

SAFCEI POLICY CONFERENCE

5-7 November 2019

A New Vision for Sacred Life and Living Earth¹

SAFCEI, the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute, is hosting a two-day Policy Conference from 5 – 7 November to envision, map and plan the leadership role that faith communities must play in seeking an **environmentally sustainable future** across the Southern African region, the continent and beyond.

The conference will bring together faith and thought leaders and activists from many southern African faith communities. We will explore current and future environmental challenges and hear and share stories of progress in pioneering the earth-keeper movement. Underpinned by spiritual and moral values and informed by our experiences, articulated needs and best practice, we will aim to jointly formulate policy positions on key issues, in order to encourage a movement of "blessed unrest"² in an African context.

It is a decade since SAFCEI's first Policy Conference in 2009. In the intervening years, the crisis has worsened. Faith communities, first slow to respond, have increasingly participated in global and regional climate and biodiversity policy meetings. Faith-based thought leaders contributed to the UN Rights of Mother Earth Declaration³. Ground-breaking and attitude-shifting statements by global faith leaders like Pope Francis' *Laudato si*⁴ and the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change⁵ have gained traction around the world.

Climate disruption, environmental degradation and ecosystem collapse are now a 21st century reality that threaten not only the flourishing of life, but the survival of all living creatures. We have lost touch with our roots in the natural world and many community relationships are in tatters. We have been captivated by consumerism and technology and afflicted by chronic socio-economic injustice and a deepening poverty gap.

Six themes will be explored at the conference: Planetary Boundaries and Biodiversity, Energy and Climate Justice, Food and Climate Justice, Consumerism and Waste, Land and Water Justice, and Animal Justice.

At the local level, faith-based organisations have mobilised a multitude of contextual grassroots eco-justice actions. People of faith have also partnered with civil society advocacy groups, to challenge and transform unjust structures, developments and practices. But this is not enough. At a time when trust in political and business leadership is at an all-time low and our institutions are only paying lip-service to the 'green economy', we need a new moral compass and a movement of hope. All faith communities share a mandate to care for our common home which sustains and nourishes the whole community of life. Now is the time for people of faith to lead a massive groundswell of transformation for the love of the Earth and future generations.

¹ Korten, D. (2014) *Change the story, change the future*. A report to the Club of Rome. Berrett-Koehler, Oakland. In von Weizsacker E and Wijkman, A (2018) *Come On! Capitalism, Short-termism, Population and the Destruction of the Planet – A report from the Club of Rome*. Springer, New York.

² <https://www.blessedunrest.com/>

³ <http://therightsofnature.org/universal-declaration/>

⁴ https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf

⁵ <http://islamicclimatedeclaration.org/islamic-declaration-on-global-climate-change/>