

JOINING IN GREAT LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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Momentum is building in the lead-up to the UN climate talks in Paris that begin on 30 November 2015 and are crucial to our future.

What – and who – will cause the tipping point that will lead to the bold decisions we need being taken before it is too late?

It may well be come from sleeping giants.

People of faith are increasingly calling for greater connection with our precious world and each other and particularly for serious action to protect our precious planet's ability to sustain life as we know it. The **Islamic Declaration on Climate Change** is the latest call from **faith communities** to urgently make substantial changes in order to protect our world.

Over the remainder of 2015, there are some key opportunities for faith communities (and people with no faith!) to **come together to connect with each other and show our care for the earth.**

The **People's Pilgrimage** has already begun across the globe. It will culminate in events on **28-29 November.**

This coincides with major gatherings that will take place around the world that same weekend, to coincide with the start of the UN climate talks in Paris. At that meeting, world leaders will meet to agree on how the world will respond to climate change. We have until then to build the public pressure and political support necessary for them to agree to a strong deal. It is important **for this movement to be successful that it involve as many people from as many different aspects of our community as possible.**

In **Australia**, the gatherings at the end of November are being called **People's Climate March.**

In **Canberra**, I am working to ensure that Canberra's faith communities can play a prominent role at this very important time for humanity.

Canberra's People's Climate March will start at 12 noon on Sunday, 29 November. This will allow Christian congregations to attend straight from Sunday morning church services. It would show wonderful leadership and integrity for local Anglicans to join in.

Of course, it is not possible for everyone to attend mass gatherings - nor is it necessarily desirable.

That is why I and others (led by Yeb Saño) are encouraging communities to organise mini-pilgrimages in their local area to support the wider pilgrimage to Paris. As the **People's Pilgrimage** website says:

It's a way for everyone – of all faiths and none – to share our hopes and fears, and call for action on climate this year.

Local organisers choose the pilgrimage site(s). Perhaps it could be:

- a special place that is threatened by climate change - such as a local water resource, beach or special natural habitat
- a place that gives hope for the future
- a place that is sacred for prayer or meditation.

(Pilgrimages may, of course, include the mobilisations on 28-29 November!)

Other events can also build engagement and momentum among diverse people and alliances between different faith groups in the lead-up to the main gatherings at the end of November. For example:

- **1 September** – World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation. **Anglicans** and **Roman Catholics** will now join Orthodox and other Christians in this annual event. **What is your congregation planning?**
- **25 September** – **Pope Francis addresses United Nations General Assembly** (8:30am ET, 10:30pm AEST). As he will no doubt build on his Encyclical, **Laudato Si'**, that he addressed to **all people**, this would be an excellent opportunity to start a conversation around what it will take to protect the common good and how humanity can stand together in unity – perhaps as preparation for events on 4 October and/or 28-29 November. Already, faith and non-faith communities starting to plan vigils. **What is your congregation planning?**
- **4 October** – **St Francis Day/Sukkot**. An interfaith event could focus on our precious world and explore together our common responsibilities as stewards of it – and prepare for the People's Climate March on 29 November (including painting banners). That date is significant for both Jewish and Christian people.
 - It is the Christian feast day of St Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals and the environment - and a very accessible way of engaging children in the important message of caring for our world.
 - It is also the Sunday of the Jewish festival of Sukkot this year. A recent **Rabbinic Letter on Climate Change** initiated by rabbis in the US has called for Jewish communities to gather that day to explore together our responsibilities toward the Earth and all humankind, in this generation.
 - **2 November** – **anniversary of Cyclone Hayan (Typhoon Yolanda)**. A quiet gathering of people of all faiths and none could honour those who have already lost their lives to climate change

For humanity and life as we know it to survive, **we need to change our approach to everything**, so that it is focussed on regeneration and not destruction.

And, **to change everything, we need everyone.**

And be aware that people fall under one of two categories: they are either your brother and sister in faith, or they are your counterpart in humanity.

— Imam Ali bin abi Taleb

Let's all take this opportunity to come together, as companions in humanity, to begin to build a better, safer, fairer future for all and call our political leaders to follow our lead. Let's awaken the sleeping giants – all of us!

Now, **what are you planning to do to build the momentum?**

*This is an edited version of an article that originally appeared on Sustainable Jill. Read the **original***

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