

**Impuls von Landesbischöfin Kristina Kühnbaum-Schmidt  
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„Conferences, meetings, assemblies - I am tired of hearing that. People sitting and discussing, but in the end, what's the result? In the best case, a new paper. A paper that won't change anything.“ The man talking to me in that way, was somehow aggressive and depressed at the same time. He didn't talk about *this* conference. But I guess: if he had heard about this climate youth conference he would have asked me the same questions.

So well, what would have been my answer? For me, there are four key points and one.

1. Firstly, conferences like this are important to learn, to get to know the facts and to be informed about new developments. That's also important to be prepared - prepared to react to fake news.

2. Secondly, gatherings like this are important to meet other young (and older) people. Knowing that you are not alone, helps a lot. Sharing your fears and worries and also your hope, strengthens in a challenging and complex situation.

3. Thirdly, talking about the situation of climate change and about how people in different regions or countries are acting against it, encourages you not to give up. And it is so helpful to share experiences and know-how. That is a kind of empowerment.

4. My fourth key point: At conferences, experts are present, like Prof. Baschek here today. That provides an essential opportunity to listen, to learn, to find solutions and, as a result, to implement solutions. There are also a lot of other people present - so it is an excellent networking event. And this conference gives voice to you, the young people and your questions, your themes, your suggestions for action.

I would like to add one more point which I often hear about and that is: Why are we doing this, I mean: why are we doing this *as church*? I often hear people saying: „*You should talk only about Jesus, about faith and you should concentrate on praying, preaching, singing. As a bishop, why are you talking about climate change, climate action and such things as climate justice?*“

My answer is: Well, when I talk about climate change, climate action and climate justice, I *am* talking about my faith, I *am* talking about God and Jesus, I *am* talking about how to live as a christian person.

Let me explain this in a few words: The Bible tells us - I quote Psalm 24 - *“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the water”*.

These words are only one example for the bible's message: The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. Human beings, created in God's own image, are called to serve as faithful and responsible caretakers of God's precious and unique creation. As human beings, we are a part of the world and we are dependent on the health of the whole natural world. An anthropocentric understanding of our relationship with creation must be revised to a whole of life understanding. We are all interdependent in God's whole creation. Christians believe that Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation

and unity. So we are called also to metanoia and a renewed and just relationship with creation that expresses itself in our practical life. Christ's love calls us to deep solidarity and a quest for justice for those who suffer. Because of this, I think, it is an important task for the church to empower and embrace young people seeking to take action against climate change and environmental degradation in order to protect their futures. And one way to do this is to organize the climate youth conference.

And now, let me talk about the consequences. What are we doing as Northchurch, what are we doing as evangelical churches in Germany? Basically, we are caring for creation and climate justice for decades. When I was a teenage girl - and that is almost 45 years ago - a group in my congregation was dedicated to peace, justice and care for creation. That made me more aware and at that time I started eating vegetarian food. But I wanted to talk about what we as churches are doing: As a part of the worldwide ecumenical movement, we see: The present world development model is threatening the lives and livelihoods of many, especially among the world's poorest people, and destroying biodiversity. Our vision is to overcome this model based on over-consumption and greed.

In 2021, the synod of our Northchurch decided to be carbon neutral by 2035. This means: we have to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, especially evident in the fields of mobility and our buildings. We aim to switch completely to renewable energy until 2035. I know: that is an ambitious aim and also we as churches have to strengthen our efforts, but I am really confident that at last, we will be successful.

And now: what can everybody do to stop climate change? Latest polls predict that most people in Germany, especially young people, support actions intended to stop climate change. But: whatever action this would be, it should not interfere in daily life. And I think, that is a problem. I can't imagine how things will go on well without changing everyday behavior. This week's theme reminds us: This year, Earth Overshoot Day is already some weeks ago (2. August). It marks the date when humanity has exhausted nature's budget for the year. And it calls us to deep solidarity and a quest for justice for those who have contributed to this the least, but suffer the most, physically, existentially, and ecologically. In this regard, it will be crucial to change our way of life - first of all in the global north. And that means: needing less, consuming less, sharing more, using things together. I know, that is not easy at all. But I think it's worth thinking about what makes us really happy. More and more possessing and consuming? Or a more healthy life, spending more time with family and friends and the joy of living in an environmentally friendly way?

At the end, I want to thank you: for participating in this conference, for caring about God's creation and particularly in this week for caring about ocean life. It is really wonderful that you are taking responsibility for climate change. And let me assure you: You are not alone. We have to act together and we will act together to prevent our planet from becoming uninhabitable for humans and other living beings. I believe: Christ's love moves the world to care for God's creation. God calls us to be a blessing - and God will bless you.