



Roadmap

for Congregations, Communities and Churches
for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice



World Council
of Churches



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

Join the pilgrimage ...

The way we interact with the economy and creation – not only as private persons, but also as congregations, communities and churches – is strongly connected with our faith convictions.

Love is the centre of our Christian belief (1. John 4:16). Therefore we cannot ignore when parts of the worldwide body of Christ are suffering due to unjust economic structures (“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it;” 1. Corinthians 12:26).

Jesus says: “I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.” (John 10:10). One important aspect of discipleship is clear advocacy for a just economy and creativity to organize local supply with reverence for life. From the beginning we were given responsibility for taking care of all creation. However: the cry of the whole creation today is stronger than ever.

That is why we need a **STRONG MOVEMENT OF TRANSFORMATIVE FAITH** and we invite you to be part of it!

We live in a time of change. Ecumenical unity and conviction about the necessity for a deep system change has never been so broad:

- The 13th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan in 2013 called for a pilgrimage towards an Economy of Life and climate justice.
- The Lutheran World Federation at its 12th Assembly in Windhoek in 2017 clearly pointed out that salvation, humans and creation are not for sale and urged for the development of alternative economic models that could be practised at large and small scales.
- The 26th General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Leipzig in 2017 called for churches to present themselves as beacons of change and alternative communities amidst growing socio-economic and ecological challenges.
- The Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha in 2018 called us to a transforming discipleship.
- The Papal Encyclical *Laudato si'* has led to many Roman Catholic initiatives for lifestyle changes that reflect respect for creation.

- With the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the United Nations has set out clear objectives for the world community.

- A rapidly growing movement of faith-based and grassroots initiatives has the aim of reshaping the future.

We see this broad unity as a historical chance and sign of hope.

Therefore ...

We invite congregations, communities and churches to join a pilgrimage for an Economy of Life and climate justice, to commit to make changes in the way we live, to share successful ideas and to encourage one another.



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Confession for a just and sustainable life

We are embarking on a journey for change. We are thankful for our accomplishments thus far. Still God's call for us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves and to take great care of creation encourages us to do more. That's why we invite congregations, communities and churches to discuss the following 5-step programme to change the way we deal with the economy and our ecological surroundings.

The following steps are a kind of roadmap relating to a variety of issues. It is not necessary to agree on all points. Discussing them is already an important part of the pilgrimage. Our goal is to strive for conscious, just and sustainable ways of living for the wellbeing of our communities and our only planetary home.



Roadmap for a just and sustainable community

1 Living in accordance with the covenant with God and creation

- 1.1 Support and practise small-scale, live-giving agriculture
- 1.2 Create community gardens
- 1.3 Provide access to clean water

2 Renewable Energy & Climate Protection

- 2.1 Monitor energy consumption and move towards renewable energies
- 2.2 Promote climate-friendly mobility
- 2.3 Deal with energy and materials consciously

3 Just and Sustainable Consumption

- 3.1 Buy ecological, fair and regional
- 3.2 Reduce waste
- 3.3 Re-use and recycle

4 Economies of Life

- 4.1 Create places for moneyless interaction
- 4.2 Practise alternative economic models
- 4.3 Practise just finance

5 Networking

- 5.1 Name contact persons for economic and ecological justice
- 5.2 Raise our voice on economic and ecological issues in our communities and beyond
- 5.3 Network with other communities and initiatives

1 Living in Accordance to the Covenant with God and Creation

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“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31) Creation is intrinsically good. Most time creation cares for us and not we for creation – as our indigenous brothers and sisters remember us. “Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.” (Gen 9:16) It is time to reintegrate ourselves into this covenant.

1.1 Support and practise small-scale, life-giving agriculture

“We support life-giving agriculture.” Food is a human right. Moreover fresh and high-quality food is a pleasure and an investment in health and climate protection. The conventional industrial agriculture is leading to a critical loss of biodiversity, disastrous effects of climate change, degradation of the soil that nourishes us, and sometimes to land grabs and displacement of people by greedy

multinational companies. This can no longer be accepted or supported by our thoughtless consumption.

1.2 Create community gardens

“We must come back to regional, small-scale and ecological agriculture.” To achieve this, promoting direct relations between producers and consumers is essential. Churches can bring producers and consumers together.

We want to turn the land we have into life-giving, fruitful, productive gardens and share food. Plant gardens near to every church as symbol of life and communion with creation!

Even very small grounds that churches might own may be used as community gardens that yield vegetables, medicinal herbs, fruits or rare species as a contribution to rescue biodiversity. They can be wonderful meeting points and help to deepen relationships within the community. They are also visible examples of practising life-giving agriculture and rediscovering all resources for food sovereignty in accordance with God’s creation.

1.3 Provide access to clean water

“We want to provide access to clean water for everybody.” We promote Blue Communities: Communities that respect the human right to water, promote water as a public good and say no to bottled water where tap water is safe or look for alternatives, where it is not. We contribute towards realisation of goal #6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): “ensure access to clean water and sanitation for all”. We must lead by example by implementing the right to water and sanitation ourselves in our own congregational/organisational or individual settings.

Silvia Lackner: Intercultural Rainbowgarden Austria.



2 Renewable Energy & Climate Protection

“We are the last generation that can fight climate change. We have a duty to act.”

(Ban Ki-moon, former General Secretary of the United Nations)

2.1 Monitor energy consumption and move towards renewable energies

“We monitor our energy consumption at least once a year and strive for a complete change to renewable energy.” The consumption of fossil-fuel based energy harms the climate. Already today it is leading to a vast destruction of livelihoods, to the drowning of islands, to conflicts, wars and a growing number of climate refugees. Communities based in privileged countries need to control the use of energy and to improve the energy efficiency of buildings and establishments. (Where possible, changing from conventional to eco-electricity is the first and easiest step. Installing solar panels, building a community-run, small-scale hydroelectric dam, etc., are advanced steps.)



As a worldwide communion in Christ we could collaborate: ethical investments in one part of the world can provide access to renewables and improve living conditions in another.

2.2 Promote climate-friendly mobility

“We support climate-friendly and post-fossil mobility.” What this can be is highly dependent on your context. Posting timetables for public transport, bicycle parking and sharing, installing one of the many carpooling or car-sharing systems, installing charging points for electrical cars – or – over all: reduce the need for mobility by re-regionalizing daily-life economy!



Photo by American Public Power Association on Unsplash

2.3 Deal with energy and materials consciously

“We deal with energy and materials with conscience and care.” Every time we consume something, we pay twice: for its cost and for the disposal of waste. The production of an item requires energy. Every waste of energy harms the environment and costs money that could be used for beneficial projects.

Therefore energy efficiency and the way we use things are important. Sometimes small changes like duplex printing on recycled paper, avoiding plastic and styrofoam cups or installing switchable electrical outlets can have a remarkable effect.

3 Just and Sustainable Consumption

If you “love your neighbour as yourself”, you are interested in who is producing the goods that you need and how. Can you find the respect of life in the whole production process?

3.1 Buy ecological, fair, and regional

“We prefer buying from local producers and respect ecological and social criteria.” Supporting local establishments promotes economic wellbeing and coherence in our regions as well as has a positive impact on the environment.

Introduce officially the ‘best offer’ instead of ‘cheapest offer’ principle.

For instance we prefer to offer in our cafeterias:

- fair-traded coffee, tea, juice, and chocolate and
- vegetarian food.

In our offices we choose to procure:

- products that adhere to social and ecological standards; and
- long-lasting products.

3.2 Reduce waste

“We avoid disposable (single-use) articles and buy reusable products and recycled materials.” The huge and still growing plastic island in the ocean is showing how we drown in our own rubbish. Plastic is even becoming a part of our food chain. There is no need for using

beverages in plastic bottles or tin in daily life.

Avoid every form of throwaway articles. Depositing waste for recycling is good. Reducing waste is better. Where using throwaway articles seems unavoidable, opt for compostable ones, if possible. Reducing paper consumption in the office can be another important step.

3.3 Re-use and recycle

“We want to reuse instead of waste.” Give items the chance for a second life: in the hands of someone else or in new applications. Let’s be creative. Organised exchange circles bring people together and help to save money and protect the environment. Creative, secondary-use concepts can be of unexpected beauty. Nowadays one can find good quality recycled paper. The positive effects of this choice on the environment are often underestimated.



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4 Economies of Life

Jesus says: “You give them something to eat.” (Luke 9:13) One important aspect of discipleship is clear advocacy for just economy and creativity to organize local supply in respect of life. We are called to be transformative disciples, designing the present by coming from the future of the kingdom of god – sometimes turning “the world upside down” (Acts 17:6).

4.1 Create places for moneyless interaction

“We want to open spaces for people to meet - regardless of their financial background.”

In a world where daily life is more and more dominated by consumerism and achievements are increasingly measured in terms of money, congregations can be a place of rest: a meeting point without the necessity to buy or pay for something, without judgement on ability to pay, without exclusion. This atmosphere of respect and trust can be the cradle of alternative forms of supply and mutual support.

Norman Tendis: conference on World Mission and Evangelism 2018



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4.2 Practise alternative economic models

“We want to strengthen alternative economies by practising good examples.” The beginning can be very simple: a shelf where people can deposit things they don’t need any more and others can take for free. We can develop: a free shop, second-hand shop, food-sharing-point, repair café, skills-exchange network, producer-consumer network, and much more. The experience to organise a part of your daily life with little or no money is wonderful and strengthens the community.

4.3 Practise just finance

“We inform ourselves about life-giving forms to deal with money and finance, and check what is practicable for us.” Churches often critique destructive economy and at the same time empower it by thoughtless investment. Ethical investment, contracting, credit unions, different kinds of project-financing, ... There are many good methods that we can use in favour of our communities and the world. Complementary currencies are growing worldwide and are a proven model to strengthen a region including economically. Church-owned ethical banks could be something normal and contribute much more to a better world.



Marcelo Schneider/WCC

5 Networking

“Whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 18:19) We can have more impact, if we do things together!

5.1 Name contact persons for economic and ecological justice

“We have identified at least one person that promotes alternative economies and ecological sustainability in our community and can be in contact with other networks.” When a congregation names contact persons, they feel encouraged in what they do. The exchange with others brings new ideas and higher motivation. Regional projects can more easily be realised if local promoters are clearly identified.

5.2 Raise our voice on economic and ecological issues in our communities and beyond

“We want to act locally and think globally.” Though important, lifestyle changes are not enough. When we begin to implement changes in our spaces, our voice promoting system

Marcelo Schneider/WCC



Marcelo Schneider/WCC

change in a broader sense will be better heard and will carry more credibility. Whether we call it advocacy or prophecy, we need to push our governments to enact national and international policies that will support just and sustainable ways of living (see Economy of Life for All Now: An Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture).

5.3 Network with other communities and initiatives

“We want to be change agents not only for ourselves, but as part of a growing movement on a pilgrimage for transformation.” It is encouraging and joyful to be part of a movement, to build alliances with other congregations, communities, and initiatives in our own countries and worldwide. We need to look for good initiatives in our surroundings, to learn from, accompany and share them.



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