

[EarthBeat](#)

[Faith](#)



Light illuminates a crater during the sunrise at Haleakala National Park on the Hawaiian island of Maui Oct. 9, 2018. (CNS/Navesh Chitrakar, Reuters)



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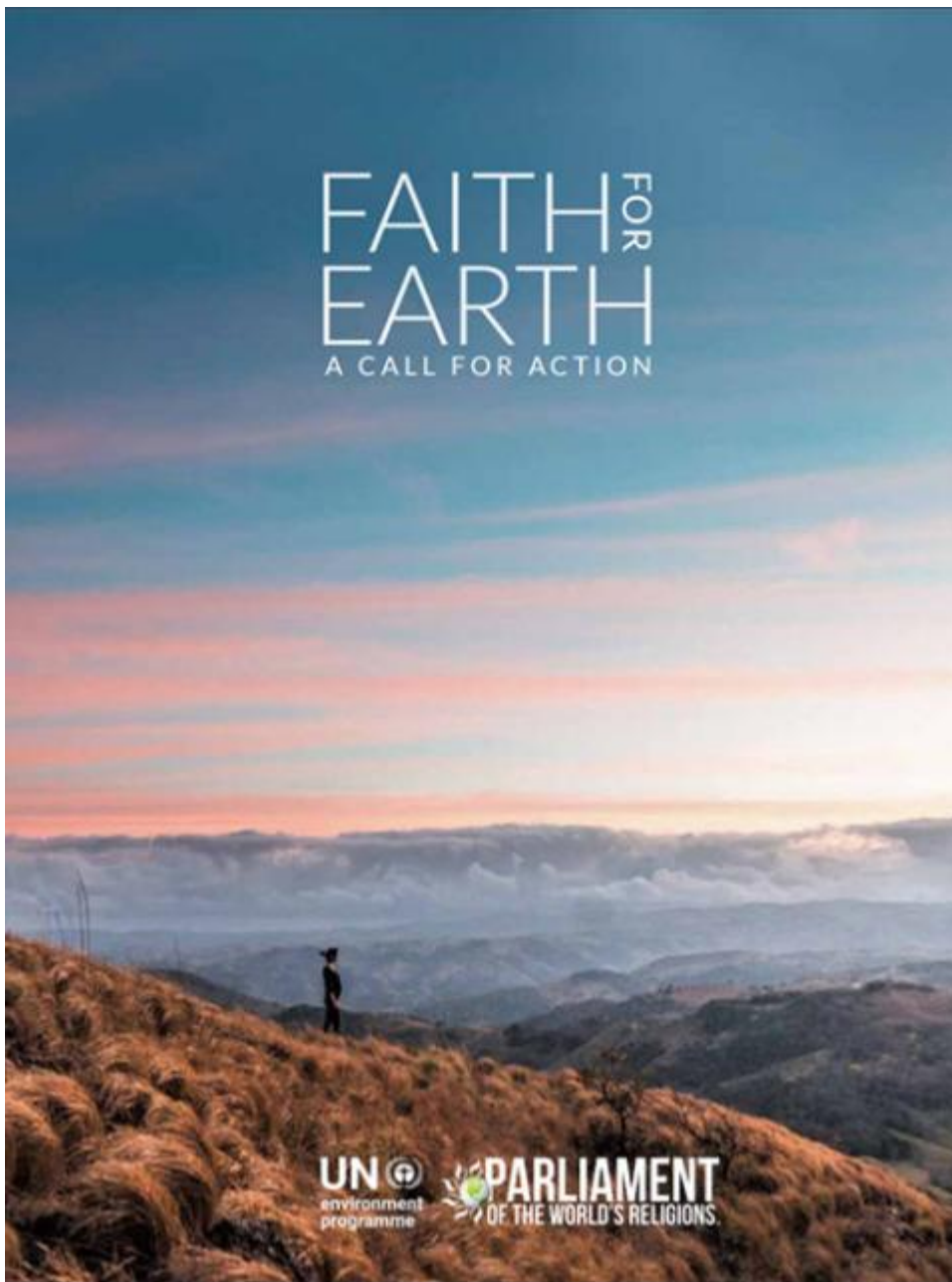
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The world is home to many religions, yet there is common ground in the belief that the Earth, itself a common home, must be respected and protected in the face of growing environmental threats.



"Scientific evidence documenting the crisis is undeniable and grows with every passing day. At the same time, there has been a surge of faith-based action and advocacy on behalf of the environment from religious groups everywhere. The response is coming from every corner of the world, reflecting both the diversity of the ways we define our relationship with nature and the essential unity of values at the core of all our hope," the book states.

It adds, "It is time, as never before, to call on our faith, our values, our religious teachings and traditions — on Faith for Earth. And it is time for action."

The book's faith section was authored by Kusumita P. Pedersen, professor emerita of religious studies at St. Francis College, in Brooklyn Heights, New York. It presents teachings on creation and the environment from a dozen faiths, including Christianity, Buddhism, Baha'i, Sikhism, Daoism and Islam, as well as a number of Indigenous traditions.

MOTHER EARTH
 Many religions, as well as the best of superstitions or reduction of the individual, person or community, are for the sake of the world, through the moral passage — faith, justice, stewardship, death, and rebirth. We have no choice but to live as those who are here, and each one of us is the beginning.

All over Africa, Earth is regarded as the female spirit, the Mother Earth. There is respect to care for her, her body, and her life. Especially, we will not kill the land without her permission. We ask her permission again before digging to bury the dead so that her child may return to her womb. Some Yoruba even believe in the spirit of the Earth, and a farmer or craftsman would not do his job, he is asked to breathe life to create and to create again.

When a great festival and ceremony is planned to honor someone, water is given and poured over the ground while calling the name of the God, Mother Earth, and the ancestors, and honoring their blessings upon all present. Families and friends play an important part in the African rites. When in a place a person does her best, she is doing her best — work being all in the great effort.

The one of African religion is in the presence between the human, the spirit world, and the environment. In African belief, the spirit world is not separate from Earth. It is all in all. We are made by the spirit of Earth and are changed with the spirit of Earth. It is a larger world than the one we live in. It is all in all. (African will not take any Earth to be dead.)

— (from *Indigenous Traditions*)

Uluru
 The Aboriginal people consider it much more than a place. As a site, it is sacred, ancient, historic — all were formed by the same substance as the mountains and valleys in the land, water, sky, Country in Uluru with its own speaking language and following its own nature without the shape of this substance to become rock, water, earth. Country is broad, deep, all, and cannot be, and cannot leave, words, and come for the people in the Country in their culture, identity, Country is all.

The Aboriginal people, having begun when the world did, the Ancestors taught the people the ways of being in Country, and those ways were called the Law. It was Law that sustained the well of life, the things contributed by Ancestors, and the natural relationships established. The Ancestors formed the center that was the world. Life and the knowledge of how to care for it, was created at the same time. The Law never existed in Uluru. Age after the light of creation grew there, and existence was formed. (Uluru was)

In the end, all that needs to uphold the pattern that sustains the world good and all that needs to sustain it is the same end, to the beginning, the Law of Country is the light that sustains the world, and if Country and the world, is in the light, then it is the light that sustains the world.

— (from *Indigenous Traditions*)

Body Paint
 This would not be always as we know it now. There is all that Ancestors, the spirit world, and the present, the present world. Land, water, sky, life was given, and life in all its shapes was given the way of being. But one day the world might grow as the Ancestors had made it. There was the being, the way, the way. The Ancestors call the "Dancing, the way of the Ancestors" is called "Dancing."

— (from *Indigenous Traditions*)

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The book quotes a number of prominent faith voices, including Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and Mohandas Gandhi, along with St. Hildegard of Bingen, Passionist Fr. Thomas Berry and Rabbi Arthur Waskow, and cites passages from the Book of Genesis, the Hadith, Navajo chants and Jainism texts.

- The need for gratitude for the natural world, upon which human survival relies;
- There are both legitimate and illegitimate uses of nature, with greed and destruction condemned and restraint and protection commended.

Along with teachings, *Faith for Earth* focuses on how many religious communities have responded to the call to care for the earth. One shared focus across faiths has been trees.



Pilgrims travel in boats as they accompany the statue of Our Lady of Nazareth during an annual river procession and pilgrimage along the Apeu River to a chapel in Macapazinho, Brazil, Aug. 3, 2014. (CNS/Reuters/Ney Marcondes)

Many Shinto shrines are found in forests, which are then viewed as sacred, leading in recent decades to the preservation of the area's ecosystems and raising environmental awareness. In November 2019, Sikhs celebrated the 550th birthday of Guru Nanak by planting 1 million trees. Catholic dioceses and groups in Africa have also emphasized tree plantings.

Since the early 1990s, some Buddhists have ordained trees, wrapping traditional orange cloths around them, to draw attention to deforestation, while those living in the Himalayan Mountains have networked to take steps to protect the local environment. Elsewhere in the Himalayas, the Chipko movement, especially prominent among Hindu women, began holding vigils in the early 1970s to stop logging in the region. And the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative today is a global effort to end tropical deforestation.

The book also highlights measures that religious communities have taken to live out stewardship in their own actions, such as the Sisters of Earth network of Catholic women religious and their commitment to eco-justice and sustainability.

Sikhs have also worked to "green" their houses of worship, known as gurdwaras. And earlier this year, 500 rabbis and Jewish leaders issued "Elijah's Covenant," a letter calling for action on climate change and support for refugees fleeing disasters.

The practice of a "Green Ramadan" has gained in popularity among Muslims, which includes conserving food at the traditional Iftar evening meal each night to give to people in need, adopting a more plant-based diet and using less disposable products and more reusable items. Last year, the Fiqh Council of North America, which provides guidance to Muslims on the continent, called for Muslim investment firms to develop fossil fuel-free portfolios that include investments in clean energy.

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The U.N. has produced guidelines to help houses of worship reduce energy use and become more sustainable. With buildings responsible for roughly 30% of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide, the U.N. said green adaptations by the globe's estimated 100 million-plus houses of worship would be "a massive demonstration of commitment to sustainability."

Said Iyad Abumoghli, director of the U.N. Environment Programme's Faith for Earth Initiative, "Our challenge is not that we don't know what to do — it's how quickly we can do it. ... We're calling on everyone — countries, cities, the private sector, individuals, and faith-based organizations to become part of the flourishing global interfaith movement that is increasingly bringing people together to protect and sustain life on Earth."

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