

Eco Church Studies – September 2016

An introduction

Christ Church Virginia Water is embarking on the process of becoming an Eco Church, which is an award scheme that takes our church through a process to help it integrate wider creation care across the whole of church life, from worship and teaching, to buildings and grounds, to personal lifestyle of members, and to community and global engagement. It starts with 5 week sermon series during Creation Time/ Season of Creation, joining in the Jamaica Creation Care Call for Action.

Creation Time began in 1999 when the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) urged churches to adopt a Time for Creation stretching from 1 September to the feast of St Francis on 4 October and this was endorsed by the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in 2007, which recommended that the period "be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change". Annually the CTBI publish resources for **Creation Time** produced by the churches. <https://ctbi.org.uk/creation-time-2016>

This resonates with the Global Catholic Climate Movement and the Catholic Climate Covenant which are promoting the **Season of Creation** covering the same period from 1 September. <http://seasonofcreation.com/> The Pope, clearly troubled by the state of our environment, has appealed to catholics worldwide to pray for the environment on 1 September and thereafter.

The World Evangelical Alliance in collaboration with the Lausanne Movement has strongly increased its focus on Creation Care. www.careofcreation.org.

The Lausanne Global Consultation on Creation Care and the Gospel met in late 2012 in Jamaica to build on the creation care components of the Cape Town Commitment 2010. The outcome was **the Jamaica Creation Care Call to Action**. This is an important statement for the global church, inviting people to join a growing movement of Christians around the world who want to respond to the urgent global task of caring for God's beautiful creation.

"Creation Care and the Gospel: Reconsidering the mission of the church" book edited by Colin Bell and Robert S. White, is the follow on from the earlier commitment. In this book an international group of theologians, scientists and creation care practitioners explore what this ancient truth means for us today. They show how care of God's creation must be an integral part of the mission of Christ's church, an expression of joyful worship, and a path of hope for a world in desperate need of it.

Over the 5 weeks of **Creation Time** you are invited to explore some of the materials written by leading Christian figures to explore the biblical basis for considering Creation Care as a Gospel issue and discovering how we can respond collectively and individually to care for Creation.

Week 1: Jamaica Creation Care Call to Action. Creation Care as a gospel issue, a mission issue

Read the Call to Action. Discuss the two primary conclusions: Creation Care is indeed a 'gospel issue within the lordship of Christ: and we are faced with a crisis that is pressing, urgent, and that must be resolved in our generation'. How do you respond to this?

Ten sets of actions are proposed. Which of the ten actions do you feel able to take on?

How might your group, or you individually, respond to the call to prayer, "intentional and fervent, soberly aware that this is a spiritual struggle and we can, and must bring the power of the Holy Spirit into this struggle".

Week 2: Creation Care by John Stott – extracted from ‘The Radical Disciple’

Week 3: The Psalms – extracts from Edward Brown’s ‘Ruling God’s World God’s Way’

Week 4: Jesus Saviour of the World – extract from Dave Bookless ‘Planetwise’

Week 5: Living Out our Care for Creation – from ‘Creation Care and the Gospel’

Thoughts for Group Leaders by Ben Niblett

The studies could be read through in a group, out loud or individually. Leaders could ask someone to facilitate and bring out what they think the main points are. Leaders could choose which parts to discuss as they go through and whether to do it in pairs or small groups or with the whole group. They could recommend people read them beforehand and come prepared.

It might be good to suggest an intro question to warm the group up before each study,

Eg when does Creation make you feel closest to God? or
when you hear the word 'ecology' what do you think of? or
have you ever heard a sermon or read a book on this subject?