



## **Youth Pre-Assembly** ***'God, Renew Us in Your Spirit and Restore the Creation'***

### **Background Information**

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues that young people face today. The unprecedented climate crisis is marked by rising temperatures, more frequent natural disasters, and significant loss of biodiversity. The planet is experiencing extreme heat waves and cold snaps, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, and more frequent and intense natural disasters. These changes pose a significant threat to our communities and the environment, with devastating consequences for our health, well-being, and economic prospects. In the context of Asia, the climate crisis poses significant challenges, particularly for vulnerable communities such as farmers, fishers, and coastal dwellers. Climate change is already leading to crop failures, water shortages, and rising sea levels, which threaten people's livelihoods and well-being. The effects of this crisis are felt acutely by the most vulnerable members of society, including young people, who are set to inherit a world in a state of emergency and who are already experiencing the effects of environmental degradation in their lives.

Today, we have far more knowledge about the earth and climate systems than our forebears did. Therefore, young people not only have greater opportunities but are also confronted with greater responsibilities in this interconnected and global society. In this world, nothing can exist as a separate reality that is independent of anything else. There is a deep interconnectedness and interrelatedness that exists among all of God's creation, being that God's fingerprint is on every created being. To have a sustainable world, one that nurtures us, we must agree to abide within the constraints of the biophysical principles that govern Earth and our inseparable place within its indivisible spheres. Our collective task as humanity is to abandon our past hubris of being masters of nature and of having 'dominion' over the earth, but instead recognise that we are but one species, but one creature among the vastness of God's good creation. The ultimate pathology of fear and arrogance emerges when stewardship is replaced by ownership, and when resource management loses sight of its original purposes and becomes obsessed with command-and-control success.

Restoration is the attempt to put something into a prior position, place, or condition. The renewal and restoration of God's creation stem from the will and work of God himself, and it thus mandates us to participate in this renewal and restoration through intention and action. The very process of restoring the earth to health is the process through which we become attuned to the rest of creation, and, through the rest of creation, to ourselves. Restoration, in this sense, is both the means and the end; it allows us to participate in God's healing of creation and also ourselves. Restoration is also the fulfilment of our moral obligations to maintain the welfare of future generations and those beyond. To this end, maintaining healthy, viable ecosystems is an expression of the heart and the spirit of taking care of the earth.

In recent years, young people have taken up this challenge with increasing urgency, demanding action from governments, businesses, and society at large. Since young people are seen to be still in the process of making their place in society, and of exploring and experimenting with different identities and options, they are thought to catalyse social change. They possess the passion, energy, and creativity as agents of transformation and hope. Young people are calling for a paradigm shift from the prevailing synthetic and mechanistic lifestyles, arguing instead for lives of sustainability and dignity for all created beings. Despite the scale of the challenge, young people around the world are

taking action. Young people are not simply troubled victims of political and economic transformations, but active agents in their own right, capable of negotiating the restructuring of forces and social pressures that shape their lives. Young climate activists, for example, have inspired a global movement, calling for immediate and sustained action to address the climate crisis. This movement has highlighted the need for young people to be involved in decision-making processes and to have a say in shaping the future of our planet.

Asian young people, in particular, have a unique and special role to play. Asia is the world's largest and most populous continent, with rich and diverse cultures and rapidly developing economies. However, the region is also home to some of the world's most pressing environmental problems, such as air pollution, deforestation, water scarcity, and food insecurity. Asian young people are well placed to address these challenges, as they are intimately connected to their local communities and have a deep understanding of the cultural, social, and economic contexts in which they live. They also have access to the latest technologies and innovations, which they can use to promote sustainable development.

The role of young people in the renewal and restoration of creation can hardly be understated. Faith must be at the heart of such mobilisations of young people, and the ecumenical movement can play a far greater role in offering a platform to young people to foster a sense of ownership and solidarity and articulate their visions and expectations of church actions in the fight against the climate crisis. Young people of faith can draw from Christianity's long and rich tradition of serving the wider community through engagement and activism. The teachings of Christ emphasise justice, peace, and love for all of God's creation. Christian youth can take inspiration from these teachings and use their faith as a source of motivation and empowerment. The Church must also provide a supportive and nurturing environment for young people to develop their leadership skills, their spiritual growth, and their sense of social responsibility.

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) recognises the crucial role that young people play in God's renewal and restoration of creation. The CCA's Youth Pre-Assembly, a gathering of young people prior to the CCA's 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, is an opportunity for young Asian Christians to come together, share their experiences and ideas, and discuss ways to address the challenges facing the environment. It will allow for the critical examination of our situation today and determine where society needs to be, from the perspective of the youth, if people and creation are to have dignity, justice, and well-being.

**Objectives:**

- To provide a platform for young Asian Christians to articulate their experiences and expectations on the renewal and restoration of creation.
- To identify key challenges facing the creation care in Asia and explore ways to address these challenges.
- To synthesise strategies and action plans for young Asian Christians to contribute to sustainable development in their local communities.
- To enhance the participation of young people in the ecumenical movement.

**Dates and Venue:**

25–28 September 2023 in Kottayam, India

**Participants:**

- 25 youth delegates
- 50 Assembly stewards
- 15 youth leaders from Indian churches
- 15 youth secretaries from select NCCs and international member churches