



THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN TACKLING WATER CHALLENGES AROUND THE WORLD

Round Table Amsterdam International Water Week

1 November 2021, 12:00-13:00 (CEST)

BACKGROUND: WATER SYMPOSIUM 2019

On 6 and 7 November 2019, we organized a water symposium in Amsterdam as a side event to the 2019 Amsterdam International Water Week. The water symposium was called “Water in Times of Climate Change” and aimed to encourage dialogue between cities, activists, scientists, governments, businesses, NGOs, and religious communities.

In enabling such dialogue, the symposium unpacked water issues facing three cities (Amsterdam, Jakarta and Cape Town) from the viewpoint of science, politics, economics, and religion. Although stakeholders in science, politics, and economics are constantly invited into conversations regarding water sustainability, religion is not often invited to the proverbial table, despite the obvious value it can add.

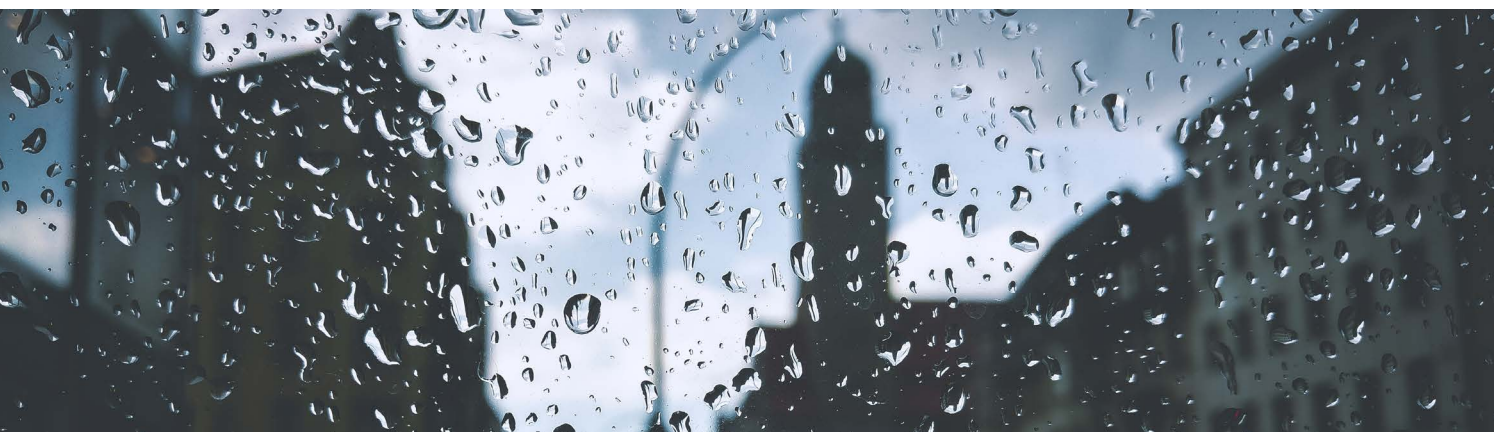
FOLLOW-UP AND BEYOND: AIWW 2021

Considering the successful engagement held during the 2019 symposium, we would like to continue these critical water conversations. Instead of inviting all the usual stakeholders to lead the discussion, the focus will be on the contributions (actual and potential) of religious communities and leaders to the water challenges faced by communities across the globe. It remains essential that even though politics, science, and economics will not be leading the discussion, that they will be participating and listening.

Using the case studies of Amsterdam/the Netherlands, Jakarta/Indonesia and Cape Town/South Africa again (but with an open invitation to other cities/countries to engage on the issue), we will host a workshop exploring the following questions:

1. What religious principles and values could contribute to our approach to tackling water challenges around the world?
2. How are religious leaders and communities currently contributing to managing water in times of climate change?
3. What additional potential contributions could religious leaders and communities make to managing water crises?
4. How do we get the right people around the decision-making table?

The workshop will call from pledges (as done during the 2019 symposium) from all stakeholders on how best to include religious communities, leaders, and values into developing water policy and holistically implementing actions seeking to address “Water in Times of Climate Change”.

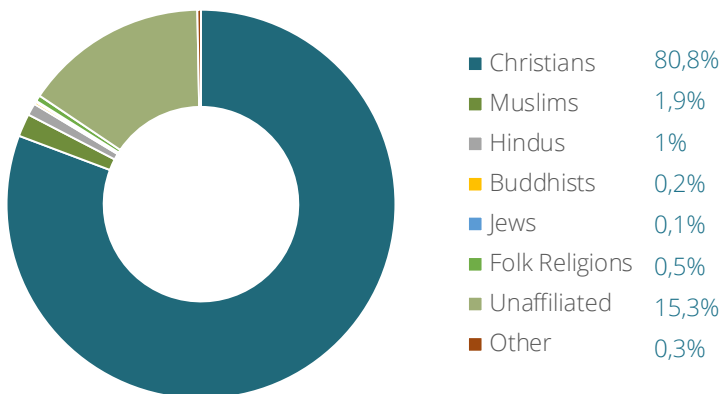




SOUTH AFRICA

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES	CURRENT ROLE RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES	POTENTIAL ROLE RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indaba, (eco-)ubuntu/ukama 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Courageous conversation (interfaith) - Awareness campaign school and faith groups (Green Anglicans/WWF) - Adopting a local river by religious communities (Anglican church) - Ban on single use plastic (Anglican church of Southern Africa) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indaba/courageous water conversation/safe space in becoming a water-sensitive city (Cape Town project)

RELIGIOUS MAPPING SOUTH AFRICA¹



CASE STUDIES

Water & faith communities Cape Town

In 2018, it was announced in Cape Town that the city was three months away from “Day Zero” – the day when the taps would run dry. How did the faith communities respond? At first they were on their knees praying for a miracle. But then they realised that they must pray for something deeper. They started to recognise that water is sacred and that they should commit to protecting it. Churches started committing to all kind of activities:

- Water harvesting and use of greywater
- Checking for leaks
- Adopting local rivers as part of their spiritual journey – recognising them as their own “Jordan river” – holding regular clean ups, putting in litter traps, planting trees and taking shared responsibility

1. Source: Pew Research Center, 2020. Taken from <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2020/percent/all/>

- Holding “courageous conversations”, derived from the South African concept of “indaba”, with the mining companies to challenge them on some of the water problems related acid mine drainage, and the run-off from artificial fertilisers and pesticides

The churches awoke also to the reality of water justice – many people in Cape Town live “day zero” every day of their lives because they must carry water to their homes in informal settlements from communal taps. Clean drinking water and sanitation is the most fundamental human right and should be safely and sufficiently available to all citizens in the city.²

Green Anglicans

Anglicans have long been concerned with environmental issues. The Anglican Communion states that the fifth mark of mission is ‘to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth’.

The Anglican Church of Southern Africa’s Environmental Network (ACSA-EN) aims to support churches and Dioceses to fulfil God’s call to be Earthkeepers and to care for Creation.³

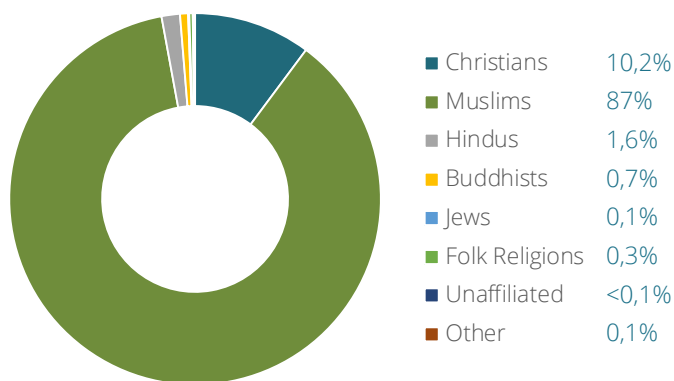
2. See Thabo Makgoba (2021), in J.J. Hasselaar & E.C. Ijmker (eds.). *Water in Times of Climate Change: A Values-driven Dialogue*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press.

3. See <https://www.greenanglicans.org/>

INDONESIA

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES	CURRENT ROLE RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES	POTENTIAL ROLE RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Green Sufism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The East Java Provincial Water Resources Agency in Surabaya is concerned about water quality and quantity of Welang River in Pasuruan Regency. It develops a flood adaptation and mitigation program including all stakeholders. The present project explores the role of Islamic boarding schools in cleaning the river and preventing floods. It studies the teaching of the religious leaders and the participations of the students. - Eco-mosque Jakarta - The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative Indonesia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online course on religion and ecology (The Netherlands-Indonesia Consortium for Muslim-Christian Relations)

RELIGIOUS MAPPING INDONESIA⁴



Eco-mosque Jakarta

To reduce the threat of climate change, Indonesia's largest religious organization has teamed up with the government to launch a program that requires all mosques to become environmentally friendly.

One of those mosques is Az-Zikra, situated just outside the city of Jakarta, in the hilly town of Sentul in Bogor, West Java. They hope to include technology such as solar panels in the future, but for now, they

4. Source: Pew Research Center, 2020. Taken from <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2020/percent/all/>

have incorporated a variety of features. One is the building of a water tank that directly filters out rainwater, providing clean water to the mosque for cooking and showering. The second is the recycling of water that is used for a praying ritual called “Wudhu.”

The program is led by Indonesia's Ulema Council, one of the country's top religious organizations. This is not the first time the organization has taken a serious stance on environmental issues. Back in 2016, they issued religious decrees against illegal forest fires and wildlife trafficking. That move shows how serious Indonesia is in working to prevent climate change from getting worse in the country.⁵

Interfaith Rainforest Initiative

The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) Indonesia is an international organisation, multi-faith alliance that aims to bring moral urgency and faith-based leadership to global efforts to end tropical deforestation. It is a platform for religious leaders to work hand-in-hand with indigenous peoples, governments, civil society and business on actions that protect rainforests and safeguard those that serve as their guardians. IRI-Indonesia collaborates with several religious organizations, including the Inter-Religious Council of Indonesia (IRC), the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, the Council of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), the Conference of Bishops (KWI), Parisada Hindu Darma Indonesia (PHDI), the Indonesian Buddhist Association (Permabudhi), and the Confucian Supreme Council (MATAKIN), civil society organizations like Conservation Strategy Fund (CSF), The Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (AMAN), and Econusa, Academician from Bogor Agriculture Institute (IPB) and Nasional University (UNAS) and international organizations such as Religions for Peace (RFP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN), and GreenFaith.⁶

5. Silkina Ahluwalia (2018). Mosque helps lead environmental initiative in Indonesia. Taken from: https://news.cgtn.com/news/35557a4d34677a6333566d54/share_p.html

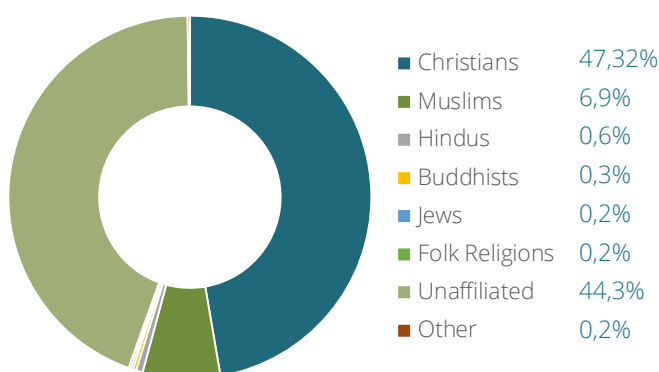
6. See: <https://www.interfaithrainforest.org/indonesia/>



THE NETHERLANDS

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES	CURRENT ROLE RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES	POTENTIAL ROLE RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated values-based approach (VU Amsterdam) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Green mosques and green churches - Initiative green Muslims (www.groenemoslims.nl) - Laudato Si'-platform (laudato-si.nl) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 27 January 2021 Round Table on Religion & Climate Change

RELIGIOUS MAPPING THE NETHERLANDS⁷



CASE STUDIES

Green churches Amsterdam

With the initiative of 'green churches' Kerk in Actie and Tearfund seek to encourage religious communities to become more sustainable.⁸ They do this via an (online) toolkit and networking opportunities. When a church has taken some sustainable steps and decides to take at least 1 sustainable step each year, it receives a Green Church sign as motivation. In Amsterdam several green churches can be found among others the Dominicus church, the Bethel church, the Keizersgracht church, and the Old Catholic church.

Regarding water, the toolkit of green churches provides specific advice, which includes:

Save on drinking water by:

- Flow restrictors on cranes.
- Toilets with a water saving button.
- Use of rain barrels for watering the church garden.
- Compare your water usage to other church buildings.

7. Source: Pew Research Center, 2020. Taken from <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2020/percent/all/>

8. See <https://www.groenekerken.nl>.

La Trappe Beer

The Trappist monks of Koningshoeven Abbey in Berkel-Enschot (near Tilburg) strive for one hundred percent circularity based on their religious beliefs. A big challenge because they produce the popular beer La Trappe in their brewery. This produces almost one million cubic meters of wastewater per year. That is why the De Dommel abbey and water authority board joined forces.

The showpiece of the collaboration is the Biomakerij, which has been in operation for 2.5 years now. In 2018, this sustainable treatment technique was awarded the public prize of the Water Innovation Prize (an initiative of the Union of Water Boards) and in 2019 with the Circular Award in the water boards category. In the tropical greenhouse, the waste water from the abbey itself and the brewery is purified according to a sludge-on-carrier system. The wastewater passes through tanks with a total of more than three thousand different bacteria at great speed.⁹

9. See <https://www.koningshoeven.nl/de-abdij/biomakerij/>