

# AFRICAN FAITH COMMITMENTS FOR A LIVING PLANET

## THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA Long-term plan on the environment – summary

### INTRODUCTION

The Methodist Church in Kenya grew out of the United Methodist Free Churches whose mission to East Africa arrived in Mombasa in 1862. In 1967 the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) became autonomous from the British Methodist Church and today has more than three million members, 384 full-time ministers, 1,000 congregations and 10 synods across Kenya. The MCK sponsors 553 schools and runs a university, three tertiary training institutes, one major hospital and 14 health centres. It has a Women's Fellowship, Men's Fellowship and Youth and Junior Church Conference fellowships.

MCK has previously been involved in environmental work by celebrating an Agriculture Week every year which culminates in a Sunday service. It has also offered agriculture training for rural farmers at several church-run rural agriculture training centres: Kaaga Bio Intensive, Marimanti Rural Training Centre and Ribe Rural Training Centre. MCK is participating in the development of a toolkit on the environment and sustainable development with ARC and the Kenyan Organization for Environmental Education for faith schools in Kenya. In May 2012 the Church also participated in training in 'Farming God's Way' – form of faith-based sustainable agriculture – organised by ARC with Care of Creation, Kenya.

In March 2012, 24 members of the core leadership of the Methodist Church in Kenya met for three days to develop a seven-year strategy and action plan for environmental conservation for the Church. This group included the Presiding Bishop of the Church, Rev. Dr Stephen Kanyaru, the Church's Conference Secretary, Bishop Isaya Deye, along with eight other Bishops and key representatives of each of the Church's Synods.

The group met at Kaaga Bio-intensive Agriculture Training Centre, Meru, with input from Care of Creation and support from ARC, the Vista Hermosa Foundation and the World Church Council, and drew up MCK's first environment policy. 'Stewardship of God's Earth' commits Methodists in Kenya "to be good stewards of God's creation by following sustainable practices in the conservation and use of resources in the Church and at home and in helping to develop more sustainable lifestyles".

The Church has established an environmental committee to promote eco-congregations and eco-schools, asking each Synod to draw up their own action plan. Six draft action plans were drawn up for Kaaga and Nkubu, Tharaka and Singwaya, Mombasa and Kilifi, Western Synod, Nairobi Synod and Nyambene and Miathene.

#### *Summary of the Synod Action Plans:*

#### ASSETS

- Plant trees and fruit trees and establish tree nurseries. Each diocese committed to a target number of trees to be planted in all church property;
- Set up farm demonstrations and farmer training on, for example, drip irrigation and establish an Intensive Agriculture Training Centre;

- Set up rainwater harvesting and trainings and promote small irrigation initiatives next to water sources along with community water treatment tanks;
- Create green fences on schools and properties;
- Begin soil and water conservation on church and individual pieces of land.

#### EDUCATION

- Create awareness in the Church about environmental conservation;
- Mobilise MCK schools to become eco-schools;
- Sensitise communities, pupils and students on water-borne diseases;
- Educate children on the importance of trees;
- Mainstream religious values in Education for Sustainable Development for all 533 schools sponsored by MCK in Kenya.

#### WISDOM (FAITH)

- Teach Biblical values on stewardship of God's earth;
- Teach about 'Farming God's Way';
- Set up retreat sites for environmental Biblical teachings;
- Use Methodist organisations – Junior church, Youth, Women and Men – to teach about water treatment, storage, conservation and proper use of water.

#### LIFESTYLES

- Promote beautification of homes, centres and churches;
- Set up kitchen gardens and tree planting groups;
- Promote traditional seed banking and protect indigenous trees;
- Encourage use of energy saving stoves, solar, biogas and food warmers;
- Teach on traditional African beliefs on the environment;
- Encourage income generation from environmental projects;
- Promote healthy eating habits, nutrition and healthy living.

#### MEDIA AND ADVOCACY

- Organise creation awareness seminars and radio programmes on environmental conservation with features in church magazines and other print media;
- Participate in International Environment Day celebrations.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

- Create links and coalitions with other churches, NGO agencies, private sector and government agencies.

#### CELEBRATIONS

- Hold annual Agricultural Week celebrations, promoted through poems and drama;
- Organise sightseeing nature trips and learning trips;
- Promote Information Exchange Forums and participate in international days such as Environment or Water Day.

*This plan and environmental policy has the support of the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Kenya, Rev Dr Kanyaru M'Impwii Stephen, and the Bishop of each Synod. It was ratified by the Standing Committee of the Synod in June 2012.*

This plan was launched at ARC's Many Heavens, One Earth, Our Continent celebration held in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2012