



Uwakili Mwema kwa Uumbadji

(Good stewardship for Nature)

Eco-Theology Handbook
for Uwakili Project Partners



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Foreword

At the root of biblical traditions, Adam (Gen 1:26) is an integral part of God's creation. Consequently, human beings are responsible for being masters of creation rather than rulers of creation. It means that doing ecotheology in the Church's mission and pastoral institutions must be grounded in the fact that humans are to be masters of caring for creation. This theological responsibility is at the heart of ecotheology. God has blessed and commissioned us to care for the whole creation, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and master over the fish of the sea and over birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth' (Gen. 1:28).

Multiplication, control, and master of creation explicate stewardship of God's creation (Gen. 2:15) rather than conquering and plundering it. God's coming on earth in Jesus Christ is a gracious response to the gross misconduct and disobedience of human beings against God's covenant with them (John 3:16). Unlike God's reply to the cry and misery of Israelites (Exodus 3:7), today God through Jesus Christ wants to renew the whole creation that groans (Romans 8:22-23). Thus, this foundation of our ecotheology drives us in our engagement to be stewards of the mysteries of God as inheritors of God's covenant and recipients of God's promise of renewal of creation and salvation.

This handbook on ecotheology is indispensable in redefining and reviving the spirit of responding to the local and global challenges of environmental degradation, global warming, and climate change. The handbook must empower the Church to rediscover its role in promoting ecological conversation and changing human behaviors that destroy the earth. The guide brings a sound theology of ecology and climate (ecotheology) and mainstream actions resulting in positive impacts on stewardship of creation.

This manual goes beyond the surfaces of the initiatives in the Sustainable Development Goals to the roots of God's covenant with human beings in caring for the world they inhabit. Therefore, I recommend that this handbook be used in the Church and its institutions to guide and inspire people to act against any behaviors and activities that destroy the creation of God.

Biblical quotes from The Six ELCT Bishops

1. Bishop Michael Adam's, ELCT-DMR

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28). "Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." (Genesis 1:29). "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day." (Genesis 1:31)

2. Bishop Dr. Abednego Keshomshahara, ELCT-NWD

Let us act immediately to protect planet Earth before it is too late. What kills the dog starts by killing its nose, which smells for its survival. Let us use our senses to see that the Earth's planet needs our quick responses by planting trees that absorb carbon dioxide and methane gases, using renewable energy, stopping the use of fossil fuels, and planting crops that suit the global warming climate changes. We must slow down the pace of drought, floods, hunger, heat, sinking of islands, destructive winds, diseases, and deaths of people and other living things. We can succeed if we give up our selfishness and apathy.

3. Bishop Andrew Gulle, ELCT-SELVD

Damaging the environment for Christians and other people is a sin; it is criticizing the God who placed humans on earth to care for the environment. Only humans themselves have the responsibility to care for the environment. The consequences of damaging the environment are significant for humans and all creatures. Humanity bears the shame of causing harm to itself and distressing other creatures because they have damaged the environment. We can say that human rebellion destroys other beings. We may be late, but we are not too late to take deliberate action to save our environment now, and in doing so,

we will be saving ourselves! Everyone, adults, youth, and children, should be involved in environmental conservation. Various groups and organizations should come together to protect the environment. The Church should take action, the dioceses should take action, the provinces should take action, and the parishes should take action.

4. Bish. Dr. Benson Bagonza, ELCT-KAD

As a Church, we are called also to use spiritual resources by teaching and preaching ecotheology. Human beings are charged to protect, not to exploit, forests. We are called to co-exist with the environment. Sadly, it can be without humans, but humans cannot exist without the environment.

5. Bishop Dr. Yohana Ernest Nzelu, ELCT-SELVD

God created heaven and earth (Gen 1:1) and followed the first five days of creation, whereby He created everything a man could need for life, including plants and animals. On the 6th day of creation, God created man and gave him authority over the earth and everything that is on it (Gen 1:26-28). God created man on the last day of creation so that man would have a safe and good environment for human life. Unfortunately, it is not as God expected. Man has become a threat to environmental conservation. We are suffering from global warming and climate change because we have not taken our part in God's creation as stewards and expected faithful servants in case of caring for God's creation. Since God has given us this great responsibility and privilege, we must care about how we treat the environment for us, other creatures, and future generations.



Introduction

This is Kairos moment for the survival of the creation. This is such a critical moment that the Church needs to take action to bring about change. It is a moment for each human being of faith to embrace an eco-friendly lifestyle and take action to save God's creation. God's creation faces unprecedented challenges, and humanity is in a state of overshoot. Overshoot occurs when people use energy and biological resources faster than ecosystems can regenerate and pollute beyond nature's assimilative capacity. In other words, modern humans are consuming, polluting, and destroying the biophysical basis of our own existence – God's creation. The

symptoms of overshoot are biodiversity loss, deforestation, overfishing, land and soil degradation, pollution, climate change, etc. Overshoot and its symptoms increase poverty and natural resource conflicts, adversely affecting human well-being. In developing countries like Tanzania, overshooting has accelerated the poverty level, exacerbated conflicts, and overexploited natural resources, which in turn affects local livelihoods. It is clear that the time for action is now, and every well-wisher is responsible for engaging in any sustainable interventions for the sake of creation. This project, Uwakili, gives a noble chance to the Church, other faith leaders, and congregants to take a front seat to advocate for and influence the policy and decisions made by policymakers and corporations for the welfare of the coming generations and the planet we all live in. This handbook will serve as a reference tool for reminding faith leaders of their faithful role in teaching their congregants about the relationship between their natural and spiritual existence on Earth.



The Handbook

This small introduction to eco-theology is part of a cooperation between The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, Tanzania Forrest Conservation Group, and Danmission. It aims to inspire church leaders, congregations, and individual Christians to think about

the way they use natural resources. It is an invitation to embrace the understanding of God's creation and act accordingly. Further, this handbook provides biblical reflections on creation, teachings, and practical examples from the ELCT church partners, providing guidance on Christian teachings, engagement, collaborations, and commitment to both the church community and faith leaders to preserve creation through word (Gospel) and deeds (Action) during the green Sundays.

Biblical Mandate for Creation Care

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28). "Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." (Genesis 1:29). "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day." (Genesis 1:31)

In Genesis, the first book in the Bible, we are told how God created all things in seven days. Reading the story of creation, we learn that humankind is a part of the whole creation. On the sixth day, as the last part of creation, God made human beings. "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." Gen 1:31

The interrelatedness between humans and all other created things emphasizes our shared story. All living beings came from the same source; we have a common ground. In that sense, there is a deep connectedness between humans, plants, animals, and the earth it-

self. Understanding this interrelatedness should make us realize the necessity of living in a way that does not exploit nature and animals but bears our common creation in mind. Humankind breathes the air the trees prepare for us and eats what the plants provide us. If we do not care for nature, our human lives will be destroyed. God rested on the seventh day, together with all his creation. Even today, all living things need to rest and not be exploited in our craving for more. This is an essential part of creation as well. God called this day to be a resting day for all.



Also, we read in Genesis 2:15 that mankind, both male and female, were created in God's image. The 'image' and 'likeness' enable human beings to have fellowship with God. However, it does not mean humans are God or can become God. Human beings were given the task of being fruitful

and multiply on earth. They were also given another responsibility to have dominion over all other creations. Being inseparable from God's image, humankind must exercise this dominion under God's instructions to make sure that all parts of God's creation remain good as God intended it. As we read that God saw all he had made and found it good, we must bear in mind that taking care of creation is taking care of that which God declared to be good. As humankind is both a part of God's creation and created in the image of God, we have a special responsibility.

To be created in the image of God also means acting according to God's will. "Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Gen 1:26.

The small words "so that" indicate that humankind is to rule over the rest of the creation in a specific God-defined way and that God has confidence in humankind that they can do this. That way must be related to the goodness of all the creation, and we have entrusted this responsibility by the will of God.



The Meaning of UWAKILI

Uwakili is a Swahili term that literally means stewardship. But what does it mean to be a good steward?

The word “steward” can be found in several places in the Bible, such as Matt 25:14-30, Luke 16:1-15, and Luke 12: 42-43. A steward is given the responsibility to take care of something on behalf of someone else. This role is that of a “middleman.” A steward has authority but works for another than himself and is, therefore, also a servant of another. We know the description of a good steward from the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 24:14-30), where we hear about stewards. A rich man is traveling, and he leaves his stewards with talents. One steward gets five talents, one gets three, and the last steward gets only one talent. Two stewards use their talents so they flourish, but the last steward buries the talent in the ground. When the master returns and receives the multiplied talents, the faithful stewards are invited into the joy of the Lord. The steward who had buried his talent, so it had not multiplied now meets the anger of his master.

The parable teaches us that the good steward is the one who has not only taken care of the talent he was given but also cultivated it, so it multiplied and became more. The good steward is the one who takes what he has been given to take care of and makes it abundant for his Lord.



In the book of Jonah, we learn of another of God's stewards. We are told that God also sometimes calls his stewards to speak on his behalf. Jonah is called to be a prophet of God, to speak to the people and Nineva, and to make them change how they live (Jonah 1:1-2). The Church, as an institution and on the individual level, is called to be a prophetic voice in society.

A Good Steward of Creation

In the Bible, several texts emphasize the relationship between the Creator and the whole of creation, with humankind being a part of this. Humans are called to be stewards of creation.

To be a good steward of creation means it is our responsibility to look after and take care of all of creation and make it multiply. Stewardship of creation involves the caretaking of the environment, animals, our families, and our communities so they flourish.



In other words, a good steward of the Creation is a servant who is mindful that he will have to return the land with all that belongs to it to the Lord one day. A good steward is one who behaves like he will be held accountable when the master returns and, therefore, strives to take care of all of creation

so that it may have life and have it abundantly. And a good steward raises his prophetic voice to remind the people of faith that God created the whole of Creation and found it good.

In the present situation, a good steward is aware of sustainable resource management, like reducing the use of fossil fuels, being aware of protecting biodiversity, and stopping deforestation. A good steward is an ethical consumer who considers how the production of clothes and food impacts the climate and is aware of the handling of trash and the treatment of humans and animals in the production chain. A good steward will raise his prophetic voice against social and economic injustice due to the impact of humankind's unsustainable way of living.



How to be a Good Steward

To be a good steward is to understand the relationship between creation and Creator and to live accordingly. As we heard in the Parable of the Talents, the good steward is the one who does not only keep the talent he has been given to take care of – but the ones who make the talents flourish. To be a good steward is not only to understand – but to act. The good steward of God's creation is called to promote abundant life for all things living and growing, for the Earth itself.



Addressing overshoot in a theological way and working with environmental sustainability and community development in the Church is based on the story of Creation from the book of Genesis. Humans are created together with the rest of Creation, and at the same time, in the image of God to be good stewards of this.

The Church consists of humans, created in the image of God, with the responsibility to be good stewards of creation. It has the possibility and responsibility to be an inspiring agent of change for the whole community. This can be done in several ways by all faithful humans, in this context including church leadership, congregations, and individuals.

What to do?

1. **Advocacy.** The Church can be a prophetic voice at local, national, and international levels. The prophetic voice can be used to hold the national government accountable for their laws and policies, as well as promoting local governments in promoting environmentally friendly initiatives. The Church can be a reminder of the necessity of ethical decision-making. As a prophetic voice, should insists on eco-justice for all, addressing both national and international actors.

2. Call for action. Overshoot and unsustainable natural resource management call for humans' behavioural change. Religion and faith are ways to address and change behavior among humankind, as those are connected to values and ways of living. The Church must show its understanding of all natural resources being a part of God's creation and, as such, have a spiritual and existential dimension by prioritizing eco-justice in its own daily life and documents. The Church consists of humans who experience overshoot in different ways. Each congregation must be aware of the local needs and insist on participatory development by involving congregations and local groups. It must reach people at their level and let them set the agenda in their specific context to make the most important change for themselves.

3. Create awareness

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There is a connection well-being and being. If creation affects human life There is only one deep interconnection Bible emphasizes in creation and a web of relations. interconnectedness and all other created

things can inspire sermons and seminars in the Church. This eco-theological reading of the Bible can inspire the congregation to appreciate, protect, and restore what may be broken, and it can foster reflections on just, equitable, and responsible stewardship. Understanding humans' role as stewards will make each Christian eager to cultivate reverence, adapt to a suitable living, and advocate for eco-justice. Taking care of the whole of Creation also honors God's wisdom and love.

4. Education. The education in creation care can start from childhood and go through Sunday schools, confirmation classes, and youth groups and can involve all members of the Church. It is beneficial for the whole community if caring for creation be-

comes a community issue. If the children know how to handle trash, they will teach their parents the same way that parents are teaching the children to grow crops and collect the rain. Education must take the specific context into consideration but also focus on the national/global solutions.

5. **Pastoral care.** The Church can offer pastoral care by creating spiritual reflections that deepen the spiritual bonds with God and the creation. It can integrate nature into worship to make the relationship between God and Creation visible and sensible.
6. **Eco justice.** Overshoot, climate change and unsustainable natural resource management hits the vulnerable populations hard and increases social injustice. Churches can support the affected and address the root causes of eco inequities, provide guidance for a sustainable lifestyle, and support the ethical choices that must be taken. Based on the current environmental challenges that have led to social and economic injustices, it is important to put the eco justice agenda at the centre of the church through its existence and operation.



Psalm 24:1:

"The earth is the Lord's," tells us, that we are all a part of God's creation, and we as humans are to take care of it.



Green Sunday

“Green” represents new life, vitality, and promise. When the creation is green, humankind is filled with hope, vitality, and love – like nature when rain falls after a long period of drought, floods, and hunger.

Green Sunday is an opportunity to recall and reinforce our Christian responsibilities as good stewards of the creation.

The Green Sundays may involve the engagement of local officials, young people, and volunteers to participate in activities like the following:

1. Creating good messages about responsible stewardship, environmental conservation, awareness, and green living through hymns, gospel, choir, scriptures, and poems that can be widely spread in the community.
2. Facilitate environmental dialogues among youth and other groups on the current environmental issues and how they can be addressed through faith.
3. Organize green-themed youth activities such as sports and games.
4. The Church Community and other faith members work together to collect waste, clean up the environment, and plant trees and flowers in their surrounding areas.
5. Contribute to improving people’s environmental attitudes to make our environments cleaner.
6. Hold green auctions of organically grown and environmentally friendly products such as fruits and vegetables, honey, cook stoves, and other such items.





Best practice – inspiration from ELCT

The Lutheran Church in Tanzania has, in many ways, been working with eco-theology for many years. The dioceses, being partners of the Uwakili project, are committed to serving God's people and agree that evangelism and providing social services are two sides of the same coin. We have gathered some of the best ideas, and we hope can we inspire each other to be good stewards of creation.



Use of Green Charcoal

Spheres or blocks of green charcoal briquettes can be made of agricultural waste, such as dry banana peels, coffee husks, and plant and tree leaves. They can be used as an alternative to other fuels, such as coal and oil, both for household use and in heating boilers in factories, among other uses.

Green charcoal does not emit much smoke like firewood or charcoal made from trees because of the clay in which the agricultural waste is compressed.



Genesis 2:15:

God entrusted humans the Garden of Eden, to take care for it.



Planting of High-Quality Forests

Plantations that are ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially acceptable are an important part of good stewardship. The aims of planting high-quality forests are to reduce deforestation, reduce land degradation, generate income through sales of forest products, and raise communities' awareness of the impact of overshoot.

The natural conservation forest needs staff that can be trained on forest fire prevention and caretaking of specifically biodiverse species in the forest.



Leviticus 25:23:

We are reminded that humankind is caretakers of the land, and the verse reminds us of the need for responsible management.



Planting of Trees by Youth Groups

Tree planting brings significant economic benefits that contribute to community development and economic growth of youth and women in general. The presence of trees enhances the visual charm of an area, making it more attractive. Communities with a flourishing tree canopy attract individuals who recognize the long-term benefits and improved quality of life associated with such environments.

Moreover, tree planting projects also possess the potential to generate employment opportunities and foster economic growth of the Church. As tree planting programs expand, the demand for workers in these fields increases, providing job opportunities within local communities as well.



Use Of Church Land Sustainably

One diocese bought a plot of land to provide different social services to the community, such as a school and sustainable agriculture practice.

In the strategy to plan the proper use of the land, the diocese conducted a study of the environmental conditions of the entire district. The first strategic action was to ensure that water was available at the farm, which would be a major stimulus for all the development activities. To deal with the challenge of lack of water, a solar system was installed to pump water

from a deep well and store it in a two hundred thousand liters tank (200,000 liters) in collaboration with various stakeholders.

Use of Sermons and Education

A diocese recognized the importance of environmental conservation and decided to act by organizing a tree-planting campaign. The first step was to educate their congregation about the significance of trees in maintaining a healthy environment. The sermons and teachings emphasized how trees contribute to reducing air pollution, combating climate change, promoting biodiversity, and providing numerous human benefits.

To achieve the campaign, the Church partnered with the congregants and the local community. Together, they organized tree planting events where Church leaders and congregants joined to plant trees in Church premises and congregants' home premises, including public spaces such as schools.

They organized public hearings, created informative pamphlets, and collaborated with worshippers to organize tree-planting activities. They also contacted local individuals and government offices, seeking collaboration for the campaign.

The collaborative efforts of multiple Churches saw a widespread tree-planting movement, benefiting not only the environment but also fostering a sense of unity and purpose among the local faith community.



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Colossians 1:16-17:

This passage points to Christ's central role in creation (as incarnate), emphasising the interconnectedness of all things.



Partner presentation

DANMISSION:

Danmission's program strategy outlines three intervention areas for its work on sustainable and just stewardship of natural resources:

- Enhance theological and spiritual-based responses to poverty and natural resource scarcity.
- Strengthen sustainable, just, and equitable access to and use of natural resources.
- Prevent and manage natural resource conflicts.

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tanzania (ELCT)

ELCT is involved in creating Sustainable Livelihood and Environment Programmes. Caring for the earth and agroecology infuses everything as a community's ability to support itself depends on its ability to preserve and protect its land, water, and its other natural resources. ELCTs strengths depend upon its well-established structures, transparency, and participatory approach from the grassroots through the parish supervisory committees in all activities.

Tanzania Forrest Conservation Group (TFCCG)

Apart from being the independent partner to Danmission, TFCCG has a forefront role as a consultant and is commissioned to provide training and monitor learning outcomes and their implementation to six ELCT dioceses on sustainable and just stewardship of natural resources. The dioceses are implementing a project on sustainable and just stewardship of natural resources, Uwakili with funding support from Danmission.

DANMISSION



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CHURCH IN TANZANIA



Tanzania Forest
Conservation Group
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