

Faiths Unite: Visions for Transformative Climate Action

Online event 1 – The World We Want

Moderator: Faith Biddle, FWCC

Host: Valeriane Bernard, Brahma Kumaris

Speakers: Reverend James Bhagwan, Pacific Conference of Churches (Fiji); Iyad Abu Moghil, Faith for Earth UNEP (Nairobi); Liza Zogib, DiversEarth and Chair of IUCN, Religion, Spirituality, Environmental Conservation and Climate Justice Specialist Group (Switzerland); Mohamed Mohideen, Islamic Council of Victoria (Australia)

Opening

Faith Biddle welcomes participants and opens with an encouragement to settle into the “Zoom” space. She speaks of how Covid-19 has changed our lives drastically. This includes the postponement of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP26,) which was to be held in Glasgow in November.

Faith speaks about the interfaith response to the postponement of COP, and why ILC is hosting this series. She reflects that the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC did not want to lose the opportunity for interfaith climate conversations as a result of the postponement. The series is structured as a series of events, as opposed to webinars, to reflect this togetherness. ***“Our interfaith climate conversations are part of what spurs us on to do the work that we maybe do predominantly individually. We have the ability to gather, so let us use this.”***

Faith then introduces the first event, which will focus on different faiths’ responses to the challenges posed by both the climate crisis and Covid-19.

Speaker 1 – Reverend James Bhagwan

Reverend James Bhagwan opens with an acknowledgement, which is part of indigenous Pacific ways, of the land, the people and the communities we are a part of, and the ancestors whose journeys have brought us to this place and this time. He then offers the indigenous greeting “Bula Venaka”. He explains that this is not just a greeting of good day - the words directly translate to mean ‘Life’ and ‘Thankfulness/Abundance/Great’. James therefore opens with a challenge to the dominant narrative on the climate crisis ***“where we speak of death and destruction, we choose to speak life, especially when we come from an area that is deeply affected by climate change.”***

James then offers some insight into how Covid-19 has affected the Pacific. Areas have been hit in very different ways. Australia and New Zealand have a high number of cases, as do some of the larger islands (incl. Guam and French Polynesia). On smaller islands Covid-19 lockdowns have affected the people most in terms of subsistence – the collapse of the tourism industry has resulted in serious economic struggles for many.

In turn, people have returned to important things in life: family, spirituality, community. This has also seen people returning to living directly off the land, returning to their communities and engaging in subsistence economies. Social capital has also developed strongly during this time, as people come together to work together as a community. James reflected that this social capital holds particular

importance for Pacific islanders as it is a reminder of their indigenous knowledge, traditions, indigenous spirituality. James reflects that this going back to Nature, focusing on what the sea and the Earth provides, is from a Christian perspective a return to the old normal or “the Kingdom of God.”

James closes with an emphasis on the need for continued engagement with these alternative forms of subsistence in the face of the climate crisis. Covid-19 has given people an opportunity to glimpse an alternative way of being to current extractive systems: ***“Let us not rush to get back to the old normal [...] let’s use this as an opportunity to reset our world.”***

Speaker 2 - Mohamed Mohideen

Mohamed opens with the greeting As-salamu Alaykum and peace be with you. He acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which he speaks and the elders past, present and future. He also acknowledges that ***“the land of the Aboriginal people will always belong to them and that we cherish their heritage and culture.”***

Mohamed begins by speaking about the environmental disasters that Australia has seen over the past year in terms of droughts, floods, bushfires. He reflects that the scale of disaster has been matched by showings of love and support (in terms of shelter, food, holding of hands and togetherness). People have come together from across different parts of society, across generations, faiths, cultures, ethnicities. He notes the power interfaith gatherings have to affect policy and practice in this space.

Mohamed then reflects on the Covid-19 situation in Australia: ***“people are still coming to terms with the fact that this tiny particle could cause such havoc and destruction.”*** He focuses on the success of the Australian government’s policy of prioritizing lives over economic impact. He also noted however, the rise of violence, mental health issues, loss of income and employment, racism (anti-semitism and Islamophobia) amidst the pandemic. Faith leaders and communities have responded to this ***“standing side by side.”***

Mohamed highlighted how the closure of places of worship provided a real difficulty. For Muslims, this has meant sacrificing Friday prayers. The silver lining of this situation is the strong sense of community and camaraderie that has come out of this space. He emphasizes the value of interfaith collaboration in forming a strong and cohesive community, caring for one another and protecting nature. ***“I believe that we will be richer from this experience [...] next year, inshallah we will have better and grander festivals in our places for worship.”***

Speaker 3 - Liza Zogib

Liza opens by speaking about this as a personal moment, offering a quote by the Dalai Llama: ***“true change is within, leave the outside as it is.”*** She begins by telling a story about an abused hunting dog adopted by her family, reflecting on how our disconnection from animals reflects our disconnection from ‘the other’.

Liza then reflects on the feeling of responsibility. ***“We are the world and the world is us.”*** She asks us to reflect on how far our feeling of responsibility extends. She situates violence in the individual psyche and suggests that this moment of suffering and violence asks for individual transformation in turn. She then speaks to indigenous communities’ stewardship of land and the work of environmental defenders who continue to protect biodiversity, still feeling that deep connection with nature.

Liza leaves us with the question of how we might look to our own minds, our own lives, and there live without division, with a peaceful mind, that will in turn affect the way we relate to nature. ***“With a mind more whole and more wholly be the change we want to see in the world?”***

Speaker 4 - Iyad Abumoghli

Iyad opens by reflecting on the existential threats presented by climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and the waste crisis. He reflects that the pandemic crisis is part of the biodiversity crisis due to imbalance that humans have created in our ecosystems. The world has responded with drastic measures that have altered the way we used to live (incl. how we perform our spiritual practices).

Iyad then reflects on the ***“climate pandemic”*** resulting from humans ***our unsustainable wants rather than our sustainable needs.***” He links health and wellbeing of people to the health and wellbeing of the planet. Under these conditions, investing in nature-based solutions is a moral duty for all humanity. Iyad speaks also to the moral duty to protect every human being on earth and their non-living habitats. He reflects that the solutions to these challenges are embedded in our own behaviours the ethical and spiritual values we live by: ***“religions teach us to live gently on Earth, to fight corruption and exploitation of our resources.”***

Iyad then speaks to measures that we can take as faith communities. He begins by reflecting on the influence of religious leaders and the potential of ***“heart to heart teaching”*** that can affect behavioural change. He speaks to what environmental sciences can teach us about the behavioural changes necessary for a healthy planet and reflects that faith and science need to work in sync. Iyad then reflects on the ***“economic power of religions”***. This includes the greening of assets, through green and responsible investment which can act as ***“drivers of positive change and build back better”***. This includes ***green building principles*** (e.g. green roofs, recycling, waste etc.) in faith settings. A third set of measures is in the area of ***nature-based solutions***. These offer a form of climate resilience – to protect and restore ecosystems - based on indigenous and community knowledge of local eco-systems. Iyad closes by reflecting on the collective strength offered by ***intra and interfaith collaboration and multilateral systems***. He reflects on the proposed Faith for Earth coalition by UNEP to bring faiths together and create partnerships with intragovernmental organisations, States and other stakeholders. ***“We need a future where we can proudly say it is the Ecocene not the Anthropocene. We need a future that respects not only human rights but also the rights of nature.”***

Group Reflections

- In the midst of Covid 19, what are you most grateful for?
- What one thing would you change in your life in order to have the world we want?

Key takeaways

Mohamed Mohideen emphasizes that together we can achieve more than alone. He highlighted the strength of interfaith collaboration and the importance that ***“we believe in each other, share with each other and come together.”*** Iyad Abumoghli closes by reflecting on the importance that ***“we practice what we preach”***, emphasizing the need for faith communities to be willing to change our own attitudes and practices. Liza Zogib follows this with a reflection on the need for us each individually to contemplate our place in the world to be ***“clear our minds, be sane and inspire others.”***

Faith Biddle ends with a reflection on the need to find a balance between optimism and listening to uncomfortable truths. She encourages participants to take the break-out room conversations forward with those close to you and online. Participants then join together in closing the session with a few moments of silence and reflection.

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Online event 2 – COP26: Ramp up the Ambition!

Moderator: Lindsey Fielder Cook, QUNO

Host: Elena Cedillo, Lutheran World Federation

Speakers: Sarmad Iqbal, Islamic Relief Worldwide (Pakistan), Neil Thorns, Chair of the Climate Coalition and Advocacy Director at CAFOD (UK), Professor Joyashree Roy (Bangabandhu Chair Professor, Asian Institute of Technology, IPCC Author (Thailand), Moema de Miranda, Churches and Mining, Franciscans (Brazil), Ovais Sarmad, UNFCCC Deputy Executive Secretary (Bonn)

Opening

Lindsey Fielder Cook welcomes participants to the second ILC webinar, held amidst the geopolitical tensions and economic turmoil of the COVID-19 pandemic. She speaks to the unprecedented nature of the current times and destruction of the natural world. ***“How do we stand tall with strength, hope and compassion? How do we stand tall with love, with vision and with courage to live and inspire a transformation for a healthy Earth?”***

Lindsey then introduces the event, which will be a conversation based around five questions related to the COP26 and raising climate ambition. The conversation will be followed by a time of reflection as to how interfaith work can support climate ambition.

Part 1 - *What is needed to make a reality of National Adaptation Plans to ensure that adaptation efforts are community-based and locally led?*

Sarmad Iqbal opens by speaking of the need to bring local communities into adaptation responses (both in terms of participation and knowledge sharing). He then offers some examples from Islamic Relief’s work in this area. IRW has adopted a ‘bottom up’ approach to climate adaptation, placing emphasis on the education of local communities on environmental issues: programmes have included work on water and sanitation, food security, and climate sensitive livelihoods. This, in turn, has meant that Islamic Relief has been able to advocate at a provincial and national level in a way that is informed by local knowledge. Sarmad ends by reflecting on how civil society stakeholders at the grassroots level offer a key point for collaboration in bridging the disconnect between local stakeholders and decisions at the policy level.

Joyashree Roy then addresses ***“the need for articulation and acceptance of the scientific fact that adaptation plans are nothing more than new development plans that are meant to reduce the climate risks to communities.”*** She reflects on National Adaptation Plans as being recognized as the same risk reduction strategies as those used by investors but on behalf of communities. She emphasizes the need to take into account the risks communities currently face and may face as a result of adaptation plans (e.g. how these intersect with already

existent inequalities in terms of gender, social groups etc.). She then speaks to the need for direct involvement of local scientific educational institutions in developing science-based adaptation plans for local communities. She closes by emphasizing the importance of communicating climate risks to local communities, stating that climate service providers who can monitor and evaluate climate risk have a crucial role to play in this capacity.

Part 2 - What is important to have on the agenda for COP26 and what does that mean for climate action now?

“The Paris Agreement may not be the perfect answer to everything but it is critical and historic for bringing together global efforts on climate change.” – Lindsey Fielder Cook

Moema Miranda begins by setting the scene for COP26. She recalls the political moment around the signing and ratification of the Paris Agreement in the years 2015/16, which also saw the publication of Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato si’* and the election of Donald Trump in the US. She says that the Covid-19 pandemic has shown that we cannot continue our way of living as we have done over the past 5 years. In terms of climate action Moema highlights two key points: mobilizing local communities and addressing climate denial. She links the first aspect to the need for personal responsibility amongst the wealthy and the need to address our consumerist lifestyle, as put forward in *Laudato si’*. On the second aspect, she notes that as people of faith we continue to live in a world affected by political power games. She therefore flags information sharing as crucial to facing climate denial head on.

Neil Thorns reflects on climate ambition as being key for COP26, noting that both the G7 and COP Presidency will be meeting in the UK in 2021. He notes that ambition must be reflected in countries’ Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) on which they must be prepared to deliver. He also notes that the COP26 must be responsive to the challenges raised by the pandemic and its interlinkages with the climate emergency and rising inequality: ***“How can we plan the future as opposed to planning for the future.”*** He emphasizes the need for a holistic approach that does not wait until COP26 to address these issues: he flags debt relief as being key, and emphasizes the need to put poor people at the heart of building back better. Closely linked to this point is the issue of financing the climate response and in addressing loss and damage. Neil closes by reflecting on the hope he is gaining from civil society spaces, emphasizing the need to enable and amplify the most marginalized in the global community.

Part 3 - What are Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and what is a fair share for countries’ NDCs?

Lindsey Fielder Cook opens the discussion by reflecting on climate justice and fairness, emphasising that the Paris Agreement is based on developed countries’ willingness to lead in mitigation and finance. She reflects that in Britain, where the industrial revolution started, there is a strong call for an ambitious stance on climate justice.

Joyashree Roy begins by offering an introduction to the basis of the NDCs: these are voluntary contributions to GHG emission reductions based on what a country can do in terms of adaptation and mitigation. She then reflects that many studies already show that the current NDCs, even if implemented, is falling short of the need for 1.5C target. If we do not ramp up our ambition to climate contributions, suffering and damage will continue to rise. Joyashree reflects on the topic of the NDCs fairness: the bottom 90% of our global population account

for 48% of emissions. She notes that ***“this is complex because we work in a fragmented world but we are pledging for a global whole.”*** IPCC studies are showing that a decent standard of living can be met without negatively impacting the climate system, so irresponsible consumption can go down without negatively impacting individuals’ levels of wellbeing.

Neil Thorns reflects on the interdependence of the world, as addressed by Pope Francis in *Laudato si’*. Neil speaks to the perception of NDCs, emphasizing that we must view them as a global contribution. In terms of fairness, he notes that NDCs must have proven policies in them as to how to get to 1.5C and in recognition of countries’ common but differentiated responsibility. As to the situation in the UK, he emphasizes the need for the UK government to catalyse ambition (for example, by significantly increasing the fifth carbon budget) and to recognize its role as a historic emitter.

Sarmad Iqbal offers a reflection on the situation in Pakistan, where there has been increased ambition on the NDC. He speaks of this ambition in light of the climate impacts Pakistan is facing. Islamic Relief has been engaged with working with the Pakistani government on reviewing the NDCs, ensuring that the voices from provincial governments and communities faced with the challenges are being taken into account. He closes by offering hope for an ambitious approach to NDCs at the next COP inshallah.

Ovais Sarmad opens by reflecting on what he sees as most important for the COP26 agenda, emphasizing the need for a successful outcome based on leadership and trust between parties and different stakeholders. Article 6 and the provision of climate finance to developing countries are both emphasized. He finally, emphasizes the need to ensure confidence in the multilateral system, linking this to a need for moral and ethical responsibility at all levels. When it comes to NDCs, Ovais places a clear emphasis on the need for continued and urgent focus on decarbonization over the next 10 years.

Part 3 - Speaking to 1.5, do we address root causes of climate change or do we address symptoms? Does geoengineering offer a potential solution to climate change or is it an excuse for business as usual?

Neil Thorns begins by noting that geoengineering offers solutions to only one aspect of climate change without addressing the structures that are causing it. He emphasizes that it is important to understand where the call for geoengineering is coming from. He speaks about the private sector’s responsibility, noting that 100 of the large global companies have been the source of 70% of GHG emissions since 1988 but have not significantly altered their business practices. He closes by emphasizing that ***“We are not in a business as usual situation, we need fundamental change to the way we work and the way we live our lives.”***

Joyashree Roy responds by noting that the removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere that can be done in many ways. She reflects that oceans and forests have been doing this for many years. The IPCC report on reaching 1.5C shows that human communities can make choices that will effectively remove CO₂ from the atmosphere. Joyashree emphasizes that how we go about mitigating climate change is a choice. She offers the example of how some cities have adopted measures to reduce air pollution, whilst others have not even begun to address this

aspect. Geoengineering is a domain where we have less certain information and we are unsure about its impact. ***“Do we choose to step into the known or unknown world?”***

Ovais Sarmad responds by recalling the moral questions that climate action raises. ***“We have a huge responsibility and accountability to ensure the protection of our Earth [...] and there is a huge reward in it.”*** In relation to questions on climate altering technology, he emphasizes the need for decarbonization and mitigation of climate change.

Part 5 - What does climate ambition mean to you? From your heart, outside of your role? What does it mean to you and how can these interfaith efforts strengthen us on a daily basis?

“I have one life as a human life. I want to live a life doing no harm to others. So if any of my carbon footprint causes harm to others, I want to get out of that. For example, I have made adjustments to walk more to live a fossil fuel free day [...] You see the principle of doing no harm to others in the way we talk about externalities. But love is the sole driving force. If we are driven by love, I don’t think we can do harm to others. I want to live a life full of love for everything.”

- Joyashree Roy

“These moving feelings are those that keep us going [...] We can more connect with an open love, with a kind of love that can involve all of Earth – not just Nature, but all of Creation. We can form a big net of love that comes from God’s heart and brings us all together. This sense of being together can open our heart and mind to the suffering of others.”

- Moema Miranda

“Making a difference every day through making a positive change every day [...] Even if you send that one email to address issues of climate change, then reflect on how can you do that better tomorrow? Be very stubborn against strong hurdles.”

- Ovais Sarmad

“To live simply, sustainably and in solidarity. And by taking the hard actions that we need.”

- Neil Thorns

“Islam teaches us to be just, ethical and humanitarian in all aspects of our lives. With this belief you can mold your life accordingly. [...] All our actions have an impact on the most vulnerable. This compels us to act. The motivation of faith will help us to stand firm.”

- Sarmad Iqbal

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Online event 3 – Hope for the Future

Moderator: Chiara Martinelli, CIDSE

Host: Philip Mendelssohn (Interfaith Glasgow), Maureen Sier & Magadlen Lambkin (Interfaith Scotland)

Speakers: Tais Tokusato (Soka Institute, Brazil); Father Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam (Vatican Dicastry for Promoting Human Development, India); Khulekani Magwaza (Lutheran World Federation, South Africa); Sister Jayanti Kirpalani (Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, UK)

Opening

Philp Mendelssohn (Interfaith Glasgow) opens by offering some background to the webinar series and how the interfaith groups in Scotland were first connected with the ILC. Looking towards the future, Philip speaks to the COP26 that will now take place in Glasgow in 2021 and extends a warm welcome to all visitors. Maureen Sier (Interfaith Scotland) then welcomes participants and introduces the moderator, Chiara Martinelli, Senior Advisor at CIDSE.

Chiara introduces the event, offering it up as a welcoming space in which all can participate and play a role. She opens with a reflection that ***“the discussion on climate change faces many obstacles: political, social, but also in our hearts. As faith-based organisations we recognize that our faith traditions support us in our struggle for climate justice and brings hope back into our climate actions.”*** Chiara reflects that hope is not just a wishful word but can be generative, offering a clear vision and determination to achieve climate justice. She emphasises the value that the experiences of different faith traditions can bring to this discussion.

The short film #Imaginefor1Minute is then shown. It welcomes participants to close their eyes and picture their hope for the future.

Part 1 - *In your experience, what stories of hope can faith communities offer for action on climate justice?*

Tais Tokusato

Tais begins the discussion by telling her own story of how she came to work at the Soka Institute in Manaus, contributing to actions for climate justice. She reflects that in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where she was raised, sustainability was not a regular topic. In 2016 she moved to the Soka Institute to work on environmental education projects. Reflecting on the ties between people and the environment in Buddhism, Tais notes that the Buddhist belief that all people are worthy of respect due to the limitless potential of their lives underpins her action on climate justice in turn. ***“Every change starts in the heart [...] Hope means putting this learning into practice.”***

Tais offers two stories of hope from the Soka Institute. The first, on environmental education programmes for children from public schools in Manaus, emphasizes the transformative potential of education and how this can impact youth participation in climate action. The second project, involves planting a tree for every baby born in a certain hospital in Manaus and portrays the ties between people and nature.

Father Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam

Father Joshtrom begins by offering positive energy and blessings from Pope Francis in the Vatican. He tells the Old Testament story of David and Goliath (Book of Samuel, Chapter 17) in which the Kingdom of Israel faces the army of the Philistines and the giant Goliath. In this story, the Israelites cannot see their future – the crisis that is facing them seems too huge. Father Joshtrom reflects that the climate crisis is huge also but that, just as God brings David, a small boy, to fight the giant in this story, the climate crisis will be faced from below. ***“From the below, from the peripheries, we see people come together to fight for climate justice and the human family.”***

Father Joshtrom then offers two examples of action on climate justice from the Catholic context. The first is the story of the ‘Laudato Tree’ initiative, which aims to plant seven million trees through the 11 countries of the arid Sahel region in Africa. The movement is led by a 16 year old girl, based in San Francisco, and is directly inspired by the Pope’s Encyclical. A second example of Catholic action on climate justice is the Vatican’s “Living Chapel” project series that is developing places of worship which include plants. This project models what nature-based solutions might look like within the context of faith communities.

Khulekani Magwaza

Khulekani responds to the question by placing emphasis on the significant role for faith communities in climate action. He reflects that faith communities can play a more ambitious role in climate action than many actors as ***“they can serve as a moral compass for implementing climate policies and strategies”***, as well as offer examples for society at large. Khulekani reminds participants of a Nelson Mandela’s words that “Some things always seem impossible until they are done”.

Khulekani shares that the Lutheran World Federation is advocating for intergenerational justice to be placed at the centre of climate justice. He speaks to the effects of the climate crisis that can already be seen in Southern Africa and emphasizes the need for adaptive capacities to drought and food shortages through technological developments and practical responses such as food cabins and water storages. He closes by reemphasizing the theme picked up on by other speakers also: that faith gives support to ambition and hope.

Sister Jayanti Kirpalani

Sister Jayanti focuses her answer around ***“practical things that give me a lot of hope for the future.”*** She offers two examples of climate action in India, where the main centre of the Brahma Kumaris is based.

The first example relates to farming practices developed in the Maharashtra in India, where local farmers have developed an approach called “yogic farming” to naturally increase their yield. This approach combines organic practices with meditation at every stage of the farming process, from seed propagation to plant growth. Sister Jayanti shares that this method has been studied by a number of universities in India, who have found that this approach seems to result in an increase of good bacteria in the soil and diminishes the number of pests in the soil (reference this research?).

Sister Jayanti’s second example focuses on a India-wide renewable energy project, where Brahma Kumaris centres have distributed solar cookers and lanterns. As a result of this project, many more people can now access light in hours of darkness, enabling them to remain active during these hours where previously they would have stopped at dusk. By offering alternatives to paraffin stoves and wood burners this project provides benefits across the areas of health, safety and the environment.

Part 2 – *How can hope inspire and shape a just and sustainable recovery?*

Tais Tokusato

Tais reflects on this question by reflecting on how the Soka Institute itself offers an example of how hope has inspired and shaped environmental conservation and recovery in Manaus. The Soka Institute is located on the former site of a factory. Over the past 28 years, the surrounding area has been restored by members of the Institute to create a flourishing, biodiverse forest. Her example reflects how hope can foster the vision needed for recovery over time. She reflects how the Institute has affected the lives of the individuals who take part in its programmes, offering testimonials from participants across generations whose experience at the institute has helped to inspire them to live with greater environmental awareness.

The Institute launched a new initiative in September 2020 in response to Covid-19. The “Covid Memorial” plants one new tree for every life lost to the pandemic in Manaus. Tais reflects how this interfaith project, that involved a range of stakeholders, emphasizes the possibility for regeneration amidst difficulty. ***“By not losing hope, we can make a real change and difference in the world.”***

Father Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam

Father Joshtrom opens by reflecting on how hope can inspire a just and sustainable recovery. He comments that through the course of many Conferences of the Parties not much has changed in this sphere. He identifies the need to inspire people as crucial for affecting change, and notes that this is an area in which faith communities have an important role to play in modeling how to live out our morals in practice. ***“I think that it is important in this critical moments that all faith traditions, from the repertoir of our spiritual treasures, bring out the best: Justice and stewardship in Islam; Ahimsa, nonviolence in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions; love and care in the Christianity and Judiasm.”***

On the second point of how to shape a just and sustainable recovery, Father Joshtrom reflects on the dual need of individual physical recovery in the context of Covid-19, and the need for communal recovery at the global scale under climate crisis. In this context he recalls Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’*, which emphasizes the need to strategise and develop clear response plans across all area of society.

Father Joshtrom closes his reflection by emphasizing the power of peoples’ movements in shaping the recovery, offering historical examples that reflect the idea that a critical mass (3.5%) is needed to enact change.

Khulekani Magwaza

Khulekani responds to the questions by focusing on how the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities and fragilities of Creation. He emphasizes the need to place a regard for human dignity at the heart of any discussions around a just and sustainable recovery. Noting the need for a holistic and interdisciplinary response, Khulekani reflects that actions towards empowerment must recognize human experience as being multidimensional.

Khulekani then reflects on the trauma that the dual crises of climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic have caused within communities, and the importance of recognizing this within any ofrm of recovery. He shares the impact of the flooding that took place in Durban, South Africa in 2019 and the Covid-19 pandemic on his own extended family, who lost many loved ones and the resulting trauma with which they have been left. He asks how we can deal with the traumas and long-lasting emotional effects on those most immediately affected and uphold their dignity amidst theses crises? Khulekani reflects that it is in the hands of faith communities, who already have systems in place for responding to the traumas wrought by loss, to respond to this situation. ***“Our hope is that which says that nothing like this should ever happen again. Our faith is that which encourages us to reach out to one another, those that are poor and vulnerable.”***

Sister Jayanti Kirpalani

Sister Jayanti responds by centering the need for a future sustainable lifestyle. She reflects how the focus on simplicity and lifestyle amongst the Brahma Kumaris shows how lifestyle change is possible now through a focus on our internal lives as well as our consumption habits. She presents this as a counter to rising consumption that is unsustainable and how we deal with limited resources.

“Simplicity in lifestyle is not deprivation, not renunciation...the things we really need are within.”

She closes with the example of a major renewable energy project that has been created at by the Brahma Kumaris headquarter in India. The project took in local people to equip them with skills to construct solar mirrors and provide energy for up to 20,000 people. Sister Jayanti placed strong emphasis on knowledge sharing as being key. She underlined that it is important to show how a just and sustainable recovery is happening in practical way.

Part 3 – *Questions from the floor*

“Could the interfaith group set up a global one to one for all movement, where one individual family in the global North is linked to a family in the global South and reaches out to each other to journey through this climate emergency together?”

Sister Jayanti responds that ***“empathy is easier when you have a face to connect to rather than an abstract of poverty.”*** She emphasizes that empathy in the context of the climate crisis holds the potential to make a huge difference.

“How do you see COP26 being different in terms of inspiring – particularly from a faith perspective - those who attend and the wider audience?”

Father Joshtrom reflects on his experience of engaging in interfaith work under the UN bodies. ***“Until we really bring about a paradigm shift that we love the Earth and live with greater sobriety [...] I’m afraid real changes will not happen.”*** He shares that the need for this form of engagement, alongside technicalities, is widely understood by many involved in these processes.

How do you imagine we can deal with the traumas individuals and communities are facing?

Khulekani reflects how it the number of people dealing with trauma is difficult to identify and quantify. He reflects that the response must therefore be through a coming together at the local community level where people ***“can all see each other and reach out to those people”*** who need support.