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The Church of South India becomes ARC's latest partner

April 10, 2008:

ARC's latest religious partner in the bid to protect the natural environment, is the [Church of South India](#) (CSI) which represents some 3.8 million members in India and around the world.



The CSI represents 3.8 million Christians, in southern India, northern Sri Lanka and overseas.

The Church this month issued a statement through ARC, written by the Madhya Kerala Diocese in central Kerala, which has been a pioneer in green activism for some years. Link [here](#) for more information about the diocese's ecological work and [here](#) for a set of steps, recommended by the CSI, as to how to develop a long term ecological plan.

The agreement with ARC stems from an international conference hosted by the Diocese in February 2008, in which ARC and the CSI signed a memorandum of agreement, after which ARC agreed to help the Diocese to put together a seven year plan of environmental action - of which this statement is an early step. Currently all the parishes in the Diocese are undergoing environmental audits, and they are due to discuss the results in internal meetings in the next two months.

The inspiring statement, which is based on a speech given by Bishop Thomas Samuel in February, emphasises that: "Our aim is to keep this beautiful world beautiful, and not to turn it into a wasteland."

"We are God's gardeners, and when we forget this, then not only does the earth suffer, but all creation suffers, because all things are connected," continues the statement, which can be read [here](#) in full.

"Our actions and attitudes toward the earth need to proceed from the centre of our faith, and be rooted in the fullness of God's revelation in Christ and the Scriptures. We seek carefully to learn all that the Bible tells us about the Creator, creation, and the human task. In our life and words we declare that full good news for all creation is still waiting "with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God," (Rom.8:19).

"In Hinduism there is no separation between the Divine and nature. Both are the same aspects of the same reality. Like the ocean, Brahma the Creator is the unmanifest depths of the sea. Everything is Brahman, or as it is said; "Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma."

"Everything is the very aspect of the same reality, and everything is sacred. Christians too can share in this Vedic vision of unity which is the basis for an ecological approach, in which human beings can honour the entire universe. There are many sacred places to Hindus. Christians too sing of the beauty of the earth but seem to have no difficulty in polluting that which is holy. We should not ignore our high calling. All things are connected."

The statement goes on to recommend some very practical actions for its own members - although these are equally relevant for Christians everywhere.

[Church of South India](#)

"We refuse to succumb to despair: remember Abraham who hoped against hope. There is hope for the future. If we can live out this vision in our daily lives and can communicate it to others in word and action then we can play a powerful role in creating an attitude of reverence for the earth." A powerful statement from the Church of South India.

[Why involve the Faiths?](#)

Why and how should the faiths be involved in responding to climate change?

[ARC and the Faiths](#)

Faith communities are working in countless ways to care for the environment. This section outlines the basics of each faith's history, beliefs and teachings on ecology.

Ways to help

Here are some of the ways in which we in the Church of South India can help.

"Our aim is to keep this beautiful world beautiful, and not to turn it into a wasteland."

- * We can learn to eat lower on the food chain: reducing the animal products in our diet is perhaps the single most-effective step we can make
- * We can practice energy conservation: let us use less heat, less light, less airconditioning.
- * We can plant trees.
- * We can change our driving habits.
- * We can influence the government.
- * We can develop our thoughts on eco-spirituality.
- * We can participate in recycling.
- * We can volunteer in local cleanup programmes.
- * We can join environmental groups.
- * As church leaders and church members we can take a leadership role in persuading others to do the same.
- * And perhaps most important of all, we can evaluate our own life styles, our desires, our aims, and our relationships with creation. We can help lead others to think about what is most important in their own lives: what do they really value?

The statement ends with the following thought-provoking parable, which is as relevant to Hindus, Buddhists and quantum physicists as it is specific to Christians. It goes as follows:

There was once a wise man, a hermit in the Himalayas, and people used to go to him to find answers. One day a little boy thought of an idea for tricking the hermit. "I'm going to get a small bird and hold it in my hand," he told his friends in the village. "And I will say: is it dead or is it alive? And if he says it is dead then I will release it, and if he says it is alive then I will crush it."

So the boy went to see the wise man, and he did what he had boasted. But the hermit looked into his eyes and could see what he was planning.

"It will be," said the wise man, "what you want it to be."

LINKS

Link [here](#) for the CSI statement about the environment in full.

Link [here](#) for a set of steps, recommended by the CSI, as to how to develop a long term ecological plan.

Link [here](#) for more information about the Madhya Kerala diocese.

Link [here](#) for more information about the diocese's ecological work.

Link [here](#) for general background to the Church of South India - which is the result of the union of churches of varying traditions: Anglican, Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Reformed and which was inaugurated in September 1947.

Link [here](#) for the original Christian statement on the environment launched at Assisi in 1986.

Link [here](#) for a Catholic theological statement about the environment.

Link [here](#) for an Orthodox statement about the environment.

Link [here](#) to learn more about ARC's work with the faiths developing seven year plans to make generational changes on the issues of climate change and the natural environment.

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