2025 Yearbook

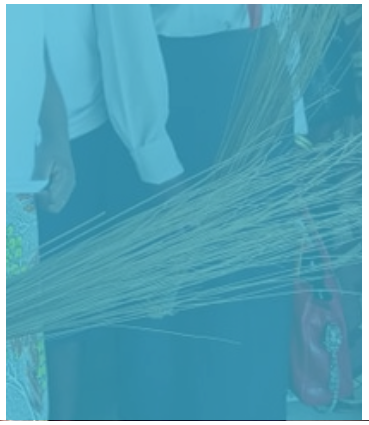
Center for Climate Justice and Faith

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

Connecting Ecological Healing to Racial and Economic Justice








Centro Para la Justicia Climática y fe
Seminario Teológico Luterano del Pacífico

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of the Center for Climate Justice and Faith,

Resurrection – a centerpiece of faith in the God whom Jesus loved. "I believe in…resurrection" we declare when gathered in worship, echoing our ancestors in the faith. What does it mean to bear witness to the resurrection today? The question rolls around in my heart. When death-dealing forces run rampant – including the forces that push God's beloved creation further and further into climate catastrophe, how do we embody resurrection faith?

Anastasis, resurrection in New Testament Greek, literally means up-standing or rising up. According to Greek lexicons "ana" and "stasis" together can imply uprising or standing up against death-dealing forces, and "movement toward a (new) state of affairs." In cellular biology, cellular anastasis refers to recovery of dying cells after they have passed a certain point of no return! The relevance is astounding for a world that has passed a certain point of no return in relationship to some degree of climate disaster. To believe in the resurrection is to cling firmly to God's trustworthy promise that the "principalities and powers" -- the death-dealing forces, trajectories, ideologies, and systems in our world, including the engines of our societal fossil-fuel orgy -- will not win. God's will to bring abundant life for all (John 10:10) will be done, and God's Spirit equips us to join with God in "shaping a world where God's reign of life, peace, and flourishing breaks through in our time."



The work of climate justice -- be it through education, public policy advocacy, local resilience-building, protest, divestment and reinvestment, and more -- is bearing witness to resurrection. Though the U.S. government may be dismantling climate-saving policies and scorning environmental justice, by the power of God's holy Spirit , we up-rise and say "no, through the Spirit's power, we claim life, we will build communities and societies that 'serve and preserve' (Gen. 2:15) God's garden earth and that 'let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream'" (Amos 5:24).

The graduates of the Center's program – be they in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, North America, or Oceania – bear witness to God's trustworthy promise of resurrection in the face of death. You who support the Center's programs, you too are bearing witness to the resurrection by your support!

In recent months, work in the global ecumenical community has given me significant time with faith leaders of the Global South and of Indigenous communities around the globe. Their fierce and tender commitment to climate justice and to building a new economic order as a part of that work has witnessed to me the power of resurrection faith. One of them, Rev. Chipasha Musaba, General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia, said it well in a consultation in Zambia at which I gave a keynote address: "The biblical story traces God's unwavering commitment to restore sustainable flourishing – where justice flows, communities, thrive, and creation is healed." Participating in this, he says is our "divine calling. May we challenge systems that commodify creation and dehumanize communities, and may we embody a theology…where worship inspires justice, and faith bears fruit in ecological and socio-economic renewal."

With Hope and Gratitude,

Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, Founder and Director

Academic Year 2024-25
By the numbers

38 Students in English-language Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith from 12 countries



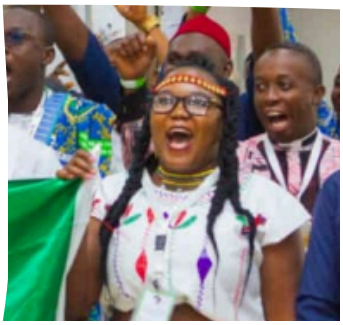


29 Students in Spanish-language Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith from 12 countries



8 Students in Community Organizing for Climate Justice as Love in Action







11 PLTS MA and MDiv students in Concentration in Climate Justice and Faith



178 Applicants to Center for Climate Justice and Faith programs from 34 countries



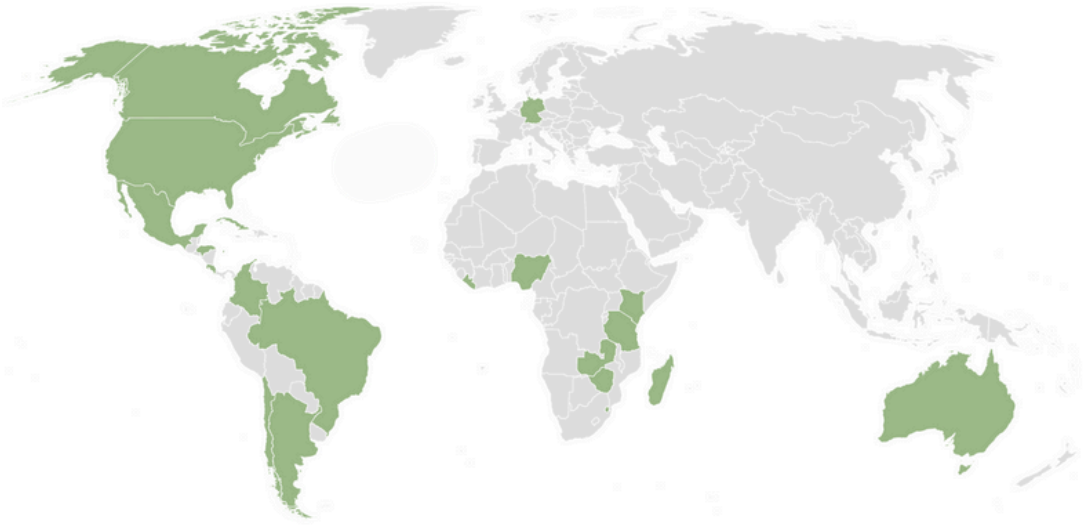
English-language Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith

In fall 2024, the Center for Climate Justice and Faith received 105 applications for the English-language Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith program. People from 22 countries on five continents were looking for an opportunity to learn how to put their faith into action and work for climate justice. After a thorough review process, the center was thrilled to accept 39 students from 12 countries into the 2024-25 cohort.

This cohort was incredibly diverse with students from a wide range of careers, ages, and life experience. Students in this cohort were pastors, university professors, biomedical engineers, laboratory scientists, students, civil engineers, NGO leaders, and corporate responsibility officers. With such a variety of world views and backgrounds, the two semesters were full of rich dialogue and learning.

Over the course of the two semesters students met every other week in groups of 8-12 students and a facilitator to discuss their readings and lectures from the week. Students discussed theology, climate science, how they see climate change impacting their communities, and how their faith is calling on them to respond.

As the final step in completing the certificate program, students implemented Sacred Action Projects that further climate justice in their community. These projects ranged from a professor designing a Climate Justice and Faith course at a university in Colorado, to a student in Liberia who organized his neighbors to form a team that will clear storm drains and prevent flooding during heavy rains, to a filmmaker who created an animated short film to inspire youth to get involved in their community. Each student in this program took their own passion, skills, and resources and put them to use to create a more just world.



Students from the 25 countries highlighted above participated in either the English-language or Spanish-language Certificate in 2024-25





Bupe Kibiki, Graduate of the Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith program plants trees with the team she formed (L) and speaks to a congregation about her project (R).

SACRED ACTION PROJECT:

Creation Care and Birthday Trees in Tanzania

Bupe Kibiki is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania Youth Desk and a Medical Laboratory Scientist in Njombe, Tanzania. After witnessing the impacts of landslides in her neighborhood caused by prolonged droughts and heavy rains, Bupe felt compelled to join the Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith program so she could better help her community deal with the impacts of climate change.

For her Sacred Action Project, Bupe sought to educate students in her region about the effects of climate change and mobilize them to be proactive in protecting their communities. Bupe created a team with four other young adults from other Christian denominations to design and implement the project which they called, "The Stewardship of Creation Project". Working together allowed the team to present at Lutheran and Catholic schools in their town – building ecumenical relationships and broadening their reach.

The team realized that they needed to have an opportunity for students to begin practicing what they learned right away to help students internalize the lesson. In partnership with a local NGO called Kilimanjaro Environmental Preservation, Bupe and her team brought native trees for students to plant in their community. These native trees hold soil in place and are one of the best methods to reduce the risk of landslides.

To encourage students to take responsibility for the trees, they gave the trees to children who were celebrating their birthday the week of the presentation. These students each received a "Birthday Tree" that they were responsible for planting and caring for. This creative framing celebrated the tree as a gift and a responsibility for these children. Bupe hopes caring for these trees will help students understand how all of Creation is both a gift and a responsibility.

Just a few days before she presented this project, another landslide killed three of Bupe's neighbors just one block from her home. Bupe shared that this tragedy has inspired her to reach even more schools and students with her project. She is just getting started.

Spanish-language Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith

The PLTS Center for Climate Justice and Faith welcomed the third cohort of our Spanish-language Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith program in Spring 2025. The 2025 cohort includes 29 students from 12 countries throughout North and South America. These students gather every other week on Zoom where they discuss different aspects of the climate crisis, share where they are finding hope, and lift each other up to address the issues facing their communities. At the end of their program, each student will implement a Sacred Action Project, where they will engage their larger community in climate justice work.

Students also gather twice a month for a plenary session for our Climate Justice, Faith, and Science series funded by the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion initiative. These speakers are experts in their field and discuss how they see the impact of climate change in their field. Topics for these plenaries included biodiversity, forestry, mental health, and agriculture. This series is increasing scientific literacy in our students and building relationships across religious and scientific communities. To watch the recordings of these plenaries visit youtube.com/@PLTSclimatejusticeandfaith





(left) Rev. Jose Matos, Graduate of the Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith leads a group of youth to learn more about the environmental threats facing San Juan Bay near their community in Puerto Rico as part of his Sacred Action Project. (right) Volunteers in Peru plant trees as part of Rev. Juan Luis Rodriquez Chalco's Sacred Action Project.



A mural depicting former Georgia senator and civil rights activist John Lewis on the side of Faith Lutheran Church

SACRED ACTION PROJECT:

Ecological Memory as Liturgy

Krystle Moraska, a Mission Developer at Faith Lutheran Church in in Warner Robbins, GA, is building an intercultural and bilingual ministry in a neighborhood home to many families of African and Latin American Descent. Krystle is a 2025 graduate from the Spanish-language Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith program and wanted to use the skills she gained to help build relationships between Faith Lutheran Church and members of the surrounding neighborhood.

For her final Sacred Action Project, Krystle worked with women in her neighborhood to create a liturgy centered on their stories, wisdom, and experiences with creation. This liturgy will accompany the installation of a composting system and rainwater collection system in the congregation's future community garden.

"I learned a lot from their stories, such as the complexity of layers of joy, suffering, injustice, and signs of life. Co-creating something meaningful that we developed based on their stories was sacred in the way that we opened ourselves to possibilities of how the Holy Spirit works through us."

Through conversations with these women Krystle learned how the story of creation is deeply interconnected with people's most profound stories and understanding of themselves. Women shared stories from all stages of their lives that were central to their understanding of God.

"Creating spaces for women in our community to share their stories was very powerful for many of them. They shared very vulnerable and sensitive things. They told stories from all moments in their lives. Some mentioned that they shared things with me that they had not shared with many other people in their lives. This was also very sacred."

She believes this project was a successful step towards her goal to strengthen existing relationships and build new relationships between the church and their neighbors by honoring the stories and perspectives. Moving forward, Krystle wants to see how can this model be used to center the experiences and perspectives of marginalized people in other aspects of the congregation's ministry.

Concentration in Climate Justice and Faith

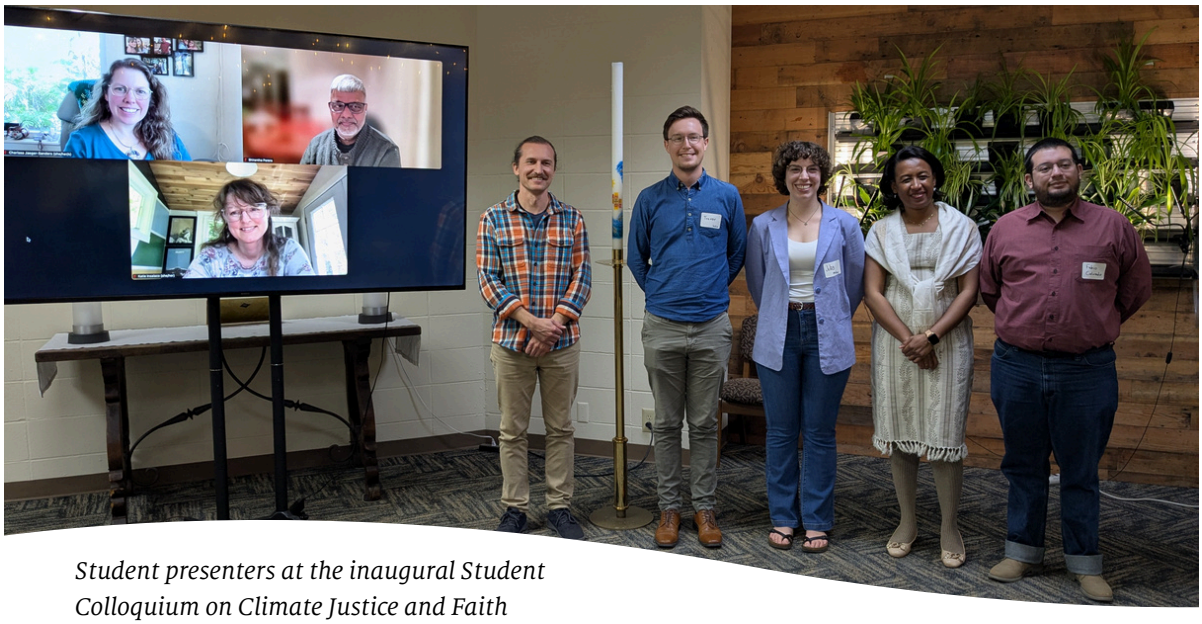


MA and MDiv PLTS students with a concentration in Climate Justice and Faith attend the Bioneers conference Spring 2025.

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS) MA and MDiv students in the Concentration in Climate Justice and Faith cultivate moral, spiritual, and practical power for the work of climate justice in communities of faith. These emerging church leaders have the opportunity to intern with environmental organizations such as GreenFaith and Interfaith Power & Light, attend a retreat focused on the intersections of faith and climate justice, participate in national conferences, focus their academic studies on climate justice, and present their work at a student colloquium. This year students in the Climate Justice: Theology and Action in Relation course delved into green and blue colonialism and implemented impressive projects focused on bringing climate justice into the church.

MDiv student Allie Wilcox penned an introduction, "A Lutheran's Call of Economic Neighbor Love" for GreenFaith's forthcoming divestment guide as part of her internship. In this article, Wilcox gives readers plenty of fodder for conversations about how our church invests its resources – reminding us how Martin Luther called on Christians to love one another in economic terms, famously rebuking Pope Leo X for enriching himself at the expense of the poor.

Another MDiv student, Teagan Shumaker, organized the first Student Colloquium on Climate Justice and Faith in partnership with the Laudato Si' Action Committee at the Jesuit School of Theology. Inspired by the Bioneers Conference in 2024, Teagan wanted to organize an event where seminarians across the Graduate Theological Union could share ideas and inspiration for bringing climate justice into their work and lives. Read more about this colloquium on the following page.



Student presenters at the inaugural Student Colloquium on Climate Justice and Faith

STUDENT PROJECT:
Colloquium on Climate Justice and Faith

On May 2, 2025, seven students from three Graudate Theological Union-affiliated Schools presented papers and projects focused on the intersection of climate justice, creation care, environmental justice, and faith. These inspiring presentations were incredibly diverse. One group of PLTS seminaries shared their quest to track the ecological footprint of the eucharist. Their curiosity led them to a family-owned vineyard outside of Sacramento, CA where they witnessed communion wine made using regenerative viticulture and the labor of fellow congregants.

Mami Brunah Sandaniaino, a PLTS Student from Madagascar, shared a project where she interviewed a dozen young Malagasy women who migrated from Southern Madagascar to cities in the north where they work as low-paid domestic workers. During these interviews Mami Brunah uncovered that many of these women were driven from their agricultural communities due to droughts that made it impossible to survive off of the land. Mami Brunah is now working with her colleagues in Madagascar to create a garden and farming program so these women can support themselves and have access to healthy food.

Other presentations included the role of the church in banning mining in El Salvador, the role of wander in our understanding of God, and how sustainable agriculture can help communities thrive. The event was an opportunity to witness the many ways in which we can each use our unique skills, gifts, and contexts to be agents for climate justice. Plans are already underway for the next Colloquium in spring 2026.

Community Organizing for Climate Justice as Love in Action

The 2025 Community Organizing for Climate Justice as Love in Action program was taught by the Via Cooperative, a collective of evaluators, faith leaders, and community organizers with a combined experience of 50+ years in community organizing and program evaluation. This team includes Maureen Okasinski, Lecturer at the University of Michigan School of Social Work; Meghan Sobocienski, a PLTS Graduate as well as Co-founder and Director of Grace in Action Collectives in Southwest Detroit; and Bianca Vazquez, Program Director at the Beloved Community Incubator in Washington, DC.

This team of seasoned community leaders met with students in the Community Organizing for Climate Justice program on a weekly basis for 12 weeks. During these meetings students were challenged to look deeper into the issues facing their community and grapple with the causes of these issues. Meeting in small groups students receiving guidance in overcoming obstacles and practiced holding each other accountable. Students finished the course with the greater skills, confidence, and community of support needed to be effective advocates for climate justice. In 2026, this program will be a two-semester "Certificate in Faith-rooted Community Organizing for Climate Justice" for teams of 3-6 people from synods, congregations, and community groups.

NEW PROGRAM:
Graduate Accompaniment Program

Since launching our first program in 2021, more than 290 students have participated in Center for Climate Justice and Faith programs. This growing network of alumni are scattered around the globe in 36 countries and 26 states of the USA. These participants have invested a significant amount of time developing spiritual strength, gaining skills, growing in knowledge, and building community in order to be effective advocates for climate justice.

In Spring 2024, we surveyed our graduates to learn how they have continued working for climate justice in the years or months since graduating. We were thrilled to learn that 85% of participants responded that they were actively working on climate justice issues in their community. 63% of participants also reported that continued support from the Center for Climate Justice and Faith can help them be more effective in this work. In addition to this survey we conducted a one-on-one listening campaign with program graduates to learn more about obstacles they've faced in continuing their climate justice work since completing their program. During these interviews we heard over and over again the need for more ongoing support to help students continue their work for climate justice.

In response to this survey and listening campaign, the Center for Climate Justice and Faith launched a Graduate Accompaniment Program in Fall 2024 to ensure our graduates continue to be effective advocates for climate justice long after they complete their initial program. In 2025, the Center published a Certificate Curriculum Guide as a supplemental resource to the course work and reference materials used during the Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith and launched a Coaching program where alumni access free coaching sessions with a certified coach to help them overcome obstacles faced in their climate justice work.





L - Rev. Dr. Neddy Astudillo (far right) speaks at a UN Press Conference on Faith and Biodiversity. R- Astudillo meets meets with UN COP16 Secretariat Astrid Schomaker

Public Programming in Climate Justice and Faith

Center for Climate Justice and Faith at COP16

Rev. Dr. Neddy Astudillo, Coordinator of the Spanish Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith, attended the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16) in Cali, Colombia as part of a grant from the American Association for the Advancement of Science Dialogue on Science Ethics and Religion initiative. During her time in Colombia, Rev. Dr. Astudillo launched the Spanish-language Climate Justice, Faith, and Science webinars with a live event, "Peace with nature, biodiversity, and climate change." She spoke at several official UN events and side-events sharing what faith institutions across Latin America are already doing to preserve biodiversity and how scientists can better engage these faith communities. Neddy also represented PLTS as a co-author of the Faiths for Biodiversity report "Uniting for Nature". This report discusses biodiversity loss at an international scale and was funded by the European Union.

Unearthing the Racist Roots of the Climate Crisis Webinar Series

In partnership with the Certificate in Racial Justice and Faith at PLTS, the Center hosted a series of three webinars exploring the connections between racial, climate, and ecological justice. Webinars featured guests from the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women sub-taskforce of the ELCA Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations program, Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery, Movimento Nos Criaçao in Brazil, the People's Justice Council and the Garrett Collective at Garrett Theological Seminary.

Climate Justice, Faith, and Science Webinar Series

Thanks to a grant from the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Center for Climate Justice and Faith hosted a Spanish-language webinar series on the intersection of Climate Justice, Faith, and Science. Speakers for these webinars included an Anthropologist, a forestry technician, Biologists, and mental health experts all speaking to the intersection of climate justice with their field of study and why their faith calls them to act. You can view these recordings in Spanish with English subtitles at youtube.com/@PLTSclimatejusticeandfaith

American Prayer Photo Exhibit

The Center for Climate Justice and Faith initiated a collaboration with the GTU Center for Arts and Religion to host American Prayer: Photographs by Lucas Foglia featuring religious and spiritual rituals in nature.

OUR TEAM

Staff

Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda
Director
Professor of Theological and Social Ethics, PLTS

Sarah Berg
Associate Director

Rev. Dr. Neddy Astudillo
Coordinator of Spanish-language Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith

Phoebe Morad
Coordinator of Certificates in Climate Justice and Faith

Maureen Okasinski
Co-coordinator of Certificate in Faith-rooted Community Organizing for Climate Justice

Meghan Sobocienski
Co-coordinator of Certificate in Faith-rooted Community Organizing for Climate Justice

Bianca Vazquez
Co-coordinator of Certificate in Faith-rooted Community Organizing for Climate Justice

Cover photos: Certificate graduate Elizabeth James and women in her congregation in Abuja, Nigeria prepare to plant trees as part of Elizabeth's Sacred Action Project for the Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith.

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Steering Committee, Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith (Spanish)
Director at Instituto para la Pastoral Contextual de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina y Uruguay

Elena Cedillo
Instructor and Steering Committee Member, Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith (English & Spanish)
Program Executive for Climate Justice, LWF

Dr. Peter McLellan
Advisor, Certificates in Climate Justice and Faith
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America World Hunger Program

Moises Perez
Steering Committee, Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith (Spanish)
Seminario Luterano Augsburgo

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Steering Committee, Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith (Spanish)
Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Humanities, Universidad Luterana Salvadoreña.

Rigoberto Omar Guadron Minero
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Rev. Dr. Karla Koll
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Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer
Instructor and Advisor, Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith (English)
Rector, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary

Rev. Dr. Carmelo Santos
Steering Committee, Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith (Spanish)
Director of Theological Diversity and Ecumenical & Inter-religious Engagement, Office of the Bishop of the ELCA

Rev. Dr. Angela Trejo Hagaar
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