

Hello, my name is Matthias and I am co-directing the World Evangelical Alliance's Sustainability Center which is based in Bonn/Germany.

Our topic today is 'Turning Up the Heat: Biblical and practical responses to climate change'.

In this second part I want to focus on practical responses to climate change, which will include advocacy and campaign mobilization. For me it is very important to emphasize that in this part we want to present to you various ways how believers can practically engage in scripture-based practices. Doing so, we also challenge some of the current and traditional narratives of responding to climate change. That will become pretty clear and we have room to further unpack this in the Q&A session that follows this input.

So when we think about practical Responses to Climate Change, It's important that our faith gets hands and feet and that we practically implement what we've come to believe is true and valuable.

So what can believers do?

The first and foremost thing we can do and that should always be our first priority is to Pray.

Prayer is VERY practical, it's transformational, prayer changes the world; wouldn't it be great if we all spent more time in prayer?

We start each new week at the World Evangelical Alliance Sustainability Center with prayer. We usually meet on Monday afternoons at 12:30pm at our office in Bonn (currently only virtually). Feel warmly invited and join us via ZOOM! If you would like to join us, please send a short email to [info@wea-sc.org](mailto:info@wea-sc.org) and we will provide you with more information and some inspiration and prayer points for each new week.

When it comes to prayer we want to make sure that we pray in an informed way and that we pray in authority. What do I mean by that?

First thing is praying in an informed way: Make sure that you read before you pray. And in this case I mean: Read the newspaper, read policy papers, read prayer guides, read other resources that talk to the pressing issues of our time.

For example, a great resource for prayer in the last couple of weeks and months has been the COP 26 PRAYER GUIDE which featured EIGHT WEEKLY

THEMES AND CREATIVE PRAYER IDEAS. Very well done, great resource by Tearfund, Renew our World and 24-7-prayer. The guide had been created to help believers around the world to pray for COP26 and the challenges of the reality of climate change. Each week covered a specific theme, and the authors had added prayer points at the end of each explanation. There were also creative prayer ideas to equip believers to pray in new ways, either as an individual, household, or in your local community.

We have plugged this prayer guide into our social media communications at the WEA Sustainability Center in the run-up period to COP26, especially in October, and it has been fascinating to see how many believers from around the world shared it, liked it and used it to inspire their prayer life. You can continue to use the content of the Prayer Guide even now after COP26 since – unfortunately – as you all know the problems have not at all been solved. We need to step up our strategic and transformational prayer. And doing so, it's also fun to explore new and innovative ways to pray. So Try it out for yourself!

It's also great to organize a prayer event, maybe a "prayer for creation evening" inviting people from your community. We just did that recently in my home town of Hennef. Ideally, if you organize a prayer meeting, invite people from different churches and also members of migrant churches --> it will add to the diversity of perspectives and the experience for everyone on such an evening will be great. For me it was impressive to see the power that lies in the common prayer of Christians from different church and denominational backgrounds or different spiritual traditions. I got to know new forms of prayer, saw some of my practices again with completely new eyes and was able to critically question them, and above all we had a lot of joy in each other and with each other.

One of our global partners at the WEA Sustainability Center is the Renew our World campaign. In general I would highly recommend to you to have a look at it if you don't know it so far and if you haven't been in touch with it – not only in terms of prayer (the section we are still in).

What is Renew Our World? Renew Our World is a global movement of Christians who believe that since we are truly image bearers of God, we should act like it – living out love for one another in actions and in truth. Since we are image bearers of God, we won't stand by while our neighbours are trapped in poverty, and we won't stay idle as creation is left untended, and inequality is left to fester.

It is basically a prayer movement and a campaigning movement and we take a lot of inspiration from being part of it but also contributing our share to it. So Kudos, Renew Our World, colleagues, if you happen to watch this. You are doing a remarkable job!

You might ask yourself, how Renew Our World is doing what it does? Through national campaigns combined with joint global moments Renew Our World is building a global movement of Christians praying, living and campaigning to make the world fair and sustainable. So there are both chances on the national level and on the global level for you to link into the Renew Our World campaign.

Back to the first thing believers can practically do to respond to Climate Change – which is prayer. Renew our World has wonderful prayer resources on offer. How to pray for Climate Change, A guide to praying for the climate, Prayer for all creation and many others. So make sure to check out the Renew Our World campaign – I hope I have watered your mouths enough by now... 😊

The second thing believers can do besides investing prayer is investing time. We all know that one of our most precious resources we have as humans on earth is time. So it is of great significance if we set aside a certain time for someone or something. With regards to creation in general and the climate in particular, the so-called Season of Creation is a great annual opportunity to dedicate a certain portion of your year to a certain spiritual focus: God as creator and God's beautiful creation.

What is the Season of Creation? It is THE annual Christian celebration of prayer and action for our common home, every year from 1 September through 4 October. Together, the ecumenical family around the world unites to pray, protect, and advocate for God's creation. During the 2021 Season of Creation for example, hundreds of thousands of Christians united around the theme, "A home for all? Renewing the Oikos of God." During the season of creation, you can explore lots and lots of events globally and nearby where you live. You can also plan your own events and publish them on the Season of Creation website so others find out about them and may join.

For every Season of Creation, there is a comprehensive "Season of Creation guide" that takes you on a deep dive into the respective annual topic. It features some sound theology, resources for social media communications and

some great ideas for practical implementation individually, in groups and as church congregations, including resources for the organization of a Season of Creation Church service.

The great thing is: During the Season of Creation you KNOW that thousands of Christians around the world, even in communities very different to yours, are having the same focus and are dealing with the same topic. Indeed, from September 1 to October 4, the Christian family GLOBALLY celebrates the good gift of creation. Interestingly enough, this global celebration began in 1989 with the Ecumenical Patriarchate's recognition of the Day of Prayer for Creation and is now embraced by the wide ecumenical community.

It's great to set aside a specific time during the year (or maybe during a month, week or day) for special awareness and action: How could that look like in your case? Where and how can you invest time?

One idea I want to share with you what you can do during a set a side time like the season of creation: You can take a deep dive into the spiritual & scripture dimensions of political agendas in the sustainability space and really take time to discern what the bible says about the pressing challenges of our times. An example is our "The Bible and the SDGs" campaign, which is basically a jointly developed resource featuring short bible reflections on each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, a featured project per SDG showcasing how the local church can engage very practically in social action and community action and an idea what you individually can do. With this resource – for example – you can spend 17 days exploring the spiritual dimension behind each of the 17 SDGs.

In the third step it now becomes VERY practical: You can engage in concrete campaigning.

Again a great starting point is the Renew Our World campaign that we've already talked about. On it's website, for example, the Renew our World campaign offers an Open letter to world leaders. The background is: Christian leaders from across the world are uniting to support the Renew Our World campaign and mobilise the global church to stand up for justice in a changing climate. You can add your name to this letter – strong recommendation.

Two of the recent campaigns by Renew our World are (1) The Most Rubbish Companies campaign and (2) the Reset21 campaign.

In order for you to get a feeling how campaigning can practically work and how it feels, let me give you a little background on the The Most Rubbish Companies campaign. The story is:

Our world has a rubbish problem, and it's hitting people living in poverty the hardest. Companies sell billions of single-use plastic products in countries where waste isn't collected. They know full well that communities will have no choice but to live among this rubbish or burn it – leading to health problems and climate change. We are also seeing that Covid19 is hitting the poorest communities that already face big health and environmental challenges. Our new report, “The Burning Question”, reveals how the burning of plastic waste is leading to respiratory diseases as well as climate change.

So you see: It's really well done: The campaign call to action and the campaigning ideas are supported by a well-researched report that gives facts and figures and that can be used as a resource for further learning and communicating.

So what were the results (so far, I have to say, because you can still join in and support the campaign)? In response to the situation described above, over 40,000 Christians around the world have joined Renew Our World's Rubbish Campaign and called on multinational companies to improve this rubbish situation by taking responsibility for the plastic waste mountains their products are creating. Some of the companies have begun to move in the right direction, though there is still a long way to go. However, two companies, Coca-Cola and PepsiCo, are hardly off the starting line when it comes to taking responsibility for their plastic pollution. And on the campaign's website, you can see a League Table of how the companies that are dealt with in the report are performing [here](#).

Let's move to the second campaign under the title “Reset21”: In this campaign Renew Our World is calling on governments and leaders to deliver a clean and fair recovery from the pandemic and build a sustainable future for all creation, by: (1) Resetting extreme inequality, starting by cancelling debt payments to give poorer countries financial breathing space. (2) Getting the world on track for the safer level of 1.5°C warming, starting with pandemic recovery plans and climate commitments. (3) Restoring damage to creation to help prevent the next pandemic, starting with forests.

Every believer around the world can practically engage in campaigning to political leaders by signing the petition that is part of this campaign!

There are many more things you can do, it's hard to mention them all in this input. The best thing is: Start doing something and you will notice that you will be easily exploring the next thing to do. Be curious, keep your eyes open, and put yourself in an active mode to give your faith hands and feet.

The fourth and last step I want to mention today is: Start making Lifestyle Changes. Ask yourself: Where can I be a changemaker myself? Where can I contribute to the big goal of caring for God's creation, what can I practically do myself to fight climate change. In this part, I want to recommend to you the "Living the Change campaign", that we at World Evangelical Alliance have directly contributed to. In fact, we have adapted the general campaign material to produce an evangelical expression that really works for us and inspires our global Evangelical movement. I like the subtitle of the campaign a lot which reads: "Faithful choices for a flourishing world".

The core idea of the Living the Change campaign is to encourage believers around the world to choose faith-consistent sustainable lifestyles. Living the Change doesn't have all the answers to these questions, but encouraging and equipping the Christian community to step out and make personal sustainable lifestyle commitments motivated from a heart of faithful discipleship is part of the solution. While looking squarely in the face of overwhelming ecological problems, making personal faith-consistent lifestyle choices is something each one of us has the power to do in little ways, and sometimes in big ways. This is especially true if sustainable living choices are made in one of three high impact lifestyle areas—diet, transportation, and energy. If millions of Christians made faith-consistent sustainable lifestyle commitments our community would have a big collective impact for the better on creation, the climate, and the wellbeing of our neighbors, especially those suffering from poverty who are hurt the most from the effects of climate change and polluted ecosystems.

The whole campaign rests on three pillars, three priorities for climate friendly living: (1) Energy Transition, (2) Eco-friendly Transport, (3) plant-based diet. In a special section on the campaign website, you can make your personal commitment. And in another section, you get ideas how to host a Meal & a Living the Change Conversation. The event&activity ideas speak to different formats such as: Prayer & Worship Service, Storytelling, Creation Care Community Service, Learning Something New (which means a training or educational format) and advocacy (titled: "Let Your Voice Be Heard")

I want to end by asking you: Where can you turn Up the Heat? What can your personal practical response to climate change look like? In which of the four areas mentioned in this input do you want to do your next small but significant step? Or put differently: which mix is your mix?

We have talked about

- (1) Prayer
- (2) Setting aside Time
- (3) Campaigning
- (4) Lifestyle Changes

It's time to turn Up the Heat. Are you in?