

# Faith Rising: Uniting Moral Power for Climate Action

## A Brief Catalogue

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**Faith for Earth Coalition  
United Nations Environment Programme**



# FAITHS ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

## A Moral and Spiritual Imperative

Faith actors (this term encompasses faith leaders, faith-based organisations and institutions, faith communities, people of faith, and others) are upholding the values of stewardship, compassion, justice, and harmony with creation finding opportunities to collaborate with local communities and indigenous peoples supporting social and economic needs. These enduring moral foundations are especially vital today as the world faces the escalating climate crisis—one that threatens ecosystems, intensifies inequality, and endangers the very future of humanity.

Climate change is not only a scientific or political issue—it is a profound ethical and spiritual challenge. As custodians of ethical traditions and influential voices within communities, faith-based actors are uniquely positioned to inspire climate action that is grounded in values, equity, and hope. Whether promoting renewable energy, advocating for climate finance justice, advancing resilience in vulnerable communities, or championing nature-based solutions, faith communities around the world are demonstrating that faiths can co-implement solutions to drive sustainable development.

In response to climate change's growing urgency, the **Faith for Earth Coalition** of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) serves as a platform to mobilize and empower faith-based efforts in addressing the triple environmental planetary crisis.

In support of UNEPs work on Climate Action and UNFCCC goals and objectives, the Faith for Earth Coalition supports faith actors in delivering local-to-global impact across areas such as mitigation, adaptation, capacity building, climate finance, and just transition.

This Climate Action Catalogue offers an overview of impactful efforts led by faith-based actors in response to climate change.

In this Catalogue, we aim to:

- Uplift the importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in advancing environmental policy and governance;
- Mobilize faith networks to share their programmes and initiatives through knowledge exchange;
- Promote inclusive, value-based climate solutions that leave no one behind; and
- Inspire further collaboration across governments, civil society, and faith actors.

The Faith for Earth Coalition's mission is: "*Promoting faith leadership, faith-based organisations, and communities as custodians of far-reaching, value-based perspectives on environmental sustainability*".

**Visit: Faith and Climate Action**

## Supporting a Science-Policy Framework

### Understanding Climate Change and the Role of Faith-Based Organisations

UNEP highlights that the “world is in a climate emergency. Unless greenhouse gas emissions fall dramatically, warming could pass 2.9°C this century”. The effect of burning fossil fuels, deforestation, agriculture, and industrial processes have a high footprint and negative long-term effects on People and the Planet.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Synthesis Report (AR6) confirms that the Earth’s surface temperature has already increased by approximately 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels, leading to more intense and frequent extreme weather events, including droughts, storms, and floods. These changes disproportionately affect low-income and marginalised populations.

**“Human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming.”**

*IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report, 2023*

### The Multilateral Climate Governance Framework

The international response to the climate crisis is anchored in several multilateral agreements and frameworks. These include:

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development embeds climate action in SDG 13, which calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, provides the foundational legal structure for international climate cooperation.

- The Paris Agreement (2015) strengthens global commitment to limiting global temperature rise to well below 2°C, with efforts to stay within 1.5°C. Countries set nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to reduce emissions and enhance resilience.

These frameworks exist in a wider ecosystem emphasising inclusive participation, the need for engagement multi-sectoral solutions to achieve a just and sustainable transition.

### Why Faith Matters: The Role of Faith-Based Organisations in the Climate Response

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) offer moral, spiritual, and community-driven approaches to the climate crisis. Their unique strengths include:

- **Community Mobilisation:** Leveraging trust and influence to promote sustainable practices starting with faith-owned institutions and through climate education.
- **Advocacy for Justice:** Amplifying the voices of vulnerable communities and promoting ethical policy solutions.
- **Long-term Vision and Commitment:** Providing sustained institutional support rooted in the religious teachings.
- **Ethical Investment and Divestment:** Redirecting faith-aligned resources toward responsible finance.
- **Bridging Worldviews:** Translating scientific knowledge and policy frameworks into values-based narratives.

# FAITH-LED CLIMATE ACTION

## Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue for Climate Policy

### Faith and Science Summit Ahead of COP26

In the lead-up to COP26, nearly 40 global faith leaders and 10 leading scientists gathered at the Vatican for the Faith and Science: Towards COP26 Summit, hosted by the Vatican, and British and Italian Embassies to the Holy See. The Summit sent a powerful signal to world leaders: climate action must be rooted in both scientific evidence and moral responsibility.

A joint interfaith appeal was signed, calling for urgent, transformative climate policies and greater multilateral collaboration. This historic event highlighted the power of interfaith unity in shaping climate discourse.

The Faith for Earth Coalition was pivotal in supporting this global effort, offering strategic input, convening bilateral meetings, and helping deliver the unified voice of faith communities to COP26 leadership. As Dr. Iyad Abumoghli noted, *“this was not just a milestone, but the start of a long-term journey of shared responsibility for our planet”*.

*The COP26 Interfaith Task Force on Climate Change demonstrated inclusive, transparent, and open interfaith collaboration, publishing a report.*



### UNEP's Strategic Engagement with Faith Actors at COP27 – Prioritising Adaptation, Finance, and Just Transition

At the Climate COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, faiths built on efforts to engage with state and non-state actors, advancing ethical and moral motivations to shift climate actions at all levels. This included ways to promote a just energy transition, to scale up community-level climate finance, and for climate adaptation.



### The Global Faith Leaders Summit and the Abu Dhabi Interfaith Statement

In the lead-up to COP28, the Faith for Earth Coalition joined partners at the Muslim Council of Elders with the support of the COP 28 Presidency to co-organise the Global Faith Leaders Summit, Confluence of Conscience, in Abu Dhabi, convening 200 high-level religious leaders, scientists, women leaders, and youth from various faith traditions.

The Abu Dhabi Interfaith Statement is a unified call for urgent and ambitious climate action grounded in shared spiritual values. The statement emphasised the necessity of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C and highlighted the moral imperative to protect vulnerable communities.

Notably, the statement received endorsement from Pope Francis, Imam Al-Azhar, and many faith leaders reinforcing the global faith community's commitment to environmental stewardship.



### The Faith Pavilion at COP28

For the first time in UNFCCC COP history, a dedicated Faith Pavilion was established within the Blue Zone, symbolising the importance of values-based climate action to the COP Presidency.

### The Faith Pavilion at COP29

Building on the success at COP28, Faith for Earth Coalition the Muslim Council of Elders, extended the impact of a Faith Pavilion to COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The Pavilion hosted over 65 sessions organised by more than 70 organisations, bringing together religious leaders, policymakers, scientists, Indigenous representatives, women groups, youth, and civil society actors to discuss faith-driven climate solutions. This initiative underscored the moral and ethical dimensions of climate action, fostering interfaith collaboration and amplifying the voices of diverse communities.

Again, the strategic importance of partnering with faith actors who are mobilising their communities, driving responsible investment practices, and working on community-based resilience was demonstrated in 70 sessions. These sessions featured a variety of discussions focusing on faith and climate action, involving over 97 organisations from 11 faith traditions.

At a side event titled "Faiths for a Just Transition: Bottom-Up and Systemic Approaches from Affected Communities" showcased firsthand experiences from churches in Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Sweden, Fiji, and the USA, illustrating their pivotal role in fostering a just energy transition.

The Faith Pavilion at COP29 became a key space for interfaith dialogue. It spotlighted, in an unprecedented way, the diversity of the network and their fortitude when working with the areas and communities most impacted by climate change. It showcased how different faith groups contribute to climate solutions through advocacy, community resilience, and sustainable development.



## Renewable Energy & Clean Technology

### Greening Houses of Worship

Buildings and Construction are a priority sector under UNEPs work on Climate Action. In May 2020, the Faith for Earth Coalition produced good practice guidelines to mobilise faith groups exploring the ways that their houses of prayer can reflect their moral imperative.

These guidelines showcase how religious institutions can serve as powerful models for sustainability, aligning spiritual teachings with practical climate solutions.



### Faith Institutions Lead Fossil Fuel Divestment Movement

In 2022, 35 faith-based institutions from six countries announced their commitment to divest from fossil fuel companies, representing over \$1.25 billion in assets. Catholic organisations alone accounted for \$500 million in divestment. This Initiative was coordinated by the Laudato Si' Movement, World Council of Churches, Operation Noah, Green Anglicans, and GreenFaith, illustrating the growing influence of faith voices in ethical investment and climate justice.

Similarly, Climate-Responsible Finance - a Moral Imperative towards Children is a joint appeal by World Council of Churches (WCC), United Nations Environment Programme, Muslim Council of Elders, and NY Board of Rabbis committing to engaging with the financial institutions through financial dealings aligned with the Paris Agreement objective of limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

## Faith, Environment and Climate Change

### Empowering Faith Communities through Values-driven Environmental Policy Advocacy

The Faith for Earth Coalition, in collaboration with the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), offers the "Faith and Climate" online course as part of an 8-module course to equip faith communities with the knowledge and tools to address climate change from a moral and interfaith perspective.

This free, 8-week moderated e-learning course comprises eight modules, requiring approximately 3 hours per week, and is designed to support faith actors as they navigate intergovernmental spaces for environmental policy, connect with other faith-based organisations, and advocate for climate action in their local contexts.



## Gender-Inclusive Climate Action

### Faith for Earth Interfaith Women Council Champions

#### Gender-Responsive Environmental Stewardship

The Faith for Earth Interfaith Women Council is a platform composed of distinguished faith and interfaith influential women leaders advocating for environmental stewardship and sustainable development through their communities, inspired by their spiritual traditions.

By uniting women from diverse faith backgrounds, the Council emphasises the unique role women play in promoting ecological sustainability and resilience.

Their work focuses on integrating gender perspectives into environmental policies and actions, ensuring that women's voices and experiences remain central in climate solutions.

### Women, Faith and Climate Network

In October 2024, Faith for Earth Coalition joined 50 women leaders from eight major faiths and 15 countries in Frascati, Italy, to launch the Women, Faith and Climate Network.

This groundbreaking initiative, convened by Wilton Park, British and Irish Embassies to the Holy See, the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), and Islamic Relief, and supported by Project Dandelion and Faith for Earth, aims to amplify the role of women of faith in climate leadership and action.

The network focuses on scaling up the influence of women-led climate action networks from diverse faiths and geographies to accelerate progress toward climate goals.

## Youth-led Climate Engagement

### Faith for Earth Youth Council Mobilises Young Faith

#### Leaders for Environmental Advocacy

The Faith for Earth Youth Council is a platform composed of young faith leaders and members of youth movements globally advocating for the protection of the Earth in their faith communities.

Recognising the pivotal role of youth in driving change, the Council empowers young individuals to lead environmental initiatives, participate in intergovernmental processes, and foster peer-to-peer learning.

Through capacity-building programs and active engagement under the Action Plan, the Youth Council ensures that the perspectives and energies of young faith leaders are harnessed for sustainable development and intergenerational equity.

### Documenting Faith-Based Climate Initiatives

The "Faith Action on the UN Sustainable Development Goals" database is a collaborative initiative by UNEP's Faith for Earth Coalition, the Parliament of the World's Religions, United Religions Initiative, and Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology to showcase environmental efforts led by religious communities worldwide, particularly focusing on SDG 13: Climate Action.

Faith groups have utilised the database to share their climate action initiatives, such as renewable energy projects in houses of worship and climate awareness campaigns, thereby inspiring others and fostering global collaboration.

# FAITH-BASED CLIMATE INITIATIVES: A LOOK INTO THE NETWORK

## GreenFaith

- **Faith Background:** Multi-faith (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Indigenous faiths)
- **Organisation Type:** Interfaith environmental NGO
- **Scope:** Global – active in over 40 countries
- **Key Actions:**
  - (1) **Advocacy & Capacity Building:** Organizes campaigns like Faiths for Climate Justice, engaging faith leaders and communities in demanding just climate policies.
  - (2) **Fossil Fuel Divestment:** Mobilizes religious groups to divest from fossil fuels and invest in renewable energy.
  - (3) **Training & Education:** Offers leadership training for faith-based environmental activism.
  - (4) **Policy Engagement:** Engages with UN and national bodies to ensure religious voices are included in climate governance.

## Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development (ICSD)

- **Faith Background:** Primarily Jewish-led, works across Christian and Muslim faiths
- **Organization Type:** NGO
- **Scope:** Global – based in Jerusalem, active in Africa and North America
- **Key Actions:**
  - (1) **Solar Energy Projects:** Collaborated with the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and Gigawatt Global to establish solar farms in Mozambique to empower rural communities.
  - (2) **Faith-Based Environmental Education:** A Communion of Subjects: Law, Environment, and Religion
  - (3) **FIRE Initiative (Faith-Inspired Renewable Energy):** Supports clean energy projects initiated by faith communities.

## Anglican Development Services (ADS) Kenya

- **Faith Background:** Anglican Church
- **Organization Type:** Church development arm
- **Scope:** Kenya
- **Key Actions:**
  - (1) **Faith Advocacy:** Hosts interfaith dialogues to shape national climate policies.
  - (2) **Community Adaptation:** Implements food security, clean energy, and water conservation programs in climate-vulnerable areas.
  - (3) **Capacity Building:** Supports local clergy and youth groups in climate education and advocacy.



### Catholic Church in Uganda and Kenya

- **Faith Background:** Roman Catholic
- **Organization Type:** Religious institution
- **Scope:** Regional (East Africa)
- **Key Actions:**

(1) **Renewable Energy Access:** Through the Solar Pledge for East Africa (SPEA), equipped over 12,000 schools and 750 health centers with solar energy.

(2) **Faith and SDG Alignment:** Promotes the Laudato Si' vision and helps achieve SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy).

(3) **Community Resilience:** Focus on vulnerable communities in rural and peri-urban areas.



### Operation Noah

- **Faith Background:** Christian (ecumenical)
- **Organization Type:** Charity
- **Scope:** United Kingdom
- **Key Actions:**

(1) **Ash Wednesday Declaration:** A theological statement calling for urgent climate action, signed by bishops and faith leaders.

(2) **Divestment Campaigns:** Encourage churches to divest from fossil fuels and reinvest in green energy.

(3) **The Bright Now Campaign:** Advocates for ethical investment by Christian institutions.

### Franciscan Action Network (FAN)

- **Faith Background:** Catholic (Franciscan)
- **Organization Type:** Non-profit
- **Scope:** United States
- **Key Actions:**

(1) **Youth Mobilization:** Through Franciscan Earth Corps, promotes sustainable lifestyles and advocacy.

(2) **Political Advocacy:** Lobbies for U.S. federal climate legislation aligned with Catholic teachings.

(3) **Education & Outreach:** Disseminates faith-based resources on climate change and justice.



### Christian Divestment Coalitions

- **Faith Background:** Christian (Anglican, Methodist, Catholic orders, Quakers)
- **Organization Type:** Church alliances
- **Scope:** Primarily UK
- **Key Actions:**

(1) **Fossil Fuel Divestment:** Over 70 Christian groups announced plans to divest from banks funding fossil fuel expansion.

(2) **Corporate Pressure:** Targeted banks like Barclays to divest from oil and gas.

(3) **Moral Leadership:** Aligning church investments with environmental stewardship.

### **Islamic Relief – Solar-Powered Farming in Kenya**

- **Faith Background:** Islam
- **Organization Type:** Global NGO
- **Scope:** Mandera County, Kenya
- **Key Actions:**

**(1) Solar Drip Irrigation:** Boosted crop yields threefold, reduced water usage by 80%, and cut operational costs by 75%.

**(2) Food Security:** Supported smallholder farmers with climate-smart agriculture.



### **Islamic Help – Beekeeping & Tree Planting in Tanzania**

- **Faith Background:** Islam
- **Organization Type:** Global NGO
- **Scope:** Tanzania
- **Key Actions:**

**(1) "Trees for Change" Campaign:** Planted over 30,000 trees and nurtured 68,000 seedlings.

**(2) Women Empowerment:** Provided sustainable livelihoods via beekeeping, aligned with environmental conservation.

### **Namawanga Educational Facility – Kenya**

- **Faith Background:** Bahá'í
- **Organization Type:** Local community initiative
- **Scope:** Namawanga, Kenya
- **Key Actions:**

**(1) Green Construction:** Built an 800 m<sup>2</sup> education center using interlocking stabilized soil blocks (ISSBs) and solar lighting.

**(2) Sustainable Systems:** Integrated water recycling and composting latrines.

### **Bahá'í International Community – Global Green Projects**

- **Faith Background:** Bahá'í
- **Organization Type:** Global faith community
- **Scope:** Global
- **Key Actions:**

**(1) Sustainable Agriculture:** Organic farming in Japan.

**(2) Renewable Energy:** Solar greenhouses in Bolivia.

**(3) Reforestation:** Tree planting in Uganda, Pakistan, Haiti, and Iceland.

**(4) Waste Management:** Community recycling in Malaysia.



### Sadhana Forest – India, Kenya, Haiti

- **Faith Background:** Hindu-inspired, interfaith
- **Organization Type:** International NGO
- **Scope:** India, Kenya, Haiti
- **Key Actions:**

(1) **Reforestation & Water Conservation:** Restores degraded lands and trains volunteers in sustainable living.

(2) **Eco-Living:** Fully off-grid campuses run on solar and wind energy, practicing zero-waste and vegan lifestyles.



### Indira Paryavaran Bhawan – New Delhi, India

- **Faith Background:** Inspired by Indian philosophy
- **Organization Type:** Government building
- **Scope:** India (national)
- **Key Actions:**

(1) **Net Zero Energy Building:** First of its kind in India, featuring passive cooling, rooftop solar panels, and geothermal technology.

(2) **Symbolic Design:** Represents the five elements of Indian cosmology – earth, water, fire, air, and space.

### Daoist Ecological Protection Network

- **Faith Background:** Taoism
- **Organization Type:** Religious Association Network (Chinese Daoist Association, supported by Alliance of Religions and Conservation)
- **Scope:** Nationwide, China (Key temples include Louguantai Temple in Shaanxi and Maoshan in Jiangsu)
- **Key Actions:**

(1) **Ecological Temple Network:** Since 2006, 120+ temples have adopted sustainable practices such as solar lighting, biofuels, and resource conservation.



# CONCLUSION

This catalogue underscores the essential role of faith-based organizations in responding to the climate crisis through value-driven, community-centered action.

From global climate summits to grassroots adaptation campaigns and values-driven environmental advocacy courses, faith actors are leading transformative initiatives that blend spiritual conviction with scientific insight and policy engagement.

Their work spans interfaith collaboration, ethical advocacy, climate finance, and nature-based solutions—demonstrating that climate action rooted in compassion, justice, and stewardship is both powerful and scalable.

These efforts reflect a broader, growing movement of faith-inspired environmental leadership—mobilising moral authority, social capital, and hope to create a just and sustainable future for all.

**“Religion and spirituality hold tremendous wisdom for the protection and conservation of our earth, inspiring both religious and secular actors to advocate for stronger political will and lead by example.”**

— Faith for Earth Coalition, UNEP

In case of any queries, please visit the [Faith and Climate Action](#) webpage.