

# Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action

Mathew Koshy

We stand at a pivotal moment in human and planetary history. The mounting urgency of climate change calls not only for technological solutions or political commitments, but for a radical reorientation of our spiritual, ethical, and communal lives. The climate crisis is a spiritual crisis. It challenges the Christian community to embody prophetic courage, moral clarity, and practical transformation. The World Council of Churches (WCC), recognising the need for such a transformative response, has launched the “Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action (2025–2034)” — a spiritual pilgrimage toward ecological justice.

## Real - World Suffering

The impacts of climate change are no longer theoretical—they are unfolding before our eyes with increasing intensity and frequency.

- **Rising sea levels** threaten the very existence of low-lying island nations and coastal communities, forcing climate-induced migration.

- **More intense and frequent cyclones, monsoons, and floods** have displaced millions across South Asia, particularly in India and Bangladesh.

- **Prolonged droughts** are becoming more common in sub-Saharan Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Deccan Plateau, devastating agriculture and food security.

- **Glacier retreat** in the Himalayas is accelerating, threatening the water supply of over a billion people in South Asia.

- **Heatwaves** are growing in severity and duration, causing widespread health crises, particularly among the elderly, the poor, and the outdoor workers.

- **Water scarcity** is emerging as a critical issue in both urban and rural regions, exacerbating tensions and affecting hygiene and public health.

- **Biodiversity loss** is accelerating due to habitat destruction, coral bleaching, and changing climate zones, leading to the extinction of numerous species.

- **Forest fires** have become more frequent and intense in regions such as California, Australia, and even parts of India, destroying carbon sinks and displacing wildlife.

- **Agricultural disruptions** caused by erratic rainfall, shifting

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seasons, and pest outbreaks are threatening food production and farmer livelihoods globally.

- **Mental health challenges** and climate-related trauma are rising, especially among children, youth, and vulnerable populations.

- On **5 August 2025**, an extremely intense **cloudburst** occurred in the upper catchment of the **Kheer Ganga (Kheergad) river**, triggering a massive **flash flood** and mudslide through **Dharali village**, located along the pilgrimage route to **Gangotri Dham**. Wall-like torrents of water, rocks, and sludge moved at speed, sweeping away homes, shops, hotels, and infrastructure in seconds. In some places, mud depths reached **15 meters**, submerging buildings.

The urgency is rooted in real-world suffering. Around the globe, communities are reeling from devastating floods, prolonged droughts, rising sea levels, intensifying wildfires, and food insecurity. The consequences are most severe for those who contributed the least to the crisis: Indigenous peoples, low-income communities, women, and future generations.

## Understanding Resilience: Mitigation and Adaptation Resilience

It refers to the ability of both human and non-human systems to withstand and respond to climate-induced changes. It bridges the gap between mitigation — cutting greenhouse gas emissions to limit temperature rise — and adaptation — coping with the unavoidable impacts of climate change. Mitigation seeks to limit global warming to below 2°C, preferably 1.5°C, by reducing emissions by at least 50% by 2050. Adaptation acknowledges



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that even with reduced emissions, climate disruptions will persist and must be addressed locally, taking into account geography and vulnerability. Resilience integrates these two, providing a balanced and dynamic response to climate change.

## The Limits of COP Negotiations

Despite numerous annual meetings under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Conference of the Parties (COP) has often failed to produce decisive outcomes. The reasons include conflicting national interests, reluctance of developed nations to finance adaptation and loss and damage, lack of enforceable commitments, and the influence of fossil fuel lobbies. **Promises such as the \$100 billion climate finance pledge remain largely unfulfilled, highlighting the gap between rhetoric and reality.**

## Carbon Economy and the Path to Sustainability

A central aspect of addressing the climate crisis is the shift from a carbon-intensive economy to a sustainable, net-zero carbon economy. Transitioning to

renewable energy sources, enhancing energy efficiency, promoting sustainable lifestyles, and supporting circular economies are essential steps. These measures align with Christian ethical commitments to justice, responsibility, and care for creation. The transition to a Solar Hydrogen economy requires deliberate and coordinated efforts across all levels of society. This transition offers vast employment opportunities in renewable energy, sustainable transportation, waste management, agriculture, water conservation, and green construction. **The Church must take the lead in preparing communities for this shift by promoting education, training, and a vision for a just and sustainable economic order. Engineering colleges and vocational institutions must revise their curricula to equip future generations with the skills necessary for this emerging economy.**

## Theological Roots and the Misuse of Dominion

The root causes of climate change lie in an extractive and unsustainable global economy: **fossil fuel dependency, deforestation, overconsumption, industrial agriculture, and the relentless pursuit of profit measured by GDP.** Tragically, the model of limitless growth has failed to recognise the Earth's finite limits and the sacred interconnectedness of all life. The dominant interpretation of Genesis 1:28—human dominion over the Earth—has been exploited to justify environmental abuse. **But a closer biblical reading reveals a mandate not of domination, but of mutual responsibility and care. Genesis 2:15 commands**

humanity to “serve and preserve” creation. Psalm 24:1 reminds us, “The Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.”

## Ecological Metanoia: Repentance and Transformation

The Christian response must begin with repentance—ecological metanoia. The WCC calls churches to turn from systems of ecological sin, including colonialism, consumerism, and extractive capitalism. **This repentance must lead to transformation: of hearts, theology, institutions, and public witness. We are called not just to lament, but to act—to reimagine holiness as right relationship with Earth and neighbour, and to live this faith through concrete, prophetic commitments.**

## Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation and Ecocide Law

One such commitment is support for the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT), a global initiative to halt new fossil fuel development, equitably phase out existing production, and fast-track a just transition to clean energy. Churches are urged to endorse and amplify this campaign.

Equally important is the campaign to make “ecocide” an international crime. **Recognising ecocide in international law would hold corporations and governments accountable, ensuring that the rights of nature are upheld alongside human rights.**

## A Call for Economic Transformation

The call for climate justice also includes economic transformation. **Climate finance is essential to support adaptation and resilience. Loss and damage funding must compensate those already suffering irreversible harm. The cancellation of unjust debts and implementation of fair taxation systems—especially for high-emission industries—are moral imperatives rooted in biblical justice.**

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To be continued

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Carbon Neutrality Initiatives of the Church of South India