

# Green Church

Prof.Dr.Mathew Koshy Punnackadu  
Convener of CSI Synod Ecological concerns committee

Christians, at least in part, seem to be responsible for the present environmental crisis, primarily because of their misunderstanding of the scripture. Jesus Christ, our saviour, guide, and mentor, tells us to repent, love God and our neighbour. The concept of neighbour include the whole creation. Just as we meet Christ in our human neighbour, we meet Christ in every part of creation. In all aspects of its life, the Eco-Church fellowship will strive to re-establish the fundamental spiritual relationship of humanity with God, the Earth and all its creatures. A basic tenet of its evangelism is found in II Corinthians 5:19 which reads, "God is reconciling the whole world — or cosmos — through Christ." We encourage parishes to incorporate ecological concerns in their order of worship and include both advocacy and direct action for social justice and the integrity of creation in missional activities. We encourage the active participation of our fellow Christians, and all people of good will through prayer, partnership, and involvement, which will help humanity to return to an eco-friendly life style

CSI is the first Church in India to incorporate Environmental concerns in their ministry. We are really proud to understand that Environmental concerns committee has been functioning since 1992. At the synod level, hectic efforts were being made to propagate the environmental concerns to the grass root level. I have taken the initiative of editing the five Eco-books published by CSI. We introduced the idea of Green Diocesan Award /Green Parish Award/Green School Awards. The Awards are for propagating the idea to grass root level. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Alliance for Religions and Conservation (ARC) has honoured the ecological contributions and long term commitment of CSI in protecting the life in this planet by giving an award on 3rd December 2009. This event is one of the historic moments of CSI. We could receive the award on 3rd June from Mr. Baan Ki Moon, Secretary General of UN in presence of Prince Philip in a function organized at Windsor Castle, London. We are thankful to UNDP and ARC for the royal honour bestowed upon us.

- 1) Without a good organizational set up , the Green diocese programmes cannot be carried out effectively. Diocesan Ecological Committee, District level/Area level Committees and Parish level committees are essential for a good organizational set up. Then the decisions can be implemented up to the grass root level effectively. Only then it will become a people's movement and participatory in nature. With out the full participation of the members the Green Church movement will not be effective. The programmes should have a continuity.

- 2) A sound theological backing is essential for our Green Church Movement. There are so many environmental organizations in our country. There is no meaning in duplicating their work. For us it is a ministry. It is a part of our faith. Hence members have to be taught about the faith aspect of the environmental ministry. The Eco-biblical scholars are now using the word 'mutual custodians' instead of 'stewards'. Earth is a community of inter-connected living things which are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival. The Earth is a balanced and diverse domain requiring responsible custodians who function as partners with, rather than rulers over, the Earth to sustain its balance and diversity
- 3) The programmes of the Green diocese should have to be eco-friendly. An eco friendly church cannot use plastic cups in their programmes, toxic chemicals for cultivation, exploit the natural resources, etc. Our programmes and policies ought to have an eco-touch.
- 4) The churchyard of a Green parish ought to be Green. Churchyard is a place not only for us but all the creatures to worship our lord. The flora and fauna of the churchyard should be conserved.

In the book of Deuteronomy, God, speaking through Moses, says, "I have set before you life and prosperity, death and adversity. Choose life." (Deut. 30:15,20) In the story of Noah told in Genesis, God makes a great Covenant, or binding promise, to humanity and to creation. God has flooded the world, but as he brings Noah to dry land he promises never to destroy all life in such a way again. As the Bible says, God makes the covenant with "every living creature of every kind that is found on earth." And the rainbow is given to be a perpetual reminder of this promise. Now we need a new covenant. We need to covenant that we will not now destroy all life. We hold the power of life or death. We are altering the very balances of life on earth, polluting with toxics and poisoning through misuse. We have already swept away countless "living creatures of every kind that are found on the earth. " Unless we change, we, not God, will destroy life. Unlike God however, we cannot bring to life again, nor can we create a new heaven and a new earth. Ninety percent of the chemicals currently on sale have never been assessed for their wider environmental and health impact. Which means that we do not know for sure what they do. But we do know that their impact stretches far beyond our own communities and generations. This is why we need a new covenant based upon the one God made with Noah. This covenant is between us and our neighbours; between us and God; between us and the rest of nature. It is a covenant to the generations who have not yet been born, yet whom we are already endangering by the poisons we are producing now. It is a covenant between us and those who came before us who helped preserve the very balance of creation itself.