



Key Area 3 Wisdom

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Theological foundations for environmental action and care have been around, in every major faith, for a long time. Environmental issues are now high on the public agenda in many countries. Yet many faiths must ask themselves why environmentalism is still a relatively marginal concern in their thought and practice. In addition, all faiths have a tradition of care for those who are going through suffering or crisis, and they have tried and tested ways of teaching their future leaders to pass on the wisdom of the ages, adapted to the requirements of the present day.

Wisdom is multi-generational, something to be shared among all ages. The passing on of wisdom and knowledge by the faiths to the next generation is key to the success of any environmental movement.

This guideline provides you with simple questions to consider when grounding your practical action in the wisdoms of your faith.

Steps and questions to consider as you develop your Faith Plan

<i>Name of faith community/group/organisation</i>	
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Training

Questions	Space for notes and comments
1. How do you train your religious teachers and future religious leaders on environmental issues?	
2. If so, have you based your training programmes on the theology, beliefs and values your faith holds?	

<p>3. If not, how could the training curriculum for faith leaders address our relationship with nature? Can they be equipped to support efforts to protect nature?</p>	
<p>4. Have you considered making your training accessible to all members of your community as and when appropriate?</p>	
<p>5. Have you considered how training courses may be funded when this is required?</p>	

Crisis and adaptation

<p>1. What is the role of crisis in your theology and how have you dealt with crises in the past? How does your faith respond to our ecological crisis today?</p>	
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<p>2. What strategies or tools from your experience could you apply to responding to climate change and threats to biodiversity?</p>	
<p>3. Have you created a plan for your faith to care for those affected by climate change or environmental catastrophe, so that in case of flood, or famine or typhoon, you are as prepared?</p>	
<p>4. How will you care for marginalised groups in society when a crisis occurs? Have you considered the impact of religion, race, gender, age etc?</p>	
<p>5. Have you assessed the trajectory of a potential crisis in the long term and what kind of adaptation may be needed in the future?</p>	

<p>6. Have you consulted the science regarding environmental adaptation and climate solutions to ensure your plans are best suited to your local environment or context?</p>	
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<p>Next steps: Recognising smaller, personal crises?</p>	
<p>1. Environmental work can often lead to high levels of burnout and anxiety for those who partake in it. Have you considered a support plan to help those doing this work when they may be struggling?</p>	
<p>2. Are you able to recognise your own eco-anxieties and how to look after yourself, physically, mentally and spiritually? What kind of practices may help you to be self-sustainable?</p>	

Sacred places

<p>1. What role have your sacred places played in helping to preserve habitats for wildlife? Eg, churchyards are often vital eco-systems in urban areas; sacred mountains are sanctuaries for endangered animals; holy water sources – wells, streams and lakes – can be a refuge for creatures whose habitats have been destroyed or polluted.</p>	
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<p>2. Why are these spaces sacred and what does your theology say about the sacred nature of the place?</p>	
<p>3. Are you the main stakeholder within the sacred space? Who are the other stakeholders and what is their interest in the space?</p>	
<p>4. Have the sacred spaces been mapped and assessed for monitoring?</p>	
<p>5. Is there potential to involve the public or your wider community in the protection and maintenance of the space?</p>	

Theology of nature, water and natural resources

<p>1. Many faiths have developed statements about their relationship with nature. Has your faith or your faith tradition created and published theological statements about the human relationship with water, with forests, with land or with pollution?</p>	
<p>2. Are you familiar with the statements from your faith tradition? Can you find these statements? Publicise them? Quote from them? Make them easily available in your libraries and on your website?</p>	
<p>3. If your own tradition has not created these, can it do so? Can your community create a statement in relation to your context?</p>	
<p>4. Taking your faith values and understandings of natural resources, can you now incorporate these into how you might mobilise and manage land, nature and water resources?</p>	

Prayer and meditation

<p>1. Many people within many religions have occasions to pray or meditate for something to change, and</p>	
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<p>occasions to be grateful for what they have. Can gratitude for, or mindfulness of, the abundant gifts of nature, and, for example, all the work involved in creating your food, play a greater part in your practice?</p>	
<p>2. Can you introduce into your regular worship and practice prayers for a better, more harmonious world; for human beings to find solutions to those problems they can change, and to accept those problems they cannot?</p>	
<p>3. Have you considered where to pray or meditate? Could times of dedicated prayer and meditation be held outside in nature or areas related to what you are praying for?</p>	

For more information...

To learn more about possible action you can take, watch the Faith Plans webinar on [Wisdom](#), engage with personal stories and real-world examples, and access links to key resources.

Visit the [Faith Plans resource library](#) to find examples of stories, poems and prayers written by the faiths on the environment.

You may also wish to explore in more detail, the resources provided by our partners.

- [Prayers on the Environment](#), Religions for Peace
- [The Assisi Poems](#), written by Jay Ramsay for ARC
- [Praying for Earth](#), a guide by the Church of England Diocese of Newcastle
- GreenFaith: [Sacred Season for Climate Justice](#) - Resources for the religious holidays of Holi (Hindu festival of colours), Vaisakhi (Sikh New Year), Ramadan (Muslim month of fasting and prayer), Passover (Jewish celebration of the exodus of the Israelites), Holy Week and Easter (the most important Christian festival commemorating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead)

Case studies

Exploring spiritual and moral aspects of the climate crisis

Center for Earth Ethics

The US-based Center for Earth Ethics (CEE) is a non-profit Christian organisation working towards a world where value is measured by the sustained well-being of people and planet. Its work is carried out through four main programmes, centred on an understanding that systematic changes are needed in both policy and culture. The programmes are:

- Eco-Ministry
- Environmental Justice and Civic Engagement
- Original Caretakers
- Sustainability and Global Affairs

In April 2021, CEE, along with the secular Climate Reality Project, hosted an online programme of Climate Reality Leadership Corps Training. The training offered expert guidance on three topics: stopping fossil fuel expansion, accelerating climate solutions, and driving federal climate action in the US. Such training provides people of faith with the opportunity to align knowledge with the beliefs and values of their faith, and pass that knowledge onto others in their communities.

[Click here](#) to read the full story.

By Dekila Chungyalpa, Director of Loka Initiative, an education and outreach programme at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for faith leaders and religious institutions.

A Personal Journey

Dekila explains how an understanding of ancient Buddhist wisdom enabled her to tackle her own personal crisis, which eventually led to the establishment of the Center for Healthy Minds. She has devoted her life to working on the environment, including for His Holiness the 17th Karmapa, who asked her to create environmental guidelines for Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries.

'About seven or eight years ago I reached a point where I was suffering from what we now call 'eco-anxiety'. I had reached the bottom of the pit, and I just didn't feel very hopeful. I was suffering so much just from seeing what was happening with climate change.

'His Holiness the Karmapa said to me at this point that he wanted me to practice Tonglen, which is the meditation of giving and receiving. He said: "I think this is the meditation that would really benefit environmentalists who are suffering like you." At this time, I took it as personal teaching and went home and practiced Tonglen, but over the years it has become clear to me that we, the environmental and the climate community, all of us are suffering from this. We are all, to some extent, despairing and grieving and fatigued.

[Click here](#) to read the full story.