

**THE SUNWAY CHARTER**

# Faith in Action

Addressing Planetary Health Challenges through  
Spiritual Leadership



# Background

The 2024 Planetary Health Summit and 6th Annual Meeting (PHAM 2024) marks a pivotal juncture in our collective journey toward addressing our planet's profound challenges. As we confront the complexities of the so-called Anthropocene epoch, characterised by unprecedented human impact on Earth's ecosystems, the imperative for concerted and coordinated action has never been more apparent. The intertwined environmental and climate crises pose grave threats to human health, economic stability, and the survival of life on Earth, demanding bold and immediate intervention on a global scale. The 2021 [Sao Paulo Declaration](#) called for the "Great Transition", a fundamental shift in how we live on Earth and an urgent need for collective action to safeguard planetary health.

Faith<sup>1</sup> is a guiding thread in the complex tapestry of humanity's relationship with Mother Earth, weaving through cultures, communities, and civilisations. Rooted in reverence for creation and the created and a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of ecosystems, spiritual heritage offers profound insights into our collective responsibility towards planetary health. Through the annals of time, spiritual teachings and practices call upon us to be stewards of Earth, reminding us of the commitment and trust placed on humans to respect and nurture the sanctity of all life forms.

As we confront these pressing challenges, faith takes on renewed significance. Drawing upon the rich mosaic of spiritual wisdom, faith communities worldwide are mobilising to advocate for sustainable practices, promote environmental justice, and foster a more profound sense of ecological interconnectedness. As custodians of faith and guardians of the Earth, faith communities recognise the pivotal role of spirituality in nurturing a harmonious relationship between humanity and the planet, guiding us towards a future where ecological well-being is safeguarded for generations to come.

The timeless wisdom of faith traditions reinforces this urgent call for ecological stewardship. For example, the recent release of "[Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth](#)" provides renewed testimony of the enduring values of reverence for creation, justice, and interconnectedness espoused by faith traditions across the globe. Rooted in the Islamic principle of 'mizan,' or balance, the Covenant calls upon us to safeguard the delicate equilibrium of our planet's ecosystems and uphold all living beings' inherent dignity. It reminds us of our sacred duty as custodians of the Earth, entrusted with the well-being of present and future generations.

Likewise, "[Laudato Si'](#)", Pope Francis's seminal encyclical, urges humanity to recognise the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic concerns. Within its pages, Pope Francis reminds us that our care for the environment is intimately linked with our care for the most vulnerable members of society. He highlights the urgent need for ecological conversion, emphasising the intrinsic value of every creature and the interconnectedness of all life on Earth.

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<sup>1</sup> Faith in this context refers to the institutionalised, traditional, and Indigenous forms of expression of spirituality and connection with a higher power. In this regard, it is also not meant to exclude people of no faith or who are agnostic.

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Through *Laudato Si'*, we are called to embrace a holistic vision of planetary health that seeks to restore harmony between humanity and the natural world. It inspires us to create a culture of integral ecology where environmental sustainability, social justice, and spiritual fulfilment are deeply intertwined.

Thus, taking these two documents as a starting reference, we can embark on a collective journey towards achieving harmony between humanity and the planet, forging pathways towards a future where faith and planetary health converge in harmony and compassion.

PHAM 2024 in Malaysia reaffirmed the importance of integrating faith communities into planetary health discourse. Recognising the moral authority and influence wielded by faith leaders, organisations and communities, Sunway Centre for Planetary Health (SCPH) and Faith for Our Planet (FFoP) intend through the creation of this interfaith charter to forge a collaborative pathway toward community action resilience. The creation of this charter – informed by the principles below – urges collective, interfaith action, inspired by the Sao Paulo Declaration, adopted at the 2021 Planetary Health Annual Meeting in Brazil, and the Kuala Lumpur Call to Action adopted by acclamation at PHAM 2024 and energised by the Planetary Health Roadmap and Action Plan.



## Preamble



The spirit of the Al Mizan Covenant, the timeless wisdom of Laudato Si', the Sao Paulo Declaration and the Kuala Lumpur Call to Action resonate as beacons of hope and knowledge in our collective journey towards planetary health. Recognising the intrinsic value of every being and the sacred duty to safeguard our shared home, this Sunway Charter on "Faith in Action - Addressing Planetary Health Challenges through Spiritual Leadership" (the Sunway Charter) pledges to uphold the principles of sustainability, justice, and compassion. Through the Charter, we promise to build pathways towards a future where faith informs an understanding of and takes action to address planetary health, guiding us towards a world where respect for the Earth is central to our efforts.



The undersigned, guided by our diverse spiritual heritage, faith practices and convictions, recognise the urgent need to address our planet's interconnected crises, including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and social injustices. Rooted in our shared reverence for life and the natural world, we commit ourselves to promoting planetary health and sustainable living as essential expressions of our faith and moral responsibility.

We recognise the centrality of the following principles to this Charter



## Principles



**Shared Values of Stewardship, Responsibility, Unity, Interconnectedness and Solidarity:** We recognise the enduring wisdom of environmental stewardship embedded within different religious, indigenous, and spiritual traditions. We will integrate these teachings into modern approaches to planetary health. We understand the inherent interdependence of all life forms, acknowledging that the welfare of humans, animals, and ecosystems is deeply intertwined. We will fulfil this stewardship role in tackling planetary health issues by supporting religious communities in understanding their joint obligations and interconnectedness with the environment. We affirm that every spiritual tradition carries a shared responsibility to preserve and promote the welfare of all living beings. We commit to utilizing this awareness to foster collaborative action.

**Integrating Inherited Knowledge and Indigenous Wisdom:** We acknowledge the rich diversity of Indigenous and spiritual traditions and their teachings and practices, which can guide contemporary approaches and efforts toward a harmonious society and a healthy planet. We will integrate Indigenous and spiritual traditions' diverse teachings and practices into our contemporary efforts by developing educational programmes, community projects, and policy initiatives that promote a harmonious society and a healthy planet.

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**Justice:** We will advocate for justice, equity, and compassion in our relationships with one another and the Earth, particularly for marginalised and vulnerable communities disproportionately affected by environmental degradation. We will implement coordinated and complementary programmes and initiatives that draw on the collective wisdom of our spiritual heritages and faith practices to foster harmony between humanity and the Earth. This will include promoting compassion, stewardship, and social justice principles and integrating diverse spiritual traditions to protect and enhance the well-being of people and the planet.

**Intergenerational Dialogue:** We value the intergenerational exchange of wisdom, values, and responsibilities in caring for the Earth. By promoting and providing space for meaningful conversations and co-creation across generations within and between faith communities and people of no faith, we guarantee that the voices and perspectives of both current and future generations will be enabled to contribute to our joint endeavours toward environmental sustainability and planetary well-being.

**Gender, Diversity and Inclusion:** We recognise that individuals have several intersecting layers to their identity. We acknowledge that a combination of this intersection of people's gender, disability, age, and other diversity factors affects their vulnerability to harm and exclusion caused by the differential impact of environmental and climate change. We will work to ensure inclusive and meaningful actions that require involvement and amplification of minority and often disenfranchised voices, addressing systemic inequities and discrimination, and ensuring that policies are sensitive to diverse needs, local wisdom, and local knowledge.

**Engaging Faith-Based Communities, Institutions and Places of Worship:** We value faith-based institutions and places of worship which serve as crucial hubs for educating, informing, advocating, and generating respect for planetary health, and consequently acting as centres for education, advocacy, and action. We recognise that these institutions and places of worship possess the capacity to mobilise communities, champion sustainable practices, and instil a sense of ethical responsibility towards the environment. We acknowledge that using their trusted status as sources of guidance and support, these communities, institutions, and places of worship can facilitate dialogue, raise awareness, and foster collaborative endeavours to protect the planet's health. We will encourage more participation and partnerships with faith-based institutions and places of worship to develop and implement educational programmes, advocacy campaigns and community projects that promote planetary health.

**Nurturing Leadership and Action:** We aim to cultivate leadership and moral accountability for preserving the natural environment and the well-being of its inhabitants by fostering a deeper appreciation within faith and indigenous communities of the importance of doing so. We want to encourage the widespread adoption of spiritual and indigenous rituals and practices that foster reverence for the natural world and all its creations. We pledge to implement tangible measures to minimise our ecological impact, advance sustainable practices, and advocate for policies that protect the planet's health.

# Call to Action for Faith Communities

**Make the Case:** Acknowledging the limited availability of comprehensive evidence regarding the impact of faith on planetary action, we suggest the following measures to bolster this evidence base:

- ◆ Collect, compile, and analyse stories and data on the role and contributions—both positive and negative—of faith in planetary action.
- ◆ Develop educational and advocacy resources, including policy briefs, research papers, case studies, presentations, videos, and key messaging.
- ◆ Promote evidence showcasing the effectiveness of collaborating with local faith actors and networks, particularly in fragile contexts.
- ◆ Encourage faith institutions and communities to participate in grassroots advocacy campaigns to support relevant initiatives.
- ◆ Collaborate with policymakers, government entities, and interfaith alliances to shape decision-making processes and promote agendas focused on planetary health.

**Education and Awareness:** Acknowledging the importance of raising awareness within our communities regarding the pressing issues of planetary health and the ethical obligation to address them, we commit to:

- ◆ Improving planetary health literacy for faith communities and faith organisations, including through engagement with the Planetary Health Education Framework.
- ◆ Developing a toolkit for faith leaders for communication for planetary health, incorporating environmental teachings into sermons, religious education, and youth initiatives, inspiring action, and nurturing environmental literacy.
- ◆ Seeking a better understanding of what communities want and need to know about each other as a basis for effective collaboration in planetary health response by contributing to the Planetary Health Communications Working Group Stakeholder Analysis.
- ◆ Listening to faith communities and using faith institutions as spaces for dialogue
- ◆ Contribute to the international communication campaign to promote global community awareness as prescribed from the Roadmap from the Kuala Lumpur Call to Action.
- ◆ Empowering spiritual and Indigenous leaders and organisations to promote transformative learning to engage youth to identify with the Earth and the interconnection of all beings and thereby sharpen their resolve to conserve it.
- ◆ Developing specific educational programmes, workshops, and resources that underscore the interplay between faith, ethics, planetary health, and environmental stewardship.
- ◆ Organizing community events, seminars, and dialogues to facilitate conversations about planetary health and its implications for our collective well-being.

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**Lifestyle:** Reemphasising the importance of advocating for sustainable lifestyles that encompasses mindful consumption, waste reduction, and the utilisation of renewable resources, we commit to:

- ◆ Motivating faith communities and institutions to embrace eco-friendly practices, such as minimising food wastage, practising mindful consumption, conserving water and energy, and opting for sustainable transportation.
- ◆ Providing resources and assistance for community-based initiatives, such as community gardens, composting programs, and recycling efforts, to foster a culture of sustainability within our communities.
- ◆ Partnering with local businesses, farmers' markets, and environmentally conscious vendors to promote ethical and environmentally responsible consumption options.

**Community Collaboration:** Acknowledging the importance of fostering mutual understanding through collaborative networking and partnerships among faith communities, environmental organisations, and other stakeholders to enhance our collective impact, we commit to:

- ◆ Connecting faith-based initiatives and planetary health groups to pool resources, knowledge, and networks, thereby enhancing community resilience and sustainability.
- ◆ Organising interfaith dialogues, forums, and working groups to facilitate cross-cultural exchange, mutual learning, and solidarity in addressing common environmental challenges.
- ◆ Supporting community-based projects and initiatives that promote environmental justice, ecological restoration, and sustainable development in marginalised and underserved areas.
- ◆ Hosting meetings to foster partnership and collaboration between practitioners of planetary health and faith communities.

**Spiritual Renewal:** Affirming the importance of cultivating a deep spiritual connection with the Earth and incorporating ecological awareness into our worship, rituals, and sacred teachings, we commit to:

- ◆ Enlivening religious services and gatherings with eco-theological reflections, prayers, and rituals that honour creation's sanctity and instil a reverence for all living beings.
- ◆ Organising nature-oriented retreats, pilgrimages, and ceremonies that provide opportunities for spiritual rejuvenation, ecological mindfulness, and connection with the natural world.
- ◆ Encouraging environmental stewardship through activities, such as tree planting ceremonies, beach cleanups, and land restoration projects, demonstrating our faith-inspired commitment to caring for the Earth.



# Commitments to Planetary Health



We, the undersigned, will initiate consultations across our membership (and beyond), engaging individuals and institutions to concretise the commitments made in this Charter to improve planetary health. To achieve this, SCPH and FFoP will respond to the six commitments included in the Kuala Lumpur Call to Action through active engagement in the six working groups that have been established for the implementation of the Planetary Health Roadmap Action Plan based on our collective desire to operationalise the principles outlined above, consequently integrating planetary health values into faith activities and institutional missions and vice versa.

We call upon people of all faiths and spiritual traditions to join us in this sacred endeavour to heal and protect our planet. Let us draw inspiration from our diverse spiritual heritages and unite in solidarity to safeguard the Earth for present and future generations. Together, let us commit to pursuing planetary health, recognising that our collective efforts can bring about transformative change and create a sustainable and just world for all.

To sign the charter please email your name, position and organisation you are representing to **[phfaithcharter@gmail.com](mailto:phfaithcharter@gmail.com)**.

## CHARTER SIGNATORIES TO DATE:

SIGNATORY	REPRESENTING
Dr Azizan Baharuddin	Universiti Malaya
Dr. Omnia El Omrani	Medical doctor and a policy fellow at Imperial College London. She is one of the first Health Envoys for the 28th UN Climate Conference (COP28). She was the first official Youth Envoy for the President of COP27 and the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs.
Dr Jemilah Mahmood	Executive Director, Sunway Centre for Planetary Health, Malaysia
Rev Ebenezer Joseph	Former President, Methodist Church of Sri Lanka
Ven Napan Thawornbanjob	International Network of Engaged Buddhists Forum, Thailand
Dr. Amjad Saleem	Research Fellow, Universiti Malaya Non Resident Fellow, Centre for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies Doha, Qatar
Michelle Shi Jie Chew	Youth President, Malaysia Red Crescent, Malaysia
Sethu Pathy Cumarasamy	Hon. Secretary, Batu Caves Temple, Malaysia



SIGNATORY	REPRESENTING
Brian Delos Santos	FFOP Youth Fellow. Information Officer at the Climate Change Commission of Philippines Also works for the Office of Senator Juan Edgardo “Sonny” as an Angara Policy Intern. He completed a professional development course at the UN office for disaster risk reduction global education and training institute, transitioning to complex risk management and resilient urban futures: harnessing south-south cooperation and learning from Covid-19.
Andleen Raazaq	Muslim Aid UK Board Member, United Kingdom
Chempaka Emalin Pahamin	World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
Cheryl Danasamy	Administrator, Archdiocesan Office for Human Development under the Catholic Church in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Dr Muhammad Ikhwan Azlan	Senior Lecturer, Selangor Islamic University (UIS), Malaysia
Dato. Dr. Dino (Dionysius Shankar Kumar)	Core Team Member Creation Justice Ministry, Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur Adjunct Professor (Biodiversity Conservation and Management) Faculty of Science and Marine Environment, University Malaysia Terengganu Former CEO of WWF Malaysia, Malaysia
Dr Ismath Ramzy + Head of Department	Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia
Dr Wan Ahmad Hazman	CEO YSS – Youth Services Malaysia
Dr. Durriyyah Hasan Adli	Associate Professor, Centre for Civilisational Dialogue (UMCCD); Senior Researcher and Mosque Committee, Malaysia
Dr. Asmawati Muhammad	Deputy Director, UMCCD, Malaysia
Dr. Zeeda Mohamed	Director of Universiti Malaya Sustainable Development Centre, Malaysia
Fazira Naser	Senior Executive, Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa (youth services), Malaysia
Habsah Marjuni	Muslim Aid Malaysia
Grace Tam	World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
K.V. Soon	Vice president of the Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia, and Chairperson Shah Alam Branch. Co-founder of Learning Beyond Schooling and Family Place, Malaysia
Hajdi De Jesus	Associate and Youth Pastor at the Life Source Ministry Assembly Church, Philippines. Creative Arts Specialist Philippines Climate Commission.
Md. Abu Sayem	Professor of World Religions and Culture at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

SIGNATORY	REPRESENTING
Mohammed Mohsin	Part-Time Lecturer, Institute of Modern Languages (IML) University of Dhaka (DU). Khateeb, G.M.G Jame Mosque, Tejgaon Dhaka-1208. Part-Time Faculty Dept. of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) Islamic University of Technology (IUT) Bangladesh
Dr. Mona El-Sherbini	Medical doctor and Associate Professor of Medical Parasitology at the Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University, Egypt
Mr. Anthony Tan Kee Huat	Director of Finance and Administration All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM - SDG) - Master of Sustainable Development Management from Sunway University and a member of Creation Justice Commission of the roman Catholic Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Mr. Leonidas Woo	Senior Officer Methodist Crisis Relief and Development MCRD - network of all Methodist churches in Malaysia and also disaster relief intervention overseas - Started a SDG and Creation Care Inforzone, Malaysia
Mr. Siow Eik Kwang	Tzu Chi Environmental Protection Program Coordinator, Malaysia
Mrs Nadiyah Abdul Rahman	lecturer at a predominantly Chinese university. Dedicated to interfaith dialogue and environmental issues, Malaysia
Norma Noordin	International Commissioner, Scouts Association Of Malaysia
Nurulain Natasha Binti Muhammad Aris	Postgraduate Student, UMCCD, Malaysia
Pr. Cheng Pysong	Head of Department HISTEAM/7979 - Network of partnering churches across Malaysia on social intervention such as disaster relief, school disaster preparedness, food bank and families in crisis. Also lecture at Malaysia Bible Seminary, Malaysia
Ragib Anjum	Undergraduate student
Thammy Chong	World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
Putri Winata	World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
Rev. Andy Chi	Executive Secretary (Church Relationship and Welfare) National Evangelical Christian Fellowship Malaysia NECF - Coordinator for churches in disaster response, Malaysia

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**What is Planetary Health?** A Planetary Health approach to human development recognises that humankind has made significant progress in many ways, with the industrial, green and technological revolutions as examples. But these development gains are now offset by increasingly obvious disruption to the planet's health. We can see this in depleted biodiversity, changing land use and cover, a massive increase in air pollution, shortages of natural resources, and the resulting damage to our lived environment, most clearly demonstrated through recent pandemics and disease outbreaks and the climate emergency. (<https://www.pham2024.com/pham-2024#pham-faq>)

**What is a religious institution?** Churches, temples, mosques and other places of worship and institutions that exist to support and manage the practice of a specific set of religious beliefs (<https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/religious-institutions>)

