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Eco-theological Pathways for Faith Formation: a Case Study of Young Theologians Initiative for Climate Action, Kenya

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Abstract

This article explores the topic of faith formation in the communities residing in the Ngecha-Tigoni ward, in Kiambu County, from an eco-theology perspective. The study made use of Richard Osmer's four-task model of practical theology in examining the practical integration of eco-theological elements in faith formation. The study was qualitative, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty participants, including eight members of Young Theologians Initiative for Climate Action (YTICA), five teachers, and seven faith leaders. Study participants were purposively selected from within the Ngecha-Tigoni ward in Kiambu County, Kenya, and recruited to the study. The study found effective integrations of eco-theological teachings in sermons and church activities, which was found to be effective in enhancing the overall understanding of the concept of sustainability among congregants. As a result of the integration of eco-theological teachings, participants reported engaging in different activities such as praying for the environment, which is an indication of faith formation. The study further found that, while school activities were implemented in public schools within the Ngecha-Tigoni ward, the students did not engage in environmental conservation activities beyond the school. The rationale was that the faith-based initiatives for environmental sustainability by the YTICA group and faith leaders were largely one-off and short-term without the continuous follow-up that would result in sustainable change. The study recommends meeting the need for capacity building for faith leaders, teachers, and

YTICA members in order to improve their general understanding of eco-theological practices and their application within social and cultural contexts.

Introduction

This study seeks to explore faith formation through the lens of eco-theology, specifically within the context of the Ngecha-Tigoni ward in Kiambu County, Kenya. This study aims to research and document the special needs and characteristics of faith formation in places like the Ngecha-Tigoni ward, in Kiambu County, with a case study of YTICA (Young Theologians Initiative for Climate Action) and further delve into potential theological impacts on communities in the future. YTICA is a faith-based organisation whose goals are consciously drawn from the precepts of one or more religious or spiritual tradition. The goal of this study is to understand how eco-theology can shape and enhance the faith formation of individuals and communities, fostering a more profound spiritual connection with the environment.

Eco-theology is a theological discourse that investigates the link between religion and the environment. This area of study looks at religious perspectives on nature, creation, and the place of humans in the natural world. Eco-theology primarily focuses on the interrelationships between ecology and the natural world.

The phrase 'faith formation' refers to the conscious, planned processes that individuals undergo to grow in religious faith and spirituality (Lytle 2013:17). In her study on the process of faith formation, Lytle (2013:17) observed that it is not just about giving out information on the teachings of the church. Rather, it's about leading and facilitating an encounter with the mystery of God in Christ. Faith formation does not just take place in the Sunday worship service. It's the way we live our lives, being formed and transformed, individually and collectively, in our hearts, minds, and relationships through the power of the Holy Spirit (Roberto 2010:106).

Application of Eco-theological Concepts

In the past few decades, eco-theology has been considered a critical area of theological research, especially when dealing with environmental crises that face the world. Based on research conducted by Hwang (2024:376), theological reorientation should mainly focus on ecological concerns. Through the above, it will be possible to advocate for a spirituality that majors on the interdependence of humanity and creation. Through eco-theology, traditional Christian views can easily be challenged based on how they have seen nature as separate from humanity. As noted by Vincent (2023:66), a number of faith-formation models have been overlooking ecological principles as they major on doctrinal teaching and morality. However, they have not been able to address the environmental implications of such teachings. As a result, there has been a disconnection between spiritual life and ecological responsibility, which has caused neglect in many faith communities.

There is an urgent need for eco-theological integration, especially due to global environmental degradation. Giller *et al.* (2021:1432) observe that, by neglecting the environment, the community can easily experience dire consequences. Different research conducted by Potts (2023:152) indicates faith communities should always be involved in the transformation of environmental advocacy and education. Through the incorporation of eco-theology into religious teachings, faith communities will play a critical role in empowering individuals to consider the environment as a moral and spiritual obligation. In a Christian context, faith formation has a theme highly disconnected from the material world of salvation and morality. Due to such separation, many believers have not been able to recognise the importance of taking care of the earth as a critical aspect of their faith. As recommended by Potts (2023:152), eco-theology can play a critical role in correcting such imbalance through the connection of religious teachings to practical ecological actions. Integration of such principles into faith formation will also educate people on faith, which nurtures spiritual wellbeing and encourages ecological justice.

The Ngecha-Tigoni ward, situated in the central highlands of Kenya, is a region characterised by its rich natural environment and strong Christian heritage. The area is home to diverse ecosystems, including forests, rivers, and

agricultural lands, which are vital to the livelihoods and cultural practices of the local population. However, these ecosystems are under increasing pressure from deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution, and the impacts of climate change. The degradation of the environment not only threatens the ecological balance but also poses challenges to the wellbeing of the community. The region is predominantly Christian, with various denominations practising their faith. However, environmental degradation, driven by deforestation, pollution, and unsustainable agricultural practices, poses a significant threat to the area's ecological balance.

In this context, faith communities have a critical role to play in promoting environmental stewardship. The Christian faith, which is predominant in Ngecha-Tigoni, offers theological resources that can be mobilised to inspire and guide the community in caring for the environment. Eco-theology, with its emphasis on the sacredness of creation and the moral imperative to protect it, provides a theological basis for integrating environmental concerns into faith formation. Eco-theology offers a theological response to environmental challenges by emphasising the interconnectedness of creation and humanity's responsibility towards the environment. This perspective is particularly relevant in the Ngecha-Tigoni ward, where the relationship between faith and the environment can be deepened through targeted faith-formation programmes.

Being within a predominantly Christian community, churches in Ngecha-Tigoni play a critical role in social and spiritual life. Different faith-formation activities, such as mentorship and community outreach, are very vibrant in the above community. As described to me by Kevin Maina, the YTICA team lead, the above initiatives have mainly led to the spiritual and social wellbeing of the community. However, despite so much effort, the Ngecha-Tigoni ward is still experiencing environmental challenges such as waste-management issues and soil erosion. The ward mainly depends on farming, which has led to rapid urbanisation due to shrinking arable land. The above calls for attention to sustainable practices. However, the Ngecha-Tigoni ward lacks faith-formation programmes that consider the above issues, as they only focus on traditional Christian teachings. Due to such limited perspectives, community members have not been fully equipped with different ways of addressing the environmental challenges that have a direct impact on their livelihoods.

In the Kenyan context, religion plays a crucial role in shaping community values and practices. Churches and religious leaders are influential in guiding moral and ethical behaviour, making them key players in promoting environmental stewardship. However, the integration of eco-theological principles into faith-formation processes remains limited, necessitating a study that explores how these concepts can be effectively incorporated into the religious life of communities like Ngecha-Tigoni.

Methodology

This is the methodology employed in investigating faith formation through an eco-theology lens in the Ngecha-Tigoni ward, in Kiambu County, Kenya, with a focus on the activities of the Young Theologians Initiative for Climate Action (YTICA). The methodology encompasses research design, data-collection procedures, participant selection, and ethical considerations. The approach applied in the current study was based on Richard Osmer's four-task model of practical theology (Smith 2010). The current read involves the first task, which entails gathering empirical data to describe practices and experiences that relate to eco-theology and faith formation.

The study is qualitative with a phenomenological design and uses a case study to capture the multifaceted dimensions of eco-theological engagement facilitated by the YTICA team. The rationale for the study design therefore is based on the fact that it examines the lived experiences of faith leaders and community members of the influence of eco-theological practices on faith formation (Busetto, Wick, and Gumbinger 2020:14). The selection of qualitative methods in this study is based on the fact that they are likely to result in an enhanced understanding of the context under study, which is faith formation as seen through eco-theological perspectives. The selection of YTICA is based on the fact that they are a group of young theologians who are involved in activities such as tree planting and taking care of the environment while also promoting faith-based beliefs. The engagement of this group in environmental activities makes it an appropriate case study. A thematic approach to analysis was adopted in the study. The method entails developing themes from a set of qualitative data (Lochmiller 2021:202). The current study seeks to examine faith formation from an eco-theological perspective by focusing on the YTICA activities, making thematic analysis most appropriate.

Results

These are the findings from interview responses. The study targeted a sample of twenty-five participants; however, only twenty consented to the study. The participants included eight members of YTICA, five teachers, and seven faith leaders. The section below includes participant demographics as well as the thematic analysis of the twenty transcripts. The chapter engages with the second task in Osmer's four tasks of practical theology, which involves interpreting the data acquired in a study.

Participant Demographics

The table below shows the demographic characteristics of participants. Out of the eight YTICA members, three were male and five were female. The study involved YTICA members who perform different roles including founding member (1), group secretary (1), projects mobilisation (2), social media (1), advocacy (1), and ordinary members (2). Equally, out of the five teachers, four were male and only one was female. Three of the five teachers reported that they were in charge of environmental activities while two others reported that they had witnessed or experienced YTICA activities. At the same time, there were seven faith leaders out of whom five were male and two were female. The faith leaders involved assume different roles including deacon (1), priest (1), pastor (2), coordinator (1), theologian (1), overseer (1), and ministry head (1). Among the faith leaders, there was a fair representation of different denominations: Catholic (1), Anglican (2), African independent (1), and other Pentecostal churches (3).

Demographic Characteristics

	Male	Female	Total
YTICA Members	3	5	8
Teachers	4	1	5

Faith Leaders	5	2	7
Total	12	8	20

Integration of Eco-theological Teachings

The theme examines participant responses on the extent to which religious leaders within the Ngecha-Tigoni ward are able to integrate eco-theological teachings in their sermons and the influence that this has on the audience. One of the teachings in the current context has concerned the role of God not just as a creator but also as a sustainer of life. One of the participants observed that:

> One of the teachings that I have found effective has been informing people that God is interested in sustaining life. I find this to be consistent with the story of creation and the story of Noah.

The findings above are an indication that God is interested in all life and that human beings have a responsibility to take care of all creation as designed by the creator. A number of participants emphasised the element of responsibility, arguing that human beings are mere stewards rather than owners of living things on earth. In this context, one of the participants reported that:

> I keep emphasising that we are just stewards on earth and that we have a role of taking care of the environment, not just today but for future generations. I have achieved this by demonstrating that taking care of the environment is not just a social issue but also a religious and ethical concern.

Some of the faith leaders reported that they have specific periods when they teach about environmental and ecological issues:

> My church has set apart the month of June to celebrate and teach about environmental issues. Here, we have four Sundays, during which we create awareness about the environment while at the same time drawing possible links to biblical teachings. I believe that setting aside this specific period has resulted in better understanding and involvement of believers with environmental activities.

Beyond the faith leaders, the primary school teachers selected for the study also reported that they have been able to integrate the concepts of environmental sustainability into school-based learning. One of the participants indicated that:

> I like to train my students in the element of responsibility and environmental maturity early enough. I have consistently told them that it is their responsibility to plant trees and not to litter the environment. When the same information is also shared by faith leaders and other persons within the society, we begin changing their minds and perspectives about the environment.

The participation of educators in this study reflects the significance of environmental education at a young age on the formation of ecological values. Schools and religious institutions provide persuasive formative influences when the messages about environmental stewardship they convey are compatible. Nonetheless, this potential synergy may be destroyed due to differences between the teaching lessons of the institutions and the practices of the community. Children who learn about creation care in school but witness environmental neglect in their faith communities may experience value conflicts. This highlights the importance of collaboration between religious leaders, educators, and local organisations to exemplify consistent environmental stewardship.

Evidence from some of the study participants indicates that the integration of eco-theological concepts into sermons is not just about informing them what the Bible says but also about having a clear call to action, which could result in behavioural change. In this case, one of the respondents noted that:

> After informing the congregants that God expects us to be stewards, I move ahead to demonstrate how exactly we could be stewards. Some of the examples that I use include using water sparingly and practising appropriate approaches while farming.

The practical approach described above is an indication that, in some cases, environmental activities result in a call to action, which may result in tangible changes in behaviour.

Faith Formation through Environmental Initiatives

This section examines the extent to which engagement in various environmental activities influences faith formation among local communities in the Ngecha-Tigoni ward in Kiambu County, Kenya. Based on the findings, one of the impacts of environmental activities is that it influenced their overall understanding of God. One of the study participants noted that:

> I have always known that God is the creator. However, I feel like I have always focused more on how he meets my needs without looking at his broader role in creation. I feel like the teachings have assisted in developing a broader understanding of God. I even appreciate small things about creation.

Another participant observed that:

> For me, engaging in environmental conservation has become more of an act of faith and worship rather than just any other civic duty. My understanding is that I have a role to take care of God's creation.

Another participant reported that they pray for the environment, which is considered an act of faith formation.

> My group has a prayer for the environment. For me, the prayer is that God may change the hearts and minds of men so that they are more supportive of the environment.

The findings indicate that the current teaching of and participation in eco-theological practices have created a belief among participants that they have a moral and spiritual obligation towards the environment. From the findings above, the integration of environmental care into faith formation appears most effective when framed as a holistic spiritual discipline rather than a separate social issue. Respondents also stated that other activities such as community gardening or clean-up campaigns would add value when clearly associated with biblical teachings concerning the care of creation. This is consistent with studies that demonstrate how experiential learning enhances moral growth and religious identity (Koehrsen, Blanc, and Huber 2022:21). The physical act of caring for the environment thus becomes a spiritual practice that shapes character and deepens faith commitments.

Some participants also reported being sceptical at first, which changed with teaching and direct engagement in practices.

> I am among those who did not attend the environment events. I saw it as a responsibility of local government. I have not only learnt but also seen firsthand how these issues affect us. I believe God wants us to keep the environment clean.

Findings, therefore, imply that eco-theological practices can be critical in shifting perceptions and overall mindsets about environmental activities. A further analysis of the findings indicates that the ways that environmental efforts promoted faith formation varied by generation. Participants who were younger and especially those who had experienced the YTICA programmes were more readily open to the concept of environmentalism being a part of their spiritual identity. This indicates that exposure to eco-theological practices during early years can influence lifetime dynamics of faith and environmental awareness (Olowo 2021:65). Older congregants needed to be convinced of the theological soundness of the faith-formation process in and through

environmental action more often, whether through framing conservation as an expression of neighbour love or intergenerational responsibility.

Besides, faith communities with the desire to enrich faith formation via environmental actions are supposed to pay attention to building coherent initiatives with understandable spiritual dimensions. This could involve establishing environmental ministries with specific faith-formation objectives, combining conservation efforts with scripture study, or developing eco-retreat options. The challenge lies in maintaining the delicate balance between ecological action and spiritual reflection – ensuring that *doing* remains connected to *being* in relationship with the creator. When achieved, such integration provides an effective example of faith formation that resolves both spiritual and ecological crises in our era.

The next part examines whether engagement in eco-theological practices results in sustainable change.

Influence of Faith-based Environmental Initiatives on Sustainability

The theme examines the extent to which eco-theological practices, as well as faith-based initiatives, have resulted in sustainable development in the context of increasing the participation of community members in environment-related activities. A majority of participants noted that, while there has been a general change of mindset toward the environment, the impact is often short-term, as only a few individuals are able to follow through with the suggestions. One of the participants reported that:

> The church and other groups tend to organise environmental activities regularly; however, I feel that the impact is always short-term. For instance, most people would only plant trees during those specific days. If you walk by the road on a random day, you will find litter. I am not critical; I am just saying that the behaviour change may not be sustainable.

Similar observations were made by another participant, who noted that;

> I am a member of a religious group, and when members are called upon for an environmental activity, only a few actually show up. There is obviously a link between faith and sustainable activities, but I cannot explain why some people are still not interested.

The findings above are an indication of a lack of direct connection between eco-theological teachings and sustainable engagement in environmental conservation. The rationale for this would be that a majority of faith-based environmental initiatives are one-off activities which may not necessarily result in behavioural change. One of the faith leaders, however, reported that they had witnessed actual engagement in sustainable activities:

> We have been very consistent with environmental stewardship, and one of our calls to action has been to have members engage in activities such as tree planting and home gardens. I can confidently report that this has been achieved. Some members have actually planted trees and are also involved in conserving the environment.

The findings above could be taken to mean that many of the changes that have been witnessed so far have been individual and on a small scale. While such environmental activities may still have a cumulative sustainable impact, findings indicate that there is a general lack of personal initiative to engage consistently in environmental activities after the eco-theological teaching.

The study also involved interviewing primary school teachers to understand the impact that eco-theological practices have on the likelihood of school students engaging in actual sustainability activities. Teachers interviewed in the study had different perceptions. Some reported that they had witnessed significant positive changes:

> I would say that there has been some change in terms of developing some positive values. Previously, environmental studies used to be just any other subject. When you integrate faith elements, I have witnessed students become

> more engaged and participating in activities such as managing waste.

The argument above is based on the assumption that eco-theological teachings create some spiritual connection, which leads students to believe that they have some sense of duty or obligation towards the environment. Other participants had different perceptions of the effectiveness of the interventions:

> One of the obvious impacts of the eco-theological teachings is that there is an increase in the overall awareness of environmental and sustainable activities among school children. However, among the children, sustainability is based on, among others, the amount of infrastructure and support that is available. For instance, a child may understand the value of cleaning the environment. However, actual engagement is dependent on how well teachers and parents support them.

Another participant noted that:

> I have seen children being excited about the story of creation and why we should continuously take care of the environment. However, the fact that environmental degradation remains an issue means that a majority of children do not carry what they learn into adulthood.

The results gave rise to a sharp discrepancy in the data: on the one hand, children were more open to the teachings of eco-theology, and adults, on the other hand, were more resistant or indifferent. Teachers speculated that this disparity stemmed from generational differences in environmental values and the inertia of established lifestyles. The success of faith-based sustainability initiatives depends on interventions that bridge these generational gaps by modifying messages for various age groups. For example, appealing to adults on the basis of a theology that links environmentalism with other convictions, including health, frugality, or intergenerational justice, might lead to greater commitment. Meanwhile, nurturing children's innate curiosity through hands-

on projects and storytelling could solidify their commitment to sustainability as they mature.

The findings above indicate that there are gaps in the actual implementation of eco-theological concepts so that they have a sustainable impact over time. For schoolchildren, teaching is important in instilling values and a general appreciation for the environment. However, sustainability is based on factors such as continued reinforcement and support.

In order to have a better understanding of the gaps described above, the study included questions on challenges faced in implementing eco-theological activities. A major challenge identified by a majority of participants was the lack of immediate benefits. Given that a majority of individuals within the community are farmers, they are often more focused on their daily survival needs, which implies that participating in environmental activities is not considered a priority.

> In my understanding, most people know that they are supposed to take care of the environment. But I feel like these aspects often get lost between the day-to-day activities.

Equally, on priority, one of the faith leaders observed that:

> We tend to place most of these activities during the weekend due to perceived availability. However, most people do not perceive this to be a priority, which explains the low numbers.

The findings are an indication that, despite the teaching and practice, a majority of people are not intentional about the integration of environmental activities into their daily lives. Another challenge identified was that some community members view participation in environmental activities as an elitist agenda and, therefore, only for specific members of the community. In this case, one of the YTICA group members observed that:

> I have witnessed some sense of resistance from some community members. They feel like they do not have the

> financial means to implement sustainability projects. While they appreciate biblical teachings associated with the idea, they often feel like they belong to others.

As a result of the prioritisation of socioeconomic needs, some participants in the study reported that they viewed environmental initiatives as an elitist agenda often for persons with financial means within the society. The findings align with observations by Conradie (2012), who observed that, in most cases, engaging in environmental activities such as tree planting may require time and financial investment which causes some community members to feel that it is not a priority. This aspect becomes a significant barrier to long-term engagement, especially given that individuals fail to perceive the long-term ecological benefits.

From the findings above, faith-based environmental initiatives in Ngecha-Tigoni demonstrate both promise and pitfalls. Such initiatives are excellent at increasing awareness and spurring occasional action, but have not succeeded in creating inbuilt community-wide sustainability practices. To overcome this, religious institutions need to go past organising symbolic activities to making ecological consciousness a part of spiritual practice. This requires sustained education, structural support, and creative approaches to bridge generational and ideological divides. Overcoming these issues, faith communities will be able to exercise their distinctive moral authority to make not only short-term connections but lasting, revolutionary change, both to individuals and the world around them.

Mitigating Eco-theological Practices

There are different barriers and challenges in the implementation of eco-theological practices. One of the recommendations for mitigating the challenges involves capacity building for teachers and faith leaders. One of the faith leaders noted that the integration of eco-theological practices into sermons and church activities may, at times, be difficult to achieve. On capacity building, a participant reported that:

> My submission is that faith leaders need more theoretical backing. There is a need, for instance, to have seminars and

> workshops which show how to structure eco-theological sermons and how to ensure that they have a sustainable impact on the community members.

The concept of capacity building above is an indication that some faith leaders may not have relevant and appropriate knowledge about the mitigation. Another approach to mitigating the challenges would be to ensure that teachings on eco-theological practices as part of faith formation should be linked directly to people's livelihoods.

> People need to see directly how the eco-theological practices influence their day-to-day lives. I think there is a need for more practical examples while demonstrating that we are merely stewards of what God has created.

The recommendation above indicates the need to demonstrate the perceived benefits of the activities in people's lives. When people are able to draw direct benefits and connections, it is possible that theological teachings will be more openly embraced, resulting in sustainable environmental activities over time.

Integration of Eco-theological Practices in Teachings

The study findings revealed that religious leaders in the Ngecha-Tigoni ward have an active practice of integrating eco-theological commitment into their preaching, where they preach eco-theology as part of spiritual calling and moral responsibility. This is in line with wider theological theories, based on which faith groups are seen as fundamental players in mitigating ecological crises with the help of biblically underpinned environmental ethics (Habel 2000:18). Under Osmer's framework, we can interpret findings in the context of Genesis 2:15 where God places Adam in the garden 'to work it and take care of it' (NIV). Churches therefore ought to integrate eco-theological teachings into sermons, Bible studies, and catechism classes as part of holistic faith formation. Ignoring this leaves out a vital aspect of God's mission.

In achieving the above, churches can develop sermon guides that connect scripture to practical environmental issues. Faith leaders stated in the study that they included real-world examples in their eco-theological lessons, such

as planting trees and conserving water. The results show that raising awareness usually is insufficient to establish lasting change in environmental behaviour unless enhanced by supporting structures. The challenge lies in moving beyond moral exhortation to develop tangible and community-based sustainability initiatives (Cheng et al. 2021:112). Effective eco-theology must close the gap between theological study and embodied ecological practice in faith communities.

Faith Formation through Environmental Initiatives

The results of the study found that faith communities' efforts to protect the environment are a great way to grow spiritually and strengthen their faith. The participants explained how the activities, such as tree plantation, conservation schemes, and environmental education, took the form of transformative spiritual practices that helped them become more connected to the creation as well as the creator. The findings could be interpreted in the context of James 2:17 which states, 'Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead'. Environmental initiatives provide a concrete way for believers to express faith in action, embodying stewardship, responsibility, and love of one's neighbour.

The study however revealed that there have been challenges relating to the sustenance of the spiritual aspect of environmental efforts. Other respondents pointed out that conservation actions were prone to becoming empty rituals unless seriously considered theologically. The findings imply the need to ensure that environmental initiatives are considered as spiritual discipline rather than just another church activity to be fulfilled. One of the approaches for addressing the above is through practical integration such as encouraging testimonies from members whose faith deepened through eco-practices.

The Influence of Faith-Based Environmental Initiatives on Sustainability

The results revealed a complex relationship between eco-theological teachings and sustainable environmental practices within the Ngecha-Tigoni community. Although faith-based activities have been successful in increasing awareness about environmental stewardship, the effects on long-term behavioural change have not been entirely consistent. One practical integration of the

findings would involve religious institutions modelling sustainability by reducing waste, promoting renewable energy, and managing church land responsibly. In religious circles, the research revealed that, in theory, there is acceptance of environmental stewardship but, in practice, it is not practised. There were some faith leaders who felt they had succeeded in engaging the members to participate in sustainable living such as maintaining home gardens or conserving water, although, in such instances, it was usually on an individual level as opposed to a collective engagement. The sporadic participation in environmental activities points to a gap between doctrinal teaching and personal conviction. Flam (2022:63) suggests that good eco-theology should fill this gap by integrating sustainability into the very definition of spiritual identity, such that sustainability cannot be separated from faith practice. In the absence of such an integration, environmentalism may be treated as an optional add-on rather than a core manifestation of religious commitment.

Mitigating Measures for Enhancing Eco-theological Practices

The study also sought to examine possible approaches to mitigating the challenges and improving the contribution of eco-theological practices towards sustainability. One of the recommendations was capacity building for teachers and faith leaders, to ensure that they have a better understanding of eco-theological practices, including how they could be effectively integrated in a way that meets social and cultural contexts. Another practical application of the findings would be religious institutions creating awareness campaigns to educate the general public while at the same time building strategic partnerships with public and private institutions to access capacity and resources.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study sought to answer various research questions. The first was in regard to the integration of eco-theological practices and the influence on faith-formation processes. The study found that faith leaders within the Ngecha-Tigoni ward in Kiambu County have been able to efficiently integrate eco-theological practices into their sermons and teachings. The above was achieved by demonstrating the role of God as a creator while also informing congregants of their role as stewards of God's creation. The evidence of faith

formation was illustrated in aspects such as individuals praying for the environment as well as an integration into mainstream church activities.

The second research question was about perceptions of and beliefs about environmental conservation. While participants had mixed reactions to the relevance of eco-theological practices, YTICA members and faith leaders interviewed in the study reported that a majority of community members did not necessarily engage in environmental and sustainability activities as a result of eco-theological teachings. The findings link with the third research question on the actual impact of eco-theological practices in addressing environmental challenges. The study found that eco-theological teachings resulted in practices such as tree planting and environmental conservation, which are largely one-off and short-term. Lastly, the study examined different mitigating measures for enhancing eco-theological practices. The measures examined include capacity building for teachers and faith-leaders and demonstrating the direct benefit of eco-theological practices to community members.

A number of the limitations of this study indicate useful future research directions. The sole emphasis on religious leaders and teachers raises unsolved problems concerning congregational acceptance and the implementation of eco-theological teachings. The opposition to environmental messages in certain religious groups should be studied, especially where environmental interests are seen to contradict traditional religious values. Longitudinal research could help determine whether eco-theological training leads to long-term behavioural change. Cross-cultural comparisons of religious traditions could present other possibilities of uniting ecology and spirituality. These research trajectories would greatly expand the knowledge of faith-based environmental participation.

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