

What I learned from the Summer School

I attended the Summer School on the topic “Climate Justice” from 13 to 26 July 2024 at Mission OneWorld at Neuendettelsau in Germany.

The program brought together 20 Lutheran brothers and sisters from diverse regions: Africa (3 participants), Central America (5), South America (3), Australia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines (4), and Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong (5).

1. What is climate injustice?

Global climate injustices arise from the unequal contributions to and unequal impacts of climate change.

Developed countries, historically responsible for most carbon emissions, face fewer immediate risks due to having greater resources and advanced infrastructure to respond to changes. In contrast, developing countries though contributing minimally to global carbon emissions, with limited resources to respond, face the harshest impacts such as extreme weather events, rising sea levels and food insecurity.

At local level, when natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods or droughts strike, the hardest hit are the poor and marginalised communities in the low-income areas who contribute little to climate change.

Younger generations are not responsible for the causes of climate change, but will face its worst impacts. They have inherited a problem not of their own making.

These are injustices caused by climate change. Addressing these injustices requires global cooperation and policies that enforce responsibility and provide equitable aid to those most affected.

2. Principles of Reality, Equality, Equity and Justice

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Reality Few get more than they need. Some get just what they need. Many get less than they need.



Equality Everyone gets the same support, this works better for some than for others.



Equity Everyone gets the support they need.



Justice The structural and systemic cause of inequality is addressed. Everyone can come as they are.

To address global climate injustice, application of the principles of reality, equality, equity and justice is essential.

Reality recognises that developing nations, despite low emissions, face severe climate impacts and need targeted support.

Equality ensures that all countries can access resources and knowledge for climate resilience.

Equity calls for differentiated responsibilities, recognizing historical emissions and the financial capabilities of wealthier nations to support climate initiatives in poorer regions.

Justice enforces accountability for major polluters and supports compensations for affected communities.

Together, these principles can promote global cooperation and create a fairer, sustainable climate future for developing, semi-developed and developed nations alike.

3. Methods of Learning

We were divided into four groups. We discussed and shared the various climate change issues faced and the resulting damages and injustices affecting each participant's country and community.



Each group selected a representative to present a summary of their discussion.



The summary from each group was posted on the walls for other groups to review in detail.



We also studied the 17 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These global goals aim to achieve "peace and prosperity for people and the planet"—while protecting oceans, forests and addressing climate change.

While learning from participants from other countries, to share I contributed Singapore responses to address climate change issues, such as:

Building blocks of coastal protection:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbmJ7IbVINs>

Measures to guard against rising sea levels:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1B6gIP95sC8>

Protection against the threat of rising sea levels and inland flooding:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ts0goDC7bnI>

To prepare for the Summer School, I attended a TTC evening course, *From the Desert to the City: Christians in Creation Care*, lectured by Mr Lawrence Ko. Since the Summer School offered limited biblical and theological teachings on creation care, I obtained consent from Mr Ko to share his lecture slides with other participants.

4. Visited Herrenkrug Park at Magdeburg:

(i) To learn from Vitopia, an alternative, eco-conscious living community.

Set up as a cooperative in 2012, Vitopia aims to create a sustainable lifestyle centered around resource conservation, social connection and communal governance. The residents, consisting of around 15 members including children, manage their daily activities through consensus-based decisions. They engage in sustainable practices and participate in initiatives to reduce carbon footprints. To create a shared space for learning and connection, the community hosts cultural events, workshops and educational sessions open to the public.



(ii) To learn the clean-up of Elbe River.

To address years' pollution from industrial and urban wastes, the Elbe River between Magdeburg and Dresden underwent a decade-long clean-up. Cleaning-up efforts included water treatment, pollution control and habitat restoration. Water quality and biodiversity was finally restored. Community awareness and sustainable practices were also emphasized to prevent future contamination. Today, the river has a healthier ecosystem that supports diverse species and offers safer recreation for locals.



5. Guided tours to:

(i) Lohe Zeit Museum, (ii) Wartburg Castle, (iii) Wittenburg, (iv) Erfurt, and (v) Nuremberg.

6. Attended Sunday Services:

(i) at Saint Nikolai Church, Neuendettelsau on 14 July 2024, and
(ii) at Mission OneWorld garden on 21 July 2024; participating in their celebration of 200 years missionary works in Brazil.

7. Christian Unity

Throughout the program, we shared in group studies discussing the ways that climate change impacts our own nations and communities. Each one of us even though with limited resources has our own way to respond to the challenges faced. I saw a common purpose and concern to care for the created world as it is our Father's world.

Beyond our studies, we shared in songs, meals, chapel and vesper services. Together, we sang hymns in different languages; yet the Spirit united our voices into one harmonious praise to God. These deepened our connection and bound us together by our shared faith in Christ.



For me, it was an experience of Christian unity despite many types of differences. It was the first time that I was studying and working with African, Central and South American brothers and sisters in Christ. I came away with a greater appreciation of the richness and diversity of the global Lutheran church and the unity we share in Christ. This unity surpasses geographical, cultural, nationality and ethnicity barriers. This experience with my Lutheran brothers and sisters worldwide has left a lasting impression on me. I experienced that we are truly one body in Christ.

Rev Caleb Oh
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