



COP26 Policy Brief: Faith for a Safe Climate Future

A Calling for the Inclusion of Religious Perspectives in Climate Policy

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATION:

Morality-centred solutions which harness the influence of faith institutions are crucial for transformative change and acceleration in individual, community, and international-level responses to the climate crisis.

Background

The climate crisis is not fundamentally a challenge of science, but a challenge of our beliefs, commitments and actions. According to the UN Secretary General, there is “a clear moral imperative to protect the lives and livelihoods of those on the front lines of the climate crisis”; which leads to the question of which organizations can and should facilitate such rapid action at scale to avert climate catastrophe. In the instance of food systems, current goals (in most western, developed countries) is to ensure plentiful, convenient, cheap, attractive, diverse foods on demand whenever we need it. However, such goals have led to soil degradation, labour exploitation, biodiversity loss, overuse of pesticides and fertilisers, excessive packaging, and high carbon emissions from transportation. A pivot to goals around health, environmental sustainability, just work and ensuring people are connected to the landscapes where their food is produced is needed.

Research at Nottingham

The University of Nottingham is leading ongoing research which identifies the potential for interventions framed in religious terms to initiate, activate and sustain pro-environmental behaviours among lay Christians. Our study of responses to the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent Book 2020 “[Saying Yes to Life](#)” revealed that theological messages about the environment led to a reduction in beliefs that humans are above nature, and greater appreciation of and obligation towards the natural world. We also observed that people adopted more environmentally friendly lifestyles, particularly when it came to energy use, food choices and recycling habits. This work suggests potential for positive actions for environmental stewardship rooted in faith-based values, beliefs and worldviews.

Faith perspectives are underexplored, even though [they hold such untapped potential](#) for action on climate change. [The ability of faith](#) to connect individual, community, and international level responses is particularly needed in the context of complex sustainability challenges.



Implications for Climate Change

Framing climate change in terms of morality shifts the discussion from being about what is politically expedient or economically feasible to what is ultimately the right thing to do. The complexity of policy issues such as Nationally Determined Contributions, innovative financing arrangements, new technological solutions, and priorities for adapting to natural disasters can mask the fact that there is an urgent need for transformative (not just superficial or incremental) change. Faith traditions around the world have been gathering pace in responding to the climate and nature crises. Faith communities may offer hope for change across various domains including deep, personal motivations and paradigms, practical and financial resources needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and individual behaviours of citizens around the world. The need for new solutions and new climate coalitions is urgent – faith for the future is needed more than ever.

Further Reading

Read the [full article](#)

Read Dr Chris Ives’s [COP26 blog](#)

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