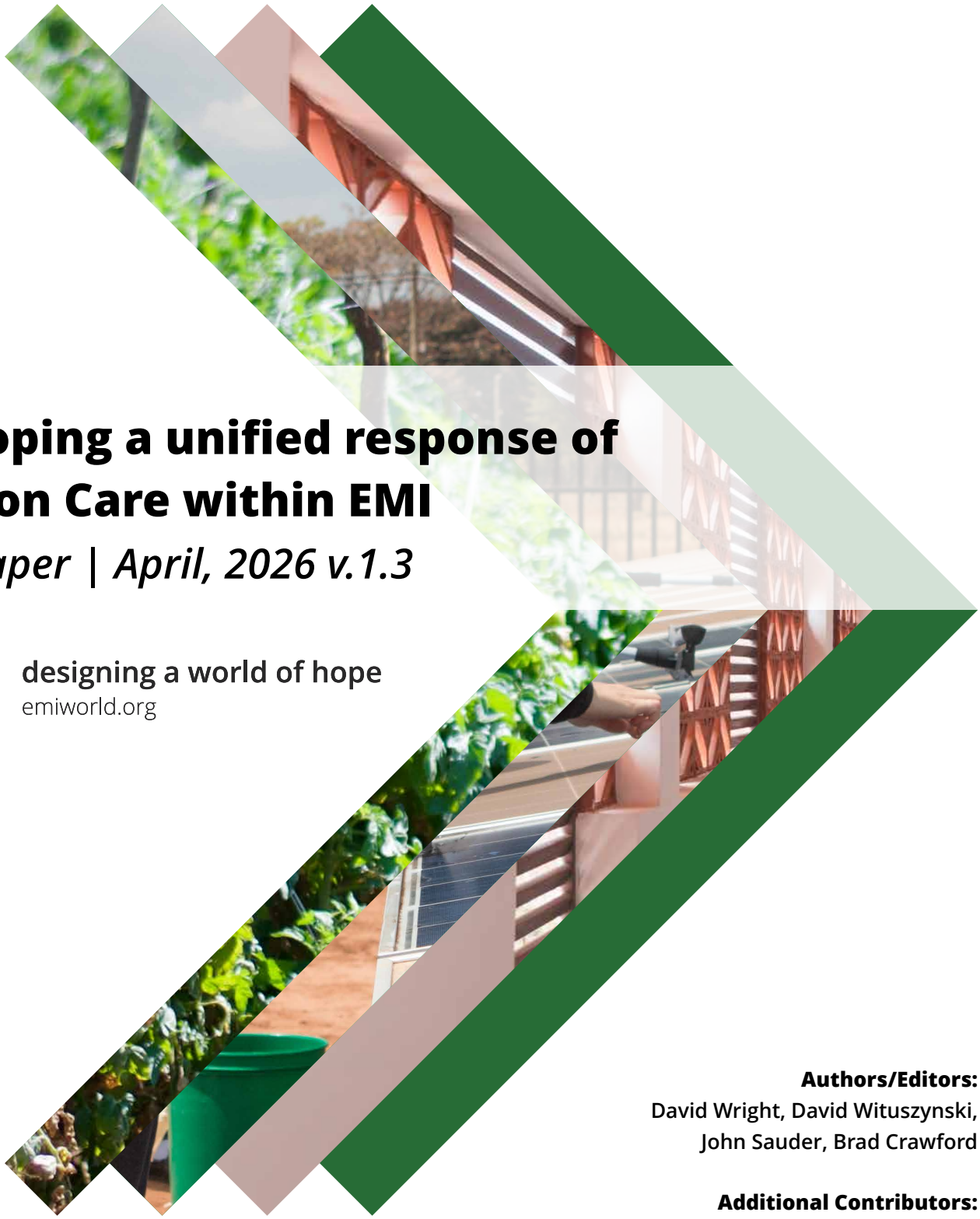

# Developing a unified response of Creation Care within EMI

*Whitepaper | April, 2026 v.1.3*

designing a world of hope
emiworld.org

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# Developing a unified response of **Creation Care** within EMI

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## Introduction

EMI is uniquely positioned to influence the relationship between the built and natural environment through our core values and a vision that includes holistic restoration. Within our mission we desire to serve communities and the church in ways that respond to every aspect of the world's brokenness with the love and healing of Christ's redemptive work.

To better understand the relevant needs and opportunities within the restoration of God's creation, we might ask the following questions:

1) **What is changing within the world's natural environment?** What are the observable symptoms and the felt effects?

2) **How do these changes intersect with the work of EMI?** How do we contribute to further harm or healing of the natural world through the choices we make as designers of the built environment?

3) **How do we engage as Christians with the created world?** Why should we be compelled to respond—not merely as designers and builders, but as faithful followers of Christ?

4) **How do we support an EMI response to creation care?** How do we define sustainability within our approach to projects, establish practical guidelines and resources for our teams, and measure our progress and impact?

In exploring each of these questions we'll examine a diversity of perspectives while searching for common areas of alignment within our shared faith, mission and values. Resulting key **unifying statements** and recommended principles for an EMI response are included within each discussion and introduced within the following summary.

## Executive Summary

The exploration of creation care for the Christian designer and builder is a journey that seeks to avoid the common pitfalls of a human-centric, secular activism or a retreat into passive indifference. This approach applies not only to our response, but also to how we define the problems of our time. Much of the popular media discourse is focused on alarmist predictions rather than grounded, shared ecological realities. The planetary boundaries framework discussed in **Section 1.0** attempts to broaden our understanding of the current health of interconnected ecosystems through observable symptoms and changes within the natural world over the last 50-100 years, some of which could be destabilising for human flourishing.

The issue is further defined at the intersection between the natural and human worlds, including the built environment. Human-designed infrastructure for shelter and transportation, agricultural practices, land development, energy consumption and water-use affect how communities experience and contribute to ecological change. When resources and natural systems are stressed, marginalized populations often suffer the most. Our decisions in design and construction can deepen this form of injustice, but in **Section 2.0** we also discuss opportunities to bring healing into the communities we serve through design, and to envision a world where relationships are restored and flourishing.

In **Section 3.0** we begin to frame a theological meaning and motivation for our response by exploring the underlying cause for what scripture describes as the 'groaning of creation'. As Christians, we acknowledge the subjection of all creation to futility, to a state of frustration, decay and incompleteness because of sin. It was human sin that disordered creation, thus environmental brokenness is tied to spiritual brokenness. Yet while the effects of the human sinful condition bring harm to the natural world, our actions are not beyond God's sustaining, sovereign control of his creation. In this we are 'subjected in hope'. Creation is not groaning in death throes, but in the labour pains of expectation for something new: a coming restoration of all things by God's redemptive purposes through Christ.

This present and future hope is anchored in the firstfruits of Christ's resurrection. As Christ-followers indwelt by the firstfruits of the Spirit, we are called to participate in the new creation as his agents of healing, even as we await its final restoration. **Section 4.0** concludes with a discussion of possibilities for a practical EMI approach to our work within the built environment that *anticipates* renewal by *practicing* renewal. This is a practice of stewardship, hopeful engagement, embodied discipleship, love for the hurting and the lost, and worship of the Creator.

Before engaging any scientific models, data sets, or environmental frameworks, EMI affirms that Scripture is our primary authority for understanding both creation and our responsibility toward it. Our motivation for Creation Care is rooted in faithful obedience to God, not in projections of environmental outcomes or fear of future consequences. The observations and tools that follow are offered as descriptive aids to help us understand the present context in which our stewardship is lived out. They are not the foundation of our calling, but serve to inform how we seek to honour God through wise, humble, and responsible care of His creation.

## Section 1 – **What is changing within the world's natural environment?**

### 1.1 Human impacts on a changing world

One commonly used approach for describing patterns of environmental change is the **planetary boundaries framework**, first developed in 2009 by the international scientific community. Their work identifies nine critical earth-system processes and associated boundaries within which humanity is able to thrive and flourish. The framework continues to evolve through updates informed by current scientific understanding and serves as a resource for governance strategies and policies at all levels, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Like all scientific models, this framework represents an evolving human attempt to describe complex systems within God's creation, and should be understood as a tool for observation rather than a definitive or prescriptive authority.

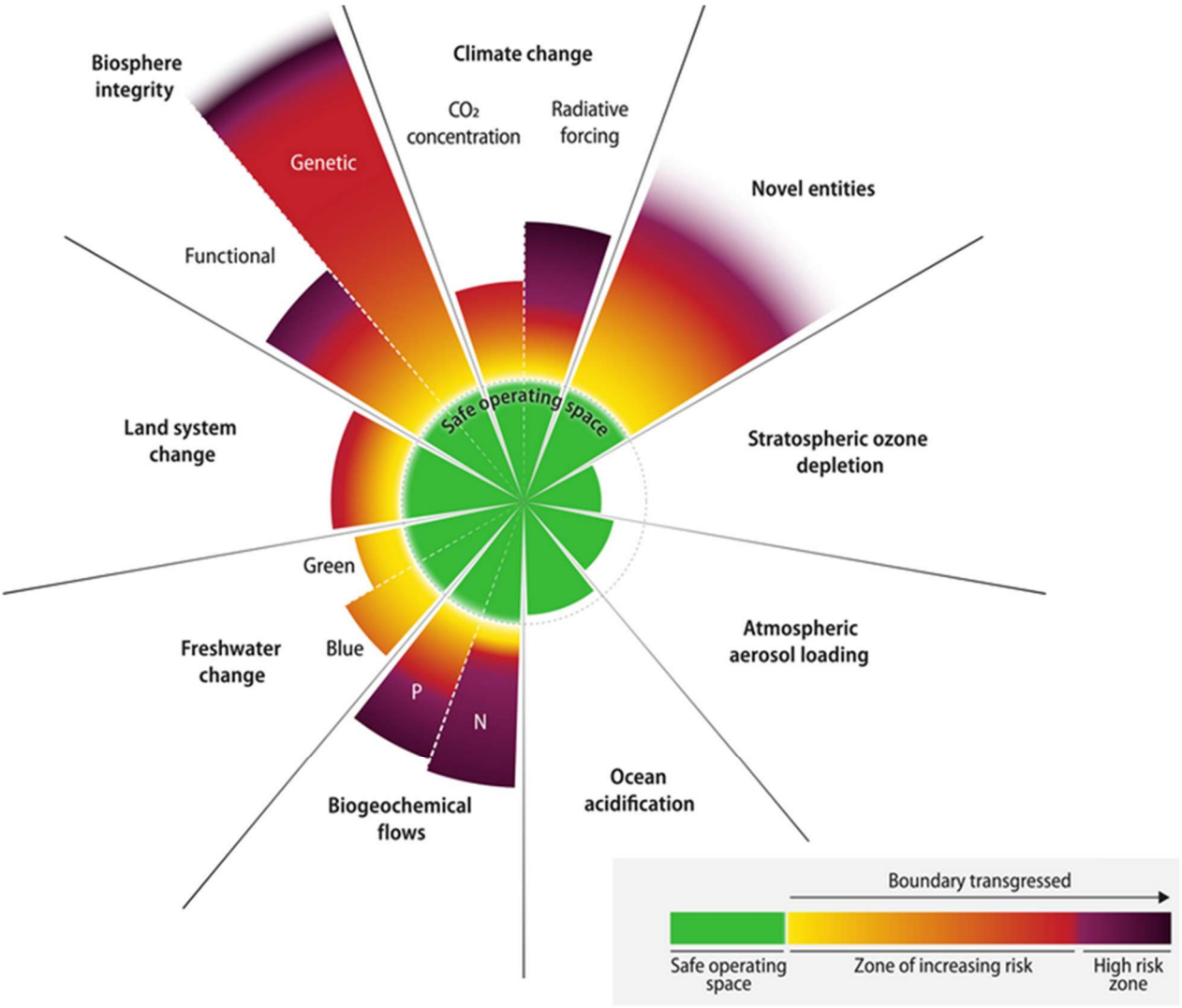


Fig 01. – The current status of nine earth-system processes, as of 2023. (Richardson, 2023, Fig.1)

Rather than isolating and independently addressing the changes within specific processes, planetary boundaries are meant to be considered together as interconnected systems, especially when studying the overlapping influences of human (anthropogenic) activities. The observable changes in these integrated processes over recent history, generally within the last 50-100 years, are briefly described below along with a description of each earth-system.

**Biosphere Integrity**

Biosphere Integrity refers to the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem function caused by human activity. It includes both genetic diversity (variation within species) and functional diversity (the roles species play), which are important for maintaining the earth's resilience and stability. Since 1970, habitat destruction, pollution, and overexploitation have driven a 73% average decline in wildlife populations across marine, freshwater, and terrestrial ecosystems (WWF Living Planet Report, 2024). The IPBES Global Assessment Report has observed that within approximately 8 million known species of animals and plants, around 1 million are currently threatened with extinction (IPBES, 2019).

**Climate Change**

Earth's climate is shaped by the balance of solar energy absorbed and radiated back into space. While climate naturally varies due to seasonal cycles, ocean patterns, and volcanic activity, recent warming has been largely attributed to rising levels of greenhouse gases like $CO_2$, methane, and nitrous oxide. These gases trap heat, intensifying the greenhouse effect (Boorse, 2022).

Global average temperatures have risen by about 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels, with most of that warming occurring in the past 50 years. This has accelerated the intensity of weather events, ice melt, and sea level rise, contributing to complex feedback patterns within the climate system that scientists continue to study and seek to understand.

**Novel Entities**

Novel entities refer to human-made substances—like synthetic chemicals, plastics, heavy metals, and genetically modified organisms—that do not naturally occur and can disrupt earth's systems. This boundary is exceeded when their production and release outpace our ability to assess and manage their risks to ecosystems and human health, i.e. before testing can occur.

Since the 1970s, over 350,000 synthetic chemicals have been registered globally. In this same time period, 3.1 billion metric tons of plastics have also accumulated, with around 140 million metric tons distributed in rivers, lakes, and oceans (Statista, 2024).

**Stratospheric Ozone Depletion**

This boundary addresses ozone layer thinning caused by human-made chemicals like CFCs, which reduce its ability to block harmful UV radiation. Since the 1980s, significant ozone loss—especially over Antarctica—has largely stabilized due to globally-agreed regulatory action. If current policies continue, full recovery is expected by mid-century.

**Freshwater Change**

Freshwater use describes the safe limits of water consumption and changes to the global hydrological cycle, encompassing both blue water (surface and groundwater) and green water (soil moisture available to plants). Growing populations, intensive agricultural use and economic shifts towards more resource-

consuming patterns have led to a rise in consumption of nearly 1% per year since the 1980's. Current annual withdrawals of more than 4 trillion $m^3$ have led to widespread river depletion, groundwater over-extraction, and declining water quality (UNESCO, 2024).

Despite increasing levels of use, according to the UN World Water development report, roughly half of the world's population still experiences severe water scarcity for at least part of each year.

**Atmospheric Aerosol Loading**

This type of loading refers to the concentration of tiny particles (such as sulfate, black carbon, and dust) in the atmosphere that influence climate by affecting cloud formation, precipitation, and the earth's radiation balance, as well as impacting human health. Currently an est. 2.8 billion people are exposed to hazardous levels of air pollution worldwide (Health Effects Institute, 2024).

Over the past 50 years, industrial emissions, biomass burning, and urban pollution have raised aerosol concentrations, especially in Asia and Africa, altering monsoon patterns and regional climates. In contrast, other areas of the world have seen modest improvements due to air quality regulations.

**Ocean Acidification**

Ocean acidification is the ongoing decrease in ocean pH caused by the absorption of excess atmospheric $CO_2$, which disrupts marine ecosystems and weakens the ability of organisms like corals and shellfish to build calcium carbonate shells and skeletons. Since the start of the Industrial Revolution, ocean surface pH has dropped by about 0.1 units (a 30% increase in acidity), placing increasing stress on marine ecosystems that support biodiversity and food systems. (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2020).

**Land System Change**

Land-system change refers to the large-scale conversion of natural ecosystems—like forests, grasslands, and wetlands—into agricultural, urban, or industrial areas. This reduces biodiversity and disrupts key earth-system processes. Deforestation across tropical, temperate, and boreal forest biomes have diminished carbon storage and altered water and nutrient cycles.

Although deforestation rates are slowing, over 460 million hectares of tree cover have been removed in the past 25 years—a 12% decline since 2000. (Global Forest Watch, 2024).

**Biogeochemical Flows**

Biogeochemical flows refer to global cycles of key elements like nitrogen and phosphorus, which support ecosystem productivity and water quality. Excessive fertilizer use, industrial agriculture, and increasing wastewater discharge have accelerated these flows, causing eutrophication—nutrient overloads that lead to dense plant growth and oxygen-depleted waters.

Together these stresses invite thoughtful reflection on how humanity interacts with the earth's natural systems and how we might respond with greater humility, wisdom, and care.

**Unifying Statement:**
*Rooted in our biblical calling to steward God's creation, we seek to thoughtfully engage the observable symptoms and felt effects of a 'groaning creation'. These realities help us discern how to live out faithful obedience as designers of the built environment in ways that reflect the gospel and honour the Creator.*

## 1.2 Those most affected from a changing environment

The symptoms of a groaning creation are not equally felt, with communities and nations least responsible for its causes sometimes experiencing its most severe effects. People living in poverty face greater risks, with environmental degradation compounding their existing vulnerabilities in several key areas:

- **Increased Vulnerability to Climate and Environmental Shocks**
  People in resource-constrained communities are often more vulnerable to environmental hazards and disruptions, such as droughts, floods, and heatwaves, due to living in more risk-prone areas combined with inadequate housing and infrastructure. They often lack access to early warning systems or emergency support, making initial responses and recovery more difficult. As a result of limited risk protection, they are more frequently displaced.

- **Dependence on Natural Resources for Survival**
  Many low-income communities depend directly on farming, fishing, and local ecosystems for food, water, and income. Environmental degradation—such as soil depletion, water scarcity, or loss of biodiversity—directly threatens their basic needs and economic stability. Lack of access to affordable energy often creates compounding issues, e.g. cooking with inefficient firewood can lead to deforestation *and* health problems from smoke inhalation (aerosol loading).

- **Limited Capacity to Adapt and Recover**
  With less access to financial resources, education, or government support, people with resource constraints have fewer coping mechanisms to adapt to environmental changes or recover from disasters. Sustainable technologies and innovations are often unaffordable or unavailable in lower-income settings. This lack of adaptive capacity reinforces cycles of poverty and deepens inequality, highlighting the need for compassionate, thoughtful stewardship.

Researchers studying families impacted by poverty in 16 low-income nations have found a strong correlation between increased vulnerability and changes in the environment (Ahmed, et.al. 2009). Many of these families represent the beneficiaries of EMI's projects. In the following section we'll discuss how these changes directly intersect with our approach to serving communities and the church through the built environment

**Unifying Statement:**

*Faithful stewardship includes caring for those who are most vulnerable to environmental stress and disruption. In serving communities with fewer resources, EMI reflects God's justice and compassion by designing the built environment to provide protection, dignity, and care for both people and the places they depend upon.*

## Section 2 – **How do these changes intersect with the work of EMI?**

God designed people as fundamentally relational beings. This extends not only to our relationships with God and with other people, but also to our relationships with the rest of creation. Some of these relationships are obvious: we cannot survive unless we are nourished by the non-human creation through healthy food, clean air, and pure water. Some relationships are less obvious, but no less important: studies have demonstrated that exposure to intact natural systems increases subjective wellbeing (e.g. Russell et al., 2012). Especially in our roles as designers of the built environment, we acknowledge that a "sense of place" is an important part of one's lived experience, and one's relationship with a place is tied up in one's relationships with the creatures and natural processes that exist at that place.

As we seek to witness restoration of *both* people and the world within the vision of EMI, we also seek restoration of the relationships *between* people and the world. The globally dominant culture has fractured this relationship by conceiving of the world as primarily a store of material resources. A restored relationship with the world includes the ability of a person to sustain him or herself from the stores of nature, but also the ability of that person to live in peace with and support the world's flourishing.[2]

The built environment is a primary shaper of the way that people interact with the world around them. Buildings and infrastructure can promote separation from the world, resulting in the dominance of human-constructed artifacts. They can also promote connection with the world by providing opportunities for mutually beneficial interactions.

In contrast to 'rewilding' as the only approach to restoring healthy natural systems, well-managed human interventions have been shown to result in mutually beneficial outcomes. Here are a few ways that EMI's activities across various sectors of human-designed environments can either contribute further harm or begin to heal our fractured relationships with the natural world:

**Shelter and Structures**

Conventional construction practices often depend on unsustainably-sourced or carbon-intensive[3] and synthetic materials that contribute to climate instability, chemical pollution and habitat loss. For the last 100 years human expansion and settlement patterns have also become increasingly less densified, resulting in disconnected communities and energy-consuming transportation infrastructure.

A healing response emerges through spaces and structures that foster life-giving relationships, carefully considered land-use planning, bioclimatic design, and low-impact, earth-based materials that support ecological and occupant health. Considering aspects of recyclability, durability and resilience in a full life-cycle materials analysis can also help to ensure both safety and sustainability for structures.

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[2] For some explorations of this in the scientific literature, see Kim & Kaplan (2004) and Loder (2014), along with Warners, et. al. (2014) on reconciliation ecology as a paradigm for creation care.

[3] 34% of annual carbon emissions are attributed to the construction sector, according to the United Nations Environment Programme, 2025

Fig 02. – Overlooking a central garden courtyard, locally-sourced clay ventilation blocks provide sun-shading and passive cooling for interior spaces within SIL's Bible Translation Center, designed by EMI in Senegal (Photo by Matthew Coffey)

**Landscaping**

Landscaping that removes native vegetation, replaces diverse plant life with monoculture ground covers, or uses chemically-intensive practices can degrade ecosystems, decrease emissions capture, and disrupt nutrient cycles. When hardscaping dominates green space, it worsens urban heat islands and reduces rainwater absorption, contributing to land-system change and climate vulnerability.

In contrast, restorative landscaping can heal both land and community. Incorporating native plants, pollinator gardens, shade trees, and green infrastructure (e.g., bioswales, rain gardens) supports biodiversity, bioclimatic comfort and water retention. The contemporary theory of "reconciliation ecology" envisions creating habitat for non-humans in places where humans regularly live, work, and play (Rosenzweig, 2003).

Fig 03. - EMI Uganda staff joined together to establish plantings around the Gem Playground – a uniquely designed space that brings children with special needs into an outdoor recreational environment. (Photo by Adam Gordon)

**Food Systems**

With food production linked to some of the largest drivers of environmental change, built interventions must also seek to address agricultural solutions whenever possible. Land-use planning that encroaches on arable land or promotes destructive agricultural practices can threaten biosphere integrity.

Healing occurs when sites incorporate regenerative agriculture, sustainable irrigation, edible landscapes, composting systems, natural seed banks, or community gardens that reinforce local food sovereignty and reduce pressure on land systems and natural resources.

Fig 04. - EMI assisted with rehabilitation design, installation, and operational training to improve the efficiency of irrigation systems in Guayabal, Colombia – helping the people of this community to improve their livelihoods through sustainable agriculture. (Photo by Jason Chandler)

**Water**

Water scarcity can be attributed to physical scarcity, when there is a shortage of water because of local ecological conditions; and/or economic scarcity, when there is inadequate water infrastructure. Built interventions that result in excessive groundwater extraction, impervious surfaces, and untreated wastewater can strain freshwater systems, reduce groundwater recharge, and pollute water bodies.

Domestic water consumption has contributed to large increases in water demand over the past 50 years, thus EMI's design of municipal and residential systems in standard building services or through WASH community efforts can have significant impact. Healing comes through best-practice consumptive patterns, sustainable treatment methods and integrated water-sensitive design. This could include rainwater harvesting, greywater reuse, and constructed wetlands that mimic natural systems, helping communities stay within sustainable hydrological cycles and restoring watersheds altered by land conversion.

**Energy**

High energy-consuming buildings and infrastructure can contribute to unsustainable operational expenses while increasing emissions and particulate pollution (aerosol loading). In contrast, designing for energy efficiency through passive systems and cleaner energy like solar can reduce these impacts.

Healing emerges when EMI is able to monitor and advise on best-practice energy use and align energy systems with sustainability measures. Best-practice design can decrease reliance on emissions-intensive

sources and enable resilient access to energy across all socio-economic levels through systems like microgrids and energy cooperatives. Access to energy can also empower other resource-reducing actions: for example, a mechanical fan could dramatically increase the energy efficiency of a wood-burning stove, and an electronically-controlled irrigation system could reduce water losses and improve crop yields.

Fig 05. – Students learning how to clean and maintain solar panels from an EMI-designed micro-grid system for a campus in Tanzania (Photo by Jenni Keiter)

**Health and Sanitation**

Pollutants in air, water, and soil all negatively affect human health and the health of surrounding ecosystems. Practices such as the improper incineration of rubbish, poorly designed wastewater infrastructure, and the use of toxic materials in construction all have the potential to harm both inhabitants and neighbors of EMI projects.

Healing designs treat waste as a resource—e.g., ecological sanitation that returns nutrients to the soil—thus protecting biosphere health, conserving freshwater, and supporting nutrient cycling. Within building and site design, incorporating bioclimatic and biophilic principles such as daylighting, ventilation and healing gardens through evidence-based design can lead to proven health and developmental benefits. (Jimenez, et.al., 2021)

**Disaster Resilience**

Built infrastructure that ignores ecological systems—such as clearing mangroves or modifying wetlands—reduces natural buffers against disasters and worsens vulnerability to climate-related extremes.

Conversely, a well-designed environment is the primary way that humans can withstand events that would otherwise cause natural disasters. Healing interventions reinforce nature-based solutions for climate resilience: flood-tolerant site planning, reforestation, and adaptive design that partners with—not against—natural systems, helping communities stay resilient as climate and environmental impacts intensify.

Fig 06. – Despite having recently experienced a 50-yr flood event, MAF is able to land their amphibious aircraft in Balimo, PNG with EMI-designed docking infrastructure that can adapt to changing climate conditions - maintaining a lifeline to this isolated community. (Photo by Terry Fahey)

**Operational Alignment**

These intersections also go beyond our design and construction practices, encompassing the sustainability of our internal operations. By responsibly managing our office resources and reducing the ecological footprint of our travel and project activities, we can demonstrate a posture of stewardship to our ministry clients and relate to the next generation of young professionals seeking coherence between their values and the regular rhythms of their work.

These types of healing interventions define the opportunities and the obligations of the design and construction industry, but what about our responsibilities as Christians in light of the gospel? In the next section, we'll view the alignment of our faith and values with the care of creation.

**Unifying Statement**

*As designers of the built environment, the work of EMI intersects with natural systems and processes across every discipline and sector in which we provide services. Our choices in these intersections are never neutral – they either harm or heal relationships between people and the natural world.*

## Section 3 - **How do we engage as Christians with the created world?**

### 3.1 Historical Responses

As Christians, we share a belief in scripture's definition of environmental degradation resulting from humanity's sin, which fractured the original harmony between God, people, and creation. Yet, our *response* to the created world has spanned a range of views across the history of the church, reflecting broader theological, cultural, and philosophical shifts:

- **Early Church (1st–5th centuries):** Many early Christians saw creation as good, reflecting the Genesis text, but emphasized the spiritual over the material. Influences from Platonism led some to view the physical world as inferior to the spiritual realm.
- **Medieval Period (5th–15th centuries):** Thinkers like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas affirmed the goodness of creation as God's handiwork. Creation was seen as a reflection of divine order and a means to understand God, explored through reason and observation of the natural world.
- **Reformation (16th century):** Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin upheld the value of creation, emphasizing its role in God's providence and glory. However, the focus remained on human redemption rather than environmental stewardship.
- **Enlightenment and Industrial Era (17th–19th centuries):** During this time, many Christians embraced scientific progress and dominion theology—interpreting the Genesis text as a license to exploit nature for human benefit. The world was increasingly seen as a resource.

While many of these historical Christian perspectives respond to aspects of biblical truth, they've also been subject to common distortions, some of which remain within our current worldviews.

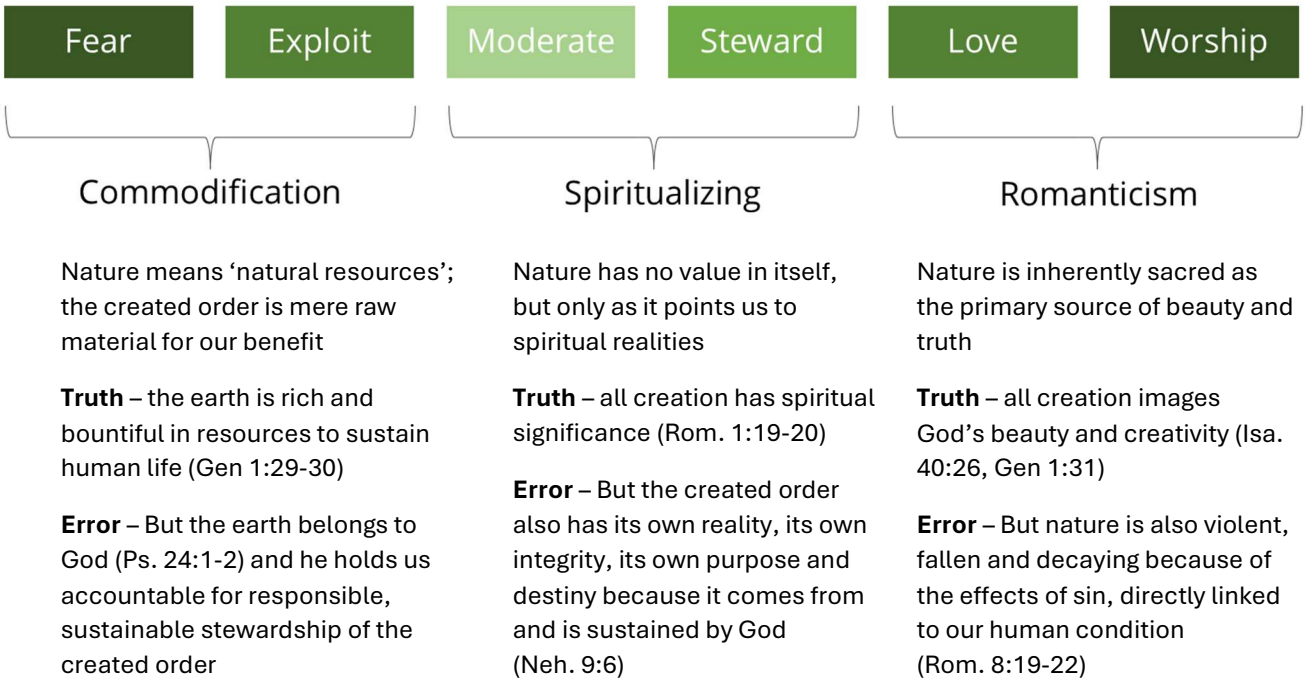


Figure 07. - Truth and (corrective) error within our various responses to the created world (Snyder, 2007)

From the 20th Century to the present, a growing awareness of ecological decline has led many Christians to examine biblical teachings that recognize the intrinsic value of the created world and emphasize an integrated response of caring for all of creation.

Developing a robust theology of creation care through the lenses of historical Christian thought helps us to avoid common distortions and interpret creation passages faithfully within the full biblical storyline of creation, fall, redemption and restoration.

**Unifying Statement:**
*The earth, though richly endowed to sustain life, is God's possession, and as Christians we are entrusted with its wise and responsible care. It reveals God's power and beauty, and participates in His divine purpose, yet it also bears the marks of human sin, suffering the consequences of a fallen world as it longs for restoration.*

## 3.2 The Mission of Restoration

A biblically grounded view of mission is drawn to God's purpose for the renewal of all creation, beginning with the firstfruits of Christ's resurrection, empowered by the Spirit, and moving towards a final fulfilment where all things are made new (Romans 8).

In the Apostle Paul's writings, the world - not just the church or the individual soul, is the theatre of God's redemptive work. The cosmic renewal of all things is the fruit of our salvation, as creation itself shares in the freedom and glory revealed in the children of God. The healing of creation is God's saving work, not our own achievement; yet, as spirit-led believers united with Christ, we participate through a faithful and hopeful witness.

This anticipation of holistic renewal begins to shape a missional response to the created world:

- **Our response to brokenness:** The exercise of dominion in the larger biblical text includes the active promotion of harmony and peace (shalom) not only between humankind and nature, but also between people, and centrally between people and God. Ecological problems cannot easily be separated from other aspects of our broken world, including other broken relationships (Drake, 1993).
- **Our response to the most vulnerable:** As followers of Jesus, we love others by responding to the suffering of those directly affected by the results of sin and the degradation of God's creation. This includes being aware of the impact on the poor from both the economic cost of responding to a changing natural environment and the adverse consequences of those changes.
- **Our response to natural systems:** The true measure of our efforts to care for the created world lies in the health and integrity of the earth's integrated ecosystems—whether they function as God intended. Rather than focusing on isolated solutions, a unified approach seeks to honour the full web of relationships that sustain life – human and non-human (WEA Sustainability Center, 2025).

Integrating a missional response within the various sectors of EMI's work (previously discussed in section 2.0) becomes an embodied witness of the built environment to visibly reflect the transformational values of the Kingdom:

- **Shelter and Structures** as spaces of safety, belonging, reconnection and healing
- **Landscaping** that demonstrates reconciliation between the built and natural environments

- **Food Systems** as expressions of God's abundant provision
- **Water** as a shared responsibility for a precious gift
- **Energy** that brings people together and empowers work and service
- **Health and Sanitation** that affirms the dignity and value of people made in God's image
- **Disaster Resilience** that's rooted in hope and justice for the vulnerable

**Unifying Statement:**
*Christian mission participates, by the Spirit and in union with Christ, in God's restoring work for all creation—anticipating his promised renewal through faithful witness that seeks healing, justice, and flourishing across human communities, natural systems, and the built environment.*

## 3.3 Unified Calls to Action

A growing number of unified calls to creation care have emerged from the global Church in recent decades. These declarations arise from broad consensus among evangelical leaders, missional networks, and Christian development organizations. Foundational statements such as the **Cape Town Commitment (2010)**, the **Jamaica Call to Action (2012)**, and the recent **Korean Invitation (2024)** affirm that caring for God's creation is not a peripheral concern but a gospel issue rooted in the mission of God.

The *Cape Town Commitment* (a foundational document from the Lausanne movement) asserts that creation care is "a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ" and calls for repentance from environmental exploitation and indifference. The *Jamaica Call to Action* echoes this urgency, highlighting how environmental degradation harms the poor and urging the Church to integrate creation care into its mission and witness. The *Korean Invitation* builds on these calls by naming creation care as an expression of whole-life discipleship, urging contextual action, global collaboration, and practical integration into church life.

These appeals are supported by thoughtful theological and missional frameworks, such as OMF International's *Theological Basis for Creation Care*, or the NAE's *Loving the Least of These*, both of which anchor the call to care for creation in the nature and mission of God Himself.

Together, these voices offer a unified and biblically grounded call to action. They affirm that creation care is not only a response to current ecological realities or a focus across the design industry but a joyful act of obedience and a faithful witness to the hope of Christ.

**Unifying Statement:**
*The global Church is calling all believers to embrace creation care as an essential expression of the gospel. EMI's commitment to this call allows us to join with the wider body of Christ in reflecting God's love, justice, and redemptive purposes in our lives and through our work.*

## 3.4 Core Commonalities within our SOF, Mission, Vision, and Core Values

The global Church's call to creation care finds deep resonance within EMI's foundational documents and identity. Our **Statement of Faith** affirms that God is the Creator of all things and that humanity—made in His image—has been entrusted with the care of creation. The redemptive work of Christ is cosmic in scope, pointing not only to the salvation of individuals but also to the restoration of all things (Colossians 1:19–20). This theological foundation makes creation care a natural outworking of our faith.

EMI's **Mission**—to develop people, design structures, and construct facilities which serve communities and the Church—reflects a commitment to both people and place. Our work exists at the intersection of physical environments and spiritual transformation. Serving vulnerable communities often means addressing issues of environmental degradation, public health, and resilience—concerns that are deeply connected to creation stewardship.

Our **Vision** to see "people restored by God and the world restored through design" encapsulates a holistic understanding of redemption. We affirm that God's restorative work includes both the spiritual and the physical, and our design efforts are part of this wider redemptive story. The environments we shape and steward should reflect God's justice, beauty, and care for all creation.

This alignment is further expressed in EMI's Core Values:

- **Design**: We pursue culturally appropriate, sustainable, and transformational design that honours both people and the places they inhabit.
- **Discipleship**: We follow Jesus in all areas of life, recognizing that caring for creation is part of living as faithful stewards and image-bearers of God.
- **Diversity**: We work across cultures in mutual respect and partnership with local professionals, seeking to understand and support local communities whose well-being is often directly tied to the health of their environment.

These values were reaffirmed through EMI's internal 2024 survey, which showed strong theological and practical support for creation care among staff. Respondents expressed a desire for more tools and resources, increased collaboration, and stronger accountability to help them live out this commitment.

**Unifying Statement:**
*EMI's commitment to creation care flows from our shared theology, mission, and values. We are not adding a new emphasis but living more fully into who we already are—participants in God's redemptive work for both people and places, grounded in the hope of Christ and empowered by His Spirit.*

# Section 4 – **How do we support an EMI response to Creation Care?**

## 4.1 Sustainable Project Goals

Sustainability within the design and construction industry is often defined as the making of buildings and infrastructure that meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. More specifically, this definition typically promotes a balance of sustainability across social, environmental and economic dimensions.

An EMI response deepens that vision within a restorative mission— adding a theological and relational dimension to our activities within the built environment. One method for practically defining sustainability and the nature of these activities is through EMI's core value of Design.

**Design:** *EMI works within the local context to design and construct culturally appropriate facilities that are sustainable, affordable, and transformational.*

The expression of this narrative begins to holistically define a sustainable approach to projects across three related dimensions:

**Projects engage with the needs of local communities (contextual)**

- Involve a participatory design & construction process that encourages culturally-responsive solutions
- Allow for a local workforce & locally-sourced products
- Adhere to design & construction principles that promote universal access and life-safety for local users

**Projects are environmentally responsive (sustainable)**

- Incorporate resource-conserving materials, energy-efficient systems & bioclimatic methodologies
- Promote climate & disaster resiliency
- Integrate health-supportive, biophilic and regenerative design principles

**Projects are aligned with partner capacities (affordable)**

- Align with operational & strategic planning objectives
- Consider life-cycle cost & principles of circular economy
- Include cost planning services in design & construction

**How we shape the built environment (transformational)**

**Unifying Statement:**

*Sustainability within the context of EMI's projects, enriched by a vision of restoration, can reflect our core value of Design through locally grounded, environmentally responsive, and practically aligned solutions to promote the flourishing of communities both now and in generations to come.*

## 4.2 Tools and Resources

Implementing sustainable goals across EMI projects requires the development of additional tools, resources and training for project teams. Further defining the factors and sub-factors within each dimension outlined in Section 4.1 may take the form of abbreviated technical guidance with links to localised data and specialised resources.

For example, mainstreaming a **Disaster Risk Reduction** (DRR) design approach across projects could include a procedural process that helps EMI designers to complete a sequence of steps:

- Analyse a project's geophysical susceptibility to hazards.
- Map resilience capacity through focus group discussions with project stakeholders.
- Evaluate the site and building(s) from a developed hazard list.
- Develop design solutions/mitigation strategies to address the resilience gaps.

In considering possible formats for assessing a project's sustainability, EMI's Creation Care Working Group (CCWG) evaluated a number of established assessment and benchmarking tools, including green building certification programmes and other frameworks for sustainable development.

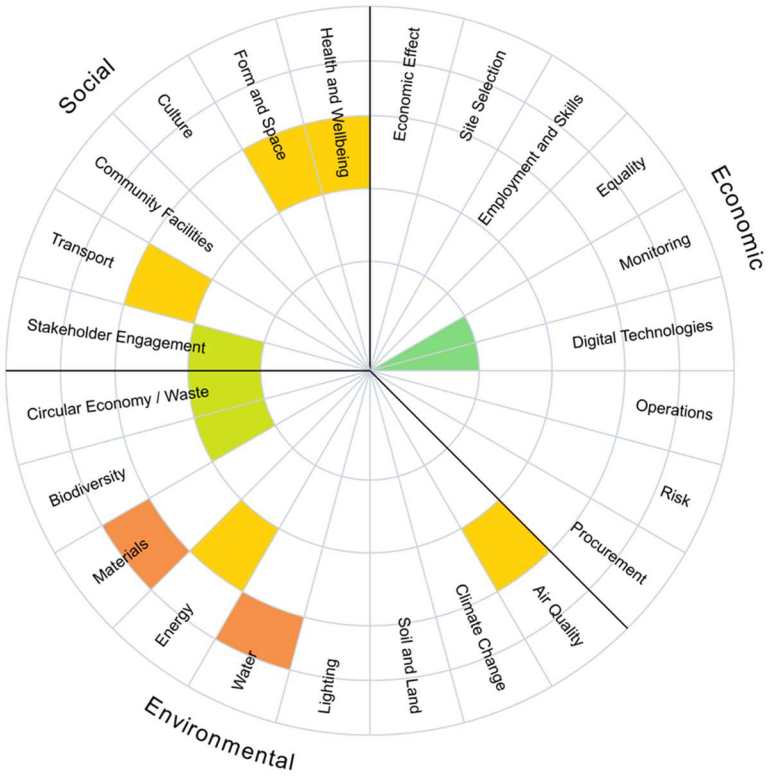


Fig 08. - The SPeAR tool evaluates a project's sustainability by visually mapping its performance across 24 indicators
Source: ARUP, 2025

In considering an approach for project assessments from the evaluation of existing tools, several criteria for EMI projects emerge:

- **Limit complexity** by focusing on factors with maximum impact across typical EMI project types and locations, yet holistically assessed across integrated dimensions.
- **Reduce barriers** to use and training requirements, e.g. professional credentials like LEED AP.
- **Reduce cost** (and time investment) to EMI and our partners by avoiding formal certification programmes or third-party reviews.
- Derive a framework that allows for **regional benchmarking and local adaptation**, yet maintains broad applicability from a common standard applied across EMI regions.
- Develop a tool (or an existing tool for use within EMI) that **guides the design process from inception** through the design stages into construction and post-construction.
- Move beyond targets aimed at "doing less harm" within a resource-consuming paradigm to **actively improving ecosystems** through restorative and regenerative responses.

Like the DRR example noted previously, mainstreaming sustainability measures at some level across all standard projects in addition to specialised services for select projects increases overall impact and reinforces a commitment to creation care across all EMI interventions.

**Unifying Statement:**

*Supporting a unified, consistent response to improving sustainability across EMI projects requires standardised guidance, assessment tools and training for project teams, while allowing for individual project baselining and local adaptation.*

## 4.3 Project Metrics

We gain a greater awareness of the impact of our engagement in creation care by including sustainability goals within our core value metrics - tracked, evaluated and shared EMI-wide through a Design Dashboard.

Project 'process' **Outputs**, leading to **Outcomes** resulting in '**Stories of Impact'** may include similar factors or indicators as mentioned in 4.1. Success is measured by adherence to standard principles (not a standard design expression) within each indicator as applied to the design and construction approach for a project.

Verification may occur through abbreviated post-project surveys completed by the EMI project manager. In the DRR mainstreaming example, this may be a simple Y/N response on whether the DRR process was followed/ completed. If Disaster Resiliency was identified as a sub-indicator within the environmental dimension of an assessment tool and locally baselined, the survey may ask whether the benchmarking target was achieved within the design response.

The relational and theological dimensions of restoration within EMI projects are further emphasised in how we build project teams and through our Diversity and Discipleship core values, also measured through our CV metrics.

**Unifying Statement:**

*By embedding sustainability goals and creation care principles into EMI's core value metrics, we cultivate a consistent and measurable project approach while encouraging a restorative design and construction process.*

## 4.4 Conclusion

As a ministry established in the work of design and construction, EMI operates at the intersection of people, place, and purpose. We see first-hand how the natural environment affects lives, livelihoods, and the built environment. Our commitment to serve communities and the church compels us to pay attention to these realities—not merely as technical challenges, but as deeply spiritual and missional concerns. We recognise that Creation Care is not an optional add-on to our work, but an essential act of love for our neighbours, a faithful response to God's gifts, and an active sharing in His work of restoration. This commitment stands regardless of shifting cultural narratives or scientific debates, because it is grounded in God's unchanging call to steward His creation faithfully.

In practice, we express this commitment through a built response that aligns with the character and purpose of our mission- holistically engaging with the needs of those we desire to reach. This work can be supported by tools, training, and standardised guidance that allow for both consistency across project regions and adaptation through unique expression in the local context. By integrating sustainability goals into our operations, our projects and our core value metrics, we develop a **focus for excellence in our work**, resulting in measurable impact through our teams, our partners and the communities we serve together.

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