

# Declaration: Christian Commitment in Light of the Environmental Crisis and its Victims in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>1</sup>

## Forum on Creation Care, CLADE V

The environmental crisis is a determinative factor for the survival of the entire creation, and it is directly connected to the themes analyzed in all the other consultations in CLADE V. In spite of its relevance, it would appear that most people within our churches are either asleep or indifferent to this reality. We sincerely desire to produce real commitments that lead to action and not repeat what occurred in the recent United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20) which did not lead to any significant results.

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<sup>1</sup> This declaration is the summary document from the Forum on Creation Care, which gathered at CLADE V, July 9–13, 2012, in San José, Costa Rica.

## Expressions of Death

Creation groans... Do we hear it? Each time its groans are louder, even in our Latin American contexts, with expressions of death like the destruction of our forests and the continual advance of agricultural boundaries, the contamination and scarcity of water, soil degradation, the loss of food sovereignty, and the acquisition of the most fertile lands by a wealthy minority. All of these expressions, and many more, relate to favoring economic interests over the interests of creation's well-being. The poorest and most vulnerable people groups, including indigenous populations, bear the most negative impacts of these problems, which also transcend the present and will harm future generations throughout the entire creation.

We acknowledge that the theology in the majority of our churches today is insufficient to respond adequately to these expressions of death. Our eschatological teaching is all too often tied in to the destruction of the earth. Our anthropocentric and self-centered spirituality has limited our relationships with the rest of creation and therefore has also distorted the exercise of our role as responsible stewards.

## Expressions of Life

In spite of our being surrounded by these expressions of death, the Holy Spirit is inspiring and calling the church to wake up from our lethargy. And some Christians are hearing and responding:

- Pastors throughout the entire region are beginning processes of reflection about our call to care for creation.
- Churches in Nicaragua are carrying out massive reforestation projects.

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- Churches in Peru are educating youth and children in order to foster a greater appreciation for creation and for our call to protect it.
- Brazilian churches are working together to defend environmental rights and to mobilize others.

Although the Lord has made creation with an amazing ability to restore itself, it is important that we fulfill our vocation as co-creators.

### Confessions

We confess that we have not paid attention to the leading of the Holy Spirit regarding our relationship with the rest of creation: we have ignored our responsibility as stewards, we have been accomplices in the destruction of creation and in the negative impacts on the most vulnerable people through our unsustainable lifestyles of ever-increasing consumerism.

We confess that, as a church, we have not demonstrated a response in solidarity regarding the devastating environmental situation in various parts of our region, especially in Haiti. Due to our greed and indifference, we have contributed to the reality of the forced migration and persecution that thousands of our peasant and indigenous brothers and sisters are suffering.

We confess our selfishness and our arrogance because we have lived as if we were the only important forms of life on this earth.

*Forgive us, Lord, for our lack of creativity to teach our families and churches to love and take care of your creation. Forgive us, Lord, and guide us, Holy Spirit,*

*to become transformed into instruments of peace and reconciliation with your whole creation.*

### Call to Commitment:

In the same way that God saves and calls the church to evangelize, he will make a new heaven and a new earth, and he calls us to participate in this mission. As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to:

- develop a holistic theology from the perspective of the New Creation and to teach it in our churches.
- become involved and to incarnate ourselves in an interactive dialogue with and in our local communities so that we might obtain from creation what it offers to bless humanity and supply us with what we need, without destroying creation.
- live individually, as families and as churches, with a lifestyle that respects creation and thereby gives witness to our commitment of faith.
- commit ourselves to the well-being of those that suffer most from the consequences of these expressions of death.

As in other areas of our faith, let us dare to be different in our care of creation! May God's will be done, here on earth, as it is in heaven. Amen.