

Partnership Service of the Bremen Mission

Trinity Sunday, May 26, 2013



**Raise voice, lift heart and hand –
the climate change should end!**

Editor:

Norddeutsche Mission / Bremen Mission

Berckstraße 27

D-28359 Bremen

Phone: 49 (0)421 / 467 70 38

Fax: 49 (0)421 / 467 79 07

info@norddeutschemission.de

www.norddeutschemission.de

Bank account: 107 27 27

Bank: Sparkasse Bremen (bank code: 290 501 01)

This **draft** was prepared by the **women's council** of Bremen Mission who had, in 2012, organized a consultation on the topic of climate change.

Thanks to Ariane Sessi Sayi who supplied the liturgical texts and to Reverend Dr. Bertille Pialo Hetcheli who composed the sermon, to Reverend Sabine Mellies-Thalheim and Reverend Anne-Kathrin Schneider-Sema who organized the prayer meditations and assembled the materials and to Reverend Bridget Ben-Naimah who composed the intercession prayer.

The **service order** can be downloaded in the form of a PDF- or word-file from our website, **section service/download**.

Preface

„And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good!“ We, the people, have a completely different perception of the creation. What appears before our eyes is the climate change that destroys ecological systems, that endangers the life of human beings and animals. Many people close their eyes. They deny the reality. Other people calculate and are of the opinion that it is still five minutes to midnight. Others hope that the hands of the clock will stop or may even go backwards. But has the point of no return not already been passed? „Climate change – optional chances in a hopeless struggle?“ this is the way in which the participants of the women’s consultation of Bremen Mission that takes place every four years confronted this subject.

It is astonishing how concrete such an abstract topic could become if one looks at it not from far away but gets close enough to touch it by sharing and participating in the suffering and by further opening one's own awareness.

The wing beat of a butterfly that can initiate changes is in our hands. When publishing their draft for the celebration of this year's Partnership Sunday, the women of the women’s council of Bremen Mission appeal to us not to resign because positive consequences could arise from our actions. We derive comfort from their message, courage for finding a way out of this hopelessness. It is not the kind of courage borne by desperation, it is the courage that originates from the power that gives us perspectives and intends to encourage us to eternal life.

Jointly, we shall not give up to do what we can do in our different places of living: to recognize our own role in the vicious circle of consumption with the intention of changing it, to adopt a model role in our behavior towards climate protection, to insist that lip service paid by responsible authorities should be followed by action.

“Raise voice, lift heart and hand– the climate change should end“. It is difficult for us to become involved in an action unless we advance to the very meaning of the problem. There are so many distractions... But God has entrusted His creation to us, only to us, to nobody else.

Doing service to God at all times in our life. We are grateful to all persons that were active in the women’s council for the preparatory work they did for the service on Trinity Sunday 2013, May 26th. A service that will be held by all our six member churches in a similar manner. We thank especially Reverend Dr. Bertille Hetcheli-Maditoma for her sermon proposal and Reverend Anne-Kathrin Schneider-Sema as well as Reverend Sabine Mellies-Thalheim for the sermon meditations. The intercession prayer was drafted by Reverend Bridget Ben-Naimah.

With best regards,

Heike Jakubeit
President of the Bremen Mission

Service Order

Opening music

Opening/ vote/ welcome

Opening hymn: From first light of sunrise

Psalm 1 or One-World-Bible (page 160)

Opening prayer

Opening hymn

Reading from Old Testament: Jeremiah 17, 5 - 8

Reading from New Testament: Matthew 25, 14 - 30

Confession of faith

Hymn: He's got the whole world

Sermon relating to Genesis 1

Hymn

Join-in activity

Hymn

Announcements

Collection

Intercession and Lord's Prayer

Mission

Blessing

Hymn

Opening Music

Opening/ vote / welcome

We celebrate church service
in the name of God
the great force of creation
that has conceived and shaped us
and in the name of His Son who went down into the depth
of our mankind
and the Holy spirit
who inspires us daily
and converts wrong into right.
Amen

Opening hymn: From first light of sunrise

1. Vom Aufgang der Sonne - ne
From first light of sun - rise
Quand naît la lumière - re,

2.

3. bis zum Niedergang der Sonne, sei ge-
till the setting of the sun, give your
quand s'éteint le feu du jour, cé - lé -

4. lobet den Namen des Herrn, sei ge -
praise to the name of the Lord, give your
brons par nos chants le Seigneur, cé - lé -

lo - bet den Na - me des Herrn.
praise to the name of the Lord.
brons par nos chants le Seigneur.

Psalm 1 or One-World-Bible (page 160)

Blessed is the one
 who does not walk in step
 with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
 and who meditates on his law day and night.
That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither -
 whatever they do prospers.
 Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement,
 nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

(Psalm 1 according to One-World-Bible)

Opening prayer

One person:

Let us pray:

God, you are all in all, all things considered; early in the morning, when the world was still young, you created life with all its beauty and all its terrors.
You created everything that we know.
Hallowed be thy name.

ALL:

Hallowed be thy name.

One person:

Early in the morning, in the middle of the multi-coloured community of your church on earth and in heaven, we celebrate your creation, your life, your death and your resurrection, your sympathy with us; therefore we pray to you.

ALL:

God give us new life when we are burnt out and tired;
new love when we have become stone-hearted,
forgiveness when we are feeling hurt or when we hurt others,
and the joy and liberty of the Holy Spirit when we are prisoners of ourselves.

(silence)

One person:

For all and for everyone who really repent, God pronounces forgiveness and gives us the right to start from the beginning.
Thank God!

ALL: Amen.

Hymn

Reading from Old Testament: Jeremiah 17, 5 - 8

Reading from New Testament: Matthew 25, 14 - 30

Apostles' Creed

We confess our Christian faith, together with Christians all over the world and together with those that preceded us in faith.

Hymn: He's got the whole world

Sermon relating to Genesis 1.1

A proposal elaborated by Reverend Dr. Bertille Hetcheli as well as sermon meditations by Reverend Sabine Mellies-Thalheim and Reverend Anne-Kathrin Schneider-Sema can be found in the annexe.

Hymn

Join-in activity

Murmuring groups

“What is it that I do, what is it that you do?” Climate change in a practical manner. The congregation members get together in murmuring groups or exchange their views in their respective row. The objective of the murmuring group is to find new ideas how the climate change could be decelerated or stopped altogether and to encourage each other to increase their efforts.

To start with, some examples could be given:

- I use the bicycle very often.
- I use an energy-saving stove or cooker.
- We installed energy-saving bulbs in our house.
- I cook vegetables that were produced locally.

The exchange in the murmuring groups could last for approximately 10 minutes.

To sow plants: - Congregation activity -

Reading: The parable of the mustard seed. Matthew 13, 31-32 or Luke 13, 18-19
We prepare small flower pots or plastic bags filled with soil (for instance pressed bags that could afterwards be planted into the ground) and place them onto a small table near the communion table.

Side by side with them, there are bowls with mustard, sunflower or other seeds. Congregation members who are interested will move forward to sow the seeds into the soil and to take the results home.

At home, the watering will take place. Thus, the responsibility will, as an analogy, be transferred into everyday life.

Hymn

Announcements

Recommendation for the collection:

The partner churches of Bremen Mission are actively engaged in climate protection: reforestation, improved stoves, fight against bush fires, water well pumps operated by solar energy, these are some of the projects handled by them.

Due to the initiative of E. P. Church, a network of religious organisations which engage themselves for climate protection was set up in Ghana (Religious Bodies Network on Climate Change - www.relbonet.org). Members are churches like E. P. Church, Lutheran Church, God's Unification Church and Pentecostal churches but at the same time Muslim organisations, inter alia the office of the National Imam and the Ahmaddiya movement. Furthermore, close cooperation was agreed upon with government and non-government organisations such as the anti-corruption coalition and a private union that observes the development of oil and gas resources in Ghana in a critical manner. The office of this network is situated in the office of the E. P. Church in Ho.

In the year 2009, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (E. P. Church) received from the hand of the UN-General Secretary Ban Ki-moon in Great Britain an environment protection award.

Today's collection will support the activities of this network coordinating the many local, national and international initiatives for climate justice in Africa and making the voice of the South heard towards an irresponsible industrialisation (or economic policy) that only serves the interests of the North.

Intercessions

O God our help from ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home;

We thank you for this opportunity to worship together in different parts of the world as partners in your mission.

We give you glory for the various ways in which you have made yourself known to the world through the Bremen Mission partnership. We praise you for calling us to be co-workers in your vineyard.

God our creator, when you created this world, you called us to till and take good care of the land so that it would benefit all the inhabitants of the earth. But in many ways, we have failed to do so. We have exploited the earth for our benefit to the detriment of others. Our industrial activities have adversely affected the environment which you have given to us to live in. As a result of selfishness, affluence, and indifference, we have allowed our greenhouse gas emissions to result in the depletion of the ozone layer and climatic changes that have adversely affected the livelihood of people. We have indiscriminately felled trees and depleted our forests for personal gain causing difficult climatic conditions that lead to loss of lives, loss of shelter, loss of livelihood, and loss of property, among others.

As salt of the earth and light of the world, we have remained silent in situations where we should have spoken. We have turned a blind eye to situations needing attention right before us. We have even connived with people to do the wrong things. We have remained unconcerned about people who are suffering as a result of our unhelpful practices that have adversely affected the lives of people around us.

We pray, O God, and ask for forgiveness for our sins and shortcomings. We ask that you have mercy on us and help us to turn away from our weaknesses. We ask that you revive in us the goodwill to take the necessary precautions so that our practices would not adversely affect the climate in ways that negatively impacts on the lives of people.

We pray, O God, in your sovereignty and wisdom, help us, particularly as members of your church to play our various prophetic roles that would bring positive change in the way we handle practices and issues related to climatic change.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen!

Lord's Prayer

Mission

Blessing

Nutifafa na mi!

Hymn

Postlude: Organ or choir

ANNEXE

Example for a sermon relating to Genesis 1 – text according to the One-World-Bible, page 25

This passage of the One-World-Bible narrates in a simple and succinct way the creation story told in the first two chapters of the book of Genesis. It appears as a poem, which far from explaining the structure and the process of the formation of the earth, the planets and everything that exists, sings the wonders of the creation and its creator. Before the beginning there was nothing: "A desert world, dark and empty. No light, no earth, no air for breathing. And God thought this cannot continue. He wanted a vast and beautiful world and life on earth." Upon this reflection was born the project of God for the entire universe.

This creation story reveals a God of order who created things one after the other in order to establish the necessary elements for the survival of the human being for who He was creating the world.

God firstly creates the universe that we can call the raw material. Then He creates light. He created light before all other things because it is necessary for the future survival of plants, animals and human beings. Then he created the sky, the sea and the dry land. The dry land will be the privileged place for human life; it will provide all necessary elements for life.

The creation of living beings follows the same process as that of material things. God created the beings that live in the sea and the sky, then the animals living on the earth and finally the humans.

God found that everything he created is good because everything was in order. Each element was created at the appropriate time and occupied the place which ensured the harmony of the whole. The creation is particularly characterized by its rich diversity of species within each family of plants and animals.

Three key points deserve our attention. The first point relates that God alone is the source of all that exists: the sky, the earth and all that is in the universe. These elements do not exist for themselves and do not come either from any force or do not result from any act of spiritual beings. The second point shows that the world is God's creation, and it reveals God's glory and is subject to His will. The third refers to the responsibility entrusted to men and women. "They will inhabit the land to cultivate and maintain it. And when they live together in peace with everything around them, it may look like paradise. "

Regarding the theme of the celebration of our partnership Sunday this year, our reflections will mainly focus on this point. Man and woman have actually "farmed or cultivated the land". The scientific and industrial progresses are the evidence

thereof today. But have they followed the instruction "maintain it"? The world as it is today, does it look paradise?

Huge challenges threaten the beauty and the harmony of the creation. The climate has dramatically changed and continues to change. This change has a negative impact on people's life. To meet these challenges, several world summits are devoted to it. We will try to see in the next paragraphs how scientists define this phenomenon, the different terminologies which are used, the current and future consequences related to it and some measures to use in order to mitigate the effects of the climate change.

In general, a climate change is a lasting change (it can last from a decade to a million of years) of statistical parameters (average parameters, variability) of the global climate of the Earth and its various regional climates. These changes may be due to intrinsic processes to the Earth, external influences and, more recently, human activities.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change uses two terminologies. The term "climate change" refers only to the changes caused by human activities, while the term "climate variability" is used to refer to naturally occurring climate change. We hold this distinction.

If the entire planet is affected by these two phenomena, it suffers most from the consequences of climate change. While natural climate variability is over very long periods, we should understand that this implies some adaptation requirements of plant and animal species. Climate change is very fast and therefore threatens greatly the often fragile ecosystems.

Due to the industrialization of the planet, the massive use of fossil fuels and a strong rate of greenhouse gas emissions, the climate change causes the melting of glaciers and consequently increases the level of the sea worldwide. This situation leads to many flooding nowadays.

Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate variability and climate change. We can make the following observations:

- a very hard radiation throughout the year with poorly differentiated average temperatures;
- an increase of the temperatures from the South-West to the North-East with recorded maximal temperatures during the year which can reach or exceed 45° C while the minimum is rarely below 10° C;
- a steady decline in the quantity of rainfall, and a high spatio-temporal variation
- grain lines' characteristics of Sahel oriented from North to South over a distance of 500 to 750 km, being often accompanied by strong winds and heavy rains which are sometimes catastrophic;
- degradation of the vegetation mainly due to the aridity of the climate, successive droughts and especially the human activities (increase of the urban population that

lead to a higher demand for fuel wood in the cities)

- degradation of soils (due to erosion there is a loss every year of average of arable lands).

The important economic sectors including agriculture are vulnerable to the current climate sensitivity, with huge economic impacts. Mainly semi-arid tropical zones of Africa experience a reduction in the length of the growing season. This helps to further weaken the adaptive capacity of Africa, increasing in this way the continent's vulnerability to the projected climate change. We must note that Africa is the continent with the greatest delay in the field of technological progress and in the agricultural sector. The impact of climate change on the world food supply is one of the most serious effects of the phenomenon. The worst imagined case scenario foresees the drastic drop in cereal production in the Sahel region of Africa.

This vulnerability is exacerbated by existing developmental challenges such as endemic poverty, with limited access to capital, including markets, infrastructures and technology, ecosystem degradation, complex disasters and conflicts.

By 2020, according to some researches, climate change will contribute to water stress, land degradation, lower crop production and an increased risk of forest fires; consequently we will witness a decrease of 50 percent of the agricultural productivity. This situation will result in severe shortages of food and water, and the affected populations will suffer high pressures that will compel them to migrate.

The Climate change is one of the major challenges for humanity today. That is why:

- At the global level, all nations must work together to provide a comprehensive response to the climate change by reducing the rate of greenhouse gas emissions.
- The developing countries in particular must continue to engage and follow the process to better understand the given opportunities for capacity building and technology transfer so that we can adapt to the adverse effects of climate change in order to ensure their sustainable development.
- At both individual and collective level, every citizen, every Christian is invited to be committed into the fight against the emission of greenhouse gases by adopting habits and lifestyles that respect and protect the environment. For this purpose the members of the large family that we form in the Bremen Mission, everyone according to his own context must further deepen the reflections on the implications of this major challenge, continue to trust God, the Master of the creation, and invite Him to restore to the world its beauty and harmony it had in the beginning. Thus men and women will live in peace with all that surrounds them and the world will look like paradise.

Amen!

Meditations

Protect the Creation

Today, it goes without saying: we have to protect the creation. This is an appeal to Christians all over the world. Basically, this mandate originates from the Bible, Gen 1,26 and 28 as well as Gen 2,15. According to the assignment of Gen 1,26 and 28, we are supposed to dominate the earth, to subdue it or even to suppress it (according to the „German Bible Society's“ words). The assignment of Gen. 2,15 is more peaceful: cultivate the earth, protect it, preserve it and keep an eye on it. It is, therefore, not surprising that, in the history of Christianity, these biblical words were again and again used on one side to legitimate the changes of nature that were caused by human domination (construction of dams, straightening of rivers), on the other side to criticise them.

In the final analysis, both these interpretations centre on the question: who has the sovereign power over the earth? Is it us, the people, or is it God, the Creator? The answer of the Bible is unambiguous: “God, being the supreme Lord of the universe, shall have the last word – He has the power to achieve what is good and to control chaos¹.” Psalm 104, the so-called “psalm of creation”, emphasises this topic of God's power over the earth once again: „...when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created...” this is what verse 29f says. God, the master of life and death, is praised here. We owe our life and the life of plants and animals, nature and environment around us to His power as creator. Let us take His mandate to us seriously, let us protect the creation against destruction and exploitation, this is how we subordinate our power to the power of God. Our endeavours to protect the environment will thus become achievements for praising God. To honour Him, we protect the creation by subordinating our power to His power. In this manner, we obstruct those powers and forces that use the environment as merchandise, as raw material for their greed of gain, as object for exploitation and abuse, only for their own welfare.

Anne-Kathrin Schneider-Sema

¹Literature: Klaus Tanner in: Schöpfung: glauben – loben – handeln. Predigten und Reflexionen zu Natur und Schöpfung. Hg.: H. Schwier und M. Welker. Heidelberg, 2010, S. 76.

What can we do? What we can do!

“Raise voice, lift heart and hand – the climate change should end.” This theme of our partnership service – how can we realize it?

First of all we Christians shall **praise God** for the world we are living in - together with all who believe in him as the Creator (Psalm 104). Then the people surrounding us will be aware that life on earth is not just an incident development following the law “survival of the fittest” as scientists proclaim with the theory of evolution. **God is planning, initiating and keeping His creation.** That’s what we have to **confess**.

Then we have to recognize: **God gifted us with talents and tasks** to save His creation. **Everybody has at least one special talent**, others more than one (see scripture reading from the New Testament, Matthew 25:14-29). With these talents we **must act** to change the climate change. Do we accept this order of God? Is it our heart’s desire to keep Gods creation as habitat for all beings in future? Or do we think by ourselves: “I don’t care what comes after me” or “I cannot change anything. I better dug a hole in the ground and hide my talent” (Matthew 25:18). Then of course nothing will be changed! People who do this are busy digging the Earths grave. But others use their talents. Some use their mouths to protest against the climate killers. More use their brain and hands to labour for the change of the climate change. Not like the global climate change conferences. They are caught up in the whirlwind of world activities. Those who hold the protection of creation near and dear start to change the climate change **with little, effective actions**. They **pray** for protection of the creation against complete destruction by human failure. They try to avoid the climate collapse. In Germany and everywhere in Europe the **awareness increases** for waste of energy resources like water, oil, nuclear power, electricity, primary materials, etc. Therefore alternative resources and conservation possibilities are discussed, developed and integrated in daily life. More and more people are willing to **lower their standards and change their behaviour**.

It still is a long way to change the unscrupulously mind and behaviour devoted to conspicuous consumption in Germany, Europe and the world. It may need more catastrophes before the change of mind is followed by concrete actions. As Christians we must and shall go ahead displaying a good example. We know of our responsibility to protect the creation according to Gods order. The earth must be dressed and kept as a garden (Gen. 2:15). The earth shall be kept as living habitat for all creatures. That is God’s will and commandment. **We are in charge to fulfill it**. One day we will have to give account to God how we managed the talents he gave us (Matthew 25:19-29). If we used them gainfully for the welfare of others or if we lazily hid them because of ignorance or spite. Then God will be angry rightly.

But he will bless everyone who endeavours his/her talent and **contribute to change the climate change with voice, heart and hands**. (Jeremiah 17: 7+8) Like fruits of a tree along the river banks concrete actions will grow constantly to keep the creation as living habitat for all. Trusting the Lord helps that many good actions will happen and be successful. Let’s join in praying and working together, everybody with her/his talents and at his/her place. Then we can help to save the Earth and keep God’s creation alive.

Sabine Mellies-Thalheim



Norddeutsche Mission

Berckstraße 27
28359 Bremen
Telefon: 0421 4677038
Fax: 0421 4677907

Konto 107 27 27
Sparkasse in Bremen (BLZ 290 501 01)
IBAN: DE45 2905 0101 0001 0727 27
BIC: SBREDE22