

eco-congregation

England and Wales

Autumn 2006

Newsletter



Hello!

How wonderful that God expects us to be in communities! I'm becoming more and more convinced of the importance of building communities of resistance to the culture of consumerism that surrounds us. How can we expect people to live differently when billions of pounds/dollars are spent convincing us to acquire continually and without limit?

So I urge you to develop space in your churches where people can be nurtured in a different set of values: *shalom* principles, such as sharing, justice, seeing ourselves as part of creation rather than lording ourselves over it, inclusivity, wholeness, equality and right living.

That's quite a challenge! But if we in the church are the place where people's hearts and minds are transformed, then we need to provide the place where people can be supported in the next step: behavioural change.

Keep going with all the fantastic work that you are doing! And let me know! The more stories I have to tell, the more inspired people can be when I get to tell them.

With kind regards

Jo

Jo Rathbone, Eco-congregation, The Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2LZ 024 7685 3061

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PS Let me know an email address if you have one, and if you have changed your address (real or virtual!) recently.

Latest Eco-congregation Award winners:

Stratford-upon-Avon Methodist
St James Maghull
St Bridgets West Kirby
Littleover Baptist
St Mary's Beighton Sheffield
Emmanuel Loughborough
St Aiden's Sudden Rochdale
St John's Methodist Whitley Bay
United Church Dorchester

Congratulations to all these churches. Even if you don't think that you are on your way to being given the Award, do let me know how you are getting on!

Developing networks for caring for creation

Could you host a meeting to gather people who are working on similar issues? Working together in local networks is inspiring: sharing resources, ideas and even doing practical projects together, which wouldn't be possible for a single church to do alone.

Just invite everyone you can think of, let me know so that I can put the invite round my contact list, and off you go! I'm happy to come and facilitate such a meeting if you would like me to.

Breathing Places Phase 2

The Autumnwatch programme on BBC2 recently saw the launch of the next grant scheme of £4million available to groups who want to create or maintain breathing places and get local people involved. What about developing your churchyard as a quiet garden, or a place for education with the local primary school? Grants of between £300 and £10,000 will be available to support projects lasting one year. The aim is to:

- Increase participation and access to local breathing places by encouraging people to become actively involved in them, and by supporting activities that are open and accessible to everyone.
- Make a lasting improvement to the local environment by supporting activities that develop existing breathing places or help create and sustain new ones.

For more information, go to: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk or phone 0845 4 10 20 30. The closing date is 13 December 2006, so get those applications in quick!

Season of Creation website

Dr Norman Habel is a wonderful poet, hymnwriter, and respected scholar/theologian according to Rev Bonni-Belle Pickard. She stumbled across his website:

www.seasonofcreation.com and thoroughly recommends it. It's full of liturgical ideas, theology, images, Bible studies... all from an Australian perspective, as that's where he is based. Enjoy!

Forty years since Lynn White

John Bradbeer from Devon pointed out to me that next year will be the fortieth anniversary of the academic paper that effectively started ecotheology, namely Lynn White's 'The religious roots of the ecological crisis'. John is working on a series of meetings, discussions and other related activities in Lent to mark the anniversary. Could this be a way in for your church to look at creation care? How about having an open meeting for your community and inviting someone to speak?

Getting the message out

For your next Eco-congregation event, why not let them know at Premier Radio: advertise through yournews@premier.org.uk and they might even ring you for a radio interview.

Fight the plastic with Fairtrade Cotton!

Earthcare Bradford has linked up with Bishopston Trading Company and now sells cotton shopping bags with a message - have a look: <http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/earthcare-bag.htm> Could your church buy some and sell them on? You could even raise money at the same time!

Care for the World - Music and Liturgy from RSCM

Are you wondering how to organise a special service on creation care? How about doing as Sue Gooderham did at Evesham Methodist and use a great resource from the Royal School of Church Music.

Care for the World is a festival service arranged in three sections: • A celebration of creation • The environmental problems in the world today • Our hope in Christ who will make all things new. Care for the World draws together a wide variety of musical styles including African folk music, jazz, anthems and hymns. It is an exciting collection with contributions from composers such as Bob Chilcott, Andrew Carter, W.A. Mozart, Beethoven, John Harper and Geoff Weaver. It's £4.95 and available through the online shop at www.rscm.org.uk or phone 0845 021 7726. Sue says it comes as a booklet complete with CD of backing music if you don't have access to musicians. Brill!

They also have a short musical on a moment in the life of St Francis of Assisi (Ridout: Francis) in their Festival Service section - has anyone used that?

Anyone found anything else helpful?

Support for bigger projects

Community Action for Energy (CAfE) based at the Energy Saving Trust provides support for community groups, including churches, on setting up projects. On the website www.est.org.uk/cafe there are details of training courses, funding, funding database, resources and info including briefing notes on building partnerships, publications and so on. Churches can apply for funds to have consultant to come and look at the church. Tel: 08701 261 444



National CLIMATE March - Saturday 4th November - London

Remember Remember the 4th of November ! The CLIMATE March is part of the International Day of Action on Climate and will be the UK's biggest ever Climate Change Demo. It takes place on the Saturday before the Nairobi Climate Talks. For more on the International Day of Action see: www.globalclimatecampaign.org and www.campaigncc.org - Campaign against Climate Change and www.icount.org.uk = Stop Climate Chaos event.

For £10 seats on a coach leaving from Royal Well, Cheltenham e-mail: cathyclimatechange@yahoo.co.uk. The coach will leave at 8.00 am and pick up in Cirencester at 8.30 am. Return to Cheltenham after 7.00 pm.

Bible in TransMission on sustainable development

To see this edition from the Bible Society, log on to: <http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/I3.php?id=311> Articles by John Houghton, Alan Emery, Jane Williams, Ian Hore-Lacey, Edward Echlin, John Guillebaud.

Science and Religion for Church Leaders, Nov 7-9, 2006, Wolfson College, Cambridge:

This course will aim to equip church leaders to answer some of the questions about science and religion which they might well face during the course of their ministry. Are science and religion in conflict? How does one interpret the early chapters of Genesis? What do science and religion say about the human person and how are ethical issues raised by science to be handled? Speakers for the Course include:

- Revd Margot Hodson (Environment)
- Prof. Colin Humphreys FIM FInstP (Astronomy and the Date of the Crucifixion)
- Revd. Dr John Polkinghorne KBE FRS (Relating science and religion)
- Dr Gordon Wenham (Interpreting Genesis)

For more details see www.faraday-institute.org under 'Courses'.

Prof RJ (Sam) Berry in Liverpool

Don Thompson of Merseyside Environmental Trust has arranged an open discussion with Professor Sam Berry in Liverpool on Saturday 18th November 2006 at 10.30am. It's free but places should be booked.

For details contact MET on 07074684135 or email theroost@tesco.net

Professor R.J. Berry is an animal ecologist geneticist and was Professor Emeritus of Genetics at University College London 1978-2000, and a former President of the British Ecological Society, the European Ecological Federation, and the Mammal Society. Professor Berry is also Moderator of the Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (and a former President of Christians in Science), and had a significant hand in making Eco-congregation happen!

Farmers' Market in church revitalises community

Revd Susan Ramsaran from Shipbourne, Kent once had a whacky idea: St Giles church could be home to a



Farmers' Market! And it has been going for 3 years now, providing an outlet for local producers, a chance for people in the community to meet, fresh local produce for people to

purchase, and an opportunity for the church to be part of the solution. During the 2 hours a week that it opens, fairtrade hot drinks are offered alongside meeting the producers and buying the fruit and veg, meat and bread. In 2005, St Giles farmers' market was voted the best in Kent.

How about that for your church? Or what about a community allotment? What about starting a cookery club if people in your locality have not learned how to cook? Or what about a community lunch club for older people, and parents at home with children, using fresh, local produce?

Texts on environmental issues:

<http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/religion/christianity/texts/index.html>

Jolly helpful site! Lists relevant Biblical texts and quotes from theologians both ancient and contemporary.

'Think of a World...'

An environmental conference

Church Stretton, Shropshire - 24th to 26th November.

The conference will focus on climate change:

- impacts and action through key speakers
- workshops
- activities
- exhibition

Speakers include

- the Secretary of State for Climate Change & Environment Ian Pearson MP,
- President and of the Methodist Church Conference – Revd Graham Carter
- Vice President of the Methodist Church Conference Dudley Coates.

There will also be a locally produced, animal friendly, organic and fairly traded café open all day on the Saturday.

The conference is being organised by the Shrewsbury & Wolverhampton District of the Methodist Church but everyone with an interest in the environment, climate change, and how we can take action is invited to attend and will be made welcome. The conference is free.

To book contact Brenda on 01902 332508, although not essential, it is helpful if you could.

Ecological Footprint

Could you use this idea to get through to folk in your congregations that we need to reduce? An ecological footprint measures how much of the world's resources we require in order to sustain our lifestyle. It brings it home when people realise that our current lifestyle might need 3 or 4 planets if everyone were to live as we do. Here are some sites that might help to get this across to people:

www.ecofoot.org
www.footprintnetwork.org
www.bestfootforward.com
www.ecologicalfootprint.com



Shrinking the Footprint

This is the CofE's programme to attempt to measure the carbon footprint of churches up and down the country (for the year 2005), provide information, advice and support to help churches reduce that footprint, and then to measure again in 2007. The website is a good source of information and access to relevant links, articles etc: www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org

So if you are part of an Anglican church, you should be doing this! If you haven't heard about it, then have a look at the website, and challenge your PCC about it. The idea is that every church does it and that the information is collated nationally to feed back to General Synod, whose request it was in the first place.

Request for pictures and stories

Does anyone have any good quality emailable pictures of actions they have taken on environmental issues? It would be great to be able to make things more accessible visually, but that means having more pictures and more accessible aurally by having more stories. So please do send me details of what you are up to in your local situation - small actions, big projects, it doesn't matter!

Email them to me at ecocongregation@rase.org.uk

Thanks.

Green Electricity

There have been different articles over the past year or so pushing different aspects of the Green electricity market from different perspectives. It is not easy to get to the bottom of it! The Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland arranged a seminar with different speakers to try and understand how best to advise churches who are investigating buying green. A paper (currently being written) will be coming out very soon and will be put on the Eco-congregation website as soon as I can, and it will also go on the Operation Noah site (www.operationnoah.org). Please do read it - it is quite long, but we really do need to understand what it is all about.

Job advert: Executive Director for Operation Noah, the churches' climate change campaign
Initial contract 2 days per week for 12 months
Climate change is humanity's biggest challenge. Help the churches lead the way.

Operation Noah aims to inspire Christians to 'cut the carbon' and demand a safe and just solution to the crisis of climate change. We need a pioneer with proven campaign management skills to help put climate change at the heart of the churches' witness.

Working initially part-time with a campaign assistant, you will promote Operation Noah through the churches of Britain. Our ambition is for a full-time director and team to generate a mass-movement for personal and political action. Whilst you do not need a theological background, you will need a track record of partnership building, and be able to interpret the ethical challenges of climate change for a variety of audiences.

A competitive salary is offered for this high profile position. The post is based at the headquarters of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and will involve travel.

For an application pack, contact Penny Elvins, CTBI, Bastille Court, Paris Garden, London SE1 8ND, telephone 020 7654 7254, penny.elvin@ctbi.org.uk.
The closing date for applications is 24 October 2006.

Operation Noah is a project of the Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and Christian Ecology Link (registered charities).

Set All Free 2007

25 March 2007 will mark 200 years to the day that a Parliamentary Bill was passed to abolish the slave trade in the British colonies.

Although slavery was finally abolished in the Americas in 1888, it is estimated that over 20 million people are still in forms of servitude today.

set all free aims to remember the past and apply its lessons to tackle the legacies of Transatlantic Slavery and its modern day equivalent.

Please consider how you can mark the date. Have a look at the website www.setallfree.net which has loads of information on it which will equip you to remember, reflect and respond.

It would be helpful to make the links for people: our expectations of cheap goods are paid for by practically slave labour in other parts of the world. So not only does our demand for consumer goods and services cost the earth, but it costs the lives of those who are trapped into providing such goods.

Prayer from the Council of Black-led Churches, Birmingham:

Lord, even in the routine activities of life, teach us to seize opportunities to be your channels of wealth to those who live in poverty. Ever fill us with your Spirit and a willingness to work for the release of those in captivity. Stir in us the reality of the Good News of Jesus Christ, and that realising it afresh we may be stirred to liberate all who are oppression. Amen.

Switch Off/ Lights Out/ Black Out

Many regions are linking in with the I Count event in London on November 4th or some time near to demonstrate the measurable dip in electricity consumption when people act together. Try and find out what your local authority might be doing. In London, its 4th November - so turn you lights off that day, persuade your church to switch off the floodlighting, persuade local shops to switch off the neons...

Book - Doing December Differently

The latest book from Wild Goose Publications by Nicola Slee & Rosie Miles explores who people of faith and goodwill might mark the midwinter season and the Christmas festival with integrity and simplicity. How can we include others and celebrate difference without putting us all under intolerable strain, or perpetuating false and oppressive myths of the ideal family life?

£14.99 from Wild Good Publications 0141 332 6292 or www.ionabooks.com

Website: Web of Creation

www.webofcreation.org is a site set up by the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, and has lots of worship, education and practical ideas. It is written from an American perspective, but there is plenty of overlap. Enjoy!

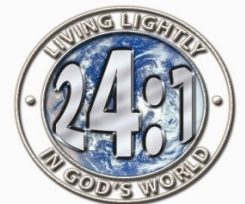
Quote

"It is important today that theologians and others should begin to look at the Bible afresh, and to reassess its message about humanity and our relationship with the planet. A fresh reading of biblical texts about the created world order, its conservation and restoration, and some reflections on the cultural contest in which these themes occur, not only in the bible but also in other religious texts from neighbouring cultures, can tell us much about Christianity's real ecological ethic... When the Bible's teaching on God's creation and our place in it is duly digested, I believe that it cries out to us: 'you are follow-creatures of everything else in the Cosmos. You have no right to exploit or destroy, but you have duties to all, under God to whom you are responsible.' "

Father Robert Murray

Living Lightly 24:1

This is the new community of people at A Rocha who are trying to work out ways of living the truth of Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it".



There are three elements:

- [The 24:1 COMMITMENT](#) - *believing* 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it' Psalm 24:1
- [The 24:1 CHALLENGE](#) - *behaving* - Living lightly in God's world
- [The 24:1 COMMUNITY](#) - *belonging* - Caring for God's world together

This new lifestyle commitment is based around Psalm 24:1 and God's ownership of the earth. Recently, politicians have at last started talking about the moral duty of reducing our harmful impact on the environment. It's a duty to the world's poor, to species under threat, but ultimately it's our worship of God to live as if he really is Lord.

A Rocha are looking for people to sign up - contact them via www.arocha.org.uk or phone 0208 574 5935.

Community of Prayer

Christian Ecology Link is encouraging community through praying together. **CEL's new Community of Prayer** is an e-mail community, together not in space but in time, and hope and purpose. Do you sometimes feel helpless, maybe even hopeless about the state of the earth? Are you anxious about your children's future? Would you like spiritual energy for ecological justice? Then join the Community of Prayer.

Joining means you are dedicating yourself to:

- Pray for creation and action for ecological justice sometime between 6am and 9am or 9pm and 12 midnight every Wednesday.
- Share prayers, poems and thoughts with others in the community
- Using the CEL Prayer Guide put together by Philip Clarkson-Webb (on the CEL website).

To join email the co-ordinator on:

community-of-prayer@christian-ecology.org.uk
Look at the website: www.christian-ecology.org.uk and click on Community of Prayer in the left hand index.