

eco-congregation

England and Wales

Summer 2006

Newsletter



Greetings

Just before Easter I was privileged to attend a conference in Geneva about developing more awareness of creation issues in our worship and liturgies. It was a fascinating encounter, out of which came some important things which helped me greatly:

- many people have become *numb* to what is happening to our world. This is destructive not only because in such a state, people become unable to care for creation, but also for individuals who suffer emotionally, spiritually and psychologically because they are numb.
- being in touch with the Creator in the community of God's people potentially provides truth, solidarity and renewal by the Spirit of God both individually, and together as the community of creation.
- Holy Communion/Mass/Eucharist/the Meal/The Lord's Supper could become again the radical earth- and community-affirming action that the early church demonstrated it could be, challenging the status quo in many areas: food distribution and equality, food production and agriculture which is good for the planet, inclusivity and community building and eating in the context of working out how we live this challenge to radical discipleship. How we 'do' this central meal could have far-reaching consequences!

It was exciting to be a part of such a fascinating discussion, and to see environmental issues in the wider context of church life (pastoral and political!).

What with the political parties trying to outdo each other in their green credentials, and some excellent reports produced recently about how to bring about real change (Have a look at the Sustainable Consumption Roundtable report: 'I will if you will' for some practical suggestions for Government as to the way forward), we hope that more people will begin to live out the values that might preserve the planet for future generations. What *you* are doing in *your* church is important! Keep going! And let me know how you're getting on.

With all good wishes

Jo

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

ecocongregation@rase.org.uk
www.ecocongregation.org

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:

St Marks Broomhill, Sheffield
St Peter's Pimperne/Mary Huddy Memorial Trust
Saffron Walden Methodist (*second Award*)
St Mary's Clophill, Bedford
Stratford Methodist

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!

Help! Greenbelt stall for Eco-congregation

Greenbelt (www.greenbelt.org.uk) is a Christian arts festival. Partners include Christian Aid, CMS, Traidcraft, YMCA. It takes place at Cheltenham Race Course over August Bank Holiday. This year I have taken the plunge and I'm having a stall at Greenbelt just for Eco-congregation. I've also managed to get myself a seminar slot, which means that the Eco-congregation word gets out to more people! This is the first time that I've done this, and I need some help to staff the stall.

So here is your Greenbelt offer: for people who can come and staff the stall for a few hours in the day, there is a reduced price day ticket available: £22 (usual price for day ticket onsite is £27). I will have 2 of these reduced price tickets available per day: Saturday 26th, Sunday 27th, and Monday 28th August. All you have to do is offer to staff one of these slots:

- Saturday: 10am-2pm or 2pm-6pm or 6pm-10pm
- Sunday: 1pm-4pm or 4pm-7pm or 7pm-10pm
- Monday: 10.30am-1.30pm or 1.30pm-4.30pm or 4.30pm - 7.30pm

If you are willing to offer 1 slot each day, you can have a free weekend ticket, which includes camping on the site (I'll only have one of these)! Now that's a bargain!

If you've never been to Greenbelt before, it is a great place. For many years when I felt on the margins of church life because I kept going on about matters of social justice, development issues, and the environment, I felt like at least at Greenbelt I was in the mainstream!

So, can you help out? Or would someone else from your church like to come along? I've taken a risk here, so I'm really hoping that some of you can help! Give me a ring to talk about it more. Perhaps you could come along with a friend, and do one slot each? The DEADLINE for letting me know whether you want the tickets, and for which day, is **July 1st**.

One World Week - 22 - 29 October 2006

Celebrate the wonders, rail against the injustices, inform local people, engage with the issues... '*Mind the Gap*' is this year's theme. Get involved! www.oneworldweek.org or contact the office on **0118 939 4933**. They produce excellent resources, which you can use at any time of year! Excellent for linking environmental issues to matters of global concern.

Churchyard politics and plastic!!

Has anyone any positive ideas of how deal with the problem of floral tributes left to rot with unrottable stuff (cellophane oases, wire)? Has anyone entered into negotiations with florists about this issues, ie persuading them to provide biodegradable ways of providing floral tributes? It is quite a problem, and it would be good to know if anyone has come up with a bright idea to solve it! Give me a ring and let me know! 024 7685 3061.

Creation music

A couple of suggestions have come in about music for helping people to explore creation issues: two songs from Iona: *Sing praise to God* and *Heaven shall not wait*. Also a good source of hymns with a creation theme is the 'Common Ground' songbook published by St Andrew Press (www.standrewpress.com). Any other ideas to share?

What about liturgical resources? Has anyone written any prayers/psalms/responses that they would like others to be able to use? Has anyone addressed environmental issues in a more emerging church context which could be shared? Do write and let me know your stories.

Food for thought!

15 food rules for ecological public health:*

- Eat less but better
- Eat simply
- Eat no more than you expend in energy
- Eat equitably; don't take food out of another's mouth
- Eat a plant-based diet with flesh sparingly, if at all
- Celebrate variety; get biodiversity into the field and thence to your plate; e.g. try aiming to eat 20-30 species per week;
- Think fossil fuels; energy transporting food to you or you to food = oil
- Eat seasonally, where possible
- Eat according to the proximity principle, as locally as you can; support local suppliers
- Learn to cook quickly producing simple meals, leave fancy food for really special occasions
- Be prepared to pay the full externalised costs; if you do not, others will.
- Drink water, not soft drinks
- Be aware of the hidden ingredients; look at the label to locate the unnecessary salt and sugars; if they are there, don't buy.
- Educate yourself without becoming neurotic!
- Enjoy food in the short-term but think about its impact long-term;
- Be confident. It's your food now but your children's environment in the future!

*Expanded from Tim Lang & Michael Heasman (2004), *Food Wars: the global battle for mouths, minds and markets*, London: Earthscan, 362pp, ISBN 185383-7024

How could your church make this easier for people in your locality?

A Rocha resources for worship

An excellent CD-rom and DVD are available for use with all sorts of resources on - a bargain at £10 from their website: www.arocha.org.uk or on 0208 574 5935. It has presentations, 6 week Bible study, 5 short films, including a 15 minute film with John Stott and others on the theological basis for environmental care.

Some dates for your diary:

May/June BBC Climate season

www.bbc.co.uk/climatechaos

4 - 12 June **Wild Life Week** www.wildlifetrusts.org

5 June - **World Environment Day** www.environment-agency.gov.uk- for church resources to celebrate look

for environment Sunday on www.arocha.org.uk

17 - 25 June **Green Transport Week** www.eta.co.uk

18 - 25 June **Refugee Week** www.refugeeweek.org.uk

26 - 30 June **The Big Recycle** www.thebigrecycle.com

Help fund nonviolent peace initiatives

It was interesting to hear the responses to the Iraq Christian Peacemaker Team: active nonviolent peacemaking was decried as naive and meddling. Whilst there are university departments set up to study military strategy, government departments dedicated to supporting military solutions, and whole industries geared up to the development of weapons, there is relatively very little to develop and support nonviolent initiatives. Of course, once violent action is legitimated, then things quickly spiral up, and death and destruction are the inevitable result, usually with long term environmental damage, too.

Ekklesia (www.ekkleisia.co.uk) has started up a venture to help give peace more of a chance. The new initiative - www.peacenik.co.uk - is a not for profit enterprise that will raise money for peace initiatives such as Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT).

How does it work?

Peacenik.co.uk is a unique and brand new Internet Service Provider (ISP). People use Peacenik.co.uk as their provider of broadband, dial-up connections to access the internet or to get an email address (anyone from around the world can do this). All the profit from the service goes into a peace fund. Peace groups submit proposals to the fund for support for their nonviolence projects. Everyone who uses Peacenik.co.uk gets to vote for which projects they think the fund should support

How can you get involved?

You can help by:

1. Using Peacenik.co.uk as your provider of internet access or registering for a peacenik email address (you can get one even if you are outside the UK)
2. Recommending Peacenik.co.uk to others
3. Putting in links from your website to Peacenik.co.uk
4. Sending proposals to Peacenik.co.uk for peace projects that need funding

But remember that it is those who use Peacenik.co.uk (who get a peacenik email address or access the internet through peacenik) who will choose which peace projects get funded - so do recommend peacenik to your friends and peace groups you are involved with. Visit www.peacenik.co.uk for more details of the project, as well as how to make Peacenik.co.uk your Internet Service Provider (ISP) or get a Peacenik email address.

Spares online!

www.espares.co.uk is a great site for getting hold of things that you need to be able to mend appliances, or getting hold of that manual that you used to have...

Join a programme of action!

Global Action Plan's EcoTeams and Small Changes programmes successfully bring households together to help them reduce their impact on the environment. During four monthly meetings, groups of 6-8 friends and neighbours share tips and ideas on what they can do in their homes to cut down on the rubbish that they produce or the energy that they use.

The programmes have been running the UK since 2000 and to date over 800 households have taken part. On average members have achieved the following reductions: Rubbish 23%, Gas 15%, Electricity 9% and Water 21%. This means lower household bills too! Some of the things that EcoTeam members have done include: not leaving the TV on stand-by, taking a cloth bag to the shops, buying locally produced food and installing a water butt to name but a few.

Anyone can join, friends, neighbours or members of a congregation. EcoTeams and Small Changes compliments the Eco-congregation scheme and can help meet some of the criteria. The EcoTeams programme is currently being run in South Nottinghamshire, and Small Change is running in Thanet and Tonbridge and Malling in Kent and Lewes and Hastings in East Sussex. In these areas, Global Action Plan's staff coordinate and support the teams as they go through the programme it is also free to take part. Alternatively, a group can take up the EcoTeams in Community programme where people are trained to recruit and lead their own EcoTeams. Training and support are provided by Global Action Plan.

EcoTeams are an extremely effective way in which to reduce our impact on climate change, cut down on the growing waste problem and reduce the pressure on natural resources.

To find out more about EcoTeams; contact ecoteams@globalactionplan.org.uk or ring 0207 405 5633. Visit our website for more details: www.globalactionplan.org.uk.

EcoTeams are funded by the New Opportunity's Community Recycling and Economic Development programme, EST's Innovation Programme, Broxtowe Borough Council, Rushcliffe Borough Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Kent County Council and East Sussex Council.

If you'd like to be involved with setting up an EcoTeam in your area which also has some Christian input, then contact Chris Walton who is co-ordinating this on behalf of Christian Ecology Link: greeneditor@aol.com or Tel: 01502 713020. Have a look at the page on the CEL website: www.christian-ecology.org.uk/ecoteams.htm

Faith and Power - Report on energy from CEL

You can download the latest report on developing a non-nuclear energy strategy from the Christian Ecology Link website (www.christian-ecology.org.uk) or you can order a hard copy (price £2) from CEL, 3 Bond Street, Lancaster, LA1 3ER, UK. tel: 01524 33858.

Ethical Travel Guide from Tourism Concern

A guide to responsible travel from Earthscan. £12.99 + £2 p+p from Tourism Concern: 020 7133 3330.

Green Electricity quandary?

www.greenenergyworks.org.uk/electric.htm is a website put up by the Green Party to try and help people to understand the different aspects of buying green. Although now all suppliers have an obligation to provide electricity from renewables up to a certain percentage, I'm still convinced that opting for green pushes the demand ever upwards, and gives a clear signal to the Government that this is the way we want things to go.

What about buying into a corporate scheme? There are a number about.

Mission agency demonstrates green stance

BMS World Mission has joined Stop Climate Chaos, a coalition of organisations against human induced climate change, in a move it has called 'essential' and has urged its supporters to get involved with Stop Climate Chaos action. BMS primary concern is that those most at risk from the effects of climate change are in developing nations, said Mark Craig, BMS director of communications. 'We really have to do more to help Christians throughout the UK take the threat seriously. Being part of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition is one way in which BMS can do that while also helping to move our society towards a biblical model of stewardship of our natural resources'.

Could your church/district/synod/circuit/union join SCC? Perhaps it could go hand in hand with some practical suggestions for churches to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions.

Environmental upgrades on community buildings

I have been part of a coalition of people working to try and persuade the Government to put money into a community buildings fund to enable local communities to upgrade their buildings to include energy saving measures and renewable technologies. This includes church buildings, which for some communities are the only community buildings!

Could you and your church members write to your MP and ask her/him to sign up to EDM 811? We have until November to make the Government sit up and take notice of the fact that people want to 'do their bit' but for larger buildings need extra help. Buildings can be an inspiration to lead more energy efficient lives! Help us to achieve that by a bit of political pressure.

Applied Biblical Studies - www.Workshop.org.uk

I'm almost at the end of a course that I've been doing - 11 weekends during the year, which has been really brilliant. So wonderful, that I want to spread the word! It has been great to do a course where environmental issues are not just an add-on (or even non-existent) but part and parcel of the underlying ethos of the course. There have been all ages, all backgrounds, all denominations and none attending, and real grappling with difficult issues in a supportive atmosphere. Why not consider it? It has been life changing for many of us!

Advertising your event

Are you putting on an event on fairtrade, or some aspect of caring for creation? There is an opportunity to advertise it for free online via the Just2Fish website. Click on: www.just2fish.org.uk/add_an_event.htm

Migrant Workers

After the disaster with the cockle-pickers at Morecombe Bay, the issue of migrant workers rose to the surface. The Arthur Rank Centre and the Church Rural Group produced a helpful leaflet about the issues (enclosed with hard copies). If we are serious about buying local, then we need to be informed. If you would like multiple copies of the leaflet, contact ARC on 024 7685 3060/1.

Eco-holidays in the UK

Fancy an eco-holiday? Have a look at this site for ideas: www.naturaldiscovery.co.uk - this company also does consultancy work on sustainable tourism for AONBs, local councils, etc and sells eco-friendly products in conjunction with Natural Collection. For more information contact Jameslittle@naturaldiscovery.co.uk 0845 4582799.

Information about MRDF - main funder for Eco-congregation

Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF) exists to promote the rights and opportunities of marginalised people, challenge injustice and fight poverty. This means working with locally-based organisations, putting environmental sustainability at the heart of long term



development in the poorest countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. MRDF also raises awareness in the UK about development issues, through building up partnerships with campaigning and advocacy groups. This includes a grant to Eco-Congregation to assist churches make connections between environmental issues and the Christian faith.

Environmentally friendly agricultural techniques, like composting and companion planting, have yielded a bumper harvest for Radika.

Find out more about MRDF agricultural partners in our free church Harvest Pack. Order yours from mrdf@methodistchurch.org.uk or 0207 467 5132.

My thanks to David Mutton at MRDF for this article.

SAGE Bible Studies

Oxford's Christian Environmental Group, SAGE has made available 7 Bible studies on their website:

<http://www.sageoxford.org.uk/bibstuds.htm>

If you are looking for inspiration for things for homegroups, why not have a look!

Bats in the Belfry?

ARC used to run the Living Churchyard Project, and we currently have an excellent leaflet about bats, which we are keen to get out to people. Do phone and request multiple copies! 024 7685 3060/1.

Walking the Environmental Talk:

Katherine Shepherd reports back from Hereford

What the Church is doing to 'green' itself is a question often heard. On Saturday 6th May the Hereford Diocese held an environmental conference at Leominster Priory together with Marches Energy Agency to consider just this, bringing together some one hundred people from within and outside the Anglican community.

The conference, 'The Beauty of the Earth', used presentations and workshops to provide information on environmental issues. Speakers included Dr Peter Carruthers, formerly of the John Ray Initiative and David Shreeve, Conservation Foundation. Feedback will form a valuable input to the developing Diocesan Environmental Strategy which will identify a longer-term environmental vision and how talk can be turned into walk!

The key message was that although people often feel helpless in the face of degradation despair is not the Christian option. There is a need to rediscover the earth's beauty and reconnect with natural cycles in order that people begin to value the environment. Only once the environment is valued will there be a caring love for it.

Christian Aid report - 'The climate of poverty'

In May, Christian Aid launched a report on Climate change: 'The climate of poverty: facts, fears and hope'. There is one interesting quote from Nazmul Chowdbury from Practical Action: 'Forget about making poverty history. Climate change will make poverty permanent.' You can download the report from www.christian-aid.org under 'In depth'.

BIG EVENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE 4th NOVEMBER

Stop Climate Chaos are organising a big event in London on 4th November. Christian representation is needed! We are the ones who can provide hope and vision for the future, and a moral dimension to the campaign. Tearfund will be organising on behalf of the Christian agencies, alongside Operation Noah and A Rocha. Find out more from www.stopclimatechaos.org.uk and come along with people from your church! Flyers can be ordered from early June. Even if you can't come along, please write to your MP and encourage your congregations to do the same - most MPs are woefully ignorant about climate change. We need to find out ourselves and educate our MPs!

Methodist/URC network on environmental issues

Gwen Jennings has been appointed to develop the network and a website, currently at: www.methodist.org.uk/static/econetwork/index.htm You can sign up to receive email newsletters from Gwen on that site.

...and finally

Please pray for me as I try to move the Eco-congregation project forward and ensure its future funding and development. At such a time of heightened awareness of the issues, it is important that the project offers hopeful ways into the issues that lead to action, and vision for a better future. Thank you.