

Greetings!

After a year of discussions, consultations and drafts, ARC is proud to announce the launch with the UN of our Guide to Seven Year Plans.

The purpose of the Guide is to help faith communities at every level - local, national and international - to move into a new stage of environmental action, reflection and thought. Many have already done audits; many have searched their scriptures for insights into how we should care for or with nature; many have looked into traditional practices for eco-friendly ways of living. Now, the UN/ARC Guide offers the next level of engagement.

Using the seven key areas in which faiths have power, influence or significance – ranging from investments, through land holdings and media to education and celebration – the Guide offers ideas and ways forward for creating a Seven Year Plan which can reflect the specific strengths of each faith community.

This is an idea that is already being adopted world wide and taken up by many secular environmental agencies as a means of partnership with the faiths. It is also a timely reminder that change takes time and that our response to the environment should be grounded in what is right not just in panic responses to apocalyptic utterances.

The heart of the programme is that over the seven years from 2010 to 2017 the faiths will concentrate on developing ways of living which will result in changes which last generations. This stands in contrast to the short term thinking of most activist organisations.

This is about climate change, but it's also about protecting and respecting the natural environment. And the reason the faiths are being involved is because they believe this is the right way to behave – regardless of any specific crises or particular issues.

ARC has no interest in controlling the use of the Seven Year Plan idea. We want to hear from faith groups and we are working closely with major national or international religious bodies such as the China Daoist Association, the International Baha'i Community; the World Council of Churches and the Association of Buddhists for the Environment.

But we believe that this idea of a Seven Year Plan for Generational Change is one which many will want to use regardless of any links with us. Already we have an array of websites such as Faiths United for Sustainable Energy ([www.fusenow.org](http://www.fusenow.org)), partner secular bodies such as Conservation International and religious media outlets committing to feature the idea and the Guide.

We want this to spread as far and as wide as possible and we invite you to use any networks you have to encourage faith communities to reflect on what they can do now. If you can let us know what feedback you get, wonderful, and we'll try and include it on our website or in a more substantial Guide that we'll be producing at the end of the year. But more important than that is just getting the idea out.

One particular strand that ARC will be working on is the idea of Eco-Twinning – faith groups linking up with their equivalents in parts of the world where they are experiencing the negative impact of climate change. Perhaps your church or mosque or temple or diocese already has a twinning arrangement overseas that you might expand to include an ecological element?

In November next year we will be celebrating all the responses and successes, and there will be more on this over the coming months.

Meanwhile, here we go!

With best wishes,  
ARC

[Link here for the main project page for the Seven Year Plans.](#)

Other Stories this month have been:

1. New resource materials from the Churches for Creation Time – which extends from the start of the Orthodox liturgical year on September 1 to the Feast Day of St Francis on October 4, via the traditional Anglican Harvest festival.
2. A reminder by the Religious G8 meeting that the eco-crisis is, above all, a crisis of the heart.
3. A new Catholic Schools Eco-Newsletter – this one about how one school for 7 to 13 year olds organised a full “Timetable Crunch” on Earth Day – including details of all the lessons in case your or your children’s school might like to follow suit
4. The environmental handbooks titled “Listening to the Earth”, written by Benedictine community in North America and published in English, Spanish and Portuguese last year with the help of ARC and the World Bank have been successful slow burners in the eco-publishing world.

In the past year, more than 1,300 downloads of the English version have been made from our website, with more than 2,600 of the Spanish and 4,900 of the Portuguese. We had some great, unsolicited comments from a headmaster of a Catholic state school in the UK a few weeks ago:

“It’s brilliant as a guide to what to do about the environment as a Catholic school – and the theological reasons why we should do something,” said Peter Wells of St Joseph’s Secondary School. “There’s a core in this book that means you can say to yourself, as a reader: ‘I can see this working in a practical way’ ... It shows how Christianity is a source of a rich understanding of the earth”