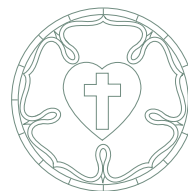


GOD'S CREATION

– our home

FAITH, HOPE, AND ACTION

A message from the Bishops' Conference of the Church of Norway
about our Christian calling in the encounter with the climate crisis



Bispemøtet



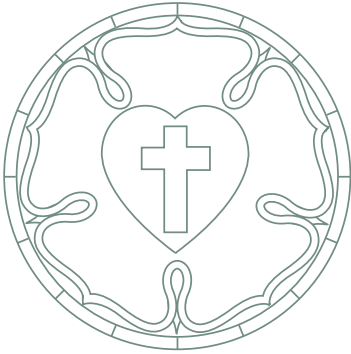
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Foreword

We need inspiration and courage to meet the climate challenges. The Bishops' Conference believes that this is precisely what the liturgy gives us. We have chosen in this document to reflect on the great challenge and crisis of our time in the light of the various elements in the liturgy, because we see clearly that the climate crisis concerns our faith in God and our life in God's world. Besides this, we can see in a new way how our lives find expression when we celebrate the liturgy, and how God meets us there in the midst of life – just as this life is, and therefore in the encounter with this crisis. This is a different way of speaking about this crisis than we have done previously. We believe that this makes the message to us clearer – and even more challenging.

The beautiful and fine-tuned interplay between species diversity and the conditions that make life possible is created by God. God has entrusted us with the stewardship of the creation, and human life is interwoven with it and dependent upon it (Gen 1:28 ff.). Now we raise our eyes and recognize our responsibility for the earth.

The balance in nature is disturbed. We know that human beings are responsible for changes in the climate and for the pollution that destroys lives.

The creation is like a vast web in which everything is interconnected, woven in one single piece. The creation bears God's name, and it was God who set his stamp upon it by speaking the very first creative words: «Let there be light!» And God saw that what he had created was good (Gen 1:31)

The human being is a part of this vast web of life and lives in an interplay with all that is created. God creates the human being from the earth and blows the breath of life into his nostrils (Gen 2:7). The human being is a part of nature and is therefore dependent on a close connection to all that is created.

The church must constantly remind people that we are called to show the same care for the earth that God has shown us through the fine-tuned interconnection in the creation. The fight for climate justice is a part of the task to which Jesus Christ calls us.

In the liturgy, we praise and thank God our Creator, Redeemer, and Life-Giver. We seek God in prayer. We ask for forgiveness. The hope that is proclaimed in the Gospel gives us courage in the encounter with the climate crisis, and it gives us strength for the actions that are demanded of us. There is a vital force in the fellowship that is gathered around word and sacrament. It is there that we are called to deal with the situation and break out into the future, taking our stance together with all those who are willing to accept a shared responsibility for our one earth. Eternal God, we pray:

«Show us your way, and give us the will to take your way».

*The Bishops' Conference
February 2021*

Opening words

*«When I look at your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars
that you have established;
what are human beings
that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?»
(Psalm 8)*

It is here that we begin, in the encounter with God.

When we lift up our eyes to the night sky, many of us can recognize how small we human beings are. The sky is covered with brilliant stars. The moon shines towards the earth. The aurora borealis rips open the dark night sky, the midnight sun shines for twenty-four hours a day. The wonder and joy at what we see turns into words, into praise. *«When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established, what are human beings – that you care for them?»*

The earth belongs to God, but it is also our home.

The earth and nature are a gift from God, beautiful and rich in resources, but at the same time vulnerable. We are called to be stewards of what we have received in solidarity with human beings elsewhere in the world and with the generations that come after us, and with respect for the intrinsic value of other living beings. As human beings, we are a part of the creation and share life on earth with all that lives. Nature is a beautiful, but also a terrifying setting for the struggle for survival. And both



human beings and other living things often live in a brutal struggle for survival.

Everywhere in creation, however, we see traces of God's vitality and goodness. Look at a field in autumn, at trees bearing fruit, at the sea with its fish. Look at the newborn baby filling its lungs with air for the first time and crying out! Look at everything that grows and develops. Look at the butterfly that for a tiny moment lies almost weightless in your hand. There are traces of God in our daily life.

God continues to create, and continuously upholds the creation. God is not only the origin of the universe: God is at work in the whole of creation even today. Another Psalm in the Bible describes this in beautiful words, as follows:

«You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal. [...] You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart» (Psalm 104:10 ff.).

In the Sami tradition, the same word is used for creation and for blessing: «sivdnidit.» This is a religious praxis that can be found through the whole of Sápmi (the Sami areas in Russia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway). This praxis is mostly carried out by thinking or uttering some words of blessing; it sometimes also includes small rituals, such as making the sign of the cross. Sivnidit is a praxis that belongs to daily life and that underlines the close connection between the creation and God's own self. It emphasizes that we encounter God in creation. It can be a way of saying one's evening prayer, or grace before and after meals, or a prayer on setting out on a journey.

As human beings, we are God's stewards here on earth, but we are also co-creators. This entails watching over God's sacred creation. We must take responsibility for the survival of life on earth. We must have respect and consideration for plants and animals. We are to administer the earth's resources and raw materials in a way that is helpful and oriented to the future.

Good stewardship does not mean opposing renewal or progress. Our work is a continuous process that develops in a creative variety that includes research, education, and innovation, and that is continually renewed in the encounter with new challenges. Such steps forward are also good opportunities that God gives us, and they must be encouraged, though not at the cost of the intrinsic value of the creation and its variety and sustainability, nor at the cost of the integrity and dignity of human beings.

We have a duty to distribute the goods of creation justly and with respect for nature's intrinsic value. Future generations must be able to live on an earth that gives them enough to eat, clean water to drink, and the possibility of leading safe and good lives.

When we relate to all that is created, we are also relating to God.

*Good God, you who give life to all that lives,
we praise you for the beauty of the earth,
and for all that tells us that you are good.
Here before your face we pray: Give us ears that hear,
hearts that are grateful and hands that serve,
so that we can hear your word, praise you for your goodness,
and bear witness in word and action to your mighty deeds.
(From the church's liturgy)*

Confession of sin

«He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature.

So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.’ So he hurried down and was glad to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, ‘He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.’

Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, ‘Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost» (Luke 19,1–10).

Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus led to great changes in the tax collector’s life. The story shows us that we must confront our failures and our greed. It shows the possibility of starting anew with trust in God’s forgiveness and reconciliation. It can give us a new start and a new orientation for our life.

*Forgive us, God,
that we do not care when nature is destroyed,
and instead want to make an exaggerated profit
with no respect for life.
Teach us by your grace
to love all your creatures, our sisters and brothers,
and to take care of life in all its variety.*

In one of the first narratives in the Bible, Adam and Eve hide after they have disobeyed God’s will. They do not dare to stand in the presence of God, and God himself must call them back to himself.

We must meet God and other people face to face and confess what is against God’s will. Sin is the lie that the human being lives for oneself, and this falsehood leads us away from life and fellowship. The destruction of nature, the climate crisis, and distrust among people – these are consequences of the reality of sin.

Nature is rebelling against the human beings who have so long tormented, exploited, and oppressed it. In the encounter with the crisis that now faces us, it is easy to see the consequences of the wrong that we human beings have done. Both climatic changes and the loss of biological diversity are the result of development and action shaped by human beings, in connection with our excessive consumption. This means that we share in responsibility for other people’s suffering and for the destruction of nature.

We need to realize that many of our political and economic choices damage the earth and destroy the climate. We are in a historical context in which the Christian idea of stewardship has not only been used to legitimate a good administration of the earth’s resources: it has also led to an over-exploitation that is not sustainable for the environment in the short or longer term.

We need to turn to God, as individuals and as church, as part of a nation and as humankind, and confess our errors and our sin.



*Set us free to serve you, protect the creation,
and meet our neighbor with love.
God, you know and love us all.
You want us to take care of each other and of the earth.
You know that we fail, and that we rebel against you.
Forgive us and help us,
for Jesus' sake.
(from the church's liturgy)*

The Gospels relate that people who meet Jesus get a new beginning. A change occurs. Jesus' words give strength for a new life. His words resounded with a summons to a radical change of people's way of life, as he himself said: «Go, and sin no more». We are met by God's grace, which sets us free and calls us to take new choices in the best interests of our neighbor and of the whole of creation.

«For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us» (Psalm 103:11–12).

Kyrie

«They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stood still and said, 'Call him here.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.' So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way». (Mark 10:46–52)

A blind beggar from Jericho has given us the words for our shared cry for help: «Kyrie eleison!» Many persons who were in distress cried out these words when they met Jesus, and this cry has found a place in many of the church's liturgies down through church history. Now, we share in the blind man's cry for help. Now, it is we who cry: «Kyrie eleison!» We need God to have mercy on us – as a nation, as humankind, and as the creation.

The climate changes pose a threat to the daily bread of millions of people. They affect plants and trees, rainfall and the alternations of the seasons. The temperature rises, the water heats up, the ice melts, we experience more drought and extreme weather phenomena. This is already a threat to many people's lives. The sea becomes acid and new sicknesses occur. The climate panel of the UN has shown us that we face a catastrophic global warming. Action is urgent. The indigenous peoples of the world are particularly exposed, because their way of life is threatened

by the development of consumption and by the climate changes to which this leads.

We must therefore accept the necessity of huge political and economic changes in order to fight against the causes of this climate change. This must be followed up in decisions, in concrete plans, and in praxis. We are a part of one and the same reality. The emissions that have already taken place have had vast consequences for our world today, and the risk that these effects may become irreversible is growing, as the climate changes intensify.

We know that global warming undermines the world's food security, economic sustainability, and social stability. Threats to security that exist in many vulnerable states and regions are strengthened. In almost every country, the discrepancies and the injustice in the distribution of resources and welfare benefits are increasing. If we do not succeed in cutting emissions significantly in the coming years, there is a very high risk that the climate changes will have catastrophically irreparable consequences.

The climate changes are one of the greatest threats to the natural diversity in the world. The rise in temperature and the change in the amounts of rainfall affect the living conditions of the species on earth and will impact both the natural diversity and ecosystems.

The loss of natural diversity is due to a large extent to human action. The UN Report «The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment» (MA) states that changes brought about by human beings in the ecosystems in the last fifty years have taken place

more quickly than in any other period in human history. In our times, species are becoming extinct more than 100 to 1,000 times more quickly than would have been the case under natural circumstances. Between 10 and 100 species become extinct every day. The loss of natural diversity proves to have a self-reinforcing «snowball» effect. When one species dies out, this affects the living conditions of the species in its environment, so that they too are at risk of dying out. This demonstrates the unsustainability of today's development. The various species have an intrinsic value, and we have no right to eliminate them, irrespective of whether or not a species appears useful to us here and now.

The Bible's affirmation that «the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now» (Rom 8:22) has taken on a completely new dimension. Ours is a time marked by great challenges and crises, and these have an impact on each other. The climate crisis and the loss of biological diversity lead to greater inequalities and more poverty, which in turn is intensified by the pandemic. Together with war and unrests, this too is one of the causes of the increasing numbers of refugees and migrants.

We know, from various parts of the world, that many are already victims of the climate crises. People in the Pacific region find that they have to flee because the soil on which they grow their food is drowned by the rising sea, and the water slowly but surely takes a stranglehold on village after village. In other places, agriculture is affected by the unpredictable alternation between extreme drought and heavy rainfall. In Norway, the traditional reindeer husbandry of the Sami faces great challenges. The loss of grazing pastures is destroying the very special basis of their livelihood. This is both a problem of justice and a part of the climate challenge.

As human beings, we grieve over the loss of flora and fauna, and of the variety that helps to enrich our lives and our existence. Climate grief is a growing human reaction to climate changes and the loss of biological diversity. There is a

continually increasing awareness that our planet is threatened, because something that was fresh and vital is disappearing. This is a profound and serious insight; but it can help us to see what it is important and necessary for us to do.

The climate crisis affects the very center of the church's faith and life. We stand together in an ecumenical fellowship with our Christian sisters and brothers, and in a fellowship with people of all cultures and religions, and we remember that «if one member suffers, all suffer together with it» (1 Cor 12:26).

God, our heavenly Father!

You who sustain the world, and hold the heaven on high.

We call to you – we, whom you made in your own image, but who in all respects have gone astray on your path and have strayed from your way.

We have got lost in vast dark woods and cannot find the path home.

We call to you for help.

Draw us up from the dark to the hills where the light shines and let us see the earth in your holy light.



Gloria

*You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills;*

*giving drink to every wild animal;
the wild asses quench their thirst.*

*By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.*

*From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.*

*You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use
(Psalm 104:10–14).*

The church in all periods of history has praised and thanked God for the creation. We find many expressions of this in the Book of Psalms. People across the whole world still express their faith in prayers and songs and hymns. Praise is our response. For a church that thanks God for the creation, there is a short path to taking an active part in the environmental struggle. The Canticle of the Sun, a song written by Saint Francis, expresses this in a special way. Here is a literal translation of some verses:

*May you be praised, my Lord, with all your creatures,
especially with my lord and brother the Sun
who is the day, and you give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor. [...]*

*May you be praised, my Lord, for our sister, mother Earth
who sustains us and governs us
and produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*



Baptism

«Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, «Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.» Jesus answered him, «Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.» Nicodemus said to him, «How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?» Jesus answered, «Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit». (John 3:1–5).

Water is a precondition of all life on earth. Water is a part of the creation and a part of our daily living. Water is an ingredient in what we drink and eat, and it makes up a large part of our bodies. We use water to wash ourselves and to protect ourselves against illness. Rain gives water to the earth, making it green and fruitful. It links us to everything that lives on earth and to the cycle of nature. We began our life in water, protected by the amniotic fluid in our mother's womb. In baptism, water is used in a sacred action.

The Bible contains many stories about how God acted in and through water. Water can both give and take life. God created the world through water (Gen 1; 2 Pet 3:5). Noah and those with him were saved from the waters of the Flood; and the rainbow was set up as a sign of God's faithfulness (Gen 7–8; 1 Pet 1:20–21). God rescued the people of Israel through the Sea of Reeds (Exod 14; 1 Cor 10:1–2). Jesus promised living water to the woman at Jacob's well (John 4:10–15). A river with the water of life will spring out from God's throne (Rev 22:1).

Norway's seas and coastal regions are rich in resources. Human activity and climate changes increasingly threaten this variety. Our fisheries and the banquet of food presented by the sea are

menaced by an exploitation of the sea as if it were inexhaustible, where financial profit counts for more than a sustainable use. Huge quantities of rubbish are dumped in the sea. Plastic and other materials that are degradable only to a small extent can remain in the environment for hundreds of years, with damage to both animals and human beings. It is estimated that in the world as a whole, between 8 and 12 million tons of plastic end up in the sea each year.

Water is the basis of our life, and at the same time a threat. The water in Christian baptism is a sign that contains both life and death. Baptism does not protect us from wickedness, sin, and destructive forces. It gives us a promise and a hope that the forces of life are the strongest, and that God forgives us and cleanses us from all that is wrong.

God wants fellowship with us human beings. He wants us to live in fellowship with each other. Jesus Christ is the one who binds together heaven and earth, eternity and daily life, here and now. Baptism integrates us into a global fellowship in the whole worldwide church, together with many who suffer because of injustice, sickness, and climate changes. Baptism's hope in the resurrection breaks through the boundaries of this life and challenges us to lead a life in responsibility and love. Love gives us commitment and care for society, for our fellow human beings, and for the world for which we are appointed stewards. Baptism is a call to action.

«Merciful God, we thank you that the water of baptism, through your word, is a source of grace in which you forgive us our sin, save us from the power of death, and give us a promise of eternal life. Send your Spirit, so that those who are baptized may rise up to the new life with Jesus Christ, our Lord».
(from the liturgy of baptism)

Renunciation and faith

«I renounce the devil and all works and his entire being.

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,
a holy universal Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen».
(The Apostolic Creed)*

We all know something about the struggle between good and evil. We are called to say no to what is evil, and yes to what is good. Yielding to sin's falsehood destroys life and all our relationships to God, our fellow human beings, nature, and our own selves. When we celebrate baptism, we put words to what is evil and is against God's will, and we distance ourselves from this. We do so in fellowship at every baptism in the liturgy, when we renounce the devil and confess the faith.

The climate challenges concern our faith in the triune God. The confession of faith in the triune God anchors our life in an all-encompassing totality.

Faith links us to the coming into existence both of the world and of our own selves, but also to our daily life. God gives life and loves all his creatures. Martin Luther puts it as follows: *«God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. [...] And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all ...»* (Luther's Explanation of the First Article of the Creed in the Small Catechism).

Jesus, God's Son, became one of us. In the mystery of the incarnation, God takes up human nature into himself and identifies with all that is created. God bears the broken and the damaged through the wounds on his own body. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we are given vitality and hope for our task as stewards of God's varied grace.

God's Spirit gives life to the whole of creation. The Spirit creates in the church a varied fellowship from all peoples, cultures, and social groups. The church is to be a sign of the reconciliation of all of humanity, and of the world.

Our common faith in God gives us courage and hope to fight for a better future. In confidence in the new creation by the triune God in us and with us, we can break out into the song of praise that professes our faith:

*«Praised be God our Creator, we exult at your work.
Praised be Jesus our Redeemer, you show us the way to life.
Praised be the Spirit, our Comforter, you fill us with joy and peace».
(From the church's liturgy)*





Proclamation

*«He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation;*

*for in him all things
in heaven and on earth were created,*

*things visible and invisible,
whether thrones or dominions
or rulers or powers –
all things have been created through him and for him.*

*He himself is before all things,
and in him all things hold together».*
(Letter to the Colossians 1:15–7)

The church is charged to proclaim the Gospel about Jesus Christ that shows us God's greatness, God's loving will and grace. The proclamation is meant to interpret and communicate what God's law and gospel mean for human beings and for the entire creation in our days.

The gospel's message is a message about hope! This hope is anchored in God's love for us and for all that is created. This is why the Christian hope must also communicate God's love for the whole of God's creation. When Jesus met people, he always gave courage to face life and faith in the future to those who needed it. The people who met Jesus received a new way of looking at their own lives, and he gave them courage to set out on new paths and strength to walk on these paths. We still experience this today. Through God's Word, we can see ourselves and the world with new eyes – with the eyes of love, of faith, and of hope.

We stand together with Christians throughout the world in the work of limiting the climate changes. We can counteract both fear and despondency when we take part in a committed collaboration with others and hold fast to our calling as Christ's disciples. Through interpretation, a deeper study, and the use of

the Bible's words, and through letting the spirituality of earlier Christians inspire us, we can together use the earth for our shared joy and benefit. Bishop Ambrose wrote, as long ago as the fourth century: «The earth is to be used by all, all of them together. It knows no rich persons, but only poor ones whom it feeds. It is not out of your own possessions that you give to the poor. You are giving back a part of what belongs to God. The earth is to be used by all.»

When we encounter crises, it is easy to become egocentric and see only what concerns our own selves. God's unconditional love summons us to love our neighbor and the whole of creation. We cannot love God and our neighbor without taking care of God's creation.

We need a shared political will to take decisions that protect the environment and the basis of all life. This is anchored in the goals of sustainability and justice. We require solutions and attitudes that benefit everyone.

The Bible's texts can give courage and hope, so that we tackle the work that lies ahead. God's Word can give us strength to be a counterculture in today's society. Moderation, solidarity, and humility are words that we need to make our own again – words to which we give a new legitimacy.

*Give us, God, a vision of our world
as your love wants to reshape it;
a world where the weak are protected, not exploited,
a world where no one is hungry or poor,
a world where goods and resources are shared, so that everyone can
benefit from them,
a world where nations, peoples, and cultures live in tolerance and
mutual respect,
a world where peace builds upon justice and where justice is
governed by love.
Give us courage and inspiration to build this world,
through Jesus Christ, our God.*

Intercession

*«Pray then in this way:
Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen».*
(Matthew 6:9–13)

«What is faith, other than prayer?» said Martin Luther. Prayer is our conversation with God. A prayer can be ready-formulated in an act of liturgical worship or a prayer-book – and a prayer can be wordless, a sigh, or a spontaneous expression of what most deeply concerns us here and now. This also applies to our encounter with the challenges of the climate crisis.

«Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God» (Phil 4:6).

Prayer is extremely important both in Christian worship and in our daily lives as Christians. The Bible relates that Jesus too prayed, often out in the open spaces. The evangelist Luke describes this as follows. «He would withdraw to desert places and pray» (Luke 5:16). Through prayer and silence and contemplation, Jesus conducted this intimate conversation with God.

Prayer unites us in a worldwide Christian fellowship. When we pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us, we become part of a global fellowship and can realize that we are part of a common movement towards that which is good and right.

Jesus taught us to pray. Christians from every land and Christians through all the ages have sought God with these words.

They have prayed that God's kingdom may come and that God's will may be done on earth. In times of unrest and uncertainty, it is especially good and necessary to come together as Christians in a fellowship that embraces various churches. Hope is directed towards what we do not yet see. This is a hope for change, for what can happen, for what must happen. Hope can be formed in prayer to God. Our eyes are turned to what God wants of this world, of the church, of us. «Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.» This is how Jesus taught us to pray.

The intercession in the liturgy is oriented both to heaven and to earth. The liturgical elements in worship embrace many more persons than those who are gathered in the act of worship. In the liturgy, we come before the Creator of heaven and earth, and pray for the church and for every human being. These prayers also contain petitions for all that is created, and express the close link between the Creator and the created.

When we look at the climate crisis, which is a serious threat to both nature and life, including our own lives, we ask that we may receive the courage and strength to live as a sign that all that is created belongs to God.

We pray for a just distribution of the earth's resources. We pray for decision-makers and governing authorities, that there may be the political will to make progress in measures regarding the climate, so that international agreements may be implemented.

We pray that we may have the insight and the will to change our lifestyle, our daily routines, and our choices, which are sometimes unthinking and often harmful. This concerns food, consumption, travel, the use of water and energy, and the consumption of many material goods. We pray for help to make changes in our lives, so that we can live more simply and with a greater respect for each other and for the creation.

We pray in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Life-Giver.

Collection

*«Eternal God, yours is the earth and what fills it.
All that we own belongs to you.
From what is your own, we give back to you.
Receive us and our gifts in Jesus' name. Amen».
(From the church's liturgy)*

Jesus said: *«I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another»(John 13:34–35).*

From the very earliest days of the church, when the communities met in people's homes, they put Jesus' words into practice. They shared everything, so that no one might suffer. They took care of widows and orphans, and gave to the poor. In this way, they showed that love of neighbor and practical care ought to be an important part of the community's fellowship.

To share what we have is an ancient Christian praxis. The church has a special obligation to demonstrate and to realize the actions and symbols of the love of neighbor. In recent years, we have seen the development of a fellowship of action in the love of neighbor, not least among the world's young people in the encounter with the global climate crisis. We see this as a sign of hope in our times.

The love of neighbor gives human beings vitality, courage to face life, and a hope for the future. Love is not *«rude. It does not insist on its own way. It does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth»(1 Cor 13:5–6).*

To be the church in one of the world's richest countries entails obligations. We must recognize that our own prosperity is often based on economic structures that contribute to injustice in the world. For several decades, Norway has administered economic wealth that is a consequence of the extraction of crude oil. Oil and gas are burned and become a part of the world's total climate gas emissions. This means that we too



have a special responsibility to contribute resources and finance to the development of new sources of energy and to reduce our emissions and limit the further destruction of the environment.

It is our duty as a society and as individuals to give a share in our affluence. We see the need for the Norwegian society, with the economic resources of our fellowship, to increase its contributions to climate work – to the benefit of everyone.



The lord's supper

«Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood'» (Luke 22:19–20).

In the Bible, God's presence is often described as a meal. To sit around the same table and share the pleasures of a meal is seen there as a sign of God's hospitality and generosity, and as something that creates fellowship. The fruit of the earth is shared with everyone. In the Bible, the grapes and the wine are an expression of fellowship and joy. They are also an expression of God's gift to us – we meet and receive the crucified and risen Jesus in the bread and the wine.

In the Lord's Supper, people from the whole world and from every generation gather together around the same table of the Lord.

We belong to a worldwide church. Whenever we gather for worship, we confess this global fellowship that stretches out across all boundaries and continents: *«The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread» (1 Cor 10:16–17).*

In the celebration of the Lord's Supper, we confess and we know that we form a vast fellowship that takes part in the same prayer of thanksgiving and shares in the same bread. This meal also contains Jesus' own invitation to fellowship, solidarity, and reconciliation. From the earliest times of the church, sharing the bread and wine of the eucharist has been connected to

sharing the food we eat and the water we drink. We present the fruit of the earth and of human beings' work.

In the fellowship of the Lord's Supper, we stand together to realize the commission given by Jesus. As a highpoint in the church's liturgy, it gives us strength to encounter our daily life. We are sent out into the world with a diaconal task as Jesus' disciples. Words must become the action of love of neighbor in our encounter with other people and with society. What we receive in this fellowship can transform both ourselves and the world that God loves.

In every piece of the bread we share, there also lies hidden a hope for a just world. In the eucharistic meal, in the bread and the wine, there lies a taste of a better future. The Lord's Supper is not an individual action: it raises us up into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and a relationship with each other. In this way, we are reminded of our relationship to the entire creation. In the Lord's Supper, we proclaim the death of Christ until he comes. Jesus' death on the cross makes God one with those who suffer and are oppressed. Through Jesus, we receive a share in the salvation that God gives, in the act whereby God sets us free to serve God and to give dignity to the oppressed and raise them up.

*We thank you, God of wisdom,
for the profound secret of your meal.*

The bread we have broken is one.

Your Son has given his life for one world and one humankind.

*We ask you: Help us to hear the cry that you have heard,
to see the grace that you have seen, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.
(From the church's liturgy)*

Blessing and dismissal

*«May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord lift up his face upon you and give you peace».*

The blessing is spoken at the close of every act of worship. The word «blessing» means «to speak well of.» God's good words follow us out, after the liturgy is over. At the same time, God's blessing is more than words. To be blessed by God is to be borne by God's love in our life. To be blessed does not mean a life without worries, cares, and distress; it means that God is with us on every day and on every kind of day. The close connection in Sami between the word for creating and blessing, «sivdnidit,» helps us to see even more clearly that the earth and the creation are encompassed by blessing.

The blessing sends us out with strength and courage to meet the tasks and challenges that await us. The blessing has a universal language that meets people over the whole earth at various times. This is how it has been ever since Aaron lifted his hands and blessed God's people.

Blessing and praising are closely linked. We can give God our praise as thanksgiving for the rich blessing we receive. God encompasses us with his grace and peace. It is God's love that forgives, that draws us to him again and again. It is God's peace that gives calm and rest, no matter how hard and difficult life can be.

We are sent back out into our daily life, out of God's house where we have gathered for worship. We can live in the blessing, with renewed love, faith, and hope.

This is the close of the liturgy and the beginning of our further service of God. The greatness and beauty of the creation always bear witness to us of God's love:

*Blessed be
the earth
the beautiful blue planet,
our home in the cosmos.
Blessed be
all goodwill
honesty and loving actions.*

*Blessed be
the light
in the human heart.
May it grow strong,
embrace the darkness
and give birth to peace and reconciliation*

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A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

The earth is under threat. The climate crisis that affects our planet threatens our existence, destroys the diversity of the earth, and creates vast global differences between people. The church's task is to give hope and courage, both locally and globally.

It is only by acting together that we can do what is needed. We must find solutions together and bear the burdens together. Our task is to be a critical voice, but at the same time to take part in a constructive cooperation with political and economic decision-makers in order to consolidate the path towards a green shift local, nationally, and globally. The church must challenge the structures that consolidate injustice and inequality during the climate crisis.

The Bishops' Conference calls for a broad-based dialogue about what is needed, if we are to prevent the total crisis of the creation. We hope that this brochure will give inspiration to act for a good and just stewardship of the creation.

The brochure uses the different elements of the liturgy to unfold the various aspects of the encounter between Christian faith, the creation, and the climate challenges. The liturgy contains every aspect of life and gives strength and courage to meet these challenges.



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