

Christians in Science – 2021 Conference

The Climate Crisis: A Christian Response

Abstracts

Prof Euan Nisbet - Climate Change

Methane - the warming breath.

Methane is a major anthropogenic greenhouse gas. It's rising very rapidly, and this growth is arguably the largest deviation from the hopes of the Paris Agreement. The causes driving methane's rise are not well understood, though much of the growth may be coming from tropical biological sources such as wetlands and cattle.

'Moya' means 'air', 'wind', 'breath' in some Southern African languages. It also means 'Spirit', Holy Spirit. MOYA – Methane Observations and Yearly Assessments – has been a major UK consortium studying the Global Methane Budget, with field work and flight campaigns in the Arctic, tropical Africa and South America, as well as remote locations like Ascension and Antarctica.

Unlike CO₂, managing methane growth is not just a task for the industrialised world. Although gas and coal industries are major sources, the MOYA results show that the tropical countries will have to share in the task of mitigating methane. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.* That was true in Galilee, but now we can tell, we do know. Ethically we all now have to share in the task of managing methane. We've left Eden: we need to live in the consequences.

Dr Ruth Valerio - Climate Justice

2016 saw world hunger increase for the first time in a decade, with the climate crisis being one of the key factors behind that. Whilst the changing climate is beginning to effect everyone, it's the poorest people who are currently being affected the worst. This session will explore how that is happening, including looking at the links between climate and conflict and at the inequality of resource use and carbon emissions, and will consider why this is a topic of Christian concern and how the Scriptures can inform our response.

Hannah Malcolm - Climate Action

This presentation will offer a theological reading of the growing participation of UK Christians in climate initiatives over the last five years. In many cases, climate science is cited as a necessary consideration for the fulfilment of already-existing Christian commitments. This represents a significant shift in the ways UK Christians understand the role of dialogue between theology and

the sciences; previous science and theology dialogue has usually been treated as an area of expert concern, primarily offering insight into apologetics or specific ethical problems. By contrast, the dialogue between climate science and theology has seen the emergence of non-technical leadership amid the expectation that climate science plays a critical role in re-examining the meaning of Christian life, both for individuals and as communities.

Prof. Meric Srokosz - Climate Hacking

Given the climate emergency that the world faces due to increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, geoengineering (aka climate hacking) has been proposed as a solution. This means that we (human beings) would “solve” the problem of increasing carbon dioxide levels by applying engineering solutions on a planetary scale. Various geoengineering schemes have been proposed, including carbon capture and storage, ocean iron fertilization, adding reflective aerosols to the lower stratosphere, spraying seawater into the lower atmosphere to enhance marine cloud formation, launching giant reflectors into space to reflect sunlight, and so on. All these solutions raise ethical questions such as: who decides which of these options is safe to pursue? What will be the impact of the proposed solution on people living in different parts of the planet, particularly on the poor? Can a country pursue one of the options unilaterally? This talk will explore these issues and try to bring a Christian perspective to them.

Dr Mirjam Schilling – Viruses: connecting climate and human identity

In the last 18 months we have not only been challenged by a pandemic, but also by the consequences of climate change. Melting glaciers, devastating floods and fires are pressing issues that need tackling. From a Christian perspective it is quite tempting to think of these challenges as individual natural evils. But what if these phenomena are somehow connected? A proper understanding of the biology of viruses shows that the topic is more complicated, and that there are lessons to be learned about the connectedness of the whole of creation, our identity as human beings and our role in this world.