality in the countries of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa...and...the injustices in the suffering and poverty of millions of people in our world today are a direct cause of the alarming destruction and degradation of the earth's natural environment...and...further believing such injustices to be sinful, clearly condemned in the Bible and contrary to the will of God and following the call for a Jubilee in the Book of Leviticus (Chapter 25).

It goes on to state that the synod resolves to:

4.1 call on the governments of the countries of the CPSA and the G8 nations and on the United Nations urgently to seek for and implement a more just economic system which will prevent the exploitation of the poor countries of the world to benefit the rich;

4.2 call on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the UN, in the light of alarming escalating unemployment, to establish radical new trade agreements which take into account the welfare of people, the natural environment and the viability of agricultural and industrial enterprises in developing countries;

4.3 further call on the governments of the G8 nations to cancel all the odious and unpayable debts during the year 2000;

4.4 call on ecumenical leaders of the churches of Southern Africa to consult with the leadership of the SADEC countries regarding the establishment of more just economic structures and forms of government and for the Provincial church leaders to consult with Provincial government leaders;

4.5 call on the Dioceses of the CPSA to:

4.5.1 inform themselves and their parishes about the issues of Eco-Justice and, to discuss them formulate a plan of action which would lead to a more just economic system at international, national and local level to support the Jubilee 2000 Campaign;

4.5.2 to fund a Provincial Human Development Programme at the level of at least 0.7% of annual diocesan income (calculated according to the annual provincial returns from dioceses) for development projects for the poor and the alleviation of poverty, such program to be administered by the appropriate authorities in each Diocese.<sup>167</sup>

While this presents a strong statement on economic justice, it is rather vague on ecological issues, and so does not clearly provide an integrated view, one that an *oikotheology* seeks to construct.

#### **4.5.6 2002 Bloemfontein**

In his charge to Provincial Synod in September 2002 Archbishop Ndungane, focusing on “Christ our Hope for Today: A New Journey to Emmaus”, identified three major challenges: Poverty Eradication, the Preservation of the Integrity of Creation and Combating the AIDS Pandemic. In the section on the environment he started off by stating:

In a foreword in a book of Essays entitled “Environmental Justice in South Africa” edited by David McDonald, I wrote:  
“South Africa is a land of stunning beauty and scenic wonder, with contrasts ranging from arid semi-desert areas to lush green forests; from flat plains to towering mountains. Socially and economically it is likewise a country of extreme contrasts, ranging from the affluence of multimillion-rand mansions to the extreme poverty of people living in tin shacks or under plastic, with no employment or resources of their own.”

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<sup>167</sup> Provincial Synod Resolutions, 1999.

The greatest challenge to Southern Africa is to eradicate poverty and develop its people while ensuring that the natural environment is not destroyed in the process. There must be development, but not at the price of destroying the natural environment for the next generation. We must constantly strive to find ways of creating a balance between our own rapacious demands and the preservation of the environment for our future survival. God has provided for our needs not our greed. The natural wonders of our region - including the magnificent variety of fauna and flora, as well as our water resources, our topsoil, our grazing lands, our clean air - must be preserved and protected for future generations. Environmental justice is integral to peace and prosperity. The environment cannot speak out for itself; it cannot *toyitoyi*. It needs us to speak up on its behalf.

The lesson we need to learn urgently is that if we do not treat the environment with integrity, we ourselves will reap the consequences of fouled air and water, increasing deserts, rising sea levels, denuded marine resources, and a world vastly impoverished in species diversity. Our children will ask how we could have allowed this to happen.<sup>168</sup>

His words articulate well an *oikotheology* which this research is attempting to construct. The archbishop then commented about the WSSD which had taken place shortly before Synod. He mentioned that there should be support for the resolutions coming out of this meeting as well as those emanating from the Anglican Congress. He also expressed the need for ongoing concern: "It is our responsibility to monitor the implementation of commitment to actions on the issues on which our physical as well as our spiritual lives depend."<sup>169</sup>

He expressed the significance of environmental issues and commended Bishop Geoff Davies for his concern:

What is important for us as the church is to move environmental issues to the forefront of our agenda. I would like to pay tribute here to Bishop Geoff Davies, our liaison bishop on environmental issues. His has been a lone persistent voice in this arena.

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<sup>168</sup> The President's Charge, Provincial Synod, 2002.

<sup>169</sup> The President's Charge, Provincial Synod, 2002.

In an earlier section of his charge relating to poverty eradication the Archbishop recognises the value of land: "As church we need to engage in creative community development programmes that will, among other things, encourage the use of land in food production."<sup>170</sup>

Another issue that surfaced at the Provincial Synod was that of militarization. Bishop Davies proposed a resolution on "Militarization". In calling for a reduction in armaments and the promotion of peaceful alternatives to violence the following formed the introduction to the resolution:

Noting that in his Charge to Synod, the President observed that "there are so many people who go hungry every day", with "2.8 billion people living on less than R20 a day" and that "even when civil war is ending, as in Angola, the full extent of the humanitarian crisis in that area is only now being revealed and requires a massive international response. An additional one million people are affected by famine as a result of the civil war." ....believing that military expenditure is a non-productive use of finances, natural resources and human energy; And furthermore, noting with alarm that the amount spent on armaments (\$900 billion annually) could solve the environmental and poverty crises facing humanity....<sup>171</sup>

While an initiative like this is to be welcomed, and in spite of referring to the "environmental and poverty crises", it does not articulate a clear connection between the reduction of defence spending, the decrease in poverty and the enhancement of the environment.

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<sup>170</sup> The President's Charge, Provincial Synod, 2002.

<sup>171</sup> Provincial Synod Resolutions, 2002.



#### **4.5.7 2005 Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal**

The most recent Provincial Synod was held in July 2005 at Edgewood College in Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal. As Bishop Geoff Davies was not longer a diocesan bishop at this stage he did not attend the synod. There were no resolutions on the environment at this synod, perhaps symbolising both the vital leadership position played by Bishop Davies in the CPSA but also how shallow the environment concern was in the church.

In his charge, however, Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane did refer to the issue of climate change. Under a section entitled "Building Bridges of Hope: Bridges of Hope for the World" in his charge, Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane made the following comments:

[O]ur understanding of the human vocation as stewards of creation is a vital contribution and alternative morality in right-thinking people's attempts to save the world from ruthless economic exploitation. Some scientists are predicting that global warming and environmental degradation will soon be causing more deaths than the 3 million a year from HIV/AIDS. We have to speak out, be engaged.<sup>172</sup>

#### **4.6 Land in the CPSA**

While the Archbishop had spoken about land use, the issues around land have not been a prominent concern of the bishops of the CPSA, nor has it been seen as a significant factor in poverty alleviation. In 1995 the Southern African Anglican Theological Commission produced a report on land and its uses.<sup>173</sup> The bishops have a liaison bishop on land issues.

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<sup>172</sup> The President's Charge, Provincial Synod, 2005

<sup>173</sup> CPSA, "The Land and Its Use in Southern Africa: Report of the Southern Anglican Theological Commission, 26<sup>th</sup> January 1995", 6-16 (*Bulletin for Contextual Theology*, Church and Land, 5:3, September 1998 (issued October 1999)).

#### 4.7 CPSA Environment Network

The formal establishment of an Environment Network within the CPSA is a significant step in the focus of the CPSA in terms of the environment.

Since 1995, once again through the efforts of Bishop Geoff Davies, there have been resolutions of Provincial Synod and Provincial Standing Committee calling for the establishment of an Environment Network within the CPSA. While its establishment had been accepted the structure that emerged has remained an informal one. Unlike other committees authorised by the bishops to be established, the Environment Committee receives no funds from the Province, nor is it required to report to Provincial Synod. This has led to its marginalisation within the CPSA.

There has, however, been interest and enthusiasm from Anglicans to support its formation and functioning. Bishop Davies' commitment to its formation received support at the Global Anglican Congress on the Stewardship of Creation at which CPSA delegates present agreed as a group to set up a CPSA Environmental Network. This was followed up by a telephone conference on 29 October 2003 at which the 11 people participating, including those from dioceses outside of South Africa (Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland), agreed to support and participate in the CPSA Environment Network.<sup>174</sup> Bishop Geoff Davies was elected the chairperson of the Network. The first meeting of the Network took place in Grahamstown from 12-15 February 2004. A total of 14 delegates, from the dioceses of Cape Town, Highveld, Natal, Zululand, Lebombo, Lesotho and Swaziland and representatives from the Anglican Students' Federation (ASF) and the College of the Transfiguration, gathered. At this meeting the following statement was agreed upon:

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<sup>174</sup> Minutes of the CPSA Environment Network teleconference, 29 October 2003.

***"Celebrating God's Creation:  
Ukuvuyisana Ngendalo kaThixo"***

**CPSA ENVIRONMENT NETWORK**

**Vision:**

To cherish the living planet that has been entrusted to us by our creator and to promote a more ecologically sustainable way of life.

**Aim and objectives:**

To assist the CPSA fulfil its prophetic calling regarding environmental and economic issues by:

1. Creating and encouraging environmental awareness and an appreciation of creation.
2. Empowering environmental action and responsibility at a Parish, Diocesan and Provincial level.  
Providing environmental resource material.
3. Developing and disseminating worship resource material.
4. Ensuring environmental education is included in theological training within the CPSA.
5. Collaborating with other environmental stakeholders.
6. Supporting environmental and eco-justice projects in the CPSA.
7. Speaking out and taking action against environmental and socio-economic injustice in institutions of governance and power.<sup>175</sup>

It was decided at this meeting that a major focus would be on using a parish audit, a simple document that would help congregations identify their own environmental priorities and environmental management policy. The promotion of sustainable agriculture would be another focus of the Network. The meeting agreed that it is important to try to provide people with the skills to secure their own food.

It is interesting to note the dual concern for "environmental and economic issues". While this focus tends to reflect the *oikotheology* that we are trying to construct, it is



difficult to assess the significance of the Network. When Bishop Davies became the co-ordinator of SAFCEI he resigned as the chairperson of the CPSA Network, resulting in the loss of an important advocate of the Network's work.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The Anglican Communion has tried to grapple with environmental issues in various ways through pronouncements of archbishops and resolutions of Lambeth Conferences. At times these statements have contained elements pointing towards elements of an *oikotheology*. There has, however, not been evidence of a consistent and sustained effort to formulate an appropriate environmental theology.

Developments in respect of the environment within the Anglican Communion have had an influence on developments within the CPSA. Bishop Geoff Davies attended the 1998 Lambeth Conference and was obviously in touch with developments within the Anglican Communion. Within the CPSA Bishop Davies played a prominent role in proposing environmental motions to Provincial Synod and in establishing the Environmental Network. Synods within the Anglican Church, and possibly within other churches are notorious for making statements about issues without following them up properly. So, while on paper, some remarkable resolutions have been passed, there has not been clear evidence of them being acted upon in a meaningful way. Also, we have seen that particular individuals can make an impact on the life of the Province. There needs to be the formulation of a theology that can guide and sustain the church at all levels.

Environmental issues remain marginal within the CPSA. No major organisations within the CPSA seem to have grappled seriously with environmental issues; they

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<sup>175</sup> Minutes of the CPSA Environment Network meeting, 12-15 February 2004.

seem to remain an optional extra. While the Environment Network provides a potentially effective vehicle for the continued focus on the environment within the CPSA, it needs to be strongly supported by the leadership of the church and given authority to carry out its work effectively. What is also needed is greater co-operation among different organisations within the CPSA. For example, there could be much greater collaboration with the Development Network, a recognised Network within the CPSA. Within chapter seven we look more closely at suggested strategies for the CPSA.

In the next chapter we look at a particular diocese, that of the diocese of Umzimvubu. This provides us with an opportunity to example of what can be achieved within a particular diocese that has a sustained focus on the environment.

## CHAPTER 5

### AT HOME IN AFRICA: THE DIOCESE OF UMZIMVUBU

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on work done in respect of the environment and poverty in the Diocese of Umzimvubu, a diocese within the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA). It serves as a case study, showing how a particular church denomination within a specific geographical area has focused on environmental concerns with an awareness of their impact on poverty. The study concentrates on the period from 1991 to 2003, the period during which Bishop Geoff Davies served as the Bishop of this diocese. We also consider the earlier period, particularly from 1989, when Davies first began work in the diocese.

The reasons for concentrating on this diocese are two fold. Firstly, the diocese is one with widespread poverty. It is situated mostly in the Eastern Cape Province, which is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa. Secondly, it is a diocese where there has been a concerted effort to focus on the environment, primarily through the “sustainable agriculture” and environmental education programmes. It is hoped that the lessons learnt in this context by the diocese may be of assistance to other churches in other contexts, and will help us root the environment-poverty connection in a rural South African context. In this way it will contribute to the construction of an *oikotheology*.

Within the diocese there emerged a clear understanding that the resources of the earth serve as a source of life for all, and that these resources should be well managed so that those who are poor may have access to them and so ensure their survival. The term “sustainable”, especially in regard to agriculture, is used in recognition that this

resource base needs to be maintained so that ecosystems are not compromised. The strong environmental education component was necessary to help people see the value of the environment, that it should be respected, enjoyed, preserved and used in a way that benefits all.

In order to place this work in context we provide an overview of the life of the diocese, including commenting on the nature of its poverty. Thereafter, we describe aspects of development in the diocese, focusing on education and training, land, sustainable agriculture and the Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Project (USAEEP). We then look at particular occasions and specific issues within the diocese, those that point us towards an *oikotheology*. We conclude with a discussion on insights gained from the diocese.

## **5.2 Overview of the life of the diocese**

We consider a brief history of the diocese, and then describe the geography, language, parishes, clergy, synods and the bishop of the diocese, together with a note about the extent of poverty in the diocese.

The Diocese of Umzimvubu grew out of the “multiplication” of the Diocese of St John’s, being formed from the northern region of St John’s.<sup>176</sup> Realising that the Diocese of St John’s was rather large and that there was a need for “development”, a committee for the Northern areas, called the *Regional and Community Development Committee* (RCDC), was formed in 1989. This committee proposed the formation of a new diocese and on 28 July 1991, at a Family Day Service held at the East Griqualand Show Grounds in Kokstad, the Diocese of Umzimvubu was inaugurated. Its name had been decided upon on 22 April 1991 at a meeting of the clergy and lay representatives at Kokstad to name the new diocese. Its name is taken from the

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<sup>176</sup> St John’s Diocese had been formed in 1874.

Umzimvubu River which rises in the Ukhahlamba - Drakensberg and with its tributaries runs through most of the Diocese, connecting many of the parishes.

On 1 December 1991, at a service in Mt Frere, Bishop Geoff Davies was enthroned as the first bishop of the Diocese of Umzimvubu. Previous to this, since 1988, Bishop Davies had served as Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese of St John's. He served until the end of December 2003,<sup>177</sup> when he was succeeded by Bishop Mlibo Ngewu.<sup>178</sup>

The diocese covers a wide area.<sup>179</sup> It includes the area from the Ngwagwane, Umzimkulu and Mtamvuna rivers in the North to the Tsitsana, Tsitsa and Umzimvubu rivers in the South. On the North West is the Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg mountain range and on the East the Indian Ocean. The area incorporates a number of areas rich in biodiversity and natural beauty. There are areas with endemic flora as well as the ecologically sensitive Pondoland Wild Coast and the beautiful Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg, a proclaimed World Heritage Site.

While English is spoken throughout the diocese, the most common language spoken is isiXhosa. Sesotho is spoken in some parts of the diocese, particularly in those parts near Lesotho. Afrikaans is also spoken, particularly around Kokstad.

The diocese was divided into 32 parishes, comprising about 600 congregations. These were grouped into six archdeaconries: Clydesdale, Holy Cross, Kokstad, Matatiele, Mount Frere and Qumbu. The diocese was served by 52 clergy, 23 of whom were stipendiary. Of these, four were women (one from Canada).<sup>180</sup> Regular synods were

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<sup>177</sup> Bishop Davies was appointed Provincial Executive Officer, based in the Diocese of Cape Town, by the Archbishop of the CPSA. He held this position until 30 June 2004. Since then he has concentrated on pursuing his environmental interests, chiefly through SAFCEI.

<sup>178</sup> Bishop Ngewu was consecrated at a Provincial gathering on 5 December 2003 in the Cathedral in Grahamstown, Diocese of Grahamstown.

<sup>179</sup> See map, xi.

<sup>180</sup> As at 31 December 2003.

held as the main decision making instrument of the diocese.<sup>181</sup> They provided an opportunity for the bishop to set out the diocesan vision in the “Bishop’s charge”, the clergy and lay representatives and various groups, such as the Mothers’ Union and the Youth, to report on their work, for the finances of the diocese to be presented and for decisions to be made about the future of the diocese.

As we saw from chapter four, in his role within the CPSA, Bishop Davies has a strong concern for the environment. This concern came through in his introduction of a theme of the environment (with the 1985 Call to Mission theme of “The Earth is the Lord’s”) while serving as the Director of the Department of Mission for the CPSA (1981 – 1987) and in a number of resolutions he brought to the Provincial Synod of the CPSA. Significant too was his production in 1997 of “Save Our Future”. He has engaged in a number of environmental issues and this has led to him being popularly referred to as the “green bishop”. His involvement has extended beyond the CPSA to other denominations. During his episcopacy of the Diocese of Umzimvubu he was able to strengthen his environmental vocation in leading the diocese in its approach to development.

A major part of the area of the diocese covers the former Transkei “homeland”.<sup>182</sup> As we have seen in chapter two, homelands had a high density of people for a rural area and as a consequence of overcrowding, the land become significantly degraded. This area was no exception.

The area the diocese covers is regarded as one of the poorest areas of South Africa, with relatively little infrastructure and unemployment as high as 75%.

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<sup>181</sup> Synods were held from 30 September – 3 October 1993; 27 – 29 September 1996; and from 2000 (which comprised three settings, over a three year period).

<sup>182</sup> The Transkei was a homeland created by the South African government for those of Xhosa ethnic origin. In 1976 it became “independent” of South Africa. The homeland system was scrapped with the scrapping of apartheid, and in 1996, when new provinces were created in South Africa, it became part of the Eastern Cape Province.

In one particular area, research revealed the extent of the poverty:

An academic study done in the Mt Frere district found that there is chronic poverty with 250 000 people living below the bread line. Seventy-seven percent of households generate no wages at all. People are both income and asset poor, having lost or never been able to acquire livestock. A third of the people spends 80 per cent of their income on food and is permanently undernourished, with little protein in their diets.<sup>183</sup>

To a large extent the people live off the land. Relying on traditional subsistence farming methods, the people are dependent on access to arable land to eke out a living. There were particular environmental problems facing the diocese which were to impact negatively on the livelihoods of communities:

We all know, however, that there has been, and continues to be, serious environmental degradation here, and this is in many ways linked to the demonic policies of apartheid. We all know the phrases which describe the situation here: soil erosion, deforestation, inadequate water supplies, drought, land shortage, lack of enough arable land for crop production, overgrazing, overcrowding. Trees are being cut faster than they are being replanted. Fuelwood demand exceeded supply as long ago as 1980. Forests are shrinking.<sup>184</sup>

In this diocese, working to maintain healthy ecosystems, preserving the fertility of the soil and ensuring there is water available played a significant role in helping eradicate poverty. It is these aspects that are tackled in efforts to embark on development.

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<sup>183</sup> Kate Davies, "Back to Eden in South Africa", *The Window*, Issue 1, November 2003, USPG, London.

<sup>184</sup> Bob Thelin, "Sustainable Agriculture: Caring for the Holy Earth", A Presentation at the Workshop on Sustainable Agriculture, Organised by the Catholic Development Centre, Silowa Conference Centre, Umtata, 17-19 September, 1993, 2.



### 5.3 Development in the diocese

“Development” has been a significant term within the life of the diocese, and was regarded as an important focus. It took on different meanings. Bishop Davies was to continue the focus on development that had begun before his arrival in the diocese. At the inauguration of the diocese, Davies used the term “development” in a particular way in referring to human development: “Our primary task in the “new” South Africa is to develop people.”<sup>185</sup> His commitment to development was to focus on the needs of people as well as preserving the natural environment which was seen as providing the resources for meeting these needs.

In the next sections we trace the emergence of a focus on development, with the connection between poverty eradication and the environment, looking at particular people, the development committee, and aspects of development in the diocese.

#### 5.3.1 Particular people

Many people in the diocese became engaged in the development work. Besides Bishop Davies, there were a few who were to play particular leadership roles. They represent different aspects of this development work. They are introduced here in order to give a clearer picture of who they are and when they were involved.

Morriat Gabula, a priest in the diocese, is recorded as having being involved in development in the diocese for many years. An early reference to his work is the following: “Father Gabula is a community and development fieldworker for the diocese. As such, he is involved in evangelical outreach and development.”<sup>186</sup> The origin and nature of his ministry is expressed in the following:

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<sup>185</sup> Geoff Davies, “Enthronement Charge by the First Bishop of Umzimvubu, The Rt. Revd. Geoffrey F. Davies”, 1 December 1991, St George’s, Mt Frere.

<sup>186</sup> Minutes of the Regional and Community Development Committee, 19 May 1989.



It was during a five year ministry in Butterworth that Father Gabula began to feel dissatisfied with what he was achieving. He felt strongly that evangelism was not meeting the basic needs of all the people and so, after a great deal of prayer, he asked Bishop Jacob for a license to work on evangelism AND development – the compassionate ministry of Christ.<sup>187</sup>

In his approach to his work he always tried to promote self sufficiency and avoid dependency. At various times over the years he was involved in both a full-time and a part-time capacity in this work.<sup>188</sup>

While Morriat Gabula had been part of the diocese for many years, Bob Thelin came from the outside. In response to the widespread soil degradation, food insecurity and high poverty levels experienced in the diocese, sustainable agriculture was to become a strong focus. Bob Thelin became closely involved in this work and was to articulate its approach in a number of ways. He was trained in both agriculture and theology and he had worked for a number of years in sustainable agriculture in various parts of Africa. He started working in the Diocese of St John's in July 1990. From the end of 1990 he was chosen as the new director of the *Regional and Community Development Committee*, convening meetings and serving as its minute secretary.<sup>189</sup>

When Thelin's contract ended on 30 November 1995, Bishop Davies requested Dan Hoffman of the Joint Ministry on Africa to second Bob and his wife Nelda to the Diocese of Umzimvubu from 1 June 1996.<sup>190</sup> The purpose would be "to work in the area of sustainable agriculture and to continue with church land issues."<sup>191</sup> From June

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<sup>187</sup> *Umzimvubu News*, Diocese of Umzimvubu, November 1993, 3.

<sup>188</sup> His contribution to the community was recognised in 2001 when he was awarded the honour of *Community Builder of the Year for the Eastern Cape*.

<sup>189</sup> Minutes of the Regional and Community Development Committee, 14 December 1990.

<sup>190</sup> From 1 December 1995 to 31 May 1996 Thelin was on home leave in the USA.

<sup>191</sup> Minutes of the Regional and Community Development Committee, 4 September 1995.

1996 the Thelins were based in Kokstad until Bob's retirement on 31 May 2000.

When he left, Ms Busiswa Wawa succeeded him as a field worker.

In 2000 Busisiwa Wawa became a field worker for USAEEP, and was active in visiting communities and encouraging them. Her skills in AIDS work contributed considerably to her work. She did a month's course at the Wildlife college at Hoedspruit in 2000. This course in basic project management, with a bit of computer literacy training, and business plans enabled her to assist the Project in a variety of ways. In 2003, she received further training, doing a permaculture course at Rustler's Valley in the eastern Free State.

Since the early 1990's, Kate Davies, Bishop Geoff's wife, was used in the Diocese to provide environmental education resources. Years earlier she had initially trained as a natural scientist and had lectured at the University of Cape Town. In 1995 she did the Rhodes University Gold Fields participatory course in Environmental Education. Her final project was the "Year of Special Days" – a guide to significant days in the South African calendar and which, until 2000, contained prayers and bible readings on the theme Justice, Peace and the Environment.

When Bob Thelin left, and, after an evaluation in February 2001, Kate took over the administration and management of the agricultural component while adding environmental education (EE) as a new dimension. At this time the "Sustainable Agriculture Programme" thus became known as the "Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Programme" (USAEEP).

Dan le Cordeur, the fourth person introduced, was from the diocese and was involved in development work from the early stages, in the late 1980's. He went onto train as a priest and continued his work in the diocese.

### 5.3.2 Development committee

The *Regional and Community Development Committee* (RCDC) played an important role within the diocese in the area of development. It is within this committee that the development vision of the diocese was expressed and the environmental focus arose. This committee's history will be traced and its importance assessed.

The RCDC was started in the Diocese of St John's in 1986 following a CPSA conference at Wilgespruit. This conference on Human and Community Development was organised by the CPSA Department of Mission through its director at the time, who happened to be Revd Geoff Davies. The priests from the Diocese of St John's who attended were Morriat Gabula, Sydwell Mhlauli and Livingstone Ngewu.

This committee was established with two broad purposes: the one was to develop the northern region of the Diocese of St John's and the other was to help the church to become more involved in community development. In 1988 the Committee spent two days developing its aims and objectives, which were published in a leaflet in 1989. The vision was stated as follows: "Our vision is that all God's people should reach the full stature of their humanity, so as to live in harmony with the rest of God's creation."<sup>192</sup> One of its objectives was clearly stated as being "[t]o assist people in finding strategies to break the poverty dependency cycle."<sup>193</sup> It is significant that while the term "development" was dominant in the discourse in the diocese, it was understood that the eradication of poverty was clearly seen to be at the heart of it. The intention was to engage in development in a manner that reflected an *oikothology*.

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<sup>192</sup> *Umzimvubu News*, Diocese of Umzimvubu, November 1997, 6.

<sup>193</sup> *Umzimvubu News*, Diocese of Umzimvubu, November 1997, 5.

This RCDC, chaired for most of the time by Bishop Davies, was an important body in the life of the diocese. It consisted of about eight members, comprising mainly clergy, appointed as need arose, and met about every one or two months. It became a driving force in the implementation of development work in the diocese.

### **5.3.3 Aspects of development in the diocese**

At this stage a few remarks about aspects of development are made. This serves to highlight various issues, some of which will be discussed more fully later. We look at approaches to development, frustrations experienced, and the issue of outside assistance.

During this period under consideration, different approaches to development were made. For example, at one stage, Dan le Cordeur worked with four parishes, Ncoti, Ensikeni, Lusikisiki and Cibini, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the church with the members and inspiring them to take stewardship seriously. He used the *Participatory Rural Appraisal* (PRA) method whereby people were involved in recalling the history of their church, telling their stories, and describing their congregation or community.

In its work the RCDC included a wide range of activities, including the preparation of Bible studies on aspects of caring of the land, and the organising of prayer services such as in Qumbu and Lusikisiki districts where at one stage violence had become widespread.

Important lessons were learnt, and a holistic approach to development developed. The value of relationships in development work was recognised. Thelin commented: "If our work in the field of agriculture doesn't create or strengthen a healthy

community spirit, it is worthless.”<sup>194</sup> Thelin’s approach to development may be seen in the following piece he had written:

Jesus said that he had come so that people might have life, and have it in all its fullness. And so the church is called to become involved in forms of ministry which help people to experience that fullness. That is the goal of development, it seems to me, working with people in ways which touch every aspect of their lives – social, physical, economic, moral, spiritual. Pointing people to God.<sup>195</sup>

It is interesting to note that while environmental issues were important in the diocese, it was only in April 2003 that a *Diocesan Environmental Working Group* was formed. A significant event occurred when seven members of this group attended workshops at Reichenau Roman Catholic Mission organised by the *Women’s Leadership and Training Programme* aimed at raising awareness of the importance of the environment for people in the diocese.

The diocese was to experience its fair share of frustrations in undertaking development. Engaging in development that reflected an *oikotheology* was not easy. Thelin expressed his frustration in trying to mobilise people in a report under the section headed “The Way Forward”:

It seems there are few people in the diocese who share the vision of healing the land and healing the people who live on the land.... I must say that my definition of development is holistic, and includes evangelism, reconciliation, the restoration of human dignity and self-respect, as well as economic and social upliftment.

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<sup>194</sup> Bob Thelin, “Sustainable Agriculture: Caring for the Holy Earth”, 2.

<sup>195</sup> Bob Thelin, “‘Where to Development?’ Some biblical and theological reflections”, St Cuthbert’s, 4 April 1991; presented to the Regional and Community Development Committee, 1.

Is sustainable agriculture something that the committee feels should be engaged in as part of mission to marginalised people living and working in a degraded environment in the rural areas?"<sup>196</sup>

Bob Thelin worked for the diocese for 10 years. In his final report to the RCDC, Thelin offered further some personal reflections on his experiences:

On 1 June [2000] I will be leaving Kokstad and my work in the Diocese to return to the USA on retirement. For the past 37 years Africa has been my home. It will continue to be my home despite the fact that I will be living far away, in another country, on another continent. I will miss the beauty of the green hills of Transkei and East Griqualand. But even more I will miss the beauty in the faces and lives of the people I have worked with....I will always remember the gifts I have received here: friendship, hospitality, love, grace, forgiveness. In one sense, it has been a lonely road. Some people have not understood what we have attempted to do in working with rural communities. Some have not shared the vision that development is a process of reaching out to people and walking with them where they are in their homes and communities. The ultimate goal of the process is the proclamation of a practical message of hope which leads to transformation and the restoration of human dignity in the lives of people.<sup>197</sup>

In working to eradicate poverty the consideration of where the resources come from arises. Evident throughout this time in the diocese was the tension between using outside resources and those within the diocese itself. Bob Thelin expressed this, on an occasion to the RCDC, in a fundamental way in terms of the vision of the work: "Does the committee believe that the vision I have attempted to lift up is something which is being imposed by an outsider from America?"<sup>198</sup> In an earlier discussion on the continued work of the Thelins in the diocese the need for the use of local resources was emphasised: "There is a feeling that the work in the diocese must not

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<sup>196</sup> Bob Thelin, "Sustainable Agriculture Programme, Diocese of Umzimvubu, Report to Regional and Community Development Committee", 23 July 1997.

<sup>197</sup> Bob Thelin, "Sustainable Agriculture Programme, Diocese of Umzimvubu, Final Report to the Regional and Community Development Committee", 12 April 2000.

<sup>198</sup> Bob Thelin, Sustainable Agriculture Programme, Diocese of Umzimvubu, Report to Regional and Community Development Committee by Bob Thelin, 23 July 1997.



be done just by outsiders... [I]t seems the experts are only whites. They are tied to money and power and authority.”<sup>199</sup> On a later occasion Gabula was to express strongly an approach which stressed self reliance:

People have resources within themselves for things they want to do for themselves. Allow them to contribute something towards what they want to do. Apartheid made our people, including myself to be dependent on them, even with things we can do ourselves. There are people who can make wire netting in some of the projects and who can teach other people how to do the same without them having to go out and buy the wire. At the end of it all, they will say they that they did it themselves, thereby putting an end to the dependence cycle.<sup>200</sup>

There had been a concerted effort to mobilise the resources available within the diocese. However, there was also an openness to engage valuable resources of those outside the diocese. This was clearly illustrated in the sustainable agriculture and environmental education programme. However, for agriculture to be sustainable implies that the reliance on outside inputs is kept to a minimum.

## **5.4 Education and training**

In this section and the next we consider two of the key elements of the diocese in its approach to development: education and training, and land. In considering education and training we focus firstly on theological education and the establishment of the Diocesan Training Centre.

Education and training were seen as important aspects of the life of the diocese and served to support the focus on the environment and poverty eradication. There were a number of components to education and training: general theological training, general skills training such, as in sustainable agriculture, and environmental

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<sup>199</sup> Minutes of the Regional and Community Development Committee, 4 September 1995.



education. The construction of a training centre was a key factor in the education and training offered. We will trace the vision behind this centre and evaluate the role it played. It needs to be borne in mind that in terms of the vision of the diocese “[u]nderlying all training will be an understanding of the need to rediscover harmonious living with God the Creator, with one another and with the natural environment.”<sup>201</sup> This certainly contained a strong environmental thrust, and one that incorporated the human family. The sustainable agriculture work was seen as the practical expression of the intention to eradicate poverty.

#### **5.4.1 Theological training**

Over the years there were discussions within the diocese about the nature of theological education, and the need to find appropriate models within the financial constraints they experienced. Revd Dan le Cordeur set out some of the issues in theological education in a paper on the issue. In his introduction he remarked on the very real experience of poverty within the diocese:

The Diocese of Umzimvubu is a poor rural area, many of whose productive inhabitants are absent as migrant labourers in the city, particularly if educated. The primary sources of income in the area, and hence for the diocese, are old age pensions. The problems of financial and human resources are also linked: because of the centre/periphery economic structure, educational tools such as libraries needed for successful training for ministry are available in the towns but not to our diocese.<sup>202</sup>

The economic viability of the diocese was a matter of concern. Furthermore, le Cordeur regarded the history and nature of the church as a problem in perpetuating dependence. He commented that “because missionaries were historically externally

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<sup>200</sup> Morriat Gabula, “Report to the Regional and Community Development Committee”, 22 November 2000.

<sup>201</sup> *Umzimvubu News*, Diocese of Umzimvubu, November 1997, 5.

<sup>202</sup> Dan le Cordeur, “Theological Training in the Diocese of Umzimvubu”, 10 February 1998, 1.

funded, the people in the rural areas still see the bishop as the owner of the church and expect him to maintain the institution and plant originally established from outside.”<sup>203</sup> One response to the conditions of the diocese was to devise theological education courses that would deal with issues of poverty, within a broader environmental framework. A proposal was invited from David Olivier, project co-ordinator of *the Gold Fields Faith & Earthkeeping Project*, a project we looked at in chapter three. After meeting with le Cordeur on 19 January 1998, and responding to a document<sup>204</sup> by le Cordeur, Olivier produced a proposal that took into account both the context as well as the particular focus of the diocese. His proposal set out to bring to the educational process

*a Christian environmental (and ecumenical) theology and skills development that focus[es] not only on creating a greater awareness of environmental issues and problems but also on the role religious people can play in establishing an environmentally friendly lifestyle in the process of improving the living conditions of their people.*<sup>205</sup>

In focusing on the need to deal with poverty, Olivier tackled the issue under a section of “Hearing the Cry of the Poor” in which he suggested the following procedure:

To set the process in motion I would suggest that we begin with focusing in the group discussions on the issue of *poverty* in the Umzimvubu region. Three basic questions need answers: How do the people understand poverty? What causes poverty among the people of this region? What are they, as church people, doing to address the issue of poverty among themselves?<sup>206</sup>

It was intended that the discussions would help people to begin to understand the causes of poverty and ways in which they could address them effectively. His understanding of poverty was that it was “a specific life-experience caused

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<sup>203</sup> Cordeur, “Theological Training in the Diocese of Umzimvubu”, 1.

<sup>204</sup> Dan le Cordeur, “Theological Training in the Diocese of Umzimvubu”, 6 December 1997.

<sup>205</sup> David Olivier, “Theological Training in the Diocese of Umzimvubu: A Proposal for the possible participation of the Gold Fields Faith & Earthkeeping Project”, undated, circa 1998, 1-2.

<sup>206</sup> Olivier, “Theological Training in the Diocese of Umzimvubu”, 2.

by the interaction of numerous factors. Political, economic, cultural, psychological and ecological factors can, for example, be explored in the discussion...."<sup>207</sup> Olivier came to the diocese and held a monthly course along the lines he had suggested.

An important boost for theological education was the establishment of St Francis College which was based at the *Diocesan Training Centre* (discussed below). Here tutorials were offered for the correspondence course material of the national and ecumenical *Theological Education by Extension College* in Johannesburg.

There were other organisations that were invited to give input. For example, "The *Institute for the Study of the Bible* (ISB) in Pietermaritzburg would be coming in the next few days to do a workshop at Lusikisiki. They use a contextual approach which is very good."<sup>208</sup> Use was also made of the courses in human development offered by Vuleka Trust, an ecumenical training organisation based in Botha's Hill, KwaZulu-Natal.

The diocese also supported the provincial training college, the *College of the Transfiguration*, although costs of sending students to this fulltime residential seminary meant that only a small number of students could be sent there annually. There was a strong focus on the diocesan schools, particularly St Monica's, and St Stephen's, in terms of the contribution they make to building up the life of the diocese.

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<sup>207</sup> Olivier, "Theological Training in the Diocese of Umzimvubu", 2.

<sup>208</sup> Minutes of the Regional and Community Development Committee, 22 May 1995.

## 5.4.2 Training centre

As was mentioned earlier, an important asset in the implementation of effective training in the diocese was the establishment of a Diocesan Training Centre. It was able to be a central place at which resources could be concentrated. We look at the background to the establishment of the Centre and the role it played in fulfilling the diocesan vision.

In 1987 the CPSA had identified the need for the training of people in what is now the Eastern Cape, in order to make an impact on the widespread poverty in the area. This action of the CPSA was to serve as an early motivation and encouragement to the Diocese of Umzimvubu to establish a skills training centre. An integral part of the vision of the diocese was to establish a centre in the northern region of the diocese where the bishop could also meet with the clergy and laity for training and spiritual renewal. It should be noted that “[a]t that time the centre needed to be on a farm, away from the restrictions of the ‘group areas’ of Apartheid.”<sup>209</sup> In February 1989 St John’s Diocese held a meeting at St Cuthbert’s which discussed the need for development training in the diocese. As a follow up to this meeting, workshops were held between the 12 and 18 August 1989 for all archdeaconries. Almost all the clergy in the diocese attended the workshops and many of them brought one or more lay members. The meetings were to encourage development work in the diocese:

The aim of the workshops was to introduce people to methods of starting development work (projects, training or other initiatives), and to look at ways in which parishes could work together with the Diocesan Fieldworker and the HDD [Human Development Department] in developing themselves.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> *Umzimvubu News*, Diocese of Umzimvubu, November 1997, 5.

<sup>210</sup> Report of the Development Workshops held in the Diocese of St John’s in August 1989, dated October 1989, 1.

The interest and enthusiasm generated through these workshops helped in the establishment of the new Diocese of Umzimvubu in 1991 and the purchase and development of Glenthorne Farm as a Diocesan and Training Centre helped realise much of the original vision of the RCDC. The farm is 400 acres with arable land alongside the Umzintlava River, adjacent to Kokstad. As well as being a base for skills training, resources, training and conferences, it also houses the bishop of the diocese. Bishop Davies affirmed the value of this centre in his first synod charge. In doing this he was also reaffirming the vision of the Bishop of St John's, Bishop Jacob Dlamini:

We have a vision for our Diocesan Centre at Glenthorne Farm, which is adjacent to Kokstad. It is for a centre for reconciliation, where we can all meet each other; a place where we may rediscover harmonious living with God the Creator, with one another and with the natural environment; a centre for training so that people may develop their potential through leadership and skills training to develop their full stature intended by Christ (Ephesians 4:13).<sup>211</sup>

Training people in their own local context was considered important. In preparing for the establishment of the centre, and in making approaches for funds, the RCDC emphasised that "we still need to train trainers who will train people in the local situation – that the most effective method of training is still to be the people's own locality: therefore Glenthorne should be a centre for training trainers."<sup>212</sup> The Centre itself was seen as integral to the overall development vision of the diocese as the following comment attests: "It was not really true that the Glenthorne Training Centre is separated from the longer-term development agenda of the diocese. It is not possible to separate the centre from work with the people in the rural areas."<sup>213</sup> The Centre was used extensively to promote various kinds of training in the diocese.

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<sup>211</sup> Geoff Davies, "Enthronement Charge by the First Bishop of Umzimvubu, The Rt. Revd. Geoffrey F. Davies", 1 December 1991, St George's, Mt Frere.

<sup>212</sup> Minutes of the Regional and Community Development Committee, 26 October 1990.

The Training Centre was called “Umzintlanga, the meeting place of the nations”. At the heart of the centre was the desire to equip those who were poor with skills to help them gain self employment and dignity. Education and training were seen as an important step in helping people to break out of the downward spiral of poverty and dependency. The Centre was overseen by a Management Committee. The Training Centre’s objectives were set out as follows:

- To arrange skills training – managerial, technical, leadership, training (training the trainer) and Christian, in response to the community’s identified priorities.
- To liaise with other bodies whose expertise and resources can benefit trainees and community members.
- To develop a resource centre where people can have access to equipment, materials and information.
- To monitor projects in the area in order to promote growth and continuity.<sup>214</sup>

The Centre linked with other specialist training institutions, using their trainers, equipment and infrastructure whenever possible.

The Centre sought to become a model of what the diocese was trying to achieve. Conference participants were exposed to environmental issues and concerns and Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Project (USAEEP) resources through posters and displays in the training and other rooms. There were also videos available for viewing. Visitors were encouraged to walk up the mountain to enjoy the view and to see the donga reclamation initiative and progress made in clearing the alien vegetation by the *Working for Water Programme*. Even in terms of food production, an example was set. When appropriate, the caterers used solar cookers to assist with food preparation. Project members from the Zamukulunga community garden at Glenthorne would sell their excess produce to the Centre when it was available. Conference participants became aware that

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<sup>213</sup> Minutes of the Regional and Community Development Committee, 27 October 1993.

<sup>214</sup> Training Centre pamphlet.



environmental responsibility was a part of every training programme run at the Training Centre.

The Training Centre became well known in the East Griqualand-Kei region (including the OR Tambo and Alfred Nzo municipalities). Apart from the church and the USAEEP, the Centre was widely used by a variety of organisations including the *Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) Working for Water Programme*, the Ikwezi School's project, the *Catholic Institute of Education*, Poverty Alleviation, *Independent Development Trust (IDT)*, Department of Education – (including Wild Coast Contractors, *Adult Basic Education & Training*, Sports and Culture), Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU), Department of Health, Red Cross, Mvula Trust, *Traditional Healers Association*, *Electricity Supply Commission (ESKOM)*, Rhodes and Fort Hare University Distance Learning Education Departments and local boy scouts, clubs and schools.

While training and education were important, so too was the sustainable agriculture programme. In order to put the sustainable agriculture programme in perspective we need to consider the issue of land, including the land survey that was undertaken and issues of land usage.

## **5.5 Land in the diocese**

Land is an important factor in any consideration of development in South Africa and from an environmental point of view the correct use of land is significant. The past injustices in land distribution and ownership patterns in South Africa still influence present day realities. Land issues are even more significant in rural areas. As noted in chapter two there is a close connection between land and poverty. Access to, and ownership of land is an important aspect of poverty eradication. Land issues were no less significant in the Diocese of Umzimvubu.



Within the diocese there developed an appreciation for the significance of the land. Land was an important component of the sustainable agriculture work and was foundational in the diocesan strategies to enhance the livelihoods of its communities. Bob Thelin developed a theology of the land and helped formulate a diocesan approach. He attended and contributed towards a number of conferences.

In its approach to assessing the best use that could be made of the land it owned, the diocese decided that the first step should be to survey the land:<sup>215</sup> "It was decided that all land belonging to the Diocese should be surveyed to see whether such land has any potential for Agriculture or Animal husbandry. It is necessary to establish what land the Diocese has and how such land could be developed."<sup>216</sup> Bob Thelin was assigned this task. In it he was accountable to the RCDC and to the diocesan trustees. He reported to Diocesan Council and to the Diocesan Synod. In the first stage, which took about three years to complete, Thelin worked on identifying all church land in the diocese and determined its legal status – determining whether it was under Deeds of Transfer (title deeds) or Permission to Occupy certificates. His physical and legal assessment of the lands situation was time consuming and involved going through diocesan office files, Board of Trustees minutes, and the records in the Registry of Deeds office in Umtata to locate documents.<sup>217</sup> A major problem was that some of the documents had been lost or misplaced. Also, records in local magistrates' offices were often incomplete. Where necessary he tried to get duplicate copies of lost documents relating to government departments.

Stage two of this process was determining the best use of the land and changing existing land use patterns, if necessary. This whole process also took much time in

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<sup>215</sup> It is interesting to note that at the time there was also a Provincial initiative to undertake a survey of land for the CPSA. The work would be done in the diocese to compliment and not to be in competition with the Provincial survey proposed by Mr Henry Bennett of the CPSA.

<sup>216</sup> Minutes of the Regional and Community Development Committee, 14 March 1989.

that meetings were held at a local level, involving parish council members and other interested members of the community to discuss the best use of the land.

To assist in this process the RCDC developed criteria which should be considered in the vision for land use. They were:

- (1) seeking justice for land and people
- (2) promoting sustainable agriculture and land use so that God's creation can be renewed
- (3) helping people to relate to the land from a practical "theology of the land" perspective
- (4) where necessary, working at creating harmonious relationships between church and community where conflict may now exist
- (5) encouraging local "ownership" and "participation" in the decision making process.<sup>218</sup>

Bob Thelin, who had a strong feeling for this process that the diocese was undertaking, expressed the value of the work in the following way:

The vision of the church lands survey and development programme is basically to be a part of the continuing mission of the church in the Diocese. This is to restore the human image in our brothers and sisters. This can also be stated in other words: to improve the quality of life for the people living in the rural areas as God's creation is being renewed. People have lost their humanity (ubuntu) and dignity (isidima) through many years of oppression and exploitation and injustice. Their humanity and dignity and self-reliance need to be restored and the people helped to experience the love and power of Christ in their lives. Church land can be used in the way which helps make this vision a reality.... Hopefully what we are doing will help in bringing about a Year of Jubilee for the land and its people.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Umtata is a town that was the capital of the Transkei homeland.

<sup>218</sup> Bob Thelin, "Church Lands Survey and Development Programme", Diocese of Umzimvubu, Report to Diocesan Synod, 1993.

<sup>219</sup> Thelin, "Church Lands Survey and Development Programme".

In terms of the use of the land it needs to be noted that the land was under pressure. With much of it located in the Transkei homeland it exhibited many of the effects of degradation. Thelin recognised the need to maintain soil fertility as a basis for sustaining people's livelihoods: "In some of the sites soil erosion is a problem and needs to be addressed within the diocesan commitment to helping people to live in harmony with God's Creation."<sup>220</sup> Thelin viewed the land as something that would provide for people's needs. The ministry of restoring health to the earth was regarded as closely connected to the care of people:

A starting point on implementing our vision of healing the earth is to examine that way in which we look at the land....We need to have reverence and respect for the land....[I]t is God's intention that the land should provide food, clothing, and shelter for the human family.<sup>221</sup>

The *Surplus Peoples Project* conference on Church Land was held from 27-28 June 1994. Thelin attended it and gave a brief presentation on a "theology of the land", in which he dealt with the subjects of church land audits and the vision for the future. Thelin showed a particular concern for land owned by the church:

Not least of the challenges facing the churches in South Africa today is the land crisis. As the cry for justice becomes a cry for the restoration of land or the redistribution of land in view of historic dispossession, forced evictions and economic injustice, what is the church doing about its own land? And if we remember that the land crisis includes environmental issues like soil erosion, we may also ask how well the church cares for the land it still owns!...

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<sup>220</sup> Bob Thelin, "Church Lands Survey and Development Programme", Report to the Northern Regional Advisory Committee, Diocese of St. John's, 22 April 1991.

<sup>221</sup> Bob Thelin, "Sustainable Agriculture: Healing the Holy Earth, Personal Reflections by Bob Thelin", Diocese of Umzimvubu, September 1996, 1.

Mr Thelin reported on the wish to break down the barriers between church and people; that the people see mission land and the church as being part of them so that they could work together in harmony.<sup>222</sup>

Conflict over land has been a feature of our South African history. In areas of great poverty this has been even more of a problem. In reporting on his work in Mfundweni, Thelin mentioned that

it was decided to visit the Mahobe area of Mfundweni to meet with the people there to discuss the violence which has erupted over land conflicts. That meeting, in mid July, did not take place, as I was informed that the chief had said land conflicts do not involve the church.

People have been pushed off land and some have been killed. The church needs to be involved.<sup>223</sup>

Throughout the whole process of trying to devise a policy for the best use of the land, the diocese attempted to address the issue of church land by engaging people in a variety of ways, including holding diocesan workshops on the theme.

## **5.6 Sustainable agriculture**

Having considered education and training, and land – key elements of the diocese in its approach to development - we now look at the general approach to agriculture and then focus on a specific programme of the diocese, the *Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Programme* (USAEEP). Bob Thelin had a strong focus on sustainable agriculture. We consider some of his views on this in the context of development and then concentrate on the more formal programme, namely the USAEEP.

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<sup>222</sup> Minutes of the Regional and Community Development Committee, 26 October 1990.

Sponsored by the *Catholic Development Centre* in Umtata, a Sustainable Agriculture Workshop took place from 13-16 September 1993 at the *Silowa Conference Centre* near Umtata. It included discussions around the issues of sustainable agriculture, permaculture, theology of land, and agro-forestry, with about 50 participants. Two people attended from the diocese. It was to be an important event in the work of the diocese in this area; fruit of this was borne in Thelin's work:

Bob Thelin is initiating a programme of sustainable agriculture, encouraging farmers to plant indigenous trees, heal the dongas, work together establishing communal gardens, using more local and natural resources instead of purchasing expensive fertilisers and rotating crops instead of planting the same crop in one place every year.<sup>224</sup>

Thelin viewed sustainable agriculture, combining the correct use of the environment with other aspects of development, as

A model of social and economic organization, based on an equitable and participatory vision of development, which recognises the environment and natural resources as the foundation of economic activity....Agriculture is sustainable when it is ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, culturally appropriate, and based on a holistic scientific approach....It comprises four basic principles: correct land usage, encouraging biological diversity, feeding the soil and not the plants, and the reduction of external input usage.<sup>225</sup>

Sustainable agriculture includes the conservation of energy, production of diverse forms of high quality foods, fibres and medicines, and the use of locally available renewable resources, appropriate and affordable technologies and the minimisation of the use of external and purchased inputs. For Thelin, sustainable agriculture presented wise land use that would provide for people's needs:

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<sup>223</sup> Bob Thelin, "Church Lands Survey and Development Programme", Diocese of Umzimvubu, Report to the Regional and Community Development Committee, 10 August 1994.

<sup>224</sup> *Umzimvubu News*, Diocese of Umzimvubu, November 1997, 7.

Sustainable agriculture provides a way of producing food, fibre, and fuel while preserving the environment. There are a variety of ways to define sustainable agriculture.... Basically we can say it is a way of using the land which brings healing to the land and to the people living on the land. It allows us to pass the land on to the next generation in as good or better condition than when we received it.<sup>226</sup>

Thelin was skilled in the technical aspects of sustainable agriculture and in his work in the diocese concentrated on passing these skills on. He felt he was merely reviving what had been common agricultural practices:

There are a number of activities which those engaged in sustainable agriculture carry out to ensure the production of healthful food. These include: planting of cover crops to prevent soil erosion, use of compost and manure to enrich the soil, crop rotation to cut down on weed and insect problems, mulching to conserve precious soil moisture, intercropping, use of soil-building crops (legumes like beans, peas, lucerne), planting of trees (preferably indigenous species), integration of crop and animal production, extremely limited use of agricultural chemicals. There is a recognition that the soil is a living organism, and a very precious resource.

By now we can see that sustainable agriculture is not a new system of farming in the Transkei. In the old days, our ancestors farmed and lived in harmony with nature. There is much "indigenous knowledge" which we can use in developing environmentally-friendly farming systems today.<sup>227</sup>

## **5.7 Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Programme (USAEEP)**

During the period under review both sustainable agriculture and environmental education were important focus areas in the life of the diocese. In terms of

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<sup>225</sup> Thelin, "Sustainable Agriculture: Caring for the Holy Earth", 5.

<sup>226</sup> Thelin, "Sustainable Agriculture: Caring for the Holy Earth", 1.

<sup>227</sup> Thelin, "Sustainable Agriculture: Caring for the Holy Earth", 2.



environmental education (EE), Kate Daives had been involved in this area in the diocese on an informal basis for a number of years. Both sustainable agriculture and EE were joined to form one programme with the formation of the USAEEP in 1997. Previously they had been operating more informally and less interdependently.

This Programme had two components to it. The Sustainable Agriculture (SA) component offered practical and relevant support to help people improve their land use practices so that they could achieve “food security” and achieve more sustainable lifestyles. The EE component involved leaders from schools, churches and other community organisations. The training encouraged a greater awareness of the environment, empowering people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate in identifying and solving environmental problems in their communities. The USAEEP strove in all that it had done to support the diocesan vision, “That all God’s people would reach the full stature of their humanity, so as to live in harmony with the rest of God’s creation.” We start by looking at the aims of the Project, support for it, and connections with HIV and AIDS. We then look at a description of some of the projects followed by an evaluation of the project. The aims of the Programme have been described as follows:

In broad terms, the programme was designed to help reverse the continuing degradation of the land by rekindling a sense of responsibility amongst people to care for the earth. In practical terms this meant helping some of the really poor people in rural parts of the Diocese achieve food security – not just for a year or two but into the future, thus renewing their human dignity and enabling them to help themselves.<sup>228</sup>

While the focus was on restoring and enhancing the ecological resources the emphasis was on enabling people to gain access to land and other resources to sustain themselves. In this sense it reflected an *oikotheology*.



The overall project objectives were set out as follows:

- Develop and maintain a resource/ training centre for sustainable agriculture and environmental education at the Umzintlanga Training Centre on Glenthorne Farm, near Kokstad.
- Provide administrative, consultative and educational support to the Sustainable Agriculture project leaders and field worker. This will include environmental and agricultural information and skills.
- Produce environmental educational resources, including adapting the School Environmental Policy Pack for use by, amongst others, faith groups.
- Organise sustainable agriculture and environmental education courses and workshops for agricultural field workers, teachers, learners, church, youth and community leaders in the north-eastern Eastern Cape (formerly Transkei) and East Griqualand. This should include topics of alien vegetation, soil erosion and recycling.
- Support local school recycling, alien clearing and water education programmes.<sup>229</sup>

### 5.7.1 Support for the programme

Administrative, consultative and educational support for the Sustainable Agriculture project leaders came from a variety of courses and conferences attended. We list some of these to illustrate the variety of resources engaged:

- The KZN *Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs Planting Without Ploughing (PWP) Expo*, Kwa-mbuthuma, Izingolweni, 30 July 2002.
- *Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture Workshop* – Umzintlanga Training Centre, 21-23 October 2002.
- *National Land Care Conference*, Gauteng.
- “The dignity of human sexuality and the AIDS challenge” Two five day workshops held in Grahamstown, hosted by MAP international.

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<sup>228</sup> *Umzimvubu News*, Diocese of Umzimvubu, August 2001, 8.

<sup>229</sup> WWF-South Africa Final Report, Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Programme, ZA 527.B, January 2002-September 2003, 2-3.

- Women's leadership programme – *"Moral leadership development for social transformation"* organised by the Church Community Leadership Trust
- "Wellness Management Workshop" organised for the Diocese of Umzimvubu Isiseko Sokomeleza Committee (HIV/ AIDS programme of which Busi Wawa is a member).

A significant event was one that was arranged by the Programme itself. In October 2002, the USAEEP held a valuable Sustainable Agriculture workshop at the Training Centre, to which all parishes were invited to send representatives. More than fifty participants attended from parishes, the sustainable agriculture and other community projects. Mbulelo Magaqa from the *Master Farmers' Project* at Port St Johns and Vernon Gibberd, a small scale agriculturalist from Queenstown, were facilitators. A fairly comprehensive booklet giving ideas on sustainable agriculture and exercises to engage in was made available to participants.

In terms of the work of Environmental Education (EE) there were a number of resources produced by the project. The following were some of them:

- *Ukubhlala Umgaqo Siseko Olula* - A simple guide to writing a constitution in isiXhosa
- *EnviroQuiz Questions* - based on the Enviro fact leaflets (for High Schools)
- *Sustainable Agriculture Workbook Booklet* in English and isiXhosa
- *Practical Solar cooking resource file* – used by learners and educators doing energy projects.
- *Junior School Enviro-kids Environ-Quiz* – question booklet, based on recent editions of the WESSA children's magazine, "Envirokids."

A number of workshops were run. The following were some of these:

- *Learning for Sustainable Living Workshops*
- *Climate Change Resource development workshop*
- *Environmental Education, Energy and Climate Change teacher workshops*
- *Energy and Sustainability Projects*
- Energy workshops for teachers
- Theological Training
- Church Youth Programmes
- “Environmental Education Processes” Distance learning B.Ed Tutorials
- EG High Schools’ Enviro Club Activities
- *Combined High Schools’ Enviro Quiz*
- Workshops and field trip with the Crane Foundation and KZN Wildlife
- *Alfred Nzo Municipality Environmental Management Committee*
- *Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Workshops* – organised by Earthlife Africa.
- Environmental Educators Course – support for 3 East Cape Teachers
- Eco-schools project in EG

There was particular support for local schools in terms of recycling, alien vegetation clearing and water education programmes. The East Griqualand schools’ paper recycling programme had seven schools actively involved. EE workshops regularly included discussions about active learning projects and these usually discussed the importance of biodiversity, the problems of alien vegetation infestation and ways in which water studies could be incorporated into learning programmes. Workshops for teachers, learners and church leaders have encouraged a better understanding of what WSSD could mean at a local level, in terms of biodiversity, sustainable energy use and efficiency and climate change. It was reported that “Kate has done ‘Sustainability, Energy Efficiency and Climate Change’ workshops for over 1200 teachers from 500 schools from as far a field as Cofimvaba and Tsomo to Maluti and

Umzimkulu this year.”<sup>230</sup> The *National Environmental Education Programme* and Eco-Schools projects provided another focus for the USAEEP school based activities: “Highly successful enviro-quizzes involving over 500 learners from previously disadvantaged communities have been innovative and meaningful way[s] that environmental learning has been introduced into under-resourced schools in the region.”<sup>231</sup>

While Kate Davies worked at helping train teachers to implement EE in schools, she also wrote EE material and helped implement EE projects in churches.

It is interesting to see the connection made with HIV and AIDS in the diocese:

The rampant HIV/ AIDS infection rates are making the garden projects play an even more significant role, both as a source of fresh vegetables to improve the nutritional status of communities and as an example of what can be done when people work together as a focus in the community. And always, hand in hand in the gardens, goes an understanding of the importance of sustainability, land restoration and resource conservation.<sup>232</sup>

Busi Wawa, the USAEEP fieldworker, visited various projects on a regular basis, acting as a liaison person and offered support and advice. She also became actively involved in the HIV and AIDS programme.

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<sup>230</sup> Kate Davies, *The Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Programme (USAEEP)*, Report to the Synod of the Diocese of Umzimvubu 17-19 October 2003.

<sup>231</sup> Davies, *The Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Programme (USAEEP)*.

<sup>232</sup> Davies, *The Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Programme (USAEEP)*.

### 5.7.2 Description of some projects

As an illustration of the work done in fulfilling the objectives, we give a description of the work undertaken in three of the areas of the diocese in the period 2001-2003. These descriptions offer perspectives on some of the successes achieved as well as highlighting some of the difficulties experienced in engaging in development work in a rural area like this. It is worth noting that, like many churches in rural areas, most of the active members are women. This was certainly the case in the Diocese of Umzimvubu.

In the *Khanyisani Project* in the Mvenyane Region there was a strong focus on vegetable farming. The community would buy seed potatoes which they planted, both in their own homes as well as in the communal gardens supported by the Sustainable Agriculture Project. They were also planted on the church's land. This project helped achieve one of the aims of the project – to help rural communities to achieve food security and then to derive a source of income from their efforts. Assistance was given in helping people establish vegetable seedling nurseries. Problems experienced included potato blight and the interruption of their water supply through vandalism of the tap.

As with the *Khanyisani Project*, the *Siyazama Project* in the XaXazama Region mainly involved the growing of vegetables, especially onions, spinach and beetroot, on communal land. There had been experimentation with different varieties of seeds. In one year a good quantity of peaches were canned after a very good peach crop. Despite the government installing water pipes, taps and a tank, irrigation problems persisted and mostly rainwater had to be relied upon. Members of the project made netwire and fenced their garden. Siyazama operated as a centre to which seeds were delivered. Other parish garden projects also bought from them.

*Nomzamo Project* in Ndahara in the Umzimvubu Region is a small remote project, yet has been a model of sustainability. Members have been able to use the seeds they got from their previous year's harvest. Water has been supplied by the installation of new pipes supplied by the USAEEP. In response to problems they experienced from hares and insect pests they tried natural pesticides. The bakery project acquired an important contract with the government in which the government pays for them to supply bread to the local primary school. This certainly was most empowering of the women involved in this project. A two day fencing workshop was held as well as a beekeeping workshop, which did not lead to a successful project.

The hillside of this area is criss-crossed with erosion dongas. In an effort to make a difference the environmental education component worked to distribute posters on land care and donga reparation to the school. They also contacted the government *Land Care Department*. It was hoped that the erosion repair project could provide employment for some young unemployed men in the community.

Residents in the area had experienced a problem crossing the river. For a few months, in the winter, people can wade across the river but in summer it is cut off from the road by the river and the only access is by means of an overhead cable conveyance.

A meeting was held with the Ward Councillor to discuss access across the river, and a pedestrian bridge was built to replace the overhead "cable box". Two volunteer English engineers offered to design and raise money for the materials if the community agreed to do the work. On 6 September 2002 there was a grand opening of the bridge. This bridge was to symbolise the essence of the approach of the USAEEP:

It was through a partnership between the USAEEP, the Diocese and our wonderful link with Robin Woodd and his parish in England that the community at Welakabini have built themselves a 40m pedestrian suspension bridge across the Umzimvubu River. With designs, funding assistance and supervision from Robin and his team, the impoverished community have improved their own quality of life with their own hands.<sup>233</sup>

The projects have received some recognition for their work. In December 2003 two of the garden projects won prizes in the *East Cape Council of Churches* garden competition. One of them was awarded overall first prize.

### 5.7.3 Evaluation of the programme

We make some assessment of the programme including the Episcopal support offered. An outside evaluation of the sustainable agriculture programme was undertaken. One of the recommendations was that there was a need for greater self generation in the projects. The vegetable gardens were seen as valuable: "Low cost vegetable production seems to be the driving force which leads to the improvement of farming techniques, poverty alleviation, conservation and ultimately a more sustainable lifestyle."<sup>234</sup> Most importantly, the evaluation recommended that attention be given to planning, administration, record keeping and time management. The need for a business plan, the setting of qualitative and quantitative targets/ goals, budget controls and reporting was stressed. Despite successes, there was a need to encourage use of more sustainable small scale farming techniques, land rehabilitation, water harvesting and promote environmental conservation and awareness.

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<sup>233</sup> Davies, The Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Programme (USAEEP).

<sup>234</sup> Notes on the USAEEP Planning Meeting, Glenthorne, 2 March 2001.



The sustainable agriculture project was networked with and supported by a number of rural agricultural groups in the region. The East Cape Council of Churches requested that USAEEP take under its umbrella other church land and agriculture projects which have had little support due to geographic isolation.

The following self evaluation was made on the project:

Over the years, the garden projects have had mixed fortunes. In [an] attempt to create employment, satellite projects like chicken rearing, baking and net-wire making have sometimes been started with great enthusiasm. Recently, a number of these projects have floundered as the costs of feed, baking ingredients or wire and their transport to remote places have made them unviable. This has often dampened project morale. Vegetable growing seems to be the one activity which is productive and cost effective once basic needs of fencing, tools and water have been supplied....

In the long term, project sustainability depends on strong local leadership. Leadership capacity building needs to be encouraged and developed.<sup>235</sup>

It is worth noting at this point the value accorded by Bishop Geoff Davies to the work of the USAEEP. His support was important in giving encouragement to the efforts undertaken. He commented on the work as follows:

Some question whether we should continue involvement in sustainable agriculture and environmental education. I think it essential. Ever since coming to this Diocese, we have talked about helping people help themselves, so that the Church is not just asking people for money, but is helping people support themselves.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> WWF-South Africa Final Report, Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Programme, ZA 527.B, January 2002-September 2003, 7.

<sup>236</sup> Geoff Davies, CPSA, Diocese of Umzimvubu, Third Session of Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Charge, 6 October 2000.

A few years later, under the section “Development projects” in his charge the bishop said:

We have also done a great deal of work through the Development Committee and the Umzimvubu Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Education Programme. The agricultural component was started by Bob Thelin and Kate Davies added the Environmental Education side of it. It has been working with communities as well as the church. There is so much that can be done. For example, we are facing a drought. We would like every parish to have water tanks and reservoirs to catch water off their roofs and use the water to irrigate, so that we can grow vegetables all the year and not wait on the rains.<sup>237</sup>

The Programme was aimed at eradicating poverty in the diocese, in a way that did not destroy the resources that sustained life. To some extent the economic empowerment projects struggled. In rural areas, with little infrastructure, it can be very difficult making a viable living, particularly where resources, which were once in abundance, are becoming scarcer. The diocese is a large one and the capacity to make a meaningful impact is not easy. Nevertheless, the programme strove to make a meaningful impact in the lives of communities.

## **5.8 Particular occasions and issues**

We look at two particular activities, and two threats to illustrate the diocese’s attempt to reflect an *oikotheology*. The occasions we look at are the celebration of World Environment Day in 1995 and the building of the Cathedral. The two particular threats to the diocese are the issuing of forestry permits and the N2 Wild Coast toll road. The response the diocese made further illustrated the diocese’s commitment to sustainable land use, the preservation of the environment and the alleviation of poverty.

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<sup>237</sup> Geoff Davies, CPSA, Diocese of Umzimvubu, Continuation of the Third Session of Diocesan Synod, Bishop’s Charge, Cathedral Church of Peter Masiza, Glenthorne, 17 October 2003.

### 5.8.1 World Environment Day

The celebration of World Environment Day in 1995 was a significant event in the life of the diocese, in promoting the focus on the environment. It started with a Diocesan Family Day in the first part of the morning followed by a larger event drawing in many others. The occasion served a number of purposes: The celebration of World Environment Day, the launch of the Gold Fields Faith and Earthkeeping Project, and the opening of the Training Centre. The booklet "Save our Future", written by Geoff Davies, was also launched on this day. The guest of honour was Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

There was an inter-faith component to the celebrations. This component had been suggested by the *World Wide Fund for Nature South Africa* (WWF-SA) who participated. Based on what had happened at the Assisi Conference in Italy in 1986, the WWF-SA branch said there was interest in making the launch of World Environment Day an interfaith event. There was also participation from other Christian denominations including the African Initiated Churches.

There was a positive feeling about the day, as reflected in the minutes of the RCDC: "The Good Lord blessed us in every way. Morriat mentioned that in the celebration it was evident that God was at the centre of the event. This in spite of the differing faith perspectives."<sup>238</sup> The day's event was an example of a large activity which served as an inspiration and encouragement for people of the diocese. The event strengthened the diocese's relationship with the Gold Fields Faith and Earthkeeping Project, and made public its commitment to environment issues.

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<sup>238</sup> Minutes of the Regional and Community Development Committee, 13 June 1995.

### 5.8.2 Cathedral

As we have seen, the diocese tried to put into practice the vision it upheld. This is further illustrated by a significant project in the diocese – that of the building of the cathedral. It is significant both in its design and in the use of local resources of materials and labour.

The Family Day service on 24 September 2001 was a special occasion in the life of the diocese. For it was on this day that their cathedral was dedicated. Also on this occasion Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane dedicated the diocesan farm and bishop's residence, all at Glenthorne. The preacher at the service, which also marked the tenth anniversary of the founding of the diocese, was the Most Revd Peter Carnley, Archbishop of Perth and Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia.<sup>239</sup>

The cathedral is not usually referred to as a cathedral but as a “pro-cathedral.” Alternatively, it is referred to as the “chapel” of the Umzintlanga Training Centre, or merely Glenthorne chapel. Officially, however, it is referred to as the Cathedral Church of Peter Masiza.<sup>240</sup> The building consists of a semi-circular building of rough stone walls and thatch, with amphitheatre-style tiered stone seating, and two adjoining smaller rondavels which are also used as vestries. The following describes the building in some detail:

[It] is really just the chancel and sanctuary of a much larger ‘chapel’, the nave of which is open to the sky and stretches 50m down the steep hillside to a ‘font’ at the bottom of the slope which has the appearance of a garden pool surrounded by rocks. The outline of the ‘nave’ is defined by two parallel trellises of poles between which tarpaulins can be slung to provide shade for the congregation during big diocesan occasions, such as ordinations.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> The Diocese of Umzimvubu has a companion diocese relationship with the Diocese of Perth.

<sup>240</sup> Peter Masiza was the first black person ordained a priest in the CPSA.

<sup>241</sup> *Umzimvubu News*, Diocese of Umzimvubu, August 2001, 1.

The structure was designed by Professor Rodney Harber of the University of Natal and the construction work was done by a team of local builders under the direction of Mr Nelson Njeje. They were supervised and advised by Mr Robin Woodd, an engineer from Hemel Hempstead in England who visited Glenthorne from time to time.

Harber's work has been characterised by "imaginative building projects in indigenous idiom, the upgrading of indigenous settlements, and the [incorporation of] environmentally friendly concepts".<sup>242</sup> He himself describes his work in the following way: "The greater portion of my projects has been in rural areas with inadequate budgets. The only solution is to utilise local material, traditional builders and well tried technology."<sup>243</sup> Referring to the materials used in its construction, Bishop Davies remarked that "[o]ther than cement and treated gum poles from Harding, it has been constructed entirely from stones rolled and levered down the hillside and thatch cut on Glenthorne Farm."<sup>244</sup>

The cathedral, based at the training centre, serves as an important meeting place in the diocese, and as a visible symbol of the vision of the diocese. It is also a focus of liturgical life. In the liturgical life of the diocese we see an attempt to express their vision. A particularly poignant example is seen in the ministry of Father Gabula:

When parents want their child baptised, Father Gabula does not demand the usual fee. Instead, he asks the parents to plant a fruit tree and name it after the child. As the tree grows, so will the child who will soon be able to water and care for the tree himself. That tree will later bear fruit which will help provide the child with a balanced diet and

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<sup>242</sup> *Umzimvubu News*, Diocese of Umzimvubu, August 2001, 1.

<sup>243</sup> "'Indigenous' cathedral dedicated", *The Natal Witness*, 25 September 2001.

<sup>244</sup> "'Indigenous' cathedral dedicated", *The Natal Witness*, 25 September 2001.



also provide enough fruit to be sold to help pay for the child's education.<sup>245</sup>

Bishop Davies was aware of the need to promote earth-affirming liturgies within the diocese:

We do not observe Rogation or Harvest Thanksgiving in the way we should, especially considering we are a rural Diocese so dependant on the blessings of God and our good care of the earth. Rogation is Latin for "asking" and we ask God for His blessings on us this season – and don't we need it with the present drought? Having asked God, let us never forget to give thanks. One Church that has a wonderful Harvest Festival is St. Mary's, Merino Walk in Cedarville, usually in April or May. The Bishop is invited to join them for a Harvest Thanksgiving Service.

The Church is filled with pumpkins and cabbages and mealies and loaves of bread and after the service we all join together for lunch, giving thanks to God for his blessings.<sup>246</sup>

Poverty eradication was seen as integral to all aspects of the life of the diocese, including worship. By building a simple cathedral, and using local labour a commitment to empowerment was expressed. While eco-liturgies are important in reflecting the thinking of the church, they need to lead to action.

## **5.9 Particular threats**

The diocese responded to particular issues that it considered both a threat to the environment and to the welfare of people. We consider the example of two issues: the granting of forestry permits and the proposed N2 Toll road through the Pondoland Wild Coast. The diocese campaigned against both these developments. Both contexts illustrated something of the tension that may arise between preserving

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<sup>245</sup> *Umzimvubu News*, Diocese of Umzimvubu, November 1993, 4.

<sup>246</sup> Geoff Davies, CPSA, Diocese of Umzimvubu, Continuation of the Third Session of Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Charge, Cathedral Church of Peter Masiza, Glenthorne, 17 October 2003.

the ecology and developing the economy. The diocese's commitment to the preservation of the ecology, while also being concerned with the economic arrangements that benefit people, is illustrated.

### 5.9.1 Forestry

We consider the issue of forestry, a consideration of who benefits, the permit system, and the correspondence entered into. Historically, the economic success of tree crop farming has led to the expansion of this practice in South Africa. In 1888 plantation forestry started in South Africa and has continued to expand. Wood and other forest products are valuable and widely traded global cash crops.<sup>247</sup> The issuing of forestry permits in part of the East Griqualand area of the diocese created much controversy. The concerns centred both on the effects the tree plantations would have on the natural environment as well as the impact they would have on the local community.

Parishes and the bishop of the diocese opposed the permits. In the processes there was co-operation with local farmers and other interested people, the use of environmental lawyers as well as lobbying of government officials and mobilising of those directly affected.

The controversy began when a number of farmers applied to the *Department of Water Affairs and Forestry* (DWAF) to have forestry permits for their farms. The reasons for the requests for the permits can be largely explained by the following:

In this region, stock farming is becoming less profitable because of severe stock theft and increased labour costs. Some farmers are also feeling threatened by new labour laws. As a result, afforestation, which

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<sup>247</sup> For a detailed discussion see the work of Harald Witt, "The emergence of privately grown industrial tree plantations", 90-111, in Stephen Dovers, Ruth Edgecombe and Bill Guest, Bill (eds), *South Africa's environmental history: Cases and comparisons* (Cape Town: South Africa: David Philip, 2002).



represents an opportunity to sell farms at a profit to forestry companies, is an easy and financially very rewarding option.<sup>248</sup>

By February 1996 nearly thirty farmers had applied for permits for more than 41 farms covering a total area of nearly 40 000 hectares. This triggered off a protracted process of discussion around the issue. Kate Davies describes the situation as follows:

[I]t was with considerable alarm that some members of the community of East Griqualand (EG) in Southwestern KwaZulu-Natal heard that a substantial number of local farmers had applied for afforestation permits in the Umzimvubu/Umzintlanga River catchment areas....The areas involved are high lying grassland at present used mainly for cattle and sheep grazing.<sup>249</sup>

While it was recognised that the forestry could lead to economic development and the creation of more jobs, it was felt that on the whole this move would lead to the overall long-term impoverishment of the area, both environmentally as well as compromising communities' livelihoods.

Both Kate and Geoff Davies expressed their opposition, which are set out in documents that they wrote. For Kate the following concerns were important:

*Water:* The trees would replace the grassland. Being tall, deep rooted and evergreen they would increase evaporation from the river catchments and thus decrease water flow. They could cause the Umzimvubu and Umzintlanga rivers to dry up during the winter months, as the river flow was already low. The rural communities in the former Transkei, which depended on rivers for both human use and stock watering, would be severely affected.

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<sup>248</sup> Kate Davies, "Afforestation in East Griqualand (EG)", undated, unpublished, 1.

<sup>249</sup> Davies, "Afforestation in East Griqualand (EG)", 1.

*Agriculture:* Large scale plantations would affect the traditional farming infrastructure and make dairy and stock farming unviable.

*Regional and local economy:* As most forestry operations are undertaken by contractors many farm workers and their families would lose their jobs and homes.

*Conservation and biodiversity loss:* Grassland habitats in mountainous regions contain many endemic species. Being monocultures the trees would reduce biodiversity and cause permanent loss of natural grasslands in the areas. Habitats would become fragmented, inhibiting plant and animal dispersal. The following provides a further reason: "The area is prone to high winds in late winter. Afforestation will drastically increase the intensity of veld fires, seriously threatening the biodiversity of unplanted areas. Firebreaks are burnt in Autumn which, according to Kruger *et al* is a bad season for maintaining grassland biodiversity."<sup>250</sup>

*Wetlands* are ecologically important. They can be threatened by badly planned and managed timber plantations. "There are a number of sensitive wetlands in the proposed forestry region, including the bird-rich Franklin Vlei and the Natural Heritage site on Hebron Farm where there is a breeding pair of the endangered wattled crane."<sup>251</sup>

It was acknowledged that there were other positive actions that could be taken: "We also need to take recycling more seriously to reduce the demand for paper and pulp, and to recognise that in the future the need for food may be greater than for paper."<sup>252</sup>

Large scale tree plantations have been seen as one of the greatest threats to the environment in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. As a monoculture they have been

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<sup>250</sup> Davies, "Afforestation in East Griqualand (EG)", 3.

<sup>251</sup> Davies, "Afforestation in East Griqualand (EG)", 2.

seen as a new form of colonialism. Its exclusive planting prevents the cultivation of other vegetation which can enhance people's livelihoods, particularly in providing crops for food.

The granting of permits was an ethical issue and a number of criteria should be employed in making a decision. Through his participation in correspondence, participation in public meetings as well as through the press, Bishop Geoff engaged in the issue. He set out his opposition to the granting of permits based on a number of grounds in a Memo entitled "Afforestation in E.G. and Southern Africa".<sup>253</sup> His opposition was based on the following reasons:

1. He felt there was an overriding moral imperative to care for the land, as well as the water resources. He questioned what the longer term impacts of the land under alien plantations are, and how the land would be rehabilitated for agricultural use at a later stage.
2. There needed to be a concern for the people, and in this instance not only the people of East Griqualand but also those living downstream in the former Transkei. What would the impact be on society and the infrastructure of the farming community? Was it just a few people who would benefit?
3. It seemed that this form of farming was profitable. Bishop Davies asked: "Because money can be made out of a project does not make it right. Money can be made out of whaling or rhino horn poaching."<sup>254</sup> He stated that "because of our increasing power to influence natural processes, we must bring morality to bear on our economic decision making."<sup>255</sup> He also questioned the use of the land for more

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<sup>252</sup> Davies, "Afforestation in East Griqualand (EG)", 3.

<sup>253</sup> Dated 12 April 1996.

<sup>254</sup> Geoff Davies, "Afforestation in EG and Southern Africa", 12 April 1996, 3.

<sup>255</sup> Davies, "Afforestation in EG and Southern Africa", 3.

productive purposes, and asked whether the land should not be used to produce food?

In the environmental impact assessment it was claimed that afforestation may boost the tourist potential. Bishop Davies rejected this: "Monocultures of pine plantations will be far less attractive to the ecotourist than the glorious rolling hills and wetlands which presently provide breeding habitats for abundant birdlife including the endangered Wattle Crane."<sup>256</sup>

4. In terms of democracy and participation, all affected parties need to be consulted in a meaningful way. This, however, had not been the case.

5. His concern was not only for the present generation but for future generations too.

Apart from the damage that the planting of these trees would do to the land and the negative impact that this would have on the people, there was the further issue of the permit system, which was considered to be unjust at the time. There was concern that in the past the permit system had been inadequately controlled and secretly applied. There were some procedural problems that were incorrect. Also the Environmental Impact Assessment was not made available timeously. In May 1995 residents of the area met to work out what to do. Kate Davies met with the Deputy Director of DWAF and one of Minister Asmal's advisors in Cape Town. Bishop Geoff Davies engaged in correspondence over the issue with the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Professor Kadar Asmal. In response to a letter written to the Minister on 16 November 1995 about afforestation in the Mzimvubu Catchment River area, the Minister responded:

I have asked Mr Triebel of the Department to personally visit the area

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<sup>256</sup> Davies, "Afforestation in EG and Southern Africa", 3.

on my behalf and I understand that a public hearing is already being planned for 4 April 1996 in Kokstad. I trust that consensus can be reached at that meeting and that the whole matter can be resolved amicably. Should no solution to the problem, however, be forthcoming I will intervene personally.

Thank you for your interest in these matters.<sup>257</sup>

In later correspondence, in referring to Bishop Geoff's participation in the KwaZulu-Natal Forestry Indaba of 31 January and 1 February 1997 the Minister wrote:

I expect that we will be making further calls on your willingness to participate in establishing the procedures which will lead the way in South African land use planning.

The enclosed newsletter sums up the outcome of the Indaba and suggests a way forward with which I hope you will be in agreement, and in which you can see the role you undoubtedly have to play. You are most welcome to offer comment to my Department.

I look forward [to] communicating with you further in continuing with this planning process which we have so successfully started together.<sup>258</sup>

Both the clergy and Bishop Davies lodged objections to the granting of permits. For example, eight clergy wrote a letter setting out their objection:

Re: Franklin Afforestation Permit

We the undersigned are Priests with responsibility for parishes covering a wide area of the Eastern Cape. Our parishes are located on the Umzintlava, Umzimvubu and Umzimkulu rivers.

We wish to express our objection in the strongest terms to the granting of afforestation permits (or their renewal) in the water catchment areas of our rivers. We believe these will be seriously detrimental to the long

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<sup>257</sup> Letter written to Bishop Geoff Davies by Prof Kader Asmal, MP, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, 28 March 1996.

<sup>258</sup> Letter written to Bishop Geoff Davies by Prof Kader Asmal, MP, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, 16 April 1997.



term development and benefit of our people.<sup>259</sup>

Bishop Davies wrote a similar letter, following up an earlier submission in which he spelt out at length his objections to the granting of forestry permits in the Franklin area in the Mount Currie magisterial district. He stated that he did not write only on his own behalf, "but also of many church members who live in the lower reaches of the Umzintlava and Umzimvubu Rivers who have voiced their concern and objections to the granting of forestry permits."<sup>260</sup>

The intervention took time, but in the end achieved its results. Not only were the permits not issued but the permit system itself was changed and some of the problems at the root were addressed, namely the legislative processes. It was felt that not only was the environment preserved by the area was saved from substantial impoverishment that most people would have experienced.

## **5.9.2 N2 Wild Coast toll road**

We look at the road proposal and consider the public meetings held. The proposed building of a toll road through the Wild Coast is another issue that galvanised the diocese into action. There were a variety of means that the diocese used to show its opposition. Over a number of years there had been plans to build a new toll road, which would stretch from Durban to Port Elizabeth. It intended to run nearer the coast than the existing road. A further aspect of this development was the proposed mining at Xolobeni, an ecologically sensitive area, which some felt was the reason for the proposed road.

Opposition to this road came from a number of quarters, and for a variety of reasons.

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<sup>259</sup> Letter written to Mrs B. Vermaak, Director, Water Resources Management, Department of Water Affairs, Durban, 10 March 1999.

Bishop Geoff expressed his own opposition in a number of ways and on a number of grounds and became an advocate against its construction. It was an issue that was seen to impact negatively on the development of communities. The strong link between poverty and the environment was pointed out. There was the feeling that the degradation of the environment through the construction of this road would impact negatively on the livelihoods of the people.

The bishop was to make the following remarks at his last synod, an occasion when a resolution was passed expressing opposition to the road:

You will know that I have been campaigning hard regarding the proposed N2 Toll Road. It is not that we are against a road. We are against a road going in the wrong place. It is indeed a vexed question. There are those who say they want this road as it will bring development. We are saying, "Yes, we want roads and we want development, but it must be the right kind of sustainable development." I want to say to you that this is your land. The Pondos have looked after it for generations. Don't let a group of white capitalist companies now come and destroy your heritage. But it must be you who stand up and make your voices heard.<sup>261</sup>

The Bishop initiated public meetings in both Kokstad and Durban at which resolutions opposing it were passed. The resolution, unanimously passed by the Durban meeting, was addressed to the *Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism*, the Hon. M.V. Moosa, contained the following convictions about the proposed toll road:

1. That the proposed N2 toll road between Lusikisiki and Port Edward will not benefit the local people and will be highly detrimental socially, economically and environmentally to the established communities of the Eastern Cape;

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<sup>260</sup> Letter written to Mrs B. Vermaak, Director, Water Resources Management, Department of Water Affairs, Durban, by Bishop Geoff Davies, 9 March 1999.

<sup>261</sup> Geoff, Davies, CPSA, Diocese of Umzimvubu, Continuation of the Third Session of Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Charge, Cathedral Church of Peter Masiza, Glenthorne, 17 October 2003.



2. That the motive for this road is not for the development of the local people and communities but profits for big business, notably engineering, trucking, mining and finance corporations;
3. That the essential practices of democracy are being undermined by this project;
4. That it would be quite immoral of the government to spend R1.9 billion (or whatever the cost is) of taxpayers money to pay for two suspension bridges, so that a private consortium can then levy the public on a toll road;
5. That taxpayers money should be used for training and development of local people and not for the economic benefit of national and multinational corporations;
6. That neither the proposed toll road nor the possibility of mining will bring meaningful employment nor sustainable opportunities for economic upliftment to the local inhabitants of the Eastern Cape. On the contrary, it could have disastrous effects on established businesses;
7. That both the mining and the road will irreparably destroy the ecotourist potential of the Pondoland Coast;
8. That both the mining and road will endanger and even destroy a quite unique botanical region. It is impossible to rehabilitate the botanical diversity found there;
9. That since the Pondoland Wild Coast is a global botanical hotspot with 180 known plant species that occur nowhere else in the world, and its quite exceptional features include three major and five smaller waterfalls that tumble straight into the ocean, the Government's responsibility is to protect and preserve this unique area for our children;
10. That the Pondoland Wild Coast, and certainly Mkambati, is so exceptional it should be granted the status of a World Heritage Site;
11. That the government should clearly explain to the public of the towns in the region how they foresee this road bringing economic benefits to the poor and the general public that an upgrading of the present roads will not achieve.

And resolved to call on the Minister to:

1. Reject the Wild Coast Consortium's bid to build the N2 Toll Road in the "greenfields section" through and alongside the proposed Pondoland Park;

2. Reject any attempts to mine in the area proposed for the Pondoland Park;
3. Upgrade the present roads and build sensitive and discrete roads for ecotourist development instead of destructive motorways;
4. Explore alternative routes for the proposed N2 Toll Road , such as upgrading the R61 or R56, and consult local communities regarding the development of roads;
5. Spend public funds on upgrading existing roads and developing people rather than paying for two costly bridges for private companies;
6. Ensure that the ecotourist potential of Pondoland is not jeopardised by mining or road building;
7. Establish the Pondoland Park preserving the Pondoland Centre of Endemism as a matter of urgency;
8. Apply for World Heritage Site status for the proposed Pondoland Park.<sup>262</sup>

The grounds were comprehensive, relating to both the ecology of the areas as well as the perceived impoverishment in people's lives that the development would bring.

Use was also made of the press. For example, Bishop Davies wrote the following for the *Mail and Guardian*, in which he expressed concern that the people of Pondoland will benefit very little. "We need to stop pandering to the tourist industry, the big engineering companies and the merchant banks in the hope that a few crumbs will fall from the tables of the rich to the local people."<sup>263</sup> He also questioned the real motive for the planned road:

Why is the government so concerned about the trucking industry? Is the Department of Minerals and Energy hell-bent on mining along the Wild Coast? Is there a hidden agenda to mine titanium on the Wild Coast and truck it to Coega, another economic and development

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<sup>262</sup> Resolution on the N2 Wild Coast Toll Road, adopted at the Durban meeting; undated.

<sup>263</sup> Geoff Davies, "Where to the N2?", *Mail & Guardian*, 20 to 30 January 2003, 26.

disaster in the making?<sup>264</sup>

In December 2004 the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism set aside the Record of Decision to go ahead with building of the road on the basis that the environmental impact assessment process was flawed.<sup>265</sup>

## **5.10 Insights from the diocese**

A number of insights can be gained from this study of the Diocese of Umzumvubu. We begin by looking at people's perceptions, then look at the support offered by Bishop Davies and finally conclude with an overview of some other factors.

### **5.10.1 People's perceptions**

At the October 2003 Diocesan Synod I distributed a survey. It was in English. 90 were issued to the representatives and they were expected to fill it in on their own and return it to the front table of the meeting room. 33 were returned. In it there were two sections. In the first the individual had to indicate what parish they were from and what role they played in it, such as church warden, priest, etc. The second section consisted of the following two questions:

1. Is there a concern for the environment in your parish/diocese? If so, please describe this concern.
2. Has a concern for the environment helped in alleviating poverty in any way in your parish/diocese? If so, please describe this.<sup>266</sup>

The answers reveal something of people's perception of the nature of the

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<sup>264</sup> Geoff Davies, "Where to the N2?", 26.

<sup>265</sup> The debate was reintroduced in 2005 with a new environmental impact assessment being undertaken.

<sup>266</sup> Survey distributed to members of Diocese of Umzimvubu Synod, 2003.

environmental problems that they face and the responses that have been made to them.

The answers expose the nature of the problems that exist. A common concern was littering: "They are concerned about plastic and papers in the streets – littering."

(Layminister, St Francis, Kokstad)

"Avoiding littering." (Parish priest, St Andrews – Lusikisiki)

There were a number of other problems mentioned:

- "[T]here is a concern that resources are being depleted & no replacing is taking place." (Layminister, Holy Trinity, Kokstad)
- "No water available." (Parish priest, St Michael Parish); "There are signs of overcultivation in certain areas." (Parish priest, All Saints, Mzizi, Bizana)

The need for environmental protection was mentioned:

- "Yes to keep it clean and to the benefit of everyone." (Lay minister, St Michael's, Cibini)

There was some awareness of the interest of others:

- "[T]he priest at St Stephens, is very interested in self help projects. Particularly vegetable growing & poultry rearing.... Caring for the environment is also of concern to him." (Church warden, St Mary's, Matatiele)

Unemployment was seen as contributing to poverty:

- "Because of unemployment, poverty has reached an alarming proportion in this area." (Rector, St Stephen's, Qebedu)

There were expressions of the need to do something:

- " We are trying to teach people about it." (Priest, St Gregorys)

From others there was an admission that help was needed to do something:

- " We need some help to fight and protect the environment." (Assistant priest, Clydesdale parish)

- "No. But we would like to be taught more. People do not care about [the] environment. (a) they burn veld at random. (b) poaching is rife in the rural areas. Law enforcement is weak/do not take this seriously." (Chairperson Bernard Mizeki Guild (archdeaconry), Clydesdale parish)
- "There is a concern in the diocese and for the past ten years it has become clear to most people but to others it is still not clear especially those in the parishes because there is still a lack of education on environment. [I]n my parish maybe as time goes on when they will understand what it means to be environmentally friendly." (Parish priest, St Thomas, Ntabankulu)

Some awareness of the responses made is expressed in the following:

- "Trees are protected, veld fires are prevented, projects for plantations are carried on, ploughing of the land is being done to feed the people, agricultural projects are undertaken, agricultural officers advise people to use good agricultural methods of ploughing." (Lay minister, St Faith's, Kwamthwane)
- "[P]rojects of baking." (Deacon, Umzimvubu Parish)
- "Yes; parishioners grow crops, vegetables in their gardens. Finally they [put] small stones on dongas to prevent the run-off of the soil on rainy days. They are fighting against soil-erosion. They also plant trees in dongas to stop eroded soil." (Assistant priest, Clydesdale Parish)
- "Yes, the collection of paper rubbish to form a manure compost which is essential for the growing of plant and some other plants." (Church warden, Bongumsa Mz Dzanibe)
- "Yes I am against killing of wild animals uncontrolled veld fires, soil erosion. I encourage vegetable production." (Priest, St Ninian's Cibini Parish)
- "Yes. Warn against veldfires & littering. Encourage vegetable production." (Priest, Holy Cross)
- "Yes, planting of trees, cultivation of soil and planting of vegetables and mealies." (Church warden, St Mary's, Qanqu)
- "Yes, there is in my parish some of people are about 12 who have a fowl project and some are in the garden project. Like our Priest is seeing to it." (Sub-deacon, Holy Cross)
- "Tilling our fenced church land and have agricultural projects and piggery." (Rector, St Georges, Mount Frere)
- "For sustainable agriculture we encourage compost and cattle manure not fertilizers." (Rector, St Georges, Mount Frere)

For some there was an awareness of what was happening in the wider diocese:

- "There is a wide concern in our diocese, an example being Glenthorne and little concern in our parish. The awareness on conservation is not to burn the grass & insects because it causes soil erosion and starves the grass-eating

animals." (Rector, St Matthias, Ncoti)

There was an acknowledgement of the work of the Davies':

- "There is a concern about littering and not caring for the environment. People have somehow become aware of the importance of keeping our world in good condition through Mrs Kate Davies and Geoff's inspiration." (Rector, St. Francis, Bongwem Kokstad)

There was also particular awareness expressed about the proposed toll road:

- "Yes there is positive concern in the diocese, the toll-road that is in the process at the wild coast." (Assistant priest, St Stephen, Matatiele); and a connection was made between the proposed road and the environment: "[I]f the toll road is stopped the wild life will be safe." (Assistant priest, St Stephen, Matatiele)

The concern was not for the church only:

- "We have a community project not for our church only." (Church warden, Mfundweni)

The connection between a concern for the environment and people's livelihoods was expressed clearly by some respondents:

- "Conservation protects vegetation which sustains animals and insects. We get meat from the animals we rear, and poles for buildings and fencing – we also use the trees for firewood. It maintains the ecosystem which is so essential for maintaining balance in nature." (Rector, St Matthias, Ncoti)

The causal effect of a particular concern was mentioned:

- "Soil erosion: fire every winter....It causes a lot of poverty" (Sub-deacon, St Mary's. Xaxazana parish)
- "The crop which we get there we sell to the community and to the stores as such." (Church warden, Mfunweni)
- "For the piece of land we have there, we take a certain part to produce something such as potatoes." (Church warden, St Marks)
- "Yes looking at implementing projects alleviating poverty. In a way of teaching people to live on their own." (Deacon, Umzimvubu Parish)
- "Yes, there is in my Parish a project of garden where we are fifteen. We help those who are starving to abolish the poverty by selling some of the Project." (Mothers' Union, Cibini Parish)
- "We also have the poultry to eat and sell some of them..." (Mothers' Union,

Cibini Parish)

- "Yes these who sell fowls get they grow there chickens when big prize them around about R29. They care and clean the place where they keep them, also the garden is keep clean to and the cabbage is sold to the people like are three men working in it so they also get paid for that." (Sub-deacon, Holy Cross)
- "Yes, poverty has been alleviated." (Assistant priest, Clydesdale Parish)
- "[M]aking plastic hand bags from plastic bags." (Parish priest, St Andrews – Lusikisiki)
- "Yes, people are encouraged to use the soil (ploughing) ie natural resources, projects for making cement blocks using silt from the neighbouring river is a source of income in my parish." (Lay minister, St Faith's, Kwamthwane)
- "Yes vegetable production poultry running." (Priest, St Ninian's Cibini Parish)
- "Yes. Vegetable production. Employment for some. Preservation of environment." (Priest, Holy Cross)
- "At least it helps to feed the priest's family, so we don't pay or buy veg and mealies." (Church warden, St Mary's, Qanqu)
- "Yes, Glenthorn staff use the land for food gardens to help fight poverty and hunger and in response to HIV/ AIDS need for fresh nutrition – esp. feeding AIDS/HIV orphans and helping people living with the pandemic." (Rector, St. Francis, Bongwem Kokstad)
- "Some gardens have been established & these are helping to upgrade diet & health." (Layminister, Holy Trintiy, Kokstad)

There was interestingly also the aesthetical aspect:

- "People are conscious about cleaning and beautifying their yards." (Layminister, St Francis, Kokstad)
- "In our environment we have planted different types of trees to show our love and appreciation of nature and its beauty. It is where you can get different types of birds and their nests." (Church warden, St Marks)
- "No. Instead species which were there as I was still a youngster have gone extinct." (Chairperson Bernard Mizeki Guild (archdeaconry), Clydesdale parish)
- "Me at my home to have a small garden. Then next thing too is I like nature to like when I look at some sorts of stone birds. I just see or imagine about God like looking at trees and their different types. Even one day I was looking at the sky something just touched me seeing God caring for us." (Sub-deacon, Holy Cross)

The responses express a wide diversity of views. Most of the respondents struggled to express themselves in English. [The expressions of a number of respondents had to be edited by myself in order to make good sense.] There seemed to be no significant



variation in the responses of clergy compared to those of lay people. The connection between a concern for the environment and the alleviation of poverty seemed evident from a number of responses.

There is, however, relatively little awareness of being part of a diocesan plan of concern for the environment and poverty eradication. Theological factors did not seem to be prominent in people's responses. Significantly, a large measure of support was expressed for the work of Bishop Davies in the diocese. We consider the importance of this in more detail.

#### **5.10.2 Bishop Davies' support**

In looking at the support Bishop Davies provided, we consider his theological thinking on issues of environmental justice, the role of human beings, and the value of the environment, including nature for God's sake.

By the very nature of the Anglican Church, the role of the bishop is a significant one. In this diocese the bishop gave a strong lead in the process of implementing the vision and in encouraging all to take it seriously. Bishop Davies' qualities as a leader and his theology were instrumental in making a difference to the thinking and practice of the diocese. We consider some of these aspects of his episcopal ministry.

Particular personal qualities have assisted Bishop Davies in being effective: he is passionate and articulate, lives simply, enjoys the outdoors and sacrifices his own resources to achieve his objectives. He has been closely supported by his wife, Kate. He is not reluctant to take the initiative, and he uses personal approaches in motivating others to become involved. In his charges to synod and in his public speaking he has tried to promote an appropriate response by the church which has had a strong environmental thrust but also shows deep concern for people's lives.

He knows the value of the press in promoting his causes and uses it fully. He also knows the value of education and training, and the need to adapt to a particular context. He shows a strong interest in the wider Anglican Church and is ecumenically minded. He initiated the CPSA Environment Network and served as its first chairperson. He serves as the Vice-Chairperson of the Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa. He has also been involved in a number of other environment organisations.

Bishop Davies' theological thinking around the environment has been important in guiding his work in the diocese. We will consider some key aspects of this. Bishop Davies has regarded the need for justice as a major factor within his approach to the environment. The need to establish both economic justice as well as environmental justice has been important. He has written:

It is a long and hard haul for us to discover that we have to establish justice for the natural environment as well if we humans are to live together in peace. There will be no peace amongst us humans while we continue to abuse and rape the natural environment. As was abundantly clear under apartheid – and is clear in the world today with its gross economic disparities – we all suffer when injustices are perpetuated amongst us. So we all suffer when we treat the natural world with disdain – for we have to have clean water to drink, clean air to breathe and soil to grow our crops in if we are to survive.<sup>267</sup>

In a consecration sermon Bishop Davies stated: “[Y]our responsibility as a Bishop includes seeking economic justice for your people and justice for the natural environment. “Eco-justice” is integral to the Gospel and our witness to it. You must be a voice of the voiceless.”<sup>268</sup> At the Global Anglican Congress on the Stewardship of Creation he gave a paper entitled “Economic and Ecological Justice: Two sides of the

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<sup>267</sup> Geoff Davies, “Church and the Environment: A Personal pilgrimage”, 30-34 (*Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Africa* (Double issue in partnership with the SACC: Church, Environment and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), 2002), 31.

same coin.”<sup>269</sup> At a breakfast briefing at Diakonia Council of Churches he again picked up on the theme of eco-justice.<sup>270</sup>

For Bishop Davies the role of human beings and the need not to abuse the earth is important. In his enthronement charge he said that

we cannot continue to exploit the earth as if it were a limitless resource for which we have no responsibility. God charged us to “rule” over the earth (Genesis 1:26). The biblical understanding of rule is to nurture, care for, look after, that the world will be a better place for our having lived in it - not to exploit it for our own advantage.<sup>271</sup>

He expressed a similar sentiment in the consecration sermon. He said that

[i]n the very first Chapter of the Bible God mandated us to “rule” or have dominion over” God’s creation. We are making a rotten job of it....We rape the earth with gay abandon, blithely disregarding the consequences for our children. Rape is unfortunately the appropriate word, when we think of mother earth, whom we despoil, disfigure and abuse for our own self-centred gratification, allowing our rapacious greed to override all considerations of ethical and moral behaviour.<sup>272</sup>

The need to protect the environment against various forms of abuse is important for Bishop Davies.

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<sup>268</sup> Geoff Davies, Sermon given at the consecration of the Revd Funginkosi Niclaus Mbhele and the Revd Elijah Thwala in the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity, Pietermaritzburg, May 2001.

<sup>269</sup> Geoff Davies, “Eco-justice and the church”, 118-124, in Jeff M. Golliher (ed), *‘Healing God's Creation,’ the report of the Global Anglican Congress on the Stewardship of Creation*, compiled by the Anglican Observer to the United Nations, Archdeacon Taimalelagi F. Tuatagaloa- Matalavea (Harrisburg, Pa: Morehouse Publishing, 2004).

<sup>270</sup> Geoff Davies, “Famine or Plenty? EcoJustice for a Hungry World” (Durban: Diakonia Council of Churches, 2003.)

<sup>271</sup> Geoff Davies, “Enthronement Charge by the First Bishop of Umzimvubu, The Rt. Revd. Geoffrey F. Davies”, 1 December, 1991, St. George’s, Mt. Frere.

<sup>272</sup> Geoff Davies, Sermon given at the consecration of the Revd Funginkosi Niclaus Mbhele and the Revd Elijah Thwala in the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity, Pietermaritzburg, May 2001.

As Christians we worship the author of all life. Life therefore has a sanctity. Christians should therefore take a stand and give a lead on environmental issues. There are areas that are sacred and should be protected from the interests of mining, military defence, roads, commercial exploitation. For example, in this Diocese we have two areas of exceptional natural beauty: - the Transkei Wild Coast and the Drakensberg Mountains. They both deserve to be protected, cared for and preserved for future generations....

We have a history and legacy of exploitation and abuse of human beings and the environment in southern Africa. Let us as Christians realize our responsibility to our fellow persons and our environment that we may uphold justice, peace and the integrity of creation.<sup>273</sup>

Bishop Davies has a strong focus on the need to set aside land that is not at all developed. In respect of the Glenthorne property he suggested:

I want you to consider whether a part of Glenthorne could not be set aside as a place where we can say: "This is set aside for God; for spiritual refreshment and a sanctuary for God's creation". I know this little hillside. I have walked every inch! It can revive the soul!....There is an amazing variety of beautiful birds here.... I hope we can see this as a sanctuary to protect the variety of God's creation. I have for long been intending to put a notice up at the entrance to Glenthorne saying:

*Glenthorne is Church property  
Dedicated to the glory of God  
Please:  
No hunting or shooting  
No violence  
No littering<sup>274</sup>*

While Bishop Davies has made clear his own views towards the environment, he also took the initiative in communicating them to others. He attempted to keep people informed of what was happening in the wider church and made the most of the opportunities to promote environmental concerns. For example, in a "Pastoral

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<sup>273</sup> Davies, "Enthronement Charge", 1 December, 1991.

<sup>274</sup> Geoff Davies, CPSA, Diocese of Umzimvubu, Continuation of the Third Session of Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Charge, Cathedral Church of Peter Masiza, Glenthorne, 17 October 2003.

Letter", written while he was suffragan bishop of St John's, he drew to people's attention two environmental matters. The first one was Kate Davies' report from her visit to the convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation held in Seoul, South Korea in March 1990. In it Kate had written : "I have a sense of frustration because of the urgency of certain environmental problems which concern the whole of God's created order.... The church needs to act now by example and teaching." Secondly, in this same "Pastoral Letter" he draws attention to the Anglican Consultative Council's meeting in July 1990 in Wales which added the fifth affirmation to the definition of mission, namely: "The mission of the church is to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth." Bishop Davies adds a comment in his letter: "Living as we are in a rural and agricultural area, this mission priority should have particular significance for us."<sup>275</sup>

### **5.10.3 Other factors**

While Bishop Davies played a significant factor in the life of the diocese we need to look at other significant factors. We consider fragile livelihoods, the structured approach, training, the involvement of all, diocesan-wide activities, networking, and lobby and advocacy. Both the needs and opportunities of the diocese played an important role in making these efforts significant. The fact that the people of the diocese are materially poor has meant that they have responded well to a focus that has been seen as beneficial to their well-being. The approach of the diocese was a holistic one; it was one that developed out of the work of the RCDC. It was part of a vision with a methodology for development with clear objectives. The focus was also integrated into the wider life of the diocese. The established instruments of the church were used. For example the synods were used to highlight the vision of the diocese and to encourage people to participate in particular activities in achieving this.

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<sup>275</sup> Geoff Davies, Pastoral Letter, CPSA, St John's Diocese, Northern Region, October 1990.

There was value placed on the need to develop people. This led to the focus on education and training, evidenced in the support for the diocesan schools as well as for lay and clergy training, both at the Centre in the diocese, as well as in sending clergy away for training. The emphasis was on empowering people, not merely on developing physical resources. Development of people was not only from the “top down”, it occurred on all levels. The challenge and changes were at all levels, and there was an attempt to engage all involved. All people were seen to be important, and to have “assets”, with a role to play, even those who were considered very poor.

Within an Anglican context there is a danger that development of people becomes one that focuses on the clergy to the exclusion of the laity. In this diocese this was not the case. While clergy were certainly involved, there was also the inclusion of many others. Despite being a relatively large diocese, there were numerous occasions for diocesan wide gatherings. Partly this was the ethos of the diocese, that they would come together for diocesan community/family activities. These were well planned events that were to have a significant impact on the people and development of the diocese. These occasions also served as occasions for celebration, and sustained the people in their mission.

There were a number of examples of the active co-operation with other organisations, locally and further a field, both within and outside the church. The immensity of the task at hand was certainly a motivating factor in strengthening the collaboration with other organisations. Not only was there the openness to learn from the work of other organisations and the use of their resources, but there was also a willingness to share resources. Also, at various occasions in the life of the diocese use was made of experts. However, there was a recognition that outside resources should not be relied upon, particularly in the area of finances, and also human resources. Those that came to work in the diocese from the outside realised their limitations.

The media were used to promote their agenda and highlight the work of the diocese. There was also use made of video and television. There was a strong awareness of the need to be engaged in lobbying and advocacy. Opportunities were taken to attend meetings, to speak to high placed government officials and to write to the press. There was a concerted effort to communicate what was happening both to those within the diocese as well as those outside. This was to greatly increase the support for the work in the diocese. A strong spirituality sustained the work. It was an integrated and engaged spirituality.

### **5.11 Conclusion**

It has been difficult to assess the impact made on poverty in the diocese by the programmes of the diocese. Regular impact assessments had not been undertaken. One inevitably asks whether the work done is sustainable. Will it continue to develop in response to new challenges? It is too soon to assess its long term sustainability.

During Bishop Davies' time in the diocese significant contacts were established both within and without the diocese to support their work. The continuance of these is important. Their work has been an inspiration and a sign of hope to others. Its theology has fitted the context. It put faith into action. The work in the diocese had many components. It was certainly a bold attempt to focus on the environment. While we have not been able to measure the impact on poverty eradication there were clear plans to deal with it.

The diocese attempted to ensure that maintaining a healthy environment would help ensure prosperity. The bishop's support was a significant factor in the efforts that were made. While some theological dimensions to the work were articulated there



did not appear to be a sustained theological vision the diocese adopted and owned. It is for this reason that an *oikotheology* is urgently needed. In the next chapter we try to map out what these elements should be in constructing an *oikotheology*.

## CHAPTER 6

### HOMEWORK: THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

#### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will outline the elements of an *oikothology* based on a reflection on the preceding chapters and an examination of a range of biblical and theological resources.

From the historical perspective provided in chapter two, we noticed the divisions in the house of life. The insights gained pointed us towards the view that the environment embraces all of life, and that the restoration of people's dignity leads to respecting all of life. From examining the church's response in chapters three and four we noticed that the church tended to respond to particular circumstances and challenges but did not have a systematic theology, or a common understanding of what is being aimed at, and that the important link between the environment and the economy was seldom dealt with. In the focus on the Diocese of Umzimvubu in chapter five we saw that eradicating poverty had a strong link to the environment in terms of producing food based on a wise use of the land. However, despite strong episcopal encouragement, there was still a need for a consistent theology that would sustain the church's engagement beyond the influence of a few strong personalities. This chapter therefore takes up this challenge, with the articulation of an *oikothology*.

An *oikothology* is based on the *oikos* metaphor. In this chapter we will explore this metaphor, its value and use as well as the problems associated with it. We begin with a consideration of the relationship between theology and the environment, and then consider resources that the church may draw on to strengthen its engagement with environmental issues, and particularly those that point towards an *oikothology*. In

order to construct this theology we need to challenge the traditions. As the basis of *oikothology*, *oikos* is explored as a metaphor. A consideration of the role of human beings is important in the formulation of an *oikothology*, which indicates how people relate to the ecological resources of the environment. The economic dimensions of an *oikothology* are then set out in some detail, for it is in the outworking of this theology in the world that a just economy is established and poverty tackled. We conclude with a short selection of South African and Southern African theological statements that have expressed well insights which have echoed the essence of an *oikothology*.

## **6.2 Struggle to make the earth our home**

In this study we have assumed that the Christian faith is one which values the natural environment, and that it is the church that has been slow to act this out. However, we need to be aware that there has been much criticism of the Christian tradition in respect of the environment. In 1967 Lynn White Jr. delivered a widely published lecture in which he maintained that the Judeo-Christian tradition bears “a huge burden of guilt” for the ecological crisis. He claimed that Christianity “not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.”<sup>276</sup> White’s address was a watershed in the debate on religion and the environment, and set off a heated debate within religious circles.

There were a number of scholars who criticised White’s approach to Scripture. For example, in countering the criticism by White, Richard Hiers made his defence on hermeneutical grounds, claimed that that “[l]ike other critically illiterate readers before him, White blurs together the P and J creation stories, thereby obscuring and

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<sup>276</sup> Lynn White, “The Historical roots of our ecologic crisis,” *Science* 10, 1967.

omitting significant elements."<sup>277</sup> However, Tucker felt that White's point was being missed. He said that "many biblical scholars misread an important point in White's argument. For him it was not so much the biblical text as the history of its interpretation in the Christian West that formed the historical roots of the ecological crisis."<sup>278</sup>

Since this debate theologians have tried to stress the ecological significance of the Bible and Christian tradition. An *oikothology* proceeds on the foundation of all of this. However, given the reality of life in South Africa at present, a myopic Christian focus on the environment without detailing a fundamental relationship to the issue of poverty and therefore to economic justice, will be counter-productive. Thus as this chapter proceeds we will seek to move this focus from just speaking about the environment or ecology, to speaking about the intrinsic relationship between ecology and economics. As we shall argue below, it is here that the term *oikos* becomes significant.

We look firstly at what we call "traditional resources", and then, building on this, "contemporary resources". We then engage in challenging the traditions to extend theological resources to serve an *oikothology*.

### 6.3 Traditional resources

Traditional theological resources have tended to value the ecological dimension of the environment and in this respect contribute little towards the construction of an *oikothology*. They need to be challenged to provide a more comprehensive approach to the environment. The themes of creation, covenant, Jesus and ecclesiastical traditions are considered briefly.

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<sup>277</sup> Richard H. Hiers, "Ecology, biblical theology and methodology: Biblical perspectives on the environment" (*Zygon* 19: 1, 1984), 45.

<sup>278</sup> Gene M. Tucker, "Rain on a land where no one lives: The Hebrew Bible and the environment, 3-17 (*Journal of Biblical Literature* 116:1, 1991), 5. There have been a number of articles on the debate. See, for example, Elspeth Whitney, "Lynn White, ecotheology, and history," 151-169 (*Environmental Ethics* 15, 1993).

The creation accounts in the early chapters of Genesis reflect a world created in diversity and abundance. A picture is given in these passages of there being sufficient resources for all life to be sustained and to flourish. That all has been created by God implies a sense of specialness, of sacredness. This helps us see the need to value and to preserve all aspects of our world.

The tendency in theological thinking has been to associate God's concern for the world only with human beings. This thinking easily leads to the devaluation of the rest of creation. The Noahic covenant is one that embraces more than the human community. God's covenant in Genesis 9 is a covenant with *all* creation. This is helpful in showing God's strong concern for other aspects of life; and helps re-inforce the lasting value of all of creation. In Romans chapter 8, the covenant idea of creation and redemption extending to all of life is emphasised.

It seems evident from the gospels that Jesus exhibited an attitude of respect towards the natural world. In his life Jesus shows an intimacy and familiarity with a variety of God's creatures and also the processes of nature. He spent time in the hills praying, and teaching on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and on a mountainside. Jesus was at home in the natural environment. In his teaching one reads of sowing seed, vines, lost sheep, shepherds, lilies of the field, and birds of the air. He exercised power over creation, calming the waves, walking on the water, multiplying the loaves. He identified himself with the natural elements such as water, bread and light. In his life and teaching Jesus expressed a strong concern for those who were poor. Yet his concern for people was not divorced from an interest in and relationship with the non-human world.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> There are a number of helpful resources from the New Testament. See, for example, Calvin De Witt (ed), *The Environment and the Christian: What we can learn from the New Testament?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991); Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (ed), *Tending the garden: Essays on the gospel and the earth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987); For further references to Jesus and

Within the traditions of the church there have been a number of people who have affirmed the Christian faith as one that values the natural world, and people's place within it. St Francis of Assisi comes to mind. But one can also draw on the example of many others. One thinks of the Celtic tradition. There is also Hildegard of Bingen, Hugh of St Victor and Meister Eckhardt.<sup>280</sup>

#### 6.4 Contemporary theologies

Beyond these traditional theological resources, there are three contemporary theologies which can help us with different components in the construction of an *oikotheology*: ecofeminist, African and liberation theologies.

In this study we have been aware of the impact that gender has on patterns of poverty. In a country like South Africa that has high levels of discrimination against women, it is important that we develop theological insights to counter this. We also noted that the discrimination of women and the oppression of the environment and increased poverty went hand in hand. The insights offered by ecofeminist writings, which look at the position of women in relation to the environment, offer us useful resources to help us to see the interconnectedness of life and promote the empowerment of women.<sup>281</sup>

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the New Testament see, for example, Edward P. Echlin, "Jesus, the fossil record, and all things," 278-281 (*New Blackfriars* 72, 1991); Donald Senior, "The Gospels and the earth," 141-145 (*The Bible today* May 1988).

<sup>280</sup> See, for example, an overview of these tradition and individuals in Sean McDonagh, *The Greening of the church* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990).

<sup>281</sup> See, for example, Aruna Gnanadasan, "Women, economy and ecology", 178-185, in David G. Hallman (ed), *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North* (Geneva: WCC Publications; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994); the writings of Rosemary Radford Ruether which engage traditional theology, see her edited work, *Women healing earth: Third World women on ecology, feminism and religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist theology* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), "Ecofeminism: The Challenge to theology", in Dieter Hessel and Rosemary Ruether (eds), *Christianity and ecology: Seeking the wellbeing of earth and humans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); the works by Vandana Shiva are also helpful in dealing with contexts of poverty, such as *Staying alive: Women, ecology and*

There have been insights offered from within Africa on the relationship of women to the environment.<sup>282</sup> While there has been a large corpus of writings from a feminist perspective in South Africa there has not been much on ecofeminism. Ecofeminism does not have a homogeneous perspective; there are a number of varieties.<sup>283</sup> These include liberal, Marxist, radical, socialist and postmodern perspectives. There is, however, a large measure of agreement, especially that there are significant connections between the oppression of nature (naturism) and the oppression of women (sexism), and that the patriarchal conceptual framework accounts for this oppression. Sue Rakoczy has described ecofeminism as bringing together “feminism and ecology into the matrix which exposes the domination of women by men and the domination of the natural world by human beings.”<sup>284</sup> Ecofeminism emerged “as a response to the perception that women and nature have been mutually associated

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*development* (London: Zed Books, 1989); for a section of general ecofeminist publications see, Carol Adams (ed), *Ecofeminism and the sacred* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein (eds), *Reweaving the world: The Emergence of ecofeminism* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990); E. Rae, *Women, the earth, the divine* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994); M.H. MacKinnon and M. McIntyre (eds), *Readings in ecology and feminist theology* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995); and Judith Plant (ed), *Healing the wounds: The Promise of ecofeminism* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1989).

<sup>282</sup> Sara C. Mvududu, “Revisiting traditional management of indigenous woodlands”, 143-160, in Rosemary Radford Ruether (ed), *Women healing earth: Third world women on ecology, feminism and religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996). In looking at Shona practices she examines issues in women’s access to natural resources. Ndyabahika looks at the place of humanity, particularly women in creation (see G.N. Ndyabahika, “Women’s place in creation”, 23-30, in M. R. Kanyoro and N. J. Njoroge (eds), *Groaning in faith: African women in the household of God* (Nairobi: Acton, 1996). Isabel Phiri looks at how women in the Chisumphi cult have been singled out because they are the ones who are responsible for fetching water, firewood and looking for everyday food. Consequently they are more affected by changes in the environment (see Isobel Phiri, “The Chisumphi cult: The Role of women in preserving the environment”, 161-171, in Rosemary Radford Ruether (ed), *Women healing earth: Third world women on ecology, feminism and religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996). Alice Kabugumila claims that while women have, on the whole, been victims of the environmental crisis, they have also done something about their situation: rain water harvesting, tree planting, use of energy-saving stoves, and conversion to environment-friendly housing. (See Alice Kabugumila, “Tanzanian women’s response to the environmental crisis”, 64-73, in Jessie N. K. Mugambi and M. Vähäkangas (eds), *Christian theology and environmental responsibility* (Nairobi: Acton, 2001). See, also, Rakoczy’s description of what she calls “women’s initiatives for ecological justice” in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Kenya and Niger. See her book, *In Her Name: Women doing theology* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004), 315-322.

<sup>283</sup> “Ecofeminism”, derived from the French *ecofeminisme*, was coined by Francoise d’Eaubonne who first used it in 1974.

<sup>284</sup> Susan Rakoczy, *In Her Name: Women doing theology* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004), 300.



and devalued in Western culture, and that both can be elevated through direct political action.”<sup>285</sup> All relationships, with God, with each other and with nature are deformed by patriarchy, and in the name of God. Ecofeminist theology sheds light on patriarchy as well as other oppressive and dualistic thinking and practice, by affirming women as full members of the household of life, and also the world as the home of God.

African theology is the second contemporary resource that can be of assistance to us. In using the term “African theology” we refer to general theological insights reflected in African perspectives. There have been a number of contributions from the context of Africa that are helpful to us. Also helpful is that these reflections are mostly from a context of poverty and the struggle for life. We look at some of these contributions.

Ogotu looks at various aspects of the relationship of human beings to God and the environment from within an African context.<sup>286</sup> Pobee mentions the importance of theological reflection on the Christian meaning and significance of human relationships with nature.<sup>287</sup> Berhane-Selassie emphasises that the use and preservation of nature is intertwined with the maintenance of human welfare.<sup>288</sup> According to Kyomo, a human being remains healthy only by living in harmony with the whole creation.<sup>289</sup>

An *oikothology* is about the establishment and strengthening of community. Characteristic of African worldviews has been a strong focus on the community of life, including a sense of unity, an affirmation of people’s full humanity. Asante

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<sup>285</sup> Kathleen Coyle, *Renewing the face of the earth* (*Asia Journal of Theology*, 7:1, 1993), 119.

<sup>286</sup> G. Ogotu, *God, humanity and mother nature* (Masaki Publishers, 1992).

<sup>287</sup> John Pobee, “Creation faith and responsibility in the world,” 16-26 (*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 50, 1985).

<sup>288</sup> Tsehai. Berhane-Selassie, “Ecology and Ethiopian orthodox theology”, 155-172, in David G. Hallman (ed), *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994).

<sup>289</sup> Andrew Kyomo, “The Environmental crisis as a pastoral challenge in Africa” in J. Mugambi and M. Vähäkangas (eds), *Christian theology and environmental theology* (Nairobi: Action, 2001), 57-63.

expresses some of these views: "The African concept of *pan-vitalism* suggests that nothing in the universe is inanimate for the African....the African sees ontological relationships among all things. He does not see himself in isolation from the other creatures, nor does he see other creatures in isolation from him."<sup>290</sup> Of community, Harvey Sindima, writing from a Malawian perspective, describes community in the following way:

Community must be based in a consciousness that all creatures are part of all others, that humans share a common destiny with nature. Community, and the vision that puts forth that community, must be dedicated to the fullness of life for people, for other animals, for plants, for the Earth, indeed for all expressions of the divine *Moyo*.<sup>291</sup>

There are indeed rich insights that Africa theology provides. Another theology from a context of struggle, liberation theology, also provides useful insights. Liberation theology focuses on the liberation of human beings from all that oppresses them, particularly unjust structures, and affirms their full humanity. The integration of ecological concerns into liberation theology offers particularly helpful resources for constructing an *oikothology*. To illustrate this we can look briefly at the work of a leading liberation theologian, Leonardo Boff, who has reflected this new focus.<sup>292</sup> In his writings Boff emphasised the role of modern global capitalism in increasing

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<sup>290</sup> E. Asante, "Ecology: Untapped resources of pan-vitalism in Africa", 289-293 (*African Ecclesial Review* 27), 290.

<sup>291</sup> Harvey Sindima, "Community of life: Ecological theology in African perspective", 137-147, in BC Birch, W Eakin and JB McDaniel (eds), *Liberating life: Contemporary approaches to ecological theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990), 146.

<sup>292</sup> Boff has served as an editorial advisor to the Ecology and Justice Series of Orbis Books. See Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), and *Cry of the earth, cry of the poor* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997). A number of useful articles in this respect are contained in Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo (eds), *Ecology and poverty: Cry of the earth, cry of the poor* (Concilium; London: SCM Press; Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1995). See, for example, the following from this publication: Julio de Santa Ana, "The Present socio-economic system as a cause of ecological imbalance and poverty" (Translated by Dinah Livingstone) 3-11; Leonardo Boff, "Liberation theology and ecology: Alternative, confrontation or complementarity?" (Translated by Paul Burns), 67-77; Jose Ramos Regidor, "Some Premises for an eco-social theology of liberation" (Translated by John Bowden) 78-93; Eduardo Gudynas, "Ecology from the viewpoint of the poor" (Translated by Dinah Livingstone) 106-114. For

poverty and despoiling the world's ecosystems. His concerns have been with the plunder and consumerism of the world's resources. He has been critical of the impact of globalising capitalism, with free trade practices, on the environment. In his works Boff argues for a strong connection between people and the environment, the poor and the earth.

Brazilian ecofeminist theologian, Ivone Gebara, like Boff, has sought to incorporate environmental aspects into liberation theology.<sup>293</sup> Solidarity is extended to those aspects of the environment that are being marginalised and threatened. Furthermore, the forces and factors that oppress people are also those that destroy the land, with its soil, air and water. They regard poverty as an ecological threat. Efforts, therefore, to preserve the environment need to address systemic poverty.

## 6.5 Challenging the traditions

It has been the misinterpretation of Scripture within South Africa that has been a factor in legitimising an oppressive political system. Viewing Scripture solely from the perspective of human beings has also led to the exploitation of the environment through its disregard and the establishment of unjust economic systems that have further exploited it and not allowed all to enjoy its fruits. It is in this context that Dieter Hessel calls for a re-examination of Scripture, and claims that "theologians are beginning to read and interpret the Bible with more alertness to nature (what goes on outdoors), while attending to God's special regard for the oppressed (the view from below)".<sup>294</sup> He calls for the value of "recultivating the soil of biblical narratives to

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comments on Boff's treatment of the spirit in relation to his ecological theology see Ernst Conradie, "Notes on Leonardo and the *Filioque*, 14-24 (*Scriptura* 79, 2002).

<sup>293</sup> For an overview of her thinking see Ivone Gebara, *Longing for running water: Ecofeminism and liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

<sup>294</sup> Dieter Hessel, "The Church ecologically reformed", 86-206, in Dieter Hessel and Larry Rasmussen (eds), *Earth-injustice and the church's response* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 189.

nurture earth-friendly praxis” as he claims the Bible “offers hidden treasures to ecologically alert readers”:

Rereading biblical passages from the perspective of earth community cuts through an overlay of modern anthropocentric misinterpretation, exposing how much Scripture has to offer as a critique of nature manipulation and destructive development. The Bible turns out to be a resource for celebrating daily life and guiding our ultimate redemption with (*not* apart from) the rest of nature.<sup>295</sup>

There are a number of different approaches to what we may call “eco-hermeneutics.”<sup>296</sup> One particular project that has tried to read Scripture from the perspective of the earth has been the Earth Bible project. Of the significance of this project, Desmond Tutu, in the foreword to the one of the collections of articles published by the Earth Bible project, writes that in the same way that “[f]eminists have forced us to confront the patriarchal orientation of much of the biblical text”, so too the “Earth Bible writers are now confronting us with the anthropocentric nature of much of the biblical text.”<sup>297</sup> The Earth Bible project explores text and tradition from the perspective of the earth, employing a set of ecojustice principles. These may be summarised as follows:

1. The Principle of Intrinsic Worth:  
*The universe, Earth, and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.*
2. The Principle of Interconnectedness:  
*Earth is a community of inter-connected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.*

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<sup>295</sup> Hessel, “The Church ecologically reformed”, 190.

<sup>296</sup> See the overview in Luco van den Brom, “Ecological Hermeneutics”, 433-450, in A. König and Simon Maimela (eds), *Initiation into theology: The Rich variety of theology and hermeneutics* (Pretoria: JC van Schaik, 1998).

<sup>297</sup> Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst, *The Earth story in Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 7. For an assessment of the significance of the Earth Bible project see Ernst Conradie, “Towards an ecological biblical hermeneutics: A Review essay on the Earth Bible project”, 123-135 (*Scriptura* 85, 2004).

3. The Principle of Voice:  
*Earth is a living entity capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.*
4. The Principle of Purpose:  
*The universe, Earth and all its components are a part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall of that design.*
5. The Principle of Mutual Custodianship:  
*Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners with, rather than rulers over, Earth to sustain its balance and a diverse Earth community.*
6. The Principle of Resistance:  
*Earth and its components not only suffer from human injustices but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.<sup>298</sup>*

These principles are useful in helping us construct an *oikotheology*, as they reinforce the image of the earth as our home, a place where all life has its place and carries meaning. Viewing Scripture in this way helps correct the one-sided interpretations which consider only the needs and hopes of human beings, and which consequently leads to the neglect and impoverishment of the earth's resources. It gives the earth an active role.

Reinterpreting Scripture provides us with the basis for rethinking our theology. Hessel sees the need to "theologize as if earth community matters"<sup>299</sup> in respect of "God, Christ, Spirit, world, church, soul/body, sin and evil, redemption and the eschatological vision of New Jerusalem or New Earth".<sup>300</sup> Following Barbour, he lists four particular theological themes that need to be challenged:

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<sup>298</sup> Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst, *The Earth story in Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 20.

<sup>299</sup> Hessel, "The Church ecologically reformed", 190.

<sup>300</sup> Hessel, "The Church ecologically reformed", 191.

1. The separation of "God from nature. God was understood to be revealed primarily in historical events rather than in natural life, and God's transcendence was emphasized much more than God's immanence or living presence in creation."<sup>301</sup>

This understanding remains very prevalent in theological thinking. Rather than envisaging the global house as the place in which God dwells, it leads to the "desacralisation" of life and to practices that easily devalue that which is not human.

2. Furthermore, there has been the progressive separation of "humanity from nature. Humanity alone was said to be made "in the image from God, set apart from all otherkind, and given dominion."<sup>302</sup> This thinking also encourages a rapacious attitude and behaviour towards the natural world, seeing its destruction as having no clear link with the impoverishment of human beings.

3. Increasingly there developed a "separation of redemption from creation. Nature became a mere backdrop for the drama of human salvation."<sup>303</sup> This thinking undermines the understanding of God's on-going concern for all of creation and the liberation of the whole household of life.

4. Increasingly, churches have "accepted and reinforced common assumptions about the domination of men over women (patriarchy), and the rights of human beings over nature."<sup>304</sup> The promotion of these hierarchies has legitimised the domination of the home by men and human being to the detriment of other valuable elements.

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<sup>301</sup> Hessel, "The Church ecologically reformed", 187.

<sup>302</sup> Hessel, "The Church ecologically reformed", 188.

<sup>303</sup> Hessel, "The Church ecologically reformed", 186.

<sup>304</sup> Hessel, "The Church ecologically reformed", 188.

It is clear then that we need a theological position that responds to three concerns, namely, 1. to build onto those traditions that are helpful; 2. to take seriously the critique of the Christian traditions where it is warranted; and 3. to find ways to help the church to deal with the relationship between ecology and economics. To this end we are constructing an *oikothology*. This theology is primarily based on the meaning of *oikos* and its implications as a metaphor. We turn now to examine this.

## 6.6 The meaning of *oikos*

To begin with we need to consider the meaning of *oikos*. The basic meaning of *oikos* in general Greek and Hellenistic usage is given as “house” or “dwelling”, and related meanings of “domestic affairs”, “wealth”, “possessions”, as well as “family”, or “family” or “family property”. In both the Septuagint and the New Testament the use of the phrase in the “house of God” is common in referring to the temple, which also came to refer to the community.<sup>305</sup> According to Louw and Nida *oikos* may be categorised in the domain of constructions with a subdomain of buildings as “a building consisting of one or more rooms and normally serving as a dwelling place”.<sup>306</sup> It is acknowledged that the word can also include public buildings such as a temple. As a kinship term it could also refer to the “family” or “household”.<sup>307</sup> Also possible is its interpretation as “lineage” or “family line”.<sup>308</sup> Under the domain which refers to possessions, property and ownership *oikos* may also refer to the “possessions associated with a house and household”, “property, possessions”.<sup>309</sup>

As mentioned earlier, fundamental to an *oikothology* is this concept of a home or house. The earth as the “household of God” is used as a metaphor to describe how

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<sup>305</sup> Gerhard Friedrich (ed), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Volume V; translator and editor, Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 119.

<sup>306</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida (eds), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains. Volume 1* (Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa, 1989), 81a.

<sup>307</sup> Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 113a.

<sup>308</sup> Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 115a & b.



the world should be viewed and as a means of helping us understand the relationship between a concern for the environment and the eradication of poverty. It is a metaphor that helps us bridge the “green divide”. All have a home, all are equally valued. Both the health of ecosystems as well as the access by human beings to these resources is taken seriously. A home embraces the material as well as the non material. In a home there is the structure as well as mutuality of care, assurance of belonging, sustenance and support. A home implies domestic relations of interrelatedness and interdependence, without rivalry and oppression. It is about community and reconciliation, wholeness, connectedness, love, sacrifice, generosity, and welcoming the stranger. All life shares the same home. We all need each other. *Oikos* as metaphor incorporates the central dimensions of what constitutes the environment, and it gets to the root of environmental problems, by dealing with both the ecology and the economics.

Fundamental to our argument is therefore that this expansive term, *oikos*, with all its related meanings provides us with a metaphor – earth as our *oikos*, our home – with which to ground a theology that can unify reflection and action on the environment and the economy. To this end the metaphor has been used by the World Council of Churches for a number of decades.<sup>310</sup> It has been used in the expressions of other church bodies, such as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Within the South African context it has not had much use, other than in the work of Ernst Conradie who has used it in his writing on a number of occasions.<sup>311</sup> A current initiative to

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<sup>309</sup> Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 560b.

<sup>310</sup> See, for example the following works: J.B. Cobb, *Sustainability: Economics, ecology and justice* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz, *God's spirit: Transforming a world in crisis* (Translated by John Cumming; New York: Continuum, 1995), Larry L. Rasmussen, “Theology of life and ecumenical ethics”, 112-129, in David G. Hallman (ed), *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North* (Geneva: WCC Publications; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 112-129, Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth community. Earth ethics* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm shift in the ecumenical movement?* (Translated by Tony Coates; Geneva: WCC Publications).

<sup>311</sup> Ernst. M. Conradie, *An Ecological Christian anthropology: At Home on earth?* (Aldergate, Hants: Ashgate, 2005).

produce a theological statement by the church on the context of poverty in a post-apartheid South Africa has picked up on this theme.<sup>312</sup>

To take this idea further in the context of this thesis we need to explore further three words in English derived from *oikos*: ecology, economics and ecumenics. At the outset we need to say that some of the terms discussed below are used by different theologians in different ways. There is, however, a large measure of consensus on the essence of the meaning of this term *oikos*.

The word “ecology” is literally a word about the home, or the logic of the home (*oikos-logos*), refers to the interrelated dynamics that make up the total life of the household. It refers to the resources of the earth and respecting these systems that sustain life. “Economics” is literally the rules of the household (*oikos-nomos*). Conradie sees economics as follows: “The discipline of economics reflects on appropriate laws or rules (*nomoi*) for the household, the art of administering the global household”.<sup>313</sup> Wayne Meeks claims that while the science called economics is a relatively recent invention, the word *economy* is an ancient word that means literally the “law or management of the household.” He sees economics “in its ancient sense” is about “access to what it takes to live and live abundantly.”<sup>314</sup> Larry Rasmussen regards economics as meaning “knowing how things work and arranging these “home systems” (ecosystems) so that the material requirements of the household of life are met and sustained. The household is established as hospitable habitat.”<sup>315</sup> The values inherent in this understanding of economics are explored later.

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<sup>312</sup> This document, called *The Oikos Journey*, is due to be published during March 2006 by the Diakonia Council of Churches. It is a document modelled on the Kairos Document, which seeks to highlight economic justice issues.

<sup>313</sup> Ernst M. Conradie, “Stewards or sojourners in the household of God”, 153-174 (*Scriptura* 73, 2000), 153.

<sup>314</sup> Meeks, “The Economy of grace and the market logic”, 2.

<sup>315</sup> Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth community, earth ethics* (Ecology and Justice Series) (Maryknoll, New York, 1996), 91.

The word *oikoumene* or “ecumenics/ecumenical” is also derived from the root word *oikos*. It is used in the context of describing the position of the church in the world. In it we learn that the *world* is the household of God, not the church. Rasmussen comments on ecumenics as

recognizing the unity of the household – all belonged to the same family – and nurturing this unity, both within each community and across the collective “households of faith” scattered on three continents around the Mediterranean Basin. The *oikoumene* included a conscious effort to stand for the whole church in each place.<sup>316</sup>

This is a term that some writers use interchangeably with *oikos*, as we see in the writings of Konrad Raiser:

*oikoumene*, understood as the one household of life created and preserved by God, thus extends beyond the world of humankind, of the one human race, to creation as a whole. It reminds us that human history is bound up with the history of all living things and that the human household is incapable of surviving without being related to the other households which are its natural environment.<sup>317</sup>

The metaphor of the household thus provides for an understanding of the presence of God. God has established the household and dwells in it, and sustains it. This makes the earth home special. Meeks reflects on God dwelling particularly with those who are marginal in society.

The word from the God of Israel is not a word of power through control but of redemption through dwelling with those who are most threatened by homelessness:

I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their

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<sup>316</sup> Rasmussen, *Earth community, earth ethics*, 95.

<sup>317</sup> Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in transition: A Paradigm shift in the ecumenical movement?* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 87-88.

taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them... (Ex. 3:7-8b).

The promise of this God is Immanuel, God's own dwelling with those who are systematically separated from the household of life.<sup>318</sup>

While the physical aspects of a home are more obvious the non-material aspects are less so. As well as a place of shelter, protection and security the home is also a place of acceptance, nurture, hospitality and sharing.

It is widely recognised that the problems of hunger and poverty are not primarily related to a lack of the sufficient resources in the world, but rather the lack of adequate distribution of and access to them. Within South Africa people have been excluded from the resources that they need to nourish and sustain themselves. They have been excluded from the household goods, the "pantry" of the household. Through a number of apartheid laws black people were excluded from a variety of resources that could have enriched their lives. Primary among them was access to land. Land is the basis of the home: it supports and nurtures life, particularly in producing the food we need to survive. As we saw in chapter two, land ownership and occupation patterns have been very unjust and have contributed greatly towards poverty.

This situation has been compounded by our economic system. Because of the nature of our capitalistic society with its competitiveness and consumptiveness there are those who gain an unfair share of the household resources.

## 6.7 Problems with the home

The home in South Africa has often been a place of struggle, and so using the metaphor of a home is not a positive image for many. We need therefore to consider problems associated with the home from a racial, gender and poverty perspective.

The apartheid policies destroyed home life for many both literally and figuratively. A battery of legislation placed restrictions on people's ability to establish a meaningful home. The Group Areas Act and the establishment of homelands meant that people had to be forcibly removed from the land of their birth and set up home in often inhospitable circumstances. The migrant labour system, in which workers had to move from their home of birth to some "new" home, has led to much suffering. The context has been one in which home life has been systematically destroyed through the iniquitous policy of apartheid and many have come to experience a sense of not being at home in the country of their birth.

Furthermore, the Mixed Marriages Act, No 55 of 1949 and the Immorality Act, No 21 of 1950 made it difficult for people to build family life across racial lines. The policy of creating homelands was also built on the assumption that people could or should not live together, that their racial and ethnic differences meant that they needed to live apart. It was conceived that all could not be members of one household and furthermore, some should live in better houses than others.

People's sense of belonging to one another as well as to the earth has been destroyed. There is a strong sense of homelessness. The idea of the home, therefore, does not have a strong appeal to many people, particularly those who have experienced the abuse of the home. In South Africa there are a large number of street children and homelessness is widespread. For many there is no clear concept of what a home is.

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<sup>318</sup> Meeks, "The Economy of grace and the market logic", 11.

Further, for many women the home does not carry pleasant associations: it has been a place of abuse. Many women live in danger in their own homes, fearing psychological, physical and sexual abuse from their partners. Domestic violence violates the home, crushing the dignity of women and destroying family life. The strong patriarchal mentality that pervades home life in South Africa means that the experience of many women is that they feel trapped in performing menial chores with little appreciation. For poor women, who work long hours in other people's homes as poorly paid domestic workers maintaining the households of those who are more well off, the home is not associated with hospitality, mutuality and sharing.

High levels of poverty also mean that many people do not have homes, or live in homes that provide inadequate shelter and security. While this is a legacy from the apartheid government, the ability to meet the housing demand is proving to be difficult. Furthermore, a number of the "RDP houses" built have proved to have been badly constructed and some have collapsed or become uninhabitable.<sup>319</sup> The AIDS pandemic, resulting in a high number of orphaned children, has led to the increasing incidence of child-headed households, where life becomes a desperate struggle to survive.

Because of these limitations to the metaphor, Conradie cautions us against emphasising too strongly that we are at home on the earth. As human beings we continue to experience on going suffering and pain. It cannot be said that we are yet "at home" in this world. There is a strong sense by some that the world awaits a future home where there is an end to the present problems: "This earth is not yet the

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<sup>319</sup> The "RDP houses" refer to those small, basic houses conceived during the period of the Reconstruction and Development Programme and built in large quantities to try to overcome the housing backlog.



new earth. This house does not yet provide a home for all its creatures. The earth is not our home yet.”<sup>320</sup>

Yet despite these shortcomings, it remains a useful metaphor to use. Indeed, I would argue that because of the difficulties experienced around the home in South Africa it is a particularly useful term. It holds up before us a sign and symbol of what life should be like, and this provides us with a vision of a hopeful future and becomes a goad for action in the present against the experience of “non-*oikos*”. In other words it has a strong prophetic aspect to it in a context of injustice, poverty and ecological degradation. This seems to be the meaning of South African theologian Russell Botman, who comments saying that “apartheid was theologically indefensible because the *oikos*, the very idea of the household – whole and bound together by sacred ties – was at stake in its quasi-religious ideology. It threatened to destroy the *oikos* by taking as its point of departure the irreconcilability of people.”<sup>321</sup>

As we proceed with this articulation of an *oikothology* we do so mindful of these problems with the term in our context, but also appreciative of the power of the metaphor to guide our theological reflection and engagement.

## 6.8 The Place of human beings

Determining the place of human beings is most important in formulating an *oikothology*. We now turn to that task.

Any theology that tries to be authentic in the South African context needs to take seriously its past, including experiences of racism and sexism. While the society is

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<sup>320</sup> Ernst M. Conradie, “Stewards or sojourners in the household of God”, 153-174 (*Scriptura* 73, 2000), 166. See also Conradie’s more recent and comprehensive work: *An Ecological Christian anthropology: At Home on earth?* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2005).



one of diversity this differentness must not be used as a basis to determine what portion of the household goods each person gets. In what was a society of great injustice this hierarchy must be challenged, and all are encouraged to take responsibility. Equality is to be established. In fact all who have been despised and discriminated against are to be welcomed. Understanding the position of human beings in relation to the rest of creation can help provide important insights into how the resources of the earth should be accessed and distributed. We start by considering critical views of this relationship, which focus on human beings' superior attitude. The two contributions offered also provide some solutions.

In a lecture on "Racism and ecology", Albert Nolan likened human being's relationship to the environment with racism: "Not only do some human beings believe that they are superior to other human beings, but human beings as a whole have come to believe that they are superior to all other creatures, and that they can dominate, exploit, use, abuse and destroy any of the other things God has created."<sup>322</sup> There is the attitude that human beings own everything and can do with it what they like. It is a very arrogant attitude. Nolan feels that a more positive attitude towards all of life will impact positively on human relationships: "As we develop more respect for nature, including our own human nature, we will begin to develop more respect for one another as members of the same human race."<sup>323</sup> In fact, knowing and appreciating ourselves as human beings and knowing our place is greatly significant: "Reconstructing the moral fibre of the nation, getting beyond violence, overcoming racism of the heart, transcending sexism, protecting the environment and learning to

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<sup>321</sup> H. Russel Botman, "The *oikos* in a global economic era: A South African comment." <[http://www.crvp.org/book/Series02/II-6/chapter\\_x.htm](http://www.crvp.org/book/Series02/II-6/chapter_x.htm)> accessed on 1 May 2005.

<sup>322</sup> Albert Nolan, 2002, "Racism and Ecology", 11-13 (*Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Africa*, Double issue in partnership with the SACC: Church, Environment and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Vol 8, No 2 & Vol 8, No 3, April & August 2002).

<sup>323</sup> Nolan, "Racism and Ecology", 13.

be humble, all become possible once we discover who and what we really are: a small but powerful part of God's glorious universe."<sup>324</sup>

In a similar vein to Nolan's view, James Cone, the African American theologian, claims that

[t]he logic that led to slavery and segregation in the Americas, colonization and apartheid in Africa, and the rule of white supremacy throughout the world is the same one that leads to the exploitation of animals and the ravaging of nature.... The fight for justice cannot be segregated but must be integrated with the fight for life in all its forms.<sup>325</sup>

He calls for a greater collaboration: "Justice fighters for blacks and the defenders of the earth have tended to ignore each other in their public discourse and practice. Their separation from each other is unfortunate because they are fighting the same enemy - human beings' domination of each other and nature."<sup>326</sup> He states that "[r]acism is profoundly interrelated with other evils, including the degradation of the earth."<sup>327</sup>

The tendency in Christian theology has been to overemphasise the unique position of human beings in the realm of nature, and this domination has largely been legitimised on the basis of differences. Attempts have been made to try to interpret the meaning of the works used in Genesis 1 & 2 for the action of human beings in relation to natural world, and various images have been used to describe the role of human beings, including that of "gardener" and "trustee".

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<sup>324</sup> Nolan, "Racism and Ecology", 12-13.

<sup>325</sup> James H. Cone, "Whose earth is it, anyway?", 23-32, in *Earth habitat: Eco-injustice and the church's response*, edited by Dieter Hessel and Larry Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 23.

<sup>326</sup> Cone, "Whose earth is it, anyway?", 23.

<sup>327</sup> Cone, "Whose earth is it, anyway?", 26.

To look at the position of human beings Gene Tucker suggests that we look at biblical understandings of culture and nature. He acknowledges that neither is a biblical concept and that "this dichotomy between the world created by human intervention and society (culture), and the world before or outside of or unmodified by human activity (nature) may turn out to be false or misleading."<sup>328</sup> He notes, however, that '[a]ll the Hebrew traditions assume that human beings, who are both in and of the world, have a distinctive place in creation.'<sup>329</sup> It is a responsibility in which responsibilities, and the limits of authority, rather than rights, are emphasised.

A common role assigned to humans is that of steward. The word "steward" comes from the Greek work *oikonomos*. This has been criticised as being too "managerial". Other, more egalitarian models have been proposed.

For example, Conradie comments that although "the metaphor of 'stewardship' remains dominant in many Christian circles, also in South Africa, it has become a highly contested one."<sup>330</sup> Furthermore he adds that despite "its considerable ecclesial influence the metaphor of stewardship *as metaphor* has often come under considerable criticism in ecological theology."<sup>331</sup> His concerns are expressed as follows:

(i) "The notion of stewardship still assumes human supremacy among the species. Even though the emphasis is on responsibility instead of domination, the management model assumes that we as human beings know the best. It builds on the false assumption that we are skilful enough to manage everything, including

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<sup>328</sup> Tucker, "Rain on a land where no one lives", 6.

<sup>329</sup> Tucker, "Rain on a land where no one lives", 16.

<sup>330</sup> Ernst M. Conradie, "Stewards or sojourners in the household of God", 153-174 (*Scriptura* 73, 2000), 154.

<sup>331</sup> Conradie, "Stewards or sojourners in the household of God", 158.

ecological systems.”<sup>332</sup> Again, the issue of the superiority of human beings is emphasised.

(ii) Also “the notion of stewardship assumes a *relationship between* humanity and nature. By contrast, astrophysicists and biological scientists have suggested that human beings are simply an integral part of nature (and the evolution of natural ecosystems)...The theology of dominion or stewardship fails to accentuate that we belong to the earth more than it belongs to us, that we are more dependent on it than it is on us, that we are *of* the earth and not living *on* the earth.”<sup>333</sup> This is a sobering view of human beings, and certainly provides an antidote to dominating forms of behaviour.

(iii) “The rhetoric of the numerous appeals for proper stewardship is primarily aimed at people in positions of authority and responsibility. This assumes considerable social and economic power. The world’s poor, landless and marginalised are not the primary interlocutors of a theology of stewardship.”<sup>334</sup> Much of the literature on the environment is addressed to people whom it is assumed have a reasonable amount of wealth. An *oikothology* that is authentic must address the concerns of those who have relatively little.

While human beings should be seen as members of the earth community, they certainly have a strong active role in managing the economy. It is in establishing a just economy, which strongly respects the ecological balance of the household that we focus.

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<sup>332</sup> Conradie, “Stewards or sojourners in the household of God”, 158.

<sup>333</sup> Conradie, “Stewards or sojourners in the household of God”, 158.

<sup>334</sup> Conradie, “Stewards or sojourners in the household of God”, 159.

## 6.9 Economic dimensions

An *oikotheology* points us towards a just economy. Given the weakness of Christian thinking about the relationship between ecology and economics, the remainder of this chapter therefore examines some of the elements that constitute such an economy and which, in turn should comprise principles inherent in an *oikotheology*. Firstly the problems with economics are considered then the vision for a new economy is outlined.

### 6.9.1 Problems with economics

Today economics is largely decided by those who have resources and power – they set the household rules. They dictate how goods and services are produced and distributed. And they consume most of these products. Those who work in the household, the “domestic workers”, those who are poor, generally do not have meaningful control of these rules. God’s household rules are needed to ensure that all share in the abundance of the household of life.

We live in a world in which economics determines everything, and yet it would seem that ecological dimensions, in fact, should inform economics. In support of this Rasmussen argues that “there can be no economic order that is not totally dependent upon the planet’s ecosystems and the biosphere and geosphere as a whole ... Economic production and consumption, as well as human reproduction, are unsustainable when they no longer fall within the borders of nature’s regeneration.”<sup>335</sup>

Economics has tended to become less of a study of access to the resources that offer life, and instead focuses on issues like supply and demand within the dominant

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<sup>335</sup> Rasmussen, *Earth community, earth ethics*, 112.

market system. Meeks acknowledges that this market economy is an efficient system for distributing goods and services. However, the problems inherent in the system are all too apparent: "In a market society, all social goods are produced and distributed as if they were commodities. It is therefore possible for such a society not to be outraged when many of its children no longer have access to what it takes for them to live and live abundantly."<sup>336</sup> He points out further the danger of commodification:

According to the gospel and the depth of human wisdom, *what is necessary for life* cannot be a commodity or exclusively a commodity. Thus social goods such as food, housing, jobs, education and health care should not be exclusively distributed according to the market logic and social goods such as justice, belonging, respect, affection, and grace should not be distributed in any sense according to the logic of exchanging commodities. Otherwise, it is inevitable that those with nothing to exchange will get left out of the home. In the market society, however, there is nothing that cannot, in principle, be distributed as a commodity. Everything is for sale.<sup>337</sup>

Good economics should ensure that all of life thrives and flourishes. Rasmussen asserts that the fundamental task of any economy is the "continuation of life." He describes the way in which economics has come to move away from what he terms "*oikos* economics."<sup>338</sup> These three ways are: (1) nature is seen as interchangeable parts and machinelike rather than organic and communitarian; (2) "the propensity to generate affluence by expanding to new worlds until the globalized West became a full "planetary wave"; (3) the shift of economics from "the household and its community to the firm or corporation."<sup>339</sup> The third one is the most significant, for businesses exist to maximise profits whereas households exist to maximize the quality of life and its members.

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<sup>336</sup> Meeks, "The Economy of grace and the market logic" 4.

<sup>337</sup> Meeks, "The Economy of grace and the market logic", 5.

<sup>338</sup> Rasmussen, *Earth community earth ethics*, 91.

### 6.9.2 Home economics

An important component of an *oikotheology* is the formulation of principles that lead to an ecological sensitive economy. Of particular help is the work of Rasmussen. He sets out three principles for earth's economy as follows:

- (1) Nothing is wasted. What is discarded may be used as nourishment for some life form. There should be a strong focus on re-using and recycling;
- (2) Sunlight is the only input that comes from the outside; all else is already part of the system;
- (3) The environment depends on diversity and difference, and this must be encouraged. Biodiversity is regarded as "utterly crucial."<sup>340</sup>

These three principles point to the fact that the earth is a closed system. This implies that the dumping of waste somewhere else always affects someone, and reinforces the notion that what we throw away does not go away. Certainly the need for recycling becomes obvious. And it points us to the damage that is done when waste is put arbitrarily into the air and sea. The prospect of dealing with nuclear waste is even more concerning. The myth of unlimited growth, in which there is presumed to be an unlimited supply of raw materials for production and consumption needs also be discarded. The earth is a fragile home that needs to be nurtured and cared for recognising its limitations.

Seeing the earth as our home encourages us to share the resources we have available to us. There should not be those who are poor and those who are rich within the household. Good mechanisms (economic systems) are used to ensure that there is fair distribution of resources. If the ecological systems are properly maintained there will be sufficient resources for all.

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<sup>339</sup> Rasmussen, *Earth community earth ethics*, 92.

<sup>340</sup> Rasmussen, *Earth community, earth ethics*, 114.



### 6.9.3 Problems with the economy

Compounding the impact of the capitalist economic system is the phenomenon of globalization. Of globalization Bloomquist remarks:

The differing impacts of economic globalization matter. They complicate and often confound what can be generalized prescriptions to be applied on the same way to all. It is because we are interrelated in one body – rather than as competing rivals – that we are pulled into more complex analyses of what is really going on.<sup>341</sup>

In a world of economic globalization we experience greed, hoarding, selfishness, exploitation and ecological destruction. The impacts are uneven and we are left with those who are very rich and those who are very poor. Ironically, with the formation of a global village through increasing globalization, there is an increasing destruction of community. Botman recognises this:

Globalization as an ideal allows for no alternative measure of thought; it presents itself as the only view on contemporary society. Neo-liberalism is the ideological vehicle of economic globalization.... It prescribes a certain autonomy to the market that increases inequality and fragments political life and communities.

Its negative impact on the *oikos* is, thus, not only economic. It shows up in the behavior it promotes and the fragmentation it produces in the moral foundations of community. Individualism abounds and competition is celebrated. Solidarity and co-operation are sacrificed.<sup>342</sup>

In looking at the way forward Botman argues that “the alternative to poverty is not property, but community. Together, in solidarity, the poorest find a home, the wealth

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<sup>341</sup> Karen L. Bloomquist, “Communion, responsibility, accountability”, 261-288, in Karen L. Bloomquist (ed), *Communion, responsibility, accountability: Responding as a Lutheran communion to neoliberal globalisation* ( Documentation No. 50/2004; Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2004), 263.

<sup>342</sup> Botman, “The *oikos* in a global economic era”.

of friendship, and the gift and gifts of neighbors.”<sup>343</sup> Botman concludes his analysis of globalization with the following words: “I claim no less than that globalization is at odds with the *oikos* of life, the community base of being and the household narrative of the Bible.”<sup>344</sup>

#### 6.9.4 Community

An *oikothology* argues that community is a key to good economics. Meeks describes economics in relation to community: “As the arrangement that makes it possible for the household or community to live, economy was bound to community. In fact it was clear that economy existed to serve community. Economy in the broadest sense meant that the relations of human beings for the producing of the conditions of life against death.”<sup>345</sup>

In Africa and South Africa a strong sense of community is what holds communities together, particularly among those who are poor. Russel Botman picks up on this aspect of community.<sup>346</sup> He equates the concept of *oikos* with the African notion of *ubuntu*.<sup>347</sup> He claims that “the *oikos* concept is not only key to the Bible, it is also a central concept in Africa, in an African idiom. I refer here to the term used in southern Africa, which has equivalents elsewhere, namely, *ubuntu*.”<sup>348</sup> He goes on to stress the communal nature of humanity:

I want to suggest that the West might consider a small gift we in Africa just could offer. It is the gift of *ubuntu* – a term difficult to translate into

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<sup>343</sup> Botman, “The *oikos* in a global economic era”.

<sup>344</sup> Botman, “The *oikos* in a global economic era”.

<sup>345</sup> Meeks, “The Economy of grace and the market logic”, 2.

<sup>346</sup> H. Russel Botman, “The *oikos* in a global economic era: A South African comment.” Accessed at <[http://www.crvp.org/book/Series02/II-6/chapter\\_x.htm](http://www.crvp.org/book/Series02/II-6/chapter_x.htm)> on 1 May 2005.

<sup>347</sup> As Botman indicates this *ubuntu* is shorthand for a longer phrase often translated as “a person is a person through other people.”

<sup>348</sup> Botman, “The *oikos* in a global economic era”.

occidental languages. But it is the essence of being human, it declares that my humanity is caught up and inextricably bound up in yours . . . I am because I belong.

That is the essence of being human for Africans, being human in relational and cooperative terms. The human being is not only a personality, but also a sociality. This is also the first thrust of the creation story: God created humanity in relationship.<sup>349</sup>

Community recognises that we live in one household, that we need one another to survive and thrive.

Bloomquist explains community in this way:

We are created in relation to God, other people and the rest of creation, for the sake of loving and sharing what each can contribute to the whole. The problem is that economic globalization tends to weaken those very bonds of family and community, that, theologically, are constitutive of who we are – in relation to others. Instead of community, individualism is emphasised; instead of cooperation, competition; instead of participation in the life of others, production that uses others.<sup>350</sup>

Sallie McFague builds on this notion of community. After describing the contemporary economic model and its worldview,<sup>351</sup> McFague goes on to describe what is referred to as an “ecological economic model” and worldview.<sup>352</sup> She describes a model that “sees the planet more like an organism or a community that survives and prospers through the interrelationship and interdependence of its many parts, both human and nonhuman.”<sup>353</sup> This model is described as focusing on the “wellbeing of the community” rather than on “fulfilling the insatiable desires of

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<sup>349</sup> Botman, “The *oikos* in a global economic era”.

<sup>350</sup> Bloomquist, “Communion, responsibility, accountability”, 262-263.

<sup>351</sup> Sallie McFague, *Life abundant: Rethinking theology and economy for a planet in peril* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 75-97.

<sup>352</sup> McFague, *Life abundant*, 99-123.

individuals” as is the case in neo-classical economics. She states that “the focus is not principally on human beings; rather, we human beings are seen to benefit when the entire system is healthy.”<sup>354</sup> This model has theological implications in that it implies not a shift “from God to the world, but from a distant God related externally to the world to an embodied God who is the source of the world’s life and fulfilment.”<sup>355</sup> That God is at home in the world is affirmed.

### 6.9.5 A Vision for the economy

Within the South African context work has been done on looking at alternatives to the present economy which would ensure a more sustainable economy, one that reflects the essence of an *oikotheology*.<sup>356</sup> Work has also been done in looking at particular aspects of the global economy.<sup>357</sup> In order to construct the economy we want to see in place we need to reflect further on the household and household values. We want an economy characterised by bounty, generosity, sharing and caring. The church should embody this alternative economy, marked by hospitality, sharing and caring.

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<sup>353</sup> McFague, *Life abundant*, 72.

<sup>354</sup> McFague, *Life abundant*, 99.

<sup>355</sup> McFague, *Life abundant*, 131.

<sup>356</sup> Margaret Legum of the South African New Economics Foundation has worked on critiquing the present economy and incorporating in her vision for the economy provisions for its “greening”. Her ideas are set out clearly in her book *It doesn’t have to be like this! A New economy for South Africa and the world* (Kenilworth, Cape Town: Ampersand Press, 2002). A useful resource that considers poverty eradication strategies for South Africa, together with reflections on the role of the church is contained in a collection of papers, edited by the former director of the Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation, Mongezi Guma, *The Church’s search for Economic Justice* (Published by ESSET; printed and produced by Progress Press, 2002). For a basic introduction to the economy and how its functions, see Bobby Marie (ed), *Understanding the economy and society: A Resource book* (Durban: Diakonia Council of Churches, 2004).

<sup>357</sup> See, for example, Rob van Drimmelen’s book *Faith in a global economy: A Primer for Christians* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998); and Lukas Vischer who offers an ecological and theological critique which focus on trade in his chapter “How sustainable is the present project of world trade?” in Julio de Santa Ana (ed), *Sustainability and globalization* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998).

To do this, we need to consider the biblical and theological aspects of the rules of the household, the economy that reflects God's values. Meeks traces the Old Testament roots of the concept of the household and economics. He mentions that "the primary scriptural narratives speak of God more in economy metaphors. God redeems the world by *creating home* for God's creatures. The story of redemption is the economy of God."<sup>358</sup> It is in the act of bringing people out of the house of bondage in Egypt, an economy of slavery, that there is redemption. God's household is different to the economy of Pharaoh's.

God's economy is characterised by ample provision. In the desert wandering there is a story of God guiding the people and providing for them. An informative instance of how God provides is given in the story of the provision of manna. It was not a commodity that could be exchanged in the usual way – it was regarded as a gift from God. What is instructive is the way in which it was distributed. In Exodus 16:17 & 18 we read: "The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no lack; they gathered as much as each of them needed." God provides according to their need; greed and hoarding are to be discouraged.

The Sabbath (and Jubilee) provisions are an important aspect of an *oikothology*. The provisions apply to both the human and the non human community, and help us to see the connectedness of all of life. They also make clear the connection between the ecological and the economic. In the economic sphere they indicate that there are limits to work, the ownership of property, consumption and exploitation. The provisions of the Sabbath help ensure that there is justice and sufficiency for all.

Konrad Raiser emphasises the broadness of the concept of Sabbath, which enables the good functioning of the home. He notes that

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<sup>358</sup> Meeks, "The Economy of grace and the market logic", 9.



in the household of Israel the sabbath rest becomes an ordinance to protect slaves, animals, plants and the cultivated land..... The extension of the sabbath regulation to social relationships within the household of Israel (the sabbath year and the year of jubilee) is intended to maintain the viability of the household of the people as a whole, since it protects the life of its weakest members. The sabbath thus becomes an eschatological symbol of the restored order of the household of the whole creation, which permits all creatures to live and dwell in peace (shalom).<sup>359</sup>

The Torah which contains the “house rules” of the “house of Israel” ensures that all members of the household live a full life. This includes making special provision for those who may be out of the household economy, especially those who are poorer.

In the New Testament the ethic of the Old Testament is reinforced in relation to the economy. Of Jesus’ role Meeks remarks: “Jesus does not loosen the household rules; he radicalizes them.”<sup>360</sup> Meeks sees the actions of Jesus as significant in this respect.

God redeems the world by becoming a household slave, a steward to the household of the creation. The principal name of God in the New Testament, also a narrative description, is the “One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.” God raised this economist from the dead and creates the Resurrection Household, with new household rules.<sup>361</sup>

Jesus encourages generosity in a spirit of joy and celebration, and condemns meanness expressed in the pursuit of riches.

Drawing on this biblical tradition, some valuable perspectives on economic justice were encapsulated in the statement produced entitled “Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth”, by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches at a gathering

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<sup>359</sup> Raiser, “Ecumenism in transition”, 89.

<sup>360</sup> Meeks, “The Economy of grace and the market logic”, 13.

<sup>361</sup> Meeks, “The Economy of grace and the market logic”, 10.

in Accra.<sup>362</sup> It is helpful to look at aspects for their statement that point towards the economy that an *oikothology* expresses, one that has a close connection with the ecological aspects of the earth. The document observed: "We see a dramatic convergence between the suffering of the people and the damage done to the rest of creation." It was acknowledged that : "The root causes of massive threats to life are above all the product of an unjust economic system." Neoliberal economic globalization is seen to be the cause of increasing suffering and poverty. It demands "an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and creation." It describes this current economic system as "immoral " and one in which nature is treated as a "commodity".

Similar sentiments are expressed in a document produced by the Justice, Peace and Creation team of the WCC, *Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth (AGAPE): A Background Document*.<sup>363</sup> A source of the problem of underdevelopment and poverty is identified in the following way: "The unquenchable thirst for more power, more profits and more possessions, which motivates corporate entities, and some individuals and social groups, is unsustainable and deprives many communities of the ability to meet their own needs in harmony with the environment."

The statement affirms that: "Centred on capital, neoliberalism transforms everything and everyone into a commodity for sale at a price." It is described as an "economy of death." The centrality of economics to the life of faith is also affirmed in this document: "Economics and economic justice are always matters of faith as they touch the very core of God's will for creation."

The statement sets out a vision of the economy:

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<sup>362</sup> World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 24<sup>th</sup> General Council, Accra, Ghana, 30 July-13 August 2004, Document GC 23-e, English. <[www.warc.org](http://www.warc.org)>



An economy of life reminds us that the main characteristics God's household of life:  
 The bounty of the gracious economy of God (*oikonomia tou theou*) offers and sustains abundance for all;  
 God's gracious economy requires that we manage the abundance of life in a just, participatory and sustainable manner;  
 The economy of God is an economy of life that promotes sharing, globalized solidarity, the dignity of persons, and love and care for the integrity of creation;  
 God's economy is an economy for the whole oikoumene – the whole earth community;  
 God's justice and preferential option for the poor are the marks of God's economy.

Within the context of South Africa, a key aspect of dealing with the economy is to deal with the issue of the land.

#### 6.9.6 Land and the earth

There have been many theological views expressed on the land, and within the African and South African contexts there have been a number of contextual studies. While the focus has often been on the ownership and control of land, there has also been attention given to the right use of it. As we have indicated earlier, land is a significant resource in the eradication of poverty. In looking at church land, Graham Philpott and Phumani Zondi, consider the significance of land in the alleviation of poverty.<sup>364</sup> Molefe Tsele and Mark Butler take this analysis further.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Justice, Peace and Creation Team, World Council of Churches, Geneva 2005. <[www.wcc-coe.org](http://www.wcc-coe.org)>

<sup>364</sup> Graham Philpott and Phumani Zondi, "Church land: A Strategic resource in the war against poverty", 17-39 (*Bulletin for Contextual Theology Focus on Church and land*, Vol 5, No 3, September 1998, delayed until October 1999).

<sup>365</sup> Molefe Tsele and Mark Butler, "Towards a theology of church land in South Africa", 53-60 (*Bulletin for Contextual Theology Focus on Church and land*, Vol 5, No 3, September 1998, delayed until October 1999).

Bruggemann's comprehensive study of the land in biblical faith stressed its importance.<sup>366</sup> The land is seen as a significant factor in God's relationship with the world. Land is a gracious gift from God. The land is not only a source of life but also of culture. Many people have been estranged from their ancestral lands. Their identity is tied to the land and expressed in the songs they sing, the art they create, their celebrations, their rituals and rites of passage. The land given to us by God does not only belong to the present community. God has entrusted the land and all its natural resources to all people to care for, keep and use it within communities. There is a close reciprocal relationship between people and the land. Mamphela Ramphele asserts that "the restoration of the land to itself – the recovery of its regenerative capacities – means, too, the restoration of the land to the people."<sup>367</sup>

From within an African context the value of the land is stressed by many scholars, activists and leaders. In using the Agikuyu of Kenya as a case study, Hinga shows how disregard for the traditional environmental ethics and the substitution of the colonial ethic of domination led to the massive landlessness not only in terms of quantity but also in the quality of the land available.<sup>368</sup> Women's relationship to the land is a significant one. Kabugumila sees women's rights to land ownership as a means not only of sustenance but also of maintaining the integrity of the land.<sup>369</sup>

An important theological affirmation that should be emphasised is that the earth belongs to God. The observation is made that "in Africa today, it does not appear as

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<sup>366</sup> Walter Bruggemann, *The Land: Place as gift, promise and challenge in biblical faith*. (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

<sup>367</sup> Mamphela Ramphele with Chris McDowell (ed), *Restoring the land: Environment and change in post-apartheid South Africa* (London: The Panos Institute, 1991), 204.

<sup>368</sup> Teresia Hinga, "The Gikuyu theology of land and environmental justice", 134-172, in Rosemary Ruether (ed), *Women healing earth: Third world women on ecology, feminism and religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996).

<sup>369</sup> Alice Kabugumila, "Tanzanian women's response to the environmental crisis", 64-73, in J.N.K. Mugambi and M. Vahakangas (eds), *Christian theology and environmental responsibility*. Nairobi: Acton.

if the earth belongs to God”<sup>370</sup> but instead to transnational corporations, international financial institutions, foreign investors, and the wealthy who control it for their own benefit. It is also acknowledged that the land belongs largely to men as “[a]lmost all land in Africa, except in matrilineal societies, is owned and controlled by men.” It is asserted that “[t]he land given to us by God does not only belong to the present community”, nor even to us “as people”, “[i]nstead, we belong to the land.”

A further document, *This is God’s earth: Adopted by SACC & Church Representatives on 19 June 2002 in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)*, the section headed “The Earth belongs to God”, draws attention to the following implications:

A Christian understanding of social struggles and development must begin with an affirmation that this is God's earth, and all that we seek to do in, with and to it, should be done out of this recognition. This means that all human life, and all living things, including the earth and its bounty, is a gift from God and is to be cherished, respected and enjoyed, and any right to private property must be circumscribed by this recognition of God’s fundamental ownership of all things. Every human owner must therefore recognize the ‘social mortgage’ on property, meaning that property should be stewarded for the good not just of the owner but for the good of others.

We cannot therefore be party to any process or system that treats life or the earth as a commodity, nor anything that does not recognise that all people of the earth hold ownership of the resources of the earth in common, what is sometimes known as the ‘global commons’.<sup>371</sup>

This document also contains an important section on the vision of Shalom, a vision that points us towards an *oikotheology*.

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<sup>370</sup> *The Earth belongs to God: Some African church perspectives on the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) and beyond*. It was adopted at the African Regional Consultation on Environment and Sustainability, held at Machakos, Kenya, from 6-10 May 2002. This consultation was arranged by Siphso Mtetwa who was employed by the SACC to prepare churches for WSSD. See full text in Appendix 6.

<sup>371</sup> *This is God’s earth: Adopted by SACC & Church Representatives on 19 June 2002 in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)*. SACC. See full text Appendix 1.

The Christian faith does not look backwards to creation, or to a once golden period in the past, but rather looks forward in hope to the coming Reign of God. The Scriptures speak of this hope in many ways, but the dominant vision is that of 'Shalom', a time of well-being, right relations, justice and peace. It is a time in which the whole of creation is fulfilled in the presence of God, a time in which human beings, nature and the earth itself is whole. This vision is one of great equality in which all are able to participate in and benefit from the wealth of God's Reign.

Again, the close connection between the wellbeing of people and the earth is expressed:

Our commitment to the poor and marginalised people and communities is at the same time a commitment to the earth itself, for the future of the poor is dependent upon the future of the earth, and likewise the future of the earth is dependent upon the future of the poor.... We speak therefore of sustaining life in communities that embody right relations, equity and justice, and this in the context of sustaining the earth and being sustained by the earth in return.

We cannot therefore support the dominant vision of sustainable development that undermines both the earth and the poor. Our commitment is to sustainable communities that live and develop by caring for, nurturing and sustaining the people of the earth and the earth which belongs to God, and which God has given us for our sustenance.

Thus far in this chapter we have outlined the basic contours of an *oikothology*, with its primary commitment to integrating a concern for ecology with a concern for the economy making use of the central metaphor of the *oikos* or household. While it is clear that further theological work needs to be undertaken as to what this might mean for traditional Christian doctrines in a way that goes beyond that scope of this thesis here we need note that an *oikothology* has implications for creation, the fall, redemption and the mission of the church. In terms of creation, it affirms that there is only one home. It accommodates all and all life is to be respected. The "fall" has resulted in both poverty as well as environmental degradation. Redemption is therefore for all life. It cannot be considered only in respect of human beings; God's

concern embraces all. The church's mission, therefore, is to bring life to both human beings as well as to the rest of creation. It is to eradicate poverty as well as preserve the environment, for in preserving the environment poverty is also eradicated. Other doctrines that an *oikothology* has implications for include the trinity, Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology and eschatology.

### 6.10 South African public theology

Whilst this chapter has sought to draw together for the first time the key elements of what we have called an *oikothology*, it is important to note that this is not undertaken in isolation from emerging concerns in statements from South African and Southern African contexts. This section follows on some of the resources examined in the previous section, and illustrates what an *oikothology* might look like when shared in the public arena.

As noted in chapter three, prior to the WSSD, a discussion paper was produced entitled *Choose Life!*<sup>372</sup> *A discussion paper on the World Summit for Sustainable Development by the Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa*<sup>373</sup> It also deals with issues of the land and the earth.

In referring to the period 1992 to 2002 as a "lost decade", there is the question of what progress has been made:

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<sup>372</sup> Deuteronomy 30:19.

<sup>373</sup> The Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa is a Southern African regional forum of Catholic Justice & Peace Commissions representing eleven countries: Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, Namibia, South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia, as well as the Justice & Peace Desk of the Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops in Southern Africa (IMBISA). The Alliance also includes European and North American development and relief agencies present in Southern Africa such as Catholic Relief Services (USA), Misereor (Germany), and CAFOD (UK). The full text is in the Appendix 2.

A decade after the Rio Earth Summit the condition of the global human community has not changed much. The world is still divided between over-consumption and underdevelopment, between those who have too much and those who 'have not', taking the Earth and the global human community on a destructive path to disaster.<sup>374</sup>

They then set out values that are regarded as important:

We are convinced that human progress must be informed by core values that include a deep respect for the integrity of the earth and all creation, and by a firm commitment to ensure the full human development of all people equally according to their inherent human dignity. Our assessment is inspired by the Gospel of Christ and by the social teaching of the church. It is informed by our experience of impoverishment and environmental destruction that is rife throughout the Southern African region.<sup>375</sup>

Echoing the key element of an *oikotheology* they see the need for an integrated approach in which the interrelationships are recognised:

Sustainable development demands that we integrate rather than separate the economic, ecological, and social aspects of the life of the world. This is a matter of justice. The interrelationship between human society, the economy and the environment must be taken into account in determining how the global human community will live together on this one, finite earth as a just, caring, and dignified community.<sup>376</sup>

The inequalities of wealth and poverty are acknowledged:

A few wealthy individuals and nations control the global financial and trade markets to their own benefit and the detriment of the earth, neglecting millions of people living in poverty. A new moral framework that puts people and the earth above economic growth and

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<sup>374</sup> Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa, 2002, 114

<sup>375</sup> Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa, 2002, 114

<sup>376</sup> Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa, 2002, 114

wealth accumulation is required if we are to achieve sustainable development.<sup>377</sup>

True human development is seen as including “a fresh awareness that we are part of the earth and we must therefore adjust our behaviour and systems to care for the earth.”<sup>378</sup>

It is important that the integrity of the earth should be maintained:

We want to be part of a development that ... will promote the use of renewable resources; will give back to the earth what we have taken from it by recycling and replenishing resources. We want to be part of a world that gives protection to the diversity of species that maintain our ecosystems.<sup>379</sup>

In a section on food security the real cause of poverty is pointed out: “[s]tarvation in Southern Africa is also about the unjust distribution of resources in the world and about global pollution-related climate changes that affect the poor first.”<sup>380</sup> This integration of ecology and economics along the lines we have suggested for an *oikotheology* makes the document, *This is God's earth*, referred to above, which takes seriously the concerns of an *oikotheology* a helpful resource for the church in the future. The dominant development paradigm of globalization is criticised in some detail:

The dominant development paradigm today then suggests that by building up the economy, nations, societies and people will be developed. The focus then is upon economic growth, and the way in which globalization can aid growth. In the process a host of other factors to do with people, community, culture, and the earth have been lost. Nations are forced to participate in a world economic system in which the rules are made in favour of the rich and powerful.

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<sup>377</sup> Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa, 2002, 115.

<sup>378</sup> Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa, 2002, 115.

<sup>379</sup> Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa, 2002, 115.

<sup>380</sup> Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa, 2002, 116.



Institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, the G8, the Paris Club and World Trade Organisation make use of a variety of instruments such as Structural Adjustment Programmes and Trade barriers to make it difficult for poorer nations to participate in such a way that builds up their people and local communities.

Furthermore, the dominant paradigm suggests that development should be led from the top, and is dependent upon outside intervention and aid. Local initiatives, choices and decisions that emerge out of the cultures and insights of local people are bypassed in favour of the opinions of consultants and other 'experts'. Long held patterns of community and sustainability, and understandings of people and the earth are thus overridden, and replaced with the 'modern' idea of progress and 'development', which paradoxically leads, as we have seen, to poverty of both body and spirit for billions of people across the world.

Because of its focus on growth and progress, rather than on distribution and sharing, the practice that emerges out of this development paradigm reinforces the unequal relationships that are in society. This is particularly manifested in racism, ethnic tensions, and in the distorted power relations between men and women.<sup>381</sup>

The third document, *The Land is crying for justice*, mentioned above, also stresses the link between the environment and poverty in a way that parallels the concerns of an *oikotheology*:

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.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> *This is God's earth.*

<sup>382</sup> *The Land is crying*, 5.

Furthermore it states: "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."<sup>383</sup>

## 6.11 Conclusion

The metaphor of a household or home is a useful one in helping us understand poverty and ways of eradicating it. This chapter has engaged theologically in some of the aspects raised by this study. What has been pointed out is the interconnectedness of many of the dimensions of life that inhabit the home, for an *oikotheology* does not regard tasks like caring for the environment and eradicating poverty as separate activities but as one action that brings life to the whole household. In the next chapter we look at the outworking of this.

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<sup>383</sup> *The Land is crying*, 5.

## CHAPTER 7

### HOMEMAKING: STRATEGIES FOR THE CHURCH

#### 7.1 Introduction

In chapters three, four and five we looked at the church's engagement in environmental issues and the eradication of poverty, focusing on those actions that reflected aspects of an *oikothology*. This chapter recognises what has been achieved and builds on this.

While it is recognised that progress has been made in this area, particularly over the last 15 years, the church has a long way to go and needs to be encouraged to persevere in this task. In the previous chapter we looked at the theological resources the church has at its disposal in constructing an *oikothology*. In this chapter we give further indications of what appropriate actions the church could take that enhance the environment and at the same time eradicate poverty.

While we look at the church's concern for the environment in general, it is in issues of just access to and the fair sharing of these resources that is of most concern. Furthermore, while we believe that any positive environmental action has a positive consequence in terms of helping eradicate poverty, the focus of this study is on those actions for the environment that most deliberately and effectively lead to the eradication of poverty.

We agree with a group of South African theologians writing on the church's progress, who acknowledged that environmental agendas were "beginning to creep into the dominant discourse and rhetoric of theologians, church leaders, and Christian communities" but admit that "such discourse is characterized predominantly by

notions of conservation and stewardship and not by a concern for eco-justice.”<sup>384</sup> Furthermore, despite positive signs they conclude that “it has to be acknowledged that the church is not (yet) an important role player toward eco-justice in South Africa and that some degree of resistance against environmental agendas remains prevalent.”<sup>385</sup> This is consistent with our findings in the chapters looking at the church’s response. It is from this position that the church needs to move forward.

It is widely recognised that the church is an important institution in South Africa. It has extensive resources that can be mobilised to impact significantly on the welfare of people. Jacklyn Cock has stressed the value of the church in engaging in environmental issues effectively.<sup>386</sup> She points out that the church exists in all areas of the country and enjoys the support of the vast majority of people. It has exercised a significant leadership role in the past and has the theological resources to make a positive impact.

In using the term “church” we are primarily referring to the local church. However, in some of the suggestions made a regional or national church denomination or church organisation may also be included in this term. The church in South Africa is well represented in both rural and urban areas, and so in suggesting actions that the church could take we need to be aware of these varying contexts.

In this chapter we will analyse and prioritise the important issues so that the church may use its resources most effectively in making an impact. Firstly, we look at the potential of the church to make a difference, its task, which has been largely shaped by the past, the assets the church can draw on, strategies for working, types of action

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<sup>384</sup> Ernst M. Conradie *et al*, “Seeking eco-justice in the South African context”, 135-157, in Dieter Hessel and Larry Rasmussen (eds), *Earth habitat: Eco-injustice and the church’s response* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 144.

<sup>385</sup> Conradie, “Seeking eco-justice in the South African context”, 144.

<sup>386</sup> See, for example, Cock, Jacklyn, “Towards the greening of the church in South Africa: Some problems and possibilities”, 174-185 (*Missionalia* 20: 3, 1991).

and then specific issues that reflect most closely an *oikothology* perspective. In the first part we look at strategies that the church can implement through its role in society at large. In the latter part strategies that the church needs to adopt within its own life are looked at. Sometimes, obviously, the boundary between the two is blurred.

We will look at the church generally then give some indicators for the CPSA specifically. While we concentrate on strategies for the church in South Africa, there would inevitably be wider applicability to the church at large.

## **7.2 Lessons from apartheid**

The church learnt many lessons during the struggle against apartheid. These are lessons that can be followed fruitfully in the environmental struggle. The church helped overcome injustice and institutionalised oppression. That same passion that mobilised people and confronted issues of the abuse of power and domination needs to be revitalised in order to make progress in this arena. This is supported by Conradie *et al* who claim that “[t]he churches played a crucial role throughout the years of struggle against apartheid in seeking to address the dispossession of land and other resources. This activity set a precedent for a continued activism to promote the restoration and healing of the land.”<sup>387</sup> They set out the challenge for the church in respect of the just distribution of resources, especially of the land:

After the transition to democracy, churches are faced with the task of raising awareness in the South African public of the obligation to redistribute land and resources, and to heal the land. Even if land is restored to its original owners the question has to be solved as to how it can be used to the benefit of all the stakeholders concerned. Could it be that people in this region – which is considered to be the cradle of

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<sup>387</sup> Conradie, “Seeking eco-justice in the South African context”, 142-143.

humankind – have been endowed with special possibilities to contribute to the rehumanization of humankind and the liberation of creation?<sup>388</sup>

Not only has the church learnt from the struggle against apartheid but this struggle for ecological and economic justice is also related to apartheid. We recorded in chapter two how apartheid was instrumental in leading to the destruction of the environment. It is in working towards undoing the destructive effects of apartheid that we can contribute towards restoring right relationships, the healing of the earth, and the end of poverty. Issues of racism and sexism are considered.

Racism continues to permeate South African society. The effects are found in the prevailing attitudes towards the natural environment as well as people. Environmental racism is prevalent. In many instances it is alongside poor communities that polluting and toxic waste industries are placed. By working at overcoming racism, within its own life and within society the church will contribute towards both the healing of people as well as damaged environments.

In tracing the emergence of what they call “eco-justice” in South Africa Conradie *et al* recognise that the term is meaningful only when it signifies the empowerment of those who have been marginalised:

The struggle for eco-justice has to affect the lives of those on the economic periphery of society. Indeed, we may go further and say that the extent to which the struggle for eco-justice effectively addresses this reality is, in important respects, the measure of its purpose and value. This is possible only if the struggle for eco-justice can be rooted practically in local black communities under black leadership among the poor and deprived. Unless this is achieved, we will be falling far short of what is required in South Africa.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> Conradie, “Seeking eco-justice in the South African context”, 143.

<sup>389</sup> Conradie, “Seeking eco-justice in the South African context”, 140.

We need to recognise that in South Africa, in both rural and urban contexts, women comprise most of the membership of churches. Therefore, to empower the capacity of churches requires the empowerment of women. In its own life and practice the church needs to become a fully inclusive community that values the presence and contribution of women. We have seen that it is women, and particularly black women, who are most affected by environmental degradation. It is, therefore, these women that need to be given most attention in terms of empowerment. The need for an appropriate response to take cognisance of gender has been rightly suggested:

Furthermore, it is crucial to recognise that poverty is also a strongly gendered reality, that women generally bear the bulk of the burdens of poverty, and that effective development work must take much more seriously the constraints upon and potentials of women in this context. One may say, therefore, that eco-justice needs to take root not only among black communities under black leadership, but also among black women under the leadership of black women.<sup>390</sup>

In working to dismantle patriarchal attitudes and behaviour the church can contribute both towards restoring the damaged environment as well as eradicating poverty.

### **7.3 The church's assets**

The church, by its very nature, has particular resources that it can offer society to help sustain the resources of the environment and eradicate poverty. It has gifts of community, reconciliation, healing and justice. We need to explore these briefly.

In essence the church is a *community*. An earth friendly church needs to become an inclusive, welcoming and accepting body. The church needs to be characterised by a

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<sup>390</sup> Conradie, "Seeking eco-justice in the South African context", 140.



strong sense of hospitality, one that embraces the stranger, the other, and even the earth. This image of a community is an appropriate one for the church:

The metaphor of community has increasingly been understood as an appropriate way of describing the dynamic interdependence of the diverse life forms of the earth. While this metaphor is not unproblematic it has significant potential for exploring the relationship between the church and creation. Thus the church experiences redemption as the representative of the earth community.<sup>391</sup>

Field goes on to indicate the close relationship between the earth and the church. He writes that “while it is problematic to see non-human creatures as members of the church, when the church speaks of ‘us’ this cannot be limited to the human faithful. The ‘us’ of the church extends to the earth community.”<sup>392</sup> Putting into a practice an *oikotheology* recognises the church’s own connections with the community of life.

South Africa has been characterised by a sense of alienation and estrangement. As we noted in chapter two, through actions such as forced removals, the institutionalisation of separateness in all facets of society, black people, particularly, became alienated, both physically and metaphorically from their land, and the natural environment generally. This has had disastrous consequences both in terms of increasing poverty levels as well as negatively impacting on the state of the environment. *Reconciliation* is powerful theological language and in the South African context it engages the church in a significant way. Our emphasis on reconciliation with one another should lead to the church working for reconciliation with the whole earth community, understanding and promoting the connections between all aspects of creation, and so forming one home.

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<sup>391</sup> David N. Field, “The Gospel, the church and the earth: Reflections on an ecological ecclesiology, 67-79 (*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 111, 2001), 76.

<sup>392</sup> Field, “The Gospel, the church and the earth”, 76.

The church has a particular ministry of *healing*. This should be extended to include all members of the earth community. Coupled with this, the church should strive to ensure people reach their full humanity. For it is in achieving full humanity that all can achieve fullness of life. It is in fully respecting people that the rest of creation can be fully respected, and liveable habitats and resources made available to all for their survival and thriving. The church's healing needs to extend to include the healing of polluted waters and air, and degraded land and so ensure full human health and life.

South Africa is a country recovering from experiences of gross injustice. As a consequence of the struggle for political freedom, the churches in South Africa have developed a strong sense of *justice*. This prophetic heritage needs to be drawn upon to make a meaningful contribution in the current context. To speak of justice to the earth is a powerful statement that should appeal to the church's sense of justice. The struggle for justice is a struggle to address the root causes of problems. The state of the environment is determined at its root by power relationships within society. The prophetic heritage of the church thus becomes one of its key resources in addressing fundamental injustices. Both the abuse of the earth and the oppression of its people should be challenged by the prophetic voice of the church.

Related to this is the concern for *human rights*, a long cherished concern of the church. Where human rights are abused the rights of the non-human world are accordingly abused. The converse is also true. By extending democracy we increase people's involvement in the decision making processes that affect their lives, and this includes them in decisions around natural resources. This empowerment helps them to make better choices in terms of factors affecting all aspects of their livelihoods.

## 7.4 Strategies for the church

It is important that the church consider what the most effective ways of working are. We now look at some of the approaches, focusing on the local and global, collaboration with others, including the denominational and the ecumenical approaches. We will then focus on grassroots action, education and training, lobbying and advocacy, environmental organisations and social movements.

The environment is a global phenomenon; so too is poverty. Destructive environmental activity and impoverishment in one sphere influences other spheres. As they say in the labour movement, "an injury to one is an injury to all." The church needs to realise it is a global community and has the potential to influence things on a worldwide scale.

The environmental issues and poverty confronting us are too daunting to be tackled in a piece meal fashion. It is, therefore, important that the church work ecumenically as well as with other faith based communities. Furthermore, as the church is a social organisation that exhibits similar qualities to other secular organisations, many strategies that other groups use could also be usefully employed by the church. There is much scope for the church to work together with other organisations. The need to network with like-minded organisations should become more common because of the urgency of the issues. Within the Diocese of Umzimvubu, there developed substantial co-operation with other organisations.

Denominations have different styles of operating. Local churches within specific denominations need to become aware of any statements or resolutions their own denominations have made in respect of the environment. This helps make the actions of the local church more authoritative. If a particular denomination has not issued statements or resolutions, then ecumenical ones may be drawn upon. In any event it

is helpful to refer to ecumenical pronouncements. Statements issued by the regional or national church body are helpful. Those issued by an international church may also be helpful. See, for example, the KwaZulu-Natal Church Leaders' Group (KZNCLG) one given in chapter three and recorded in Appendix 4.

It was noted in chapters three, four and five that the church has passed many resolutions pertaining to the environment. It may seem obvious to say but the church needs to revisit many of these resolutions and work at implementing them. It is important that different parts of the church collaborate together as much as possible in this area. The challenges are too great for churches to work in an isolated way. Also, churches have different ways in which they see the problems and have different contributions to make. There is also much scope for people from different religions to work together, particularly as there is a high degree of consensus among religious groups about the environmental issues that are prevalent.

It needs to be recognised that there are a variety of forms of action that the church can take that can be effective. The types of actions a church adopts are dependent upon the context of the church. For example, geographical location, composition of membership, and denominational affiliations would affect the nature of the action taken. In considering broader issues we look at the value of grassroots action, education and training, lobbying and advocacy, including relationships with local governments and green politics and the need for economic justice, to change society to reflect eco-justice principles.

#### **7.4.1 Grassroots action**

When considering possible actions, we tend to focus on the large actions, the macro-issues; this is good and can be highly effective. But let us keep in mind that God's reign is often manifested in the small, seemingly insignificant activities. Jesus pointed

us to images of the growth of a mustard seed, and the persistence of a widow as examples of activities that have an impact. In fact, it is the gradual and persistent action by each person in the church that will bring about change. Small projects can also serve as models or as inspiration to others. The church should also act passionately. We saw that in the Diocese of Umzimvubu the action by the church was purposeful, meaningful, and energetic.

In a world of hoarding and meanness, we discover the abundant generosity of God. In the gospel stories the fishing nets are almost breaking with the heavy load of fish caught; and in the feeding of the masses there is bread left over. The resources of the earth are sufficient to meet the needs of all. Emphasising simplicity is important. By opposing consumerism and materialism the church can contribute towards making more resources available to others. This focus is most appropriate in churches where people are more affluent.

#### **7.4.2. Education and training**

Within the church context there exists numerous opportunities for appropriate education on environmental matters. These include Sunday school, youth and confirmation preparation and even baptism and marriage preparation. Also within many churches bible study or faith sharing groups exist and these could be fruitfully used. The most obvious and consistent opportunity is provided through the pulpit. There is much scope for creativity in communicating an appropriate message.

Education and training are helpful tools in changing people's attitudes and stimulating action. We saw that in the Diocese of Umzimvubu environmental education and other forms of training were important components of their focus on the environment.

Exposure-encounter is a particularly powerful tool in confronting people with the realities of our environment. Accompanied by analysis and theological reflection, exposure events have great potential to change people's attitudes and behaviour. Exposure to experiences of people living in degraded environments, particularly in the case of vulnerable communities, can lead to an analysis of environmental racism and stimulate people to act more appropriately in addressing poverty concerns inherent in these contexts.

It is interesting to note that one of the objectives of the CPSA Environment Network, as noted in chapter four, is to "ensure environmental education is included in theological training within the CPSA". To ensure that ministers in our churches have appropriate training in issues of the environment, there needs to be adequate attention given to this area in their preparation and formation for ministry. Where given, training has focussed on the need to preserve the environment. What is needed is a stronger focus on the equitable access to and fair distribution of these resources which leads most directly to the eradication of poverty.

#### **7.4.3 Lobbying and advocacy**

Lobbying and advocacy for the preservation of the environment and a just economic system should be carried out by the church at every level. After ten years of democracy the church has become increasingly aware of the space and the need for lobbying government. The church is well equipped to engage in this form of action through its skills acquired during the struggle against apartheid.

Service delivery, contributing to the eradication of poverty, is increasingly being concentrated at the local government level. Municipalities usually have a number of environment related services. For example, besides environment departments there

may be departments of parks and gardens, water and sanitation and environmental health.

The church needs to become aware of and link in with the services of local government municipalities. For example, the eThekweni Municipality, which serves the greater Durban area, can offer support to those engaged in food security strategies, such as assisting in starting vegetable gardens. For this church land may also be used. The formation of partnerships with local government entities can be a fruitful strategy in enhancing livelihoods of church and community members.

Preservation of the environment and the formulation of appropriate strategies for the eradication of poverty require strong political will. Historically, church engagement in political parties in South Africa has been problematic. Under the apartheid regime parts of the church were guilty of providing theological justification for the iniquitous policies of the government. Other sections of the church showed strong opposition to the government's policies. In the "new" South Africa the church is still finding its way in terms of working out a new relationship between itself and the state. While some church leaders have entered government as elected members of parliament or as civil service officials, and Christian political parties have been formed, on the whole there is a reluctance on the side of the church to engage too closely in party political matters. In the present circumstances, in order to maintain its neutrality, this is probably the best position to hold. However, in terms of the promotion of environmental concerns, and particularly those that also lead to the positive development of people, the church needs to be open to engaging in "green politics" in the same way it may want to support other political initiatives.



Unlike in Europe, “green politics” in South Africa is still in its infancy.<sup>393</sup> While there is the Green Party of South Africa (GPSA), they have had a poor showing in elections, having not won a single seat in any national, provincial or local elections. There are some who feel that because there is not a broad based environmental movement in South Africa the time is not right to establish a separate green party but that the most strategic option at this stage would be to try to “green” existing parties, particularly the party in power at the moment.

The eThekweni Municipality council is the only local government in South Africa with an elected “green” representative. eThekweni EcoPeace (a local “green” political party) gained a seat in the 2000 local government elections. This candidate has made a significant impact, particularly in passing resolutions of a symbolic nature, such as the one which prohibits the passing of nuclear material through the Durban harbour without prior notice.

#### **7.4.4 Environmental organisations**

In chapter three we identified some organisations that are working in the environmental field and with which churches should work closely. The church is, at times, reluctant to admit its own limitations, and to draw on the expertise of others outside of the church. It would be to their benefit if the churches establish good working relationships with local environmental organisations, and be available to collaborate on environmental issues facing the community. This strategy is supported by Conradie *et al* in the following:

The churches may also encourage members to cooperate with and support numerous other organizations concerned with the environment (among them, numerous examples of projects initiated by Christians). In this respect, it will not be helpful, nor is it necessary, for Christian

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<sup>393</sup> It is interesting to note that the Green Party established in various countries in Europe is the first political party to become a European wide party to contest the elections for the European parliament.

churches to duplicate the work of other environmental organizations. Churches should, instead, support the work of these organizations as much as possible, establish the necessary channels and networks of communication, and encourage their members to participate in the work of these organizations. While Christians may ultimately have a distinct ecological vision, they could share the “penultimate” goals of many other environmental activists.<sup>394</sup>

Here we may mention by way of example some of the environmental organisations in South Africa with which the church could collaborate. Earthlife Africa and the *Environmental Justice Networking Forum* (EJNF) have already been referred to in chapter two. There are the traditional environment organisations that tend to focus on conservation issues. They include like the *Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa* (WESSA) and the *Botanical Society of South Africa*, *World Wide Fund for Nature* (WWF) and *BirdLife South Africa*. Those that have a stronger environmental justice focus include the *Environmental Monitoring Group* (EMG) and the *Group for Environmental Monitoring* (GEM). EMG, an NGO based in Cape Town, was established in 1991 to promote the engagement of civil society in debate on South Africa’s post-apartheid environmental policy. Over the years it has played an important role in raising awareness and facilitating civil society’s engagement in a range of policy processes. GEM was also established in 1991. It implements programmes in the field of sustainable development and environmental justice through research, capacity building, networking and lobbying. The church needs to collaborate actively with those organisations that deal with environmental justice issues, that concentrate on ensuring people receive justice and claim the resources to which they are entitled.

There are many international resource organisations that the church can draw on. The church in South Africa can be inspired by two movements on our continent. In

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<sup>394</sup> Conradie, “Seeking eco-justice in the South African context”, 145-146.

their announcement of the Peace Prize, the Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee recognised the link between the environment and peace:

Peace on earth depends on our ability to secure our living environment. Maathai stands at the front of the fight to promote ecologically viable social, economic and cultural development in Kenya and in Africa. She has taken a holistic approach to sustainable development that embraces democracy, human rights and women's rights in particular. She thinks globally and acts locally.<sup>395</sup>

Established in 1977 by 2004 Nobel Peace prize winner, Professor Wangari Maathai, the Greenbelt Movement is a holistic approach to reforestation coupled with the rebuilding of communities. Women have been mobilised to plant more than 30 million trees to date. In 1986 the Movement established a Pan African Green Belt Network and has exposed over 40 individuals from other African countries to the approach. Some of these individuals have established similar tree planting initiatives in their own countries or they use some of the Green Belt Movement methods to improve their efforts. So far some countries have successfully launched such initiatives in Africa (Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Lesotho, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe etc.)

While on the African continent it is worth noting the earthkeeping organisations that Inus Daneel has helped initiate. Daneel has worked extensively with practitioners of traditional religion as well as Christians in establishing earthkeeping organisations to help with the reforestation of Zimbabwe. Like the Green Belt movement these organisations have placed an emphasis on establishing nurseries and planting trees, and at the same time building community. The planting of trees has been linked to religious ceremonies.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> <<http://nobelprize.com>>

<sup>396</sup> Daneel has written a number of articles about the movement. See, for example, the comprehensive two volume work M.L. Daneel, *African earthkeepers* (Volumes 1 & 2; Pretoria: Unisa, 1999).

These two organisations focus on a concern for the environment as well as promote the livelihoods of the people. For an *oikotheology* to have meaning there also needs to be a focus on working for a just economic system that will inevitably impact on the welfare of people.

#### **7.4.5 Social movements**

The last five years has seen the growth in social movements, which, on a global scale, have come together in the annual meeting of the World Social Forum. Within these movements we have seen the oppressed, women and indigenous people, for example, speaking out for themselves and acting on the issues that affect them. Reflecting on this trend, Albert Nolan has noted how many different concerns for justice, including environmental concerns, are being increasingly more closely linked within these movements.<sup>397</sup> This is a positive development, and will help us to see more clearly the links environmental justice has with other areas of justice.

Social movements deal with real issues affecting those who are poor. The social movements in South Africa have taken up issues like the plight of the landless people, water and electricity disconnections and the privatisation of municipal resources. Patrick Bond comments on the role of social movements concerned with the environment as being effective in bringing together the need for the protection of these resources as well as giving people adequate access to them.<sup>398</sup> Churches would do well to engage more actively with these movements as representing an appropriate approach to environmental concerns.

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<sup>397</sup> Albert Nolan, "The Globalisation of the struggle for justice", address presented at the Annual Meeting of the Diakonia Council of Churches, 18 June 2005 (Diakonia Council of Churches: Durban, 2005).

## 7.5 Ecological justice

As the sharing of environmental resources implies the existence of such resources, we need to look briefly at the actions the church can take to preserve and enhance such resources. There are various activities that the church can engage in, and particularly in partnership with other organisations to ensure justice in this area. There needs to be national legislative and institutional arrangements put in place to ensure that access to indigenous genetic resources and knowledge is controlled, and that the benefits of these resources accrue to local communities. There should be the protection of endangered species, and the preservation of marine and terrestrial habitats and ecosystems. In the setting aside of protected areas local communities must be empowered and given the opportunity to participate effectively in the design, management and operation of these natural areas.

While we need the protection and preservation of our natural systems we need to acknowledge that they are severely degraded and that there is much that needs to be done to restore damaged systems. Deforestation should be prevented and rivers and other water supplies protected. There should be the promotion of organic farming and permaculture to reduce the use of additives such as artificial fertilisers and pesticides. The consumption of locally grown food should also be promoted. There is much that a local church can do to make it a centre of biodiversity. If there is a garden it could be planted with indigenous vegetation, made attractive to birds and provide a place where people can appreciate the value of nature.

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<sup>398</sup> Patrick Bond, *Unsustainable South Africa: Development, environment and social protest*, (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press; The Merlin Press, 2002).

## 7.6 Economic justice

As we have seen, the economy links the earth community and should ensure justice and life to all. Economic policies have a strong influence on the health of the earth; and unjust economic policies can destroy the earth. It is important that the church work towards a new and just society that ensures that the earth's resources are not exploited beyond their capacity to regenerate, that they are fairly distributed so that poverty can be eradicated.

As was noted in the previous chapter, economic policies are largely determined by the wealthy and the powerful, who attempt to control the earth for the satisfaction of their own needs and desires. Apart from impoverishing the earth, these policies can also exploit those who are poor. In working for economic justice in South Africa the church can make a number of contributions towards "greening" the economy.

### 7.6.1 Just trade

Trade has the potential to impoverish or empower people. The present international trade system overwhelmingly leads to the increase of poverty, particularly for people in poorer countries. The present rules of trade regulated by the *World Trade Organisation* (WTO) favour the richer countries. Free trade is not fair trade; the playing field is not even. Furthermore, trade leads to a net flow of environmental resources or raw materials from the South to the North. If the resources of our global household are to be managed in a more equitable way there is a strong need for a radical revision of the rules of trade. They need to be reformed to ensure that they become tools for appropriate development, means by which poverty may be more rapidly eradicated alleviated. As a global institution the church is well placed to support the call for fair trade. Christian Aid, an England based church development

agency co-ordinated a world-wide focus on fair trade in April 2005.<sup>399</sup> It is participating in an ongoing campaign on *Making Poverty History*.

The church in South Africa has not had a concerted focus on issues of trade, even though our economy is being increasingly affected by the removal of trade tariffs. Unemployment in industries like textile manufacturing continues to increase. The church needs to focus its efforts on establishing justice in this area, and in so doing support the eradication of poverty.

### **7.6.2 Ethical investment**

The church worldwide holds enormous financial assets. Collective action by the church to invest in portfolios that support environmentally sustainable business will make a significant difference in both preserving our natural resource base as well as protecting the health of workers and the population at large. An important resource in this regard is the Bench Marks Foundation which is a product of various organisations, including *Christian Development Trust Foundation Inc*, ESSET, Industrial Ministry, Justice and Peace Department of the SACBC and the SACC. It works closely with churches to help them explore the issues of ethical investment, and to ensure that they formulate policies to guide their own investments. The Bench Marks Foundation have developed indicators for developing and monitoring corporate codes of conduct, particularly when managing relations with stakeholder bodies. The guidelines over 100 principles, 129 criteria and 118 Bench Marks to assist companies who are genuine about responsible corporate behaviour.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> See their website for this campaign, <[www.April2005.org](http://www.April2005.org)>

<sup>400</sup> See the Bench Marks Foundation website: <[www.bench-marks.org](http://www.bench-marks.org)>



## 7.7 Specific issues

In this section we wish to highlight a few specific issues in which we feel the church in South Africa needs to act upon. They are issues that show clearly the link between concern for the environment and poverty eradication. These issues show the dependency that people have on the environment, and assist us in developing an *oikotheology*. We consider energy, climate change, food sovereignty and genetically modified organisms.

### 7.7.1 Energy

There is a close connection between power and poverty: the form of energy used impacts on poverty. In South Africa most electricity is generated from coal. While its production is relatively cheap, the impact of this non-renewable form of energy on the environment and human health is strongly negative. Renewable forms of energy need to be developed.

The Electricity Supply Commission, with the support of the government plan to produce nuclear power from a Pebble Bed Modular Reactor. Despite the potential environmental and health hazards such as the possibility of an accident and being burdened with the onerous task of having to dispose of the nuclear waste generated in this process, nuclear energy is costly and not at all labour intensive, which leads to less employment and subsequently greater poverty.

The following examples may be instructive. For R12 million, with a Pebble Bed Modular Reactor 110 Mega Watts of energy can be generated creating 80 full-time jobs and 1400 construction jobs in the first year. For the same amount of money, wind power could generate 1700 Mega Watts and create 850 full-time jobs with an additional 3000 construction jobs, assuming 100% local manufacture. Solar power

would generate 5700 Mega Watts with 680 full-time jobs and 8800 construction jobs, assuming 100% local manufacture.<sup>401</sup>

Apart from being safer, renewable forms of energy are preferable in terms of creating employment and so helping ease poverty. Churches could also formulate a policy on energy use, on its wise use and its commitment to supporting renewable forms of energy. In terms of the use of non-renewable energy, in some church contexts there are a high number of members who own cars, and so this issue of transport is an important one. Cars emit greenhouse gasses, which contribute to global warming. Churches can do more to assist in this area, such as encouraging the use of public transport, encouraging the sharing of transport and encouraging walking. Wise use of energy impacts positively on human wellbeing, and the converse is true: use of polluting forms of energy can impoverish people.

While nuclear energy has been put forward as a solution to our energy problems, and as a supposedly “clean” form of energy, a number of concerns have been expressed both in its production, and particularly in its disposal, both for human health and for the environment. In April 2005 Earthlife Africa highlighted the health problems of workers based at the nuclear facility in Pelindaba and the problem of an unprotected site where radioactive ores were buried in shallow concrete containers near a residential area. It is interesting to note that the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC) is part of the *Nuclear Energy Costs the Earth Campaign* (NECTEC), together with branches of Earthlife Africa, EJNF; *Namaqualand Resource and Education Centre* (NAMREC) and the *Congress of South African Trade Unions* (COSATU) and the *National Union of Mineworkers* (NUM). In April 2005 they issued the following:

The NECTEC is committed to the total eradication of the nuclear industry in Southern Africa. We oppose all aspects of nuclear power generation including mining, fuel production, transport of nuclear

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<sup>401</sup> These figures are taken <[www.earthlife.org.za](http://www.earthlife.org.za)>

materials, reactors, waste and the consequent lack of safety for people and our environment.

Africa is not a dumping site for nuclear waste or a testing ground for unsafe nuclear technology. It is unjustifiable to use public funds to sponsor nuclear plants that are a threat to people and the environment.<sup>402</sup>

Perhaps other churches could join the Catholic Church in supporting this campaign.

### 7.7.2 Climate change

While there is much the church can focus on, there is one particular area that the church needs to give its attention to – that of climate change. It is an issue in which there are close connections between the environment and poverty.<sup>403</sup>

Prof Jessie Mugambi made the following insightful comments about the relationship between climate change and poverty:

How does global warming affect Africa? For people who depend for their livelihood on the rain, global warming is a matter of life and death....The reduction in carbon dioxide will contribute to restoring the right climate for food production in Africa. Most people in Africa depend on rain for food. Thus it is a contradiction for any nation to say that they are committed to the reduction of poverty in Africa, but not to sign the Kyoto Protocol on global warming.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> NECTEC Media release, 26 April 2005.

<sup>403</sup> For a recent publication of the issues of climate change in South Africa see Patrick Bond and Rehana Dada (eds), *Trouble in the air: Global warming and the privatised atmosphere* (A Civil Society Reader; Durban: Centre for Civil Society, 2005).

<sup>404</sup> Jessie Mugambi, "What are the implications of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) for environmental justice/climate change within the South African context?", transcript of a talk presented at a breakfast briefing hosted by the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA) on 20 September 2002 in Pietermaritzburg.

Climate change is one of the major challenges facing our planet, with the potential to cause major environmental damage as well as widespread poverty. Both its causes and effects are international. The effects can be seen in the increasingly erratic weather patterns. In already drought-prone areas, droughts are becoming longer and hotter and rainy seasons have become unpredictable. In other areas rain and storms have become more frequent, often accompanied by floods. South Africa has been slow to acknowledge the potential detrimental effects that global warming will have on the country, and consequently the churches have been slow to act. There is, however, much that can be done to reverse the effects of climate change.

The church in Europe, USA, and Asia has been active in the area of climate change. The WCC has had a focus on climate change for the last two decades. They have produced a number of resources.<sup>405</sup>

The church needs to tackle the big polluting industries that are most responsible for climate change. The church together with civil society organisations should work closely in reaching the targets set. It is in working towards a just transition to renewable energy that the church should be committed.

### **7.7.3 Food sovereignty**

People feel poverty most fundamentally at the level of hunger. A lack of access to a secure source of food results in food insecurity. As we have indicated the problem is not about a shortage of food but its maldistribution. South Africa has much agricultural land and good climatic conditions that can produce sufficient food for all. The church needs to support agriculture, particularly organic agriculture. It may

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<sup>405</sup> See, for example, the WCC website for a record of statements produced from consultations they have organised. <[www.wcc-coe.org](http://www.wcc-coe.org)>

need to make its land available for this purpose. Within households it is most often women who see to the provision of food, so empowering women increases their capacity to provide food for their families.

The proliferation of the genetic modification of food in South Africa is an issue that touches on food sovereignty, the corporatisation of food, human health issues and the wellbeing of the environment. While it is claimed that this technology reduces poverty the opposite seems to be true. It is an area to which the church can contribute much. Some of the responses of the church are traced and suggestions for its on-going action given.

In November 2000, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) issued a press statement supporting the campaign calling for a five-year freeze on genetic engineering and patenting in crop and food production.

This was followed up by a more comprehensive document issued by the SACBC Parliamentary Liaison Office in September 2001 (Occasional Paper 7) called *Genetically modified food: The Impending disaster*.<sup>406</sup>

A national consultation was held at St Philomena's in Durban, South Africa, on 17 September 2003, convened by the Environmental Justice Desk of the Justice and Peace Department of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. There were about 30 participants present. There have also been responses by other church organisations. PACSA produced a factsheet on the topic, entitled "Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs): Hope for the Hungry?"<sup>407</sup> which they distributed widely. The South African Council of Churches organised a Consultation on Genetic Engineering from 26 – 28 May 2004 at the Eskom Convention Centre, Midrand. It

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<sup>406</sup> *Genetically modified food: The Impending disaster*, Occasional Paper 7, Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference Parliamentary Liaison Committee, Cape Town, September 2001.

<sup>407</sup> Factsheet No. 51, December 2003.

produced a statement entitled “Food is Life: The Right to food is not negotiable”, 28 May 2004. There has also been some theological reflection on the issue.<sup>408</sup>

Opposition by the churches has been based on a number of grounds. The SACBC stand is based mainly on the precautionary principle. They claimed that:

So far, no rigorous long term testing has been carried out to ascertain the effects of genetically engineered crops and foods on humans, animals, plant-life and soil. Doubts about the safety of the new biotechnologies have been confirmed by the results of scientific studies and many scientists are warning that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) pose risks to health, for example, increasing the incidence of allergies, toxic reactions and antibiotic resistance.<sup>409</sup>

They felt the concern was not the need to produce more food: “Even if GE were to produce a higher yield, the fact is the world already produces 50% more food than it needs, and yet one in seven people suffers from hunger.”<sup>410</sup>

The concern was also that small scale farmers would suffer:

[S]ustainable agricultural systems are able to provide substantial increases in yields, whilst encouraging the use of local resources and helping communities to become more self-reliant. In contrast, multinational corporations whose business is selling seeds, fertilisers and chemicals, aim to tie farmers to external inputs, which come only from them, at their price. So far the only beneficiaries of the new biotechnologies are the big agrochemical companies.<sup>411</sup>

The patenting required, they argued, would in fact bring greater poverty:

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<sup>408</sup> See for example the contributions by Steve de Gruchy: “Life, livelihoods and God: Why genetically modified organisms oppose caring for life” (*Ecumenical Review*, July 2002); and “Biotechnology as ‘cultural invasion’: Theological reflections on food security and community building in Africa” (*Scriptura* 82, 2003); also see Puleng LenkaBula, “The Social and ethical implications of Article 27 of the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) on African communities, biodiversity and indigenous knowledge”, 36-56 (*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 122, 2005).

<sup>409</sup> SACBC, *Genetically modified food*, 1-2.

<sup>410</sup> SACBC, *Genetically modified food*, 8.

<sup>411</sup> SACBC, *Genetically modified food*, 9.



The patenting of GM seeds will deepen the plight of farmers around the world who are already struggling. If a farmer switches to a genetically engineered seed, that farmer has to sign a gene licensing agreement, which specifies royalty fees and dictates the seed, fertiliser and chemicals to be used. These agreements prohibit the storing of seed for the following season.<sup>412</sup>

The concern was for both the environment and food production:

This trend towards patenting foods must be rejected. Firstly, it further legalises technology that is harmful to the environment, and thus contradicts the duty of human beings to care for the earth and to ensure that our natural resources are conserved for future generations. Secondly, it undermines the right to food security, which must always take precedence over profits and patents. Food is not just commodity or product like any other, it is fundamental to life itself.<sup>413</sup>

The Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town has been outspoken against the use of this technology in respect of food:

Species that would not naturally reproduce are mixed together. Through patenting seeds and genes, life forms can now be owned by corporations. Through contamination of natural wildlife and plants, genetic engineering forever compromises the rights of future generations to a safe, healthy and diverse environment.<sup>414</sup>

He added that genetic engineering threatened rural livelihoods, food security and local control over genetic resources.

Patent laws undermine the right of farmers to save seed, and one of the touted advantages of the patented seed, a reduction in the need for labour, is in fact disadvantageous when applied in Africa....Do Africans need genetically engineered food? I would argue, no. At least, not until we are certain of the consequences of our actions. Not until we know it is safe, that we can afford it and contain it, that it is suitable for our farmers and farming systems, that it will not lead to a reduction in

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<sup>412</sup> SACBC, *Genetically modified food*, 10.

<sup>413</sup> SACBC, *Genetically modified food*, 10.

<sup>414</sup> Mathys, Cindy, "Archbishop slams the use of GM crops", *Weekend Argus*, 23 May 2004.



jobs, that it will not destroy biodiversity and that it will not increase our dependence on rich nations.<sup>415</sup>

Most significantly he added that if companies promoting genetically engineered crops really cared about the poor, “they would lobby their governments to stop subsidising their farmers instead of trying to sell Africa newly patented seed.”<sup>416</sup>

One diocese within the CPSA responded with a resolution which expressed its opposition to GMOs. The Diocese of Natal passed a resolution at its May 2003 synod on this issue entitled “Food Security, Biodiversity and Biotechnology”. In affirming its belief in the need for food security it stated that:

1. Food is not just a commodity or product like any other; it is fundamental to life itself. We are therefore cautious of any process or system that treats life or the earth as a commodity;
2. The right to food security and the health of the environment should take precedence over corporate financial interests, as well as international trade considerations, patents and profits;
3. The lack of food security is not because of the lack of food but rather because it is not accessible or justly distributed to those that need it.

It expressed its opposition to the genetic engineering of food because it felt:

1. Threatens food security and biodiversity;
2. Leads to the removal of control of food production from local communities and farmers to multinational corporations, and so jeopardizes the ability of communities to meet their food needs through culturally appropriate and equitable ways;
3. Discourages local communities and farmers from continuing to save, exchange, nurture, use and further develop biological resources on which their livelihoods are based – for the benefit of themselves, ecosystems and of future generations;
4. Undermines the regenerative systems of agriculture and sustainable use of biodiversity, impoverishing local communities and condemning other living organisms to accelerating extinction.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> Mathys, “Archbishop slams the use of GM crops”.

<sup>416</sup> Mathys, “Archbishop slams the use of GM crops”.

<sup>417</sup> Diocese of Natal Synod Resolution, 2003.

The church needs to collaborate with organisations that are engaged in the issue, such as SAFeAGE and Biowatch. The campaign to get the government to ensure there is legislation compelling food producers to label their products if they contain GM products is a good one.

*Oikothology* is concerned with the welfare of human beings and the flourishing of all creation. The church needs to be strategic in its actions in order to concentrate on those actions which most effectively promote all of life.

## **7.8 Actions within the church**

When considering engaging in action the church needs to strive to embody within itself the principles that it strives to put in place in society. A local church should become a model of what it envisages for society. As well as mainstreaming the environment within societal structures, the church needs to mainstream it within itself. What is needed is a sustainable church. A sustainable church can best work towards building sustainable community. It is the future of the church that is at stake. If the church does not take environmental responsibility seriously then the very survival of the church will be threatened.

### **7.8.1 Liturgy**

The church needs to embrace more fully the earth in all its life nourishing and sustaining attributes. Here we will consider liturgy and then the sacraments and preaching, spirituality and pastoral care. We focus not only on the need for the church to engage with environmental issues but more particularly to emphasise the need for it to highlight the economic aspects that incorporate environmental factors, reflecting an *oikothology*.

Troy Messenger writes of the “estrangement of the earth from our worship.”<sup>418</sup> He makes a number of suggestions about worship and liturgy that facilitates the achievement of eco-justice. For him the world around us is the appropriate place to seek God.

Earth liturgy believes that the most basic elements of the earth are God’s house. If God’s spirit is indeed a creative life force moving throughout all creation, we ought to invite the earth to be our partner in worship. Authentic earth theology will emerge from congregations that take earth liturgy seriously. And the practice of worshipping faithfully with the earth will model interactions that allow us to live faithfully in our earth community.<sup>419</sup>

Messenger emphasises the value of earth oriented worship: “Liturgies must reclaim the resources of the earth as the tools of worship if we are to rebuild our relationship with God, each other, and the environment.”<sup>420</sup> He believes that the earth can teach us many things:

Once the earth is joined with us in worship, we should learn from its marvelous capacity for renewal, how it flourishes in diversity, how ecosystems depend on every element participating fully. Earth liturgy takes the earth as is model and then models the human family in right relationship to the earth. Practicing responsible living with the earth in worship is the first step in making it so.<sup>421</sup>

There are many ways in which the church can make use of liturgy to express its concern for the environment in a way that impacts positively on the lives of people. A theoretical framework followed by some useful ideas is provided in an article by

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<sup>418</sup> Troy Messenger, “The stones shall be God’s house: Tools for earth liturgy”, 173-183, in *Earth habitat: Eco-injustice and the church’s response* edited by Dieter Hessel and Larry Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 175.

<sup>419</sup> Messenger, “The Stones shall be God’s house”, 175.

<sup>420</sup> Messenger, “The Stones shall be God’s house”, 175-6.

<sup>421</sup> Messenger, “The Stones shall be God’s house”, 183.

Beryl Ingram called Eco-justice liturgies.<sup>422</sup> In it she assesses the progress made in bringing together the eco-justice and the liturgical.

Although Jewish and Christian scriptures praise the God of creation, and our hymnals and prayer books enjoy a wide variety of hymns with creation themes, today's bent toward "peace, justice and the integrity of creation," is still remarkably absent from the corporate worship of Christian bodies.<sup>423</sup>

The reasons for this are that "liturgical theologians have not yet engaged eco-theology as a liturgical issue" and that "the environmental challenge is still regarded by many liturgical theologians as theological but not necessarily liturgical."<sup>424</sup> She also comments on the fact that the patriarchal system has projected God as male and often quite distant. There is much that can be done in our liturgy to express more appropriate ways of imagining our relationship with God and the rest of creation which reflect an *oikothology*.

Within the church's liturgical calendar there are a number of occasions that could become more earth affirming. The following could be looked at: Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Advent, and Christmas. Environment related periods in the South African calendar, such as Arbor Week, Water Week, Marine Week could also be incorporated within the liturgical celebrations of the church.

Some of the sacraments use natural elements. Their link with the earth could be emphasised, for example, in baptism and the eucharist. In most churches the elements of water and bread are used merely symbolically; a little water is used for baptism and a wafer, rather than bread, is used for the eucharist. This practise reduces the significance of these substances as life giving resources of the earth.

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<sup>422</sup> Beryl Ingram, "Eco-justice liturgies", 250-264, in *Theology for earth community: A Field guide* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1996), 250-264.

<sup>423</sup> Ingram, "Eco-justice liturgies", 250.

<sup>424</sup> Ingram, "Eco-justice liturgies", 250-264.

Messenger is critical of “wafers bearing no resemblance to bread, and baptismal fonts in which it is impossible to get very wet. Earth liturgies invite the possibility of bringing the stuff of the earth into our worship space and using it to celebrate our beautiful system of living, growing, and dying beings.”<sup>425</sup>

The story goes that in parts of the Anglican Church of Mozambique a practice linking the waters of baptism to the maintenance of livelihoods was practiced. When a child is baptised a fruit tree is planted. The water used in the baptism is used to water the tree. After the child is bathed the bath water is used to further water the tree. When the tree bore fruit the fruit is sold to support the child’s education. Practices like these link faith to the harsh realities of life. Messenger tries too to see the realness of the sacraments:

Baptism and eucharist are paradigmatic rites for the earth community. These rites transform everyday human activities of eating, drinking, and washing into spiritual activities by which God can move in our common life. They teach us that rituals work when they are part and parcel of who we are as humans living in God’s creation.<sup>426</sup>

Preaching is an important act of communicating the gospel. The scope to use this to encourage appropriate environmental awareness and action is important.<sup>427</sup> Ingram makes some suggestions for preaching:

Use organic images in preaching and prayers. For example, develop the photosynthetic process of light becoming chlorophyll, or waste becoming compost becoming viable soil, or the exchange of carbon dioxide for oxygen as illustrations of God’s power of transformation. God is the original re-cycler.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> Messenger, “The stones shall be God’s house”, 176.

<sup>426</sup> Messenger, “The stones shall be God’s house”, 176.

<sup>427</sup> A helpful work is Dieter Hessel, *For Creation’s sake: Preaching, ecology and justice* (Philadelphia: The Geneva Press, 1985).

Spirituality needs to affirm the presence of God in all, including in those suffering most from the effects of poverty. Spirituality should promote life. It is in the expression of spirituality that the life of the church takes root.

There is a rich tradition of earth affirming spirituality that needs to be recovered and affirmed. In Africa there is a strong sense in which all is religious. Elements of this could be encouraging retreats in natural places, as well as exposing people to the suffering of poverty.

Howard Clinebell is well known for his books on pastoral care, and he has also written on its ecological dimensions.<sup>429</sup>

While the church appoints chaplains to hospitals, prisons, schools and armies these chaplaincies could be extended to other sectors in society, such as farmers, fisherfolk, conservation officers etc. In this way the church expresses its concern for these sometimes neglected dimensions of life.

### **7.8.2 Buildings**

It is appropriate in this study that the significance of church buildings is also considered. In the Diocese of Umzimvubu the method of the construction of their cathedral was significant. Location, the choice of materials, and light and heating requirements need to be carefully assessed.

Does worship need to be indoors? Messenger writes of the need for worship to connect with the earth:

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<sup>428</sup> Beryl Ingram, "Eco-justice liturgies", 250-264, in *Theology for earth community: A Field guide* (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 1996), 255.

<sup>429</sup> See, for example, Howard Clinebell, *Ecotherapy: Healing ourselves, healing the earth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1996).

Often it is difficult to feel the rhythms of the earth because our worship spaces are so immune from the world. Worshipping in earth space can mean many things. It certainly means occasionally leaving our walled enclosures and worshipping where we can feel the elements.<sup>430</sup>

An interesting approach to worship that tries to integrate the spiritual with the material may be seen in an ecovillage, Gqunube Green, described by Roger Hudson in which a church is constructed with three interlocking circles – the first used for worship, the second for permaculture and the third, a kraal for cattle.<sup>431</sup> He describes it as follows:

One circle will be a building constructed of earth-friendly building materials. This will serve as the church/classroom. The second circle will be a permaculture vegetable garden, organic in operation and filled with all manner of plants that make up a healthy and productive food garden. The third circle will be a cattle kraal to be used occasionally for, (a.) the collection of manure for the garden, (b.) services of thanksgiving for the season's new calves and (c.) for acknowledging the role the herd of Nguni cattle plays in ensuring healthy grass and thornveld.<sup>432</sup>

He comments on the symbolic significance of this design as follows:

[T]he bold and outrageous linking of a cattle kraal and garden with a church in equal sized circles, affirms the equality of the natural realm with that of the human in God's eyes. For there in the church garden will be the plants, there in the church kraal will be the animals, both claiming their rightful place in the worship of God. And in so overturning the popular Christian notion of humanity being infinitely more important than the birds of the air, the beasts of the fields and the plants of the earth, a creative gap for appreciating the sacredness of all of life is opened.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Messenger, "The stones shall be God's house", 178.

<sup>431</sup> Roger D. Hudson, 2002. "Enacted parables of earthkeeping", 21-25 (*Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Africa* (Double issue in partnership with the SACC: Church, Environment and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD))).

<sup>432</sup> Hudson, "Ecovillages", 22.



This church serves as a powerful symbol of the integration of various aspects of life, an affirmation that we do indeed inhabit one home.

### **7.8.3 Land**

Churches are situated on land and they may also own additional land. Across all denominations the church in South Africa owns much land. In a context of widespread poverty the church needs to see how the land it owns may be used as a resource to eradicate poverty.

It is important that before churches decide on the best use of their land they first need to compile an inventory of what they have. As we have seen, this process was logically followed in the Diocese of Umzimvubu. The Church Land Project, referred to in chapter three, is an organisation that can assist in this process of conducting this audit. Church land may be used productively in a number of ways, such as in providing a place for people to live, a source of water, and agriculture. Churches should develop policies for the use of their land to ensure, where appropriate, livelihoods may be sustained through its right use.

## **7.9 Particular proposals for the CPSA**

The engagement of the CPSA in environmental concerns has been covered both generally and within the Diocese of Umzimvubu specifically. We offer here a few further practical suggestions. Most of what has already been covered in this chapter is also applicable to the life of the CPSA. What we tend to find in the liturgy and life of the CPSA is a focus on ecological issues or conservation. Apart from a stress on good stewardship there is little encouragement to urge members to become aware of the economic dimensions of the environment. Here we will look at some of the

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<sup>433</sup> Hudson, "Ecovillages", 23.

existing resources and make suggestions for changes. We will consider the Prayer Book, the lectionary, cycles of prayer, days to focus on the environment, resolutions, the CPSA Environment Network, an environmental audit and strategies for change.

In Anglicanism the prayer book is central to worship, and reflects to some extent the ethos of the church. The most recent edition of the prayer book within the CPSA is *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*.<sup>434</sup> While it has not replaced the former *Book of Common Prayer* it is nevertheless the most common one that is used. There are a number of helpful environmental resources in *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*. The following are examples of some of the resources:

1. Canticle 6, A Song of Creation,<sup>435</sup>
2. Prayers and thanksgiving for various occasions; For the Preservation of the Environment,<sup>436</sup>
3. Collects for Various Occasions, For Rogation Days;<sup>437</sup> For a Harvest Festival.<sup>438</sup>

There is much scope for making the prayer book more sensitive to environmental concerns. Lessons can be learnt from the New Zealand prayer book, also published in 1989, which is particularly sensitive to incorporating creation related material both in the liturgies as well as in sections like the catechism.

*An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* honours particular people on particular days of the year. While St Francis of Assisi, well known for his environmental concern, features (4 October), there is scope for other church leaders, teachers, martyrs and saints who have expressed an environmental commitment to be included in the remembrances.

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<sup>434</sup> CPSA, *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* (London: Collins, 1989).

<sup>435</sup> *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*, 338.

<sup>436</sup> *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*, 89

<sup>437</sup> *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*, 328

<sup>438</sup> *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*, 329

The CPSA uses the Common Lectionary. One needs to ask to what extent in these lectionaries there is an attempt to provide readings that give voice to the earth, and consider using a lectionary that emphasises this aspect. The CPSA published lectionary contains a number of prayers in the introductory parts. These could be made more earth-honouring. The worldwide Anglican Communion and some dioceses in the CPSA issue cycles of prayer. These could be used to place issues of environmental concern as matters for prayer. A number of churches use a particular Sunday on which to focus on the environment. Some chose the Sunday closest to World Environment Day (5 June); others use the commemoration of St Francis (4 October). In other parts of the world “creation time” is celebrated between September and October. Within the Anglican Communion the Sunday nearest World Environment Day is especially used.

As we have seen the CPSA has passed a number of resolutions with wide ranging significance, including the challenging of world financial institutions and global economic systems. It needs to take its prophetic responsibility seriously and take up the challenge of what it has committed itself to.

In chapter four we set out the aims and objectives of the Environment Network. Needless to say the Network should act on these. At the meeting of this Network in Grahamstown, where these aims and objectives were set, a number of ideas for action were highlighted. We offer some comment on some of these as a way forward. There was an attempt to identify what they called the ‘big issues.’ Amongst these were the proliferation of GMOs and the proposed N2 toll road. As we have seen, within the Diocese of Umzimvubu there was active opposition to this toll road development. The CPSA should continue to work with churches, particularly those that may be directly affected by the road, to continue to engage government and other stakeholders. As we noted in the previous section, the Archbishop of Cape Town has

made a particularly strong statement about GMOs. This has certainly opened up the way for the CPSA to campaign more publicly on the issue.

The idea of parish environmental audits was one that was accepted and should be acted upon. It is seen as a practical way in which local parishes could do something, and take responsibility for themselves. The audit normally consists of a number of questions, divided into different categories, that enquire about the uses of resources. The following comments were made about it at the Network meeting:

How do we “green” our churches so that the people in parishes identify, own and solve their local environmental problems and develop an understanding of global ones? I suggest that the starting point could be a very simple audit which will help with the identification of environmental issues in a parish. From this, a policy and strategy could be developed which is specific to that particular parish situation.<sup>439</sup>

As the CPSA is a hierarchical church it is important that the bishops get on board with any initiatives. The Environment Network has written to the bishops setting out their aims and plans. There needs to be ongoing work with them. This does not suggest that others should be neglected. There are various communication channels within the CPSA: a website, an e-mail news service, diocesan newspapers and of course pulpits. They should all be used; as well as synods and other decision making bodies.

Dioceses should be encouraged to form environment groups. The Diocese of Natal is one such example of a group that has been formed. The CPSA also needs to feed into and take guidance from the Anglican Communion Environment Network.

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<sup>439</sup> Minutes of the CPSA Environment Network meeting, 12-15 February 2004.

## 7.10 Conclusion

There is much that the church has done in South Africa. We have concentrated on those actions that reflect and strengthen an *oikotheology*. The church, however, still has a long way to go. Its hierarchical nature tends to stifle the development the ordinary membership. Programmes of education and especially theological education in the areas of the environment and poverty are needed to assist people as they make appropriate responses. Churches need to work together ecumenically as well as with other relevant organisations.

The church needs to be flexible, depending on the particular church context, as the theological position and socio-economic conditions affect the action. The difference manifestations of the church need to be taken seriously. The church exists at the local, regional and national level as well as within the lives of individuals. Different strategies are needed in these varying contexts. The task is urgent and the church needs to work in a focussed and sustained way. The Anglican Church certainly has a strong basis from which to work. It needs to marshal all its resources to mobilize its ordinary members to act meaningfully and decisively.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

#### 8.1 Introduction

This study has focussed on the environmental dimensions of the contribution towards poverty eradication. It has been proposed that an *oikotheology* be constructed as a means of guiding the church into action.

#### 8.2 Influences on the church

This research represents the state of the thinking and activity of the church at a particular point in the history of South Africa. As we have seen, political developments have an effect on the response of civil society which in turn influences the response of the church. Changes in our political context in the future will continue to impact on the church's response.

Racism and the oppression of women remain significant factors in South African society. Any engagement with issues of poverty and including environmental actions must take seriously these realities. Not everyone has equal access to resources nor can exercise equal control over them. Our actions as the church need to be informed by the fact that our history as a country has led us to an abnormal situation from which we are still emerging.

### **8.3 The Environment**

Fundamental to this discussion is the environment itself. Our past has given us a particularly narrow understanding of what constitutes the environment. We have argued that it is helpful to have a broader understanding of this term. What is needed is to recover its meaning as embracing all of life, the so-called non-human as well as the human. In this way the natural resources, essential to the sustenance of the earth community are valued, and also shared equitably.

### **8.4 The response of the church**

The church in South Africa has been slow to respond to environmental concerns. This is partly explained by the political context of the time. Political oppression and the resultant warped understanding of what constituted the environment influenced the response of the church. The church did tend to respond to particular events, such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and in instances like this expressed its theology. Its awareness of the link between environmental concern and the eradication of poverty has not been strong. It has traditionally seen ecological and economic concerns as separate.

The Anglican Church within South Africa has tended to follow the trend of the rest of the church in the country. In some of its resolutions, however, it has demonstrated a better understanding of the connection between the environment and poverty.

The Diocese of Umzimvubu, situated in an area of South Africa where poverty is widespread, has experienced the destructive effects of apartheid: the segregation of people along racial lines, forced removals, the creation of homelands, the exploitation of the land through commercial farming and the general lack of resources leading to underdevelopment. The work carried out in this diocese raised environmental



awareness through education and training and tackled poverty through the encouragement of sustainable agriculture. This work illustrated the actions of one particular church in a particular area, trying to consciously link the environment to poverty eradication. In this diocese the emphasis was not so much on local churches but the diocese as a whole. While it is helpful for regions to take action it is also important for local churches to be actively engaged themselves.

In looking at the progress made by the church in South Africa, the need for a coherent theology, an *oikothology*, which would hold together the concern for the environment and poverty eradication, became apparent.

### **8.5 Constructing an *oikothology***

Understanding the earth as the household of God is a valuable concept. A theology based on the household metaphor provides us with a better understanding of the relationship between the natural resources (the ecology) and the access to and distribution of these resources (economics). An *oikothology* is a theology which holds these two spheres of life together and enables the church to act in a wholistic and integrated approach in tackling the pressing problem of economic injustice and poverty.

While this study has provided a solid basis for the construction of an *oikothology*, there is much work that still needs to be done. All the Christian doctrines need to be analysed and reformulated in the light of the insights provided by an *oikothology*.

### **8.6 Church actions**

The strategies in which the church can engage have been highlighted. Actions need to be appropriate to the particular context within which the church is working. For

example, the response of a church in an affluent area would be different from that in a poorer area. Action is vital. Mere theologizing will preserve neither the natural environment nor enhance the livelihoods of people. While the church needs to engage actively in society it needs to also practice within its own functioning the principles it wants to establish in society.

South Africa is still going through significant changes, and these changes impact both on the environment and poverty. The church also needs to be flexible in responding to new problems that arise.

## **8.7 Land**

The issue of the value of land has been stressed as an integral aspect of the environment and as a resource in poverty eradication. It is an important resource that links these two factors. In a number of sections land issues have been mentioned. In South Africa land ownership patterns remain imbalanced, and so, in turn, access to the resources of the environment reflects this imbalance. The church needs to emphasise the value of land as well as support efforts to ensure that it is justly distributed.

## **8.8 Conclusion**

In the South African context, there is a particularly close relationship between the environment and poverty. The church plays an important role in the country and needs to set an example of how concern for the environment and the eradication of poverty go together. The future of the church depends on its ability to make a difference in the world. The church needs to act. It needs to affirm that the earth is indeed a home for all. The church needs to play its part in making this a reality by urgently adopting and acting upon an *oikotheology*.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### **This is God's Earth: Adopted by SACC & Church Representatives on 19 June 2002 in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)**

##### **1. A Theological Challenge**

The World Summit on Sustainable Development held in our own country this year, presents the Church in South Africa with a God-given opportunity to consider the issues that arise from the theme, *People, Planet, Prosperity*. These include poverty, unemployment, biodiversity, population growth, climate change, pollution, access to resources, health and well-being.

Most importantly, as Churches, it provides us with an opportunity to reflect *theologically* on these issues. We do this drawing on our theological heritage that includes our engagement in contextual and critical theologies in the struggle against apartheid; and our African identity that informs our spirituality.

Living in a nation that knows both the joy of freedom and democracy, as well as the pain of poverty and disease, we furthermore seek to reflect theologically out of our commitment to the poor and our nation-wide experience of grass-roots action for better people and communities. It is therefore important that we raise the concerns of both the faith and of the faithful in this process.

As we do so, what becomes clear is that many of the concerns have to do with power and its unequal distribution in the world, and in our society.

##### **2. Results of 'Development'**

We are particularly keen to reflect theologically on the paradigms and worldviews that inform the current debates about sustainability and development. We do this because we are convinced that they have not delivered the better world that we all desire, and are indeed a contributing factor to the fact that many people are no better off now than they were at the first World Summit in Rio 10 years ago. The United Nations Millennium Report notes that:

- Nearly half the world's population lives on less than R20 a day, and people living in sub-Saharan Africa are almost as poor today as they were 20 years ago. Furthermore, 1 billion people living in developed countries earn 60 percent of the world's income, while the 3.5 billion living in low-income countries earn less than 20 per cent.
- Of the total world labour force of 3 billion, 140 million workers are out of work altogether, and a quarter to a third are underemployed. 60 million young people are searching for work, but cannot find any. A quarter of a billion children aged 14 and under work, often in hazardous or unhealthy conditions.
- Less than 10 per cent of the R560 billion a year spent globally on health research is aimed at the health problems affecting 90% of the world's people so that Pneumonia, diarrhea, tuberculosis and malaria receive less than 1% of the

global health research budget. This happens while the annual death toll from diseases caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation exceeds 5 million, 10 times the number killed in wars.

- By 2000, 36 million people were living with HIV/ AIDS, with more than 23 million in sub-Saharan Africa. By 2010 there will be 40 million orphans in sub-Saharan Africa.
- 5 million people have died in 'internal' wars since 1990, while approximately 500 million small arms are in circulation around the world.
- Average temperatures are set to increase by 1.2° to 3.5° over the next century, melting glaciers and polar ice caps, and raising sea levels, and adding to the 25 million "environmental refugees" who were forced from their homes in 1998 alone. The cost of natural disasters increased 900 percent between the 1960s and 1990s.
- 1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water, while half of humanity lacks adequate sanitation, and if present trends continue, by 2050 two out of three people on Earth will live in countries where water consumption exceeds 10 percent of total water supply.
- 65 million hectares of forest were lost in the developing world between 1990 and 1995, and every year an additional 20 million hectares of agricultural land becomes too degraded for crop production, or is lost to urban sprawl. On top of this, 70 percent of ocean fisheries are either fully exploited or over-fished

We who live and work in the Africa, know first hand the devastation that this 'development' has wrought on our people. We can see its impact on:

- The social fabric of our communities
- Women and children
- The environment
- The retrenchment economy that offers only unemployment
- Social services which are available only for those who can afford them.

As people who worship and follow the God of life, we are deeply troubled by this state of affairs. It would seem that five decades of 'development' have not helped at all, and may in fact be contributing to the problem. Upon deeper reflection, we see that we are the victims of the many false promises of 'development', and in order to understand this we need to explore where the dominant understanding of 'development' comes from and why it has chosen the path that it has. This will necessarily involve us in some philosophical reflection, but in a world in which the truth is often hidden from view it is a vital task for Christians who follow him who is the way, the truth and the life.

### **3. The dominant development paradigm.**

In the field of development, Africa has had its creative and courageous thinkers who have drawn on the best insights from this continent and other traditions in

the world, to suggest ways in which Africa can develop. However, these have been greatly overshadowed and rendered impotent by the dominant development paradigm emerging out of the west.

At the time of the Enlightenment in Europe, new understandings of time, progress, history, and human agency, were promoted by philosophers and scientists. Out of this, the 'modern' worldview emerged, which has led to much scientific discovery and technological progress. Many of the key ideals that we cherish - such as freedom, equality, democracy - grew out of this process. However, this worldview cannot be separated from the emergence at the same time of individualism, capitalism, colonialism, and secularism. With ideas of progress and growth, also came concepts of social evolution and of a hierarchy of cultures and races. This process also gave birth to a change of attitude towards nature and the earth, as vast areas of the globe were exploited for the sake of 'progress'.

Technically, the relationship between colonial and colonised nations came to an end with the First World War, but by the end of the Second World War it had re-emerged in the relationship between developed and undeveloped nations.

Almost without exception the colonial powers were considered 'developed', whereas the colonised nations were now 'undeveloped'. The same ideas of progress and growth continued to dominate the thinking of this relationship. With the emergence of the USA as a major force in the world, it was they who set the agenda as to what was developed, and it is no surprise then that the focus of being developed moved away from concerns with people and their cultures, and began to focus exclusively on the economy.

Throughout the Cold War period the Western idea of development was challenged by Communist ideas of progress. The dominant nations of both East and West sought to persuade nations in the South to adopt their paradigm for development, a process that involved development aid in various guises (grants, loans, bribes, or gifts), military assistance, and political interference. With the end of the Cold War, the western capitalist model has emerged unchallenged, and its vision of globalization is now the one and only model for growth and 'development'.

The dominant development paradigm today then suggests that by building up the economy, nations, societies and people will be developed. The focus then is upon economic growth, and the way in which globalization can aid growth. In the process a host of other factors to do with people, community, culture, and the earth have been lost. Nations are forced to participate in a world economic system in which the rules are made in favour of the rich and powerful. Institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, the G8, the Paris Club and World Trade Organisation make use of a variety of instruments such as Structural Adjustment Programmes and Trade barriers to make it difficult for poorer nations to participate in such a way that builds up their people and local communities.

Furthermore, the dominant paradigm suggests that development should be led from the top, and is dependent upon outside intervention and aid. Local initiatives, choices and decisions that emerge out of the cultures and insights of local people are bypassed in favour of the opinions of consultants and other

'experts'. Long held patterns of community and sustainability, and understandings of people and the earth are thus overridden, and replaced with the 'modern' idea of progress and 'development', which paradoxically leads, as we have seen, to poverty of both body and spirit for billions of people across the world.

Because of its focus on growth and progress, rather than on distribution and sharing, the practice that emerges out of this development paradigm reinforces the unequal relationships that are in society. This is particularly manifested in racism, ethnic tensions, and in the distorted power relations between men and women. Many have noted, for example, that during the period of the United Nations Decade for the Advancement of Women (1975-1985), the socioeconomic status of the great majority of women in the Third World in fact worsened considerably. This development paradigm is not without its supporters amongst Christians, and it appeals to many within the church due to its focus on charity, welfare and aid, and because it is the status quo which should not be challenged. In many of the nations of the North and West, Christians and Churches are deeply integrated into the dominant 'modern' paradigm and the economic system of the global world, and it is from this perspective that they view development and the calling of the Church. There is, then, a strong temptation for the Church to become captive to the dominant understanding of development to the detriment of the poor and vulnerable.

#### **4. Development visions in Africa**

It is important to note that there have been some alternatives to the dominant paradigm, many of which have emerged from the South, and from previously colonized people themselves. Africa has also given birth to alternative modes of development through leaders such as Amílcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Steve Biko. These modes of development have stressed the agency of Africans in their own development, as well as the relationship between development and overthrowing the centuries long legacy of slavery, colonialism, and ethnic conflict. Drawing on African cultural traditions, and often deeply influenced by Christian values, they have focused on issues of distribution and justice, rather than just on economic growth and free market idealism. Many of these alternative paths have flourished for a while, and then collapsed through the pressures of world political and economic forces, and lack of local capacity. Such failures have left African countries in a precarious position subject to global economic forces over which they have little control, growing debt burdens, and unfavourable trade rules.

In recent months, African heads of state have sought to once again place Africa on the agenda of world development through the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). It is important to participate in discussions around NEPAD, exploring how deeply it may be rooted in the dominant paradigm, and how much it is influenced by alternative and African visions for development. As we undertake such reflection, we recognize the practical vitality of reflecting upon the paradigms that shape our thinking about development.

## 5. Theological Insights

In response to this modern secular philosophy that undergirds the dominant development paradigm, and its Christian supporters, it is important to draw on some key theological insights so that we as Christians can offer an alternative that affirms the abundant life that is Christ's gift to us.

### *a) The Earth belongs to God*

A Christian understanding of social struggles and development must begin with an affirmation that this is God's earth, and all that we seek to do in, with and to it, should be done out of this recognition. This means that all human life, and all living things, including the earth and its bounty, is a gift from God and is to be cherished, respected and enjoyed, and any right to private property must be circumscribed by this recognition of God's fundamental ownership of all things. Every human owner must therefore recognize the 'social mortgage' on property, meaning that property should be stewarded for the good not just of the owner but for the good of others.

We cannot therefore be party to any process or system that treats life or the earth as a commodity, nor anything that does not recognise that all people of the earth hold ownership of the resources of the earth in common, what is sometimes known as the 'global commons'.

### *b) The vision of Shalom*

The Christian faith does not just look backwards to creation, or to a once golden period in the past, but rather looks forward in hope to the coming Reign of God. The Scriptures speak of this hope in many ways but the dominant vision is that of 'Shalom', a time of well-being, right relations, justice and peace. It is a time in which the whole of creation is fulfilled in the presence of God, a time in which human beings, nature and the earth itself is whole. This vision is one of great equality in which all are able to participate in and benefit from the wealth of God's Reign..

We cannot therefore be party to a system that seeks to create peace and security for one section of the earth at the expense of others. Rather than just focusing on growth and wealth, development must focus on the just distribution of that wealth amongst those who labour to create it.

### *c) The dignity of labour*

One of the greatest gifts that God gives to humanity is the invitation to participate in creation itself, through the exercise of labour. This labour and work is the way in which people create a hospitable world, secure food and shelter, develop partnerships, and exercise a broad range of skills and talents towards the vision of shalom. With its origin in God's own creation, labour seeks to serve the same ends. Yet this is not the case today in which we see two unacceptable faces of labour - as both a means to make huge profits, and generate wealth and privilege for an elite few who own their own labour, and as degrading and uncreative toil for so many in the world, including children, who must sell their labour to survive.



We cannot therefore accept a system in which people are seen simply as units of production and consumption. Rather than uniting us to God and each other, this form of labour is a major source of alienation from life and one another. We need to support the global struggle for just work.

*d) The persistence of sin*

While it is not fashionable in many circles today, it is important for Christians to speak plainly and honestly about the presence and persistence of sin in society. This is not the un-Biblical view which puts the blame for poverty on the sins of the poor, but rather sees the challenge and task to struggle against and to seek to overcome sin, and its manifestation in poverty, injustice and the degradation of the earth. At the same time, however, any scheme of development that promises progress and growth, without taking sin into account is bound to fail, for it will not have a realistic view of the possibilities of what can be achieved in history. We cannot therefore accept the bland promises of growth and development that are not realistic about the persistence of sin. God's reign of justice and peace is a gift from God, and not something that 'development' can achieve. The claim to achieve this can make development itself sinful. Furthermore, because of the presence of sin, we need to be ever vigilant about transparency amongst ourselves so that we can keep one another accountable to the values of truth and honesty thus avoiding the pitfalls of nepotism, patronage and personal enrichment that so often accompany development.

*e) Commitment to the poor*

With our appreciation of this being God's earth and our vision of and for Shalom, we are challenged to be engaged in building a better world for all. Through our faith in God, whose option for the poor was made clear through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, we ourselves profess a commitment to the poor. The hopes and dreams, as well as the concrete actions of the poor themselves must provide the lead in the struggle for development. Christians therefore are called to work and struggle alongside the movements and organisations of women, children, the unemployed, indigenous peoples, disabled people, land hungry communities and exploited workers who are agents of their own freedom and development in our time.

We cannot therefore accept a global system in which a great number of the world's citizens are getting poorer, and the gap between the rich and the poor is widening at an alarming rate. The waste of public money through war, militarization, debt repayments, corruption, and the interrelationship between poverty and AIDS are key matters of concern for those who are concerned to struggle alongside the poor.

*f) Sustainable earth*

Our commitment to poor and marginalised people and communities is at the same time a commitment to the earth itself, for the future of the poor is dependent upon the future of the earth, and likewise the future of the earth is dependent upon the future of the poor. We are aware that many communities are wracked with internal power conflicts between ruling elites and the vulnerable poor, between

men and women, between old and young people, and amongst communities themselves, often over the increasingly scarce resources of the earth. We speak therefore of sustaining life in communities that embody right relations, equity and justice, and this in the context of sustaining the earth and being sustained by the earth in turn.

We cannot therefore support the dominant vision of sustainable development that undermines both the earth and the poor. Our commitment is to sustainable communities that live and develop by caring for, nurturing and sustaining the people of the earth and the earth which belongs to God, and which God has given us for our sustenance.

This is a vision that has sustained the people of God for centuries in many and diverse circumstances. It is a vision that grows out of obedience to the God of life:

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does God  
require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk  
humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)



## Appendix 2

### ***Choose Life!*<sup>1</sup>: A Discussion Paper on the World Summit on Sustainable Development by the Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa<sup>2</sup>** **11 June 2002**

#### ***Contents***

1. A Lost Decade
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4. Sustainable Development

#### ***1. A Lost Decade***

A decade after the Rio Earth Summit the condition of the global human community has not changed much. The world is still divided between over-consumption and underdevelopment<sup>3</sup>, between those who have too much and those who 'have not', taking the Earth and the global human community on a destructive path to disaster. It is estimated that more than 1.4 billion people live in dire poverty. Many more live in underdeveloped conditions, trapped in a vicious circle of deprivation<sup>4</sup>. Yet, a few people and nations are extremely wealthy and still want to multiply their use of the earth's resources.

The 1992 Earth Summit considered plans to promote sustainable development and adopted Agenda 21, a plan of action for sustainable development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The 1997 Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly reviewed the implementation of Agenda 21 and other agreements reached subsequently. The general conclusion was that the progress in

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 30:19

<sup>2</sup> The Alliance for Justice & Peace in Southern Africa is a Southern African regional forum of Catholic Justice & Peace Commissions representing eleven countries: Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, Namibia, South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia, as well as the Justice & Peace Desk of the Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops in Southern Africa (IMBISA). The Alliance also includes European and North American development and relief agencies present in Southern Africa such as Catholic Relief Services (USA), Misereor (Germany), and CAFOD (UK).

<sup>3</sup> 20% of the world's population consumes 90% of the world's production: UN World Environmental Outlook 2002.

<sup>4</sup> 66% of the world's people live on less than \$2 a day and about 17% of the world's people live in slums: UN World Environmental Outlook 2002.

implementing Agenda 21 has been sluggish. In some respects, conditions have deteriorated from where they were ten years ago.

The Alliance for Justice and Peace in Southern Africa presents this discussion document on the World Summit on Sustainable Development as our contribution to building a better future for the world. We are convinced that human progress must be informed by core values that include a deep respect for the integrity of the earth and all creation, and by a firm commitment to ensure the full human development of all people equally according to their inherent human dignity. Our assessment is inspired by the Gospel of Christ and by the social teaching of the church. It is informed by our experience of impoverishment and environmental destruction that is rife throughout the Southern African region.

We have hope for a better future. God equips us to be co-creators of life. God calls all the earth's people to a radical reorientation for a better life. Both personal conversion and a collective global commitment to sustainable development are required to build a better world. Sustainable development demands that we integrate rather than separate the economic, ecological, and social aspects of the life of the world. This is a matter of justice. The interrelationship between human society, the economy and the environment must be taken into account in determining how the global human community will live together on this one, finite earth as a just, caring, and dignified community.

Under the theme *People, Planet, & Prosperity*, the World Summit on Sustainable Development proposes to do this. However, the Summit will be ineffective without also addressing the *power* relations that control the interrelationship between human society, the economy and the environment today.

This integration requires an acknowledgement that economic profit cannot be the only end of our endeavours. It requires that we emphasise our quality of life rather than the quantity of materials we amass to make ourselves more powerful. Without an earth to sustain our life, we would have lost everything. And *'what benefit is it to anyone to win the whole world and lose his/her very self'?*<sup>5</sup>

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Why is it important for us to address the power relations controlling the social, economic, and ecological life of the world today?

## ***2. The Causes of Un-sustained Development***

The 1992 Rio Summit marked the global recognition that we must reflect anew on our relationships with each other and with the earth. Little has been accomplished since 1992. However, as the peoples of the earth try to achieve a truly sustainable path of development we grapple with the following issues:

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 9:25

unprecedented levels of impoverishment and inequality, depletion of non-renewable resources, unsustainable harvesting of renewable resources, damaging levels and methods of waste discharge, and many others. Something is very wrong with the way we are living as a global human community and something must be done to change our ways.

Firstly, there is need for strong political will to bring about truly sustainable development. If, as the evidence suggests, in the latter years of the twentieth century there was very little development, the reasons are not only economic. Political considerations are of primary relevance, 'for the *decisions* which either accelerate or slow down the development of peoples are really political in character'.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, after analysing the situation we must conclude that this political will to ensure even, effective, and sustainable development is lacking.

However, an analysis limited to the economic and political causes of underdevelopment and over-development would be incomplete. It is necessary to uncover the *moral causes* that, with respect to the behaviour of *individuals* who are the agents of development, retard human progress. While the financial, scientific, and technical resources are available which, with the necessary concrete political decisions, ought to help lead peoples to true development, the primary obstacles to real development will be overcome only by means of good *moral choices*.<sup>7</sup>

The greatest moral crisis in the world today consists precisely in this: that the ones who possess much are *few* and those who possess almost nothing are *many*. This represents the moral failure to justly distribute the goods and services originally intended for all.<sup>8</sup> A few wealthy individuals and nations control the global financial and trade markets to their own benefit and the detriment of the earth, neglecting millions of people living in poverty. A new moral framework that puts people and the earth above economic growth and wealth accumulation is required if we are to achieve sustainable development.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION: How do moral choices shape our sustainable development plans?**

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<sup>6</sup> Pope John Paul II, 'On Social Concerns': 35

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

<sup>8</sup> Pope John Paul II, 'On Social Concerns': 28

### 3. *Our Vision for A Better Life*

True development is not simply about the accumulation of wealth and the greater availability of goods and services. It must also give attention to enabling the poor to benefit from the availability of goods and services, as well as to the social, cultural and spiritual dimensions of human development. True human development includes a fresh awareness that we are part of the earth and we must therefore adjust our behaviour and systems to care for the earth.

We want a development that works to overcome the scandal that humanity is still unnecessarily split in two by poverty and that the whole creation is split between the human and non-human. There is an urgent need to reconsider the *models* that inspire our current development policies. This includes both a revision of the values and priorities that our development model sets, and consequent changes to the systems and structures that give expression to our development model.

We want a development that ensures *international cooperation* not only in terms of development aid, but more as an expression of global social solidarity. Human solidarity recognises the poor as the agents of their own development and enables the greatest number of people to exercise their human creativity, their agency, on which the wealth of nations is dependent.<sup>9</sup> Global human solidarity leads us to a greater respect for our earth environment. It also transforms the nature of the power relations that currently limit the possibilities for real development.

We want to be part of a development that will address both the supply and demand sides of production and consumption; will promote the use of renewable resources; will give back to the earth what we have taken from it by recycling and replenishing resources. We want to be part of a world that gives protection to the diversity of species that maintain our ecosystems.<sup>10</sup>

**DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why do we need to rethink our current development model?**

#### 3.1. *Fair Trade & Food Security*

The area in which the interrelation between our social, environmental, and economic relations is most apparent today is international trade, especially agricultural trade.

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<sup>9</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Peace on Earth to Those Whom God Loves!* Message on the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2000.

<sup>10</sup> About 1183 species of birds, 12% of the world's total, and 1130 species of mammals, 25% of the world's total, are threatened with extinction. 33% of the world's fish stocks are depleted or overexploited. Half the world's rivers are seriously depleted and polluted. About 60% of the world's 227 biggest rivers are disrupted by dams and other engineering works. Source: UN Global Environmental Outlook 2002.



Rich countries give \$1 billion each day in subsidies to their agricultural products<sup>11</sup>, leading to massive over-production of agricultural products that are dumped on African economies. This drives down prices for agricultural products so that underdeveloped countries get far less for their products than their actual worth. In addition, when poor countries export products to rich countries they face high trade tariffs designed to protect rich country industries. In a classic example of double standards, this causes poor countries to lose more than \$100 billion a year – double what they get in development aid from rich countries. At the same time underdeveloped countries are under strong pressure from rich countries in the World Trade Organisation to rapidly remove trade protections from their vulnerable industries such as agriculture. This is the kind of development model that is currently being promoted.

However, even though market access for African products is a big problem for under-developed countries, the focus on access to European and North American markets is an inaccurate identification of the central problem for poor countries in the global trading system. The real problem is the indiscriminate removal of protections on trade in industry, services, agriculture and agro-genetic resources enforced upon Africa in the WTO, leading to increased food insecurity, the closure of small-scale farms in favour of big agribusiness monopolies that pollute and over-work the land, job losses by farm workers and the conversion of permanent jobs to seasonal work.

Sustainable development requires the reorientation of production from export agriculture led by big corporate interests to small-farm based production primarily for the local needs and protected by tariffs and quotas from unfair competition by subsidized products dumped by the Northern countries.<sup>12</sup> A real development framework should protect the rights of small-scale African farmers to access, save, use, exchange, sell and breed their seeds, plants, food crops and other agro-genetic resources as envisioned, for example, in the Africa Model Legislation.<sup>13</sup>

International trade is today presented as the key to sustainable development, but it is characterized by double standards and unfair terms. Sustainable development requires fair trade that recognises the moral imperative to give greater protection and food security to those who are most vulnerable.

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<sup>11</sup> Rigged Rules and Double Standards in International Trade, Oxfam International, May 2002, see [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk).

<sup>12</sup> Based on unpublished comments by Walden Bello, Executive Director, Focus on the Global South.

<sup>13</sup> The Africa Model Legislation (AML) developed by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) gives legal expression to the protection of the rights of local communities, farmers and breeders, and to the regulation of access to biological resources. 15 Francophone countries in West Africa effectively broke from the AML when they signed the Bangui Agreement, which came into force in February 2002. South Africa and Kenya had already signed a similar agreement called UPOV, an international standard that supports monopoly agribusiness interests above smallholder farmers. For more information on the AML see the site of the Washington-based Africa Faith & Justice Network, <http://afjn.cua.edu>.

Twelve million people today suffer from famine in Southern Africa. This is not simply an unpredictable natural disaster. Food shortages in the region were predicted almost two years ago. Starvation in Southern Africa is also about the unjust distribution of resources in the world and about global pollution-related climate changes that affect the poor first.<sup>14</sup>

**DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why should we give special protection to small-scale farmers today?**

### ***3.2. The New Partnership for Africa's Development***

Africa's social, economic, and political relations urgently need to be transformed through a focused and determined international effort if Africa is to be lifted out of the poverty trap. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) presents itself as a visionary and dynamic initiative by a core group of new generation African leaders to reconstruct and develop the continent. NEPAD gives some attention to environmental concerns, mostly in the areas of water affairs and counteracting desertification, conservation of natural heritage sites, and monitoring the impact of climate change.

But NEPAD's vision is blurred by fixing its sights on increased global integration and rapid private sector growth as the answer to overcoming poverty, and by its failure to engage with Africa's people to transform the continent. The remarkable political will generated by NEPAD must be focused into a participatory transformation of Africa through direct, immediate, and decisive action to overcome the causes of Africa's impoverishment.

The church must participate with energy and commitment in Africa's reconstruction and development. The church is committed to engaging with Africa's legitimate political leaders in the interests of the common good of Africa's development. We are called by God, together with all people of faith and good will, to restore our collective vision for 'a new heaven and a new earth' no less than we are called to bring individual or personal healing and peace.<sup>15</sup>

**DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why should the church participate with energy and commitment in programmes for sustainable development?**

### ***3.3. Sustainable Financing for Sustainable Development***

Finally we want to be in a world where apartheid-caused debts in Southern Africa are cancelled. These debts block the achievement of sustainable

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<sup>14</sup> The number of people affected by weather-related disasters has risen from 147 million to 211 million in the past ten years, while concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere could double by the year 2050. Source: UN Global Environmental Outlook 2002.

<sup>15</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of NEPAD by churches see "Un-blurring the Vision: An Assessment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development by South African Churches" at [www.sarpn.org.za](http://www.sarpn.org.za).

development. The debt is immoral and illegitimate and should be cancelled as a precondition for sustainable development. Real debt cancellation will provide reliable and direct budget support to underdeveloped countries that require resources for sustained development. The current mechanisms for providing development financing are politically problematic and economically unreliable. They are not guaranteed to be sustainable. Nor are the current initiatives for debt relief delivering sufficient additional budget resources for sustainable development.

The current global financial system is characterised by highly unstable and unpredictable fluctuations, driven primarily by currency speculation that severely damages the development gains made by many underdeveloped countries to the extent that whole national economies can be ruined. International currency transactions currently amounting to \$1.6 trillion a day should be controlled through the introduction of a minimal international currency transaction tax. Such a tax would raise sufficient resources to finance effective poverty eradication programmes and provide protection to vulnerable economies.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION: Who should pay for poverty eradication programmes? Why?**

#### ***4. Sustainable Development***

Sustainable development demands a new commitment to global solidarity, not simply a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of the poor and the earth. Solidarity entails a *firm and persevering determination* to commit ourselves to the *common good* because we are *all* responsible *for all*, based on the solid conviction that the all-consuming desire for profit and the thirst for power at any price are hindering full and responsible development in our world today.<sup>16</sup>

Sustainable development cannot be exclusionary. It demands the full participation of civil society and especially local communities in development. Such participation not only appropriately informs development plans but is also necessary for the sustained success of development.

We therefore make the following recommendations for sustainable development in regard to the World Summit:

- That foreign debts of under-developed countries should be cancelled outright as a precondition for sustainable development;

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<sup>16</sup> Pope John Paul II, 'On Social Concerns': 37-38



- That the rights of small-scale farmers to access, save, use, exchange, sell and breed their seeds, plants, food crops and other agro-genetic resources must be protected by the agreements governing international trade;
- That an international moratorium be declared on trade in genetically-modified agricultural products until the human health and environmental impacts of such products are thoroughly researched;
- That measures be strengthened in the international trading system to give special protection to vulnerable agricultural and other industries in underdeveloped countries;
- That an international currency transaction tax be implemented to finance poverty eradication programmes and protect vulnerable emerging economies;
- That measures be introduced in all countries, especially those who consume the most, to promote the use of renewable resources as a substitute for non-renewable resources, and that incentives be introduced for the recycling of non-renewable resources for which there are no renewable substitutes;
- That quotas, coupled with strict penalties for those who exceed them, be introduced for the extraction and use of natural resources such as forests;
- That the building of nuclear power stations and the utilisation of nuclear power be banned. At present the inability to ensure the safety of the nuclear plants and to dispose of radioactive waste is posing a serious threat to the health of humans and to the whole environment;
- That multinational companies and institutions be bound by protective labour, waste, and environmental laws as against the current trend where multinationals and their products are being given increasing exemption from such laws; and
- That a global development model be accepted by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation, the World Economic Forum, the G7<sup>17</sup> and all countries, that invests in sustainable human development rather than rapid economic growth to the detriment of humanity and the earth.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why should we ensure that workers and the environment are given greater protection against multinational corporation?**

We believe that these are necessary measures for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to introduce, without which we would have little hope for a better world. However, we realise that even all these measures together are insufficient to guarantee sustainable development. Real development depends on us – the choices we make, our willingness to get involved in building a better world, the extent to which we engage with legitimate leaders to build transparency, accountability, and social trust, and the depth of our spiritual maturity in relating to each other and the earth. We are ready to meet these

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<sup>17</sup> The G7 countries are the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, and Canada. When Russia joins the G7 meetings, it is known as the G8. A representative of the European Union now also joins the G8 meetings.

challenges. We equally implore the World Summit on Sustainable Development:  
Choose Life!

## Appendix 3

### Lecture: Ecology and Economy - University of Kent, Canterbury

Tuesday 8 March 2005

1.

The two big “e-words” (ecology and economy) in my title have sometimes been used in recent decades as if they represented opposing concerns. Yes, we should be glad to do more about the environment, if only this didn’t interfere with economic development and the liberty of people and nations to create wealth in whatever ways they can. Or perhaps, we should be glad to address environmental issues if we could be sure that we had first resolved the challenge of economic injustice within and between societies. So from both left and right there has often been a persistent sense that it isn’t proper or possible to tackle both together, let alone to give a different sort of priority to ecological matters.

But this separation or opposition has come to look like a massive mistake. It has been said that ‘the economy is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the environment’. The earth itself is what ultimately controls economic activity because it is the source of the materials upon which economic activity works. Increasingly, economists have expressed unease about the habit of thinking of environmental matters as ‘externalities’ where issues about economic development are concerned; and Professor Partha Dasgupta of Cambridge has argued very cogently that we need to stop measuring wealth in terms of GNP and to include reference to human and natural capital in any serious measure of national well-being. It is perfectly possible for a country to show an increase in its GNP and even its Human Development Index, and in fact to be experiencing overall economic decline because of the erosion of natural resources and the rate of population growth. In a paper of 2002, Dasgupta demonstrated that even in the Indian subcontinent, often cited as a good news story for gradual wealth accumulation, the pattern is really one of decline in the light of these factors. In Pakistan, for example, GNP figures suggest that the national economy grew at a steady annual rate of 2.7% between 1965 and 1993. But when depletion of natural assets and population growth are factored in, it appears that ‘the average Pakistani became poorer by a factor of about 1.5 during that period’ (Dasgupta 2002, p.5).

To say this is to identify the tip of an iceberg. And the bulk of that iceberg is our incapacity to develop a view of economics that takes account of a sufficient range of factors for really dependable prediction. The pattern we currently see in the world economy is a sort of pincer movement in respect of natural resources. We are taking resources out of the biosphere; and we are contributing to the biosphere a set of lethally dangerous extras. Both can be illustrated with one example. Contemporary methods of fish farming (aquaculture) require large quantities of

wild fish as food for farmed fish, so that there is a further dramatic depletion in the wild fish populations. Fishermen who still depend on wild fishing have to pull in greater quantities to compete with farmed produce. Farmed fish contain higher levels of toxins than wild fish; if they escape, as they often do, they interbreed with wild fish and introduce those toxins to the wild strains – as well as introducing genetic complications, since farmed fish, bred for rapid growth, have poor survival capacity outside controlled conditions (see Jared Diamond, *Collapse. How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive*, p.488). Thus we simultaneously deplete and poison. It is an elegant metaphor for a very wide range of phenomena. The impact of carbon emissions is now so well-known that it is hardly worth rehearsing the problems – though the most recent scientific summit on this matter convened by the government at Exeter some few weeks ago agreed, to the dismay of many, that practically all of our estimates of damage in terms of climate deterioration had been spectacularly overoptimistic. The measurable rise in temperature – and the hitherto underrated extent of acidisation in the ocean through carbon pollution – left little doubt that the predicted rise in water levels would be substantially greater within the next decade, and that life in the oceans was more at risk than had been realised. And of course to speak of rising water levels is not just to predict a gentle advance; melting at or near the poles could mean vast slippages of ice capable of triggering a tsunami effect. We know today what that can mean in a way that we could hardly have dreamed of even a year ago. But we are not only speaking about carbon emissions; we know something of the effects of pesticides and herbicides, and we have become more acutely conscious of the chemical cocktails in our food and water. And the transfer, for economic reasons, of plant and animal species from one environment to another has had a regularly devastating effect on the overall ecology of a new environment and its balance.

Economy and ecology cannot be separated. If Dasgupta is right about the proper definition of wealth, ecological fallout from economic development is in no way an 'externality'; it is a positive depletion of real wealth, the 'human and natural capital' of which he speaks. We should not be surprised; after all, the two words relate to the same central concept. An *oikos* is a house, a dwelling-place: ecology is the science of what makes up a dwelling place, an environment, the way it works and holds together, the 'logic' of a material setting; and economy is the law that regulates behaviour in an environment, the active 'housekeeping' that manages what is at hand. To seek to have economy without ecology is to try and manage an environment with no knowledge or concern about how it works in itself – to try and formulate human laws in abstraction from or ignorance of the laws of nature. Much of what I have been saying so far is indebted to the new study by the American biologist and geographer Jared Diamond; and he offers a vivid image for the nature of our ignorance. Why, people ask, should we be bothered about the survival of 'lousy little species' that appear to have no use? 'The entire natural world,' Diamond replies, 'is made up of wild species providing us for free with



services that can be very expensive, and in many cases impossible, for us to provide for ourselves. Elimination of lots of lousy little species regularly causes big harmful consequences for humans, just as does randomly knocking out many of the lousy little rivets holding together an airplane' (489).

We cannot continue to pretend to 'keep house' for the human race if we refuse to pay any attention to where in the house the gas pipes and electricity wires are laid, which walls are supporting walls, or where the water is carried off by the guttering. But how many sentences in lectures on this subject have begun with the words, 'We cannot continue to...'? Hundreds at least; apparently we can in the short term. But the most original and disturbing aspect of Diamond's book is its remarkably wide-ranging demonstration that failure to manage the environment is a major decisive factor (though admittedly not the only one) in the collapse of settled cultures throughout the centuries, from Easter Island to Viking Greenland; and that collapse is – as with the rising of water levels – no gentle decline but a bloody and costly disintegration. Diamond applies his model not only to the distant past but also to the history of the genocide in Rwanda and Burundi. We know a little about the way in which economic 'rationalisation' to meet the requirements of the World Bank at the end of the eighties put pressure on Rwanda, contributing to the social rootlessness that leads to militarisation. We are conscious of the poisonous legacy of colonial manipulation of tribal rivalry (perhaps an issue to which Diamond gives insufficient attention, as at least one reviewer has argued). But we are only slowly recognising the role of population growth, environmental degradation and consequent land shortage in fuelling the conflicts that followed. Such problems cannot indefinitely drift on; 'sooner or later they are likely to resolve themselves, whether in the manner of Rwanda or in some other manner not of our choosing, if we don't succeed in solving them by our own actions' (328).

Social collapse is a real possibility. When we speak about environmental crisis, we are not to think only of spiralling poverty and mortality, but about brutal and uncontrollable conflict. An economics that ignores environmental degradation invites social degradation – in plain terms, violence. It is no news that access to water is likely to be a major cause of serious conflict in the century just beginning. But this is only one aspect of a steadily darkening situation. Needless to say, it will be the poorest countries that suffer first and most dramatically, but the 'developed' world will not be able to escape: the failure to manage the resources we have has the same consequences wherever we are. In the interim – just as within so much of urban society in wealthier countries – we can imagine 'fortress' situations, struggling to keep the growing instability and violence elsewhere at bay and so intensifying its energy. We can imagine increasing levels of social control demanded, with all that that means for our own internal harmony or stability. And we are not talking about a remote future. There are arguments over the exact rates of global warming, certainly, and we cannot easily predict the full

effects of some modifications in species balance. But we should not imagine that uncertainty in this or that particular area seriously modifies the overall picture. On any account, we are failing.

2.

It is relatively easy to sketch the gravity of our situation; not too difficult either to say that governments should be doing more. Government is crucial, and it matters a great deal that the UK administration has declared a commitment to action on climate change. But governments depend on electorates; electors are persons like us who need motivating. Unless there is real popular motivation, governments are much less likely to act or act effectively; there are always quite a few excuses around for not taking action, and, without a genuine popular mandate for change, we cannot be surprised or outraged if courage fails and progress is minimal. Our own responsibility is to help change that popular motivation and so to give courage to political leaders. And this means challenging and changing some of the governing assumptions about ourselves as human beings.

One of the reasons sometimes given for not being too alarmed by predictions of ecological disaster is that we are underrating the possibilities that will be offered by new technologies. Thus the American economist Nancy Stokey, responding to a very detailed discussion by another American economist, William R. Cline, of the impact of climate change and the measures necessary to control it, describes Cline's picture as 'alarmist': 'he makes no allowance for technical change in the next 300 years that will allow the world to cope more effectively with CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and their climatic effects' (Lomborg 2004, p.642). Apart from the assumption that we have time to spare in this matter, what is startling is the appeal to 'technical change' in these general terms as a messianic resource. Diamond notes at the end of his book that technical changes introduced to solve environmental problems have a spectacular record of generating fresh problems (he instances the motor car and the development of CFC gases as safe refrigerating agents; pp.505-6). If we simply do not know what 'technical change' might lie ahead and if the history of technological 'fixes' is so unpromising, it takes a great deal of blind faith to think that we can soften the projections of danger in this way. And if this is so, one of the areas in which we have to challenge assumptions is in this matter of reliance on technology to solve problems that are actually about human choices.

To appeal to a technical future is to say that our most fundamental right as humans is unrestricted consumer choice. In order to defend that, we must mobilise all our resources of skill and ingenuity, diverting resource from other areas so that we can solve problems created by our own addictive behaviours. The question is whether, even if this were clearly possible (which is anything but clear; you can't solve a challenge like this with the mere confidence that something will turn up), it would be a sane or desirable way of envisaging the human future.

There would always be a case for putting the technical response to new crises ahead of other human needs – since we should always have to ensure we had an environment at all. But this sounds suspiciously like a recipe for perpetuating anxiety and even injustice; we ought not, surely, to be taking for granted that it is a future to be aimed at. It has been said more than once that a future of tighter technical control is also likely to be one of tighter human control. It is not as if we could simply contemplate a libertarian paradise.

But if this is so, there is no alternative to challenging the underlying motivation. Dasgupta, as quoted earlier, invited us to redefine wealth itself in a way that relativises GNP and includes the idea of natural capital; can the same kind of redefinition apply to our ideas about individual wealth or security? What if we believed that the wealthy or secure person was one whose relationship with the environment was one in which actual enjoyment of and receptivity to the environment played the most significant part? This suggests something of a paradox. In order fully to access, enjoy and profit from our environment, we need to see it as something that does not exist just to serve our needs. Or, to put it another way, we are best served by our environment when we stop thinking of it as there to serve us. When we can imagine what is materially around us as existing in relation to something other than our own purposes, we are free to be surprised, educated and enlarged by it. When we obsessively seek to guarantee that the environment will always be there for us as a storehouse of raw materials, we in fact shrink our own humanity by shrinking what is there to surprise and enlarge, by reducing our capacity for contemplation of what is really other to us.

All the great religious traditions, in their several ways, insist that personal wealth is not to be seen in terms of reducing the world to what the individual can control and manipulate for whatever exclusively human purposes may be most pressing. Judaism's teachings about the 'jubilee' principle stress that the land is lent not given to human cultivators: it requires 'sabbatical' years, and its value is to be seen not in terms of absolute possession but as a source of a limited number of harvests between the sabbatical years (Lev.25). The assumption is that the environment that is given, the land bestowed by God, has to be set free regularly from our assumption that it belongs to us; it has to be left to be itself, to be in relation simply to the God who has given it. A year of uncultivation, wildness, is not a lot, but it speaks eloquently of our willingness to organise economy around ecology, to 'keep house' within the limits of a world where we are guests more than owners. Similarly, Christianity not only has its challenges in the Sermon on the Mount to anxiety about controlling the environment, prohibiting us from identifying wealth with possession; it also has its sacramental tradition which presents the material order as raw material for the communication of God's love – the Eucharist as the effective symbol of God's action in creating a radically different human society, not characterised by rivalry and struggle for resources. At the centre of Christian practice is a rite in which all are equally fed by one gift, and in which material



things are identified symbolically with the self-offering of Christ. Islam also underlines the partnership of humanity and the rest of the natural order – and, in a passing observation in the Qur'an (Sura 16.8) reminds us that some of the purposes of the animal creation are unknown to us. And a twentieth century Iranian scholar (Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai) quotes both Muhammad and the fifth of the Shi'a Imams as commending farming because it is beneficial for humans and for the animal world as well. Examples could be multiplied from these and other faiths; but what I have quoted makes it abundantly clear that religious faith assumes that our humanity grows into maturity by allowing the material environment its own integrity. While the detail of this is inescapably complex, the point is plain. The *oikos* we inhabit has a *logos*, a meaning whose fullness is not exhausted in what we can make of it; the *nomos*, the law of our behaviour in this dwelling place, has to work with and not against the larger significance of a world that stands first in relation to its maker, and so has to be seen as free from our preoccupations about its usefulness to us.

The jubilee idea has had great currency recently as a focal image for the imperative of debt remission; I believe it has just as much importance in this context – and indeed that using it in this context reminds us of the way in which the issues of economic justice and of ecological justice belong together. Perhaps we need another 'jubilee' campaign, concentrated on sabbaticals for overfished waters and deforested uplands, recognising that the rapacity and short-term planning that devastate these resources have their roots in the same blindness that, three decades ago, began to press disadvantaged nations into debt and then sought to improve their economies by the profoundly damaging strategies of 'structural adjustment', which deplete the human – the civil and cultural – resources of a nation.

The unique contribution that can be made to this whole discussion by religious conviction might be characterised in two ways. Religious belief claims, in the first place, that I am most fully myself only in relation with my creator; what I am in virtue of this relationship cannot be diminished or modified by any earthly power. It is this that grounds the obstinate belief in the irreducible value of human persons which animates any religious witness or work for the sake of justice; it is this that enables religious resistance to even the most overwhelmingly powerful and successful tyrannies, from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich, the Soviet Union or apartheid South Africa. But the implication, secondly, is that every aspect of creation likewise finds its full value and significance in relation to the creator, not to the agenda of any other creature. In the environment there is a dimension that resists and escapes us: to be aware of that is to grasp the implications of belief in human dignity, in my own dignity or value. And to reduce the world to a storehouse of materials for limited human purposes is thus to put in question any serious belief in an indestructible human value. As writers like Mary Midgley have argued eloquently, humanity needs to rejoin the rest of

creation, to become aware of the limits that interdependence imposes and of the dangerous groundlessness of belief in human value when it is abstracted from a sense of value in all that exists around us.

We are speaking about redefining wealth as 'wealth that builds and sustains and takes forward the core purpose of our whole human enterprise' (Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, *Spiritual Capital*, p.33). If we have to use the language of rights here – and it is ambiguous in many ways – we ought to be saying that human persons have a right to live in an environment that is not only safe and healthy in the obvious sense but also is itself, not fully determined by human projects. We could imagine a 'charter' of rights in relation to the environment – that we should be able to live in a world that still had wilderness spaces, that still nurtured a balanced variety of species, that allowed us access to unpoisoned natural foodstuffs. Over the twentieth century, there have in fact been a good many moves in such a direction – in the UK through clean air legislation and the maintenance of public parks and the work of many conservation trusts. It may be that the time is ripe for an attempt at a comprehensive statement of this, a new UN commitment – a 'Charter of Rights to Natural Capital' to which governments could sign up and by which their own practice and that of the nations in whose economies they invested could be measured. But we should make no mistake: the possibility of anything like this depends on each of us. Already consumer power has begun to make a difference to the practices of international business in pressing for signs of environmental responsibility; governments need strengthening in their commitments and need electoral incentives to be involved in the sort of internationally agreed aspirations I have sketched.

But aspirations alone are no use. We return constantly in discussions of this subject to what sort of structures and sanctions might assist in making effective a change in our motivations and myths. A charter may be desirable, but needs institutional backing. Various suggestions have been advanced; and it is worth noting that very different commentators have come to convergent views on the sort of thing that is required. Sir Crispin Tickell has argued in a lecture last year for a 'World Environment Organisation' comparable to the World Trade Organisation and capable of working in harness with it. George Monbiot has elaborated, in his recent book, *The Age of Consent. A Manifesto for a New World Order*, the model of a 'Fair Trade Organisation' that would establish both ecological and economic standards for multinational trading. It would act as a global licensing body, restricting trade and enterprise across national boundaries to those companies that were ready to abide by a set of specified criteria at every stage of their activities. 'If, for example, a food-processing company based in Switzerland wished to import cocoa from Cote d'Ivoire, it would need to demonstrate to the Fair Trade Organisation that the plantations it bought from were not employing slaves, using banned pesticides, expanding into protected tropical forests, or failing to conform to whatever other standards the organization

set' (p.228). As he points out, there are already examples of such regulatory regimes in operation, some voluntary (as with the existing fair trade movement), some mandatory, such as health and safety regulations within the jurisdiction of individual nations. Is it impossible to think of internationally enforceable regulation of this sort? Monbiot goes so far as to float the possibility of expanding the remit of the International Criminal Court to deal with companies that distort or bypass the liberties of elected governments in forcing environmentally and socially disastrous developments on them (p.230) – a drastic course of action, which would bring its own complications; but the idea itself at least underlines the sense in which environmental disaster can be as destructive as military crimes.

We are looking here at new sorts of structures. Yet through institutions like the WTO, we already see possibilities. Whether a new regulatory body should be a partner to the WTO or should be a comprehensive body dealing with the large issues Monbiot outlines, a sort of combination of WTO and a 'World Environment Organization' matters less than the willingness to entertain and acknowledge the urgency of some intensified international regime to monitor and discipline economic activity in the ways we have been discussing. A manageable first step relating particularly to carbon emissions, supported by a wide coalition of concerned parties, is of course the 'Contraction and Convergence' proposals initially developed by the Global Commons Institute in London. This involves granting to each nation a notional 'entitlement to pollute' up to an agreed level that is credibly compatible with overall goals for managing and limiting atmospheric pollution. Those nations which exceed this level would have to pay pro rata charges on their excess emissions. The money thus raised would be put at the service of low emission nations – or could presumably be ploughed back into poor but high-emission nations – who would be, so to speak, in credit as to their entitlements, so as to assist them in ecologically sustainable development.

Such a model has the advantage that it seeks to intervene in what is presently a dangerously sterile situation. At the moment, some nations that are excessive but not wildly excessive polluters (mostly in Western Europe) have agreed levels of reduction under the Kyoto protocols, and are moving with reasonable expedition towards their targets; some developed nations that are excessive polluters have simply ignored Kyoto (the USA); some rapidly developing nations that are excessive polluters have also ignored Kyoto because they can see it only as a barrier to processes of economic growth already in hand (India and China). A charging regime universally agreed would address all these situations, allowing the first category to increase investment aid in sustainable ways, obliging the second to contribute realistically to meeting the global costs of its policies, and enabling the third to explore alternatives to heavy-polluting industrial development and to consider remedial policies.

This scheme deals with only one of the enormous complex of interlocking environmental challenges; but it offers a model which may be transferable of how



international regimes may be constructed and implemented. If Contraction and Convergence gained the explicit support of the UK government, this would be a significant step towards political plausibility for the programme, and it is well worth keeping the proposals in the public eye with this goal in mind. Election campaigns seldom give much space to environmental matters; but the perceived significance of these concerns is weightier now than it has ever been, and the UK's declared commitments on climate change provide an important lever for bringing them into fuller focus as we move towards the election. Just as in the realm of consumer pressure, it is up to us how high a profile a plan such as Contraction and Convergence has in the questions we raise for political candidates.

3.

But it is because the ecological agenda is always going to be vulnerable to the pressure of other more apparently 'immediate' issues that it cannot be left to electoral politics alone. Change in consumer attitudes, leading to the gradual emergence of slightly more eco-friendly policies on the part of major retailers, did not happen primarily as a result of conventional political activism, but in the wake of a persistent drip-feed of information and the identification of simple local means of exercising consumer power. As Jared Diamond says in an appendix to his book, the most effective action occurs when people have worked out the point in the commercial chain where they can most constructively bring pressure to bear: 'Consumers...need to go to the trouble of learning which links in a business chain are most sensitive to public influence, and also which links are in the strongest position to influence other links' (p.557). Consumer pressure (for abundant energy sources, for fast food, for efficient refrigeration, for rapid travel and so on) has always been a major part of the problem in the development of ecologically irresponsible economics; the question is now whether it can be part of the solution.

The indications certainly are that it can. But in a context where information overload makes us rapidly bored or disoriented or both, we still need a steady background of awareness and small-scale committed action, nourished by some kind of coherent vision. Ecologists have argued regularly that some religious attitudes are part of the problem; once again we have to ask whether religion is part of the solution. Certainly, what has sometimes been said about the responsibility of the Judaeo-Christian tradition for the exploitation of the earth is a caricature, in the light of the theological resources touched on earlier in this lecture; nor is it true that premodern or non-Western societies innately possess a superior wisdom that delivers them from ecological follies. But there is this amount of truth in the caricature: the alliance of early modern Western culture in its first flush of energy- eagerly problem-solving, expansionist, colonialist, functionally-minded - with a certain kind of Christianity - triumphalistic, rational and unsympathetic to the idea of a sacred world of symbolism, heavily focused on ideas rather than acts and relations - has undoubtedly been a factor in what is so

often called the 'disenchantment' of the natural environment. The slow rediscovery, in and out of the Christian fold, of that dimension of the environment that is in no way defined by its relationship with us but exists in its own relationship with God has posed a proper and grave challenge to what is left of the early modern rationalist/expansionist alliance.

But it is an open question whether either a simply secular philosophy or a diffuse 'sense of the sacred' in the environment will fully do the job. In these reflections, we have come back more than once to the question of how we define wealth. The historic religious traditions see it, in one way or another, as bound up in relation with an entire environment that is understood as given 'in trust'; we are answerable in respect of our relation with the material world, as we are answerable for what we make of ourselves. This is more than just an awareness of 'sacred' depth in things; it is recognising that we are bound to be involved in intervention in our environment, but that this intervention has to be measured by something more than the meeting of our needs. Thus religious faith steers us away from any fantasies we may have of not 'interfering' with the environment (the first planting of grain was an interference), but it tells us that our interaction with what lies around can never be simply functional and problem-solving. We have to discover a way of preserving an environment whose freedom from our anxious and exploiting need becomes a vital contribution to our own lives and our sense of our dignity. In honouring the freedom of what lies around us to be more than a storehouse for our gratification, we give the respect that is due to environment as creation – and thus give due honour to a creator whose purposes are not restricted to what we can grasp as good for us alone (remember the important reservation in the Qur'anic text I quoted about the unknown purposes of God in the animal creation).

Wealth is access to the 'capital' of the world as it is, access to the truth and reality that can be discovered when we are set free from our narrow and self-directed concerns – a discovery that both individuals and societies need to make. As such it is access to the depth of our own being, to the rich capacity of the world around to generate in us joy and amazement as well as practical sustenance, and to the final depth of reality which is the love of God as the source of all gifts. We shall not be able adequately to deal with our crisis of 'housekeeping' without what I earlier called the sense of being a guest in the oikos of our world, the sense that ought to keep together the logic of the household and the discipline of the household, ecology and economy. Religious commitment becomes in this context a crucial element in that renewal of our motivation for living realistically in our material setting – the motivation that is vital if we are to avoid the collapse of civil discourse, material sustainability, justice and stability which, if Diamond is right, regularly accompanies ecological degradation. The loss of a sustainable environment protected from unlimited exploitation is the loss of a sustainable humanity in every sense – not only the loss of a spiritual depth but ultimately the

loss of simple material stability as well. It is up to us as consumers and voters to do better justice to the 'house' we have been invited to keep, the world where we are guests.

## Appendix 4

### **“How Beautiful is God’s Creation” Archbishop Denis Hurley\*** *Pastoral Letter of the KwaZulu-Natal Church Leaders’ Group for World Environment Day, 5 June 2004*

We live in a Province of great natural beauty and wide cultural diversity. In celebrating World Environment Day on 5 June 2004 we give thanks to God for our natural environment and for the legislation we now have that protects the environment.

#### **Environmental degradation and its effects**

However, we see growing signs of environmental degradation:

- The loss of precious topsoil which hampers food production;
- Many people living in unhealthy conditions, with lack of access to clean drinking water and inadequate sanitation;
- Industrial air pollution causing respiratory and other life-threatening diseases, particularly evident in the South Durban area;
- Dwindling indigenous forests, particularly on our coast;
- Destruction of the habitats of other species of flora and fauna;
- Changing weather patterns, accompanied by both floods and droughts.

And it is those who are poor who suffer most from the effects of the destruction of the environment.

#### **Why is the environment being threatened?**

While some people are genuinely unaware of their own impact on the environment others are unconcerned.

We acknowledge that the political violence that has torn our Province apart in the past has left deep scars on our people and the land itself. The struggle for power, human greed and selfishness continue to destroy much of our natural heritage. We recognize too that economic policies perpetuate the unequal distribution and ownership of natural resources and contribute to environmental destruction.

#### **The response of the church**

Our biblical heritage and theological traditions, our belief in God as creator and Jesus as redeemer of all life awaken us to our environmental responsibility. In rediscovering that care for the earth is central to our gospel message we are moved to a deep respect for the integrity of creation and all forms of life and a firm commitment to ensure the full human development of all people according to their inherent human dignity. As human beings it is important that we view

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\* Reported to be his last words before he died of cardiac arrest on 13 February 2004.



ourselves as integral to the community of life. Our very survival depends on maintaining a healthy environment and protecting the biodiversity that maintains our ecosystem.

### **The need for environmental justice**

During the apartheid years our prophetic voice was raised in support of the struggle for freedom. Now our struggle is also to liberate all of creation: to nurture and foster life and to resist the many forces that threaten it. In responding to the cry of those who are poor we must not be deaf to the cry of the earth.

With the high rate of HIV and AIDS in our Province now more than ever we need to promote a healthy environment, to enable the production of nutritious food to ensure food security for all. We have grave fears about the introduction of genetically engineered crops in our Province in terms of their safety for human consumption as well as their effects on the rest of creation, including the ability to grow healthy food crops.

Our mission of healing and reconciliation must include cleaning our polluted rivers, purifying the polluted air, and challenging the spirit of greed that seeks to dominate and threatens to destroy all that God has made. We need to ensure that the gifts of God are distributed justly. We recognize land as one of these gifts that has been entrusted to our care and responsible use.

### **Steps the church can take**

As we observe World Environment Day there is much we can do to celebrate our environment and prevent its destruction. This includes:

- encouraging an appreciation and enjoyment of creation
- including environmental concerns in the celebration of our liturgy
- incorporating biblical teaching on the environment in our church education programmes
- conserving precious resources like water and promoting the reuse and recycling of resources generally
- encouraging the planting of indigenous trees and other indigenous vegetation
- ensuring responsible use of land, particularly our church land
- encouraging our congregations to read about and discuss local environmental issues
- collaborating with local environmental organisations that share this quest.

We are committed to taking our Christian responsibility towards the environment seriously and encourage you to do the same.

**Endorsed by: Bishop Mansuet Biyase** *Roman Catholic Diocese of Eshowe* • **Bishop Lymon Dlangalala** • *Natal West District - Methodist Church of Southern Africa* •

**Bishop Mlungisi Pius Dlungwane** • *Roman Catholic Diocese of Mariannhill* • **Dean Dino Gabriel**, *Anglican Diocese of Zululand* • **Ms Thudiso Gcabashe**, *Honorary Life Vice-President - South African Council of Churches* • **Pastor Colin La Foy**, *Secretary General, Southern Africa - Assemblies of God* • **Major Timothy Mabaso**, *Divisional Commander, Mid KwaZulu-Natal - Salvation Army* • **Bishop Purity Malinga**, *Natal Coastal District - Methodist Church of Southern Africa* • **Bishop Funginkosi Mbhele**, *Bishop Suffragan - Anglican Diocese of Natal* • **Pastor Martin McCrory**, *Team Leader - OneCup Transformation* • **Ds Lukas Meyer**, *Moderator - Synod of NG Kerk van Natal* • **Rev Simphiwe Mkhize**, *Chairperson, KwaZulu-Natal Regional Council - United Congregational Church of Southern Africa* • **Cardinal Wilfrid Napier OFM**, *Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Durban, President - Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference* • **Rev Robin Palmer**, *Moderator, Thekwini Presbytery - Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa* • **Bishop Rubin Phillip**, *Anglican Diocese of Natal* • **Rev Victor Pillay**, *Moderator (Acting) - Reformed Church in Africa*, • **Bishop Michael Paschal Rowland OFM**, *Roman Catholic Diocese of Dundee* • **Pastor Saul**, *Chairperson, KwaZulu-Natal - Assemblies of God* • **Bishop Louis Sibiya**, *South Eastern Diocese - Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, Presiding Bishop - Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa* • **Bishop Elijah Thwala**, *Bishop Suffragan - Anglican Diocese of Natal*.

## Appendix 5

### **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 the Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa (NECCSA). Contact details that may be used in this regard 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 are at root environmental problems. Forced removals under apartheid led to overpopulation and thus to overgrazing, soil erosion and exhaustion and depletion of water supplies. Many rural people resort to poaching and forms of deforestation as a survival strategy. 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;
  - ❑ A 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 firewood in neighbourhoods;
- ❑ 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 practises 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 overcrowded 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 of our land and all creatures who live from it for life. 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 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 trans-national 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 create 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 seems to be given a priority. In the interest of economic growth, governments too tend to attach a higher priority to development initiatives than to environmental protection. Subsequently, 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 governs 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 revisit 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 healing 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 of 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.

### **Additional Prayer**

#### **A Prayer for the Peace of the World**

Eternal God,  
in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn  
but the sword of righteousness,  
and no strength known  
but the strength of love:  
So guide and inspire the labours of those  
who seek to establish righteousness  
and peace among the nations,  
that all peoples may find their security,  
not in force of arms,  
but in the perfect love that casts out fear,

and in the fellowship revealed to us in your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Appendix 6

### **The Earth Belongs to God: Some African Church Perspectives on the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) 2002 and beyond<sup>1</sup>**

"The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?

Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.

They will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation." (Ps. 24: 1-5)

*In the household of God (oikos) the management of the house (economy) has to be based on the logic of the house (ecology).*

#### **1. In Africa today, it does not appear as if the earth belongs to God. Instead, it belongs to:**

- Governors who control the earth's resources often for their own benefit;
- Business and industry, Trans-National Corporations (TNC's), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), the forces of globalization<sup>2</sup> that control the global economy in their own interest;
- Developers whose development<sup>3</sup> projects do not benefit local communities;
- The affluent 20% of the world's population who own 80% of the world's resources;
- Industrialists whose factories pollute the environment at the expense of the poor;
- Men;<sup>4</sup>
- Foreign investors who are more interested in profits on their investments than in poverty eradication and in the impact of debt on poor countries;<sup>5</sup>
- The affluent and not the meek who will inherit the earth (Mt. 5:3-5).

#### **2. God has entrusted the land and all its natural resources to all people to care for, keep and use it within communities. This requires a vision of sustainable<sup>6</sup> communities<sup>7</sup> in which there will be:**

- A just sharing of the earth's resources;

- A working together in community;
- Participation of all in decision-making processes;
- The right to contribute to and sustain the common good;
- Cherishing of indigenous knowledge systems that are inclusive, participatory and consultative;
- A recognition and utilization of people's indigenous knowledge and skills;
- Putting in place structures and mechanisms that will ensure the provision of community's daily needs;
- Responsible leadership and self-reliant citizenry;
- Public institutions that address people's legitimate needs;
- Engendering a harmonious co-existence between all stakeholders;
- Respect for all forms of life.

**3. The land given to us by God does not only belong to the present community.**

- It also belongs to our ancestors on whose contributions we build and whose memories we keep.
- It also belongs to the coming generations for whom we hold the land in trust and whose needs we should not compromise.

**4. The land does not belong to us as people. Instead, we belong to the land.<sup>8</sup>**

- We came from the earth and to the earth we will return.
- We are not living on the earth; we are part of the earth's biosphere.
- We form part of the land and we live from the earth for the flourishing of the earth.
- The well-being of the earth transcends all of us because it is something bigger than our own interests.

**5. The land does not belong to itself. Ultimately, it belongs to its Creator, the One who sustains the Earth, and who will finally restore it. In the light of these considerations we are challenged to respond in the following ways:**

- We CONFESS that we as human beings have not always allowed the earth and its creatures to flourish. We have all too often abused and brought death to the land. We confess that we, especially as churches, have often been indifferent to environmental degradation and that, as a result, we have participated in the destruction of the environment. In many ways, we are doing to the land what AIDS is doing to our bodies. Now the land itself is infected with AIDS.
- We ACKNOWLEDGE our responsibility, especially as churches, to keep the land and to care for it as the land cares for us.



- We COMMIT ourselves, especially as churches, to promote relationships that enhance and do not undermine sustainable communities. Therefore, we commit ourselves:
  - To promote the harvesting of water, especially in small community projects in arid or semi-arid areas;
  - To help ensure food security for all, especially through indigenous means of food production, and to avoid dependence on external means of agricultural production;
  - To promote practices that enhance the fertility of the soil;
  - To resist all forms of deforestation and to promote tree-planting;
  - To speak out against industrial pollution caused elsewhere in the light of its impact on geographical areas such as the African continent and the Island States that are particularly vulnerable to climate change;
  - To seek appropriate forms of waste management and to resist the disposal of toxic and other forms of waste in impoverished countries;
  - To promote the use of new and renewable sources of energy;
  - To promote technologies that add to natural resources and that do not only extract from nature. Where technologies do extract from nature, ways of replenishing such resources must be sought.
  - To promote participatory and inclusive forms of governance;
  - To promote gender justice in the light of the crucial role of women in ensuring sustainability;
  - To attend to the re-education and re-orientation of local communities.
- We CALL upon leaders of Christian churches, of other faith communities and various levels of government, in African countries and elsewhere in the world:
  - To promote the well-being of the land and all its creatures
  - To resist the greed and self-interest of affluent and powerful minorities.
- We PRAY for the healing of the land.

God, help us not to destroy the land and to stop fighting over resources that ultimately belong to you. God graciously hear us. AMEN.

### Notes for clarification

<sup>1</sup> Statement adopted at the African Regional Consultation on Environment and Sustainability, held at Machakos, Kenya, 6-10 May 2002.

<sup>2</sup> The notion of 'globalization' needs thorough critique. In practice, it currently refers to the exclusive process of increasing penetration of capital investments, industrial goods and services from affluent nations to the destitute ones. There is neither mutuality nor reciprocity in this process.

<sup>3</sup> Sustainable development is often defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. However, the concept of

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"development" itself is highly problematic. Several decades of development initiatives have failed to bridge the gap between the affluent in centres of economic power and the impoverished on the economic periphery. In many cases development projects only succeeded in creating dependency and increasing poverty. Although there have been many attempts to define alternative models of development, the term itself remains highly contested. The legacy of the failure of "development" cannot simply be resolved by adding the adjective "sustainable". Moreover, sustainable development has become a euphemism used by the forces of globalization to disguise expansionist economic growth in the name of environmental concerns.

- <sup>4</sup> Almost all land in Africa, except in matrilineal societies, is owned and controlled by men.
- <sup>5</sup> The notion of 'Aid' should be carefully critiqued. At present the word 'Aid' is commonly used to refer to many forms of relationship such as donations, grants, loans, inducements gifts, supportive initiatives and moral encouragement. The relationship between the affluent nations and the destitute ones is characterized by the uncomfortable distinction, respectively, between the Creditors and the Debtors. In this relationship, the affluent nations have acquired the public profile of Benefactors, dispensing 'Aid' to the destitute nations. In reality, the transfer of funds, goods and services and thus dispensed as 'Aid', is in fact an investment, payable with interest under specified terms and conditions. The conditions imposed on the destitute nations compromise their sovereignty and integrity. There are no regulatory mechanisms to discipline the creditor nations in their exploitation of their debtors.
- <sup>6</sup> The notion of sustainability implies an emphasis on the provision of basic sustenance that can be sustained over time. In the African context, the provision of such sustenance is often challenged by the more immediate need for livelihood and survival.
- <sup>7</sup> In the emphasis on local community life, the dangers of traditionalism, authoritarianism, conformity, and the oppression of women and children that characterized many traditional societies have to be taken into account.
- <sup>8</sup> This formulation seeks to counter the pervasive ideology of anthropocentrism, i.e. the view that human beings form the centre of the created order and that everything in nature is there to serve human needs only.