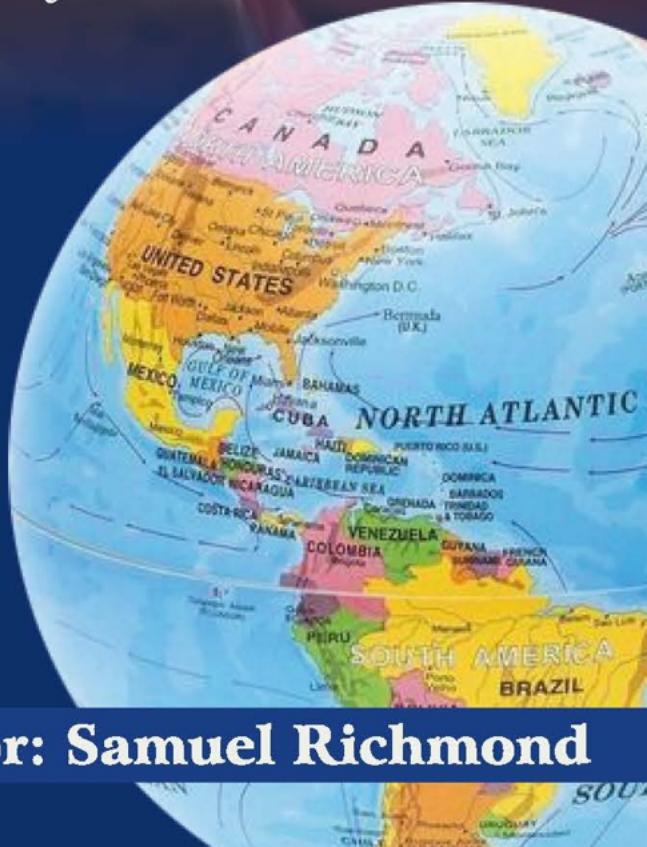


# Bible and 17 Sustainable Development Goals Devotional

*Foreword by Chris Elisara*



**Editor: Samuel Richmond**

This book is a unique resource that brings together the timeless wisdom of Scripture with the urgent call of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In a world struggling with poverty, hunger, inequality, conflict, and ecological crisis, this devotional demonstrates how the biblical vision of justice, peace, and flourishing directly intersects with the global agenda for sustainable living.

Through these 17 devotionals—each linked to a specific SDG—different authors explore God's heart for humanity and creation. It draws on biblical narratives, theological reflections, contemporary stories, and prayers to show how Christian faith is not only spiritual but also deeply practical, calling believers to action in society. Each chapter equips readers to see the SDGs not merely as policy goals, but as expressions of biblical values such as compassion, stewardship, justice, equality, and shalom.

Designed for pastors, students, churches, and communities, this devotional equips readers to integrate faith with action, to pray and work for change, and to embody God's kingdom vision of shalom on earth.

#### Why read this book?

- To deepen the understanding of the biblical foundation for justice and sustainability.
- To be equipped with practical ways of engaging the world's most pressing challenges.
- To be inspired by stories of hope that connect faith with action.
- To understand the deep connection of 17 Sustainable Development Goals with God's Word in God's world.
- To join the movement of Christians who believe that following Christ includes transforming communities and caring for creation.

*Engaging the SDGs gives Christians a chance to practice something deeply biblical: to build bridges of common concern, to collaborate where goals overlap with God's purposes, and to witness by word and deed to the kingdom of Christ.*

-Dr. Chris Elisara  
WEA Special Envoy for  
Environment, Climate, and Cities



Rev. Dr. Samuel Richmond currently serves as the Executive Director and Professor of Christian Theology at Caleb Institute, Gurugram, India. He also holds the position of Honorary Project Support Officer at the WEA Sustainability Centre. In addition, he serves as the Honorary Secretary of the Theological Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of India and is a member of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA).

An ordained minister of the Church of North India, he is also an active member of the Sadhu Sundar Singh Global Forum. He has a keen interest in promoting Creation Care, Science and Theology at different forum from last two decades. As an author he has written book on *Contemporary Issues in Science and Theology* (2018) and edited *No Turning Back: Reflections on Mission, Theology, and Spirituality of Sadhu Sundar Singh* (2024).



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# Bible and 17 Sustainable Development Goals Devotional

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EDITOR  
Samuel Richmond



2025

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## Foreword



The Bible unfolds a grand story of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. At the center stands the Creator God, who lovingly plants a garden for God and humanity to inhabit together. That garden was more than geography; it was God's dwelling place for humanity, the prototype of flourishing life in right relationship with Him, neighbor, creation—heaven itself, where the realms of God and humanity overlapped in harmony. Yet that harmony was ruptured by the fall, as sin fractured humanity's fellowship with God, with one another, and with creation itself. The story, however, does not end there. It moves toward the city of God on earth—the New Jerusalem—where God and His people dwell together once more, and where earth and heaven, once divided, are fully united under God's reign. At the center of this story is the Gospel of Jesus Christ: the good news that through Jesus' life and ministry, death, and resurrection all things are being reconciled to God. We are invited to participate in that redemption, to experience it ourselves, and to be agents of the Gospel in the world, and to the world, God so loves.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), developed and adopted by the nations of the world and grounded in research, evidence, and shared moral and ethical concern, name many of the wounds of our world: poverty, hunger, violence, broken cities, and a groaning creation—wounds that Scripture itself testifies to and that Christ came to heal. While Christians may not agree with every framework or philosophy behind the SDGs, we can still see in them echoes of God's concern for justice, mercy, and human flourishing—

reminding us of Scripture's call to "love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8), to bring good news to the poor (Luke 4:18), and of the reality that Jesus himself teaches us to long and pray fervently with the words, "your will [God] be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

Engaging the SDGs gives Christians a chance to practice something deeply biblical: to build bridges of common concern, to collaborate where goals overlap with God's purposes, and to witness by word and deed to the kingdom of Christ. In a fractured and polarized world, Christians can "code switch"—finding words others can understand without compromising the truth we hold—since humility and a readiness to learn shape our witness. This ability to listen deeply, learn, speak respectfully and intelligently about the SDGs, and meet others where they are allows us to build bridges without losing our identity in Christ.

To pray for the SDGs, then, is not to baptize a secular agenda. It is to discover and align our hearts with God's mission, to intercede for our neighbours and for the nations, and to open ourselves to the Spirit's guidance in how we are to live. Sometimes this means joining hands with others to achieve shared goals; other times it means bearing witness to a different vision when we cannot agree, and doing so with civility and grace as we talk through our differences. Always it means living as those who belong to the kingdom that has come and is coming.

This devotional is a guide into that calling. Each page connects the great needs of our world with the promises of Scripture and the hope of the Gospel. As you pray through these reflections, may you discover both the courage to stand in Christ's truth and the humility to walk with others in common cause. And may your prayers become part of God's answer—the renewal of people, places, and creation until Christ is all in all.

**Chris Elisara, Ph.D.,  
WEA Special Envoy for Environment,  
Climate and Cities**

## Preface



In an era marked by global crises—from climate change to poverty and inequality—the Church faces a vital call to respond with both conviction and compassion. In today's turbulent world, where social, environmental, and economic challenges intersect and intensify, *The Bible and 17 SDGs Devotional* offer a timely and inspiring resource that bridges faith with action by revealing how the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) align deeply with biblical truths.

These goals are far from merely secular ambitions; they reflect divine imperatives. Rooted in Scripture such as Psalm 24:1, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,” this devotional affirms that caring for creation, pursuing justice, and alleviating human suffering lie at the heart of the Gospel.

Bringing together the wisdom and lived experience of authors representing diverse church traditions, cultural backgrounds, and areas of ministry—including creation care, sustainable development, and active service—this devotional connects each SDG with the call to Christian discipleship. The authors are internationally renowned and represent different continents of the world, offering a truly global Christian perspective. Through thoughtful reflections and prayers, it provides both theological insight and practical guidance for faithful living in today's complex world.

This work dismantles the artificial divide between evangelism and social action, presenting a holistic vision where spiritual maturity

embraces community transformation and global solidarity. It invites believers to embody their faith not by withdrawing from the world's challenges but by becoming active agents of hope, healing, and renewal.

Special thanks are due to Chris Elisara, Emily Lange, Matthias Boehning and Allen Drew for their invaluable editorial support.

As you engage with these pages, may you be transformed, mobilized, and inspired to be a blessing to the nations. The world is waiting—and the time to act is now.

**Samuel Richmond**

## DAY 1

# None in Need in God's Kingdom



### SDG 1: No Poverty

“Eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030 is a pivotal goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Between 2015 and 2018, global poverty continued its historical decline, with the poverty rate falling from 10.1 per cent in 2015 to 8.6 per cent in 2018. Nowcasts suggest that owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global poverty rate increased sharply from 8.3 per cent in 2019 to 9.2 per cent in 2020, representing the first increase in extreme poverty since 1998 and the largest increase since 1990 and setting back poverty reduction by about three years.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic reversed the steady progress of poverty reduction over the past 25 years. This unprecedented reversal is being further exacerbated by rising inflation and the impacts of the war in Ukraine. It is estimated that these combined crises will lead to an additional 75 million–95 million people living in extreme poverty in 2022, compared with pre-pandemic projections.”- UN Official Site

**Bible Passage: Luke 4: 16-21**

<sup>14</sup>Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. <sup>15</sup>He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

<sup>16</sup>He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

<sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” <sup>20</sup>Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. <sup>21</sup>He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

*Verse 18: The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.*

Once a little girl named Esther asked her mother, ‘Is being poor a sin?’ Mother was astonished and asked, ‘What made you ask such a question?’ She replied that she heard from her schoolteacher that being poor is a sin.

How do we respond to such a question? In some cultures, it is believed that if a person is poor, it is because of his or her previous karma, and such people are under a curse. Sadly, in the era of globalisation, the rich are becoming richer, and the poor are becoming poorer. Unfortunately, in many societies, poor are condemned and rich are honored. It is often said that poverty is a consequence of a lack of knowledge and a lack of mastery over the technology to generate wealth. The first SDG states that we want to end poverty “in all its forms.” Indeed, it’s a big challenge for the church and the society to eradicate poverty but it’s not impossible.

Caring for the poor is one of the main themes in the bible. There are bible passages, parables, and several incidents that emphasize

God's concern for the poor. The Bible says: 'If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard hearted or tight fisted toward them. Rather, be open handed and freely lend them whatever they need' (Deut.15:7-8). In the Gospel of Luke, the writer addresses the topics of wealth, poverty, money, greed etc, but in conclusion, he states that God favours the poor. In Luke Chapter 4:18, Jesus shares that God anointed Him, 'to proclaim good news to the poor.' 'Good news for the poor,' means that God is on the side of the poor. James defines the real meaning of 'religion.' For him, 'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world' (James 1:27). In his article, 'A New Accounting of Wealth and Poverty in Luke' David D. M. King states that Luke has 74 verses that mention God's favor for the poor and 73 verses containing warnings against wealth. Through the Good News, Jesus wants to bless the poor with God's Shalom.

In its earliest days, the early Church manifested the fulfilment of the Old Testament ideals within the concept of shalom: "All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had... There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need" Acts 4:32, 34-35. They did this because of their faith in Jesus as the anointed one, the Lord, the Prince of Peace (shalom), who makes shalom a social reality by the transformative power of the Holy Spirit at work in the followers of Christ.

Esther was relaxed when her mother explained that both poor and rich are created by God in His image and likeness and that being poor or rich is neither a punishment nor a sin. Actually, God favours the poor! Poverty is rising not because of personal sin but because society has failed to understand the importance of 'sharing and caring.' Unfortunately, developing countries are suffering because of the present global economic policies and mismanagement. Do our communities favour the poor? Whatever our means, as

believers we are called to share in the Spirit the good news to the poor. The Church is a vibrant community of believers. Our collective communal strength in Christ becomes a blessing of public good to others in need. Our love for God and for one another should flow for neighbours and 'enemies'. From our commonwealth as followers of Christ, we challenge injustice and meet the needs of the poor among us. In Christ, the oppressed are freed, and economic harmony can be created as a witness to the world which will be the ultimate fulfilment of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:19).

*"The opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is enough."*

*Dr. Wess Stafford, President Emeritus of  
Compassion International*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for creating us in your image and likeness. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you became poor so that we may abound in the riches of your goodness, grace, love and mercy. Please help us to understand the suffering of others. Give us the heart of compassion and love so that we may reach and care for those among us who are living in poverty. We pray that you give our political and economic leaders wisdom to devise plans to eradicate poverty. May your Holy Spirit guide us and help us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### ***Prayer of those Living in Poverty***

Dear Father, thank you for becoming man in your Son Jesus. Thank you for coming into the midst of this world and enduring its unkindness and injustice in your own body. You are a compassionate God, you since you exposed yourself to all that we humans have to bear and endure every day. We can know that you are close to us and understand in the deepest way how we feel. We praise you that you are a God who is interested in us human beings - also in those who in the eyes of the world are among the least and the most neglected.

You do not measure a person's worth according to his wealth, position in society, or influence. Every person is equally important to you and you approach everyone in an equal, loving and blessing way.

Father, help me through this day. Give us the strength and the means to stand in life today. Each day we gratefully receive from your hand.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. Make prevailing poverty in your community a topic of conversation - sometimes this requires us to first have our eyes opened to the cruel reality of poverty, sometimes it requires our courage as people living in poverty to speak out and denounce the injustice, to point out to the rich and influential that one of the most important measures of the strength of a society is its treatment of the most vulnerable
2. Donate money, commodities, or time to local and worldwide poverty-fighting organisations
3. Since education reduces poverty, thus support educational programmes, particularly for marginalised groups
4. Join or support community development programmes that improve infrastructure, sanitation, and basic services.

*Samuel Richmond*



## END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE

IF CURRENT  
TRENDS CONTINUE,  
BY 2030

**575 MILLION**

PEOPLE WILL STILL BE  
LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY



ONLY ONE THIRD  
OF COUNTRIES WILL HAVE  
HALVED THEIR NATIONAL  
POVERTY LEVELS

MANY OF THE  
**WORLD'S VULNERABLE POPULATION**  
REMAIN UNCOVERED BY SOCIAL PROTECTION

IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES, ONLY



RECEIVED SOCIAL PROTECTION CASH BENEFITS

(2020)

IN RESPONSE TO THE  
COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS,



**105 COUNTRIES**

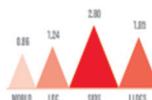
ANNOUNCED ALMOST  
350 SOCIAL PROTECTION  
MEASURES IN THE PAST

**12 MONTHS**

(FEB. 2022 - FEB. 2023)

LDCs, SIDS AND LLDCs  
FACE HIGHER VULNERABILITY  
TO DISASTERS

AVERAGE ANNUAL NUMBER OF  
DEATHS OR MISSING PERSONS  
PER 100,000 POPULATION  
(2012-2021)



WORLDWIDE, COUNTRIES HAVE **INCREASED GOVERNMENT SPENDING** ON  
ESSENTIAL SERVICES (EDUCATION, HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION) SINCE 2015

2015

47%

2021

53%

## DAY 2

# Generosity in Scarcity



### SDG 2: Zero Hunger

“Sustainable Development Goal 2 is about creating a world free of hunger by 2030. In 2020, between 720 million and 811 million persons worldwide were suffering from hunger, roughly 161 million more than in 2019. Also in 2020, a staggering 2.4 billion people, or above 30 per cent of the world’s population, were moderately or severely food-insecure, lacking regular access to adequate food. The figure increased by nearly 320 million people in just one year.

Globally, 149.2 million children under 5 years of age, or 22.0 per cent, were suffering from stunting (low height for their age) in 2020, a decrease from 24.4 per cent in 2015. The number of people going hungry and suffering from food insecurity had been gradually rising between 2014 and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis has pushed those rising rates even higher and has also exacerbated all forms of malnutrition, particularly in children. The war in Ukraine is further disrupting global food supply chains and creating the biggest global food crisis since the Second World War.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: John 6:25-35

<sup>25</sup>When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I

performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.<sup>27</sup>Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”<sup>28</sup>Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”<sup>29</sup>Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

<sup>30</sup>So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? <sup>31</sup>Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’<sup>32</sup>Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.<sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup>“Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”<sup>35</sup>Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

*Verse 35: Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

During the notorious pandemic lockdown, millions of people in the Philippines were suddenly stranded and unable to earn their daily wage. While nation leaders scrambled to find solutions to meet the needs of the people, examples of generosity began to emerge from within the community. A simple but powerful gesture from one person ended up sparking a nationwide movement.

In the middle of the lockdown, Patricia, who had to temporarily close her small business in Metro Manila, spontaneously set up a tiny community pantry to help feed fellow Filipinos during that difficult time. Next to the mini pantry filled with basic items like rice and fresh vegetables she included a sign, which translated from Tagalog read, “Give according to one’s ability, get according to one’s need”. Folks in the neighbourhood responded by taking what they needed from the cart and then adding whatever they could. Within a few days, other community pantries began sprouting up all over the country. And

for quite some time afterwards, families, community groups and churches practiced extending generosity in times of scarcity. The community pantries themselves did not ensure food security for the entire nation, but it was a significant invitation to participate in how God intends for us to live, and not simply providing what is needed to survive.

When Jesus said, “I am the bread of life”, He assured His believers that He is the ultimate source of spiritual and physical needs. He reminded his hearers that when Israelites were hungry in the wilderness, it was God who provided manna not Moses. As we approach Him in faith, we find providence in the form of life-giving bread. He is our daily bread on whom we feed daily. The Psalmist says, *‘the lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing (Psalm 34: 10).’* By partaking in His richness, it becomes our responsibility as Christians to share our resources with others. God’s provision sometimes comes through acts of generosity from His people. In the new covenant, we become a Christ-centred community of God’s people. As God supplies, we are obligated to share, not just with one another but with our neighbours in need. In our new covenant shalom reality, Christ-followers are empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill God’s injunction as mentioned in Isaiah 58:6-14, which includes “Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them...” (Isaiah 58:7). Part of God’s generosity to us will enable us to share and support one another wherever and however possible. Our goal is to strive hard for zero hunger. We need to be actively involved in providing others through the love and compassion of Lord Jesus Christ. Let our example be Patricia, who through her small efforts, became a beacon of God’s light for many hungry individuals.

*His command still holds to feed the physical hunger, and after that the spiritual hunger with the Bread of Life that came down from heaven and giveth life to the world. He came that they might have life and have it more abundantly.*

Sam Higginbottom  
(American missionary to India, 1874-1958)

***Prayer of Commitment***

Dear Creator God, thank you for providing for your creation in every way. Thank you for reminding us through your word that we also have a role in providing and caring for one another. Help us to share and extend generosity not only in our abundance but also in our need. Let us share our tables and pantries with those among us, who are hungry and even with the stranger. And may our commitment to our horizontal relationships help deepen our vertical relationship with you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

***Prayer of those Suffering from Hunger***

O Lord, who satisfies the poor with good things, you are the sustainer of those in need and have not forgotten us in our time of hunger. We come to you today asking that you would provide for our needs through your provision. You are a God who cares deeply for us and has promised to never leave nor forsake us. We acknowledge that it is not through our own doing or strength that we can survive, but only by you and the work of your hands. We look to You for protection from harm and strength in our current season. May we never forget your unending love despite our lack of faithfulness.

We thank you for your grace and mercy that is new every morning. You alone are our hope and our help in times of need, so we pray for your provision as we believe in your promises. We long to see the fulfillment of those promises in our lives and trust that you will provide abundantly according to your will.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What You Can Do**

1. Pray for our human and non-human neighbours – especially those who are experiencing hunger and food insecurity
2. Open your hearts and hands to groups committed to feeding the hungry. Support them & get personally involved.
3. Invite the hungry into your homes and churches for both physical & spiritual nourishment

*Jasmine Kwong*



## END HUNGER, ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY AND IMPROVED NUTRITION AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

CONFLICT, COVID-19, CLIMATE CHANGE  
AND GROWING INEQUALITIES  
ARE CONVERGING TO UNDERMINE  
FOOD SECURITY WORLDWIDE



TO REDUCE STUNTING IN  
CHILDREN BY 50% BY 2030,  
ANNUAL RATE OF DECLINE  
MUST DOUBLE  
(FROM 2.1 TO 3.9% PER YEAR)

## UKRAINE CRISIS TRIGGERED FOOD SHORTAGES FOR THE WORLD'S POOREST PEOPLE

UKRAINE AND THE RUSSIAN  
FEDERATION SUPPLY  
GLOBAL EXPORTS:



## DAY 3

# Yahweh Rapha and His Ground Staff



### SDG 3: Good Health & Wellbeing

“Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages is essential to sustainable development. Currently, the world is facing a global health crisis unlike any other — COVID-19 is spreading human suffering, destabilizing the global economy and upending the lives of billions of people around the globe.

Many more efforts are needed to fully conquer a wide range of diseases and address various persistent and emerging health problems. By focusing on more efficient financing of health systems, improved sanitation and hygiene, better access to doctors, and reduced air pollution, significant progress can be made to help save the lives of millions.” – UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Mark 5:25-34

<sup>25</sup>And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. <sup>26</sup>She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. <sup>27</sup>When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup>because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” <sup>29</sup>Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

<sup>30</sup>At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

<sup>31</sup>“You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

<sup>32</sup>But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup>Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup>He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

***Verse 34: “He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering”***

If there is one characteristic identifying feature of our Lord Jesus during his time on earth, it is this: Wherever he went, he proved to be a physician for the sick, bringing healing. In Galilee, Jesus went from town to town, “healing all the diseases and infirmities of the people” (Matthew 4:23). In Judea, “great crowds followed him, and he healed them there” (Matthew 19:2). Whether he came to villages, towns, or the countryside, people laid the sick in the marketplaces, knowing that this man called Jesus could heal them. People begged him that they might touch even the edge of his cloak, and “all who touched it were healed” (Mark 6:56). What is true of him is also true of his followers: “Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to cast out unclean spirits and to heal all diseases and infirmities” (Matthew 10:1). Every single day of his ministry on earth, and right up to the last hours of his life, when he healed the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, Jesus proved himself to be Yahweh Rapha incarnate, the God who heals. We first learn of this name of God in Exodus 15:26, and it runs like a thread through the Bible.

The Bible teaches us in numerous places how physical and spiritual health are interrelated. In the above passage Mark 5: 25-34, Jesus heals a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She was confident that by touching the hem of his garment she would

be healed. As she touched his garment and her bleeding stopped and Jesus turned and told her that her faith had made her healed. In this healing Jesus showed how faith in God is well associated with healing. Women's faith in Jesus, empowered her. The wisdom of the scriptures brings health. We are to trust it more than our own understanding, as this is good for our lives - even to the point of physical health. Proverbs 3: 5-8 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and rely not on your understanding; submit to him in all your ways, and he will make your paths straight. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord and avoid evil. This will make your body healthy and nourish your bones."

From beginning to end, the Bible also classifies health as a high and important value, but at the same time brings it into a wonderful overall balance and healthy context. Jesus healed people not only physically but also spiritually by forgiving their sins (Luke 5:20). God is Yahweh Rapha on all levels: He has the power to heal physically (2 Kings 5:10), emotionally (Psalm 34:18), mentally (Daniel 4:34), and spiritually (Psalm 103:2-3). Proverbs 4:20-22 says, "My son, pay attention to what I say to you, and listen carefully to my words. Do not lose sight of them, keep them in your heart; for they are life to him who finds them, and health to the whole body." No form of illness, in any area of our human existence, is excluded from the healing power of God. Psalm 103:2-4 says, "Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and mercy."

While it is inevitably part of the reality of our human life on earth to see, acknowledge, and endure the pervasive existence of sickness, pain, suffering, and death in this world, the Bible repeatedly presents us with a wonderful vision of the future that ties into this hope of complete healing and total health: one day all of these sorrowful, painful experiences of our human existence will be taken away, and Jesus will heal every pain through his Second Coming. In Revelation 21:4 we read, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death, mourning, crying and pain will be no more, for the old order of things has passed away."

In the meantime, in a world without universal health and well-being for billions of people, we as followers of Jesus are called to turn especially to those among us who are sick, weak and frail. In them we may recognize our neighbor, in them we may recognize Jesus himself. In Matthew 25:36, Jesus clarifies this mission by saying, “I have been sick, and you have visited me.” In a world like ours today, with all the health challenges, what does it mean to “visit God”? It all begins in our personal environment: We are invited to take an authentic and compassionate interest in those who are sick and in need of healing. We then walk in Jesus’ footsteps; it is a sign of the Kingdom of God. If we are sick, weak and needy we are not to be excluded from our societies. On the contrary, the Bible teaches us the exact opposite: we deserve physical, mental and emotional visitation - genuine attention. Yahweh Rapha turns to the sick and the weak, those suffering from pain and infirmity. Are we going along as his ground staff?

*The birth of the baby Jesus stands as the most significant event in all history, because it has meant the pouring into a sick world the healing medicine of love which has transformed all manner of hearts for almost two thousand years.*

*George Matthew Adams*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

God, you are Yahweh Rapha, the God who heals. You turn in a special way to the sick, the weak and the infirm. Jesus, you meet people in their suffering, pain and need in a special way. Thank you for allowing us to carry within us a wonderful hope that one day death, sorrow, crying and pain will be no more. Help me, as an expression of my discipleship, to visit those who need our special attention, our special help, care and nurture. And help me, as an expression of my discipleship, to contribute to stronger health care systems in my home country and around the globe.

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from Illness***

Heavenly Father, we come to you humbly in prayer asking for your help in this time of illness. We ask that you hear the cries of our hearts and fill us with strength, courage and peace in our suffering. Lord, we

read in scripture where Jesus healed many who were sick and afflicted. We ask that you have mercy on us and heal our bodies.

Guide the hands of doctors, nurses and all those who are treating us. Give them wisdom and knowledge that surpasses man's understanding. We thank you for hearing our cries and we trust in your will. We praise you for healing now or in the future.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. *Live healthy* - when we understand our body, health and well-being as a gift from God, we behave responsibly with regard to our health. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 we read, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body."
2. *Visit God* - by visiting the sick and understanding "visit" as extensive attention, care and concern. Where are there sick, frail and weak people in your environment and how can you become Christ's ambassador for them?
3. *Promote healthy living* - Where can you help strengthen health care and reduce threats to human health? Are there substance abuse support groups that still need workers? How can children and the elderly be better protected from road hazards? Where does environmental pollution from plastics, chemicals, and other substances lead to threats to people's health, and what can I do about it practically (for example, through collective cleanup efforts in my village)?
4. *Advocate for strong and efficient health systems* - in our modern, complex, interconnected societies, the question "What have you done?" extends to the systemic level (e.g., health systems, health financing, etc.) and our political and social commitment to it.

*Matthias Boehning*

3 GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



## ENSURE HEALTHY LIVES AND PROMOTE WELL-BEING FOR ALL AT ALL AGES

### NOTABLE STRIDES HAVE BEEN MADE TOWARDS IMPROVING GLOBAL HEALTH OUTCOMES



146 OUT OF 200  
COUNTRIES OR AREAS HAVE ALREADY MET  
OR ARE ON TRACK TO MEET THE UNDER-5  
MORTALITY TARGET



EFFECTIVE HIV TREATMENT HAS CUT  
GLOBAL AIDS-RELATED DEATHS BY  
52% SINCE 2010



AT LEAST ONE NEGLECTED TROPICAL  
DISEASE HAS BEEN ELIMINATED IN  
47 COUNTRIES



25 MILLION CHILDREN  
MISSED OUT ON IMPORTANT  
ROUTINE IMMUNIZATIONS  
IN 2021

6 MILLION MORE  
THAN IN 2019

MALARIA CASES HAVE  
SURGED WORLDWIDE

MALARIA CASES  
(MILLIONS)



### OUT-OF-POCKET PAYMENTS

FOR HEALTH PUSHED OR FURTHER PUSHED

381

MILLION PEOPLE  
(4.9% OF POPULATION)

INTO EXTREME POVERTY

A WOMAN DIES EVERY  
TWO MINUTES  
FROM PREVENTABLE CAUSES  
RELATED TO PREGNANCY  
AND CHILDbirth  
(2020)



## DAY 4

# Reach One, Teach One



### SDG 4: Quality Education

“Providing quality education for all is fundamental to creating a peaceful and prosperous world. Education gives people the knowledge and skills they need to stay healthy, get jobs and foster tolerance. The COVID-19 outbreak, however, has caused a global education crisis. Most education systems in the world have been severely affected by education disruptions and have faced unprecedented challenges. School closures brought on by the pandemic have had devastating consequences for children’s learning and well-being.

It is estimated that 147 million children missed more than half of their in-class instruction over the past two years. This generation of children could lose a combined total of \$17 trillion in lifetime earnings in present value. School closures have affected girls, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, those living in rural areas, children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities more than their peers.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:1-9

<sup>1</sup>Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. <sup>2</sup>I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my

teaching. <sup>3</sup>For I too was a son to my father, still tender, and cherished by my mother. <sup>4</sup>Then he taught me, and he said to me, “Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live.

<sup>5</sup>Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. <sup>6</sup>Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. <sup>7</sup>The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. <sup>8</sup>Cherish her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. <sup>9</sup>She will give you a garland to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown.”

*Verse 4: Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.*

A group of fearful children gathered around their mother's bed in a dimly lit room in Germany. Among the individuals present was a confused four-year-old child who was on the verge of becoming an orphan. While he listened, his mother softly uttered, “My dear children, I have a great treasure for you.” The older sister inquired, “What is it, Mother?” The woman pointed to the Bible. “Seek it in the Bible; there you will find great treasure. I have watered every page with my tears.” With that, she died. The family was broken up, and little Bartholomew Ziegenbalg was placed under the care of compassionate relatives in Halle. At the age of 12, he accepted Jesus as his saviour. He graduated with honours from the University of Halle at the age of 18. During this period, there was a big revival in Germany and Ziegenbalg felt the urge to become a missionary in India. He arrived in India on July 9, 1706. Ziegenbalg, however, embraced the motto “*Ora et Labora*,” — “Pray and Work!”, and played an outstanding role in imparting quality education to the people in the region of South India. He established a school where native students could learn Tamil, be equipped with modern European knowledge and learn Christian values and ethics. He felt that the right education would help in eliminating superstitions and unbelief.

Education plays a vital role in the holistic formation of a person. Imparting quality education involves spiritual exercise. In the Bible,

knowledge is always both holistic and relational. Proverbs 25:2 says, 'it is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.' Through this verse one may easily see the relationship between God's wisdom and human knowledge. God's wisdom allows us to acquire knowledge, develop critical thinking skills and engage with the world. According to the Bible, God gives wisdom to ordinary humans and he further enables them to be scientists, artists, writers, scholars, researchers, intellectuals etc. Holding on to God's teaching brings wisdom that helps to discover even the tiny and invisible things that we have never imagined. Wisdom is the source of insights and success. It is God's desire that every individual discover God's given abilities and gifts within him or herself before they explore or study His creation. The above passage emphasizes the value of seeking knowledge and wisdom from God through obedience.

Modern education owes its origins to the Bible, making it a crucial aspect of Christian missions. Throughout Church history, followers of Jesus have led the way in providing quality education as an extension of our mission to be makers of disciples of Christ, learners of Jesus. According to the Bible, it is the prime responsibility of the parents, teachers as well as of the Church to provide holistic education to children. Imparting education is one of the important components of Christian ministry. Education was primarily carried out by Christian missionaries. In 1540 Ignatius of Loyola realized that education is the key to empowering the people in every way. Jesuit priests were the first ones who offered education through the public school system. Their education is not just confined to liberal arts and science, professional education etc., but also extended to the formation of the entire person as social and global leaders with innovative and entrepreneurial thinking. Jesuit education is directed towards the formation of 'head (intellectual formation)', heart (emotional intelligence) and 'hand (skill formation)'. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, 'the function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education.' On every continent, Jesuit missionaries imparted quality education by learning the languages of the local people, putting that language

into written form, and composing dictionaries and grammars, thus preserving culture rather than destroying it.

Learning God's wisdom (James 1:5, 3:13-18) is character building (ethics). This flows into wider society towards mutual flourishing (morals), with practical application (vocation) for the benefit of all society. Education focused on these life-affirming elements should be made accessible to all for the building up of human dignity and civic well-being. Biblically-based quality education transforms society in such a way that human life flourishes, everyone feels equal to others, and everyone feels affirmed and elated.

*Inclusive, good-quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies.*

*Desmond Tutu  
(South African Anglican bishop  
and theologian, 1931-2021)*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for enlightening us with thy Word. Give me the heart of compassion so that I may teach others with your knowledge. There are so many around us who need quality education, proper tools and skills to be equipped. Use me as a channel of blessing. The harvest is plentiful but the labourers few, send more people like Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and William Carey to those places where children are under the bondage of poverty, illiteracy and ignorance. In Jesus name I pray Amen.

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from a Lack of Education***

O Lord, you are the giver of knowledge and wisdom. You have promised us that if we seek after knowledge, it will be given to us. We come before you today with heavy hearts because we do not possess the education that can bring about a better life for ourselves and those around us. We have had our opportunities limited by this lack of education, and it has caused us to feel stuck with no way out.

We pray that you would move upon our hearts and minds to give us the courage and strength we need to pursue our dreams. Open up

opportunities for us, so that we may gain the knowledge necessary to better ourselves and our world. We ask you to grant us the wisdom we need to understand how best to pursue our education. Guide us in our studies so we may learn all that we can and use it for your glory.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. Renew your own emphasis on education. Help others to grow in knowledge and wisdom.
2. Emphasize the importance of holistic education that goes beyond academic knowledge. Advocate for educational systems that address intellectual, emotional, and skill development.
3. Which habit could you (re-)install to nurture this growth? And for which person in your neighborhood could you become an educator this week — sharing your acquired knowledge and wisdom?

*Samuel Richmond*

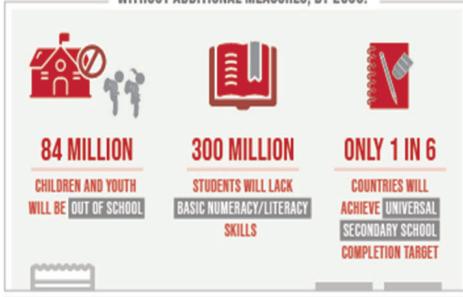


## ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

..... DESPITE SLOW PROGRESS,

### THE WORLD IS FALLING FAR BEHIND IN ACHIEVING QUALITY EDUCATION

WITHOUT ADDITIONAL MEASURES, BY 2030:



THE PANDEMIC CAUSED LEARNING LOSSES IN 4 IN 5 OF 104 COUNTRIES STUDIED

### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES ARE RISING, BUT THE PACE IS SLOW AND UNEVEN



LOW- AND LOWER-MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES FACE A NEARLY \$100 BILLION ANNUAL FINANCING GAP TO REACH THEIR EDUCATION TARGETS

## DAY 5

# Who is Greatest?



### SDG 5: Gender Equality

“Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. There has been progress over the last decades, but the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. The social and economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has made the situation even bleaker. Progress in many areas, including time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, decision-making regarding sexual and reproductive health, and gender-responsive budgeting, is falling behind. Women’s health services, already poorly funded, have faced major disruptions. Violence against women remains endemic. And despite women’s leadership in responding to COVID-19, they still trail men in securing the decision-making positions they deserve.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Genesis 1:24-28

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup>So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

*Verse 27: So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.*

“Did you see how women have been involved in God’s mission since the beginning?” One young Romani woman said in amazement to the other two students. The three women had just completed the Christian history module as part of the Roma Bible School in Southeastern Europe. They had never before heard such stories of how God had accomplished his purposes through women in powerful ways throughout the history of the Church. Roma minority groups in Europe are often socially marginalized, and Roma women in particular are far more disadvantaged than either Roma men or women of other ethnicities in critical areas such as education, health, and employment. Roma women also often experience higher rates of discrimination, harassment, and violence.<sup>1</sup> In light of these troubling inequalities, which are found all too frequently across the world, how should we think about the relationship between men and women in the new creation?

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<sup>1.</sup> Europäische Union, ed. *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Roma Women in Nine EU Member States*. EU-MIDIS II. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.2811/127019>.

Human beings are created in God's image as spiritual persons with physical bodies. Those bodies were designed from the beginning to be distinguishable as male and female (Genesis 1:27), with higher regard than the rest of creation, carrying responsibility for creation (e.g. Psalm 8:5-6). The key point in Genesis 1:27 is that both genders share the divine image equally. There's no hierarchy or indication of superiority of one gender over the other in this passage. Both man and woman are created with the same divine essence and are given the shared responsibility of having dominion over the Earth. All humans, regardless of gender, are endowed with a God-like capacity to love, create and serve in unique and purposeful ways. This is central to our dignity as human beings with intrinsic value to God. Women feature strongly throughout the Biblical narrative and in Jesus' life and ministry. Matthew, writing his gospel after the ascension of Christ, took care to note females in Jesus' lineage. Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman at a well who is shocked he is talking to her, asking, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (John 4:9).

Jesus, as a Jew, not only speaks to a Samaritan but also to a woman, breaking down barriers of ethnicity and gender. In the cultural context of that time, it was unusual for a Jewish man to speak directly to a Samaritan woman. This interaction illustrates Jesus' disregard for the societal norms that marginalized certain groups, including women. It reflects a broader message of inclusivity and equality in the teachings and actions of Jesus. Furthermore, Jesus reveals his Messianic identity to her before inviting her into new life while his disciples stumble upon the scene, deeply shocked at his interaction with a woman. "Come and see the Messiah!" the woman boldly proclaims to men and women alike in her city.

Each gender contributes to the benefit of the whole community (Romans 12:6-13). Human systems in many parts of the world have developed in such a way that they privilege male over female, and sometimes female over male. In Christ, these privileges are equalized (Galatians 3:28). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given equally to both males and females in order to carry out God's work on this planet. As local churches invest in the development and vocation of all members

(Titus 3:8), honouring all equally regardless of gender or other differences, this can show wider society how it too can benefit by deconstructing systems that would hold some back from participating to their full potential in society.

*Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.*

*Kofi Annan  
(Secretary-General of the United Nations  
from 1997-2006)*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Thank you God, that you are the God who sees every woman who is discarded, overlooked, undervalued, and oppressed. Thank you that you restore dignity and honor to your beloved daughters and invite them into your mission. We pray that the Church would imitate the way of Jesus as it trains and equips women and men to be coworkers in the kingdom. Help us to see the oppression of women in our communities, countries, and the world, and give us the heart to pray and work towards justice and restoration between men and women. Amen.

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from a Lack of Gender Equality***

Heavenly Father, we come to you in prayer today seeking a better future for us all. We ask that you give us strength and courage to strive for gender equality on every level and in every layer of our societies. You created us all equal in your eyes. We are all one in you, Christ Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female. Yet still we experience hardship and injustice because of gender inequalities.

We pray to you that you guide us as we move towards a more just future and help us achieve equal rights and opportunities for all regardless of our gender. Help us to recognise and celebrate the unique gifts each of us brings to your world. We thank you for all that you have done, are doing, and will do for us.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What You Can Do**

1. Look intentionally around your community and your church. Are women being cared for and equipped in your church? How are women faring in your community? Pray for God to show you how to imitate Jesus' example, challenging injustice and seeking out possibilities for empowerment.

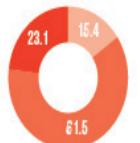
*Melody Wachsmuth*



## ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

THE WORLD IS  
**NOT ON TRACK** TO ACHIEVE  
GENDER EQUALITY BY 2030

OUT OF GOAL 5 INDICATORS:



- "ON TRACK"
- AT A MODERATE DISTANCE
- FAR OR VERY FAR OFF TRACK

..... AT THE CURRENT RATE, IT WILL TAKE .....



300 YEARS  
TO END CHILD  
MARRIAGE



286 YEARS TO CLOSE GAPS  
IN LEGAL PROTECTION AND  
REMOVE DISCRIMINATORY LAWS



140 YEARS TO ACHIEVE  
EQUAL REPRESENTATION IN  
LEADERSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE

LEGISLATED GENDER QUOTAS  
ARE **EFFECTIVE** TO ACHIEVE  
EQUALITY IN POLITICS

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

[2022]



30.9%  
COUNTRIES  
APPLYING QUOTAS

21.2%  
COUNTRIES  
WITHOUT QUOTAS



NEARLY HALF OF MARRIED WOMEN  
LACK DECISION-MAKING POWER  
OVER THEIR SEXUAL AND  
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

1 IN 5 YOUNG WOMEN

.....  
ARE MARRIED  
BEFORE THEIR 18TH BIRTHDAY



## DAY 6

# Water is Life



### SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

“Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene is the most basic human need for health and well-being. Billions of people will lack access to these basic services in 2030 unless progress quadruples. Demand for water is rising owing to rapid population growth, urbanization and increasing water needs from agriculture, industry, and energy sectors. Decades of misuse, poor management, overextraction of groundwater and contamination of freshwater supplies have exacerbated water stress. In addition, countries are facing growing challenges linked to degraded water-related ecosystems, water scarcity caused by climate change, underinvestment in water and sanitation and insufficient cooperation on transboundary waters. To reach universal access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene by 2030, the current rates of progress would need to increase fourfold. Achieving these targets would save 829,000 people annually, who die from diseases directly attributable to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: John 7:37-44

<sup>37</sup>On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup>Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

<sup>39</sup>Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. <sup>40</sup>When they heard these words, some of the people said, “This really is the Prophet.” <sup>41</sup>Others said, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “Is the Christ to come from Galilee? <sup>42</sup>Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” <sup>43</sup>So there was a division among the people over him. <sup>44</sup>Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

**Verse 38:** *Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.*

“Let’s go fishing!” the woman suggested to us. “I will show you the best spots and teach you how to do it.” This was no idle exercise—in fact, this family, like others in the poor community, often supplemented their food source with fresh fish caught in the local river. In fact, the region of Southeastern Europe is teeming with rivers, found both remotely in the wilderness and flowing through the middle of capital cities. People depend on them in a myriad of ways; however, many rivers are becoming increasingly polluted, such as the beautiful Vjosa River, the “last wild river” in Albania. Oil pollution threatens its rich biodiversity, fresh water sources, and even the land it irrigates.<sup>1</sup> Even as two billion people in the world lack access to clean water, others are unaware or indifferent to creeping pollution that threatens their water sources. What do the state of our rivers indicate about our physical and spiritual well-being?

Water is the driving force of all nature and is essential for the existence of all living beings. Unfortunately, widespread depletion of water resources is causing significant problems such as water scarcity, droughts, crop failures, and migrations in many regions. Simultaneously, certain areas experience recurring flooding during the monsoon season, necessitating effective management strategies

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<sup>1.</sup> Hoxhaj, Edmond. “Oil Pollution Threatens Europe’s Last Wild River.” *Balkan Insight*, December 5, 2018. <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/12/05/oil-pollution-threatens-europe-s-last-wild-river-11-30-2018/>.

to mitigate its detrimental effects. Furthermore, there are prevalent concerns regarding the contamination of surface water bodies, such as rivers and lakes.

Throughout the Scripture, water denotes life and has both spiritual and physical significance. God created water to sustain the ecosystem and quench the thirst of all living beings. Water is a wonderful creation of God and in the Bible it symbolizes cleanliness (Ezekiel 36:35), purity (Hebrews 10:22), salvation (Isaiah 12:3), providence (Isaiah 49:10), justice and righteousness (Amos 5:24), new birth (John 3:5) eternal life (John 4:14), and the Spirit of God (John 7:37). In the New Testament, Jesus identified himself as the living water. John's Gospel clarifies that the living water Jesus offers refers to the Spirit of God (John 7:39). Hence, "the living water" in the Bible hints at the idea that water is itself alive with its own living spirit. Jesus is promising that those who believe in Him will experience a spiritual abundance, likened to life-giving rivers. This promise finds fulfillment after Jesus' resurrection when believers receive the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit brings spiritual vitality, joy, and transformative power into the lives of believers, fulfilling the promise of living water flowing from within them. Jesus invites the thirsty to come to Him and drink from the living water and by drinking the same we also become the source of living water as followers of Christ. Without clean water there can be no life (Exodus 17:3). The free provision of abundant water is a sign of the shalom and goodness of the reign of God (Deuteronomy 8:7, Psalm 65:9, Isaiah 55:1, Ezekiel 47:9, Revelation 22:1-2). Access to clean water is an inalienable right under God for all humans (Matthew 5:45), it should not be denied and it should not be commoditized and sold unjustly. Valuing and saving every drop of water should be the priority of every believer who is not just a follower of Jesus Christ but a source of living water.

*Rivers of living water are to be poured out over the whole world,  
to ensure that people, like fishes caught in a net, can be restored  
to wholeness.*

*Hildegard of Bingen  
(German Benedictine Abbess, 1098-1179)*

***Prayer of Commitment***

Thank you God, for the wonderful network of rivers, lakes, streams, and oceans that reveal your beauty and life. We pray for those who suffer and thirst for clean water—that you would make a way through your church and others to address those needs. We also pray for those who are spiritually thirsty—would you awaken them to their thirst? Would you help them see Jesus as the great thirst quencher? Amen.

***Prayer of those Suffering from a Lack of Access to Water***

Heavenly Father, we come before you through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. We know that You have provided us with all the sustenance we need to survive in this world. You say in Your Word, “And I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.” (Isaiah 41:18)

We are thankful that You provide for us in times of need, even when we may be struggling with drought or lack of access to sanitation and fresh drinking water. We ask today that you provide us with a greater supply of clean and fresh water. Help those among us who have been affected by the lack of clean water - provide them with hope and protection. We ask that you will provide for us through your perfect love and grace.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What You Can Do**

1. Count how many times you used water during the day (whether it is to brush your teeth, wash the dishes, wash your hands, flush the toilet or even to drink). Become conscious of all the water sources you pass in a given day—both inside buildings and outside. Are they clean or polluted? How do you treat and use them? Carelessly or with gratitude?

*Melody Wachsmuth*

6  
CLEAN WATER  
AND SANITATION



## ENSURE AVAILABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION FOR ALL



### SAFE DRINKING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

~~~~~ STILL OUT OF REACH ~~~~~

### FOR BILLIONS

IN 2022



2.2 BILLION PEOPLE  
LACKED SAFELY  
MANAGED  
DRINKING WATER



3.5 BILLION PEOPLE  
LACKED SAFELY  
MANAGED  
SANITATION



2.2 BILLION PEOPLE  
LACKED BASIC  
HAND WASHING  
FACILITIES

TO MEET 2030 TARGETS,

PACE OF PROGRESS WILL HAVE TO ACCELERATE

6x

DRINKING WATER

5x

FOR SANITATION

3x

HYGIENE

2.4 BILLION PEOPLE

LIVE IN

WATER-STRESSED  
COUNTRIES  
(2020)

81% OF SPECIES

DEPENDENT ON INLAND  
WETLANDS HAVE  
DECLINED SINCE 1970

INTEGRATED  
WATER-RESOURCES-MANAGEMENT  
IMPLEMENTATION  
NEEDS ACCELERATION

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES PER PROGRESS LEVEL



## DAY 7

# Using Resources Wisely



### SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

“Goal 7 is about ensuring access to clean and affordable energy, which is key to the development of agriculture, business, communications, education, healthcare and transportation. The lack of access to energy hinders economic and human development. Latest data suggest that the world continues to advance towards sustainable energy targets. Nevertheless, the current pace of progress is insufficient to achieve Goal 7 by 2030. Huge disparities in access to modern sustainable energy persist. Rising commodity, energy and shipping prices have increased the cost of producing and transporting solar photovoltaics modules, wind turbines and biofuels worldwide, adding uncertainty to a development trajectory that is already far below Goal 7 ambitions. Achieving energy and climate goals will require continued policy support and a massive mobilization of public and private capital for clean and renewable energy, especially in developing countries.”

– UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Psalms 115:11-18

<sup>11</sup>You who fear him, trust in the Lord—he is their help and shield.  
<sup>12</sup>The Lord remembers us and will bless us: He will bless his people Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron, <sup>13</sup>he will bless those who

fear the Lord—small and great alike. <sup>14</sup>May the Lord cause you to flourish, both you and your children. <sup>15</sup>May you be blessed by the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. <sup>16</sup>The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to mankind. <sup>17</sup>It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to the place of silence; <sup>18</sup>it is we who extol the Lord, both now and forevermore. Praise the Lord.

*Veres 15-16: May you receive blessings from the Lord, creator of heaven and earth. The heavens belong to the Lord, but to mankind he has given the earth.*

“This is where my house used to be,” tells me Manuel, “but I was relocated because of the dam, it seems the city down the river needs the energy”. In 2016, the government decided to build a hydroelectric dam in River Sabor. This was the last free-flowing river in Portugal, which is a small country, but was now building its 263rd dam. There are hydroelectric dams built all over the world. According to “Mapping the world’s free-flowing rivers,” a report published by *Nature*, “only 37 per cent of rivers longer than 1,000 km remain free-flowing over their entire length and 23 per cent flow uninterrupted to the ocean.”<sup>1</sup> Hydroelectric dams are loved by some and hated by others, and a difficult topic, as environmentalists alert us to the fact their construction does not come without costs. But growing populations need energy, and energy is an important component of our society. Access to energy allows us a dignified life and certain comforts.

The earth was created with all sorts of forms of energy. Sunlight, water, wind, vegetation, domesticated animals. Over the centuries, humanity has harnessed different forms of energy, which has allowed for development and expansion. This is part of our mandate to be “fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1.28). But the way we go about things matters. One of the earliest records of the use of fire was to make bricks to construct the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:3). The construction of buildings had been done before,

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<sup>1.</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-019-1111-9>.

and the people of God set about building walls and temples. Yet the motivation for building Babel was so builders could “make a name” for themselves. Later, it is God who “makes a name” for Abram, who believed in God’s promise and lived “looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” (Hebrews 11.10).

Creating energy for the convenience of the masses has come at a terrible cost to God’s good creation. Carbon emissions are one example. Wrongly applied nuclear energy can also have terrifying consequences on creation and its inhabitants. Even harnessing solar power can create problematic waste as can electricity stored in battery-powered devices and vehicles, even if electricity itself is cleanly created by hydro dams. All humans have a responsibility to care for the domains that we inhabit as a gift from God. That means we must balance our use of energy from the material world with care for the material world (Genesis 1:26-30). Furthermore, good stewardship of the gifts of God extend to ensuring that everyone benefits from those gifts equitably (Psalm 115:16), so Jesus-followers not only need to be concerned about how we create and use energy but also how we ensure it is available for the good use of all.

The claim for clean, safe energy and access for all people is a duty that we have as Christians, we cannot disregard this mandate, we must act up to the mandate given. Perhaps Manuel did not have much of a choice about the building of the dam, but we should not stand by and let others choose our future for us, let them take the initiative on what energy we should use for our development and what cost it will have on our planet and future generations. Wise and generous stewardship can bring real change in society. If humanity thinks it cannot survive without the power (energy) it creates, in Christ we have received a spirit of power, love and sound-mind (2 Timothy 1.7). All three are important in making responsible stewards. God is powerful and God is merciful and we need to draw strength from Him as we exercise authority in order to curb the consumption of energy and use God’s given resources wisely.

*The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.....Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling, but a foolish man devours it. Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor.*

*Proverbs 21:5, 20-21*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Thank you Father, for having blessed us from the moment you thought of each one of us to inhabit this world. Thank you for having granted us our freedom and for having paid with the sacrifice of your Son for each one of us. Father, we want to be sensitive to your voice and act with responsibility, as good stewards, managing with wisdom the resources you have given us. Help us to be courageous at key moments!

*In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

### ***Prayer of Those Suffering from a Lack of Energy***

Heavenly Father, we come to you in need. Our families are in desperate circumstances, and we do not have the basic necessities of life such as clean and affordable energy. We ask for your grace and mercy over us in this difficult time. Lord Jesus, you tell us to not worry about physical needs because You will provide all that we need. You encourage us not to be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' You, our heavenly Father, know that we need all these things. We rather want to seek first the kingdom of you, o God, and your righteousness. We trust that all these things will be added to us. In our hour of need, may your mercy and compassion reign over us. May we not focus on the physical needs, but find strength in You. Open the floodgates of Your blessings so that the Holy Spirit can touch every corner of our lives. Help us to remain thankful and grateful for what we have, and provide us with the courage and strength to persevere.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### What You Can Do

1. *Renew your interest in energy resources:* what sources of energy does your locality use, what about your house? Is this wise resource management and use?
2. *Renew your personal commitment:* Switch off lights and appliances when not in use. When leaving a room make sure all elements are switched off. Use natural light to brighten a room. Are there other habits and practices you could adopt to become a good steward of what has been entrusted to you?

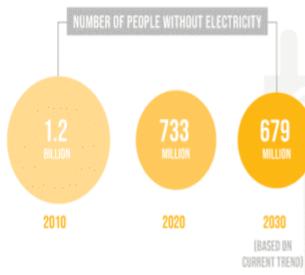
*Fernando Forgioni*



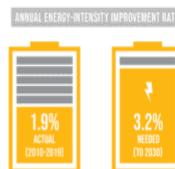
## ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL

### IMPRESSIVE PROGRESS IN ELECTRIFICATION HAS SLOWED

DOUE TO THE CHALLENGE OF REACHING THOSE HARDEST TO REACH



PROGRESS IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY  
NEEDS TO SPEED UP  
TO ACHIEVE GLOBAL CLIMATE GOALS

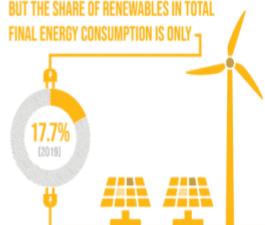


2.4 BILLION PEOPLE  
STILL USE INEFFICIENT AND POLLUTING COOKING SYSTEMS  
(2020)

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL FLOWS TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FOR RENEWABLES DECLINED FOR A SECOND YEAR IN A ROW



TOTAL RENEWABLE ENERGY CONSUMPTION INCREASED BY A QUARTER BETWEEN 2010 AND 2019, BUT THE SHARE OF RENEWABLES IN TOTAL FINAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION IS ONLY



## DAY 8

# Labour Not in Vain



### SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

“Goal 8 is about promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated the worst economic crisis in decades and reversed progress towards decent work for all. Although the global economy began to rebound in 2021, bringing some improvement in unemployment, recovery remains elusive and fragile. By the end of 2021, global economic recovery had been hampered by new waves of COVID-19 infections, rising inflationary pressures, major supply-chain disruptions, policy uncertainties and persistent labour market challenges.” UN Official Site.

### Bible Passage: Luke 6:27-36

<sup>27</sup> “But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup> If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. <sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would have them do to you.

<sup>32</sup>“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. <sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. <sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

*Verse 31-32: Treat others the way you want them to treat you.*

*What merit do you have in loving those who love you? Even sinners do it that way.*

Sitting in a restaurant the other day, I heard two men talking. Apparently, the first was commenting to the second about the problems he faces every day with his employees and how the reprisals that he took against them only worsened the condition of his small business. In recent years, effort and sacrifice have been relegated to second place in our Society; it is the law of least effort, where personal enjoyment is seen as more important, even if it is superimposed on the good of others.

Being made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), all humans have the capacity to create, invent and discover. Core to our dignity as human beings is our ability to direct our energy and time into creating value for, and contributing to, the wellbeing of the habitats in which we live (Genesis 1:26-28), including societies. Right from the beginning, God gave Adam a task, “to till the land and care for it” (Genesis 2:15). Hence the mandate to work was already given to Adam even before the fall, although since then, our task is to “earn our bread with the sweat of our brow” (Genesis 3:19a). In spite of its hardship, God has created us to enjoy the outcomes of our labour (Psalm 128:2, Ecclesiastes 3:13, 2 Timothy 2:6). Techniques and technologies have eased this burden greatly, but the material world still does not yield results as easily as it was originally designed to do.

The idle are regularly rebuked in Scripture and the consequence of laziness is ruin (e.g. Proverbs 26:15, Ecclesiastes 4:5, 10:18). Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10 address the Church members to work diligently. He reprimanded and shunned those church members who lived in idleness. He urged them to follow in his footsteps and labour around the clock as he did. He commanded: *“If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.”*

We cannot forget that the work we do has to do with working to do good around us, and in turn enjoy the fruit of it (Psalm 128:2, Ecclesiastes 3:13); we must not forget that our ultimate goal is to pursue the glory of God in this. The divine mandate to work for the good could be summarized again in the passage from Luke “treat others as you want them to treat you.” Regardless of where we are (as bosses or as employees), our work connects with the commandments the Lord Jesus summarized (Matthew 22:36-40, Romans 12:18-19), to love our God and our neighbor as ourselves - doing this is to work for the good of our neighbor. If we do our part, let us consider: how can I change my area of influence to continue working for the good? I can see a neighbor who does not have a job; I know people who are trapped in the vicious circle of poverty; what can I do for them, how can I help them find a suitable job? Working for human dignity in all its forms, in our area of influence, is without a doubt the greatest show of love for our neighbor, and the best work for the good of humanity that we can do. When we develop our dignity and enhance the dignity of others through working and offering work, for the betterment of society, we manifest the shalom of God. Paul says in Colossians 3:17, “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

*“You can't go around building a better world for people. Only people can build a better world for people. If not, it's just a cage.”*

*Terry Pratchett  
(English writer, 1948-2015)*

***Prayer of Commitment***

Lord Jesus, your sacrifice freed us from the ties we had and made us worthy. We want to respond to this call and be agents of change wherever we are. Wherever you have placed us, we want to work to build a better world. May your light always illuminate our actions to be able to provide solutions and be part of this change.

*In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*

***Prayer of those Suffering from Unemployment***

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your overwhelming love and mercy. We come to you today in our time of need, humbly asking You for provision. Lord, we know that you took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it and that you advised us “Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest”. We commend all those who work hard for their families. But Lord, many of us are without work and in need of Your provision. We ask that You would open up new opportunities for us to provide for our families and ourselves. Please guide our paths and bring provision to our lives. We thank You for Your grace and mercy.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What You Can Do**

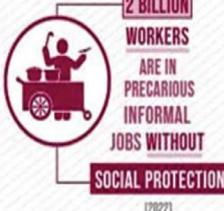
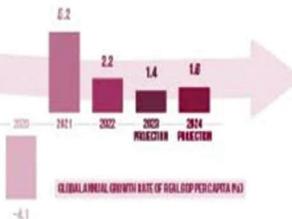
1. Reflect on the multiple functions and blessings of a good job (income, sense of purpose, inter-human contact, structure for the day, etc.).
2. Pray for a person in your neighborhood who currently has no job or who suffers from poor working conditions.

*Fernando Forgioni*



PROMOTE SUSTAINED, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL

## GLOBAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY CONTINUES, BUT ON A SLOW TRAJECTORY



GLOBAL UNEMPLOYMENT IS EXPECTED TO FALL BELOW PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS, BUT NOT IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES



## 1 IN 4 YOUNG PEOPLE

ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING,



WITH YOUNG WOMEN MORE THAN TWICE AS LIKELY AS YOUNG MEN TO BE IN THIS SITUATION

[2022]



DURING THE PANDEMIC, 4 IN 10 ADULTS IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES OPENED THEIR FIRST BANK ACCOUNT

## DAY 9

# Jesus' Calling to Collective Living



### SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

“Goal 9 seeks to build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. Economies with a diversified industrial sector and strong infrastructure sustained less damage and are experiencing faster recovery. In 2021, global manufacturing rebounded from the pandemic, although the recovery remains incomplete and uneven. Higher-technology industries performed better and recovered faster, providing a strong example of how important technological innovation is to achieving Goal 9.” – UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

<sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup> Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. <sup>15</sup> Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.

<sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of

the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

<sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup> while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup> If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

*Veres: 17-20: If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.*

God's vision for His people is a collective one. Christian faith is certainly personal (in that it is a relationship between persons) but it is not at all meant to be individual. The Apostle Paul says that the Church is, in reality, a single collective body – the One Body of Christ. To be a Christian is to be united by faith through the Holy Spirit to the resurrected and living person of Jesus *as well as to all other Christians*. And this unity is not meant to be merely a group of individuals who believe the same things. Rather, it is meant to be an interdependent community of different people who all play diverse and mutually supportive roles to carry forward the life and ministry of Jesus in our world.

In a local church community, therefore, we are called to be fundamentally collective in our approach to life together. As one local expression of the Body of Christ, we are each different parts of a single interdependent organism. And every part is important. In 1 Cor 12, Paul encourages the church not to honour one part (such as a pastor) over another (such as a janitor) or to say that certain parts (such as someone with great capacity to tithe) are necessary for the Body's mission, while others (such as a 12 year old girl) are not. All parts are important, and, as Paul says in 1 Cor 12:26, all parts rise and fall together.

Yet participation in a collective Body does not mean the abandonment of individuality – by no means! When a local church congregation is a true collective Body, it provides the mutual support that actually enables individuality to flourish. The more isolated or marginalized people are from the support of community, the more their individuality is stifled by the basic needs of survival (such as finding a job that provides enough to buy food and pay rent in the near term). When they are surrounded by community, however, they are more likely to have the support necessary to step away from the grind of survival to explore and develop giftings and callings more specific to who God has made them to be. This support structure is practiced globally through family, but family is merely a small localized expression of what the Church is meant to be. And what the Church is meant to be is what the whole world is meant to be – a mutually supportive, interdependent, and sustaining community all working together in different ways together with God to breathe the beauty, peace, justice, and flourishing of Heaven, also known as *shalom*, into the world around us. In this collective society, individuality can thrive, because it is when we live in interdependence that we have the mutual support necessary for specialization and creativity. And in the end creativity, supported by community, is what is essential for the generation of the new and innovative ideas that feed the community, refresh it, and move it forward.

This core reality of the Christian (and human) calling to collective living actually speaks directly to SDG 9: "Industry, Innovation,

and Infrastructure.” However, the Christian calling re-prioritizes the topics of SDG 9 so that we get this new order: “Infrastructure, Innovation, and Industry.”

Infrastructure is our starting point because it is the inherently collective and mutually supportive structure of our life together as a society. Infrastructure (broadly understood) is the public network of systems and resources that enable a healthy society to provide all its citizens with enough of the basics that they have the support necessary to explore their individual giftings, grow in them, and contribute meaningfully to the common good. Good infrastructure should provide everyone with consistent and affordable transit, good education, quality healthcare, affordable housing, public safety, public parks and spaces, access to meaningful work with life-sustaining wages, and support in retirement. A society where there are a small number of people who are doing very well and a large number of people who are struggling to survive is one where there are serious problems with the collective calling of infrastructure. And where this is the case, the entire society – including those doing “well” – falls together. This is because without the stability of a healthy collective structure, that huge population of people who are struggling to get by do not have the support necessary to do the exploring and experimentation that would enable them to discover and develop the unique creative gifts God has given them – and therefore they cannot contribute these gifts to their communities.

And this is an *enormous* loss, because the greatest riches that exist in our world are found in the creativity of human beings. We are the only beings on earth that bear the image of God, our world’s Creator – and our creativity is a unique expression of *His*. So when a society is structured in a way that deprives a huge population of its image bearers of the ability to realize their own God-given creativity, the entire society is impoverished.

Supportive and accessible infrastructure, therefore, is crucial for innovation – because it provides its citizens with the support necessary to flourish as creators. And when people begin to flourish as creators, they start to innovate. And when they are innovating well,

new ideas and technologies start to be introduced, and new businesses come about, and new industries grow. And as these things happen, the economy moves forward in a way that is fresh and adaptable and it feeds into the good of the whole. Collectively-oriented infrastructure, therefore, is the foundation of innovation, which is the driver of industry.

So what can Christians do to support SDG 9? We can begin by modelling a more collective way of living in our local congregations. Are we in a church where some members are rich and others are unable to pay their bills, yet nothing is being done to share this load? Or are we part of a rich congregation with a poor congregation right down the road, but yet again we are doing nothing to walk together collectively? In individualistic Western culture these situations may feel normal to us, but Scripture calls us to bear each other's burdens (Gal 6:2). The more we do this as the Church, the more we will find that the poor among us have the support necessary to find their creativity, and the Body and its mission will be enriched by what they bring to the table.

Then, as we begin to change the way we live as the Church, we will find God inviting us beyond our congregational boundaries to press for a more collective way of life as a society, one which does not accept structures that benefit a few while holding down whole communities and populations, but rather supports everyone robustly so that the creativity of all may be unleashed.

Can we embody this collective living in our congregations, speak it into our culture, and press for it in our laws? If so, the Church can be a powerful agent of change in our world's pursuit of SDG 9.

*I am because we are (ubuntu).*  
- South African Nguni proverb

### ***Prayer of Commitment (for the Church)***

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us, as we forgive those who trespass against

us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever.

Jesus, as we pray the prayer you gave us to mold us into participants in your story, help us to hear the collective “we.” Help us to pray this prayer not only for ourselves, or our family, or our church, or even The Church, but for the whole world. Holy Spirit, help us to discover, participate in, and grow strong in the gifts you have given us to build up your collective Body. And give us eyes to see our brothers and sisters who do not have the support we have, that we might join with them as their family and help them to grow in their own gifts, so that your Kingdom mission may be enriched by their innovations.

*In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

### ***Prayer of those Unsupported by their Nation's Structures***

Father in Heaven, I feel as though I am only able to survive, but never to thrive. I am weary from the daily grind of getting by. I am anxious that an accident could happen to me or my family at any time and I will have nowhere to turn, no support to fall back on. Father, you have said that I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps 139:14). Jesus, you are not ashamed to call me your sibling (Heb 2:11) and have given me a high calling as your servant and friend. Holy Spirit, you hold in yourself the power that raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 8:11) and are immediately available to me. I feel held back from what I can be by many factors in my society, but I believe that you see me and can lead me out. Come quickly, Lord. Lift me up out of my challenges and give me a firm place to stand (Ps 40:1-3), so that I may partner meaningfully within the community of your people in the great work of healing to which you have called all human beings.

*In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. Build a daily practice of praying the Lord’s Prayer. As you continue to pray this prayer, focus on its constant use of “we” rather than “I.” God has not given you anything that is for you alone – all of your gifts and resources are for the building up of the Body

and the healing, beautification, and flourishing of humanity. It is in your growing participation in this Story that you will find yourself.

2. What part of Christ's Body are you, and what role do you have to play? Take some time and prayerfully write out a 5 year plan for yourself that is focused on collective Body of Christ goals, rather than individual goals. Your 5 year plan may very well not be God's plan but the exercise of building a collective one will help you engage your life in a more Body-focused way. As you grow in this, look for ways you can help your local congregation live more collectively, and look for organizations who are working to strengthen more collective and mutually supportive structures in your society.

*Allen Drew*

9 INDUSTRIAL INNOVATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



## BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE, PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND FOSTER INNOVATION

### GLOBAL MANUFACTURING

GROWTH SLOWED FROM

2021 7.4 %

2022 3.3 %

DUE TO



INFLATION



ENERGY PRICE SHOCKS



SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS



GLOBAL ECONOMIC DECELERATION

ENERGY-RELATED

### CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS

REACHED

36.8 BILLION

METRIC TONS IN 2022

A RECORD HIGH



MEDIUM-HIGH AND HIGH-TECHNOLOGY

INDUSTRIES EXPERIENCED

STRONG GROWTH IN 2022

BUT WITH REGIONAL VARIATION

SHARE IN TOTAL MANUFACTURING

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## DAY 10

# God-like Equal



### SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

“Too much of the world’s wealth is held by a very small group of people. This often leads to financial and social discrimination. In order for nations to flourish, equality and prosperity must be available to everyone – regardless of gender, race, religious beliefs or economic status. When every individual is self-sufficient, the entire world prospers.” – UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Genesis 1:26-30

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, [a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup>So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

<sup>29</sup>Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They

will be yours for food. **30** And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

*Verse: Here is neither Jew nor Greek, here is neither slave nor free, here is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

If you want to get an impression of what inequality looks like, a visit to the two Johannesburg districts of Alexandra and Sandton is recommended. There is hardly any other place in South Africa where the disparity in wealth is more glaring; nowhere else is the country's socio-economic inequality more glaringly apparent. On the one hand, Sandton, the epitome of wealth, splendour, opulence, comfort and all the comforts of life that money can bring. It is home to the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the Sandton Convention Centre and the Sandton City shopping mall. Numerous corporate offices make Sandton a centre for business people. The impressive buildings attract tourists, and wealthy Johannesburg residents like to come here to shop. The nickname “The Richest Square Mile In Africa” is well deserved by South Africa’s financial capital. Directly opposite is Alexandra, a township where South Africa’s poorest of the poor live. Several well-known heroes of the South African struggle against the apartheid regime, such as Nelson Mandela, lived here.

Contrasts like Sandton and Alexandra are by no means unique in this world. It is not only in African cities that the ultra-rich and the ultra-poor often live in close proximity. It is not difficult to recognise that God did not imagine such conditions when he created this world at the beginning of time. The biblical foundation of human equality is firmly established in Genesis 1:27, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” This verse declares that all individuals, regardless of differences, share equal and inherent value as they are created in the image of God. This concept echoes throughout the Bible, emphasizing God’s impartiality in offering salvation to all through Jesus’ sacrificial death (John 3:16). The inclusive language of “whoever believes”

underscores the universal nature of God's love and redemption, extending to every person.

As believers embrace salvation, they enter God's family on equal terms, emphasizing a shared spiritual identity irrespective of background, gender, or social status (Ephesians 5:30; 1 Corinthians 12:27). The absence of favoritism in God's dealings with humanity is boldly proclaimed in Galatians 3:28, dismantling societal distinctions and highlighting the equal standing of every believer in Christ. James 2:1-13 reinforces the truth that individual worth is not determined by external factors but is rooted in being made in the image of God. This passage warns against favoritism, emphasizing the call to love others as ourselves. Believers are commissioned to reflect the divine principle of equality in their interactions, as urged by Colossians 3:11, fostering unity in the diverse body of Christ.

In essence, the biblical narrative consistently asserts that every human being is equal in the eyes of God. This understanding shapes our perspectives and interactions, fostering a culture of love, acceptance, and unity within the body of Christ and broader communities. The teachings of Jesus and the apostles emphasize a common identity in Christ, where socio-economic distinctions fade, and believers are united in love and purpose (Proverbs 14:21; Proverbs 17:5). Jesus expressed significant concern about power imbalances stemming from material wealth, as seen in instances such as Matthew 19:16-30, and societal positions, as evident in Luke 6:24-26. His concern arose from the misalignment of their priorities with the values of God's kingdom of shalom. In stark contrast, those who choose to follow Christ are regarded as equals in the eyes of God, recognized as sacred siblings, as emphasized in Matthew 23:8. Our practical demonstrations of love toward one another naturally highlight the positive outcomes of treating everyone as equals within the broader society. It's like a powerful example that warns rich and powerful people who only care about themselves and invites those who are struggling and left out.

*I believe that if you want to fight inequality you have to do it starting at infancy.*

*Michelle Bachelet*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Father, you created us in your image. Every human being reflects your divinity, no matter what part of the world they live in, what social class or social stratum they belong to, what gender they are or whatever else may distinguish them from other human beings. In a world full of differences between people, you call us to treat every human being with respect and to live and act in such a way that justice increases and inequality decreases.

*In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from Social Inequalities***

Heavenly Father, you have created us all in Your image and gave us a sacred purpose in life. We come before You with heavy hearts struggling with the effects of social inequalities. In Your mercy, give us the courage and strength to endure but also fight against social injustices wherever they exist. O Lord, intervene in the course of history to break down walls of oppression and marginalization that separate us from the rest of society so that we may be united in love with other human beings.

You are not closing your eyes but you see our suffering from little access to basic human needs such as education, healthcare, and food. Give us hope that also our lives can be transformed by Your grace. May those who are privileged never take for granted the blessings they have received and use their resources to lift up people like us who lack opportunity and security.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### What You Can Do

1. Embracing the biblical principle of God's impartiality (Galatians 3:28).
2. Actively engage in advocating for policies and initiatives that address socio-economic disparities, promoting justice and fairness in their communities.
3. Explore the policies in your country designed to diminish inequality
4. Identify the specific *groups targeted for support by these measures.* hning

*Matthias Boehning*

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

## REDUCE INEQUALITY WITHIN AND AMONG COUNTRIES



**COVID-19 TRIGGERS** THE LARGEST INCREASE  
IN BETWEEN-COUNTRY INEQUALITY IN **THREE DECADES**,

### CHANGE OF BETWEEN-COUNTRY INEQUALITY (2019-2020)



### REVERSING DECADES OF INCOME CONVERGENCE

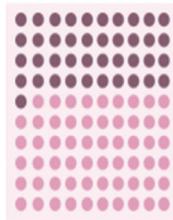


IN 2022,  
REFUGEE NUMBERS HIT A RECORD HIGH OF

**34.6 MILLION**

AMONG THEM WERE:

● CHILDREN: 41%



GLOBALLY,  
**WOMEN** ARE TWICE AS LIKELY AS MEN  
TO REPORT EXPERIENCING **DISCRIMINATION**  
BASED ON THEIR SEX



**THE TRAGIC LOSS OF NEARLY  
7,000 LIVES ALONG MIGRATORY  
ROUTES IN 2022**

UNDERSCORES THE PRESSING NEED FOR  
IMMEDIATE ACTION TO ENSURE SAFE MIGRATION

## DAY 11

# Pursuing God's Future City in our Present World



### **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**

“Goal 11 is about making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Today, more than half the world’s population live in cities. By 2050, an estimated 7 out of 10 people will likely live in urban areas. Cities are drivers of economic growth and contribute more than 80 per cent of global GDP.

However, they also account for more than 70 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. If well-planned and managed, urban development can be sustainable and can generate inclusive prosperity. The deep inequalities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and other cascading crises highlight the importance of sustainable urban development. Strengthening the preparedness and resilience of cities is crucial in responding to future crises.” – UN Official Site

### **Bible Passage: Revelation 21:1-4; 22:1-5**

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death”

or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup>down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup>No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup>They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

*Veres 1-2: Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup>down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.*

The New International Version of the Bible (NIV) has chosen to title Rev 22:1-5 “Eden Restored.” They apply this title because in John’s vision here, we have finally arrived at the great conclusion of the entire Biblical narrative. Heaven and earth, long separated by sin, have been brought back together through the work of Jesus into a “new creation” – a new physical and spiritual reality, right here on earth, where, as Rev 21:3b-4 says, “God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Eden – the physical creation where God used to walk in the garden with human beings – has been restored. But it has been more than restored. What was once a garden has become a great and glorious garden city. Somehow, through the long human story and the breaking in of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the final result has actually become

richer, deeper, and more wonderful than it was in the beginning before everything fell apart. This is the mystery of the Gospel, both on a grand scale and in our own individual lives.

And what is sometimes overlooked – even missed completely – is that the story of the Bible begins and ends *here on earth*. The story does not end with those in Christ being rescued from earth to go and live a non-physical existence in a place called Heaven. When John says in Rev 21: 1, “Then I saw a ‘new heaven and a new earth,’” the Greek word used in the Bible here and in every other reference to the “new” creation is the word *kainos*. *Kainos* does not mean “brand new,” but rather “renewed.” An old beat up bike that is repaired and tuned up and made to be a wonderful “new” bike is a *kainos* bike. There is another Greek word for “new” which means “brand new,” i.e. something that has never existed before but has been made from scratch. This is the word *neos*, but it is never used in the Bible to describe the “new creation.” The new creation is always described as a *kainos* creation, a renewed creation – a world that God has chosen never to give up on, but to lead through the darkness of its sinful brokenness and breathe heaven into it until it can one day become a place He can fully inhabit with people, plants, streams, rivers, animals, and now cities once more.

This, in the end, is the calling of the Church. The Body of Christ exists to be the living, breathing gateway through which God’s future Rev 21 and 22 renewed creation breaks into our present broken and suffering world. This is what Jesus did in his life, death, and resurrection – and through union with him by faith we are the continuation of his life and ministry. This is how Jesus has taught us to pray: “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We are praying that God will breathe heaven into our world – and we are asking that, as Jesus’ Body, he would breathe that incarnational heaven here on earth *through us*. *Jesus inaugurated the redemption and renewing of all creation, as disciples we join in with Gospel love and work, and we can be assured that in the future Jesus will complete what he started—heaven on earth once again!*

So what does this mean for us as Christians as we seek to pursue SDG 11: “Sustainable Cities and Communities”? We are called to pray that God would bring His future Rev 21-22 city to bear in our present suffering cities through our own hands, feet, words, service, and love.

Let us take as an example the low-income neighbourhood of Hunting Park in the US city of Philadelphia. Back in the 1940s and 50s, this neighbourhood was redlined because of the race of its residents. Redlining was a federal process through which maps were drawn up that excluded – or “redlined” – certain neighbourhoods from receiving loans, mortgages, and other kinds of business investment because the majority of the people who lived in them were not white. 80 years later, the descendants of this neighbourhood are still suffering under the long-term ripples of this policy. Lack of investment has led to patterns of generational poverty. Poverty has led to less political power, and as a result fewer public projects and less green infrastructure have been built in the neighbourhood. A highway was carved through it, and a natural gas power plant was erected right next to it recently despite huge public opposition – both of which have led to higher rates of lung disease, cancer, learning disabilities, and other health issues. The lack of investment has led to far fewer trees than the city’s average, leading to temperatures up to 22 F hotter than the greener parts of the city during summer heat waves! This heat differential will only worsen as climate change progresses.

Hunting Park, despite being filled with amazing image bearers, does not look like God’s Rev 21-22 city. Rev 22 shows us a city intentionally designed with a clean river running through it, full of trees, abundant with fruit, filled with the presence and light of God, and with “leaves that are for the healing of the nations.” God’s city is not only ecologically sustainable and life-giving, as SDG 11 calls for – it is beautiful, glorious, and filled with the presence of God. So how can Christians pursue the beauty, abundance, peace, and health of the shalom of God’s garden city in Hunting Park? They already are. Led by the faithful vision of the late Rev. Dr. Manuel Ortiz, Spirit and Truth Fellowship (STF), a local congregation in the Christian Reformed Church, North America has been on a mission of urban shalom. They have planted multiple churches in the neighbourhood,

invited their members who live outside the community to move into it, and joined their lives with the people in the community. They have partnered with others to build multiple health centers, a free legal clinic, a community center, and several Christian schools. They now employ a climate justice advocate, who is working with other partners (Christian and from other faiths) to connect low-income residents with good rooftop solar and home-repair options.

By 2050, 70% of the world's population will live in cities. They will be huge centers of both job growth and (if we don't change our energy sources) carbon emissions. Cities have a massive impact, for good or ill, on the trajectory of our whole world. Imagine if Christians were praying and living out the Rev 21-22 renewed garden city of heaven in every neighbourhood of every city – just as Spirit and Truth Fellowship and others are doing today? We would accomplish SDG 11 – and so much more.

*Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about.*

*N.T. Wright, Surprised by Hope*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Holy Spirit, please open my eyes, ears, and heart to where you would have me partner with others to breathe the beauty and *shalom* of your future city into the suffering of our present reality. Jesus, show me what gifts you have given me for this purpose and help me to use them faithfully in a way that honors you, loves others, and impacts your world meaningfully.

### ***Prayer of those Living in Unhealthy Urban Environments***

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done in my neighbourhood as it is in Heaven. My community has been forgotten by our city council for ages. Our schools are underfunded and our kids are getting caught up in bad

things. My neighbours are all struggling to get by. We're surrounded by concrete and don't have many trees. Litter is everywhere, and people from outside our community dump their garbage on our street corners on a regular basis. There's a highway just a few blocks away and we can't get away from the exhaust. Lord God, please turn towards our community. Please bring trees and green spaces to our neighbourhood. Turn the hearts of those in power towards us, that the city might remember us when they write their budgets and make their laws. Bring funding to our schools. Bring health centers and businesses and community centers and arts to our home. Bring your churches back to communities like ours, that we might know you haven't forgotten us. We want a chance to flourish. We believe that you love us, Jesus – please do not pass us by. Amen.

### What You Can Do

1. Begin by praying the Lord's Prayer as a regular practice. As you embrace this prayer with consistency, it will begin to change you and help you to see that you are, first and foremost, part of God's story (not the other way around). Ask yourself if you are involved in any collective work within your own community to pursue the vision of the Rev 21-22 city? If your community is well off, is there a community near you that is struggling? When you find that community, look for organizations that are doing work to rebuild, restore, make healthier, make cleaner, make greener, reduce waste, create jobs, fight pollution, etc. Join one organization and start helping them with their mission. It does not need to be a Christian organization. Partnering with those from other faiths in work that is bringing healing and restoration is a wonderful opportunity to serve Jesus and bring his heart to bear within that partnership.
2. Finally, to learn more about the global evangelical perspective on cities explore the statement entitled The Gospel and the Future of Cities: A Call to Action at this link... [[https://www.weacreationcare.org/\\_files/ugd/5cd778\\_4bd18250d58542e18e940ce602cf108b.pdf](https://www.weacreationcare.org/_files/ugd/5cd778_4bd18250d58542e18e940ce602cf108b.pdf)]

*Allen Drew*



## MAKE CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE

### SLUMS ON THE RISE

1.1 BILLION URBAN  
RESIDENTS ARE  
LIVING IN SLUMS (2020)

2 BILLION MORE ARE EXPECTED  
IN THE NEXT 30 YEARS



GLOBALLY, ONLY  
**ONE IN TWO**  
URBAN RESIDENTS HAVE  
CONVENIENT ACCESS TO  
**PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

(2022)



AIR POLLUTION IS NO LONGER AN  
EXCLUSIVELY URBAN PROBLEM

TOWNS EXPERIENCE  
**POORER AIR QUALITY**



THAN CITIES IN EASTERN AND SOUTH-  
EASTERN ASIA (2018)

GLOBALLY,  
**3 IN 4 CITIES**



HAVE **LESS THAN 20%**  
OF THEIR AREA DEDICATED TO  
**PUBLIC SPACES AND STREETS**

MUCH LOWER THAN THE  
TARGET OF 45-50%  
(2020)



IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD



1 BILLION PEOPLE LACK ACCESS  
TO **ALL-WEATHER ROADS** (2022)

## DAY 12

# Give Today to Receive



### SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

“Goal 12 is about ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns, which is key to sustaining the livelihoods of current and future generations. Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production are root causes of the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. These crises, and related environmental degradation, threaten human well-being and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Governments and all citizens should work together to improve resource efficiency, reduce waste and pollution, and shape a new circular economy.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Mark 6:30-44

<sup>30</sup>The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” <sup>32</sup>So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. <sup>33</sup>But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

<sup>35</sup>By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. <sup>36</sup>Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

<sup>37</sup>But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” <sup>38</sup>“How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.” <sup>39</sup>Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup>So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. <sup>41</sup>Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup>They all ate and were satisfied, <sup>43</sup>and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. <sup>44</sup>The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

*Verse 37: But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?”*

The incidents in Mark 6:1-6 “Jesus rejected by His own people — a prophet without an honour” and 14-29 “John the Baptist beheaded” present us with the desperateness of the crowd and Jesus’ compassion on those who chose to follow Him. A simple mathematical reading of the passage tells us that the crowd was more than 12 thousand. Humanly speaking, the disciples were alarmed by the food situation because it was already late and so they asked Jesus to send the crowd away. “By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him.” “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat” (v.35-36).

The story demands an economic and management reflection. Embedded in the passage is an IMS model: “Identifying available resources, Management of the resources identified, and Sustaining

the communities through the available resource". While the disciples wanted the crowds to be dispersed, out of compassion Jesus wanted to feed them instead, so he commanded his disciples to feed them. "But he answered, "You give them something to eat" (v.37a). The disciples' answer appears very worrying and relevant: "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" (v.37b) Here lies IMS. The words of Jesus in v. 38: "How many loaves do you have?" He asked, "Go and see." Here Jesus meant to go and "Identify the resources available." And the disciples, having identified the resources, brought them to Jesus.

What the disciples brought to Jesus was, by all calculations, grossly insufficient to meet the need of the hungry crowd that day. However, these were the resources that were available – and when placed in Jesus' hands, something amazing happened: 5 loaves and 2 fish fed 5,000 families. God took a small step of faith and surprised the crowd with abundance.

Three villages under Longleng district, Nagaland, India - Yaongyimchen, Alayong and Sanglu – form the Yaongyimchen Biodiversity Conservation Area (YBCA). Lemsachenlok Society is a community run organisation initiated by local church members which is actively working towards conserving biodiversity in YBCA. Due to the rural economic constraints and the underdeveloped setting of the majority of the people (struggling for basic health facilities, education, and other economic livelihoods), the IMS model was adopted by this society and applied based on Mark 6.30-44. The community came together to identify whatever they had and work towards healthier and more sustainable management. People gave their lands, forests and rivers, which had a huge potential for fetching every form of life and making each sustainable. And this was executed with a motto, "Give today to receive." Despite depressing financial constraints, villagers chose to give their biodiversity and their time for better management, and in return received social orderliness, economic sustainability, and an improved ecosystem where human beings and wildlife coexist in a mutually sustaining way.

For a long time, human beings have been living in a fundamentally unsustainable way with respect to Creation. We are taking from

the land more than we are giving back. We are not Identifying our available resources and living in balance. As a result, a multitude is growing increasingly hungry. Just like the Lemsachenlok Society, we are called to change this balance so that we can identify resources and manage them sustainably for both people and planet. The scale of this challenge – and the need for change – can feel overwhelming. However, Jesus reminds us that if we bring our changes to him person by person and community by community, he can take what we give him and weave surprising healing and abundance into our world. God wants us to live in balance with His Creation – and all the efforts we take to do so will find a Powerful and Holy Partner.

*Not everything is accomplished through Money and Power,  
don't restrict the Creator God to work wonders through you for  
sustaining the needy and bring Glory to God.*

*Y Nuklu Phom*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Heavenly Father, we come before you today in desperation. We are overwhelmed by the waste and pollution that we have brought upon this world. Our planet is groaning under the weight of bad and irresponsible production and consumption choices. We turn to You for help and guidance. You want us to be good stewards of this earth - to act with love and care, recognizing that the earth and all its creatures are Yours. We know that You are a God of justice who desires every human being in this world to take care of the vulnerable, including the environment.

Father, may the Holy Spirit encourage, remind and enable us to put action behind our words. Give wisdom to the big producers and consumers of this world as we strive to reduce humanity's energy consumption and waste production. Help all people around the globe to recognize the implications of their actions on this earth, so that we may serve You faithfully in the way You call us to. We humbly ask for Your help and guidance as we pray that more people are uniting to work towards a more sustainable future.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

***Prayer of those Suffering from Pollution and Waste***

Our Lord and God, please help us! Trash and plastics, some from other countries, are cluttering our beaches and rivers. Garbage is incinerated next to our town, poisoning the air we breathe. Our land is being depleted through unsustainable agricultural practices. Our forests are being replaced by single crop plantations and we are seeing fewer and fewer of the native species we used to see. The land our people have owned and stewarded for generations has been taken from us by large corporations and colonial empires and used for their own extractive purposes. Natural gas companies are poisoning our water through fracking. Factories are pouring industrial runoff into our rivers and making our children sick.

Please deliver us, O God, from the powerful who treat our land and people as a resource to be harvested, rather than a community to be cared for and partnered with. Remind them that we bear the same image of God that they do. Change their hearts, O Lord – and if they will not change, we pray that you will bring them swiftly to justice and rescue us and our land from their devastation.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What You Can Do**

1. To mitigate waste, it is advisable to minimise the use of disposable goods, maximising the reuse of objects wherever feasible, and engaging in the recycling of materials such as paper, plastic, glass, and metal.
2. It is advisable to seek for items that include eco-friendly certifications or badges denoting their production with a minimum environmental footprint.
3. Choose to purchase locally-sourced and seasonally-available food items as a means to mitigate the environmental impact associated with the production and transportation of meals.
4. To mitigate the issue of food waste, it is important to adopt strategies such as meal planning, appropriate food storage, and innovative utilisation of leftovers.

5. Visit the “*Living the Change*” campaign website and make a personal sustainable lifestyle commitment motivated from a heart of faithful discipleship.

*Nuklu Phom*



## ENSURE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS

### UNSUSTAINABLE PATTERNS

OF CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION ARE ROOT CAUSE OF

#### TRIPLE PLANETARY CRIMES



CLIMATE CHANGE



BIODIVERSITY LOSS



POLLUTION

OUR RELIANCE ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
IS INCREASING

RISING OVER  
65% GLOBALLY  
FROM  
2000 TO 2019



### TOO MUCH FOOD IS BEING LOST OR WASTED IN EVERY COUNTRY EVERY DAY



13.3%

OF THE WORLD'S FOOD IS LOST AFTER HARVESTING  
AND BEFORE REACHING RETAIL MARKETS

17%

OF TOTAL FOOD IS WASTED AT THE  
CONSUMER LEVEL

VAST MAJORITY OF THE  
WORLD'S ELECTRONIC WASTE IS  
NOT BEING SAFELY MANAGED

E-WASTE COLLECTION RATES  
(2018)LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN  
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAEUROPE AND NORTHERN AMERICA  
GLOBAL AVERAGE

## DAY 13

# Nurture All of Nature



### SDG 13: Climate Action

“The global temperature has already risen 1.1°C above the pre-industrial level, with glaciers melting and the sea level rising. Impacts of climate change also include flooding and drought, which is displacing millions of people and sinking them into poverty and hunger, denying them access to basic services such as health and education, expanding inequalities, stifling economic growth, and even causing conflict. By 2030, an estimated 700 million people will be at risk of displacement by drought alone.

To limit warming to 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels, as set out in the Paris Agreement, global greenhouse gas emissions will need to peak before 2025. Then they must decline by 50 per cent by 2030 and get to net zero by 2050. Countries are articulating climate action plans to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts through nationally determined contributions. However, current national commitments are not sufficient to meet the 1.5°C target.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Deuteronomy 22:6-7

“If you come across a bird’s nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do

not take the mother with the young. <sup>7</sup>You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life.

*Verse 6: Let the mother bird go....*

In the above passage, the Israelites were instructed that if they saw a bird's nest in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting upon the young or the eggs, they should not take the mother with the young.

Why would God command this? God has in mind the sustainability of His Creation. Human beings will naturally reach for eggs as a source of food (and God allows this), but if they reach for the producer of the eggs as well (the mother), there will be no more eggs in the future. Allowing the mother to live allows her to mate again and produce more eggs and more young, who can in turn become future mothers who produce new generations of eggs and young. And out of this bounty, humanity is invited to carefully and respectfully glean a living.

Planet earth is vast and bountiful - but for this reason, human beings can be tempted to believe that her bounty has no limits and can be harvested at will without concern for her ability to regenerate. Yet this is a false belief, and humanity's long history of unsustainable, extractive, and ultimately abusive relationship with creation has brought us to the point where the global ecosystem is becoming increasingly unable to recover from our daily way of life.

Climate change is the most extreme and urgent example of this. As we have powered our lives and built our societies through the burning of fossil fuels, for a long time God's earth has been able to deal with our pollution by sequestering it in the ocean and absorbing it into our great forests. But earth is now reaching her limits and is being overwhelmed by our relentless carbon emissions. The carbon we are putting into the atmosphere is absorbing too much of the sun's heat and the earth is heating up internally, developing a growing fever which is in turn throwing her intricate global systems further and

further out of balance. These changing systems are causing increased frequency and intensity of storms, droughts, floods, wildfires, and sea level rise. And these changes are, in turn, bringing untold - and growing - suffering for both non-human and human life.

Humanity's current way of living is emphasizing short term reward over long term sustainability. It is looking at the mother and her eggs and young and taking all of them now for the immediate gratification, while robbing future generations of the eggs a spared mother might produce. We are burning fossil fuels to achieve maximum growth and economic returns now, even if it means passing ecological and societal collapse on to our grandchildren. We are choosing the opposite path from the one that God says will enable things to "go well with us and give us a long life" (vs 6) - and we are reaping the consequences.

But the God of the Bible calls us to a different way - and we can still change. The psalmist in Psalm 115:15 acknowledges God as the Creator of all things. Creation reflects so much of God - God's goodness, God's love, and God's graciousness. God, in His grace, gave the earth to us (v. 16). But the question is, what are we doing with it? Are we carrying out our responsibilities faithfully? Every creature is valuable in the sight of God and they are well interconnected with each other. Even stones resonate with the creative life of God. We have a forgotten intimacy with our surroundings as extensions of our very selves, and climate change a powerful indicator reminding us of how fragile that relationship can be.

Climate change is already beginning to transform life on Earth. Around the globe, seasons are shifting, the temperature is going up, and sea level is rising. Shifting climatic conditions are increasingly meaning the difference between a bumper harvest and a famine.

But the Scriptures give us guidance. They impart a strong sustainability message, warning us against over-utilizing and wearing out natural resources. The need of the hour is to reflect on passages of the Bible which demand a reverent and caring approach towards humanity's relationship with the rest of God's living planetary system. . As faithful stewards, we must take care of the environment diligently.

God has not given us the authority to disturb or degrade the ecosystem but to value and sustain it with love and compassion. And this is, as with all of God's commands, for our own good. It is so beautiful to think that if we take care of God's creation, we may do well and live long in the land God has given us. Jesus invites us to this way of life - indeed he commands it.

*The Creation narratives of God are encircled with scientific expressions. Approached with modern scientific lenses, they disclose the scientific elements bearing the resemblance of a science laboratory originating new inventions.*

*Y Nuklu Phom*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Creator God, we have overused and even misused the wonderful environment you gave us, and today the environment has come so heavily upon us. We seek your forgiveness for our greediness and excessive use. Help us to care even for the smallest creature because your word teaches us that their existence sustains us and we cannot survive without them. Grant us a mindset to love and care for the environment so that our life on earth may go well, and that we may live long. Help the policy makers to understand the value of biodiversity conservation and join in this venture of augmenting and improving the ecosystem. In the name of our Lord the Creator God, we pray.

*Amen.*

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from Climate Change***

Heavenly Father, we pray to you for sustenance and mercy. You have said in Your Word that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. In this world where environmental destruction has become a norm, please grant us the strength to stand strong against such injustice. We look to Your teachings as our source of hope, and we thank You for the hope that is found in Your Word. We plead with You to give us strength in the face of adversity. As we stand between darkness and light being disadvantaged by climate change and other

forms of environmental exploitation, may You provide us with a path forward.

Help us to inspire and remind the strong and influential in our societies to be vigilant in our struggle against the corruption of our world and its resources, for we know You see it all. In Your mercy, protect both our planet and people like us. Grant us ways to work together towards a better future.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. Have a family/community black out for one hour. Share what you are doing in the hour on your social media channels.
2. Commit to sustainable living practices, including reducing personal carbon footprints, adopting renewable energy sources, and minimizing waste.
3. Actively participate in local environmental initiatives and collaborate with like-minded organizations.
4. To reflect on their roles in caring for God's creation through prayer and meditation.

*Y Nuklu Phom*

13 CLIMATE ACTION



## TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS



### CLIMATE CHANGE

IS HUMANITY'S **"CODE RED" WARNING**

OUR WINDOW TO AVOID CLIMATE CATASTROPHE IS CLOSING RAPIDLY

DIFFERENT TEMPERATURE SCENARIOS FOR CORAL REEFS



SEA LEVEL WILL RISE 30-60 CM BY 2100



DROUGHT ESTIMATED TO DISPLACE 700 MILLION PEOPLE BY 2030



MEDIUM- TO LARGE-SCALE DISASTERS WILL INCREASE 40% FROM 2015 TO 2030



ENERGY-RELATED CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS INCREASED

**6%** IN 2021

REACHING HIGHEST LEVEL EVER

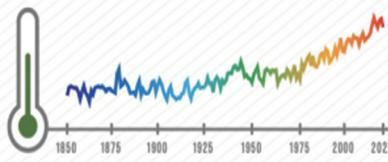


CLIMATE FINANCE

FALLS SHORT OF \$100 BILLION YEARLY COMMITMENT

DEVELOPED COUNTRIES PROVIDED \$79.6 BILLION IN CLIMATE FINANCE IN 2019

RISING GLOBAL TEMPERATURES CONTINUE UNABATED, LEADING TO **MORE EXTREME WEATHER**



## DAY 14

# Let the Waters Swarm



### SDG 14: Life below Water

“Goal 14 is about conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources. Healthy oceans and seas are essential to human existence and life on Earth. They cover 70 per cent of the planet and provide food, energy and water. The ocean absorbs around one quarter of the world’s annual carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, thereby mitigating climate change and alleviating its impacts. It is essential to conserve and sustainably use them. Yet, human activity is endangering the oceans and seas – the planet’s largest ecosystem – and affecting the livelihoods of billions of people.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Genesis 1:20-23

<sup>20</sup>And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” <sup>21</sup>So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” <sup>23</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

*Verse 20: And God said,  
“Let the water teem with living creatures...*

“There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small” declared the writer of Psalm 104. The sea is indeed vast and spacious – covering over 70% of the earth’s surface — it makes our planet appear as a glowing blue “marble” when seen from space. Looking out from a high cliff on the coast it seems to go on forever. And teem with creatures it does – or did. Scientists know of around 226,000 species in the world’s seas, and in some places, such as the Grand Banks off the east coast of Canada, fish are naturally so abundant that early explorers recorded lowering a bucket into the water and bringing it up full of fish.

The ocean is fundamental to maintaining the earth’s ecosystems and supporting human life. It regulates the world’s climate, provides us with half of the oxygen we breathe and supplies nearly half the world’s population with their main source of protein. Yet we still know so little about it. Eighty percent of the ocean remains unmapped, and scientists believe that up to 90% of the species in the ocean have not yet been described. Until the last 200 years, the deep seas and the life in them were essentially unexplored and unknown. And even now humans rarely, if ever, see the creatures of the deep ocean alive in their natural habitats. God alone knows the lives of these extraordinary and beautiful creatures.

Perhaps because it is so vast and largely unseen, people have mistreated the ocean. We have assumed that fish and other seafood are in endless supply, and so we have used ever more advanced technology and nets as wide as a football field to seek out and harvest them. As a result, about 85% of the world’s fisheries are either fully exploited or overfished<sup>1</sup>, and some formerly abundant fisheries, such as the Atlantic cod on the Grand Banks, have collapsed spectacularly. Many non-target species, from whales and dolphins to sea turtles and albatross, as well as unwanted fish, are also killed as by-catch.

Because we don’t see undersea ecosystems, we have failed to appreciate their beauty, importance and fragility. And so we have used

harmful fishing methods like bottom trawling which destroys vast swathes of seabed habitat, and dynamite which destroys coral reefs. We have assumed that the ocean has an infinite capacity to absorb pollution. So we have allowed tons of nutrients from agriculture and sewage to create “dead zones” where oxygen levels are too low to support marine life. We have allowed 14 million tons of plastic waste each year to enter the oceans where it has littered beaches on the most remote islands and created a “garbage patch” three times as large as France in the Pacific Ocean. And our greenhouse gas emissions are making the oceans too warm and too acidic for many sea creatures.

But there is hope. Although only 8% of the world’s marine area is protected, inside these areas ecosystems and fish populations have shown remarkable recovery within a few years. And fish that breed in protected areas then boost fisheries nearby. Meanwhile, many countries are starting to phase out single use plastic products. If we can regain our sense of awe and wonder at the great unseen world beneath the waves, and work to protect the life that remains, we can hope to see many fisheries and marine ecosystems recover.

In focusing on Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14), which centers on the conservation and sustainable utilization of oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development, the importance of water and its biodiversity becomes a significant focal point. Water covers about 70% of the Earth’s surface, exceeding the planet’s territorial extension and highlighting its vast significance. Understanding current efforts to preserve this common good and prevent its extinction is crucial. This aligns with the church’s role in reconciling all things through Jesus, as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

Expanding the idea of evangelization to embrace rivers, seas, and oceans within a Creation-focused theology is important. Such a theology recognizes the interconnectedness of all creation. This integral mission involves discerning, proclaiming, and living out the biblical truth that the Gospel is not only for individuals and society but also for the entire creation. This perspective calls for urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility, advocating for the responsible

use of abundant resources for the Lord's sake. Connecting SDG 14 with Genesis 1:20 underscores the biblical mandate for stewardship. It aligns human responsibility with the conservation of oceans and marine resources. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of creation, biblical teachings on justice, and the need for global cooperation, this connection reinforces the shared responsibility rooted in both environmental and ethical considerations.

The Lausanne Congress in 2010, hosted in Cape Town, South Africa, involved approximately 4,500 participants and resulted in a Commitment document. This document acknowledged human responsibility for Earth's destruction and waste. It called for repentance and commitment to urgent ecological responsibility. The integral mission concept emphasized the redemptive purpose for creation and advocated for responsible care for the Earth as an expression of love for God. It rejected the dichotomy between secular and sacred. Acknowledging sin's consequences, the document affirmed God's transformative mission to heal the broken creation. This comprehensive approach integrates responsible resource use with the lordship of Jesus. It emphasizes the inseparable relationship between one's connection to Christ and actions related to the Earth.

*Even if you never have the chance to see or touch the ocean, it touches you with every breath you take, every drop of water you drink, every bite you consume. Everyone, everywhere is inextricably connected to and utterly dependent upon the existence of the sea.*

*Dr. Sylvia Earle  
(founder of Mission Blue)*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Father God, Creator of earth, sky and sea, we praise you for creating the vast oceans of the world and the myriad creatures that live there. Restore to us a sense of awe and wonder at the intricate world beneath the waves. And help us to value even the things we cannot see, knowing that the remarkable ecosystems of the ocean give you glory and support all life on earth. We promise to do our part by being

thoughtful and responsible in what we eat from the ocean and careful that our waste does not harm the creatures that live there.

*In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

### ***Prayer of Sea-dwellers***

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the bounty of the Sea. We are Your humble servants, depending on Your grace to provide for us and our families. You have given us dominion over all things in the sea and commanded us to be stewards of its resources. You said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." You created great whales and every living creature that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind.

We thank You for giving us authority to use marine resources to provide sustenance and prosperity for our families. Remind us that we are stewards of your creation and show us how to be better stewards of the seas. Help us to use this resource in a responsible way, preserving it for future generations. Furthermore, we pray that you would protect us and our communities from the ocean pollution that finds its way to us from other nations and industries. Please lead them to repentance and a more respectful and sustainable relationship with your creation, that we might all live in increasing health and abundance on our shared planetary home.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

Pristine Seas: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/pristine-seas/>

A Rocha Kenya: <https://www.arocha.or.ke/conservation-action/>

### **What you can do**

1. Go snorkelling or diving, or watch a documentary that explores the ocean.
2. Only buy fish that are caught sustainably and using non-destructive methods.

3. Speak up for new marine protected areas to be created in your country.
4. Say no to single use plastics, join a beach clean-up project near you.
5. Reduce your greenhouse gas emissions.

## References

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, according to [https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/sustainable seafood#:~:text=3%20billion,to%20billions%20of%20people%20worldwide](https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/sustainable_seafood#:~:text=3%20billion,to%20billions%20of%20people%20worldwide).

*Richard Storey*



## PRESERVE THE BLUE, PROTECT THE EARTH: URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED TO SAFEGUARD THE PLANET'S LARGEST ECOSYSTEM

### OCEAN EMERGENCY



#### COASTAL EUTROPHICATION:

CAUSING ALgal  
BLOOMS AND  
DEAD ZONES



#### OCEAN ACIDIFICATION:

30% HIGHER THAN  
IN PRE-INDUSTRIAL  
TIMES



#### OCEAN WARMING:

SEA-LEVEL RISE  
AND AFFECTING  
MARINE ECOSYSTEMS



#### PLASTIC POLLUTION:

17 MILLION METRIC  
TONS IN 2021-  
2-3X MORE BY 2040



#### OVER- FISHING:

MORE THAN A THIRD  
OF GLOBAL FISH STOCKS  
ARE OVERFISHED

#### CITIZEN SCIENCE BEACH CLEAN-UPS

SHED LIGHT ON THE MAGNITUDE OF  
OCEAN PLASTIC POLLUTION



#### SUFFOCATING SEAS

COASTAL EUTROPHICATION TRIGGERS  
CRUSTACEAN WALKOUTS



#### OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

REPORTING STATIONS HAVE  
TRIPLED WORLDWIDE

2021: 178 STATIONS  
2022: 308 STATIONS  
2023: 539 STATIONS



#### 1 IN 5 FISH CAUGHT

ORIGINATES FROM  
ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED  
AND UNREGULATED FISHING



Day 15

## Oikos of God



### SDG 15: Life on Land

“Goal 15 is about conserving life on land. It is to protect and restore terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and stop biodiversity loss. Healthy ecosystems and the biological diversity they support are a source of food, water, medicine, shelter and other material goods.

They also provide ecosystem services – the cleaning of air and water – which sustain life and increase resiliency in the face of mounting pressures. Nevertheless, human activities have profoundly altered most terrestrial ecosystems: around 40,000 species are documented to be at risk of extinction over the coming decades, 10 million hectares of forest (an area the size of Iceland) are being destroyed each year, and more than half of key biodiversity areas remain unprotected.” UN Official Site.

### Bible Passage: Psalm 104:10:31

<sup>10</sup>He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. <sup>11</sup>They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. <sup>12</sup>The birds of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. <sup>13</sup>He waters the mountains from his

upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work. <sup>14</sup>He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: <sup>15</sup>wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts. <sup>16</sup>The trees of the Lord are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. <sup>17</sup>There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers. <sup>18</sup>The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the hyrax. <sup>19</sup>He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. <sup>20</sup>You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. <sup>21</sup>The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. <sup>22</sup>The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. <sup>23</sup>Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening. <sup>24</sup>How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. <sup>25</sup>There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small. <sup>26</sup>There the ships go to and fro, and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there. <sup>27</sup>All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time. <sup>28</sup>When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. <sup>29</sup>When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. <sup>30</sup>When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. <sup>31</sup>May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works.

*Verse 31: May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works.*

Psalm 104 is one of the most beautiful and instructive passages on creation care in the Bible. It is full of rich insights into the relationship that God has with the creatures He made, providing the context for us as His image bearers—His representatives on earth. The first thing that stands out in this psalm is that God is very much present and involved in the natural world. The psalmist sees the Earth's physical processes as God's active care for His creatures, providing water, food, and habitat to each species. As God's image bearers, we should continue this provision, but unfortunately, in the last 300 years,

humans have cut down or burned 35% of the world's forests and degraded 80% of what remains.<sup>1</sup> The destruction and degradation of habitats are the main causes of species extinctions. However, history shows that deforestation can be reversed, and SDG 15 recognizes that the primary way to protect and restore species diversity is by safeguarding and sustainably managing habitats.

The psalm declares that as God provides, “the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work,” even as it grows food for cattle and crops for people. In contrast, human agriculture throughout history and especially in modern industrial farming usually depletes the soil. The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that about 40% of the world's land area has been degraded, largely through unsustainable farming methods, and the loss in soil fertility now affects half the world's population. But there are solutions. In Leviticus 25, God instructs his people to give the land regular Sabbath rests. Communities in various places and times have discovered that if they regenerate the soil by replenishing its nutrients, maintaining its structure and microbial flora, and giving it adequate rest, it can remain healthy and continue to provide food.

The second theme running through Psalm 104 is the order and fullness that God has established in the natural world. Ordering and filling the “formless and empty” earth are the great works of God's original creation as told in Genesis 1, and Psalm 104 celebrates the fruit of these works. In God's world, natural processes are kept within their assigned bounds so they may serve God's purpose of sustaining life, and each creature has been given its own place so that it may live safely. In today's world, climate change is causing many natural processes to change in dangerous ways and become increasingly destructive. Another major threat to the world's biodiversity is alien species – plants, animals, and microbes that have been moved from their native habitats to new places where they don't belong. There, they out-compete, prey on, or cause disease to native organisms. The order God established is being undone.

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<sup>1</sup>. <https://www.discovermagazine.com>.

Summing up his survey of the natural world, the Psalmist declares, “how many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all.” Since each species was made in wisdom, we would be unwise to allow any species to go extinct. Ecological studies show that complex food webs with many species are more resilient in the face of natural disasters than ones that have been depleted, and with natural disasters increasing, resilience is more important than ever. The psalmist also declares that the filling of the earth gives God great joy and is for His glory. As people appropriate more of the earth’s ecosystems to meet human needs and desires, it is important to remember that the creatures of earth are created primarily for God’s glory and pleasure, not for human use.

*When I hear of the destruction of a species, I feel just as if all the works of some great writer have perished.*

*Theodore Roosevelt  
(26th President of the USA, 1858-1919)*

### ***Prayer of commitment***

Father God, Creator of all, we celebrate the wonderful diversity of all your creatures and praise you for filling the earth with such beautiful species. We recognize your loving care in the earth’s processes. And we pray that as your image bearers we would follow you in sustaining the many living species on earth and providing for their needs. Help us to remember that each one is made in wisdom. Joining with the psalmist we pray that your glory in creation would endure forever and you would continue to rejoice in your works. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

### ***Prayer of those who live from and with the Land***

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the bounty that is provided through this land. We are grateful for its ability to provide food and sustenance for ourselves and our families. We thank you for all your provisions over us as we remember that you are the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. We acknowledge that these resources and this land have been given to us through your grace.

We look to You for guidance and hope during times of hardship as we know that it is You who gives rain on the earth and sends water on the fields. We trust You who sets on high those who are lowly, and lift to safety those who mourn. Help us also to remember your words of caution to set apart for You all that first opens the womb and to not delay to offer from the fullness of our harvest and from the outflow of our presses. And please protect us and the other creatures around us from those outside our communities whose actions are negatively impacting our ecosystem. Lead them to repentance and a more caring way of living. We thank you for your grace and mercy that are new each morning, allowing us to live with hope in our hearts.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

*Project profile:* Sea bird restoration at Karioi Maunga, New Zealand.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a place that beautifully illustrates the themes in Psalm 104. It is a special place, almost without land mammals, that God gave to a variety of unusual organisms, most of which occur nowhere else in the world. Among them are several species of flightless birds. New Zealand's forests used to be so full of birds that early European explorers reported they could not hear each other talk because of the birdsong. However, in many parts of the country the forests are now nearly silent, largely due to introduced mammalian predators such as rats, stoats, cats and possums.

At Karioi Maunga, a forest-clad mountain on the west coast of New Zealand's North Island, A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand is restoring a population of grey faced petrels. This sea bird breeds only on New Zealand's North Island and surrounding offshore islands, but on the North Island only a few small colonies remain because of invasive mammalian predators. A Rocha and local partners have organised volunteers to lay 2,048 traps along 100 km of trap lines and check them fortnightly. They have also rallied residents in the neighbouring town to operate traps in their own properties. To date they have removed over 14,000 predators from 2,300 ha of land. Thanks to their efforts, over 30 grey faced petrel chicks have been

born and fledged in the last four years, where previously there were none.<sup>2</sup>

### What You Can Do

1. Check whether your country has A Rocha, or reach out to a local conservation organisation and get involved a project.

*Richard Storey*

---

<sup>2.</sup> <https://www.karioiproject.co.nz>.



PROTECT, RESTORE AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE USE OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS, SUSTAINABLY MANAGE FORESTS, COMBAT DESERTIFICATION, AND HALT AND REVERSE LAND DEGRADATION AND HALT BIODIVERSITY LOSS

## A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN HUMANITY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE IS ESSENTIAL

ESCALATING



FOREST LOSSES



LAND DEGRADATION



SPECIES EXTINCTION

POSE SEVERE THREATS TO PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

100 MILLION HECTARES

OF HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE LAND WAS DEGRADED EVERY YEAR

FROM 2015-2019

EQUIVALENT TO 2X THE SIZE OF GREENLAND



THE WORLD IS CURRENTLY FACING THE LARGEST SPECIES EXTINCTION EVENT SINCE THE DINOSAUR AGE



PROTECTED AREA COVERAGE OF KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS HAS STALLED SINCE 2015

### THE KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

• PROVIDES RENEWED IMPETUS FOR CONSERVING TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS. •



4 OUTCOME-ORIENTED GOALS BY 2050



23 TARGETS BY 2030

Day 16

## Seek the Welfare of the City



### SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

“Goal 16 is about promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. People everywhere should be free of fear from all forms of violence and feel safe as they go about their lives whatever their ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation.

High levels of armed violence and insecurity have a destructive impact on a country’s development. Sexual violence, crime, exploitation and torture are prevalent where there is conflict or no rule of law. Governments, civil society and communities need to work together to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity. Strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights is key to this process, as is reducing the flow of illicit arms, combating corruption, and ensuring inclusive participation at all times.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Jeremiah 29:5-13

<sup>5</sup>“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup>Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. <sup>7</sup>Also,

seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”<sup>8</sup> Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have.<sup>9</sup> They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the LORD.<sup>10</sup> This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.<sup>12</sup> Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.<sup>13</sup> You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

*Verse 7: 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.*

One of the greatest leaders in United States history was undoubtedly the Rev Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. Guided by his Christian faith, he worked together with others to build a strictly non-violent social movement in the midst of a deeply racist society that, with God’s help, meaningfully impacted the trajectory of his nation. As a direct result of MLK’s work with this movement, culminating in his “I Have a Dream” speech, the US passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the 1968 Civil Rights Act.

This did not come without a cost, however. Many of Dr King’s fellow marchers were beaten, hosed, attacked by dogs, imprisoned by police, and lynched by fellow Americans. He himself suffered tremendously, was imprisoned multiple times, and was ultimately murdered for this work. Yet his relentless organizing, his movement’s steadfast commitment to non-violence, and their repeated marches, boycotts, and other actions pressed a nation to look seriously at itself and reconsider its moral history and its laws. The United States’ wealth had been built to a remarkable degree off of the free labor of enslaved people, arrogantly and violently stolen from their homes,

separated from their families, and forced to work until they died. And despite these peoples' legal emancipation after the Civil War, they continued to be discriminated against individually, collectively, and institutionally (particularly through the many Jim Crow laws that were passed).

The civil rights movement of the 1960s sought to hold a mirror up to the United States in the form of the African-American experience as a way to help it see how profoundly unpeaceful and unjust its institutions were with respect to a large portion of its population. There is still a great deal of work to do in the United States, but the civil rights movement helped to diagnose one of America's cancers and bring more into the open what has happened, what is still happening, and what needs to change.

Movements like the 1960s civil rights movement in the US are just the sorts of things that Christians are called to. This, however, is not always obvious to Christians. In many Christian communities around the world, there can be a tendency to overly-personalize the Christian calling - to essentially reduce it to a matter of maintaining a healthy personal relationship with God, living a personally moral life, loving one's neighbours, and sharing the Gospel with them. These are all very important aspects of following Jesus, but when faced with the challenge of more societal, systemic, or institutional injustices, they do not offer an answer that is up to the task. If local laws are systemically discriminating against certain people, is it enough for Christians to simply love those people and pray for them (while doing nothing about the laws)? If an industry is polluting a waterway that a village depends on and making the residents sick, is it enough for Christians to simply take care of the sick (while doing nothing about the industrial pollution)?

The answer, emphatically, is no. There is much more to the Christian calling, and Dr King is a powerful example of it. If Christians are truly to "seeking the peace and prosperity of the cities and towns to which we have been called," a critical part of this calling has to be to take action to ensure that the social patterns of a community, as well

as its laws, work for the peace, justice, and flourishing of all the people (as well as the rest of God's creation) that are living there.

This certainly begins with living a life of personal active love for God, neighbour, and creation. But it must go beyond that to forms of more collective advocacy. This kind of action includes (but is not limited to): (a) intentionally and consistently voting for candidates who will enact just laws, (b) advocating for just laws and customs at local levels (such as on boards, in community associations, or through local government), speaking with state or federal legislative representatives, or ultimately marching for change if the change isn't coming.

This calling is often more obvious to Christians who are part of less powerful parts of societies. For those suffering under institutions that discriminate against them, activism for societal change is a matter of life or death. For Christians who are part of more powerful parts of societies, they have the privilege to not act - because the institutions are already benefiting them. But as Paul says, there is only one Church, and all members are part of one Body. And so those Christians with more power are called to see (and, God-willing, feel) the negative impact of institutions that harm their less powerful siblings in Christ, and ultimately to partner together for shalom-oriented change. This calling is not comfortable, and it may involve sacrifice. But we should expect this - for we follow a King whose life-giving path leads through the cross.

*Excerpt from "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"*

"I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the

goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection."

*Rev Dr Martin Luther King, Jr*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

We thank you, Jesus, that you are the Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. We thank you that the government is upon your shoulders. Lord, we pray you raise up leaders of character; people who have the moral courage to stand up and fight for justice in a world bent by dark forces of corruption and greed. We pray you guard our own hearts from the ways of injustice. Make us peacemakers who will build bridges instead of erecting walls. Reveal to us how we may seek the welfare of our city, our neighbourhood, our family, and inspire us to a life that cares about what we do and cares for those around us. Amen.

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from Conflict and Injustice***

Heavenly Father, we come to you today with heavy hearts, begging for your help in times of conflict and injustice. This country and my people need your guidance and protection as we desperately seek strong institutions and peace. We find comfort in the promise that You work righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. In these challenging times, we are reminded that only You, Lord, can give us justice and peace. We trust You that You will bring justice to the poor of the people, that You will save the children of the needy, and that You will break in pieces the oppressor. We need Your help now more than ever before as we desperately yearn for an end to all forms of injustice. Please show us how we can get involved in non-violent movements to pursue shalom-oriented change in our country. And please fill people

in influential positions on all levels of society with the courage and faith needed to make peace in this world.

*In the name of Jesus Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. Take some time reflecting and praying for the welfare of your “city”. Think of one or two areas where you see a lack of welfare or even injustice. Next search for a local non-profit or other organisation that is working to address those issues. Get involved with them, and commit to praying regularly for these issues (ideally with a sibling in Christ).

*Emily Lange*



PROMOTE PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL AND BUILD EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVELS

## PLEAS FOR GLOBAL PEACE

### GROW LOUDER

WORLD IS WITNESSING LARGEST NUMBER OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS  
SINCE 1946

AND

A QUARTER OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION  
LIVES IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED  
COUNTRIES (END 2020)



1/3 OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION  
MOSTLY WOMEN  
FEAR WALKING ALONE IN  
THEIR NEIGHBOURHOODS AT NIGHT

A RECORD  
100 MILLION PEOPLE

HAD BEEN FORCIBLY DISPLACED WORLDWIDE

(MAY 2022)



GLOBAL HOMICIDE RATE DECLINED

5.2%  
BETWEEN  
2015 AND 2020

FALLS SHORT  
OF THE "SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION"  
BY 2030 TARGETED IN THE SDGs



CORRUPTION IS FOUND IN EVERY REGION

ALMOST 1 IN 6 BUSINESSES HAVE RECEIVED BRIBE REQUESTS  
FROM PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Day 17

## Working Together in God's World



### SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

“Goal 17 is about revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda is universal and calls for action by all countries – developed and developing – to ensure no one is left behind. It requires partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil society. The Sustainable Development Goals can only be realized with a strong commitment to global partnership and cooperation.” U.N. Official Site.

### Bible Passage: Psalm 24

<sup>1</sup>The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; <sup>2</sup>for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters. <sup>3</sup>Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? <sup>4</sup>The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. <sup>5</sup>They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Savior. <sup>6</sup>Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob. <sup>7</sup>Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>8</sup>Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. <sup>9</sup>Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>10</sup>Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty—he is the King of glory.

*Verse 1: The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*

I am often surprised by the way God chooses to work, and we notice this in many biblical stories. God often brings unexpected characters into his story and gives them a leading role. A talking donkey is the one who had to warn a prophet of which way he should go (Numbers 22:28-34). It was a pagan emperor who let the exiled people of God go back home and funded the rebuilding of their temple (Ezra 1:1-4). A Roman Centurion is one of the few people Jesus complimented on their faith (Matthew 8:5-9), and a pagan prostitute saved the lives of two of Joshua's envoys in Jericho (Joshua 2:1). These examples widen our gaze and stretch our horizons. Christians do not hold a monopoly on God's work. We cannot box in God's action, for it is God's Spirit that leads God's work in this world, and it is amazing to think we are invited to participate in what God is already doing, like stepping into a boat on a river that is already moving.

From the beginning, "The Lord took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). The cultural mandate of being stewards of the Earth was imprinted on us all, from the moment human beings were created. The phrase "to work it and keep it" reflects the cultural mandate or responsibility given to Adam. In this context, "work" implies cultivating and caring for the garden, which involves activities like planting, tending, and harvesting. "Keep" suggests the idea of stewardship or guardianship, indicating that Adam was entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining and protecting the garden. The idea that from the very beginning of human existence, there was a divine directive for humans to be stewards of the Earth. This mandate emphasizes a harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world, with humans playing a role in caring for and preserving the environment in which they live. Instead of exploiting or abusing the Earth, humans are called to responsibly manage and nurture it because earth belongs to God. This understanding of stewardship has theological and ethical implications, encouraging believers to approach environmental issues

with a sense of responsibility and care for the planet as part of their God-given role.

The climate crisis has brought together people from across the world. People of all sorts of cultures, ages, beliefs, and walks of life inhabit this one world, and everything in it is the Lord's. It is clear from the passage that Earth is very close to God's heart. Followers of Jesus should therefore be leading the way in accomplishing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and lending our efforts to all those who share these aspirations. When the Earth belongs to our Father, then as His children we are here to take care of it as good stewards. As Paul said, "whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone" (Galatians 6:10). Though people with different beliefs may disagree with our rationale, they will love our partnership, and perhaps they will even give God glory for our investment in creating a better world. Wherever we are planted, we should seek peace, do good, and prosper.

The Sustainable Development Goals raise our sights to a more just and healthier world; challenge us to shared responsibility, to the consequences of inaction; to fight injustice and discrimination; to be generous and care for our Earth and each other. In many ways, this is a vision that, by our human efforts alone, we will never fulfil. But the vision of redemption and reconciliation is God's vision, and he is already working on it through many different people, organizations, and communities. Like the young boy who brought his fish and loaves to Jesus, we bring what we have to the Master who created all. We can trust he will miraculously multiply, distribute, and bless, for he is already at work, making all things new.

*O heavenly Father, who hast filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold thy gracious hand in all thy works; that, rejoicing in thy whole creation, we may learn to serve thee with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**A Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer, “For Joy in God’s Creation”*****Prayer of Commitment***

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are already at work in us and in our world. We remember you created us and praise you for this. Today, we entrust our efforts and actions into your hands. We want to join in the work you are already doing, we want to partner and be ministers of reconciliation. Open our eyes and guide our steps. Inspire us to action, fill our imaginations and expand our hearts with your love. Amen.

***Prayer of those who are in Danger of Being Left Behind***

Heavenly Father, we come before you in prayer today, seeking your protection and support as we are in danger of being left behind by the global society. We ask that you create a place for us where we are welcome, seen, heard and appreciated. Lord, we beg for your mercy to strengthen the bonds of friendship and togetherness between all people around this world that you have created, so that we may have a meaningful human partnership with one another. We pray that the powerful and influential of this world recognize their duty to take care of those who are in need and offer them assistance unconditionally.

We pray that your Word will be a source of power and guidance for all of us who live in destitution, providing us with the courage and strength to carry on. May we never forget that better is a neighbour who is near than a brother far away.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What you can do**

1. Find out what organisations or communities are working in your city or neighbourhood towards creation care and the furthering of the SDG. Get in touch, find out about their work and consider partnering with them or becoming a volunteer.
2. Acknowledge the interdependence between humanity and the Earth, while also recognizing that the Earth belongs to God.

*Emily Lange*



## STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



### RISING DEBT BURDENS THREATEN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES' PANDEMIC RECOVERY



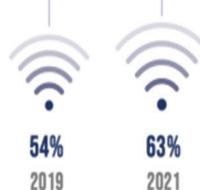
DEBT TO GNI RATIO ROSE SHARPLY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA COUNTRIES



### INTERNET

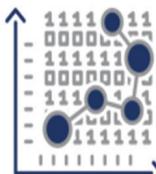
UPTAKE ACCELERATED DURING THE PANDEMIC

% OF INDIVIDUALS USING THE INTERNET



### IN 2021

- » **NET ODA** REACHED A NEW HIGH OF **\$177.6 BILLION**, LARGELY DUE TO COVID-RELATED AID
- » **FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT** REBOUNDED TO **\$1.58 TRILLION**, UP 64% FROM 2020
- » **REMITTANCES** REACHED **\$605 BILLION**, UP 8.6% FROM 2020



ODA FOR SDG DATA DECLINED BY MORE THAN 18% IN 2020

## Contributors



**Allen Drew** is an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and serves as the East Coast Regional Organizer for the Climate Witness Project (CWP). The CWP is a faith-based climate justice initiative jointly led by the CRCNA and the humanitarian organization World Renew, mobilizing churches and communities to respond faithfully to the climate crisis.

**Emily Lange** is WEASC Project Support Officer. She holds a PhD in Human Geography and in International Relations. As a contemplative scholar, her work and writing are a journey of learning to reflect and lead others into deep reflection. Having grown up in rural Portugal, she now lives in Bonn, Germany, working for the greater good of societies at PIRON Global Development.

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**Jasmine Kwong** serves as a Catalyst for Creation Care with the Lausanne Movement and is a passionate creation care advocate with OMF International, currently based in the Philippines. With a background in conservation biology and community development, she works at the vital intersection of people and the natural world. Her particular interests lie in food security and marine conservation.

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**Richard Storey** is a Senior Freshwater Ecologist at Wildland Consultants, based in New Zealand. From 2020 to 2023, he lived in Pokhara, Nepal, where he collaborated on environmental research with Kathmandu University. Richard is also actively involved with A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand, a Christian organization focused on Creation Care, integrating his scientific expertise with a faith-based commitment to environmental stewardship.

**Samuel Richmond** currently serves as the Executive Director and Professor of Christian Theology at Caleb Institute, Gurugram, India. He also holds the position of Honorary Project Support Officer at the WEA Sustainability Centre. In addition, he serves as the Honorary Secretary of the Theological Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of India and is a member of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). An ordained minister of the Church of North India, he is also an active member of the Sadhu Sundar Singh Global Forum.

**Y. Nuklu Phom**, a conservationist from Nagaland. He led the initiative to declare 17 square kilometers of forest as a biodiversity conservation area which now have expanded to nearly 200 sq. kms. It has become a hub for hundreds of wild species and one of the world's major roosting sites for millions of migrating Amur Falcons. He and his team were honored with the Governor's Gold Medal Award in 2020. Nuklu was awarded the prestigious Whitley Award—known as the “Green Oscar”—in 2021 and India Changemakers Awards in 2024 by UNDP, TIIS and FES. He continues to collaborate with local communities across the region to develop a Biodiversity Peace Corridor, promoting large-scale, community-led conservation in Northeast India.



This book is a unique resource that brings together the timeless wisdom of Scripture with the urgent call of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In a world struggling with poverty, hunger, inequality, conflict, and ecological crisis, this devotional demonstrates how the biblical vision of justice, peace, and flourishing directly intersects with the global agenda for sustainable living.

Through these 17 devotionals—each linked to a specific SDG—different authors explore God's heart for humanity and creation. It draws on biblical narratives, theological reflections, contemporary stories, and prayers to show how Christian faith is not only spiritual but also deeply practical, calling believers to action in society. Each chapter equips readers to see the SDGs not merely as policy goals, but as expressions of biblical values such as compassion, stewardship, justice, equality, and shalom.

Designed for pastors, students, churches, and communities, this devotional equips readers to integrate faith with action, to pray and work for change, and to embody God's kingdom vision of shalom on earth.

#### Why read this book?

- To deepen the understanding of the biblical foundation for justice and sustainability.
- To be equipped with practical ways of engaging the world's most pressing challenges.
- To be inspired by stories of hope that connect faith with action.
- To understand the deep connection of 17 Sustainable Development Goals with God's Word in God's world.
- To join the movement of Christians who believe that following Christ includes transforming communities and caring for creation.

*Engaging the SDGs gives Christians a chance to practice something deeply biblical: to build bridges of common concern, to collaborate where goals overlap with God's purposes, and to witness by word and deed to the kingdom of Christ.*

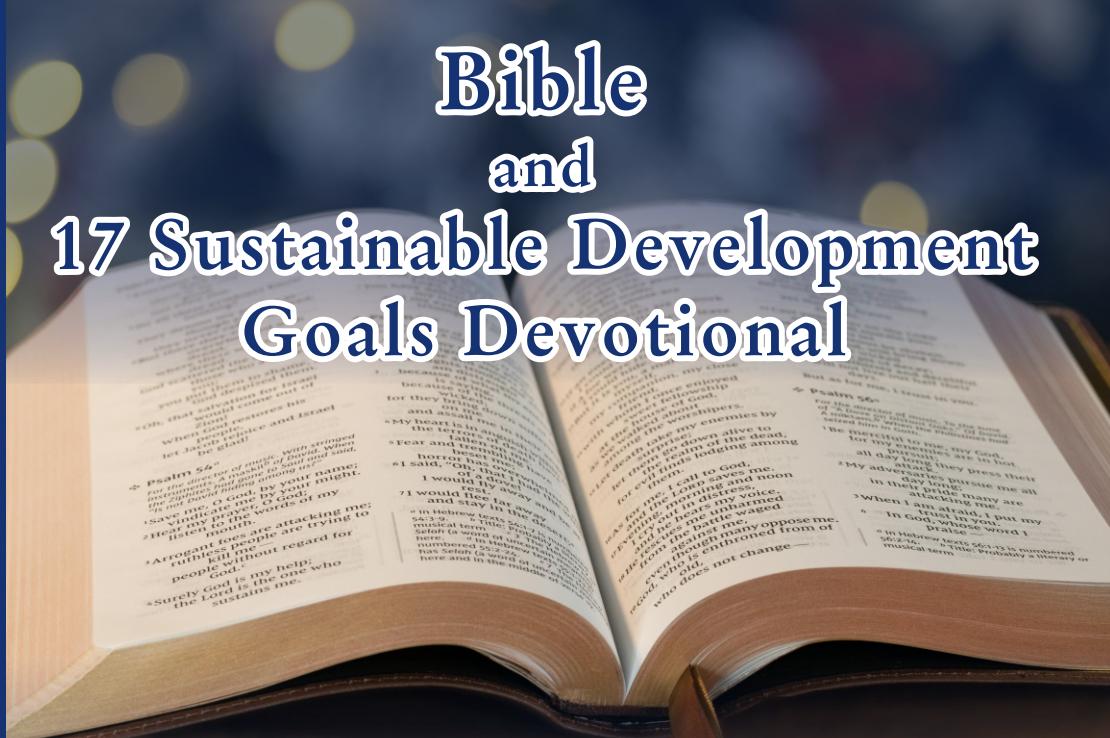
-Dr. Chris Elisara  
WEA Special Envoy for  
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Rev. Dr. Samuel Richmond currently serves as the Executive Director and Professor of Christian Theology at Caleb Institute, Gurugram, India. He also holds the position of Honorary Project Support Officer at the WEA Sustainability Centre. In addition, he serves as the Honorary Secretary of the Theological Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of India and is a member of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA).

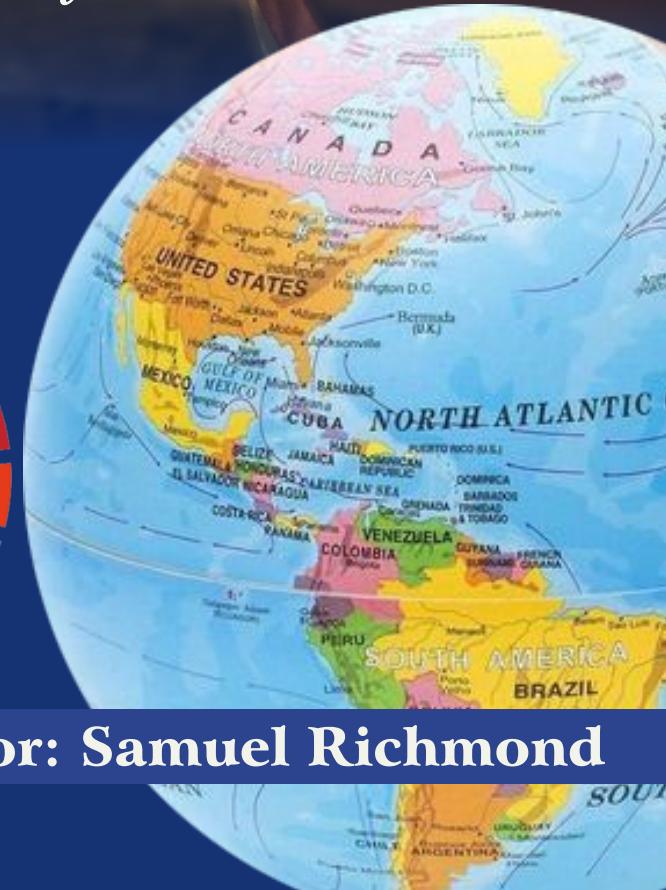
An ordained minister of the Church of North India, he is also an active member of the Sadhu Sundar Singh Global Forum. He has a keen interest in promoting Creation Care, Science and Theology at different forums from last two decades. As an author he has written a book on *Contemporary Issues in Science and Theology* (2018) and edited *No Turning Back: Reflections on Mission, Theology, and Spirituality of Sadhu Sundar Singh* (2024).

# Bible and 17 Sustainable Development Goals Devotional



*Foreword by Chris Elisara*

Editor: Samuel Richmond



**Editor: Samuel Richmond**



# Bible and 17 Sustainable Development Goals Devotional



# Bible and 17 Sustainable Development Goals Devotional

EDITOR  
Samuel Richmond



WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE



2025

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## Foreword



The Bible unfolds a grand story of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. At the center stands the Creator God, who lovingly plants a garden for God and humanity to inhabit together. That garden was more than geography; it was God's dwelling place for humanity, the prototype of flourishing life in right relationship with Him, neighbor, creation—heaven itself, where the realms of God and humanity overlapped in harmony. Yet that harmony was ruptured by the fall, as sin fractured humanity's fellowship with God, with one another, and with creation itself. The story, however, does not end there. It moves toward the city of God on earth—the New Jerusalem—where God and His people dwell together once more, and where earth and heaven, once divided, are fully united under God's reign. At the center of this story is the Gospel of Jesus Christ: the good news that through Jesus' life and ministry, death, and resurrection all things are being reconciled to God. We are invited to participate in that redemption, to experience it ourselves, and to be agents of the Gospel in the world, and to the world, God so loves.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), developed and adopted by the nations of the world and grounded in research, evidence, and shared moral and ethical concern, name many of the wounds of our world: poverty, hunger, violence, broken cities, and a groaning creation—wounds that Scripture itself testifies to and that Christ came to heal. While Christians may not agree with every framework or philosophy behind the SDGs, we can still see in them echoes of God's concern for justice, mercy, and human flourishing—

reminding us of Scripture's call to "love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8), to bring good news to the poor (Luke 4:18), and of the reality that Jesus himself teaches us to long and pray fervently with the words, "your will [God] be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

Engaging the SDGs gives Christians a chance to practice something deeply biblical: to build bridges of common concern, to collaborate where goals overlap with God's purposes, and to witness by word and deed to the kingdom of Christ. In a fractured and polarized world, Christians can "code switch"—finding words others can understand without compromising the truth we hold—since humility and a readiness to learn shape our witness. This ability to listen deeply, learn, speak respectfully and intelligently about the SDGs, and meet others where they are allows us to build bridges without losing our identity in Christ.

To pray for the SDGs, then, is not to baptize a secular agenda. It is to discover and align our hearts with God's mission, to intercede for our neighbours and for the nations, and to open ourselves to the Spirit's guidance in how we are to live. Sometimes this means joining hands with others to achieve shared goals; other times it means bearing witness to a different vision when we cannot agree, and doing so with civility and grace as we talk through our differences. Always it means living as those who belong to the kingdom that has come and is coming.

This devotional is a guide into that calling. Each page connects the great needs of our world with the promises of Scripture and the hope of the Gospel. As you pray through these reflections, may you discover both the courage to stand in Christ's truth and the humility to walk with others in common cause. And may your prayers become part of God's answer—the renewal of people, places, and creation until Christ is all in all.

**Chris Elisara, Ph.D.,  
WEA Special Envoy for Environment,  
Climate and Cities**

## Preface



In an era marked by global crises—from climate change to poverty and inequality—the Church faces a vital call to respond with both conviction and compassion. In today's turbulent world, where social, environmental, and economic challenges intersect and intensify, *The Bible and 17 SDGs Devotional* offer a timely and inspiring resource that bridges faith with action by revealing how the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) align deeply with biblical truths.

These goals are far from merely secular ambitions; they reflect divine imperatives. Rooted in Scripture such as Psalm 24:1, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,” this devotional affirms that caring for creation, pursuing justice, and alleviating human suffering lie at the heart of the Gospel.

Bringing together the wisdom and lived experience of authors representing diverse church traditions, cultural backgrounds, and areas of ministry—including creation care, sustainable development, and active service—this devotional connects each SDG with the call to Christian discipleship. The authors are internationally renowned and represent different continents of the world, offering a truly global Christian perspective. Through thoughtful reflections and prayers, it provides both theological insight and practical guidance for faithful living in today's complex world.

This work dismantles the artificial divide between evangelism and social action, presenting a holistic vision where spiritual maturity

embraces community transformation and global solidarity. It invites believers to embody their faith not by withdrawing from the world's challenges but by becoming active agents of hope, healing, and renewal.

Special thanks are due to Chris Elisara, Emily Lange, Matthias Boehning and Allen Drew for their invaluable editorial support.

As you engage with these pages, may you be transformed, mobilized, and inspired to be a blessing to the nations. The world is waiting—and the time to act is now.

**Samuel Richmond**

## DAY 1

# None in Need in God's Kingdom



### SDG 1: No Poverty

“Eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030 is a pivotal goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Between 2015 and 2018, global poverty continued its historical decline, with the poverty rate falling from 10.1 per cent in 2015 to 8.6 per cent in 2018. Nowcasts suggest that owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global poverty rate increased sharply from 8.3 per cent in 2019 to 9.2 per cent in 2020, representing the first increase in extreme poverty since 1998 and the largest increase since 1990 and setting back poverty reduction by about three years.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic reversed the steady progress of poverty reduction over the past 25 years. This unprecedented reversal is being further exacerbated by rising inflation and the impacts of the war in Ukraine. It is estimated that these combined crises will lead to an additional 75 million–95 million people living in extreme poverty in 2022, compared with pre-pandemic projections.”- UN Official Site

**Bible Passage: Luke 4: 16-21**

<sup>14</sup>Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. <sup>15</sup>He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

<sup>16</sup>He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

<sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” <sup>20</sup>Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. <sup>21</sup>He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

*Verse 18: The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.*

Once a little girl named Esther asked her mother, ‘Is being poor a sin?’ Mother was astonished and asked, ‘What made you ask such a question?’ She replied that she heard from her schoolteacher that being poor is a sin.

How do we respond to such a question? In some cultures, it is believed that if a person is poor, it is because of his or her previous karma, and such people are under a curse. Sadly, in the era of globalisation, the rich are becoming richer, and the poor are becoming poorer. Unfortunately, in many societies, poor are condemned and rich are honored. It is often said that poverty is a consequence of a lack of knowledge and a lack of mastery over the technology to generate wealth. The first SDG states that we want to end poverty “in all its forms.” Indeed, it’s a big challenge for the church and the society to eradicate poverty but it’s not impossible.

Caring for the poor is one of the main themes in the bible. There are bible passages, parables, and several incidents that emphasize

God's concern for the poor. The Bible says: 'If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard hearted or tight fisted toward them. Rather, be open handed and freely lend them whatever they need' (Deut.15:7-8). In the Gospel of Luke, the writer addresses the topics of wealth, poverty, money, greed etc, but in conclusion, he states that God favours the poor. In Luke Chapter 4:18, Jesus shares that God anointed Him, 'to proclaim good news to the poor.' 'Good news for the poor,' means that God is on the side of the poor. James defines the real meaning of 'religion.' For him, 'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world' (James 1:27). In his article, 'A New Accounting of Wealth and Poverty in Luke' David D. M. King states that Luke has 74 verses that mention God's favor for the poor and 73 verses containing warnings against wealth. Through the Good News, Jesus wants to bless the poor with God's Shalom.

In its earliest days, the early Church manifested the fulfilment of the Old Testament ideals within the concept of shalom: "All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had... There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need" Acts 4:32, 34-35. They did this because of their faith in Jesus as the anointed one, the Lord, the Prince of Peace (shalom), who makes shalom a social reality by the transformative power of the Holy Spirit at work in the followers of Christ.

Esther was relaxed when her mother explained that both poor and rich are created by God in His image and likeness and that being poor or rich is neither a punishment nor a sin. Actually, God favours the poor! Poverty is rising not because of personal sin but because society has failed to understand the importance of 'sharing and caring.' Unfortunately, developing countries are suffering because of the present global economic policies and mismanagement. Do our communities favour the poor? Whatever our means, as

believers we are called to share in the Spirit the good news to the poor. The Church is a vibrant community of believers. Our collective communal strength in Christ becomes a blessing of public good to others in need. Our love for God and for one another should flow for neighbours and 'enemies'. From our commonwealth as followers of Christ, we challenge injustice and meet the needs of the poor among us. In Christ, the oppressed are freed, and economic harmony can be created as a witness to the world which will be the ultimate fulfilment of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:19).

*"The opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is enough."*

*Dr. Wess Stafford, President Emeritus of  
Compassion International*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for creating us in your image and likeness. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you became poor so that we may abound in the riches of your goodness, grace, love and mercy. Please help us to understand the suffering of others. Give us the heart of compassion and love so that we may reach and care for those among us who are living in poverty. We pray that you give our political and economic leaders wisdom to devise plans to eradicate poverty. May your Holy Spirit guide us and help us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### ***Prayer of those Living in Poverty***

Dear Father, thank you for becoming man in your Son Jesus. Thank you for coming into the midst of this world and enduring its unkindness and injustice in your own body. You are a compassionate God, you since you exposed yourself to all that we humans have to bear and endure every day. We can know that you are close to us and understand in the deepest way how we feel. We praise you that you are a God who is interested in us human beings - also in those who in the eyes of the world are among the least and the most neglected.

You do not measure a person's worth according to his wealth, position in society, or influence. Every person is equally important to you and you approach everyone in an equal, loving and blessing way.

Father, help me through this day. Give us the strength and the means to stand in life today. Each day we gratefully receive from your hand.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. Make prevailing poverty in your community a topic of conversation - sometimes this requires us to first have our eyes opened to the cruel reality of poverty, sometimes it requires our courage as people living in poverty to speak out and denounce the injustice, to point out to the rich and influential that one of the most important measures of the strength of a society is its treatment of the most vulnerable
2. Donate money, commodities, or time to local and worldwide poverty-fighting organisations
3. Since education reduces poverty, thus support educational programmes, particularly for marginalised groups
4. Join or support community development programmes that improve infrastructure, sanitation, and basic services.

*Samuel Richmond*



## END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE

IF CURRENT  
TRENDS CONTINUE,  
BY 2030

**575 MILLION**  
PEOPLE WILL STILL BE  
LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY



ONLY ONE THIRD  
OF COUNTRIES WILL HAVE  
HALVED THEIR NATIONAL  
POVERTY LEVELS

MANY OF THE  
**WORLD'S VULNERABLE POPULATION**  
REMAIN UNCOVERED BY SOCIAL PROTECTION

IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES, ONLY



RECEIVED SOCIAL PROTECTION CASH BENEFITS

(2020)

IN RESPONSE TO THE  
COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS,



**105 COUNTRIES**

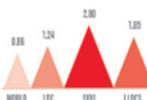
ANNOUNCED ALMOST  
350 SOCIAL PROTECTION  
MEASURES IN THE PAST

**12 MONTHS**

(FEB. 2022 - FEB. 2023)

LDCs, SIDS AND LLDCs  
FACE HIGHER VULNERABILITY  
TO DISASTERS

AVERAGE ANNUAL NUMBER OF  
DEATHS OR MISSING PERSONS  
PER 100,000 POPULATION  
(2012-2021)



WORLDWIDE, COUNTRIES HAVE **INCREASED GOVERNMENT SPENDING** ON  
ESSENTIAL SERVICES (EDUCATION, HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION) SINCE 2015



## DAY 2

# Generosity in Scarcity



### SDG 2: Zero Hunger

“Sustainable Development Goal 2 is about creating a world free of hunger by 2030. In 2020, between 720 million and 811 million persons worldwide were suffering from hunger, roughly 161 million more than in 2019. Also in 2020, a staggering 2.4 billion people, or above 30 per cent of the world’s population, were moderately or severely food-insecure, lacking regular access to adequate food. The figure increased by nearly 320 million people in just one year.

Globally, 149.2 million children under 5 years of age, or 22.0 per cent, were suffering from stunting (low height for their age) in 2020, a decrease from 24.4 per cent in 2015. The number of people going hungry and suffering from food insecurity had been gradually rising between 2014 and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis has pushed those rising rates even higher and has also exacerbated all forms of malnutrition, particularly in children. The war in Ukraine is further disrupting global food supply chains and creating the biggest global food crisis since the Second World War.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: John 6:25-35

<sup>25</sup>When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I

performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.<sup>27</sup>Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”<sup>28</sup>Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”<sup>29</sup>Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

<sup>30</sup>So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?<sup>31</sup>Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’<sup>32</sup>Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.<sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup>“Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”<sup>35</sup>Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

*Verse 35: Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

During the notorious pandemic lockdown, millions of people in the Philippines were suddenly stranded and unable to earn their daily wage. While nation leaders scrambled to find solutions to meet the needs of the people, examples of generosity began to emerge from within the community. A simple but powerful gesture from one person ended up sparking a nationwide movement.

In the middle of the lockdown, Patricia, who had to temporarily close her small business in Metro Manila, spontaneously set up a tiny community pantry to help feed fellow Filipinos during that difficult time. Next to the mini pantry filled with basic items like rice and fresh vegetables she included a sign, which translated from Tagalog read, “Give according to one’s ability, get according to one’s need”. Folks in the neighbourhood responded by taking what they needed from the cart and then adding whatever they could. Within a few days, other community pantries began sprouting up all over the country. And

for quite some time afterwards, families, community groups and churches practiced extending generosity in times of scarcity. The community pantries themselves did not ensure food security for the entire nation, but it was a significant invitation to participate in how God intends for us to live, and not simply providing what is needed to survive.

When Jesus said, “I am the bread of life”, He assured His believers that He is the ultimate source of spiritual and physical needs. He reminded his hearers that when Israelites were hungry in the wilderness, it was God who provided manna not Moses. As we approach Him in faith, we find providence in the form of life-giving bread. He is our daily bread on whom we feed daily. The Psalmist says, *‘the lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing (Psalm 34: 10).’* By partaking in His richness, it becomes our responsibility as Christians to share our resources with others. God’s provision sometimes comes through acts of generosity from His people. In the new covenant, we become a Christ-centred community of God’s people. As God supplies, we are obligated to share, not just with one another but with our neighbours in need. In our new covenant shalom reality, Christ-followers are empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill God’s injunction as mentioned in Isaiah 58:6-14, which includes “Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them...” (Isaiah 58:7). Part of God’s generosity to us will enable us to share and support one another wherever and however possible. Our goal is to strive hard for zero hunger. We need to be actively involved in providing others through the love and compassion of Lord Jesus Christ. Let our example be Patricia, who through her small efforts, became a beacon of God’s light for many hungry individuals.

*His command still holds to feed the physical hunger, and after that the spiritual hunger with the Bread of Life that came down from heaven and giveth life to the world. He came that they might have life and have it more abundantly.*

Sam Higginbottom  
(American missionary to India, 1874-1958)

***Prayer of Commitment***

Dear Creator God, thank you for providing for your creation in every way. Thank you for reminding us through your word that we also have a role in providing and caring for one another. Help us to share and extend generosity not only in our abundance but also in our need. Let us share our tables and pantries with those among us, who are hungry and even with the stranger. And may our commitment to our horizontal relationships help deepen our vertical relationship with you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

***Prayer of those Suffering from Hunger***

O Lord, who satisfies the poor with good things, you are the sustainer of those in need and have not forgotten us in our time of hunger. We come to you today asking that you would provide for our needs through your provision. You are a God who cares deeply for us and has promised to never leave nor forsake us. We acknowledge that it is not through our own doing or strength that we can survive, but only by you and the work of your hands. We look to You for protection from harm and strength in our current season. May we never forget your unending love despite our lack of faithfulness.

We thank you for your grace and mercy that is new every morning. You alone are our hope and our help in times of need, so we pray for your provision as we believe in your promises. We long to see the fulfillment of those promises in our lives and trust that you will provide abundantly according to your will.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What You Can Do**

1. Pray for our human and non-human neighbours – especially those who are experiencing hunger and food insecurity
2. Open your hearts and hands to groups committed to feeding the hungry. Support them & get personally involved.
3. Invite the hungry into your homes and churches for both physical & spiritual nourishment

*Jasmine Kwong*



## END HUNGER, ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY AND IMPROVED NUTRITION AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

CONFLICT, COVID-19, CLIMATE CHANGE  
AND GROWING INEQUALITIES  
ARE CONVERGING TO UNDERMINE  
FOOD SECURITY WORLDWIDE



TO REDUCE STUNTING IN  
CHILDREN BY 50% BY 2030,  
ANNUAL RATE OF DECLINE  
MUST DOUBLE  
(FROM 2.1 TO 3.9% PER YEAR)

## UKRAINE CRISIS TRIGGERED FOOD SHORTAGES FOR THE WORLD'S POOREST PEOPLE

UKRAINE AND THE RUSSIAN  
FEDERATION SUPPLY  
GLOBAL EXPORTS:



## DAY 3

# Yahweh Rapha and His Ground Staff



### SDG 3: Good Health & Wellbeing

“Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages is essential to sustainable development. Currently, the world is facing a global health crisis unlike any other — COVID-19 is spreading human suffering, destabilizing the global economy and upending the lives of billions of people around the globe.

Many more efforts are needed to fully conquer a wide range of diseases and address various persistent and emerging health problems. By focusing on more efficient financing of health systems, improved sanitation and hygiene, better access to doctors, and reduced air pollution, significant progress can be made to help save the lives of millions.” – UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Mark 5:25-34

<sup>25</sup>And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. <sup>26</sup>She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. <sup>27</sup>When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup>because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” <sup>29</sup>Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

<sup>30</sup>At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

<sup>31</sup>“You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

<sup>32</sup>But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup>Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup>He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

***Verse 34: “He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering”***

If there is one characteristic identifying feature of our Lord Jesus during his time on earth, it is this: Wherever he went, he proved to be a physician for the sick, bringing healing. In Galilee, Jesus went from town to town, “healing all the diseases and infirmities of the people” (Matthew 4:23). In Judea, “great crowds followed him, and he healed them there” (Matthew 19:2). Whether he came to villages, towns, or the countryside, people laid the sick in the marketplaces, knowing that this man called Jesus could heal them. People begged him that they might touch even the edge of his cloak, and “all who touched it were healed” (Mark 6:56). What is true of him is also true of his followers: “Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to cast out unclean spirits and to heal all diseases and infirmities” (Matthew 10:1). Every single day of his ministry on earth, and right up to the last hours of his life, when he healed the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, Jesus proved himself to be Yahweh Rapha incarnate, the God who heals. We first learn of this name of God in Exodus 15:26, and it runs like a thread through the Bible.

The Bible teaches us in numerous places how physical and spiritual health are interrelated. In the above passage Mark 5: 25-34, Jesus heals a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She was confident that by touching the hem of his garment she would

be healed. As she touched his garment and her bleeding stopped and Jesus turned and told her that her faith had made her healed. In this healing Jesus showed how faith in God is well associated with healing. Women's faith in Jesus, empowered her. The wisdom of the scriptures brings health. We are to trust it more than our own understanding, as this is good for our lives - even to the point of physical health. Proverbs 3: 5-8 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and rely not on your understanding; submit to him in all your ways, and he will make your paths straight. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord and avoid evil. This will make your body healthy and nourish your bones."

From beginning to end, the Bible also classifies health as a high and important value, but at the same time brings it into a wonderful overall balance and healthy context. Jesus healed people not only physically but also spiritually by forgiving their sins (Luke 5:20). God is Yahweh Rapha on all levels: He has the power to heal physically (2 Kings 5:10), emotionally (Psalm 34:18), mentally (Daniel 4:34), and spiritually (Psalm 103:2-3). Proverbs 4:20-22 says, "My son, pay attention to what I say to you, and listen carefully to my words. Do not lose sight of them, keep them in your heart; for they are life to him who finds them, and health to the whole body." No form of illness, in any area of our human existence, is excluded from the healing power of God. Psalm 103:2-4 says, "Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and mercy."

While it is inevitably part of the reality of our human life on earth to see, acknowledge, and endure the pervasive existence of sickness, pain, suffering, and death in this world, the Bible repeatedly presents us with a wonderful vision of the future that ties into this hope of complete healing and total health: one day all of these sorrowful, painful experiences of our human existence will be taken away, and Jesus will heal every pain through his Second Coming. In Revelation 21:4 we read, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death, mourning, crying and pain will be no more, for the old order of things has passed away."

In the meantime, in a world without universal health and well-being for billions of people, we as followers of Jesus are called to turn especially to those among us who are sick, weak and frail. In them we may recognize our neighbor, in them we may recognize Jesus himself. In Matthew 25:36, Jesus clarifies this mission by saying, “I have been sick, and you have visited me.” In a world like ours today, with all the health challenges, what does it mean to “visit God”? It all begins in our personal environment: We are invited to take an authentic and compassionate interest in those who are sick and in need of healing. We then walk in Jesus’ footsteps; it is a sign of the Kingdom of God. If we are sick, weak and needy we are not to be excluded from our societies. On the contrary, the Bible teaches us the exact opposite: we deserve physical, mental and emotional visitation - genuine attention. Yahweh Rapha turns to the sick and the weak, those suffering from pain and infirmity. Are we going along as his ground staff?

*The birth of the baby Jesus stands as the most significant event in all history, because it has meant the pouring into a sick world the healing medicine of love which has transformed all manner of hearts for almost two thousand years.*

*George Matthew Adams*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

God, you are Yahweh Rapha, the God who heals. You turn in a special way to the sick, the weak and the infirm. Jesus, you meet people in their suffering, pain and need in a special way. Thank you for allowing us to carry within us a wonderful hope that one day death, sorrow, crying and pain will be no more. Help me, as an expression of my discipleship, to visit those who need our special attention, our special help, care and nurture. And help me, as an expression of my discipleship, to contribute to stronger health care systems in my home country and around the globe.

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from Illness***

Heavenly Father, we come to you humbly in prayer asking for your help in this time of illness. We ask that you hear the cries of our hearts and fill us with strength, courage and peace in our suffering. Lord, we

read in scripture where Jesus healed many who were sick and afflicted. We ask that you have mercy on us and heal our bodies.

Guide the hands of doctors, nurses and all those who are treating us. Give them wisdom and knowledge that surpasses man's understanding. We thank you for hearing our cries and we trust in your will. We praise you for healing now or in the future.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. *Live healthy* - when we understand our body, health and well-being as a gift from God, we behave responsibly with regard to our health. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 we read, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body."
2. *Visit God* - by visiting the sick and understanding "visit" as extensive attention, care and concern. Where are there sick, frail and weak people in your environment and how can you become Christ's ambassador for them?
3. *Promote healthy living* - Where can you help strengthen health care and reduce threats to human health? Are there substance abuse support groups that still need workers? How can children and the elderly be better protected from road hazards? Where does environmental pollution from plastics, chemicals, and other substances lead to threats to people's health, and what can I do about it practically (for example, through collective cleanup efforts in my village)?
4. *Advocate for strong and efficient health systems* - in our modern, complex, interconnected societies, the question "What have you done?" extends to the systemic level (e.g., health systems, health financing, etc.) and our political and social commitment to it.

*Matthias Boehning*

3 GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



## ENSURE HEALTHY LIVES AND PROMOTE WELL-BEING FOR ALL AT ALL AGES

### NOTABLE STRIDES HAVE BEEN MADE TOWARDS IMPROVING GLOBAL HEALTH OUTCOMES



146 OUT OF 200  
COUNTRIES OR AREAS HAVE ALREADY MET  
OR ARE ON TRACK TO MEET THE UNDER-5  
MORTALITY TARGET



EFFECTIVE HIV TREATMENT HAS CUT  
GLOBAL AIDS-RELATED DEATHS BY  
52% SINCE 2010



AT LEAST ONE NEGLECTED TROPICAL  
DISEASE HAS BEEN ELIMINATED IN  
47 COUNTRIES



25 MILLION CHILDREN  
MISSED OUT ON IMPORTANT  
ROUTINE IMMUNIZATIONS  
IN 2021

6 MILLION MORE  
THAN IN 2019

MALARIA CASES HAVE  
SURGED WORLDWIDE

MALARIA CASES  
(MILLIONS)



### OUT-OF-POCKET PAYMENTS

FOR HEALTH PUSHED OR FURTHER PUSHED

381

MILLION PEOPLE  
(4.9% OF POPULATION)

INTO EXTREME POVERTY

A WOMAN DIES EVERY  
TWO MINUTES  
FROM PREVENTABLE CAUSES  
RELATED TO PREGNANCY  
AND CHILDbirth  
(2020)



## DAY 4

# Reach One, Teach One



### SDG 4: Quality Education

“Providing quality education for all is fundamental to creating a peaceful and prosperous world. Education gives people the knowledge and skills they need to stay healthy, get jobs and foster tolerance. The COVID-19 outbreak, however, has caused a global education crisis. Most education systems in the world have been severely affected by education disruptions and have faced unprecedented challenges. School closures brought on by the pandemic have had devastating consequences for children’s learning and well-being.

It is estimated that 147 million children missed more than half of their in-class instruction over the past two years. This generation of children could lose a combined total of \$17 trillion in lifetime earnings in present value. School closures have affected girls, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, those living in rural areas, children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities more than their peers.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:1-9

<sup>1</sup>Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. <sup>2</sup>I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my

teaching. <sup>3</sup>For I too was a son to my father, still tender, and cherished by my mother. <sup>4</sup>Then he taught me, and he said to me, “Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live.

<sup>5</sup>Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. <sup>6</sup>Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. <sup>7</sup>The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. <sup>8</sup>Cherish her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. <sup>9</sup>She will give you a garland to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown.”

*Verse 4: Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.*

A group of fearful children gathered around their mother's bed in a dimly lit room in Germany. Among the individuals present was a confused four-year-old child who was on the verge of becoming an orphan. While he listened, his mother softly uttered, “My dear children, I have a great treasure for you.” The older sister inquired, “What is it, Mother?” The woman pointed to the Bible. “Seek it in the Bible; there you will find great treasure. I have watered every page with my tears.” With that, she died. The family was broken up, and little Bartholomew Ziegenbalg was placed under the care of compassionate relatives in Halle. At the age of 12, he accepted Jesus as his saviour. He graduated with honours from the University of Halle at the age of 18. During this period, there was a big revival in Germany and Ziegenbalg felt the urge to become a missionary in India. He arrived in India on July 9, 1706. Ziegenbalg, however, embraced the motto “*Ora et Labora*,” — “Pray and Work!”, and played an outstanding role in imparting quality education to the people in the region of South India. He established a school where native students could learn Tamil, be equipped with modern European knowledge and learn Christian values and ethics. He felt that the right education would help in eliminating superstitions and unbelief.

Education plays a vital role in the holistic formation of a person. Imparting quality education involves spiritual exercise. In the Bible,

knowledge is always both holistic and relational. Proverbs 25:2 says, 'it is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.' Through this verse one may easily see the relationship between God's wisdom and human knowledge. God's wisdom allows us to acquire knowledge, develop critical thinking skills and engage with the world. According to the Bible, God gives wisdom to ordinary humans and he further enables them to be scientists, artists, writers, scholars, researchers, intellectuals etc. Holding on to God's teaching brings wisdom that helps to discover even the tiny and invisible things that we have never imagined. Wisdom is the source of insights and success. It is God's desire that every individual discover God's given abilities and gifts within him or herself before they explore or study His creation. The above passage emphasizes the value of seeking knowledge and wisdom from God through obedience.

Modern education owes its origins to the Bible, making it a crucial aspect of Christian missions. Throughout Church history, followers of Jesus have led the way in providing quality education as an extension of our mission to be makers of disciples of Christ, learners of Jesus. According to the Bible, it is the prime responsibility of the parents, teachers as well as of the Church to provide holistic education to children. Imparting education is one of the important components of Christian ministry. Education was primarily carried out by Christian missionaries. In 1540 Ignatius of Loyola realized that education is the key to empowering the people in every way. Jesuit priests were the first ones who offered education through the public school system. Their education is not just confined to liberal arts and science, professional education etc., but also extended to the formation of the entire person as social and global leaders with innovative and entrepreneurial thinking. Jesuit education is directed towards the formation of 'head (intellectual formation)', heart (emotional intelligence) and 'hand (skill formation)'. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, 'the function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education.' On every continent, Jesuit missionaries imparted quality education by learning the languages of the local people, putting that language

into written form, and composing dictionaries and grammars, thus preserving culture rather than destroying it.

Learning God's wisdom (James 1:5, 3:13-18) is character building (ethics). This flows into wider society towards mutual flourishing (morals), with practical application (vocation) for the benefit of all society. Education focused on these life-affirming elements should be made accessible to all for the building up of human dignity and civic well-being. Biblically-based quality education transforms society in such a way that human life flourishes, everyone feels equal to others, and everyone feels affirmed and elated.

*Inclusive, good-quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies.*

*Desmond Tutu  
(South African Anglican bishop  
and theologian, 1931-2021)*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for enlightening us with thy Word. Give me the heart of compassion so that I may teach others with your knowledge. There are so many around us who need quality education, proper tools and skills to be equipped. Use me as a channel of blessing. The harvest is plentiful but the labourers few, send more people like Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and William Carey to those places where children are under the bondage of poverty, illiteracy and ignorance. In Jesus name I pray Amen.

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from a Lack of Education***

O Lord, you are the giver of knowledge and wisdom. You have promised us that if we seek after knowledge, it will be given to us. We come before you today with heavy hearts because we do not possess the education that can bring about a better life for ourselves and those around us. We have had our opportunities limited by this lack of education, and it has caused us to feel stuck with no way out.

We pray that you would move upon our hearts and minds to give us the courage and strength we need to pursue our dreams. Open up

opportunities for us, so that we may gain the knowledge necessary to better ourselves and our world. We ask you to grant us the wisdom we need to understand how best to pursue our education. Guide us in our studies so we may learn all that we can and use it for your glory.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. Renew your own emphasis on education. Help others to grow in knowledge and wisdom.
2. Emphasize the importance of holistic education that goes beyond academic knowledge. Advocate for educational systems that address intellectual, emotional, and skill development.
3. Which habit could you (re-)install to nurture this growth? And for which person in your neighborhood could you become an educator this week — sharing your acquired knowledge and wisdom?

*Samuel Richmond*

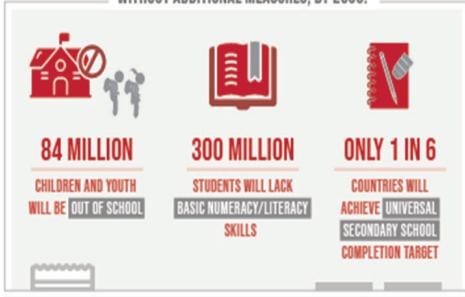


## ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

..... DESPITE SLOW PROGRESS,

### THE WORLD IS FALLING FAR BEHIND IN ACHIEVING QUALITY EDUCATION

WITHOUT ADDITIONAL MEASURES, BY 2030:



THE PANDEMIC CAUSED LEARNING LOSSES IN 4 IN 5 OF 104 COUNTRIES STUDIED

### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES ARE RISING, BUT THE PACE IS SLOW AND UNEVEN



LOW- AND LOWER-MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES FACE A NEARLY \$100 BILLION ANNUAL FINANCING GAP TO REACH THEIR EDUCATION TARGETS

## DAY 5

# Who is Greatest?



### SDG 5: Gender Equality

“Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. There has been progress over the last decades, but the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. The social and economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has made the situation even bleaker. Progress in many areas, including time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, decision-making regarding sexual and reproductive health, and gender-responsive budgeting, is falling behind. Women’s health services, already poorly funded, have faced major disruptions. Violence against women remains endemic. And despite women’s leadership in responding to COVID-19, they still trail men in securing the decision-making positions they deserve.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Genesis 1:24-28

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup>So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

*Verse 27: So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.*

“Did you see how women have been involved in God’s mission since the beginning?” One young Romani woman said in amazement to the other two students. The three women had just completed the Christian history module as part of the Roma Bible School in Southeastern Europe. They had never before heard such stories of how God had accomplished his purposes through women in powerful ways throughout the history of the Church. Roma minority groups in Europe are often socially marginalized, and Roma women in particular are far more disadvantaged than either Roma men or women of other ethnicities in critical areas such as education, health, and employment. Roma women also often experience higher rates of discrimination, harassment, and violence.<sup>1</sup> In light of these troubling inequalities, which are found all too frequently across the world, how should we think about the relationship between men and women in the new creation?

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<sup>1.</sup> Europäische Union, ed. *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Roma Women in Nine EU Member States*. EU-MIDIS II. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.2811/127019>.

Human beings are created in God's image as spiritual persons with physical bodies. Those bodies were designed from the beginning to be distinguishable as male and female (Genesis 1:27), with higher regard than the rest of creation, carrying responsibility for creation (e.g. Psalm 8:5-6). The key point in Genesis 1:27 is that both genders share the divine image equally. There's no hierarchy or indication of superiority of one gender over the other in this passage. Both man and woman are created with the same divine essence and are given the shared responsibility of having dominion over the Earth. All humans, regardless of gender, are endowed with a God-like capacity to love, create and serve in unique and purposeful ways. This is central to our dignity as human beings with intrinsic value to God. Women feature strongly throughout the Biblical narrative and in Jesus' life and ministry. Matthew, writing his gospel after the ascension of Christ, took care to note females in Jesus' lineage. Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman at a well who is shocked he is talking to her, asking, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (John 4:9).

Jesus, as a Jew, not only speaks to a Samaritan but also to a woman, breaking down barriers of ethnicity and gender. In the cultural context of that time, it was unusual for a Jewish man to speak directly to a Samaritan woman. This interaction illustrates Jesus' disregard for the societal norms that marginalized certain groups, including women. It reflects a broader message of inclusivity and equality in the teachings and actions of Jesus. Furthermore, Jesus reveals his Messianic identity to her before inviting her into new life while his disciples stumble upon the scene, deeply shocked at his interaction with a woman. "Come and see the Messiah!" the woman boldly proclaims to men and women alike in her city.

Each gender contributes to the benefit of the whole community (Romans 12:6-13). Human systems in many parts of the world have developed in such a way that they privilege male over female, and sometimes female over male. In Christ, these privileges are equalized (Galatians 3:28). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given equally to both males and females in order to carry out God's work on this planet. As local churches invest in the development and vocation of all members

(Titus 3:8), honouring all equally regardless of gender or other differences, this can show wider society how it too can benefit by deconstructing systems that would hold some back from participating to their full potential in society.

*Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.*

*Kofi Annan  
(Secretary-General of the United Nations  
from 1997-2006)*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Thank you God, that you are the God who sees every woman who is discarded, overlooked, undervalued, and oppressed. Thank you that you restore dignity and honor to your beloved daughters and invite them into your mission. We pray that the Church would imitate the way of Jesus as it trains and equips women and men to be coworkers in the kingdom. Help us to see the oppression of women in our communities, countries, and the world, and give us the heart to pray and work towards justice and restoration between men and women. Amen.

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from a Lack of Gender Equality***

Heavenly Father, we come to you in prayer today seeking a better future for us all. We ask that you give us strength and courage to strive for gender equality on every level and in every layer of our societies. You created us all equal in your eyes. We are all one in you, Christ Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female. Yet still we experience hardship and injustice because of gender inequalities.

We pray to you that you guide us as we move towards a more just future and help us achieve equal rights and opportunities for all regardless of our gender. Help us to recognise and celebrate the unique gifts each of us brings to your world. We thank you for all that you have done, are doing, and will do for us.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What You Can Do**

1. Look intentionally around your community and your church. Are women being cared for and equipped in your church? How are women faring in your community? Pray for God to show you how to imitate Jesus' example, challenging injustice and seeking out possibilities for empowerment.

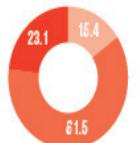
*Melody Wachsmuth*



## ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

THE WORLD IS  
**NOT ON TRACK** TO ACHIEVE  
GENDER EQUALITY BY 2030

OUT OF GOAL 5 INDICATORS:



- "ON TRACK"
- AT A MODERATE DISTANCE
- FAR OR VERY FAR OFF TRACK

..... AT THE CURRENT RATE, IT WILL TAKE .....



300 YEARS  
TO END CHILD  
MARRIAGE



286 YEARS TO CLOSE GAPS  
IN LEGAL PROTECTION AND  
REMOVE DISCRIMINATORY LAWS



140 YEARS TO ACHIEVE  
EQUAL REPRESENTATION IN  
LEADERSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE

LEGISLATED GENDER QUOTAS  
ARE **EFFECTIVE** TO ACHIEVE  
EQUALITY IN POLITICS

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

[2022]



30.9%  
COUNTRIES  
APPLYING QUOTAS

21.2%  
COUNTRIES  
WITHOUT QUOTAS



NEARLY HALF OF MARRIED WOMEN  
LACK DECISION-MAKING POWER  
OVER THEIR SEXUAL AND  
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

1 IN 5 YOUNG WOMEN

..... ARE MARRIED  
BEFORE THEIR 18TH BIRTHDAY



## DAY 6

# Water is Life



### SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

“Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene is the most basic human need for health and well-being. Billions of people will lack access to these basic services in 2030 unless progress quadruples. Demand for water is rising owing to rapid population growth, urbanization and increasing water needs from agriculture, industry, and energy sectors. Decades of misuse, poor management, overextraction of groundwater and contamination of freshwater supplies have exacerbated water stress. In addition, countries are facing growing challenges linked to degraded water-related ecosystems, water scarcity caused by climate change, underinvestment in water and sanitation and insufficient cooperation on transboundary waters. To reach universal access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene by 2030, the current rates of progress would need to increase fourfold. Achieving these targets would save 829,000 people annually, who die from diseases directly attributable to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: John 7:37-44

<sup>37</sup>On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup>Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

<sup>39</sup>Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. <sup>40</sup>When they heard these words, some of the people said, “This really is the Prophet.” <sup>41</sup>Others said, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “Is the Christ to come from Galilee? <sup>42</sup>Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” <sup>43</sup>So there was a division among the people over him. <sup>44</sup>Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

*Verse 38: Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.*

“Let’s go fishing!” the woman suggested to us. “I will show you the best spots and teach you how to do it.” This was no idle exercise—in fact, this family, like others in the poor community, often supplemented their food source with fresh fish caught in the local river. In fact, the region of Southeastern Europe is teeming with rivers, found both remotely in the wilderness and flowing through the middle of capital cities. People depend on them in a myriad of ways; however, many rivers are becoming increasingly polluted, such as the beautiful Vjosa River, the “last wild river” in Albania. Oil pollution threatens its rich biodiversity, fresh water sources, and even the land it irrigates.<sup>1</sup> Even as two billion people in the world lack access to clean water, others are unaware or indifferent to creeping pollution that threatens their water sources. What do the state of our rivers indicate about our physical and spiritual well-being?

Water is the driving force of all nature and is essential for the existence of all living beings. Unfortunately, widespread depletion of water resources is causing significant problems such as water scarcity, droughts, crop failures, and migrations in many regions. Simultaneously, certain areas experience recurring flooding during the monsoon season, necessitating effective management strategies

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<sup>1.</sup> Hoxhaj, Edmond. “Oil Pollution Threatens Europe’s Last Wild River.” *Balkan Insight*, December 5, 2018. <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/12/05/oil-pollution-threatens-europe-s-last-wild-river-11-30-2018/>.

to mitigate its detrimental effects. Furthermore, there are prevalent concerns regarding the contamination of surface water bodies, such as rivers and lakes.

Throughout the Scripture, water denotes life and has both spiritual and physical significance. God created water to sustain the ecosystem and quench the thirst of all living beings. Water is a wonderful creation of God and in the Bible it symbolizes cleanliness (Ezekiel 36:35), purity (Hebrews 10:22), salvation (Isaiah 12:3), providence (Isaiah 49:10), justice and righteousness (Amos 5:24), new birth (John 3:5) eternal life (John 4:14), and the Spirit of God (John 7:37). In the New Testament, Jesus identified himself as the living water. John's Gospel clarifies that the living water Jesus offers refers to the Spirit of God (John 7:39). Hence, "the living water" in the Bible hints at the idea that water is itself alive with its own living spirit. Jesus is promising that those who believe in Him will experience a spiritual abundance, likened to life-giving rivers. This promise finds fulfillment after Jesus' resurrection when believers receive the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit brings spiritual vitality, joy, and transformative power into the lives of believers, fulfilling the promise of living water flowing from within them. Jesus invites the thirsty to come to Him and drink from the living water and by drinking the same we also become the source of living water as followers of Christ. Without clean water there can be no life (Exodus 17:3). The free provision of abundant water is a sign of the shalom and goodness of the reign of God (Deuteronomy 8:7, Psalm 65:9, Isaiah 55:1, Ezekiel 47:9, Revelation 22:1-2). Access to clean water is an inalienable right under God for all humans (Matthew 5:45), it should not be denied and it should not be commoditized and sold unjustly. Valuing and saving every drop of water should be the priority of every believer who is not just a follower of Jesus Christ but a source of living water.

*Rivers of living water are to be poured out over the whole world,  
to ensure that people, like fishes caught in a net, can be restored  
to wholeness.*

*Hildegard of Bingen  
(German Benedictine Abbess, 1098-1179)*

***Prayer of Commitment***

Thank you God, for the wonderful network of rivers, lakes, streams, and oceans that reveal your beauty and life. We pray for those who suffer and thirst for clean water—that you would make a way through your church and others to address those needs. We also pray for those who are spiritually thirsty—would you awaken them to their thirst? Would you help them see Jesus as the great thirst quencher? Amen.

***Prayer of those Suffering from a Lack of Access to Water***

Heavenly Father, we come before you through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. We know that You have provided us with all the sustenance we need to survive in this world. You say in Your Word, “And I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.” (Isaiah 41:18)

We are thankful that You provide for us in times of need, even when we may be struggling with drought or lack of access to sanitation and fresh drinking water. We ask today that you provide us with a greater supply of clean and fresh water. Help those among us who have been affected by the lack of clean water - provide them with hope and protection. We ask that you will provide for us through your perfect love and grace.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What You Can Do**

1. Count how many times you used water during the day (whether it is to brush your teeth, wash the dishes, wash your hands, flush the toilet or even to drink). Become conscious of all the water sources you pass in a given day—both inside buildings and outside. Are they clean or polluted? How do you treat and use them? Carelessly or with gratitude?

*Melody Wachsmuth*

6  
CLEAN WATER  
AND SANITATION



## ENSURE AVAILABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION FOR ALL



### SAFE DRINKING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

~~~~~ STILL OUT OF REACH ~~~~~

### FOR BILLIONS

IN 2022



2.2 BILLION PEOPLE  
LACKED SAFELY  
MANAGED  
DRINKING WATER



3.5 BILLION PEOPLE  
LACKED SAFELY  
MANAGED  
SANITATION



2.2 BILLION PEOPLE  
LACKED BASIC  
HAND WASHING  
FACILITIES

TO MEET 2030 TARGETS,

PACE OF PROGRESS WILL HAVE TO ACCELERATE

6x

DRINKING WATER

5x

FOR SANITATION

3x

HYGIENE

2.4 BILLION PEOPLE

LIVE IN

WATER-STRESSED  
COUNTRIES  
(2020)

81% OF SPECIES

DEPENDENT ON INLAND  
WETLANDS HAVE  
DECLINED SINCE 1970

INTEGRATED  
WATER-RESOURCES-MANAGEMENT  
IMPLEMENTATION  
NEEDS ACCELERATION

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES PER PROGRESS LEVEL



## DAY 7

# Using Resources Wisely



### SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

“Goal 7 is about ensuring access to clean and affordable energy, which is key to the development of agriculture, business, communications, education, healthcare and transportation. The lack of access to energy hinders economic and human development. Latest data suggest that the world continues to advance towards sustainable energy targets. Nevertheless, the current pace of progress is insufficient to achieve Goal 7 by 2030. Huge disparities in access to modern sustainable energy persist. Rising commodity, energy and shipping prices have increased the cost of producing and transporting solar photovoltaics modules, wind turbines and biofuels worldwide, adding uncertainty to a development trajectory that is already far below Goal 7 ambitions. Achieving energy and climate goals will require continued policy support and a massive mobilization of public and private capital for clean and renewable energy, especially in developing countries.”

– UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Psalms 115:11-18

<sup>11</sup>You who fear him, trust in the Lord—he is their help and shield.

<sup>12</sup>The Lord remembers us and will bless us: He will bless his people Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron, <sup>13</sup>he will bless those who

fear the Lord—small and great alike. <sup>14</sup>May the Lord cause you to flourish, both you and your children. <sup>15</sup>May you be blessed by the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. <sup>16</sup>The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to mankind. <sup>17</sup>It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to the place of silence; <sup>18</sup>it is we who extol the Lord, both now and forevermore. Praise the Lord.

*Veres 15-16: May you receive blessings from the Lord, creator of heaven and earth. The heavens belong to the Lord, but to mankind he has given the earth.*

“This is where my house used to be,” tells me Manuel, “but I was relocated because of the dam, it seems the city down the river needs the energy”. In 2016, the government decided to build a hydroelectric dam in River Sabor. This was the last free-flowing river in Portugal, which is a small country, but was now building its 263rd dam. There are hydroelectric dams built all over the world. According to “Mapping the world’s free-flowing rivers,” a report published by *Nature*, “only 37 per cent of rivers longer than 1,000 km remain free-flowing over their entire length and 23 per cent flow uninterrupted to the ocean.”<sup>1</sup> Hydroelectric dams are loved by some and hated by others, and a difficult topic, as environmentalists alert us to the fact their construction does not come without costs. But growing populations need energy, and energy is an important component of our society. Access to energy allows us a dignified life and certain comforts.

The earth was created with all sorts of forms of energy. Sunlight, water, wind, vegetation, domesticated animals. Over the centuries, humanity has harnessed different forms of energy, which has allowed for development and expansion. This is part of our mandate to be “fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1.28). But the way we go about things matters. One of the earliest records of the use of fire was to make bricks to construct the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:3). The construction of buildings had been done before,

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<sup>1.</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-019-1111-9>.

and the people of God set about building walls and temples. Yet the motivation for building Babel was so builders could “make a name” for themselves. Later, it is God who “makes a name” for Abram, who believed in God’s promise and lived “looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” (Hebrews 11.10).

Creating energy for the convenience of the masses has come at a terrible cost to God’s good creation. Carbon emissions are one example. Wrongly applied nuclear energy can also have terrifying consequences on creation and its inhabitants. Even harnessing solar power can create problematic waste as can electricity stored in battery-powered devices and vehicles, even if electricity itself is cleanly created by hydro dams. All humans have a responsibility to care for the domains that we inhabit as a gift from God. That means we must balance our use of energy from the material world with care for the material world (Genesis 1:26-30). Furthermore, good stewardship of the gifts of God extend to ensuring that everyone benefits from those gifts equitably (Psalm 115:16), so Jesus-followers not only need to be concerned about how we create and use energy but also how we ensure it is available for the good use of all.

The claim for clean, safe energy and access for all people is a duty that we have as Christians, we cannot disregard this mandate, we must act up to the mandate given. Perhaps Manuel did not have much of a choice about the building of the dam, but we should not stand by and let others choose our future for us, let them take the initiative on what energy we should use for our development and what cost it will have on our planet and future generations. Wise and generous stewardship can bring real change in society. If humanity thinks it cannot survive without the power (energy) it creates, in Christ we have received a spirit of power, love and sound-mind (2 Timothy 1.7). All three are important in making responsible stewards. God is powerful and God is merciful and we need to draw strength from Him as we exercise authority in order to curb the consumption of energy and use God’s given resources wisely.

*The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.....Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling, but a foolish man devours it. Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor.*

*Proverbs 21:5, 20-21*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Thank you Father, for having blessed us from the moment you thought of each one of us to inhabit this world. Thank you for having granted us our freedom and for having paid with the sacrifice of your Son for each one of us. Father, we want to be sensitive to your voice and act with responsibility, as good stewards, managing with wisdom the resources you have given us. Help us to be courageous at key moments!

*In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

### ***Prayer of Those Suffering from a Lack of Energy***

Heavenly Father, we come to you in need. Our families are in desperate circumstances, and we do not have the basic necessities of life such as clean and affordable energy. We ask for your grace and mercy over us in this difficult time. Lord Jesus, you tell us to not worry about physical needs because You will provide all that we need. You encourage us not to be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' You, our heavenly Father, know that we need all these things. We rather want to seek first the kingdom of you, o God, and your righteousness. We trust that all these things will be added to us. In our hour of need, may your mercy and compassion reign over us. May we not focus on the physical needs, but find strength in You. Open the floodgates of Your blessings so that the Holy Spirit can touch every corner of our lives. Help us to remain thankful and grateful for what we have, and provide us with the courage and strength to persevere.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### What You Can Do

1. *Renew your interest in energy resources:* what sources of energy does your locality use, what about your house? Is this wise resource management and use?
2. *Renew your personal commitment:* Switch off lights and appliances when not in use. When leaving a room make sure all elements are switched off. Use natural light to brighten a room. Are there other habits and practices you could adopt to become a good steward of what has been entrusted to you?

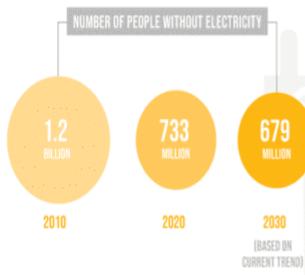
*Fernando Forgioni*



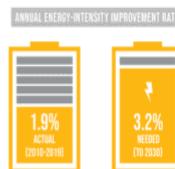
## ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL

### IMPRESSIVE PROGRESS IN ELECTRIFICATION HAS SLOWED

DOUE TO THE CHALLENGE OF REACHING THOSE HARDEST TO REACH

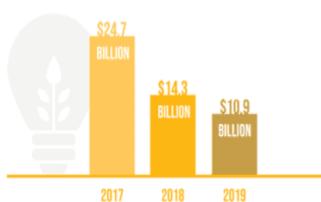


PROGRESS IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY  
NEEDS TO SPEED UP  
TO ACHIEVE GLOBAL CLIMATE GOALS

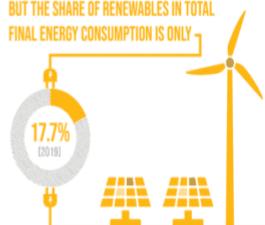


2.4 BILLION PEOPLE  
STILL USE INEFFICIENT AND POLLUTING COOKING SYSTEMS  
(2020)

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL FLOWS TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FOR RENEWABLES DECLINED FOR A SECOND YEAR IN A ROW



TOTAL RENEWABLE ENERGY CONSUMPTION INCREASED BY A QUARTER BETWEEN 2010 AND 2019, BUT THE SHARE OF RENEWABLES IN TOTAL FINAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION IS ONLY



## DAY 8

# Labour Not in Vain



### SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

“Goal 8 is about promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated the worst economic crisis in decades and reversed progress towards decent work for all. Although the global economy began to rebound in 2021, bringing some improvement in unemployment, recovery remains elusive and fragile. By the end of 2021, global economic recovery had been hampered by new waves of COVID-19 infections, rising inflationary pressures, major supply-chain disruptions, policy uncertainties and persistent labour market challenges.” UN Official Site.

### Bible Passage: Luke 6:27-36

<sup>27</sup> “But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup> If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. <sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would have them do to you.

<sup>32</sup>“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. <sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. <sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

*Verse 31-32: Treat others the way you want them to treat you.*

*What merit do you have in loving those who love you? Even sinners do it that way.*

Sitting in a restaurant the other day, I heard two men talking. Apparently, the first was commenting to the second about the problems he faces every day with his employees and how the reprisals that he took against them only worsened the condition of his small business. In recent years, effort and sacrifice have been relegated to second place in our Society; it is the law of least effort, where personal enjoyment is seen as more important, even if it is superimposed on the good of others.

Being made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), all humans have the capacity to create, invent and discover. Core to our dignity as human beings is our ability to direct our energy and time into creating value for, and contributing to, the wellbeing of the habitats in which we live (Genesis 1:26-28), including societies. Right from the beginning, God gave Adam a task, “to till the land and care for it” (Genesis 2:15). Hence the mandate to work was already given to Adam even before the fall, although since then, our task is to “earn our bread with the sweat of our brow” (Genesis 3:19a). In spite of its hardship, God has created us to enjoy the outcomes of our labour (Psalm 128:2, Ecclesiastes 3:13, 2 Timothy 2:6). Techniques and technologies have eased this burden greatly, but the material world still does not yield results as easily as it was originally designed to do.

The idle are regularly rebuked in Scripture and the consequence of laziness is ruin (e.g. Proverbs 26:15, Ecclesiastes 4:5, 10:18). Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10 address the Church members to work diligently. He reprimanded and shunned those church members who lived in idleness. He urged them to follow in his footsteps and labour around the clock as he did. He commanded: *“If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.”*

We cannot forget that the work we do has to do with working to do good around us, and in turn enjoy the fruit of it (Psalm 128:2, Ecclesiastes 3:13); we must not forget that our ultimate goal is to pursue the glory of God in this. The divine mandate to work for the good could be summarized again in the passage from Luke “treat others as you want them to treat you.” Regardless of where we are (as bosses or as employees), our work connects with the commandments the Lord Jesus summarized (Matthew 22:36-40, Romans 12:18-19), to love our God and our neighbor as ourselves - doing this is to work for the good of our neighbor. If we do our part, let us consider: how can I change my area of influence to continue working for the good? I can see a neighbor who does not have a job; I know people who are trapped in the vicious circle of poverty; what can I do for them, how can I help them find a suitable job? Working for human dignity in all its forms, in our area of influence, is without a doubt the greatest show of love for our neighbor, and the best work for the good of humanity that we can do. When we develop our dignity and enhance the dignity of others through working and offering work, for the betterment of society, we manifest the shalom of God. Paul says in Colossians 3:17, “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

*“You can't go around building a better world for people. Only people can build a better world for people. If not, it's just a cage.”*

*Terry Pratchett  
(English writer, 1948-2015)*

***Prayer of Commitment***

Lord Jesus, your sacrifice freed us from the ties we had and made us worthy. We want to respond to this call and be agents of change wherever we are. Wherever you have placed us, we want to work to build a better world. May your light always illuminate our actions to be able to provide solutions and be part of this change.

*In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*

***Prayer of those Suffering from Unemployment***

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your overwhelming love and mercy. We come to you today in our time of need, humbly asking You for provision. Lord, we know that you took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it and that you advised us “Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest”. We commend all those who work hard for their families. But Lord, many of us are without work and in need of Your provision. We ask that You would open up new opportunities for us to provide for our families and ourselves. Please guide our paths and bring provision to our lives. We thank You for Your grace and mercy.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What You Can Do**

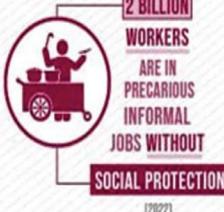
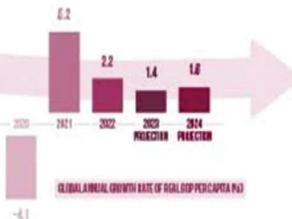
1. Reflect on the multiple functions and blessings of a good job (income, sense of purpose, inter-human contact, structure for the day, etc.).
2. Pray for a person in your neighborhood who currently has no job or who suffers from poor working conditions.

*Fernando Forgioni*



PROMOTE SUSTAINED, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL

## GLOBAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY CONTINUES, BUT ON A SLOW TRAJECTORY



GLOBAL UNEMPLOYMENT IS EXPECTED TO FALL BELOW PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS, BUT NOT IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES



## 1 IN 4 YOUNG PEOPLE

ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING,



WITH YOUNG WOMEN MORE THAN TWICE AS LIKELY AS YOUNG MEN TO BE IN THIS SITUATION

[2022]



DURING THE PANDEMIC, 4 IN 10 ADULTS IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES OPENED THEIR FIRST BANK ACCOUNT

## DAY 9

# Jesus' Calling to Collective Living



### SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

“Goal 9 seeks to build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. Economies with a diversified industrial sector and strong infrastructure sustained less damage and are experiencing faster recovery. In 2021, global manufacturing rebounded from the pandemic, although the recovery remains incomplete and uneven. Higher-technology industries performed better and recovered faster, providing a strong example of how important technological innovation is to achieving Goal 9.” – UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

<sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup> Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. <sup>15</sup> Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.

<sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of

the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

<sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup> while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup> If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

*Veres: 17-20: If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.*

God’s vision for His people is a collective one. Christian faith is certainly personal (in that it is a relationship between persons) but it is not at all meant to be individual. The Apostle Paul says that the Church is, in reality, a single collective body – the One Body of Christ. To be a Christian is to be united by faith through the Holy Spirit to the resurrected and living person of Jesus *as well as to all other Christians*. And this unity is not meant to be merely a group of individuals who believe the same things. Rather, it is meant to be an interdependent community of different people who all play diverse and mutually supportive roles to carry forward the life and ministry of Jesus in our world.

In a local church community, therefore, we are called to be fundamentally collective in our approach to life together. As one local expression of the Body of Christ, we are each different parts of a single interdependent organism. And every part is important. In 1 Cor 12, Paul encourages the church not to honour one part (such as a pastor) over another (such as a janitor) or to say that certain parts (such as someone with great capacity to tithe) are necessary for the Body's mission, while others (such as a 12 year old girl) are not. All parts are important, and, as Paul says in 1 Cor 12:26, all parts rise and fall together.

Yet participation in a collective Body does not mean the abandonment of individuality – by no means! When a local church congregation is a true collective Body, it provides the mutual support that actually enables individuality to flourish. The more isolated or marginalized people are from the support of community, the more their individuality is stifled by the basic needs of survival (such as finding a job that provides enough to buy food and pay rent in the near term). When they are surrounded by community, however, they are more likely to have the support necessary to step away from the grind of survival to explore and develop giftings and callings more specific to who God has made them to be. This support structure is practiced globally through family, but family is merely a small localized expression of what the Church is meant to be. And what the Church is meant to be is what the whole world is meant to be – a mutually supportive, interdependent, and sustaining community all working together in different ways together with God to breathe the beauty, peace, justice, and flourishing of Heaven, also known as *shalom*, into the world around us. In this collective society, individuality can thrive, because it is when we live in interdependence that we have the mutual support necessary for specialization and creativity. And in the end creativity, supported by community, is what is essential for the generation of the new and innovative ideas that feed the community, refresh it, and move it forward.

This core reality of the Christian (and human) calling to collective living actually speaks directly to SDG 9: "Industry, Innovation,

and Infrastructure.” However, the Christian calling re-prioritizes the topics of SDG 9 so that we get this new order: “Infrastructure, Innovation, and Industry.”

Infrastructure is our starting point because it is the inherently collective and mutually supportive structure of our life together as a society. Infrastructure (broadly understood) is the public network of systems and resources that enable a healthy society to provide all its citizens with enough of the basics that they have the support necessary to explore their individual giftings, grow in them, and contribute meaningfully to the common good. Good infrastructure should provide everyone with consistent and affordable transit, good education, quality healthcare, affordable housing, public safety, public parks and spaces, access to meaningful work with life-sustaining wages, and support in retirement. A society where there are a small number of people who are doing very well and a large number of people who are struggling to survive is one where there are serious problems with the collective calling of infrastructure. And where this is the case, the entire society – including those doing “well” – falls together. This is because without the stability of a healthy collective structure, that huge population of people who are struggling to get by do not have the support necessary to do the exploring and experimentation that would enable them to discover and develop the unique creative gifts God has given them – and therefore they cannot contribute these gifts to their communities.

And this is an *enormous* loss, because the greatest riches that exist in our world are found in the creativity of human beings. We are the only beings on earth that bear the image of God, our world’s Creator – and our creativity is a unique expression of *His*. So when a society is structured in a way that deprives a huge population of its image bearers of the ability to realize their own God-given creativity, the entire society is impoverished.

Supportive and accessible infrastructure, therefore, is crucial for innovation – because it provides its citizens with the support necessary to flourish as creators. And when people begin to flourish as creators, they start to innovate. And when they are innovating well,

new ideas and technologies start to be introduced, and new businesses come about, and new industries grow. And as these things happen, the economy moves forward in a way that is fresh and adaptable and it feeds into the good of the whole. Collectively-oriented infrastructure, therefore, is the foundation of innovation, which is the driver of industry.

So what can Christians do to support SDG 9? We can begin by modelling a more collective way of living in our local congregations. Are we in a church where some members are rich and others are unable to pay their bills, yet nothing is being done to share this load? Or are we part of a rich congregation with a poor congregation right down the road, but yet again we are doing nothing to walk together collectively? In individualistic Western culture these situations may feel normal to us, but Scripture calls us to bear each other's burdens (Gal 6:2). The more we do this as the Church, the more we will find that the poor among us have the support necessary to find their creativity, and the Body and its mission will be enriched by what they bring to the table.

Then, as we begin to change the way we live as the Church, we will find God inviting us beyond our congregational boundaries to press for a more collective way of life as a society, one which does not accept structures that benefit a few while holding down whole communities and populations, but rather supports everyone robustly so that the creativity of all may be unleashed.

Can we embody this collective living in our congregations, speak it into our culture, and press for it in our laws? If so, the Church can be a powerful agent of change in our world's pursuit of SDG 9.

*I am because we are (ubuntu).*  
- South African Nguni proverb

### ***Prayer of Commitment (for the Church)***

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us, as we forgive those who trespass against

us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever.

Jesus, as we pray the prayer you gave us to mold us into participants in your story, help us to hear the collective “we.” Help us to pray this prayer not only for ourselves, or our family, or our church, or even The Church, but for the whole world. Holy Spirit, help us to discover, participate in, and grow strong in the gifts you have given us to build up your collective Body. And give us eyes to see our brothers and sisters who do not have the support we have, that we might join with them as their family and help them to grow in their own gifts, so that your Kingdom mission may be enriched by their innovations.

*In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

### ***Prayer of those Unsupported by their Nation's Structures***

Father in Heaven, I feel as though I am only able to survive, but never to thrive. I am weary from the daily grind of getting by. I am anxious that an accident could happen to me or my family at any time and I will have nowhere to turn, no support to fall back on. Father, you have said that I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps 139:14). Jesus, you are not ashamed to call me your sibling (Heb 2:11) and have given me a high calling as your servant and friend. Holy Spirit, you hold in yourself the power that raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 8:11) and are immediately available to me. I feel held back from what I can be by many factors in my society, but I believe that you see me and can lead me out. Come quickly, Lord. Lift me up out of my challenges and give me a firm place to stand (Ps 40:1-3), so that I may partner meaningfully within the community of your people in the great work of healing to which you have called all human beings.

*In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. Build a daily practice of praying the Lord’s Prayer. As you continue to pray this prayer, focus on its constant use of “we” rather than “I.” God has not given you anything that is for you alone – all of your gifts and resources are for the building up of the Body

and the healing, beautification, and flourishing of humanity. It is in your growing participation in this Story that you will find yourself.

2. What part of Christ's Body are you, and what role do you have to play? Take some time and prayerfully write out a 5 year plan for yourself that is focused on collective Body of Christ goals, rather than individual goals. Your 5 year plan may very well not be God's plan but the exercise of building a collective one will help you engage your life in a more Body-focused way. As you grow in this, look for ways you can help your local congregation live more collectively, and look for organizations who are working to strengthen more collective and mutually supportive structures in your society.

*Allen Drew*

9 INDUSTRIAL INNOVATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



## BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE, PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND FOSTER INNOVATION

### GLOBAL MANUFACTURING

GROWTH SLOWED FROM

2021 7.4 %

2022 3.3 %

DUE TO



INFLATION



ENERGY PRICE SHOCKS



SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS



GLOBAL ECONOMIC DECELERATION

ENERGY-RELATED

### CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS

REACHED

36.8 BILLION

METRIC TONS IN 2022

A RECORD HIGH



MEDIUM-HIGH AND HIGH-TECHNOLOGY

INDUSTRIES EXPERIENCED

STRONG GROWTH IN 2022

BUT WITH REGIONAL VARIATION

SHARE IN TOTAL MANUFACTURING

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## DAY 10

# God-like Equal



### SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

“Too much of the world’s wealth is held by a very small group of people. This often leads to financial and social discrimination. In order for nations to flourish, equality and prosperity must be available to everyone – regardless of gender, race, religious beliefs or economic status. When every individual is self-sufficient, the entire world prospers.” – UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Genesis 1:26-30

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, [a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup>So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

<sup>29</sup>Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They

will be yours for food. **30** And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

*Verse: Here is neither Jew nor Greek, here is neither slave nor free, here is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

If you want to get an impression of what inequality looks like, a visit to the two Johannesburg districts of Alexandra and Sandton is recommended. There is hardly any other place in South Africa where the disparity in wealth is more glaring; nowhere else is the country's socio-economic inequality more glaringly apparent. On the one hand, Sandton, the epitome of wealth, splendour, opulence, comfort and all the comforts of life that money can bring. It is home to the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the Sandton Convention Centre and the Sandton City shopping mall. Numerous corporate offices make Sandton a centre for business people. The impressive buildings attract tourists, and wealthy Johannesburg residents like to come here to shop. The nickname “The Richest Square Mile In Africa” is well deserved by South Africa’s financial capital. Directly opposite is Alexandra, a township where South Africa’s poorest of the poor live. Several well-known heroes of the South African struggle against the apartheid regime, such as Nelson Mandela, lived here.

Contrasts like Sandton and Alexandra are by no means unique in this world. It is not only in African cities that the ultra-rich and the ultra-poor often live in close proximity. It is not difficult to recognise that God did not imagine such conditions when he created this world at the beginning of time. The biblical foundation of human equality is firmly established in Genesis 1:27, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” This verse declares that all individuals, regardless of differences, share equal and inherent value as they are created in the image of God. This concept echoes throughout the Bible, emphasizing God’s impartiality in offering salvation to all through Jesus’ sacrificial death (John 3:16). The inclusive language of “whoever believes”

underscores the universal nature of God's love and redemption, extending to every person.

As believers embrace salvation, they enter God's family on equal terms, emphasizing a shared spiritual identity irrespective of background, gender, or social status (Ephesians 5:30; 1 Corinthians 12:27). The absence of favoritism in God's dealings with humanity is boldly proclaimed in Galatians 3:28, dismantling societal distinctions and highlighting the equal standing of every believer in Christ. James 2:1-13 reinforces the truth that individual worth is not determined by external factors but is rooted in being made in the image of God. This passage warns against favoritism, emphasizing the call to love others as ourselves. Believers are commissioned to reflect the divine principle of equality in their interactions, as urged by Colossians 3:11, fostering unity in the diverse body of Christ.

In essence, the biblical narrative consistently asserts that every human being is equal in the eyes of God. This understanding shapes our perspectives and interactions, fostering a culture of love, acceptance, and unity within the body of Christ and broader communities. The teachings of Jesus and the apostles emphasize a common identity in Christ, where socio-economic distinctions fade, and believers are united in love and purpose (Proverbs 14:21; Proverbs 17:5). Jesus expressed significant concern about power imbalances stemming from material wealth, as seen in instances such as Matthew 19:16-30, and societal positions, as evident in Luke 6:24-26. His concern arose from the misalignment of their priorities with the values of God's kingdom of shalom. In stark contrast, those who choose to follow Christ are regarded as equals in the eyes of God, recognized as sacred siblings, as emphasized in Matthew 23:8. Our practical demonstrations of love toward one another naturally highlight the positive outcomes of treating everyone as equals within the broader society. It's like a powerful example that warns rich and powerful people who only care about themselves and invites those who are struggling and left out.

*I believe that if you want to fight inequality you have to do it starting at infancy.*

*Michelle Bachelet*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Father, you created us in your image. Every human being reflects your divinity, no matter what part of the world they live in, what social class or social stratum they belong to, what gender they are or whatever else may distinguish them from other human beings. In a world full of differences between people, you call us to treat every human being with respect and to live and act in such a way that justice increases and inequality decreases.

*In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from Social Inequalities***

Heavenly Father, you have created us all in Your image and gave us a sacred purpose in life. We come before You with heavy hearts struggling with the effects of social inequalities. In Your mercy, give us the courage and strength to endure but also fight against social injustices wherever they exist. O Lord, intervene in the course of history to break down walls of oppression and marginalization that separate us from the rest of society so that we may be united in love with other human beings.

You are not closing your eyes but you see our suffering from little access to basic human needs such as education, healthcare, and food. Give us hope that also our lives can be transformed by Your grace. May those who are privileged never take for granted the blessings they have received and use their resources to lift up people like us who lack opportunity and security.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### What You Can Do

1. Embracing the biblical principle of God's impartiality (Galatians 3:28).
2. Actively engage in advocating for policies and initiatives that address socio-economic disparities, promoting justice and fairness in their communities.
3. Explore the policies in your country designed to diminish inequality
4. Identify the specific *groups targeted for support by these measures.* hning

*Matthias Boehning*

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

## REDUCE INEQUALITY WITHIN AND AMONG COUNTRIES



**COVID-19 TRIGGERS** THE LARGEST INCREASE  
IN BETWEEN-COUNTRY INEQUALITY IN **THREE DECADES**,

### CHANGE OF BETWEEN-COUNTRY INEQUALITY (2019-2020)



### REVERSING DECADES OF INCOME CONVERGENCE

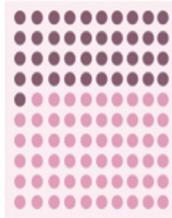


IN 2022,  
REFUGEE NUMBERS HIT A RECORD HIGH OF

**34.6 MILLION**

AMONG THEM WERE:

● CHILDREN: 41%



GLOBALLY,  
**WOMEN** ARE TWICE AS LIKELY AS MEN  
TO REPORT EXPERIENCING **DISCRIMINATION**  
BASED ON THEIR SEX



THE TRAGIC LOSS OF NEARLY  
**7,000 LIVES** ALONG MIGRATORY  
ROUTES IN 2022

UNDERSCORES THE PRESSING NEED FOR  
IMMEDIATE ACTION TO ENSURE SAFE MIGRATION



## DAY 11

# Pursuing God's Future City in our Present World



### **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**

“Goal 11 is about making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Today, more than half the world’s population live in cities. By 2050, an estimated 7 out of 10 people will likely live in urban areas. Cities are drivers of economic growth and contribute more than 80 per cent of global GDP.

However, they also account for more than 70 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. If well-planned and managed, urban development can be sustainable and can generate inclusive prosperity. The deep inequalities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and other cascading crises highlight the importance of sustainable urban development. Strengthening the preparedness and resilience of cities is crucial in responding to future crises.” – UN Official Site

### **Bible Passage: Revelation 21:1-4; 22:1-5**

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death”

or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup>down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup>No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup>They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

*Veres 1-2: Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup>down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.*

The New International Version of the Bible (NIV) has chosen to title Rev 22:1-5 “Eden Restored.” They apply this title because in John’s vision here, we have finally arrived at the great conclusion of the entire Biblical narrative. Heaven and earth, long separated by sin, have been brought back together through the work of Jesus into a “new creation” – a new physical and spiritual reality, right here on earth, where, as Rev 21:3b-4 says, “God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Eden – the physical creation where God used to walk in the garden with human beings – has been restored. But it has been more than restored. What was once a garden has become a great and glorious garden city. Somehow, through the long human story and the breaking in of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the final result has actually become

richer, deeper, and more wonderful than it was in the beginning before everything fell apart. This is the mystery of the Gospel, both on a grand scale and in our own individual lives.

And what is sometimes overlooked – even missed completely – is that the story of the Bible begins and ends *here on earth*. The story does not end with those in Christ being rescued from earth to go and live a non-physical existence in a place called Heaven. When John says in Rev 21: 1, “Then I saw a ‘new heaven and a new earth,’” the Greek word used in the Bible here and in every other reference to the “new” creation is the word *kainos*. *Kainos* does not mean “brand new,” but rather “renewed.” An old beat up bike that is repaired and tuned up and made to be a wonderful “new” bike is a *kainos* bike. There is another Greek word for “new” which means “brand new,” i.e. something that has never existed before but has been made from scratch. This is the word *neos*, but it is never used in the Bible to describe the “new creation.” The new creation is always described as a *kainos* creation, a renewed creation – a world that God has chosen never to give up on, but to lead through the darkness of its sinful brokenness and breathe heaven into it until it can one day become a place He can fully inhabit with people, plants, streams, rivers, animals, and now cities once more.

This, in the end, is the calling of the Church. The Body of Christ exists to be the living, breathing gateway through which God’s future Rev 21 and 22 renewed creation breaks into our present broken and suffering world. This is what Jesus did in his life, death, and resurrection – and through union with him by faith we are the continuation of his life and ministry. This is how Jesus has taught us to pray: “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We are praying that God will breathe heaven into our world – and we are asking that, as Jesus’ Body, he would breathe that incarnational heaven here on earth *through us*. *Jesus inaugurated the redemption and renewing of all creation, as disciples we join in with Gospel love and work, and we can be assured that in the future Jesus will complete what he started—heaven on earth once again!*

So what does this mean for us as Christians as we seek to pursue SDG 11: “Sustainable Cities and Communities”? We are called to pray that God would bring His future Rev 21-22 city to bear in our present suffering cities through our own hands, feet, words, service, and love.

Let us take as an example the low-income neighbourhood of Hunting Park in the US city of Philadelphia. Back in the 1940s and 50s, this neighbourhood was redlined because of the race of its residents. Redlining was a federal process through which maps were drawn up that excluded – or “redlined” – certain neighbourhoods from receiving loans, mortgages, and other kinds of business investment because the majority of the people who lived in them were not white. 80 years later, the descendants of this neighbourhood are still suffering under the long-term ripples of this policy. Lack of investment has led to patterns of generational poverty. Poverty has led to less political power, and as a result fewer public projects and less green infrastructure have been built in the neighbourhood. A highway was carved through it, and a natural gas power plant was erected right next to it recently despite huge public opposition – both of which have led to higher rates of lung disease, cancer, learning disabilities, and other health issues. The lack of investment has led to far fewer trees than the city’s average, leading to temperatures up to 22 F hotter than the greener parts of the city during summer heat waves! This heat differential will only worsen as climate change progresses.

Hunting Park, despite being filled with amazing image bearers, does not look like God’s Rev 21-22 city. Rev 22 shows us a city intentionally designed with a clean river running through it, full of trees, abundant with fruit, filled with the presence and light of God, and with “leaves that are for the healing of the nations.” God’s city is not only ecologically sustainable and life-giving, as SDG 11 calls for – it is beautiful, glorious, and filled with the presence of God. So how can Christians pursue the beauty, abundance, peace, and health of the shalom of God’s garden city in Hunting Park? They already are. Led by the faithful vision of the late Rev. Dr. Manuel Ortiz, Spirit and Truth Fellowship (STF), a local congregation in the Christian Reformed Church, North America has been on a mission of urban shalom. They have planted multiple churches in the neighbourhood,

invited their members who live outside the community to move into it, and joined their lives with the people in the community. They have partnered with others to build multiple health centers, a free legal clinic, a community center, and several Christian schools. They now employ a climate justice advocate, who is working with other partners (Christian and from other faiths) to connect low-income residents with good rooftop solar and home-repair options.

By 2050, 70% of the world's population will live in cities. They will be huge centers of both job growth and (if we don't change our energy sources) carbon emissions. Cities have a massive impact, for good or ill, on the trajectory of our whole world. Imagine if Christians were praying and living out the Rev 21-22 renewed garden city of heaven in every neighbourhood of every city – just as Spirit and Truth Fellowship and others are doing today? We would accomplish SDG 11 – and so much more.

*Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about.*

*N.T. Wright, Surprised by Hope*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Holy Spirit, please open my eyes, ears, and heart to where you would have me partner with others to breathe the beauty and *shalom* of your future city into the suffering of our present reality. Jesus, show me what gifts you have given me for this purpose and help me to use them faithfully in a way that honors you, loves others, and impacts your world meaningfully.

### ***Prayer of those Living in Unhealthy Urban Environments***

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done in my neighbourhood as it is in Heaven. My community has been forgotten by our city council for ages. Our schools are underfunded and our kids are getting caught up in bad

things. My neighbours are all struggling to get by. We're surrounded by concrete and don't have many trees. Litter is everywhere, and people from outside our community dump their garbage on our street corners on a regular basis. There's a highway just a few blocks away and we can't get away from the exhaust. Lord God, please turn towards our community. Please bring trees and green spaces to our neighbourhood. Turn the hearts of those in power towards us, that the city might remember us when they write their budgets and make their laws. Bring funding to our schools. Bring health centers and businesses and community centers and arts to our home. Bring your churches back to communities like ours, that we might know you haven't forgotten us. We want a chance to flourish. We believe that you love us, Jesus – please do not pass us by. Amen.

### What You Can Do

1. Begin by praying the Lord's Prayer as a regular practice. As you embrace this prayer with consistency, it will begin to change you and help you to see that you are, first and foremost, part of God's story (not the other way around). Ask yourself if you are involved in any collective work within your own community to pursue the vision of the Rev 21-22 city? If your community is well off, is there a community near you that is struggling? When you find that community, look for organizations that are doing work to rebuild, restore, make healthier, make cleaner, make greener, reduce waste, create jobs, fight pollution, etc. Join one organization and start helping them with their mission. It does not need to be a Christian organization. Partnering with those from other faiths in work that is bringing healing and restoration is a wonderful opportunity to serve Jesus and bring his heart to bear within that partnership.
2. Finally, to learn more about the global evangelical perspective on cities explore the statement entitled The Gospel and the Future of Cities: A Call to Action at this link... [[https://www.weacreationcare.org/\\_files/ugd/5cd778\\_4bd18250d58542e18e940ce602cf108b.pdf](https://www.weacreationcare.org/_files/ugd/5cd778_4bd18250d58542e18e940ce602cf108b.pdf)]

*Allen Drew*



## MAKE CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE

### SLUMS ON THE RISE

1.1 BILLION URBAN  
RESIDENTS ARE  
LIVING IN SLUMS (2020)

2 BILLION MORE ARE EXPECTED  
IN THE NEXT 30 YEARS



GLOBALLY, ONLY  
**ONE IN TWO**  
URBAN RESIDENTS HAVE  
CONVENIENT ACCESS TO  
**PUBLIC TRANSPORT**  
(2022)



AIR POLLUTION IS NO LONGER AN  
EXCLUSIVELY URBAN PROBLEM

TOWNS EXPERIENCE  
**POORER AIR QUALITY**



THAN CITIES IN EASTERN AND SOUTH-  
EASTERN ASIA (2018)

— GLOBALLY, —  
**3 IN 4 CITIES**



HAVE **LESS THAN 20%**  
OF THEIR AREA DEDICATED TO  
**PUBLIC SPACES AND STREETS**

MUCH LOWER THAN THE  
TARGET OF 45-50%  
(2020)



IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD



1 BILLION PEOPLE LACK ACCESS  
TO **ALL-WEATHER ROADS** (2022)

## DAY 12

# Give Today to Receive



### SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

“Goal 12 is about ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns, which is key to sustaining the livelihoods of current and future generations. Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production are root causes of the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. These crises, and related environmental degradation, threaten human well-being and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Governments and all citizens should work together to improve resource efficiency, reduce waste and pollution, and shape a new circular economy.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Mark 6:30-44

<sup>30</sup>The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” <sup>32</sup>So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. <sup>33</sup>But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

<sup>35</sup>By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. <sup>36</sup>Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

<sup>37</sup>But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” <sup>38</sup>“How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.” <sup>39</sup>Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup>So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. <sup>41</sup>Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup>They all ate and were satisfied, <sup>43</sup>and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. <sup>44</sup>The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

*Verse 37: But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?”*

The incidents in Mark 6:1-6 “Jesus rejected by His own people — a prophet without an honour” and 14-29 “John the Baptist beheaded” present us with the desperateness of the crowd and Jesus’ compassion on those who chose to follow Him. A simple mathematical reading of the passage tells us that the crowd was more than 12 thousand. Humanly speaking, the disciples were alarmed by the food situation because it was already late and so they asked Jesus to send the crowd away. “By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him.” “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat” (v.35-36).

The story demands an economic and management reflection. Embedded in the passage is an IMS model: “Identifying available resources, Management of the resources identified, and Sustaining

the communities through the available resource". While the disciples wanted the crowds to be dispersed, out of compassion Jesus wanted to feed them instead, so he commanded his disciples to feed them. "But he answered, "You give them something to eat" (v.37a). The disciples' answer appears very worrying and relevant: "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" (v.37b) Here lies IMS. The words of Jesus in v. 38: "How many loaves do you have?" He asked, "Go and see." Here Jesus meant to go and "Identify the resources available." And the disciples, having identified the resources, brought them to Jesus.

What the disciples brought to Jesus was, by all calculations, grossly insufficient to meet the need of the hungry crowd that day. However, these were the resources that were available – and when placed in Jesus' hands, something amazing happened: 5 loaves and 2 fish fed 5,000 families. God took a small step of faith and surprised the crowd with abundance.

Three villages under Longleng district, Nagaland, India - Yaongyimchen, Alayong and Sanglu – form the Yaongyimchen Biodiversity Conservation Area (YBCA). Lemsachenlok Society is a community run organisation initiated by local church members which is actively working towards conserving biodiversity in YBCA. Due to the rural economic constraints and the underdeveloped setting of the majority of the people (struggling for basic health facilities, education, and other economic livelihoods), the IMS model was adopted by this society and applied based on Mark 6.30-44. The community came together to identify whatever they had and work towards healthier and more sustainable management. People gave their lands, forests and rivers, which had a huge potential for fetching every form of life and making each sustainable. And this was executed with a motto, "Give today to receive." Despite depressing financial constraints, villagers chose to give their biodiversity and their time for better management, and in return received social orderliness, economic sustainability, and an improved ecosystem where human beings and wildlife coexist in a mutually sustaining way.

For a long time, human beings have been living in a fundamentally unsustainable way with respect to Creation. We are taking from

the land more than we are giving back. We are not Identifying our available resources and living in balance. As a result, a multitude is growing increasingly hungry. Just like the Lemsachenlok Society, we are called to change this balance so that we can identify resources and manage them sustainably for both people and planet. The scale of this challenge – and the need for change – can feel overwhelming. However, Jesus reminds us that if we bring our changes to him person by person and community by community, he can take what we give him and weave surprising healing and abundance into our world. God wants us to live in balance with His Creation – and all the efforts we take to do so will find a Powerful and Holy Partner.

*Not everything is accomplished through Money and Power,  
don't restrict the Creator God to work wonders through you for  
sustaining the needy and bring Glory to God.*

*Y Nuklu Phom*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Heavenly Father, we come before you today in desperation. We are overwhelmed by the waste and pollution that we have brought upon this world. Our planet is groaning under the weight of bad and irresponsible production and consumption choices. We turn to You for help and guidance. You want us to be good stewards of this earth - to act with love and care, recognizing that the earth and all its creatures are Yours. We know that You are a God of justice who desires every human being in this world to take care of the vulnerable, including the environment.

Father, may the Holy Spirit encourage, remind and enable us to put action behind our words. Give wisdom to the big producers and consumers of this world as we strive to reduce humanity's energy consumption and waste production. Help all people around the globe to recognize the implications of their actions on this earth, so that we may serve You faithfully in the way You call us to. We humbly ask for Your help and guidance as we pray that more people are uniting to work towards a more sustainable future.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

***Prayer of those Suffering from Pollution and Waste***

Our Lord and God, please help us! Trash and plastics, some from other countries, are cluttering our beaches and rivers. Garbage is incinerated next to our town, poisoning the air we breathe. Our land is being depleted through unsustainable agricultural practices. Our forests are being replaced by single crop plantations and we are seeing fewer and fewer of the native species we used to see. The land our people have owned and stewarded for generations has been taken from us by large corporations and colonial empires and used for their own extractive purposes. Natural gas companies are poisoning our water through fracking. Factories are pouring industrial runoff into our rivers and making our children sick.

Please deliver us, O God, from the powerful who treat our land and people as a resource to be harvested, rather than a community to be cared for and partnered with. Remind them that we bear the same image of God that they do. Change their hearts, O Lord – and if they will not change, we pray that you will bring them swiftly to justice and rescue us and our land from their devastation.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What You Can Do**

1. To mitigate waste, it is advisable to minimise the use of disposable goods, maximising the reuse of objects wherever feasible, and engaging in the recycling of materials such as paper, plastic, glass, and metal.
2. It is advisable to seek for items that include eco-friendly certifications or badges denoting their production with a minimum environmental footprint.
3. Choose to purchase locally-sourced and seasonally-available food items as a means to mitigate the environmental impact associated with the production and transportation of meals.
4. To mitigate the issue of food waste, it is important to adopt strategies such as meal planning, appropriate food storage, and innovative utilisation of leftovers.

5. Visit the “*Living the Change*” campaign website and make a personal sustainable lifestyle commitment motivated from a heart of faithful discipleship.

*Nuklu Phom*



## ENSURE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS

### UNSUSTAINABLE PATTERNS

OF CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION ARE ROOT CAUSE OF

#### TRIPLE PLANETARY CRIMES



CLIMATE CHANGE



BIODIVERSITY LOSS



POLLUTION

OUR RELIANCE ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
IS INCREASING

RISING OVER  
65% GLOBALLY  
FROM  
2000 TO 2019



### TOO MUCH FOOD IS BEING LOST OR WASTED IN EVERY COUNTRY EVERY DAY



13.3%

OF THE WORLD'S FOOD IS LOST AFTER HARVESTING  
AND BEFORE REACHING RETAIL MARKETS

17%

OF TOTAL FOOD IS WASTED AT THE  
CONSUMER LEVEL

VAST MAJORITY OF THE  
WORLD'S ELECTRONIC WASTE IS  
NOT BEING SAFELY MANAGED

E-WASTE COLLECTION RATES  
(2018)

## DAY 13

# Nurture All of Nature



### SDG 13: Climate Action

“The global temperature has already risen 1.1°C above the pre-industrial level, with glaciers melting and the sea level rising. Impacts of climate change also include flooding and drought, which is displacing millions of people and sinking them into poverty and hunger, denying them access to basic services such as health and education, expanding inequalities, stifling economic growth, and even causing conflict. By 2030, an estimated 700 million people will be at risk of displacement by drought alone.

To limit warming to 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels, as set out in the Paris Agreement, global greenhouse gas emissions will need to peak before 2025. Then they must decline by 50 per cent by 2030 and get to net zero by 2050. Countries are articulating climate action plans to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts through nationally determined contributions. However, current national commitments are not sufficient to meet the 1.5°C target.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Deuteronomy 22:6-7

“If you come across a bird’s nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do

not take the mother with the young. <sup>7</sup>You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life.

*Verse 6: Let the mother bird go....*

In the above passage, the Israelites were instructed that if they saw a bird's nest in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting upon the young or the eggs, they should not take the mother with the young.

Why would God command this? God has in mind the sustainability of His Creation. Human beings will naturally reach for eggs as a source of food (and God allows this), but if they reach for the producer of the eggs as well (the mother), there will be no more eggs in the future. Allowing the mother to live allows her to mate again and produce more eggs and more young, who can in turn become future mothers who produce new generations of eggs and young. And out of this bounty, humanity is invited to carefully and respectfully glean a living.

Planet earth is vast and bountiful - but for this reason, human beings can be tempted to believe that her bounty has no limits and can be harvested at will without concern for her ability to regenerate. Yet this is a false belief, and humanity's long history of unsustainable, extractive, and ultimately abusive relationship with creation has brought us to the point where the global ecosystem is becoming increasingly unable to recover from our daily way of life.

Climate change is the most extreme and urgent example of this. As we have powered our lives and built our societies through the burning of fossil fuels, for a long time God's earth has been able to deal with our pollution by sequestering it in the ocean and absorbing it into our great forests. But earth is now reaching her limits and is being overwhelmed by our relentless carbon emissions. The carbon we are putting into the atmosphere is absorbing too much of the sun's heat and the earth is heating up internally, developing a growing fever which is in turn throwing her intricate global systems further and

further out of balance. These changing systems are causing increased frequency and intensity of storms, droughts, floods, wildfires, and sea level rise. And these changes are, in turn, bringing untold - and growing - suffering for both non-human and human life.

Humanity's current way of living is emphasizing short term reward over long term sustainability. It is looking at the mother and her eggs and young and taking all of them now for the immediate gratification, while robbing future generations of the eggs a spared mother might produce. We are burning fossil fuels to achieve maximum growth and economic returns now, even if it means passing ecological and societal collapse on to our grandchildren. We are choosing the opposite path from the one that God says will enable things to "go well with us and give us a long life" (vs 6) - and we are reaping the consequences.

But the God of the Bible calls us to a different way - and we can still change. The psalmist in Psalm 115:15 acknowledges God as the Creator of all things. Creation reflects so much of God - God's goodness, God's love, and God's graciousness. God, in His grace, gave the earth to us (v. 16). But the question is, what are we doing with it? Are we carrying out our responsibilities faithfully? Every creature is valuable in the sight of God and they are well interconnected with each other. Even stones resonate with the creative life of God. We have a forgotten intimacy with our surroundings as extensions of our very selves, and climate change a powerful indicator reminding us of how fragile that relationship can be.

Climate change is already beginning to transform life on Earth. Around the globe, seasons are shifting, the temperature is going up, and sea level is rising. Shifting climatic conditions are increasingly meaning the difference between a bumper harvest and a famine.

But the Scriptures give us guidance. They impart a strong sustainability message, warning us against over-utilizing and wearing out natural resources. The need of the hour is to reflect on passages of the Bible which demand a reverent and caring approach towards humanity's relationship with the rest of God's living planetary system. . As faithful stewards, we must take care of the environment diligently.

God has not given us the authority to disturb or degrade the ecosystem but to value and sustain it with love and compassion. And this is, as with all of God's commands, for our own good. It is so beautiful to think that if we take care of God's creation, we may do well and live long in the land God has given us. Jesus invites us to this way of life - indeed he commands it.

*The Creation narratives of God are encircled with scientific expressions. Approached with modern scientific lenses, they disclose the scientific elements bearing the resemblance of a science laboratory originating new inventions.*

*Y Nuklu Phom*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Creator God, we have overused and even misused the wonderful environment you gave us, and today the environment has come so heavily upon us. We seek your forgiveness for our greediness and excessive use. Help us to care even for the smallest creature because your word teaches us that their existence sustains us and we cannot survive without them. Grant us a mindset to love and care for the environment so that our life on earth may go well, and that we may live long. Help the policy makers to understand the value of biodiversity conservation and join in this venture of augmenting and improving the ecosystem. In the name of our Lord the Creator God, we pray.

*Amen.*

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from Climate Change***

Heavenly Father, we pray to you for sustenance and mercy. You have said in Your Word that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. In this world where environmental destruction has become a norm, please grant us the strength to stand strong against such injustice. We look to Your teachings as our source of hope, and we thank You for the hope that is found in Your Word. We plead with You to give us strength in the face of adversity. As we stand between darkness and light being disadvantaged by climate change and other

forms of environmental exploitation, may You provide us with a path forward.

Help us to inspire and remind the strong and influential in our societies to be vigilant in our struggle against the corruption of our world and its resources, for we know You see it all. In Your mercy, protect both our planet and people like us. Grant us ways to work together towards a better future.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. Have a family/community black out for one hour. Share what you are doing in the hour on your social media channels.
2. Commit to sustainable living practices, including reducing personal carbon footprints, adopting renewable energy sources, and minimizing waste.
3. Actively participate in local environmental initiatives and collaborate with like-minded organizations.
4. To reflect on their roles in caring for God's creation through prayer and meditation.

*Y Nuklu Phom*

13 CLIMATE ACTION



## TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS

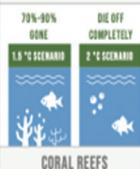


### CLIMATE CHANGE

IS HUMANITY'S **"CODE RED" WARNING**

OUR WINDOW TO AVOID CLIMATE CATASTROPHE IS CLOSING RAPIDLY

DIFFERENT TEMPERATURE SCENARIOS FOR CORAL REEFS



SEA LEVEL WILL RISE 30-60 CM BY 2100



DROUGHT ESTIMATED TO DISPLACE 700 MILLION PEOPLE BY 2030



MEDIUM- TO LARGE-SCALE DISASTERS WILL INCREASE 40% FROM 2015 TO 2030



ENERGY-RELATED CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS INCREASED

**6%** IN 2021

REACHING HIGHEST LEVEL EVER

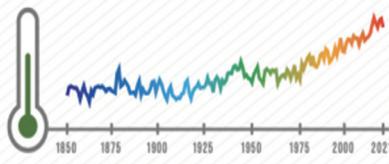


CLIMATE FINANCE

FALLS SHORT OF \$100 BILLION YEARLY COMMITMENT

DEVELOPED COUNTRIES PROVIDED \$79.6 BILLION IN CLIMATE FINANCE IN 2019

RISING GLOBAL TEMPERATURES CONTINUE UNABATED, LEADING TO **MORE EXTREME WEATHER**



## DAY 14

# Let the Waters Swarm



### SDG 14: Life below Water

“Goal 14 is about conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources. Healthy oceans and seas are essential to human existence and life on Earth. They cover 70 per cent of the planet and provide food, energy and water. The ocean absorbs around one quarter of the world’s annual carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, thereby mitigating climate change and alleviating its impacts. It is essential to conserve and sustainably use them. Yet, human activity is endangering the oceans and seas – the planet’s largest ecosystem – and affecting the livelihoods of billions of people.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Genesis 1:20-23

<sup>20</sup>And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” <sup>21</sup>So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” <sup>23</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

*Verse 20: And God said,  
“Let the water teem with living creatures...*

“There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small” declared the writer of Psalm 104. The sea is indeed vast and spacious – covering over 70% of the earth’s surface — it makes our planet appear as a glowing blue “marble” when seen from space. Looking out from a high cliff on the coast it seems to go on forever. And teem with creatures it does – or did. Scientists know of around 226,000 species in the world’s seas, and in some places, such as the Grand Banks off the east coast of Canada, fish are naturally so abundant that early explorers recorded lowering a bucket into the water and bringing it up full of fish.

The ocean is fundamental to maintaining the earth’s ecosystems and supporting human life. It regulates the world’s climate, provides us with half of the oxygen we breathe and supplies nearly half the world’s population with their main source of protein. Yet we still know so little about it. Eighty percent of the ocean remains unmapped, and scientists believe that up to 90% of the species in the ocean have not yet been described. Until the last 200 years, the deep seas and the life in them were essentially unexplored and unknown. And even now humans rarely, if ever, see the creatures of the deep ocean alive in their natural habitats. God alone knows the lives of these extraordinary and beautiful creatures.

Perhaps because it is so vast and largely unseen, people have mistreated the ocean. We have assumed that fish and other seafood are in endless supply, and so we have used ever more advanced technology and nets as wide as a football field to seek out and harvest them. As a result, about 85% of the world’s fisheries are either fully exploited or overfished<sup>1</sup>, and some formerly abundant fisheries, such as the Atlantic cod on the Grand Banks, have collapsed spectacularly. Many non-target species, from whales and dolphins to sea turtles and albatross, as well as unwanted fish, are also killed as by-catch.

Because we don’t see undersea ecosystems, we have failed to appreciate their beauty, importance and fragility. And so we have used

harmful fishing methods like bottom trawling which destroys vast swathes of seabed habitat, and dynamite which destroys coral reefs. We have assumed that the ocean has an infinite capacity to absorb pollution. So we have allowed tons of nutrients from agriculture and sewage to create “dead zones” where oxygen levels are too low to support marine life. We have allowed 14 million tons of plastic waste each year to enter the oceans where it has littered beaches on the most remote islands and created a “garbage patch” three times as large as France in the Pacific Ocean. And our greenhouse gas emissions are making the oceans too warm and too acidic for many sea creatures.

But there is hope. Although only 8% of the world’s marine area is protected, inside these areas ecosystems and fish populations have shown remarkable recovery within a few years. And fish that breed in protected areas then boost fisheries nearby. Meanwhile, many countries are starting to phase out single use plastic products. If we can regain our sense of awe and wonder at the great unseen world beneath the waves, and work to protect the life that remains, we can hope to see many fisheries and marine ecosystems recover.

In focusing on Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14), which centers on the conservation and sustainable utilization of oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development, the importance of water and its biodiversity becomes a significant focal point. Water covers about 70% of the Earth’s surface, exceeding the planet’s territorial extension and highlighting its vast significance. Understanding current efforts to preserve this common good and prevent its extinction is crucial. This aligns with the church’s role in reconciling all things through Jesus, as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

Expanding the idea of evangelization to embrace rivers, seas, and oceans within a Creation-focused theology is important. Such a theology recognizes the interconnectedness of all creation. This integral mission involves discerning, proclaiming, and living out the biblical truth that the Gospel is not only for individuals and society but also for the entire creation. This perspective calls for urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility, advocating for the responsible

use of abundant resources for the Lord's sake. Connecting SDG 14 with Genesis 1:20 underscores the biblical mandate for stewardship. It aligns human responsibility with the conservation of oceans and marine resources. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of creation, biblical teachings on justice, and the need for global cooperation, this connection reinforces the shared responsibility rooted in both environmental and ethical considerations.

The Lausanne Congress in 2010, hosted in Cape Town, South Africa, involved approximately 4,500 participants and resulted in a Commitment document. This document acknowledged human responsibility for Earth's destruction and waste. It called for repentance and commitment to urgent ecological responsibility. The integral mission concept emphasized the redemptive purpose for creation and advocated for responsible care for the Earth as an expression of love for God. It rejected the dichotomy between secular and sacred. Acknowledging sin's consequences, the document affirmed God's transformative mission to heal the broken creation. This comprehensive approach integrates responsible resource use with the lordship of Jesus. It emphasizes the inseparable relationship between one's connection to Christ and actions related to the Earth.

*Even if you never have the chance to see or touch the ocean, it touches you with every breath you take, every drop of water you drink, every bite you consume. Everyone, everywhere is inextricably connected to and utterly dependent upon the existence of the sea.*

*Dr. Sylvia Earle  
(founder of Mission Blue)*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

Father God, Creator of earth, sky and sea, we praise you for creating the vast oceans of the world and the myriad creatures that live there. Restore to us a sense of awe and wonder at the intricate world beneath the waves. And help us to value even the things we cannot see, knowing that the remarkable ecosystems of the ocean give you glory and support all life on earth. We promise to do our part by being

thoughtful and responsible in what we eat from the ocean and careful that our waste does not harm the creatures that live there.

*In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

### ***Prayer of Sea-dwellers***

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the bounty of the Sea. We are Your humble servants, depending on Your grace to provide for us and our families. You have given us dominion over all things in the sea and commanded us to be stewards of its resources. You said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." You created great whales and every living creature that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind.

We thank You for giving us authority to use marine resources to provide sustenance and prosperity for our families. Remind us that we are stewards of your creation and show us how to be better stewards of the seas. Help us to use this resource in a responsible way, preserving it for future generations. Furthermore, we pray that you would protect us and our communities from the ocean pollution that finds its way to us from other nations and industries. Please lead them to repentance and a more respectful and sustainable relationship with your creation, that we might all live in increasing health and abundance on our shared planetary home.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

Pristine Seas: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/pristine-seas/>

A Rocha Kenya: <https://www.arocha.or.ke/conservation-action/>

### **What you can do**

1. Go snorkelling or diving, or watch a documentary that explores the ocean.
2. Only buy fish that are caught sustainably and using non-destructive methods.

3. Speak up for new marine protected areas to be created in your country.
4. Say no to single use plastics, join a beach clean-up project near you.
5. Reduce your greenhouse gas emissions.

## References

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, according to [https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/sustainable seafood#:~:text=3%20billion,to%20billions%20of%20people%20worldwide](https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/sustainable_seafood#:~:text=3%20billion,to%20billions%20of%20people%20worldwide).

*Richard Storey*



## PRESERVE THE BLUE, PROTECT THE EARTH: URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED TO SAFEGUARD THE PLANET'S LARGEST ECOSYSTEM

### OCEAN EMERGENCY



#### COASTAL EUTROPHICATION:

CAUSING ALgal  
BLOOMS AND  
DEAD ZONES



#### OCEAN ACIDIFICATION:

30% HIGHER THAN  
IN PRE-INDUSTRIAL  
TIMES



#### OCEAN WARMING:

SEA-LEVEL RISE  
AND AFFECTING  
MARINE ECOSYSTEMS



#### PLASTIC POLLUTION:

17 MILLION METRIC  
TONS IN 2021-  
2-3X MORE BY 2040



#### OVER- FISHING:

MORE THAN A THIRD  
OF GLOBAL FISH STOCKS  
ARE OVERFISHED

#### CITIZEN SCIENCE BEACH CLEAN-UPS

SHED LIGHT ON THE MAGNITUDE OF  
OCEAN PLASTIC POLLUTION



#### SUFFOCATING SEAS

COASTAL EUTROPHICATION TRIGGERS  
CRUSTACEAN WALKOUTS



#### OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

REPORTING STATIONS HAVE  
TRIPLED WORLDWIDE

2021: 178 STATIONS  
2022: 308 STATIONS  
2023: 539 STATIONS



#### 1 IN 5 FISH CAUGHT

ORIGINATES FROM  
ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED  
AND UNREGULATED FISHING



Day 15

## Oikos of God



### SDG 15: Life on Land

“Goal 15 is about conserving life on land. It is to protect and restore terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and stop biodiversity loss. Healthy ecosystems and the biological diversity they support are a source of food, water, medicine, shelter and other material goods.

They also provide ecosystem services – the cleaning of air and water – which sustain life and increase resiliency in the face of mounting pressures. Nevertheless, human activities have profoundly altered most terrestrial ecosystems: around 40,000 species are documented to be at risk of extinction over the coming decades, 10 million hectares of forest (an area the size of Iceland) are being destroyed each year, and more than half of key biodiversity areas remain unprotected.” UN Official Site.

### Bible Passage: Psalm 104:10-31

<sup>10</sup>He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. <sup>11</sup>They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. <sup>12</sup>The birds of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. <sup>13</sup>He waters the mountains from his

upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work. <sup>14</sup>He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: <sup>15</sup>wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts. <sup>16</sup>The trees of the Lord are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. <sup>17</sup>There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers. <sup>18</sup>The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the hyrax. <sup>19</sup>He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. <sup>20</sup>You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. <sup>21</sup>The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. <sup>22</sup>The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. <sup>23</sup>Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening. <sup>24</sup>How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. <sup>25</sup>There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small. <sup>26</sup>There the ships go to and fro, and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there. <sup>27</sup>All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time. <sup>28</sup>When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. <sup>29</sup>When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. <sup>30</sup>When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. <sup>31</sup>May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works.

*Verse 31: May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works.*

Psalm 104 is one of the most beautiful and instructive passages on creation care in the Bible. It is full of rich insights into the relationship that God has with the creatures He made, providing the context for us as His image bearers—His representatives on earth. The first thing that stands out in this psalm is that God is very much present and involved in the natural world. The psalmist sees the Earth's physical processes as God's active care for His creatures, providing water, food, and habitat to each species. As God's image bearers, we should continue this provision, but unfortunately, in the last 300 years,

humans have cut down or burned 35% of the world's forests and degraded 80% of what remains.<sup>1</sup> The destruction and degradation of habitats are the main causes of species extinctions. However, history shows that deforestation can be reversed, and SDG 15 recognizes that the primary way to protect and restore species diversity is by safeguarding and sustainably managing habitats.

The psalm declares that as God provides, “the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work,” even as it grows food for cattle and crops for people. In contrast, human agriculture throughout history and especially in modern industrial farming usually depletes the soil. The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that about 40% of the world's land area has been degraded, largely through unsustainable farming methods, and the loss in soil fertility now affects half the world's population. But there are solutions. In Leviticus 25, God instructs his people to give the land regular Sabbath rests. Communities in various places and times have discovered that if they regenerate the soil by replenishing its nutrients, maintaining its structure and microbial flora, and giving it adequate rest, it can remain healthy and continue to provide food.

The second theme running through Psalm 104 is the order and fullness that God has established in the natural world. Ordering and filling the “formless and empty” earth are the great works of God's original creation as told in Genesis 1, and Psalm 104 celebrates the fruit of these works. In God's world, natural processes are kept within their assigned bounds so they may serve God's purpose of sustaining life, and each creature has been given its own place so that it may live safely. In today's world, climate change is causing many natural processes to change in dangerous ways and become increasingly destructive. Another major threat to the world's biodiversity is alien species – plants, animals, and microbes that have been moved from their native habitats to new places where they don't belong. There, they out-compete, prey on, or cause disease to native organisms. The order God established is being undone.

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<sup>1</sup>. <https://www.discovermagazine.com>.

Summing up his survey of the natural world, the Psalmist declares, “how many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all.” Since each species was made in wisdom, we would be unwise to allow any species to go extinct. Ecological studies show that complex food webs with many species are more resilient in the face of natural disasters than ones that have been depleted, and with natural disasters increasing, resilience is more important than ever. The psalmist also declares that the filling of the earth gives God great joy and is for His glory. As people appropriate more of the earth’s ecosystems to meet human needs and desires, it is important to remember that the creatures of earth are created primarily for God’s glory and pleasure, not for human use.

*When I hear of the destruction of a species, I feel just as if all the works of some great writer have perished.*

*Theodore Roosevelt  
(26th President of the USA, 1858-1919)*

### ***Prayer of commitment***

Father God, Creator of all, we celebrate the wonderful diversity of all your creatures and praise you for filling the earth with such beautiful species. We recognize your loving care in the earth’s processes. And we pray that as your image bearers we would follow you in sustaining the many living species on earth and providing for their needs. Help us to remember that each one is made in wisdom. Joining with the psalmist we pray that your glory in creation would endure forever and you would continue to rejoice in your works. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

### ***Prayer of those who live from and with the Land***

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the bounty that is provided through this land. We are grateful for its ability to provide food and sustenance for ourselves and our families. We thank you for all your provisions over us as we remember that you are the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. We acknowledge that these resources and this land have been given to us through your grace.

We look to You for guidance and hope during times of hardship as we know that it is You who gives rain on the earth and sends water on the fields. We trust You who sets on high those who are lowly, and lift to safety those who mourn. Help us also to remember your words of caution to set apart for You all that first opens the womb and to not delay to offer from the fullness of our harvest and from the outflow of our presses. And please protect us and the other creatures around us from those outside our communities whose actions are negatively impacting our ecosystem. Lead them to repentance and a more caring way of living. We thank you for your grace and mercy that are new each morning, allowing us to live with hope in our hearts.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

*Project profile:* Sea bird restoration at Karioi Maunga, New Zealand.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a place that beautifully illustrates the themes in Psalm 104. It is a special place, almost without land mammals, that God gave to a variety of unusual organisms, most of which occur nowhere else in the world. Among them are several species of flightless birds. New Zealand's forests used to be so full of birds that early European explorers reported they could not hear each other talk because of the birdsong. However, in many parts of the country the forests are now nearly silent, largely due to introduced mammalian predators such as rats, stoats, cats and possums.

At Karioi Maunga, a forest-clad mountain on the west coast of New Zealand's North Island, A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand is restoring a population of grey faced petrels. This sea bird breeds only on New Zealand's North Island and surrounding offshore islands, but on the North Island only a few small colonies remain because of invasive mammalian predators. A Rocha and local partners have organised volunteers to lay 2,048 traps along 100 km of trap lines and check them fortnightly. They have also rallied residents in the neighbouring town to operate traps in their own properties. To date they have removed over 14,000 predators from 2,300 ha of land. Thanks to their efforts, over 30 grey faced petrel chicks have been

born and fledged in the last four years, where previously there were none.<sup>2</sup>

### What You Can Do

1. Check whether your country has A Rocha, or reach out to a local conservation organisation and get involved a project.

*Richard Storey*

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<sup>2.</sup> <https://www.karioiproject.co.nz>.



PROTECT, RESTORE AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE USE OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS, SUSTAINABLY MANAGE FORESTS, COMBAT DESERTIFICATION, AND HALT AND REVERSE LAND DEGRADATION AND HALT BIODIVERSITY LOSS

## A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN HUMANITY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE IS ESSENTIAL

ESCALATING



FOREST LOSSES



LAND DEGRADATION



SPECIES EXTINCTION

POSE SEVERE THREATS TO PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

100 MILLION HECTARES

OF HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE LAND WAS DEGRADED EVERY YEAR

FROM 2015-2019

EQUIVALENT TO 2X THE SIZE OF GREENLAND



THE WORLD IS CURRENTLY FACING THE LARGEST SPECIES EXTINCTION EVENT SINCE THE DINOSAUR AGE



PROTECTED AREA COVERAGE OF KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS HAS STALLED SINCE 2015

### THE KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

• PROVIDES RENEWED IMPETUS FOR CONSERVING TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS. •



4 OUTCOME-ORIENTED GOALS BY 2050



23 TARGETS BY 2030

Day 16

## Seek the Welfare of the City



### SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

“Goal 16 is about promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. People everywhere should be free of fear from all forms of violence and feel safe as they go about their lives whatever their ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation.

High levels of armed violence and insecurity have a destructive impact on a country’s development. Sexual violence, crime, exploitation and torture are prevalent where there is conflict or no rule of law. Governments, civil society and communities need to work together to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity. Strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights is key to this process, as is reducing the flow of illicit arms, combating corruption, and ensuring inclusive participation at all times.” UN Official Site

### Bible Passage: Jeremiah 29:5-13

<sup>5</sup>“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup>Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. <sup>7</sup>Also,

seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”<sup>8</sup> Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have.<sup>9</sup> They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the LORD.<sup>10</sup> This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.<sup>12</sup> Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.<sup>13</sup> You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

*Verse 7: 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.*

One of the greatest leaders in United States history was undoubtedly the Rev Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. Guided by his Christian faith, he worked together with others to build a strictly non-violent social movement in the midst of a deeply racist society that, with God’s help, meaningfully impacted the trajectory of his nation. As a direct result of MLK’s work with this movement, culminating in his “I Have a Dream” speech, the US passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the 1968 Civil Rights Act.

This did not come without a cost, however. Many of Dr King’s fellow marchers were beaten, hosed, attacked by dogs, imprisoned by police, and lynched by fellow Americans. He himself suffered tremendously, was imprisoned multiple times, and was ultimately murdered for this work. Yet his relentless organizing, his movement’s steadfast commitment to non-violence, and their repeated marches, boycotts, and other actions pressed a nation to look seriously at itself and reconsider its moral history and its laws. The United States’ wealth had been built to a remarkable degree off of the free labor of enslaved people, arrogantly and violently stolen from their homes,

separated from their families, and forced to work until they died. And despite these peoples' legal emancipation after the Civil War, they continued to be discriminated against individually, collectively, and institutionally (particularly through the many Jim Crow laws that were passed).

The civil rights movement of the 1960s sought to hold a mirror up to the United States in the form of the African-American experience as a way to help it see how profoundly unpeaceful and unjust its institutions were with respect to a large portion of its population. There is still a great deal of work to do in the United States, but the civil rights movement helped to diagnose one of America's cancers and bring more into the open what has happened, what is still happening, and what needs to change.

Movements like the 1960s civil rights movement in the US are just the sorts of things that Christians are called to. This, however, is not always obvious to Christians. In many Christian communities around the world, there can be a tendency to overly-personalize the Christian calling - to essentially reduce it to a matter of maintaining a healthy personal relationship with God, living a personally moral life, loving one's neighbours, and sharing the Gospel with them. These are all very important aspects of following Jesus, but when faced with the challenge of more societal, systemic, or institutional injustices, they do not offer an answer that is up to the task. If local laws are systemically discriminating against certain people, is it enough for Christians to simply love those people and pray for them (while doing nothing about the laws)? If an industry is polluting a waterway that a village depends on and making the residents sick, is it enough for Christians to simply take care of the sick (while doing nothing about the industrial pollution)?

The answer, emphatically, is no. There is much more to the Christian calling, and Dr King is a powerful example of it. If Christians are truly to "seeking the peace and prosperity of the cities and towns to which we have been called," a critical part of this calling has to be to take action to ensure that the social patterns of a community, as well

as its laws, work for the peace, justice, and flourishing of all the people (as well as the rest of God's creation) that are living there.

This certainly begins with living a life of personal active love for God, neighbour, and creation. But it must go beyond that to forms of more collective advocacy. This kind of action includes (but is not limited to): (a) intentionally and consistently voting for candidates who will enact just laws, (b) advocating for just laws and customs at local levels (such as on boards, in community associations, or through local government), speaking with state or federal legislative representatives, or ultimately marching for change if the change isn't coming.

This calling is often more obvious to Christians who are part of less powerful parts of societies. For those suffering under institutions that discriminate against them, activism for societal change is a matter of life or death. For Christians who are part of more powerful parts of societies, they have the privilege to not act - because the institutions are already benefiting them. But as Paul says, there is only one Church, and all members are part of one Body. And so those Christians with more power are called to see (and, God-willing, feel) the negative impact of institutions that harm their less powerful siblings in Christ, and ultimately to partner together for shalom-oriented change. This calling is not comfortable, and it may involve sacrifice. But we should expect this - for we follow a King whose life-giving path leads through the cross.

*Excerpt from "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"*

"I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the

goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection."

*Rev Dr Martin Luther King, Jr*

### ***Prayer of Commitment***

We thank you, Jesus, that you are the Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. We thank you that the government is upon your shoulders. Lord, we pray you raise up leaders of character; people who have the moral courage to stand up and fight for justice in a world bent by dark forces of corruption and greed. We pray you guard our own hearts from the ways of injustice. Make us peacemakers who will build bridges instead of erecting walls. Reveal to us how we may seek the welfare of our city, our neighbourhood, our family, and inspire us to a life that cares about what we do and cares for those around us. Amen.

### ***Prayer of those Suffering from Conflict and Injustice***

Heavenly Father, we come to you today with heavy hearts, begging for your help in times of conflict and injustice. This country and my people need your guidance and protection as we desperately seek strong institutions and peace. We find comfort in the promise that You work righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. In these challenging times, we are reminded that only You, Lord, can give us justice and peace. We trust You that You will bring justice to the poor of the people, that You will save the children of the needy, and that You will break in pieces the oppressor. We need Your help now more than ever before as we desperately yearn for an end to all forms of injustice. Please show us how we can get involved in non-violent movements to pursue shalom-oriented change in our country. And please fill people

in influential positions on all levels of society with the courage and faith needed to make peace in this world.

*In the name of Jesus Amen.*

### **What You Can Do**

1. Take some time reflecting and praying for the welfare of your “city”. Think of one or two areas where you see a lack of welfare or even injustice. Next search for a local non-profit or other organisation that is working to address those issues. Get involved with them, and commit to praying regularly for these issues (ideally with a sibling in Christ).

*Emily Lange*



PROMOTE PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL AND BUILD EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVELS

## PLEAS FOR GLOBAL PEACE

### GROW LOUDER

WORLD IS WITNESSING LARGEST NUMBER OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS  
SINCE 1946

AND

A QUARTER OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION  
LIVES IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED  
COUNTRIES (END 2020)



1/3 OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION  
MOSTLY WOMEN  
FEAR WALKING ALONE IN  
THEIR NEIGHBOURHOODS AT NIGHT

A RECORD  
100 MILLION PEOPLE

HAD BEEN FORCIBLY DISPLACED WORLDWIDE

(MAY 2022)



GLOBAL HOMICIDE RATE DECLINED

5.2%  
BETWEEN  
2015 AND 2020

FALLS SHORT  
OF THE "SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION"  
BY 2030 TARGETED IN THE SDGs



CORRUPTION IS FOUND IN EVERY REGION

ALMOST 1 IN 6 BUSINESSES HAVE RECEIVED BRIBE REQUESTS  
FROM PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Day 17

## Working Together in God's World



### SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

“Goal 17 is about revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda is universal and calls for action by all countries – developed and developing – to ensure no one is left behind. It requires partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil society. The Sustainable Development Goals can only be realized with a strong commitment to global partnership and cooperation.” U.N. Official Site.

### Bible Passage: Psalm 24

<sup>1</sup>The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; <sup>2</sup>for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters. <sup>3</sup>Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? <sup>4</sup>The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. <sup>5</sup>They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Savior. <sup>6</sup>Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob. <sup>7</sup>Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>8</sup>Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. <sup>9</sup>Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>10</sup>Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty—he is the King of glory.

*Verse 1: The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*

I am often surprised by the way God chooses to work, and we notice this in many biblical stories. God often brings unexpected characters into his story and gives them a leading role. A talking donkey is the one who had to warn a prophet of which way he should go (Numbers 22:28-34). It was a pagan emperor who let the exiled people of God go back home and funded the rebuilding of their temple (Ezra 1:1-4). A Roman Centurion is one of the few people Jesus complimented on their faith (Matthew 8:5-9), and a pagan prostitute saved the lives of two of Joshua's envoys in Jericho (Joshua 2:1). These examples widen our gaze and stretch our horizons. Christians do not hold a monopoly on God's work. We cannot box in God's action, for it is God's Spirit that leads God's work in this world, and it is amazing to think we are invited to participate in what God is already doing, like stepping into a boat on a river that is already moving.

From the beginning, "The Lord took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). The cultural mandate of being stewards of the Earth was imprinted on us all, from the moment human beings were created. The phrase "to work it and keep it" reflects the cultural mandate or responsibility given to Adam. In this context, "work" implies cultivating and caring for the garden, which involves activities like planting, tending, and harvesting. "Keep" suggests the idea of stewardship or guardianship, indicating that Adam was entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining and protecting the garden. The idea that from the very beginning of human existence, there was a divine directive for humans to be stewards of the Earth. This mandate emphasizes a harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world, with humans playing a role in caring for and preserving the environment in which they live. Instead of exploiting or abusing the Earth, humans are called to responsibly manage and nurture it because earth belongs to God. This understanding of stewardship has theological and ethical implications, encouraging believers to approach environmental issues

with a sense of responsibility and care for the planet as part of their God-given role.

The climate crisis has brought together people from across the world. People of all sorts of cultures, ages, beliefs, and walks of life inhabit this one world, and everything in it is the Lord's. It is clear from the passage that Earth is very close to God's heart. Followers of Jesus should therefore be leading the way in accomplishing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and lending our efforts to all those who share these aspirations. When the Earth belongs to our Father, then as His children we are here to take care of it as good stewards. As Paul said, "whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone" (Galatians 6:10). Though people with different beliefs may disagree with our rationale, they will love our partnership, and perhaps they will even give God glory for our investment in creating a better world. Wherever we are planted, we should seek peace, do good, and prosper.

The Sustainable Development Goals raise our sights to a more just and healthier world; challenge us to shared responsibility, to the consequences of inaction; to fight injustice and discrimination; to be generous and care for our Earth and each other. In many ways, this is a vision that, by our human efforts alone, we will never fulfil. But the vision of redemption and reconciliation is God's vision, and he is already working on it through many different people, organizations, and communities. Like the young boy who brought his fish and loaves to Jesus, we bring what we have to the Master who created all. We can trust he will miraculously multiply, distribute, and bless, for he is already at work, making all things new.

*O heavenly Father, who hast filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold thy gracious hand in all thy works; that, rejoicing in thy whole creation, we may learn to serve thee with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**A Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer, “For Joy in God’s Creation”*****Prayer of Commitment***

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are already at work in us and in our world. We remember you created us and praise you for this. Today, we entrust our efforts and actions into your hands. We want to join in the work you are already doing, we want to partner and be ministers of reconciliation. Open our eyes and guide our steps. Inspire us to action, fill our imaginations and expand our hearts with your love. Amen.

***Prayer of those who are in Danger of Being Left Behind***

Heavenly Father, we come before you in prayer today, seeking your protection and support as we are in danger of being left behind by the global society. We ask that you create a place for us where we are welcome, seen, heard and appreciated. Lord, we beg for your mercy to strengthen the bonds of friendship and togetherness between all people around this world that you have created, so that we may have a meaningful human partnership with one another. We pray that the powerful and influential of this world recognize their duty to take care of those who are in need and offer them assistance unconditionally.

We pray that your Word will be a source of power and guidance for all of us who live in destitution, providing us with the courage and strength to carry on. May we never forget that better is a neighbour who is near than a brother far away.

*In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**What you can do**

1. Find out what organisations or communities are working in your city or neighbourhood towards creation care and the furthering of the SDG. Get in touch, find out about their work and consider partnering with them or becoming a volunteer.
2. Acknowledge the interdependence between humanity and the Earth, while also recognizing that the Earth belongs to God.

*Emily Lange*



## STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



### RISING DEBT BURDENS THREATEN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES' PANDEMIC RECOVERY



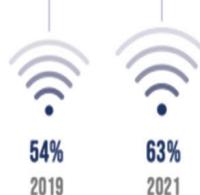
DEBT TO GNI RATIO ROSE SHARPLY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA COUNTRIES



### INTERNET

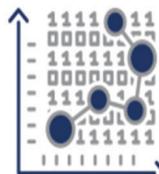
UPTAKE ACCELERATED DURING THE PANDEMIC

% OF INDIVIDUALS USING THE INTERNET



### IN 2021

- » **NET ODA** REACHED A NEW HIGH OF **\$177.6 BILLION**, LARGELY DUE TO COVID-RELATED AID
- » **FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT** REBOUNDED TO **\$1.58 TRILLION**, UP 64% FROM 2020
- » **REMITTANCES** REACHED **\$605 BILLION**, UP 8.6% FROM 2020



ODA FOR SDG DATA DECLINED BY MORE THAN 18% IN 2020

## Contributors



**Allen Drew** is an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and serves as the East Coast Regional Organizer for the Climate Witness Project (CWP). The CWP is a faith-based climate justice initiative jointly led by the CRCNA and the humanitarian organization World Renew, mobilizing churches and communities to respond faithfully to the climate crisis.

**Emily Lange** is WEASC Project Support Officer. She holds a PhD in Human Geography and in International Relations. As a contemplative scholar, her work and writing are a journey of learning to reflect and lead others into deep reflection. Having grown up in rural Portugal, she now lives in Bonn, Germany, working for the greater good of societies at PIRON Global Development.

**Fernando Forgioni**, Fernando Forgioni, Climate scientist at Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM) and Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais (INPE). Currently focused on atmospheric teleconnections and large-scale dynamics.

**Jasmine Kwong** serves as a Catalyst for Creation Care with the Lausanne Movement and is a passionate creation care advocate with OMF International, currently based in the Philippines. With a background in conservation biology and community development, she works at the vital intersection of people and the natural world. Her particular interests lie in food security and marine conservation.

**Matthias Boehning** is the Co-Director, World Evangelical Alliance Sustainability Center (WEASC) Permanent Representative to the UN in Bonn World Evangelical Alliance.

**Melody J. Wachsmuth** is a writer, researcher, and teacher based in Southeastern Europe, with a focus on mission, culture, creation care, and the impact of Christianity in Roma communities. She teaches at the traveling Roma Bible School as well as the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Croatia. Deeply passionate about God's mission and the beauty of God's creation, Melody integrates theology and lived experience in her work among marginalized communities.

**Richard Storey** is a Senior Freshwater Ecologist at Wildland Consultants, based in New Zealand. From 2020 to 2023, he lived in Pokhara, Nepal, where he collaborated on environmental research with Kathmandu University. Richard is also actively involved with A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand, a Christian organization focused on Creation Care, integrating his scientific expertise with a faith-based commitment to environmental stewardship.

**Samuel Richmond** currently serves as the Executive Director and Professor of Christian Theology at Caleb Institute, Gurugram, India. He also holds the position of Honorary Project Support Officer at the WEA Sustainability Centre. In addition, he serves as the Honorary Secretary of the Theological Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of India and is a member of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). An ordained minister of the Church of North India, he is also an active member of the Sadhu Sundar Singh Global Forum.

**Y. Nuklu Phom**, a conservationist from Nagaland. He led the initiative to declare 17 square kilometers of forest as a biodiversity conservation area which now have expanded to nearly 200 sq. kms. It has become a hub for hundreds of wild species and one of the world's major roosting sites for millions of migrating Amur Falcons. He and his team were honored with the Governor's Gold Medal Award in 2020. Nuklu was awarded the prestigious Whitley Award—known as the “Green Oscar”—in 2021 and India Changemakers Awards in 2024 by UNDP, TIIS and FES. He continues to collaborate with local communities across the region to develop a Biodiversity Peace Corridor, promoting large-scale, community-led conservation in Northeast India.

