

Ecumenical Perspectives on Climate Change

Symposium on Ecotheology

Organized by
The Middle East Council of Churches

In cooperation with
**The Association of Theological
Institutes in the Middle East**

- Opening Session:
Wednesday 4 October 2023
At Holy Spirit University of Kaslik
- Conferences:
Thursday 5 October 2023
At Saint Joseph University of Beirut

For more information and confirmation:
ecojustice@mecc.org



In Partnership with

Description

Theological reflection on ecology and Climate justice has intensified in the past decade in various parts of the world due to the urgency of the topic. However, despite the great variety of Christian traditions in the Middle East, this theme has not yet been seriously deliberated in our region. Through this symposium, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), in cooperation with the Association of Theological Institutes in the Middle East (ATIME), hopes to start this discussion and to encourage the various member Churches and institutions to reflect from within their own traditions on creation and climate concerns. It is also hoped, that theological education in the region can find ways to address our ecological reality and can be informed by it in all its disciplines. For this to happen an interdisciplinary approach should be followed.

Hence, it is pertinent that the symposium sketches the ecological realities from a scientific perspective and acquaints the participants with the ecological terminology and issues. It is then the responsibility of specialized theologians to engage with this reality and reveal in what ways these are theological concerns. The involvement of theologians from different Christian traditions can further make us aware of the diverse methodologies and approaches to engage with the topic while finding common concerns.

Finally, the organizers hope to translate this discussion into practice and effect change not only in the mindset but also on the ground. For this to happen, ecological actors and practitioners such as A Rocha, ACT Alliance, Danmission and the United Church of Canada are enlisted as partners and will be involved in this event.

Steering Committee

- Rev. Dr. Antoine Al Ahmar, Director of MECC Theological and Ecumenical Department
- Rev. Dr. Elias Hanna, Dean of the Pontifical Faculty of Theology at Holy Spirit University of Kaslik
- Rev. Dr. Michel Kanbar, ATIME Executive Secretary
- M. Rev. Dr. Jack Khalil, President of ATIME
- Sr. Dr. Yara Matta, Director of the Superior Institute for Religious Sciences at Saint Joseph University of Beirut
- Rev. Dr. Rima Nasrallah, Professor of Practical Theology at Near East School of Theology

Advisory Committee

- Dr. Manal Nader, Director of the Institute of Environment at Balamand University
- Dr. Dani El-Obeid, Professor of Agriculture at the Lebanese University
- Dr. Lara Hanna Wakim, Faith for Earth National Coordinator, UNEP
- Mr. Julius Mbatia, Global Climate Justice Manager, ACT Alliance

Main Speakers

- Rev. Dr. Dave Bookless, Director of Theology at A Rocha International
- Dr. Carmody Grey, Assistant Professor of Catholic Theology at Durham University
- Dr. Christina Nellist, President of Pan-Orthodox Concern for Animals
- H.E. Metropolitan Thomas, Bishop of El-Qussia and Mair. Anaphora Center, Egypt

Wednesday, October 4 – USEK, Pope John Paul II Amphitheater

17:00–17:30 Celebration of the **Season of Creation**. Ecumenical Prayer Service.
Homily by Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, President of MECC

17:30–18:45 **Opening Session**

- Welcome Addresses
 - Rev. Dr. Talal Hachem, President of USEK
 - Dr. Michel Abs, MECC Secretary General
 - M. Rev. Dr. Jack Khalil, President of ATIME
- Introduction to the Symposium – Rev. Dr. Rima Nasrallah
- Keynote Speech – Rev. Dr. Dave Bookless, Climate Change: Biblical and Theological Perspectives
- Middle East Churches Statement to COP28 – Rev. Dr. Antoine Al Ahmar

19:00–20:00 Reception and Eco-Exhibition

Thursday, October 5 – USJ, François Bassil Amphitheater

09:00–09:15 Welcome Address – Rev. Dr. Salim Daccache, President of USJ

09:15–10:30 Session One: **Climate Change and Social Justice**

Moderator: Sr. Dr. Yara Matta

- Coptic Perspective on Poverty and Food Security – H.E. Metropolitan Thomas
- Respondent 1 (Theology) – Rev. Dr. Rami Wakim
- Respondent 2 (Science) – Dr. Richard Maroun

10:30–11:00 Coffee Break

11:00–12:15 Session Two: **Climate Change and Care for Creatures**

Moderator: Rev. Dr. Samuel Rozfy Ibrahim

- Dietary Choices: Science and Orthodoxy on Protecting God's Creation – Dr. Christina Nellist
- Respondent 1 (Theology) – Rev. Dr. Bassam Nassif
- Respondent 2 (Science) – Dr. Dominique Salameh

12:15–13:30 Session Three: **Climate Change and Nature**

Moderator: Rev. Dr. Bishoy Helmy

- Catholic Social Teaching Applied on Climate and Nature – Dr. Carmody Grey
- Respondent 1 (Theology) – Fr. Barouyr Shernezian
- Respondent 2 (Science) – Dr. Nabil Nemer

13:30–15:00 Lunch Break

15:00–15:30 Session Four: **ATIME Student Paper Presentations**

Moderator: Rev. Dr. Michel Kanbar

- Dr. Nada Mallah Boustany, Integral Education for the Good of Creation
- Archdeacon Garen Yosolkanian, The Ecotheology in the Armenian Liturgy

15:30–17:30 Closing Session:

Operationalization. Church Commitment to Creation Care and Ecojustice

Moderators: Rev. Dr. Rima Nasrallah – Dr. Dani El-Obeid

- Ms. Kirsten Auken, Danmission, Middle East
- Mr. Julius Mbatia, ACT Alliance, Global Climate Justice
- Dr. Manal Nader, Balamand University, Institute of Environment
- Dr. Lara Hanna Wakim, UNEP, Faith for Earth

Conclusions and Recommendations

Translation available: English–Arabic–English

The Symposium will be live streamed on the MECC Facebook page

