

**Reflection by: Karen Chute**

**Date: 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2024**

Today marks World Environment Day 2024 so I will be reflecting on the significance of today and a call for action.

You may have heard of Arbour Day, Earth Day and now World Environment Day and must be wondering what's the difference? Well **Arbour Day** started in April of 1872 and is a day of observance to **plant trees**. In the United States, National Arbor Day is on the final Friday in April.

On the other hand, **Earth Day** started in April of 1970 and observed to demonstrate our support for **environmental protection**. 2 years later, The **World Environment Day** started in June and has been a day that's been set aside annually by the United Nations to bring **global awareness to humanity's responsibility to take care of the environment**, both for ourselves and for future generations.

As you can understand, all these three days have something in common and are often used interchangeably sometimes by many but the fact remains there is still need to raise awareness and drive immediate action to protect our planet.

### **Theme of the Day and What it means?**

The theme for World Environment Day in 2024 is:

***'Land Restoration, Desertification and Drought Resilience,'***

which underscores the importance of living responsibly and in harmony with nature. Saudi Arabia is the host nation for the World Environment Day conference this year to encourage individuals and communities worldwide to adopt sustainable practices

**Land restoration** is the ecological process to restore a natural and safe landscape for humans, wildlife, and plant communities. There are many methods for land restoration, which includes *reforestation, soil conservation, sustainable agriculture, and the restoration of natural ecosystems* to mention a few. A structured approach to restoring land will reverse land degradation and restore ecosystems to their natural state, making it more productive and resilient to climate change.

**Desertification** is the process by which natural or human causes reduce the biological productivity of drylands. The causes of desertification are multifaceted and interrelated. Key factors include:

*Deforestation:* The removal of trees and vegetation cover disrupts the water cycle, reduces soil fertility, and increases erosion, making the land more susceptible to desertification.

*Overgrazing:* Excessive grazing by livestock strips the land of vegetation cover, leading to soil compaction and erosion.

*Unsustainable Agricultural Practices:* Practices such as monocropping, improper irrigation, and the excessive use of chemical fertilizers degrade soil quality and deplete water resources.

*Climate Change:* Altered precipitation patterns and increased temperatures accelerate the natural processes of land degradation, exacerbating desertification.

### **Drought Resilience:**

Drought resilience refers to the *ability of ecosystems and communities to anticipate, absorb, adapt to and recover from drought conditions*. Building drought resilience involves implementing strategies that reduce vulnerability to drought and enhance adaptive capacity. These strategies are crucial for mitigating the impacts of drought, which can include reduced water availability, crop failures and economic losses.

### **Global Issues and Significance of World Environment Day 2024:**

World Environment Day is an annual commemoration that serves as a reminder of nature's invaluable gifts to humanity while also highlighting the alarming rise of pollution, environmental degradation, and climate change due to human activities. This day allows people to pause and reflect on the pressing environmental issues we face.

The increasing prevalence of contaminants and toxins in the environment has had a detrimental impact on human health, leading to respiratory illnesses, cancer, and other harmful effects. World Environment Day raises awareness about the importance of clean air and motivates individuals to take action to improve the environment, which is essential for our survival.

Moreover, this day provides an opportunity to educate and inform people about the fragility and significance of our physical environment. It encourages collective efforts to address environmental challenges and promote sustainable practices that can ensure a healthier planet for present and future generations.

In essence, World Environment Day 2024 holds great significance as it serves as a global platform to raise awareness, inspire action, and foster a collective commitment to environmental protection, conservation, and sustainable living.

### **Highlights close to home within the Anglican Communion**

Reforestation in the Solomon Islands is also part of the Communion Forest initiative of Anglican Alliance. The motto of the Communion Forest is:

***To plant is to hope  
To restore is to heal  
To protect is to love***

The Communion Forest aims to connect, equip and inspire dioceses, parishes and individuals across the world-wide Anglican Communion to plant and grow trees and to conserve, protect and restore ecosystems.

Dr. Elizabeth Perry, the Programmes Director of the Anglican Alliance visited Solomons after our ORAC meeting in March this year.

Whilst in the Solomons, she visited the Anglican Franciscan community at Hautabu, where, 10 years ago, Brother Lent, reforested a 1-acre site as a result of doing the Agents of Change course and is now a mature forest, which has become home to 600 native trees and many animal species. This was also a great need for reforestation in the wake of the logging that has happened in the Solomon in recent years.

### **Acting local thinking global - Impacts**

For us here today, we may be able to do something similar for those that own bare lands but more importantly starting small.

On the occasion of World Environment Day, it is essential for all to realize that every little deed matters when it comes to saving the environment. No matter how small a step you are taking to lead a greener lifestyle, it does make a difference. Because, if everyone starts doing little deeds one by one, it will turn into something big. As the saying goes every drop makes an ocean.

Small actions can be, for instance, clearing and cleaning all mosquito breeding places that can prevent/reduce life threatening diseases like Malaria and Dengue.

Similarly, regarding garbage disposal, it is common to see people litter, one question worth asking ourselves is what are we teaching and showing our younger generations and our children about littering?

**Question and Call for Action:** What can we change and do to ensure rubbish is separated and disposed off properly? This includes Food Waste, Kitchen Waste, Plastics, Paper etc. When it comes to printing of resources, what can we change/ ensure to minimise the paper waste we produce in each of our office spaces? What about turning off electrical appliances or lights when not in use? These little deeds and change in habits can prove to be very effective. The gifts and blessings which nature endows on us are priceless so it is essential to conserve them all for a better future and life for all.

**Closing Remarks:** As I conclude, just like the gospel text this morning especially in verse 26 “And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.” I want to leave us all with a question? Just like God’s word is a manual for our lives to function well are we hearing and listening to what nature has been declaring and telling us all this time, through the news and the environmental impacts we are facing? These truths must influence our actions and choices as individuals, families, communities, churches and leaders.

### **Reason for planting a cactus in the garden to mark the theme of this year:**

Before I take my seat, I just wanted to mention that the cactus plant that we will be planting towards the end of this service was picked to illustrate the theme of being drought resilient in a bare space that we hope to restore back with some plants. Thank you!