

# TOWARDS ZERO



## 7 LESSONS OF CLIMATE THEOLOGY





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## 1. God in Good Creation

God's creation is intrinsically good. "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good". (Genesis 1: 31)

*Preamble to the Constitution proclaims:*

*The Spirit was already in the land revealing God to the people through law, custom and ceremony.*  
(Paragraph 3)

Learning from the First Peoples, the Uniting Church regards our planet Earth as God's creation in which the Spirit of God is interactive with people. Our natural environment is active, revealing God's goodness. God's Spirit is in the Land, life-giving to all creatures.

## 2. 身土不二: **Our body and the Land are not two but one**

Our Christian stewardship of nature is a response to the Spirit of God that interconnects all peoples and the Land. The First People's wisdom is to care for the Land just as we care for our own body.

Our body and the Land are not two but one. Eco theology removes a false belief that sees the natural world as passive, the physical things as perishable, the body as sinful. It recognises that all forms of life are inwardly connected. We should "cultivate and care for" the creation. (Genesis 1: 15) We must give the Land a rest not abuse it. (Leviticus 25: 1-7)

The Spirit of God calls humanity and nature into an interdependent relationship.

## 3. **The Cosmic Christ in climate change**

Christ and the world are one.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation... all things have been created through him and for him.* (Colossians 1: 15-16)

Christ is the firstborn of all creation and all things have been created in him and for him. The faith and unity in the Lord are at the heart of ancient wisdom about the cosmic Christ.

Christ is present in climate change. The cosmic Christ will unite us in faith and action and enables us to see an intrinsic connection between moral theology and natural science. Because Christ and the world are one, our future and the future of creation are one.

In Australia, climate debate must not be trapped in power politics and let it continue to divide us. The Uniting Church encourages all members, councils and agencies to work together. Our climate action aims to reach out to all people, to build climate resilience and strengthen communities. A sustainable future requires our collective and immediate action to reduce emissions.

#### **4. Protect the rights of future generations**

Future generations have the basic rights to live a fullness of life.

*We are concerned with the basic human rights of future generations and will urge the wise use of energy, the protection of the environment and the replenishment of the earth's resources for their use and enjoyment. (Statement to the Nation)*

We recognise our future is dependent on our actions today, the wise use of energy, the protection of the environment, and renewal the earth's resources.

Young people are informing the Church on how to take climate action; their future must set limits to our present footprint caused by modern industries, individual lifestyle, and consumer culture.

The Church proclaims the Good News of Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom of God. Personal salvation is meaningless unless the Earth is saved. The Kingdom of God includes the renewal of creation. Our hope for the future will guide our climate action in the present.

#### **5. Suffering and hope**

Climate change causes suffering. There is a cross in climate change. It is not written in words, nor spoken in language, but displayed in the powerful acts of nature. There is trauma in climate change. It is not manageable by individual, but it is unfolding in a global scale of rising temperature. We recognise that climate caused suffering has impacted local communities and all people around the world. We also acknowledge deep lament among the people who have been advocating for climate justice over many years.

For Christians, the cross is a symbol of suffering, but also life. Christ's answer to suffering is compassion, healing, and hope.

*Through human witness in word and action, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ reaches out to command attention and awaken faith; he calls them into the fellowship of his sufferings, to be the disciples of a crucified Lord; in his own strange way he constitutes, rules and renews them as his Church. (Basis of Union, paragraph 4)*

Climate action is our human witness and action in the power of the Spirit. It is in our action that the cosmic Christ calls us into the fellowship of his suffering. By taking up our own cross, we become the disciples of the crucified Lord in the age of climate change. On the journey towards climate justice, Christ reaches out to command our attention and awaken our faith, and in his own strange ways renews us as his Church.

#### **6. God's love is for all**

God's love is for all people. The Church is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, reaching out to the world in the self-giving love of God for all people. Everyone is equal before the love of God.

The Uniting Church will walk the talk and take direct action towards Zero Emissions target. We also advocate for equitable transition for all people and communities. People of low income, carbon intensive industries, including mining, farming, transport, must have equal opportunities to transition towards a renewable future.

"Love your neighbours as yourselves" (Mark 12: 31). The Uniting Church seeks to reach out in love to our neighbours impacted by climate change throughout Australia. We work with our ecumenical partners to advocate and support the people living in the forefront of global warming, particularly in the Asian-

Pacific region. We call on the Government to include those climate-displaced people in Australia's future immigration policy.

## **7. Reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation**

The whole creation is in pain to be reconciled with the Creator. From death, the resurrection comes in Christ. In God's future, there is a new beginning.

*The Uniting Church was born into a vision of God's ultimate renewal of all things. God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation. (Basis of Union, paragraph 3)*

Climate action is part of our uniting journey towards God's reconciliation and renewal of all things.

Our past is linear, but our future is circular. In a linear economy, waste is produced in every stage of capital movement: resources, transportation, production, consumption, and landfill. Net zero emission means no total waste; the whole system is self-sustaining. In a circular economy, there is an in-built capacity to reduce, reuse, and recycle in every stage of value creation.

The Uniting Church already has working examples: community gardens throughout the Church, Good Sammy in WA, food trucks from Wesley Mission Queensland, tool libraries in QLD Synod, etc. We cannot achieve carbon neutral without our agencies and schools.

Our future will require unprecedented collaboration, governance structure, and financial commitment to work towards the same purpose. Our carbon neutral future is only made possible in our unity.