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## Women, Climate Change and Eco-theology

Mary Philip aka “Joy”<sup>1</sup>

The city of Bergen, “the heart of the fjords” in Norway was the perfect setting for the conference on *Sustainability and Climate in Religion* organized by the Western Norway University of Applied Science. The original peoples of this land were the hunter-gatherers, the Sami people, to whom I pay tribute and extend my gratitude. As we gathered in the Mimes Brønn auditorium of Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, I felt enveloped in the warmth of the surrounding mountains and the gentle touch of weaving fjords. The picturesque wharf and the cobble-stoned pathways told stories of the ebb and flow of life. The text that follows was set in this backdrop.

### Introduction: Interconnectedness

ചന്തമേറിയ പൂവിലും ശബളാഭമാം  
ശലഭത്തിലും  
സന്തതം കരതാരിയന്നൊരു ചിത്ര-  
ചാതുരി കാട്ടിയും  
ഹന്ത! ചാരുകടാക്ഷമാലകളർക്ക-  
രശ്മിയിൽ നീട്ടിയും  
ചിന്തയാം മണിമന്തിരത്തിൽ വിളങ്ങു-  
മീശനെ വാഴ്ത്തുവിൻ!

Transliteration:

Chandameriya poovilum shabalaabhamaam shalabhathilum  
Santhatham karathaariyannoru chithrachaathuri kaattiyum  
Hantha! chaarukadakshamaalakalarkkarashmiyil neettiyum  
Chinthayaam manimandirathil vilangumeeshane vaazhthuvin!

This is part of a poem “Sankeerthanam” written by Kumaranasan, one of the poet laureates from my state of Kerala, the land of kera or coconuts, in India. The poet says that the beautiful flowers and the colourful butterflies are all the handiwork of God; in the rays of the sun and the air we breathe we receive God’s blessings. The poem points to the presence of God in all of creation and not just human beings.

The relationship between God and creation is at the core of eco-theology. And, at the center of eco-theology is interconnectedness. To use the Catholic theologian Richard Rohr’s words, the energy in the universe is not in the planets, nor in the atomic particles, but in the relationship between them. The energy in the universe is in the relationship between all of that is in the universe from the single grain of sand to the largest formation of earth, from the single celled organism to the most complex of all beings. It is this relationship, this interconnectedness, which holds us together in this web of creation. Creation is God’s story

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and earth is very much part of that story. In the Christian story, human beings are earthlings, created out of Adamah or the earth. They were given the responsibility of taking care of that which gave rise to them – the Earth, matter – and all that was in, with and on it! To God “earth” mattered, “matter” mattered and continues to matter! It mattered so much that God became part of that matter in Jesus. Creation is God’s story about love, of fellowship, of interconnectedness, and it is part of our story too.

A song written by Kristopher Lindquist in 2016 emphasizes interconnectedness, where what happens in one part of the earth, whether it is to the permafrost in Siberia or to the corals of the Great Barrier Reef or to an island in the middle of the ocean, affects every single one of us!

The earth does not belong to us, but we belong to earth  
This radiant sphere of green and blue  
Our home and place of birth  
The web of life connects us all, each strand its vital role  
For what affects a single one affects the living whole.<sup>2</sup>

As Wangari Maathai, the founder of the Green Belt movement and Nobel Peace Prize winner, said, “we all share one planet and are one humanity, there is no escaping this reality.”

On January 8<sup>th</sup> Ukraine International Airlines 752 was shot down and with it the lives of 176 people. A good number of them were students studying in Canadian Universities. On January 15<sup>th</sup>, a remembrance vigil was held by all the universities of Canada. One of the family members, himself a student at the university where I teach, said that none of the people in that plane had conflicts with either Iran or the United States of America, but they paid the price for the conflict between the two countries. The room was pregnant with silence, the silence of holding one another in that room and the ones that were taken away. In that moment I don’t think there was anyone in that room who did not feel the bond of connection with Daria, Dorina, Parisa, Reera, Milad, Arash, Pouneh all of whom who had lost their lives in the crash.

It is a painful analogy but the same is true in the case of climate change where innocent people pay the price for the actions of others. A case in point is the tiny nation of Kiribati in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It is said to be one of the poorest nations in the world with a population of 100,000.

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<sup>2</sup> Kristopher E. Lindquist (2016), *Sing the Circle Wide*, Kanata Centre, Waterloo, ON, Canada.



The islands that form Kiribati<sup>3</sup> straddles the equator in such a way that it is the only country in the world to be situated in all four hemispheres. It is so far removed from doing anything to contribute to climate change, but they will soon lose their land due to rising sea level. Canada is among the top 12 countries who produce the most greenhouse gases. I live there and contribute to the percentage of emission. I am in a way more responsible for the disappearance of Kiribati. In an article in the Washington Post the former President of Kiribati said, “we will be the first to pay the price for other countries’ bad choices. It is time for the world to wake up and understand: we are all Kiribati.”<sup>4</sup> Yes, the choices we make have consequences far and wide.

In what follows I want to highlight the fact that women are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and climate change when in most cases they are primarily the ones that have been caring for and preserving the earth. I also advocate for the need for earth consciousness<sup>5</sup> increased participation of women in climate initiatives as women have a theology and spirituality undergirded by eco-consciousness.

In 2007 Wangari Maathai came to a school in the west side of Chicago. In an interview with a local TV station she said, “We cannot live in peace with each other if we do not manage our environment responsibly and accountably. When the environment becomes degraded

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.climate.gov.ki/about-kiribati/> accessed February 2, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Anote Tong and Matthieu Rytz, “Our island is disappearing but the president refuses to act.” The Washington Post, October 24, 2018. Ioane Teitiota would have become the first climate change refugee if he was given status in New Zealand.

<sup>5</sup> I use earth consciousness and eco-consciousness interchangeably.

and resources become scarce, people will fight over them, people who would normally call each other brothers and sisters suddenly are quite willing to confront each other,”<sup>6</sup> even kill each other. Wangari Maathai was equally right when she said that climate change in its impact, is not proportionate to the ones that contribute to it. It disproportionately affects those that least contribute to it. It is the world’s poorest and those in vulnerable situations, especially women and children, who bear the brunt of environmental, economic and social shocks.<sup>7</sup>

## Women and Climate Change



This is a painting by Ashley Cecil<sup>8</sup> a “painting activist” who creates art that illustrates how climate change affects poor communities, especially women. Cecil's painting of two women in a drought-baked landscape depicts one of them tipping out a bowl of dust instead of a bounty of grain, symbolizing the struggle of impoverished families to feed themselves in a world facing more and more climate-related impacts.<sup>9</sup> Ecological justice (ecojustice) and social justice are two sides of the same coin.

As it is, gender inequalities exist in most parts of the world, but climate induced disasters worsen the existing disparities. In other words, “climate change has gender-specific

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<sup>6</sup> Excerpts from conversations with students and Judy Valente, the reporter for Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly in Chicago. <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2007/11/09/november-9-2007-wangari-maathai/4544/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en> UN report accessed on October 28, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ashleycecil.com/> accessed on February 2, 2020. Used with permission from artist.

<sup>9</sup> Taken from write-ups about the painting.

implications in terms of both vulnerability and adaptive capacity because of women's roles in society, production and domestic life."<sup>10</sup> Whether in Haiti or Bolivia or India, women and girls are the last to be rescued; they are the last in line to receive food and water not to mention that they "face greater health and safety risks as water and sanitation systems become compromised."<sup>11</sup> In the drought stricken district of Turkana in Kenya, women hike miles to fetch water for their family's use as well as the animals in their care. UN reports show that women walk sixteen hours compared to six hours by men to fetch water. Because of climate change disasters women are forced to take on increased domestic and care work as resources disappear.<sup>12</sup> A good percentage of the climate refugees are women and children.

Studies also show that women are particularly susceptible to eco-anxiety as they are more severely affected by natural disasters because of their social role, poverty and gender inequity. Women thus will bear the burden of adapting despite their own insignificant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. I come from India. For an Indian woman, climate change is at every turn. Though not in the forefront when it comes to having power, women are the ones in charge of the household, responsible for the daily sustenance of the families, and of managing the resources whether it be of food or fodder. Inevitably, women are most adversely affected by climate change. Climate change thus becomes part of a larger picture of marginalization.<sup>13</sup> In other terms, they become victims of eco-racism, where oppressive structures victimize and cause suffering for the women who are the least responsible for climate change.

In Canada, where I currently live, "indigenous women have experienced the impacts of climate change for generations though they have been conserving the environment for even longer."<sup>14</sup> At the university where I teach, a good number of the female students suffer from eco-anxiety and display eco-cidal habits like a false sense of separation from fellow students and nature and tend to think in terms of dominating nature as a way of coping. Solastalgia is also common in students and women. Solastalgia is the distress cause by climate crisis connected with the loss of sense of place or sense of belonging.

## Women and Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs)

The rights and roles of women have never been more important as it is now in this time of climate change. July 2, 2020 marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UN Women. In a statement on the day of the anniversary of UN Women, Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said that the human rights of women and girls have more prominence, universality and more urgency than ever before. The SDG associated with climate change is SDG 13, which advises "urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (while acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to

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<sup>10</sup> Himangana Gupta, Women and Climate Change: Linking Ground Perspectives to the Global Scenario in *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 22(3) 408–420.

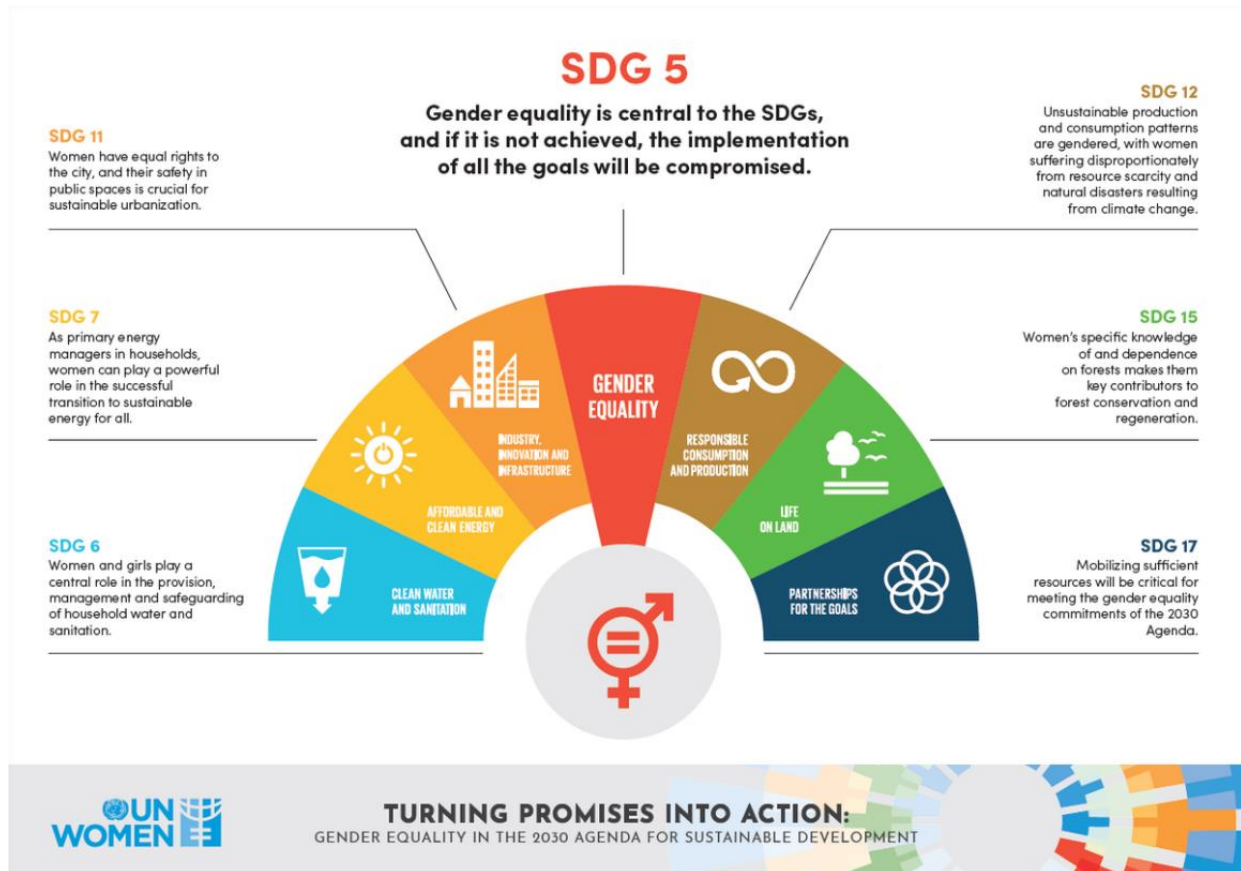
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en> UN report accessed on October 28, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Biju Negi, Reetu Sogani and Vijay Kumar Pandey, "Climate Change, Human Security and Gender," in *Gender and Climate Change: An Introduction*, edited by Irene Dankelman (London, UK; Earthscan, 2010), 72-77.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/women.html> accessed October 28, 2019.

climate change).<sup>15</sup> However, “one of the most critical SDGs is SDG 5, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, because it will have positive cascading effects on the achievement of the other SDGs, including quality education, poverty alleviation, clean energy, reduced inequalities, good health and wellbeing, zero hunger, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth and most importantly, climate action.”<sup>16</sup> The chart<sup>17</sup> below shows the correlation between gender equality and sustainable development



especially with respect to climate action.

We are already seeing some of the devastating effects of climate change, with increasing floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters. Women are the most vulnerable in these situations, facing the maximum risk due to their socio-economic status. With 70% living in poverty, women are disproportionately affected by extreme weather events, loss of agricultural productivity, destruction of life and property and so on, all of which stem from the climate crisis. Women also have the knowledge and understanding of what is needed to adapt to changing environmental circumstances in order to determine practical solutions. But women remain a largely untapped resource due to existing biases, including restricted land rights, lack of access to training, technology and financial resources, and limited

<sup>15</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> accessed July 6, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/09/why-women-cannot-be-spectators-in-the-climate-change-battle/> accessed on July 6, 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

access to political decision making due to under representation. For practical and effective climate change mitigation, we must unleash the knowledge and capability of women.<sup>18</sup>

In every part of the world, women and girls must have an equal share and say. “Women’s equality and empowerment is integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. In short, all the SDGs depend on the achievement of Goal 5.<sup>19</sup>” As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said “if you want to know the plight of a nation you only have to look at the plight of its women.” Discrimination in any form curtails the potential of women, which in turn curtails any and every hope for this world of ours.

So, it should come as no surprise that the plight of our planet depends on no small measure on the plight of women. And, yes, women are more vulnerable to climate change. But like the lotus that blooms in the muddy waters, women resist and refuse to give in and thus become agents of change, of environmental and eco-justice. The UN Watch report on Gender and Climate shows women as having a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction and adaptation strategies.

Women have been active agents in movements of environmental protection and regeneration, often bringing to them a gender-specific perspective. Women, in many cultures are the knowledge keepers. By observing nature, and the behaviour of animals and birds they predict the weather and play an important role in surviving natural disasters. In India “Adhivasi women have used their extensive experience in agriculture to cope with erratic rainfall and drought.”<sup>20</sup> In various parts of the world, women are joining forces and playing a leading role in responding and combating climate change. The story of Gloria Gaia, an Amazonian woman in Brazil who stood up to the loggers and defended not only her family but also helped her neighbours to understand the impact of logging and thus kept them away, is a case in point.<sup>21</sup> Climate activists like the 15 year old indigenous water activist Autumn Peltier, not to mention Greta Thurnberg, are beacons of hope amidst the crisis we are in.

## Women and eco-spirituality

So, what is it that inspires women to be resilient, to fight against climate change and to keep working towards a better world? I bring in Wangari Maathai’s words again. She says she drew inspiration for her movement from the Book of Genesis in the Bible, which helped her understand that the creation is how God has made it possible for us to live on this planet. The postcolonial feminist theologian Kwok Pui Lan says that it is wisdom or Sophia that is the theological grounding for the empowerment of women as agents of climate and environmental justice. I agree. There is a definite eco-spirituality in women that takes on different expressions. Women have an eco-sensitivity and eco-consciousness, and see the spirit of wisdom as the healing and life-giving force. They combine the sacred inherent in the natural world like trees, and plants and water with the understanding of Sophia, or wisdom

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality> accessed on July 6, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Lisa Sowle Cahill, “The Environment, Common Good and, Women’s Participation,” in *Theology and Ecology Across the Disciplines*, Edited by Celia Deane Drummond and Rebecca Artinian-Kaiser (New York: T&T Clarke, 2018), 141.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



thereby developing an eco-theology which undergirds their practice. Eco-spirituality fosters a rootedness, a sense of belonging in places and with the people women encounter. It empowers, and moves women to fight for their own lives, their neighbours' lives and for mother earth that houses and nurtures them.

In some indigenous cultures, women are intermediaries of God and guard mother Earth. The *Gnoni* people of northern Malawi have the ritual of burying their umbilical cord. As Fulata Lusungu Moyo, the African Indigenous eco-feminist says, "to ask 'where are you from' one would say, *ikhupi inkaba yakho* which literally means 'where is your umbilical cord buried?'"<sup>22</sup> There is a deeper meaning to this question. We all know that the umbilical cord is that which connects a baby to her mother and by burying the umbilical cord one is honouring one's connection to the earth, "the place of one's roots and belongings."<sup>23</sup> Other African and indigenous womanist traditions ascribe to a spiritual ecology that considers the earth as sacred and nature as a reflection of the divine.<sup>24</sup> This is also referred to as ecowomanism that sees "Earth as God and Nature as its spirit."<sup>25</sup> For the indigenous women of the Igoroth mountain tribe in Phillipines "the earth is a living being and it has spirit just like all the living things in it. The rivers, mountains, trees, paddy fields . . . each has its own spirit."<sup>26</sup> Thus the earth is the woman's partner in giving and sustaining life.<sup>27</sup>

In Hinduism, the 'feminine' is associated with a duality. The woman is the bestower, as well as the destroyer of life. She is 'sakti' (energy/power), the energizing principle of the universe and 'prakriti' (nature), the undifferentiated matter of the universe. According to Hindu scriptures, all beings arise from 'brahman', which is beyond manifestation. From this unmanifested substance, other beings are made manifest through the sakti. This sakti is the creative principle underlying both creation and divinity and it is female. Power is thus embodied by femaleness. Undergirded by eco-spirituality, be it from the scriptures, spiritual ecology, ecowomanism, Sophia – whatever the source of inspiration – women are and can become forces of resistance against climate change, scarcity of resources and poverty.<sup>28</sup> They are agents of environmental and eco-justice undergirded by eco-theology. As those involved in the discourses on climate change and sustainability in religion, we cannot but advocate for the increased participation of women in climate initiatives.

## So, what now?

I am a university professor and the pertinent question is "How can the subject of religion and or theology be integrated with the theme of sustainability and climate change?"

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<sup>22</sup> In isiZulu, *Ukugqiba Inkaba* means burying the umbilical cord. Fulata Lusungu Moyo, "Ukugqiba Inkaba – Burying the Umbilical Cord: An African Indigenous Eco-feminist View of Incarnation," in *Planetary Solidarity: Planetary Women's Voices on Christian Doctrine and Climate Justice*, (eds) Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Hilda P Koster (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 179.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Melanie L. Harris, "Ecowomanist Wisdom: Encountering Earth and Spirit," in *Planetary Solidarity: Planetary Women's Voices on Christian Doctrine and Climate Justice*, (eds) Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Hilda P Koster (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 241. However, it is important to note that theistic, pantheistic and panentheistic views co-exist in ecowomanism

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Cahill, 143.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Cahill, 145.

Some years ago I came across a Ted talk by Akpezi Ogbuiwge, the former Head of Environmental Education and Training of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), titled, “Africa: An Alternative Narrative” where she talks of a person waking up in 2026 to a new Africa that offered a model for the world. She goes on to say that it was a group of young people who took it upon themselves to change the narrative and fulfill what was called the sustainability dream, which valued the collective, and not the individual. It is my responsibility, all of our responsibility, to instill that kind of passion and commitment in the young people and kids of our time.

The present ecological crisis reflects a crisis in human consciousness, where the relationship with the earth and cosmos has been largely shaped by the stories that emphasized humanity’s dominion over nature. Climate change calls us, provokes our humanity to question and challenges traditional perceptions of our relationships with the Earth and, by extension, our relationships with each other and with God. It challenges us to envision a single theological climate in which the way we relate to one feeds back into our relationships with the others. How do we get our students, our children and grandchildren involved in this call for a new consciousness, an eco-consciousness or an earth consciousness that values the collective and not just the individual; that values connection and not separation? Eco-consciousness can help us redeem our stories from those of dominion to stories of connectedness and restore the damage committed against peoples, places, plants, animals, mountains, rivers and oceans.<sup>29</sup> We have this incredible opportunity to instill this sense of interconnectedness that makes us an earth community into young minds. There is this beautiful saying in India – if you want to build a boat you do not gather people around you, cut a tree, make planks and assign tasks to them. Instead you instill in them the longing for the endless immensity of the sea. We have to find ways to connect the hearts and minds of our students to that of the earth and instill that kind of passion and commitment. One of the best ways of making that human connection are through stories, not doctrines. So, the first thing is to translate the doctrines to stories. What is the doctrine of trinity if not a story of connectedness, of relationships!

As a teacher, I cannot but strive to inspire my students (also our youth, our children and grand children) to think outside the box, create cracks in their rigid framework, shift their level of consciousness and change the narrative so that it fosters respect and care for life, ecological integrity, diversity, human rights, economic justice, culture of peace. One of the tools that I have found very helpful in integrating the themes of sustainability and climate with theology is the Earth Charter. The Earth Charter is a document with sixteen principles powering a global movement towards a more just, sustainable and peaceful world.<sup>30</sup> The earth charter at its core is about solidarity that respects the interconnected, communal nature of life on planet earth; it is a call to listen the voice of the earth, a vision of hope and a call to action. At its twentieth anniversary of June 29, 2020, the Earth Charter adopted the motto, “Turning conscious into action.” Yes, it is high time we turned our conscious into action. In each course I teach, there is at least one assignment connected to the principle of

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<sup>29</sup> Neddy Astudillo, “Inter-Religious Cooperation in Eco-Ethics A Latin American Experience: For Together towards Eco-Theologies, Ethics of Sustainability and Eco-Friendly Churches,” in *Kairos for Creation: Confessing Hope for the Earth*, (eds) Louk Andrianos, Michael Biehl, Ruth Gütter, Jochen Motte, Andar Parlindungan, Thomas Sandner, Juliane Stork and Dietrich Werner (foedus-verlag, Solingen, 2019), 99-105.

<sup>30</sup> <https://earthcharter.org/> accessed December 20, 2018.

ecological integrity in the earth charter with special attention to climate change. For example, in my intro to theology class, I give the following assignment:

Choose a biblical or any religious/theological text that speaks to a piece of art on the topic “God/divine/Sacred and the Earth” taking into consideration climate change. You may choose to concentrate on various aspects of climate change as it relates to your area of interest/vocation. Topics may range from stewardship of the earth, global warming, justice to the earth, water etc. The aim is to find a visual depiction that connects the religious text and the issue and write on it. Students are required to use the Earth Charter as one of the resources and connect to its principle on Ecological Integrity.

Instead of using someone else’s art (though it is an option) I encourage them to walk around the neighbourhood and take pictures, and/or create their own art. It is so heartening to see what they come up with and often tears well up as I read their papers.

### **Engendering earth-consciousness, eco-consciousness**

As an educator, I am called to engender earth consciousness in my students, to shift my students’ level of consciousness so that they stop and think about how they perceive their environment. We all know how one sees or perceives the environment depends on how one responds to it. If our stories of earth come from the perspective of dominion then our attitude towards the earth will be one of dominion, to subdue it. If our stories of earth are of connectedness, then our response will be relational.

Let me give you an example. India is known for the monstrous practice of female feticide. However, one village in Rajasthan took a bold move.<sup>31</sup> The villagers of Piplantri decided to plant 111 trees to celebrate the birth of each girl born in the village. They see trees as prayers like what Indian philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore said years ago, “Be still my heart, these trees are great prayers.” Or as Martin Luther said, the trees are better sermons than the ones you and I preach. Though the custom was started by the former village leader to honour his daughter who died at a very young age, the practice continues. “The people of the village band together to raise a sort of “trust” for the girl. They collect Rs. 21,000 (around \$315) and the girl’s parents contribute Rs. 10,000 (around \$150), creating a Rs. 31,000 fixed deposit account for the girl which sees her through adulthood. The parents respect the ‘trust’ placed on them and makes sure that their daughter receive education and will get her married only after the legal age of 18.”<sup>32</sup> This can be seen as activism on a variety of levels but what started as an eco-feminist movement now has become a sustainable way of living. The community of Piplantri ensures that the trees survive and grow to adulthood. They have planted multiple species of trees that have begun to bring the village much needed revenue. “The trees become a symbol for the baby girl and the villagers work just as hard to protect the trees from termites, by planting aloe vera (acting as natural pesticide) around the trees, as they do the girls from violence and oppression.”<sup>33</sup> The aloe vera, as a beauty product, has since become a source of revenue. Since 2012, over a quarter of a million trees have been

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<sup>31</sup> This story is taken directly from <https://www.onegreenplanet.org/environment/village-in-india-plants-plants-trees-every-time-a-little-girl-is-born/>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

planted in Piplantri. “This is a moving example of the intimate connection between the social health and environmental health of the village, creating a truly sustainable future for community members.”<sup>34</sup> This act of the people of Piplantri is borne out of earth consciousness, an understanding that humanity is part of the earth, part of the universe, not a separate entity.

We are in dire need of new stories born out of an earth consciousness, a relational and embodied understanding of ourselves vis-à-vis the earth; we need a re-storying about the earth that includes our interconnectedness with the planet, and the re-storying needs to start now and with each one of us here and whatever vocation we are engaged in. I teach theology and so I start there. When I talk about Earth, I speak of her as a verb (not a noun) in that it is living and dynamic; not preconditioned but evolving. We call Earth our home because it is our source, origin and basis for everything that makes and keeps us alive.<sup>35</sup> In “Addressing God with names of Earth”<sup>36</sup> the Lutheran theologian Lisa Dahill invites her readers to address God, the first person of the trinity, as “Earth.” What a wonderful idea! It not only helps us to think outside the box but more importantly it fosters Earth consciousness. So, as part of this web of creation, as members of the Earth community, what we can do is enable each other, our students, our children, our grandchildren, to listen to the voice of the earth and pay heed to her stories. We can teach and share what we know with the communities that we are part of in such a way that Earth consciousness becomes our language, which in turn enables us to change the narrative and create a better world. I am a member of the World Social Forum (WSF) that started in 2001 with the motto “another world is possible”. At the concluding event, Arundhati Roy, the Man Booker prize winner for her book *God of Small Things*, poignantly said, “another world is not only possible, she is on her way, on a quiet day I can hear her breathing.” She was indeed on her way. In the 2016 forum our motto had an urgency to it and said, “another world is needed; together we can make it possible.” And we came together in response to that need. In 2018 the motto read “to Resist is to Create, to Resist is to Transform” and transformation was happening. When WSF met in 2019 the aim was to show that another world already exists. I do believe that this another world already exists where climate action is at work. We just have to awaken it and what better way but through eco-consciousness!

I end with a blessing.

The peace of the earth be with you,  
the peace of the heavens too  
The peace of the rivers be with you,  
the peace of the oceans too  
Deep peace flowing in you,  
God’s peace growing in you.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Heather Eaton, “An Earth-Centric Theological Framing for Planetary Solidarity,” in *Planetary Solidarity*, 24.

<sup>36</sup> Lisa E Dahill, “Addressing God with names of Earth” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 43:3 (July 2016): 27–31.

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