Creation Care from a Norwegian perspective

**Christian movements: an engine to development, democracy and equality.**

Norway is a small country with about 5 million inhabitants. In 2014 we celebrate the 200 year anniversary of our constitution, but our independence from Sweden was gained as late as in 1905. By then Christian lay movements and mission organizations were among many who contributed to the growing of a strong civil society and a democratic movement. The ‘Haugians’ –followers of the lay preacher and entrepreneur Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824) revived the society by their strong emphasis on work ethics and integrity, as well as abiding to the authority of the scripture. Moreover, Christians were encouraged to be creative and innovative and take charge in the society. Many small enterprises were formed by Hauge, of which many are still active today as family businesses.

Out of this sprung also a concern for world mission and evangelization. Women in particular played an important role in coming together for sharing the word of God, praying and collecting money to send out missionaries, thus establishing the backbone of mission organizations. The first mission society (NMS) was formed in 1842 and several others followed in the years to come. The NMS was the first democratically organized movement in Norway and stated an example for the formation of political parties in the country. They also introduced the right to vote in elections for women as early as in 1904, nine years before this was a reality in political elections in the country.

In 1845 it was legalized to establish other churches than the official state church. Thus in the years to come many free churches sprung out; the Quakers was here already since 1814, the Methodists (1856), the Baptists (1860), the Norwegian Lutheran Free Church (1877), The Mission Covenant Church of Norway (1884), the Salvation Army (1888), the Pentecostal movement (1906) and others. All these new churches brought with them influences from churches internationally and played a major role in empowering the people from below. They showed Christian compassion and care and took part in establishing trade unions and political parties, thus building the civil society and democracy in Norway.[[1]](#endnote-1)

This backstage is useful to consider when looking at the present situation of Norway generally and of mission and care for creation specifically. The thought of every Christian’s responsibility for good stewardship were a core value among the ‘Haugians’. So was also the thought of justice and equity in the sense that people came together and shared what they could with those in need physically and spiritually. Norway were among the poorest countries of Europe by this time, and about 900.000 Norwegians out of a population of about 2 million emigrated to the USA and Canada between 1825 and 1925 in search for a better life[[2]](#endnote-2). It is only during the last 50 years that Norway has developed to be one of the wealthiest countries in the world (per capita), mainly due to the exploitation of off-shore oil and gas. This has also resulted in the world’s largest sovereign wealth fund, The Government Pension Fund Global (SPU), currently worth more than 5100 billion NOK, or about 850 billion USD. Less than 4 % of the fund is invested in Norway in order to avoid heating up the national economy; the majority is invested in about 8000 companies worldwide[[3]](#endnote-3). The Norwegian experience of management of our oil and gas resources has been an export article for international development.[[4]](#endnote-4)

How is it possible to develop this resource without the curse that has struck so many others where the wealth is accumulated among a small minority, while the vast majority is left in poverty and coping with environmental deterioration? Most of the answer may be found within the strong civil society which keeps its leaders accountable. Biblical work ethics and justice are crucial to this. Hans Nielsen Hauge was imprisoned several times because of his rebellion against the establishment of the time, but his ideas of democracy and empowerment from below won in the long run.

**The challenge and the responsibility**

In the national inventory for Greenhouse gases (GHG), the petroleum industry counts for about 26% of national emissions, leading to a total carbon footprint of about 10.5 ton CO2-ekvivalents per person. Our national official emissions in 1990 were about 50 million ton CO2-equivalents. The national political goal for 2020 is 47 million ton, while the IPCC states that the industrialized countries must reduce their own domestic emissions by 25-40 % from the level in 1990. Our current national emissions from 2012 is 52.7 mill ton CO2-equivalents; an increase since 1990.[[5]](#endnote-5) From this it is clear that our national political goals are not sufficient, and the reality so far even worse.

But the oil and gas exported is burnt elsewhere and not counted for in the national carbon inventory. Burning of exported oil and gas will increase the Norwegian CO2-emissions 10-fold if included.[[6]](#endnote-6) The ‘Norwegian’ fossil fuel thus leads to about 1.5-2 % of the worlds CO2-emissions or similar to the cumulative emissions from Africa all together.[[7]](#endnote-7) In other words: we calculate the oil and gas as Norwegian when considering income and national wealth, but the negative side of climate change is not accounted for nationally.

The Government Pension fund Global (SPU) is a huge asset for Norway. The system of management is quite transparent but a lot of people are not satisfied with the way our common savings are invested. There are ethical guidelines to the investments, but the restrictions as to where the funds can be invested are currently under discussion.[[8]](#endnote-8) The new government has declared that it intends to create a new program within the SPU aimed at investing in sustainable businesses and projects in poor countries and emerging markets. They also consider establishing a similar program for renewable energy.[[9]](#endnote-9) These changes may result that other investors follow, thus creating a shift towards more justice in the world economy, and a more sustainable future.

Norway has played a constructive role in order to get international agreements within the UN framework as ambitious and binding as possible, still this does not correspond with our efforts to decrease our own emissions. The International Energy Agency stated in 2012 that two third of the proven reserves of fossil fuels should remain in the ground if the world is to achieve the goal of less than 2°C global warming.[[10]](#endnote-10) From the last report form the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) it can be found that even if all reserves of coal are left in the ground, still half of the oil and gas cannot be utilized.[[11]](#endnote-11) More and more countries in Africa are now discovering large reserves of oil and gas, and they want to have their just share of development and wealth from exploiting these reserves. With what right should Norway continue to exploit ours? This was discussed at the FECCLAHA Regional ecumenical forum in Kampala, Uganda in 2013, under the theme; ‘The Role of the Church in Natural Resource Management’[[12]](#endnote-12). At the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP) in Durban, 2011, Geoff Davies, retired bishop of the Anglican Church in South Africa, directly challenged Norway: ‘Norway must stop drilling for oil!’[[13]](#endnote-13) In a letter to the Norwegian Prime Minister in 2013 oilwatch Africa, representing 13 African countries says the same but less directly; ‘The Prime Minister have personally pointed out that reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation is among the fastest ways of reducing global emissions, because keeping the forest standing requires no technology. We would like to remind you that keeping undiscovered oil and gas in the ground similarly requires no costly or technologically advanced measures.’[[14]](#endnote-14)

The effect of climate change will hit the hardest those who are the most vulnerable.[[15]](#endnote-15) Poor countries and the poorest within a society will suffer the most. In general, the areas that today are marginal with regular droughts and crop failure will face even more droughts and famines. Also areas which are prone to floods will most likely have more floods and more destructive floods in the years to come. This will also affect food production and the supply of clean drinking water for an increasing population in most developing countries.[[16]](#endnote-16) Rising water-level will affect millions living in low-lying areas, which normally are those who cannot afford to live elsewhere. At the same time, these are the people with the smallest contribution to emission of Greenhouse gases (GHG). There is a strong correlation (so far) between economic wealth and GHG-emissions, which means that the wealthiest nations and the richest in each country contribute the most to GHS-emissions.

In Norway, we start to see the consequences of climate change with more and more frequent extreme weather events as well as changes in average temperature, snow cover, precipitation and ecosystems. We see that the ice-cap at the North Pole is decreasing much more rapidly than was estimated a few years ago. The average temperature has increased more in the Artic than the global average. Up to now 90 % of the increased energy which has arrived into the planet due to the increased concentration of GHG is absorbed by the ocean.[[17]](#endnote-17) This means that energy will be released from the ocean to the atmosphere for hundreds of years. It also means that melting of sea-ice will accelerate, and even more radiation from the sun will enter into the system.

Moreover, the increased CO2-emissions also lead to more dissolved CO2 in the ocean. This may seem as a lucky thing, since CO2 through this is removed from the atmosphere, and the green-house effect slows down. But the CO2 in the ocean reacts with water to form carbonic acid, thus making the ocean more acidic. The more acidic water already affects the coral reefs and other animals with calcareous shells. If these start to disintegrate, then a tipping-point of deterioration of almost all eco-systems of the ocean is reached, and this will be disastrous to all fisheries.

We are not aware of the consequences of climate change in the years to come but most Norwegians still believe we will be able to cope with the adaptations. For many others, however, like in the Philippines in December 2013, this is not a question of adaptation, but of mere survival.

We need a call for justice for people who suffers today and for the suffering of generations to come. We need to stand up for the right to live for species of plants and animals, of which also human well-being and survival is depending on. The global problem of climate change has given a crucial responsibility to Norway and other nations with a historical contribution and capacity to compensate for the effects of climate change. Churches and Christian organizations has seen this and try to take charge and to keep our leaders accountable for the role Norway plays in this game. But is this a political call for action only, or can we find a genuine Christian or biblical justification to this engagement?

**The theological justification**

The basic justification for “creation care” is that God created everything, and that everything created was good (Gen. 1:31). Thus destroying this wonderful creation, the biodiversity and the intricate ecosystems which show the glory of the creator is contradictory to his plan and will. When man was created In God’s image, it was directly linked to the responsibility we were given to care for all Gods creation (Gen. 1:27-28). The God-likeliness is thus strongly linked to our responsibility to care for creation. No other creature shares this responsibility. We can also see that when sin entered the world, it was a direct violation of the mandate we were given of stewardship of the Garden of Eden. The sin was not only that Adam and Eve wanted to be like God, but also that they extended the limits of what God had given them for utilizing the creation. Our greed and over-exploitation of creation to our own short-sighted benefit is the core source to our global environmental problem of today, and the suffering of all creation (Rom 8:22).

When we alter the ecosystems of the world, and species get extinct, this is not outside the interest to the creator. God knows every sparrow that falls to the earth (Matt.10:29). Species are now eradicated more rapidly than ever before, mostly due to our constant conquest for more land. What if these are considered as some of ‘the least of these’ that Jesus is talking about in Matt. 25:40+45? He definitively recognizes their destruction and it definitely is contrary to the creating will of God.[[18]](#endnote-18)

Through Jesus Christ, God himself became man in order to restore all the broken relationships. That means the relationship between God and humanity, and between all men and women of all tribes, colors and tongues (Gal. 3:28). But it also means the relationship between God and his creation and between humanity and the rest of creation (1. Kol. 1:20). Thus the gospel of the arrival of Gods Kingdom through Jesus Christ, includes all creation. This is expressed in the Cape Town commitment: ‘If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says 'Jesus is Lord' is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth, since Christ's Lordship is over all creation. Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ.’[[19]](#endnote-19)

Moreover, the word of God is clear in the warning of our love for money and increased wealth. We cannot serve both God and mammon (Matt. 6:24). This love for money and power is in itself a destructive force to our relationship with God. Secondly, the suffering of other people and the injustice among men is a result of our exploitation of nature and greed for more. This must be fought in our individual life as well as in the society. The Cape Town commitment further states that; ‘to live out the love for Gods creation and for all human beings means that we repent from our part in the destruction and our collusion in the toxic idolatry of consumerism, both as individuals and as a society. Instead we should commit ourselves to urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility through advocacy and action.’ [[20]](#endnote-20)

For Norway this responsibility cannot be isolated from our position as a nation of wealth which is based on exploitation of fossil fuel. The division between words and actions from the rich, polluting countries which are supposed to abide to their own commitments regarding GHG-emissions are increasingly growing.

**The Church of Norway**

The Church of Norway (CoN) became a Lutheran church through the reformation, and a state church by constitution since 1660. Today, about 3.8 million (2013) Norwegians are members of the CoN ie 75 % of the population.[[21]](#endnote-21) In 2012, the CoN was granted increased autonomy by the Norwegian Parliament, and the ties to the state were loosened.

The CoN has for many years highlighted a sustainable lifestyle care for creation and a critical voice against consumption and unjust structures. Already in 1969 the bishop conference formulated a message about environmental degradation. They also commissioned the report ‘The Consumer Society as an Ethical Challenge’ in 1992.[[22]](#endnote-22) The General Synod (GS) of the CoN addressed these issues in the case ‘Consumption and justice’ in 1996 and on several occasions since then. In 1997 CoN was involved in establishing a Fair-trade foundation in Norway.

In 2003 the CoN arranged a big ecumenical event with focus on the ocean: The North Sea sailing seminar on responsible stewardship. Politicians, church leaders, business and environmentalists around the North Sea were invited to a boat-trip from Stavanger towards the CEC (Conference of European Churches) Assembly in Trondheim. Climate issues and oil industry, fisheries and sea farming were discussed and the Geiranger declaration on responsible stewardship was formulated.[[23]](#endnote-23) In 2009 all bishops and the leadership of the CoN participated in a sailing conference to the COP 15 -meeting in Copenhagen, arranged by the Norwegian Church Aid and The Future in Our Hands.

In 2007 the GS recognized the need for a profound change in the basic values, of individuals and society in order to address the threat from climatic change. It stated that the Church has a particular responsibility in this process of change and concluded that there is a need for a new and profound reform within the Church itself.[[24]](#endnote-24) In the same year a new plan for diakonia was adopted, which introduced a new definition: ‘Diakonia is the caring ministry of the church. It is the gospel in action and is expressed through loving your neighbor, creating inclusive communities, caring for creation and struggle for justice.’[[25]](#endnote-25)

The statement from 2007 was further strengthened by new decisions in the GS of 2008, 2012 and 2013. The Norwegian authorities were challenged several times by the CoN to withdraw from involvement in exploiting tar-sand in Canada through the Norwegian company Statoil. The CoN’s own investment fund eventually sold all its shares in Statoil, which led to a lot of public attention.

In 2013, the GS gave a public statement about the SPU, challenging the management of the fund to invest more in poor countries, in a way that will benefit the poor, and to invest less in fossil fuel and more in renewable energy.[[26]](#endnote-26) The government was also challenged to readjust our national policy for oil and energy to be more in tune with the national commitments to reduce global GHG-emissions.

Since 1999, the CoN has developed the term “Green Congregations”. Through a common commitment the local congregation can serve as a motivating link between individual actions and national policy. It is easier to see results and impact in the local community from a congregation than as an individual. Also the common sharing of visions, the act of doing things together –for the common good, is a strong motivating factor. Many places actions from the local congregation triggers cooperation with other ‘activists’ which then adds up to the changing force of society from below. These attitudes and actions towards the local society also force the congregation to open up to its surroundings. A more inclusive and welcoming attitude to other people which are not so familiar with more traditional Church activities is an aspect of being a missional church.

The CoN has established groups of resource persons at the diocese level, which should highlight the work on consumption, environment, justice, sustainability and creation. These resource-groups arrange meetings, support green congregations and promote more congregations to become green.

**Ecumenical work through churches and organizations**

The ideals from Hans Nielsen Hauge are still valid. Many of the active members of churches and Christian organizations are not comfortable with the huge accumulation of wealth in Norway as opposed to the poverty and sufferings elsewhere. It is looked upon as an integrated part of mission work to give money, time and working power to the mission work all over the world. A newly published report from Digni (an umbrella organization for the development work of 19 churches and mission societies in Norway) and Norme (Norwegian Council for Mission and Evangelism, covering 43 mission organizations) states that their member organizations represent a strong active force in the society. From 250 000 to 300 000 active members, they collect about 1.3 billion NOK (215 million US$) annually. This is equal to the amount given from Norad to the same organizations to do development work.[[27]](#endnote-27) The Pentecostal movement alone collects 300 million NOK a year (50 US$).

For the mission organizations and the free churches, the active participation in society through charity works in Norway and internationally is also a natural result of the faith. The Salvation Army, the Pentecostal Church and the Church City Mission in Norway (Kirkens Bymisjon) are highly appreciated within the society for their social work among sex-workers and people with drug addictions, to mention but a few areas of their diaconal work.

Mission organizations have a long experience in development projects related to environmental issues like pure drinking water, energy-saving stoves, soil and water conservation, watershed management, organic farming, environmental education, protection of natural forests and afforestation programs. These are all related to the direct well-being of nature and people depending on it for their survival. The Cooperation for Congregation and Mission within the CoN (SMM) has isolated several “green projects” within their 7 member organizations.[[28]](#endnote-28) The Norwegian mission Society (NMS) is also leading the Environmental Competence Building Program together with Digni and some other Digni member organizations and their partners.[[29]](#endnote-29) This program seeks to link creation care, theology and mission.

Digni focuses on Long-term development, and manages and safeguards the support from Norad to projects of their member organizations in about 40 countries. Digni highlights the environment as one of the cross-cutting issues for all their members and all projects. The focus is mainly on environmental problems of direct implications for their target groups as mentioned above. In Norway, however, Digni also wants to lift up the global issues and the responsibility we share with other nations of causing climatic change trough our emissions and lifestyle.[[30]](#endnote-30)

Within the Norwegian context, the mission organizations and churches are lifting up environmental issues. The “Fretex”- company of the Salvation Army started already in 1905, and is based on collecting and selling, but also re-designing and making new products out of used clothes and other second-hand products.[[31]](#endnote-31) The concept of recycling and second-hand stores has grown immensely the last two decades: NMS (43 shops), the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (26 shops), and Normisjon (3 shops). Through this several values and needs of the organizations are merged; generating income for the mission, creating a social meeting place for people, and care for the environment through recycling and reduced consumption. Also fair-trade where the producers are safeguarded a fair price, is adopted by many churches and Christian organizations.

The Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is an ecumenical organization, working internationally in 32 countries. They are also a part of the International Act Alliance. The NCA and their youth-organization, Changemaker, have for many years worked with advocacy along with long term development aid and emergency preparedness and response. As a part of this they have focused on climate change both through influencing decision-making processes and through projects of climate change adaptation. Many reports on climate change can be found in English at the NCA web-site.[[32]](#endnote-32)

The work of The Christian Council of Norway (CCN) has also for many years promoted care for creation within its 19 member churches and 8 observers. Together with the Council on Ecumenical and International Relations of CoN, they have developed the ‘Creation Day’ as an ecumenical concept. They also published the booklet: ‘Faith and Creation’, with inputs from different church-traditions as a theological foundation for the work on engagement for the nature and the environment.[[33]](#endnote-33) Also other denominations like the Lutheran Free Church, the Methodist Church and the Salvation Army plays an active role in promoting these issues within their congregations. The Salvation Army has its own ‘environmental plan for congregations’ and the Methodist Church has developed resource materials for their green congregations.[[34]](#endnote-34) The Lutheran Free Church has a working group on climatic change, which published a thematic booklet on church and climate.[[35]](#endnote-35)

**Creation and Sustainability**

In 2008 the project ‘Creation and Sustainability’ was launched as a cooperation between the CCN, the CoN and the NCA. The project then had a 10 year horizon as a decade of change in church and society from 2008 to 2017.

The project aims to:

*1. Be a driving force for and contribute to a sustainable society locally, nationally and globally.*

*2. Contribute to a just, binding and ambitious climate agreement, and mobilizing people in church and society to support this.*

*3. Demonstrate care for creation and the environment and a consciousness for our consumption and global justice.*

*4. Create hope and confidence for the future through words and deeds.*

Through networking and ecumenical cooperation among churches, the project strives to create increased awareness of the threats of climatic change and a common theological justification of care for creation. The project has just recently finished two founding documents on the climate change challenge and the theological justification.[[36]](#endnote-36) The documents will be publicly available in Norwegian and English. The project cooperates with relevant NGO’s, participates in relevant campaigns and creates areas for dialogue. The web site [www.gronnkirke.no](http://www.gronnkirke.no) serves as a common platform for sharing of information and relevant resources for churches, congregations and individuals. The resource groups at the diocese level of the CoN are included in the project, and all churches are invited to join. The concept ‘Green congregations’ is also merged with the project and covers a growing number of churches from other denominations. By April 1st 2014, there are about 280 Green congregations within the Church of Norway, and 10 in other denominations.

During 2013 the project was engaged in the ‘Klimavalg 2013’-campaign, mobilizing people to put climate change high on the political agenda before the parliament election. Out of 101 organizations, 30 were churches or Christian organizations. Catholics, Methodists, Lutherans, Quakers, the Salvation Army and several other Christian organizations all joined the campaign. They joined forces with environmental organizations, trade unions and professionals and agreed on a common statement of 6 political demands to the politicians. Local actions where politicians were challenged were organized about 20 places throughout the country prior to the elections. The campaign was able to lift the issue of climate change from a place of minor public attention to a major one. The mere existence of such a massive movement was not possible to ignore neither for the media, nor the politicians. A major contribution to this campaign from the project was to organize and to motivate churches and Christian organizations to join and actively take part in the campaign, and to publish the magazine ‘Klimarettferdighet’ (Climate justice), which gives a scientific as well as a biblical justification for the engagement of churches in the fight against climate change. The contribution from Christians was a positive surprise to many, which has opened up many new possible areas of cooperation. One example was the conference ‘The bridge to the future’, 27 February 2014, focusing on transformation of the Norwegian society from below to a zero-emission society and to move away from fossil fuel dependency.

The project also works towards institutions of theological education, trying to promote the inclusion of creation care within the education of missiology, theology and diakonia. The newly developed documents on the background of climatic change and theology will be further developed and used as a tool towards pastors, priests and teachers at the relevant educational institutions. Furthermore the project cooperates with the actors of education to children and youth an aims to promote these issues in all education and presentation of the Christian faith.

**The interfaith track**

The interfaith approach has been stronger the last years, not least since the Uppsala declaration, from a conference convened by the Church of Sweden in 2008.[[37]](#endnote-37) In our context, NCA and CoN has strategically supported such initiatives. The ecumenical cooperation within the project was further extended during the UN Conference of the Parties (COP) 17-meeting in Durban in 2011. At COP 17 the campaign; “We have faith – act now for climate justice” were launched, primarily as an African faith based initiative. Norway then sent a delegation of religious leaders in order to advocate for a more binding and just climate agreement. The different religions together were standing on a common ethical ground for protection of the creation, thus opposing over-exploitation from the rich and suffering of the poor. The common voice of faith leaders from all over the world standing together was able to draw a lot of attention to this issue. These kind of inter-religious campaigns were also successfully utilized during the COP 18 in Doha and COP 19 in Warsaw. In Warsaw, the delegation of a Muslim, a Jew, two Catholics and two from two different Lutheran churches together represented a unique blend to the inter-religious side-events. The group met on several occasions with the Official Norwegian delegation and was given much credibility for lifting up the ethical aspects of climate justice. Religions standing together in unity obviously multiply the weight of the statements given by each of them individually.

Such initiatives will be further strengthened in the demanding times ahead. The dynamics between local and national interfaith initiatives and global coordinated efforts are important. The CoN and NCA are active partners in interfaith initiatives related to the high level meeting on Climate Change in New York in September 2014, and the coming COPs. The need for a common ethical voice, seem to be more and more important.

**The mission of God –in a Norwegian context**

The Christian organizational landscape of Norway today is very much influenced by the historical background as described in the introductory part of this chapter. The call to international mission has to a large extent been challenged through the mission organizations. The different organizations have to a different degree defined their identity within or outside the CoN. Thus bringing the gospel to all nations has to some extent been considered a calling to those with a special interest and commitment within these organizations, rather than a call to the church and the congregations itself. During the GS in 2005, the Church of Norway clearly defined itself as a missional church[[38]](#endnote-38), challenged by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 2004[[39]](#endnote-39). Hence the CoN clearly affirmed the importance of cooperation with the mission organizations, and that all congregations should be missional congregations.

The inclusion of the diakonia as a part of the mission of God has been agreed upon in general. There are different traditions; however, as to what extent the diakonia is seen as an equal valued part of the mission, or of a secondary value as compared to the proclamation and teaching of the gospel. Then, through another document from the LWF (2009) the definition of *diakonia* was challenged[[40]](#endnote-40). The fight for justice and care for creation was now included in the definition of diakonia, and hence as a part of the mission of God to this world. This means that political campaigns and advocacy can be included in the mission. The Cape Town Commitment and the Lausanne Global Consultation on Creation Care and the Gospel underlined the same view[[41]](#endnote-41). At the GS / CoN 7/2012, ‘Mission for Change –Challenges from Edinburgh 2010’, all members of the church were challenged to discipleship by a) seeking Christ, b) sharing the faith, c) showing compassion for your neighbor, and d) care for creation. All members and congregations were specifically challenged to: a) personal gift-offerings, b) consumer-patterns which contribute to global justice and care for creation, c) increasing gift-offerings to international mission and diakonia and d) becoming green congregations[[42]](#endnote-42).

The social and more political work of the church in order to change the society has been highlighted for several years from the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the LWF, while the underlining of these aspects in particular when it comes to creation care is rather new from the Lausanne movement. This has also led to a gradual change in the spoken messages from several of the Norwegian mission organizations who have their identity more closely linked to the Lausanne movement than to WCC and LWF. On 3 September 2012, the leading Christian newspaper of Norway, Vårt Land, published an interesting article written by the leaders of the three main Lutheran mission organizations of Norway; Normisjon, NLM and NMS.[[43]](#endnote-43) They called for a new model of society which is no longer based upon continued growth and consumption. They announced on behalf of their three organizations the need to repent from a consumption which puts heavy burdens on the creation of God, and makes us to idolatries. ‘These are stronger words than what is used in the official documents from bishop conferences and the General Synod of the CoN.’[[44]](#endnote-44) Still it is easy to hear the echo from the Cape Town declaration in this statement. The fact that these organizations care for creation and justice is not a new thing, they have long traditions of doing so. Their call for a structural change, however, is rather remarkable and new. At the same time this change is completely in line with the traditional ideals of these organizations: austerity, charity, work ethic and devotion.[[45]](#endnote-45) Thus it seems that the problem of environmental degradation generally and climate change specifically is of such a magnitude and severity that it can no longer remain on the private sphere and a social agenda.[[46]](#endnote-46) The three mission leaders call upon a change of structure and society, which clearly involves engagement in advocacy and entering into the political sphere. Still, it may be a long way from a statement from the mission leaders to the general acceptance of these ideas within the grass root of the same organizations.

**How to integrate the fight against climate change as a part of the concept of mission?**

As we have seen the threat of climate change is not solved by one single measure. The problem is so complex and overwhelming that all possible contribution towards the common goal is welcomed. There may be different reasons for trying to avoid the calamity, but that should not be a stumbling block for cooperation. From a Christian perspective this is a part of our calling as Christians, and should be defended as such. But we may also find common ground with other religions in this as our faith and commitment to protect life is deeply rooted in all faith traditions. Even for atheists, our ethical and moral imperatives to protect the planet are welcomed. In fact, many of them recognize that our faith is complementary to their perspectives of life, and if this is what it takes to move and mobilize the masses, they are more than eager to join forces. Through this we see that the mission of caring for creation is something we share with all humanity, yes indeed with all creation. Thus we do not fight other religions or ‘non-believers’ of Christ, but we fight destruction, indifference and carelessness. We must reorient our mindset and comprehend that this is not **our** mission in the world, but this is **Gods mission** which we are all invited to take part in.

I believe there are five important elements needed to achieve this:

1. **Connection** between scientific facts andtheology: facing the challenge of today
2. **Community and cooperation** where our Christian congregations are a natural starting point
3. **Communication** and sharing with others
4. **Change**; this must lead to a change in behavior, including the system change needed
5. **Coming**. Hope for the future

Our call to action and teaching to others is based on two sources which should be **connected**: the word of God, and the cry from those who suffers (Ex. 3:7). Jesus himself proclaimed a program for social action to address suffering and injustice (Luk. 4:17-19). The word of God should always be sharply addressed to the present situation in which we exist, and the word of God **connects** us with God and his love for the world. When people and nature is suffering, we cannot as Christians close our eyes and turn away from the responsibility. We need also to listen to the science and all the findings which clearly show that the climate is changing, with all the consequences this leads to.

Our congregations are an image of the body of Christ. We depend on each other as Christians and in Christ we are in **community** with each other. Thus we also receive strength and love and hope from being united with Him and with each other, doing things which is impossible to do alone. When we as individuals or as congregations and churches also **cooperates** with other churches, other religions and all people of good will this is a clear message to the world: God loves the world (Joh. 3:16) and the love of Christ drives us to take part in Gods mission (2 Cor. 5:14).

Spreading the message of God has always been an integrated part of the Church. But the message should integrate the two first points. Then of cause, depending on the context, the focus and the methods may change in order to communicate in an understandable manner (1 Cor. 9:19-23). **Communication** is also much more than just talking and preaching. Our work and love must be in line with our words, and may speak more than many words.

The word of God carried by The Holy Spirit will always lead to **change** from within; in individual lives, in broken relations and in congregations, communities and the whole society. The mission of God is to restore life itself, and we are a part of that starting here and now. God created all perfect, and he gave his only son to restore and redeem all that was broken and lost (Rom. 8:19-22). God’s mission is not deterioration and destruction and suffering, but the contrary. Thus we should let God fight these forces inside ourselves, among us as congregations and communities and within our societies.

We may be frightened when we look at the prospects for the future. We should think of our children and grand children and fight any destruction which may ruin their life in the future. We must admit our part in this destruction and repent from our selfish lifestyle. This cannot be separated from our role in the global context of injustice and climate change. Still, for the **coming**, our hope is to the creator of heaven and earth, who will redeem and restore all his creation in due time (Rom. 8:18-39). God’s mission is a mission of love and hope to us and to the world. We are invited to receive, to be changed, to share and together with others and in the power of The Holy Spirit to change the world.

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