

Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development



The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development's Faith Plan for 2022-24



Introduction

The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development (ICSD) reveals the connection between religion and ecology and mobilizes people to act. ICSD is a registered NGO, based in Jerusalem.

There exists a significant need to engage religious communities on climate change. A widespread view among religious adherents is that religion is separate from ecology and climate change. Most faith-based study, teaching and preaching occur without relation to the greatest crisis facing humanity today—the climate crisis. Scientific research has powerfully revealed the widespread degradation of nature, yet scientists' ability to motivate society for ecological change is limited. Many people worldwide are influenced to action more by religious belief than by science.

Common environmental challenges and the responsibility for stewardship among people across faiths can help bring people together. Faith communities working together have leverage to transform people's behavior and influence their societies and governments. Religious institutions play a unique role in society in encouraging faith adherents to think long term and act morally. Indeed, climate change is fundamentally an issue of intergenerational justice.

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ICSD's Faith Plan involves the following eight channels of action:

1. **Promote [Eco Bible: An Ecological Commentary on the Pentateuch](#) to clergy, seminaries, and faith communities.** Drawing on 3,500 years of religious ethics, Eco Bible shows how the Bible and its great scholars embrace care for God's creation as a fundamental and living message. Eco Bible inspires spiritual commitment and action to protect God's creation. Eco Bible has been a #1 bestseller on multiple Amazon Kindle categories. ICSD will continue to promote the book, especially to Christian clergy.



2. **Further engage Christian clergy on the Bible and ecology.** In collaboration with the Swedish Theological Institute, ICSD will offer in-person seminars for hundreds of Christian clergy and seminarians visiting Jerusalem. These seminars and walking tours, over the course of four-hours, provide professional-development training on teaching on the Bible and ecological awareness.

ICSD also collaborates with the Rev. Dr. Leah Schade in producing a monthly resource, [EcoPreacher 1-2-3](#), and distributes it to clergy. The resource helps clergy preach and teach on Christian ecology with greater frequency. EcoPreacher provides sermon preparation for preaching about caring for God's Creation that is short, accessible, and based on a solid biblical foundation.

EcoPreacher 1-2-3 offers a brief "eco-exegesis" for interpreting a Hebrew text from the Revised Common Lectionary for that Sunday. This is followed by one "eco idea" for the basis of the sermon, two "eco questions" to go deeper, and three "eco actions" to choose from to help a congregation put their faith into action. With this resource, preachers can use the sermon ideas in their own context and make it relevant for their congregation. Between 2022 and 2024, ICSD aims to reach 4,000 clergy with this resource, through partnerships with a range of Christian institutions.

3. **Launch the [Interfaith Greening of Religious Institutions in Jerusalem Project](#), in collaboration with World Resources Institute.** The project will engage Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religious institutions in a "greening" process of their physical building and grounds, congregational policies and practices, and educational content communicated to their congregants. The project has the potential to showcase a new path for faith-based engagement in sustainable development and climate action in Jerusalem and beyond.

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This innovative model for “greening” assets belonging to faith-based organizations is based on engaging interfaith actors through a threefold process of (1) using Science-based Targets for Faith (SBTF) to green assets, particularly buildings and land, in order to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and promote environmental sustainability; (2) educating congregations on the intersection of faith and ecology and ways to be good stewards of the environment; and (3) promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding focused on issues of common concern, specifically the environment.

4. **Complete the Mozambique project of our Faith Inspired Renewable Energy Project in Africa** This project involves an Anglican diocese of Niassa province, Mozambique, together with the renewable energy company Gigawatt Global, to deploy a 15 megawatt commercial solar field on church lands. In 2022-2024, ICSD seeks to fund and conduct a second feasibility study for the project. Following that study, the project requires approval from the government of Mozambique in order to proceed. We would also expand collaboration with Catholic institutions to collaborate on solar fields on their lands.



Photo credit: Gigawatt Global's Rwanda solar field.

5. **Re-launch the Growing Together Women’s Interfaith Ecology Project**, which will empower women educators from East and West Jerusalem schools to create vertical classroom and school gardens. Joint workshops will build a platform for promoting sustainable nutrition and renewable energy options within and beyond their classrooms. The project will also improve collaboration and partnerships among Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women, both Israeli and Palestinian.

In this project, 25 women educators in East and West Jerusalem will meet jointly to build vertical gardens and implement a faith-based ecological curriculum in their schools. We will hold trainings of

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female teachers from Palestinian and Israeli schools, from both sides of the Green Line, where they will interact and build a shared mission of creating vertical gardens in their classrooms and schools.

The training will provide specialized vertical-gardening materials. Faith-based ecological curriculum will also be developed as part of the program. This channel of action will arrange collaborations and visits of the teachers and their students to each other's gardens in West Jerusalem, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank.

6. **Expand ICSD's work in Thought Leadership and social media engagement.** We intend to expand engagement on our religion and ecology blog, YouTube channel, and Facebook and Twitter posts. ICSD will also provide webinars on religion and ecology to ten houses of worship each year. Doing so would lead to greater impact in raising awareness and promoting behavioral and policy change.

ICSD's blog is a leading blog on religion and ecology. Between 2022 and 2024, we seek for 2 million users to view content on the blog. ICSD will continue to post three blog posts per week, for 156 blog posts per year. Many posts will appear on the first page of Google search results for specific keywords. The blog posts will be on a range of environmental topics, and will include faith-based content in each post.

7. **Co-coordinate the Los Angeles Faith & Ecology Network, in collaboration with California Interfaith Power and Light.**

The Network mobilizes a grassroots spiritual voice calling for stewardship of Creation. The Los Angeles Faith & Ecology Network engages faith-based leadership in mobilizing a grassroots action for stewardship of Creation. It is one of the only such networks of clergy and green team leaders in North America. A strong, active network of faith-based ecological justice advocates is a vital means of augmenting the faith voice – and hastening the transition to cleaner, healthier and more sustainable communities.

The Network has met monthly since its launch in August, 2020. In 2022, the Network will continue advocacy efforts calling on the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles to end oil drilling on the Murphy Well that it leases for oil extraction. The Network will also conduct interfaith webinars featuring clergy from Los Angeles and elsewhere.



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8. **Organize annual Interfaith Ecology Conferences in Jerusalem.** This will be done in collaboration with the World Resources Institute, the University of Notre Dame's Tantur Jerusalem campus, the Swedish Theological Institute, and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM). Religious leaders would urge faith communities to mitigate climate change and promote renewable energy use. Presentations by scientists will describe the current impacts and imminent dangers of climate change to the region.

The conferences will establish a common ground of shared ecological needs and dependencies, shared religious values, language, and understanding, and a safe space for sidestepping standard political dialogue towards visioning, networking, and cooperating towards a more sustainable future.

Each conference would have about 125 participants. Among them will be clergy, seminary faculty, and seminarians, as well as key influencers from the environmental, business, policy, and religious spheres.

For more information about our work, visit our website: www.interfaithsustain.com

