

## Action Update- November 2

# The Earth Is The Lord's: Reflections on the UN Climate Change Conference



***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. ~Psalm 24:1-2***

*From Rev. Vy Nguyen, Executive Director*  
All of Creation is hurting. Our climate is inarguably shifting. And people of faith are among those calling for urgent action.

This week, I am among a group of global leaders gathered for the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference. The 2020 gathering was cancelled due to COVID-19, and the two years since the last conference have seen one devastating disaster after another: from wildfires and severe drought

to tornadoes, hurricanes, and typhoons, all made more complicated by the pandemic.

Leaders—political leaders as well as faith leaders—are at a critical point of engagement to protect the earth and build stronger communities. The pandemic has turned many of us inward in our spiritual journeys. We are searching for the meaning of life and how we live together as a global community. Leading voices of faith are critical in this moment to remind us of the Creation that we are called to love and protect. The water we drink, the air we breathe, the church camps we grew up in—these are all sacred and have profound meaning to us.

Faith leaders are among those addressing the gathering, sharing testimonies and calling for urgent action on behalf of the communities they represent. Rev. James Bhagwan, General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, shared a personal story about a cross that he wears around his neck. "Each of these shells were collected by my nieces and nephews, tied together with string, in the shape of a cross... This is the simple way in which the people of Kiribati make their jewelry: no diamonds, no gold, no silver. Just shells. And I wear this because they may not be able to do this for much longer. Because Kiribati is a poster child of sea level rise. This is the reality of my people, of the Pacific."

Rev. Bhagwan went on to say, “In places like Fiji, people are already being forced to relocate because of sea level rise. Our Pacific people have a deep spiritual relationship with the land and the sea. The practice of living is *Shalom* with both the land and sea. For years, we have been told that is not the way to live—that it is backward, it is ignorant.” But now, Bhagwan points out—this very way of living in “Shalom” with land and sea is what the world needs; it is this practice that might heal the earth.

The mission of Week of Compassion is to alleviate suffering, and it is becoming more and more apparent that a growing climate crisis causes significant suffering for God’s children around the world. That is why, along with our ecumenical and interfaith partners around the world, we are committed to supporting climate resilience programs. Where some of the world’s most vulnerable communities already struggle to survive under the burdens of a shifting environment, our combined efforts help provide hope and stability.

From Bosnia and Herzegovina to Puerto Rico, we help families to thrive through renewable technologies. From Honduras to Indonesia to Liberia and Sierra Leone, we support food security through sustainable agriculture. In these places, and in so many others, we work with partners to help empower farmers, families, and entire communities to thrive, despite mounting challenges to their livelihood and survival. Support for these programs goes a long way towards changing lives and creating a better future for all. But such interventions are not enough. The urgency of this moment, and the call for far-reaching systemic change, cannot be denied.

“The earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in it,” the Psalmist proclaims. As global leaders and voices of faith continue to remind us, that is good news. In this moment, it is also a call to prayer, to care, and to action. We hold in prayer all those world leaders gathered in Glasgow for this timely and critical conversation on climate action, and we pray for all people of faith, around the world, who will work together in the season ahead to ensure the continued thriving of the earth.

With Hope and Gratitude,  
Vy

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*Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.*

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