

African Churches Responding to Endangered Fullness of Life: The Case of the All African Conference of Churches and the Africa Faith Actors Network for Climate Justice

Fidon R. Mwombeki

DOI 10.25661/atj.v41i1.1230

Abstract

The climate change crisis has been a global concern in recent years, with discussions focusing on who is most affected, the need for compensation to the most affected, and how best to mitigate it. The West has been widely accused of being the primary contributor to this crisis over the years. However, Africa and other continents, often seen as the most impacted but contributing little, have also played a role in causing the harm, and thus must take steps to stop the climate crisis. This crisis threatens not only ecosystems but also fundamental human rights and the quality of life. The church in Africa, particularly within the ecumenical community, has been at the forefront of discussions on climate justice. The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), one of the faith actors on the forefront of seeking mitigation of the crisis under the African Faith Actors Network for Climate Justice (AFAN-CJ), has actively advocated for both theological and practical responses to this urgent issue. This paper examines the efforts made by AFAN-CJ towards climate justice, reflecting on God's

command and human responsibility towards the environment, particularly through the lens of dominion and stewardship over the earth, the love of one's neighbor, and the care for future generations. It will further highlight the challenges that have hindered change, despite the efforts put in place, such as poverty, unsustainable population growth, ignorance, and reckless theological positions.

Key Words

Climate, stewardship, justice, ecology, All Africa Conference of Churches, fullness of life

Introduction

The conversation about the climate change crisis, which has led to the demand for climate justice, is ubiquitous. Whether in social, political, civil, religious, or any other spheres, the reality of climate change and its devastating impact on livelihoods and quality of life is undeniable. Geographically, there are differences between continents and countries, with the effects varying in severity. It is generally agreed that Africa bears the harshest brunt of this change.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is one of the global organisations with a comprehensive focus on addressing climate issues from a justice perspective.

“Climate justice means putting equity and human rights at the core of decision-making and action on climate change ... The concept has been widely used to

refer to the unequal historical responsibility that countries and communities bear in relation to the climate crisis. It suggests that the countries, industries, businesses, and people that have become wealthy from emitting large amounts of greenhouse gases have a responsibility to help those affected by climate change, particularly the most vulnerable countries, and communities, who often are the ones that have contributed the least to the crisis.”¹

It goes on to show that injustice takes different forms: structural inequalities (between and within countries based on race, gender, economic situation, age, etc.), socio-economic inequalities, and intergenerational inequalities (the future generations will suffer more). The UNDP treats climate change as a human rights issue because it denies or limits people's agency to live with dignity. It causes loss of livelihoods, even lives, putting many at risk of food and water shortages, which in turn force people into displacement and conflicts. Moreover, the UNDP report highlights that the climate crisis also undermines the right to good health. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events, along with polluted air and water, contributes to severe health impacts, including heat stress, disease outbreaks, malnutrition, and psychological trauma from having experienced disasters.

The UNDP's statement highlights that the climate crisis threatens the fullness of life. It is a human rights issue

¹ 'Climate Change Is a Matter of Justice – Here's Why | UNDP Climate Promise', 26 June 2023, <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/climate-change-matter-justice-heres-why>.

because the people who contribute relatively little to climate degradation bear disproportionately higher consequences. And Africa is one of those vulnerable continents.

There are various levels of engagement in the fight for climate justice. The fight is at a high level politically, as evidenced by the series of the Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings this year, which will number 29 in Azerbaijan. At this level, various issues are discussed, ranging from the provision of scientific evidence to support the reality of the crisis to the complex calculations of climate change and to different demands and proposals for achieving justice. The contributions from the African continent focus on the unjust ways Africa is disproportionately affected by the consequences of climate change, despite contributing the least to its cause. In these global negotiations, Africa's voice is not as strong due to what the UNDP terms a lack of transparency and inclusion in climate negotiations and plans, as well as a lack of relevant education, resources, and connections to enable participation in policy discussions.²

At the international level, issues such as the scientific proof of Ozone layer depletion, calculations of carbon footprints per country, the concepts of loss and damage, climate compensation funds, and carbon market trading processes are highly debated. African negotiators are few and poorly funded, with limited resources to prepare. Even when they do, their voices often come from a victim standpoint. These climate negotiations and funding

² 'Climate Change Is a Matter of Justice – Here's Why | UNDP Climate Promise', 26 June 2023, <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/climate-change-matter-justice-heres-why>.

proposals, although highly touted, such as the one at COP27, have no enforcement mechanisms. The rich countries, which had promised to contribute up to USD 100 billion annually to the climate fund, have not done so, and no one can enforce the pledges.

Focus on Africa Itself

In this article, as we examine how ecotheology can contribute to addressing the endangered fullness of life, I believe it is worthwhile to focus on Africa itself. Even though I do believe that Africa suffers from the global climate destruction disproportionately, Africa itself is not innocent. Africa also contributes to the destruction and plays a role in it.

In a monumental publication coordinated by the World Council of Churches, *the International Handbook on Creation Care & Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, several articles by African authors address the subject.³ They are a valuable resource as we consider eco-theology in Africa.

The starting point is the realisation of the impact of climate change as it is manifested in the daily lives of Africans. Indeed, as mentioned above, the impact of global activities has a profoundly negative effect on Africa. Unfortunately, human activities in Africa contribute significantly to the crisis, from local to international levels.

3 Daniel Carlos Beres et al., eds., *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, Regnum Handbooks (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022).

Climate change has affected their way of life. In the food sector, the droughts experienced in various parts of Africa have made agriculture challenging, leading to food shortages. Additionally, many homesteads in different parts of Africa still rely on non-renewable energy sources in their homes. This has not only increased pollution but also elevated the rate of deforestation. Not to mention the water shortages in many areas of Africa, which significantly impact the daily lives of Africans. There has been a high degree of migration within countries and communities due to climate disasters. African countries experience conflicts between communities, particularly between farmers and herders in many countries, as each community struggles to make ends meet by accessing a dwindling supply of resources, such as arable land and water. The impact of such constraints on society's quality of life, including access to education for children, as well as food security and sanitation, is a threat. The church in Africa cannot help but get engaged in endeavours to turn the tide, limit the damage, and ensure quality of life, or fullness of life. This paper, in analysing ecotheology vis-à-vis the endangered fullness of life, begins by providing theological and existential reasons for caring for creation. Then I will showcase some of the work that churches in Africa are doing on ecological matters, from the perspective of the AACC. Lastly, I would like to mention the obstacles faced in the fight for ecological justice.

It is the Question of Obedience – The Duty of Stewardship

The fundamental theological foundation for eco-theology is that it is a question of obedience to God's

mandate or order. We need to care for creation because it has been entrusted to us by God. The central theological concept is that of stewardship, i.e., taking care of something that is not ours but has been entrusted to us for later giving account to the owner.

Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, writing on Christian theology of stewardship as it relates to creation, asserts that the earth has been exploited in self-centred ways and has turned that which God saw as good during creation in Gen 1:31 into a monster that is a threat to humanity.⁴ God has already created the land and does not create it anew. As stewards, we have one option left: to apply divine wisdom in the utilisation of the creation, taking care of something that is not ours. If we do not do so, we have to take responsibility for the failure.

Marthe Maleke Kondemo, writing on the care of creation with a focus on Gen 2, highlights that this creation narrative emphasises the intended harmony of the proper relationship we ought to have with God, the natural world, and with one another.⁵ Gen 2 opens with the narrative of the Garden of Eden, where, after Adam's formation, he is placed. He is assigned the duty to till and keep the land. Tilling here

4 J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Christian Stewardship and Creation: African Perspective on Environment and Development', in *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, ed. Daniel Carlos Beres et al., Regnum Handbooks (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022), 3–15.

5 Marthe Maleke Kondemo, 'Care for Creation: An Ecotheological Reading of Genesis 2', in *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, ed. Daniel Carlos Beres et al., Regnum Handbooks (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022), 16–24.

refers to the cultivation, ploughing, or working, while keeping means caring, protecting, overseeing, and preserving. Adam was not only to inhabit the land but also to fulfil his God-given task to work and keep it. God gave humankind the responsibility to cultivate, multiply, and care before eating from it. Therefore, if we want creation to sustain and feed us not just now but also in the future, we need to care for it. Additionally, she adds that Gen 2 reminds us that humans are not only a part of nature but also have responsibility over it.

Saint Francis of Assisi, according to John Isaack, also uses Gen 1:26, 28 as his basis for ecotheology, where humans are asked to dominate over other creatures, then be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.⁶ He highlights that Gen 1:26 should be read in conjunction with Gen 2:15, where God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden for them to cultivate or be in service to the process of cultivating Mother Earth. In the process of taking dominion over, God's people entrusted themselves with the power to exploit creation and oppress it. This, he argues, has been significantly shaped by the understanding of the meaning of domination. However, Gen 2:15 emphasises the service of the earth as God's representatives or stewards, as we utilise it to satisfy our needs. Asamoah-Gyadu notes that in Gen 1:28-30, when human beings were given the power to reproduce and dominate the earth, the domination is not just in the naming

6 John Paul Isaack, 'A Missio-African Discourse on Eco-Diakonia', in *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, ed. Daniel Carlos Beros et al., Regnum Handbooks (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022), 53-59.

and having authority over; it is also expressed through tender care and respect for nature.⁷ We are God's agents and stewards of humanity over creation; hence, it is a privilege.

This view of service is also held by Jared Hyneman and Christopher Shore⁸ who affirm that humanity is God's appointed steward of creation because creation belongs to God.⁸ Hence, humans are accountable to God for their stewardship of and interaction with the creation. Caring for creation is a relational act that is closely connected to our relationship with Christ. God has called us to care for creation in a way that demonstrates our love for Him. Additionally, it is our duty to care for creation because it is a means of God's revelation. In a quest to know more about God, we must conserve that through which He reveals Himself. Recognising the great responsibility humans have been entrusted with, we cannot compromise in its execution. Revelations 11:18 demonstrates that this care is mandatory by explicitly noting that God will destroy those who destroy the earth. The destroyers include those who stand by and remain silent about environmental abuses. It is, therefore, a mandatory duty for humans to care for the environment.

7 Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Christian Stewardship and Creation.'

8 Jared Hyneman and Christopher Shore, 'Why Are We Stewards of Creation? Why Are We Stewards of Creation? World Vision's Biblical Understanding of How We Relate to Creation', Natural Environment and Climate Issues, World Vision International, 2013.

It is for Our Welfare and Survival

The AACC, as it engages with issues of climate justice, has chosen the theme: “The Welfare of the Earth is Our Welfare.”⁹ We base it on Jer 29:7, where God told the Israelites in exile not to stay idle, waiting to return home. Contrary to their expectations of an early return home, God said they would remain there for a long time. They should buy land, plant, raise livestock, get married, and start families. And then he said: “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” We are here in the world as pilgrims. It is not our eternal home. However, we will not be here for very long. We are not leaving soon. Therefore, it is in our interest that the world we live in prospers. Our welfare, our happiness, our fullness of life, depends on the welfare of the world. So, taking care of the earth is not only a question of duty to God, but this duty to God is actually for our own welfare. Therefore, we say in AACC that climate justice is a matter of life and death. We can effectively bring an end to our lives, and many are dying because of the impact of climate change. We need to live. We need to thrive. And that depends on how responsibly we take care of the earth.

Ernst Conradie suggests that it is essential to recognise that God didn't need to create; it was part of God's

9 ‘The Welfare of the Earth Is Our Welfare | AACC-CETA: All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)’, 8 July 2025, <https://www.aacc-ceta.org/en/welfare-earth-our-welfare>.

sovereign will.¹⁰ God, therefore, finds pleasure in this world and creation. The material world is hence God willed and is the object of God's joy. We cannot enjoy the Creator without finding joy in the creature. In finding joy in creation, humans are expected to carefully utilise it to satisfy their needs.

It was God's plan and will to create the world for the sustenance of life. It is not by accident that humans were created last, after everything else was put into place. God wanted humans to enjoy life on earth by keeping and stewarding all else. Asamoah-Gyadu with Hyneman and Shore assert that God purposed to provide for the entire world, including natural systems and the needs of nonhuman life, as well as human physical needs such as food, water, shelter, clothing, and energy.¹¹ Additionally, God is said to provide for human and nonhuman life not only in the present but also in the future. The Earth has complex natural structures, systems, and organisms that, when well-stewarded, provide for human sustenance and well-being. In Gen 1:29, God makes the provision for every plant yielding seed and every tree with seed in its fruit so that we may have them for food.

It is essential, however, to guard against overemphasis on the anthropocentric utilitarian interpretation of creation, as Jonathan Kivatsi Kavusa warns, by focusing too much on

10 Ernst M. Conradie, 'God's Mission, God's Economy of God's Joy as the Deepest Source of Resilience amidst Forces of Death and Destruction?', in *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, ed. Daniel Carlos Beros et al., Regnum Handbooks (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022), 35–43.

11 Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Christian Stewardship and Creation,' Hyneman and Shore, 'Why are we Stewards of Creation?'

the idea that God intended humans to exploit nature to meet their needs.¹² Such overemphasis leads to the attitude that the earth is all ours, which results in practical materialism, greed, and selfishness. The problem with this attitude is that it opens a gateway for humans to selfishly exploit the rest of the creation, which inevitably affects human life itself as the source of welfare is depleted.

Abednego Nkamuhabwa Keshomshahara also highlights that although humans are to use nature to meet their needs, they should not be driven by greed to dominate to the extent that it harms the creation.¹³ Using the African setting, he claims that Africans traditionally feared harming others or nature since they believed God and the spirits could be everywhere and see everything. The ancestral spirits were seen as the pioneers of community life and instituted the morals that guaranteed law and order, as well as protected nature. Those who would go astray would, therefore, be punished by God and spirits. To address greed and individualism, African traditional religions emphasised the sharing of resources, ensuring that no one within the community would lack basic needs. The community took

12 Jonathan Kivatsi Kavusa, 'Ecological Stewardship from African Indigenous Thoughts in Dialogue with Christian Traditions: Resisting Ecological Violence in Africa', in *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, ed. Daniel Carlos Beres et al., Regnum Handbooks (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022), 44–52.

13 Abednego Nkamuhabwa Keshomshahara, 'The Ecclesial Mandate of Eco-Diakonia in the Mission of God', in *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, ed. Daniel Carlos Beres et al., Regnum Handbooks (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022), 25–34.

care of those in need. This created a society based on love, compassion, empathy, security, and justice.

In 2022, the UN General Assembly declared that access to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is a universal human right. The declaration recognises

“that the impact of climate change, the unsustainable management and use of natural resources, the pollution of air, land and water, the unsound management of chemicals and waste, and the resulting loss in biodiversity interfere with the enjoyment of this right - and that environmental damage has negative implications, both direct and indirect, for the effective enjoyment of all human rights.”¹⁴

For the Sake of Love for the Neighbour and the Future Generation

It is essential to care for the earth, not only for the sake of our current generation and livelihood, but also for those to come. Caring for the world is caring for people. It is a pity that to some Christians, focus on creation care sounds like we value the planet more than people.¹⁵ However, caring for the earth is indeed caring for people. The effects

14 ‘UN General Assembly Declares Access to Clean and Healthy Environment a Universal Human Right | UN News’, 28 July 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1123482>.

15 ‘Why Should Christians Care for Creation? - Common Question’, BioLogos, accessed 28 July 2025, <https://biologos.org/common-questions/why-should-christians-care-for-creation>.

of environmental degradation impact people's lives on a daily basis.

Unfortunately, the climate crisis affects the poorest and most vulnerable people on the planet, who have less capacity to mitigate against its effects. Similarly, the third-world countries, which contribute little to environmental degradation, feel the pain of destruction the most compared to the developed countries. Even in a country, richer people can mitigate the impact of climate change more effectively than the poor. So even if one can mitigate against it, for the sake of other people, we as Christians have a duty to care for creation, even for the sake of our neighbours.

The most vulnerable neighbours who cannot even fend for themselves are the children and young people. As we witness rapid changes in climatic conditions, it becomes a matter of love for our neighbour to act in ways that ensure the sustainability of life beyond our time, which is often referred to as intergenerational justice. As Africans, we need to do more in this regard. We must beef up our theology of planning. Many of our plans, individually and institutionally, are very short-term. We are almost based on the theology of “tomorrow will take care of itself.” (Matt 6:33–34)

Out of greed and a desire to earn more, humans have overexploited the Earth without giving much concern to future generations. Mank Bradford asserts that the present generation has no obligation to the future and that the present has a choice to make whether to benefit from the depletion of non-renewable resources and eliminate

renewable ones at the expense of future generations.¹⁶ Steve Vanderheiden provides an accurate response to this concern, arguing that our actions now will affect the livelihoods of people yet to be born.¹⁷ There is a causal link between our actions and their consequences for future generations. Therefore, each generation's decision to eschew conservation would lead to a continuous decline in the quality of life.

Isaak asserts, by referring to the philosophy of ubuntu, that the love of God and the love of a neighbour cannot be separated.¹⁸ In serving one's neighbour, one is not only serving God but also united with God by faith and participating in God's work. Diakonia, therefore, refers to the responsibility of serving the gospel through deeds and words that Christians perform. The deeds should be motivated by Mark 12:30-31, which emphasises the love for God and one's neighbour. God's honour and dignity should be shown in the actions that we take toward our neighbours.

Churches' Interventions in Africa: The Case of the All Africa Conference of Churches – Africa Faith Actors Network for Climate Justice

The AACC was concerned about climate change conditions and found the need to intervene and provide

16 Mank Bradford, 'Protecting the Environment for Future Generations: A Proposal for a Republican Superagency', Faculty Articles and Other Publications 122 (1996), https://scholarship.law.uc.edu/fac_pubs/122.

17 Steve Vanderheiden, 'Conservation, Foresight, and the Future Generations Problem', Inquiry 49, no. 4 (2006): 337-52.

18 Isaak, 'Missio-African Discourse on Eco-Diakonia.'

protective measures for the environment. This pushed for the formation of an ecological justice program. AACC brought together faith leaders from all religions to address the matter at hand, and they agreed that the crisis was urgent and required a collective response. This led to the formation of the Africa Faith Actors Network for Climate Justice (AFAN-CJ) and a subcommittee that included diversity.¹⁹ They tackled environmental issues from a moral, ethical, and justice perspective. The primary focus of the organisation, above other ecological concerns, is the climate sector. The basis for the intervention is the Bible, where the main question is what the Christian faith says about the environment and science. This involves studying the specific condition of the world according to scientific principles, as well as a political framework that focuses on policies affecting the ecological perspective. The three groups also questioned what could be done differently and explored potential solutions to be implemented. From a faith sector and justice perspective, the focus is on the changes that must be made in a way that promotes justice, so that those

19 Tinashe Gumbo, the AACC Program Executive for Ecological and Economic Justice explains, that “AFAN-CJ is an interfaith, multisectoral, and continental network that is hosted by the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and coordinated by [Tinashe Gumbo]. Established in 2022 to ensure that faith actors become active in climate justice work in Africa, the AFAN-CJ is currently represented in thirty-eight countries with Christians and Muslims as its main actors. The network is run through a steering committee that spearheads the work at the national and regional (West, East, Central, and North Africa) levels before connecting with continental and global processes.” Tinashe Gumbo, ‘A New Climate Activism in Africa’, in *Civic Activism in an Intensifying Climate Crisis*, ed. Erin Jones and Richard Youngs (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2024), 61.

who have a greater share in environmental destruction will also bear a greater responsibility for supporting the measures implemented. Additionally, Faith emphasises that humans are stewards on earth. The scientists advocate for reducing emissions of harmful products. The political sector establishes policies and platforms, such as the Africa Climate Week and the COP, to address these issues. The three agree on the advocacy for adaptation. The program engages in both local and international initiatives addressing climate change. Additionally, the AFAN-CJ is to be incorporated in the establishment of policies.

The members of AFAN-CJ are expected to design and implement community-based activities to further the cause of climate justice. Some engage in advocacy, others seek to participate in national dialogues and activities addressing climate change issues, and still others are entitled to represent Africa in global conversations and activities.

For example, the Methodist Church of Togo has implemented a project aimed at fostering a comprehensive understanding of national policies related to climate change, encouraging participation in policy dialogues, increasing awareness of climate change within communities, and mobilising members of faith communities to participate actively in environmental protection initiatives. It has organised an educational seminar on understanding national policies related to climate change, conducted two awareness workshops for religious communities, and established discussion groups within these communities to regularly discuss climate change issues and plan concrete actions. To

link understanding with faith, it has organised worship services dedicated to climate and the environment.

In most countries, network members are encouraged to go beyond simply planting trees by ensuring that the trees grow and thrive. However, they are also encouraged to follow up with their policymakers in their respective governments to monitor the implementation of national and international commitments. Some of the AFAN-CJ members are now included in the national delegations to COP29. Some use radio programs to train and discuss environmental issues.

Obstacles to Creation Care

The primary and most significant obstacle is poverty. As mentioned earlier, people experiencing poverty have less capacity to mitigate the impact of climate change, let alone the capacity to implement what they know is necessary. For example, many communities see that they should not cut trees and deplete forests. However, the cost of clean cooking energy, which is environmentally friendly, is too expensive for most households.²⁰ Africans cut trees and use charcoal for survival. No amount of education will deter them from cooking what they need if they cannot afford clean energy. A report by Habitat for Humanity states that access to

20 There are several organisations working to promote clean cooking energy. However, these are still very expensive and inaccessible to most vulnerable families. See, e.g., (all accessed on 29 September 2024): <https://cleancooking.org/>, https://renewablesroadmap.iclei.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Clean-cooking_Final-1.pdf, https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/stories/powering-a-greener-tomorrow?gad_source=5&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI-JyyoLboiAMVppNQbh1rrCBREAAYBCAAEGKu0_D_BwE.

adequate and affordable energy sources in the modern era is closely tied to economic and social development.²¹ Therefore, people experiencing poverty are usually equipped with the worst energy services, which enhance malnutrition, unhealthy living conditions, and limited access to education and employment. Therefore, one of the significant barriers to creation care is poverty, as people experiencing poverty often strive to meet their basic needs, which can have a negative impact on the environment, with deforestation being a central area of concern.

Christian ecotheology must address the importance of the fullness of life. Asamoah-Gyadu explains that the teaching brought in by the old Western missionaries, which glorified poverty over wealth, has also been critiqued.²² This type of Christianity made Africans loathe profit and wealth. The ascetic theology that sentimentalises poverty and focuses mainly on striving for a better life only on the other side of the grave is dangerous for the environment. The theology where the lack was seen as preferable to having created a comfortable one, even with destruction present, because it is temporal, either for an individual or for the whole world, as it will be destroyed anyway.

Moreover, Elinor Ostrom suggests that empowering local communities to be in charge of natural resources would

21 Habitat for Humanity, 'Energy Poverty: Effects on Development, Society, and Environment Europe, Middle East and Africa', accessed 28 July 2025, <https://www.habitat.org/emea/about/what-we-do/residential-energy-efficiency-households/energy-poverty>.

22 Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Christian Stewardship and Creation.'

be a valuable method of caring for creation.²³ In the context of the Central and West Basin Water Replenishment project, which not only provided employment opportunities to the community but also allowed the public enterprise to manage it, he affirms that this has not only allowed people experiencing poverty to benefit from it but also instilled a form of responsibility over it.

According to Edward Barbier, a lack of assets exacerbates the situation because it limits the key markets accessible to poor households, constraining them from adopting technologies to improve their farming systems and livelihoods.²⁴ This forces them to continually use the same cycle, which leads to the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. This hinders creation care because, with the same resources being utilised, exploitation is inevitable.

As a response to the above challenges, alternative resources must be made readily available and affordable in society. Solar energy, LED lighting, and the use of biogas are some suitable alternatives for energy production. However, for people experiencing poverty, these two options are not easily accessible due to the high cost of installation and the equipment required. Instead of turning to non-environmentally friendly alternatives because they are cheaper, eco-friendly options should be made available to them. Additionally, policies should be implemented to

23 Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

24 Edward Barbier, 'Poverty, Development, and Environment', *Environment and Development Economics* 15, no. 6 (2010): 635–60.

regulate the use of energy systems that harm the environment.

The second obstacle to our efforts for a sustainable climate is unsustainable population growth in Africa. Africa is projected to double its population by 2050, to reach more than 2.5 billion people, and “without adequate employment opportunities, education, and health care, this demographic boom could exacerbate poverty, inequality, and social unrest, contributing to migration pressures both within and outside the continent.”²⁵

As the global population grows, the environmental impact increases. Every human being consumes their share of resources from the environment. The AACC has identified population growth in Africa as a serious challenge to sustainable development. It goes without saying that as the population in Africa grows exponentially, the large population puts pressure on non-renewable resources, including land, water, sanitation, and services. AACC has produced a theological framework for churches to address population growth.²⁶

The third obstacle is ignorance. Hogan Yarrow asserts that ignorance lies in the fact that people are either unaware or unconcerned about how their actions impact their lives,

25 Julius Kirimi Sindi, ‘A Development Plan for Africa: Charting a Path to Sustainable Growth and Stability’, 2024, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/development-plan-africa-charting-path-sustainable-sindi-ph-d-eabdf>.

26 Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel, ‘Sustainable Population for Sustainable Development’, AACC Discussion Paper, Nairobi, 2021.

exemplified by the principle of “it doesn’t affect my life.”²⁷ Based on this mentality, people have argued that one individual cannot change the state of the world. Consequently, they have not made any effort to change the situation in the environment because the small impact they can make will not be practical. Additionally, many people are unaware that some of their activities can be harmful to the environment. The low level of education among many African communities makes it difficult to convince them of the impact of their actions at present, especially when the consequences are not immediately visible.

Dayyeh Ayoub highlights the consequences of ignorance of environmental issues, noting that the denial of ecological consequences can lead individuals, businesses, and the government to engage in polluting activities without realising their impact.²⁸ Additionally, it can lead to poor decision-making regarding environmental policies and regulations. Moreover, due to a lack of awareness about environment-friendly alternatives, people may continue to rely on polluting technologies; hence, even holding polluters accountable becomes difficult. He, therefore, notes that it is essential to educate and raise awareness to mitigate these effects. This will also help disseminate accurate information

27 Yarrow Hogan, ‘Ignorance Isn’t a Justification for Careless Environmental Inaction’, Opinion, The Channels, 2023, <https://www.thechannels.org/opinion/2023/03/06/ignorance-isnt-a-justification-for-careless-environmental-inaction/>.

28 Ayoub Abu Dayyeh, ‘Ignorance Pollution: Argument of Ignorance Consequences | Jordan Times’, The Jordan Times, 2023, <https://jordantimes.com/opinion/ayoub-abu-dayyeh/ignorance-pollution-argument-ignorance-consequences>.

and demystify stereotypical arguments and false claims. Failure to deal with the issue at hand will affect not only our present but also our future generations.

Finally, and perhaps most consequential for the churches, are what I call careless or reckless theological positions. It is very disheartening to observe that many of the climate crisis deniers in the developed world base their denial on their Christian faith and convictions. There is an alarming study by Bryan Ezawa and Julie M. Fagan, which shows that the White Evangelical Christians, the so-called “Christian right” in the USA, are the leading climate change deniers.²⁹ They claim that human beings are not responsible for climate change if there is any at all. And that God will, in the end, be in charge. Others are based on biblical theologies, like the story of Noah, pointing to the rainbow that God promised never to destroy the earth ever again, so it cannot happen.

For example, Kondemo notes that humans have held the belief that the responsibility given to them by God for naming animals is a sign of dominion and authority over creatures.³⁰ The interpretation of dominion is that of domination, subjugation, and exploitation at will, for the sake of humans. Therefore, there should be no consequence for humans, even if they dominate and exploit the earth, regardless of whether their actions are conducive to the environment or not. In response to this challenge, Kondemo

29 Bryan Ezawa and Julie Fagan, *Religious Beliefs a Root Cause of the Denial of Climate Change Being Anthropogenic* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Community Repository, 2015).

30 Kondemo, ‘Care for Creation.’

writes that human beings are placed on earth to be stewards, carrying out God's sovereign rule over other creatures. We, therefore, become accountable to God for keeping his creation in the care and well-being that honours Him. The land and all in it belong to God, and He has not granted power to human beings to alter and exploit it. Humanity is commissioned to protect, care for, and promote the flourishing of nonhuman creation. This stewardship is a duty for both fellow human beings and the nonhuman creation.

Kavusa attributes the destruction of creation to the theology of salvation of only the soul, which detached humans from the rest of the creation and facilitated the treatment of everything non-human as only lifeless objects that can be exploited.³¹ Humans anticipate the forthcoming salvation and a better place thereafter. However, this resulted in the belief that the rest of creation should not be protected because there is a better place where humans will go, and the rest will be left behind and destroyed.

Isaak presents a theology of salvation that Jesus brought not only for humans but for the whole creation. He responds to this claim, noting that Christ Himself came so that we may have life in abundance and hence enjoy the fullness of life in Christ.³² This is also highlighted in Gen 1:28-30, where human beings were given the power to reproduce and dominate the earth. It is essential, therefore, to note that the domination here is not just in the naming and having authority over, but it is expressed by tender care and respect

31 Kavusa, 'Ecological Stewardship.'

32 Isaak, 'Missio-African Discourse on Eco-Diakonia.'

for nature. We are God's agents, and the stewardship of humanity over creation is a privilege.

Conclusion

Baden John records Martin Luther's response when asked what he would do if the world were to end tomorrow, where Luther said he would plant an apple tree.³³ This is recorded as an anecdote on environmental stewardship. An excellent pointer that care of creation begins and ends with each one of us. Even with the knowledge that the world will come to an end, there is a need to take care of it in our present time.

Bibliography

Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. 'Christian Stewardship and Creation: African Perspective on Environment and Development'. In *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, edited by Daniel Carlos Beros, Bosela Ekakhhol Eale, Lesmore Ezekiel, Kambale Jean-Bosco Kahongya Bwiruka, Ruomin Liu, Grace Moon, Marisa Noemi Strizzi, and Dietrich Werner, 3–15. Regnum Handbooks. Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022.

Baden, John A. 'Luther's Apple Tree'. Acton Institute, 2020. <https://www.acton.org/religion-liberty/volume-29-number-4/luthers-apple-tree>.

33 John A. Baden, 'Luther's Apple Tree', Acton Institute, 2020, <https://www.acton.org/religion-liberty/volume-29-number-4/luthers-apple-tree>.

Barbier, Edward. 'Poverty, Development, and Environment'. *Environment and Development Economics* 15, no. 6 (2010): 635–60.

<https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/S1355770X1000032X>.

Beros, Daniel Carlos, Bosela Ekakhoh Eale, Lesmore Ezekiel, Kambale Jean-Bosco Kahongya Bwiruka, Ruomin Liu, Grace Moon, Marisa Noemi Strizzi, and Dietrich Werner, eds. *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*. Regnum Handbooks. Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022.

BioLogos. 'Why Should Christians Care for Creation? – Common Question'. Accessed 28 July 2025. <https://biologos.org/common-questions/why-should-christians-care-for-creation>.

Bradford, Mank. 'Protecting the Environment for Future Generations: A Proposal for a Republican Superagency'. *Faculty Articles and Other Publications* 122 (1996). https://scholarship.law.uc.edu/fac_pubs/122.

Brock, Sebastian. 'St Isaac the Syrian and His Understanding of Universal Salvation and of "the Mystery of Gehenna (Hell)"'. *Clarion Journal*, 2014, 1–11.

'Climate Change Is a Matter of Justice – Here's Why | UNDP Climate Promise'. 26 June 2023. <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/climate-change-matter-justice-heres-why>.

Conradie, Ernst M. 'God's Mission, God's Economy of God's Joy as the Deepest Source of Resilience amidst Forces of Death and Destruction?' In *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological*

Perspectives of Churches from the Global South, edited by Daniel Carlos Beros, Bosela Ekakhoh Eale, Lesmore Ezekiel, Kambale Jean-Bosco Kahongya Bwiruka, Ruomin Liu, Grace Moon, Marisa Noemi Strizzi, and Dietrich Werner, 35–43. Regnum Handbooks. Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022.

Dayyeh, Ayoub Abu. 'Ignorance Pollution: Argument of Ignorance Consequences | Jordan Times'. The Jordan Times, 2023. <https://jordantimes.com/opinion/ayoub-abu-dayyeh/ignorance-pollution-argument-ignorance-consequences>.

Ezawa, Bryan, and Julie Fagan. *Religious Beliefs a Root Cause of the Denial of Climate Change Being Anthropogenic*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Community Repository, 2015. <https://doi.org/doi:10.7282/T37S7R4R>.

Gumbo, Tinashe. 'A New Climate Activism in Africa'. In *Civic Activism in an Intensifying Climate Crisis*, edited by Erin Jones and Richard Youngs, 59–64. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/12/climate-change-protest-activism-green-transition?lang=en>.

Habitat for Humanity. 'Energy Poverty: Effects on Development, Society, and Environment Europe, Middle East and Africa'. Accessed 28 July 2025. <https://www.habitat.org/emea/about/what-we-do/residential-energy-efficiency-households/energy-poverty>.

Hogan, Yarrow. 'Ignorance Isn't a Justification for Careless Environmental Inaction'. Opinion. The Channels, 6 March 2023.

<https://www.thechannels.org/opinion/2023/03/06/ignorance-isnt-a-justification-for-careless-environmental-inaction/>.

Hyneman, Jared, and Christopher Shore. 'Why Are We Stewards of Creation? Why Are We Stewards of Creation? World Vision's Biblical Understanding of How We Relate to Creation'. Natural Environment and Climate Issues, World Vision International, 2013.

Isaak, John Paul. 'A Missio-African Discourse on Eco-Diakonia'. In *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, edited by Daniel Carlos Beros, Bosela Ekakhhol Eale, Lesmore Ezekiel, Kambale Jean-Bosco Kahongya Bwiruka, Ruomin Liu, Grace Moon, Marisa Noemi Strizzi, and Dietrich Werner, 53-59. Regnum Handbooks. Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022.

Kavusa, Jonathan Kivatsi. 'Ecological Stewardship from African Indigenous Thoughts in Dialogue with Christian Traditions: Resisting Ecological Violence in Africa'. In *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, edited by Daniel Carlos Beros, Bosela Ekakhhol Eale, Lesmore Ezekiel, Kambale Jean-Bosco Kahongya Bwiruka, Ruomin Liu, Grace Moon, Marisa Noemi Strizzi, and Dietrich Werner, 44-52. Regnum Handbooks. Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022.

Keshomshahara, Abednego Nkamuhabwa. 'The Ecclesial Mandate of Eco-Diakonia in the Mission of God'. In *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the*

Global South, edited by Daniel Carlos Beros, Bosela Ekakhoh Eale, Lesmore Ezekiel, Kambale Jean-Bosco Kahongya Bwiruka, Ruomin Liu, Grace Moon, Marisa Noemi Strizzi, and Dietrich Werner, 25–34. Regnum Handbooks. Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022.

Kondemo, Marthe Maleke. 'Care for Creation: An Ecotheological Reading of Genesis 2'. In *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South*, edited by Daniel Carlos Beros, Bosela Ekakhoh Eale, Lesmore Ezekiel, Kambale Jean-Bosco Kahongya Bwiruka, Ruomin Liu, Grace Moon, Marisa Noemi Strizzi, and Dietrich Werner, 16–24. Regnum Handbooks. Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2022.

Ostrom, Elinor. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Sindi, Julius Kirimi. 'A Development Plan for Africa: Charting a Path to Sustainable Growth and Stability'. 2024. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/development-plan-africa-charting-path-sustainable-sindi-ph-d-eabdf>.

'The Welfare of the Earth Is Our Welfare | AACC-CETA: All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)'. 8 July 2025. <https://www.aacc-ceta.org/en/welfare-earth-our-welfare>.

'UN General Assembly Declares Access to Clean and Healthy Environment a Universal Human Right | UN News'. 28 July 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1123482>.

Vanderheiden, Steve. 'Conservation, Foresight, and the Future Generations Problem'. *Inquiry* 49, no. 4 (2006): 337–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00201740600831422>.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

The author declares that he is the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

The author declares that in his research he followed all due ethical standards and guidelines of academic research.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

There was no field research conducted in compiling this article and there are no restrictions on the secondary data presented in this article.