

Eco Church Study 5: Living out Our Care for Creation

“What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? . . . faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.” James 3:14, 17

As Christ Church progresses to becoming an Eco Church, we respond both individually and collectively. The Church is embarking on a number of initiatives to both reduce our use of electricity and to increase the use of renewable energy through the Big Church Switch programme. Recycling has been reintroduced. Some elements like paper cups remain a challenge. Other ideas are being looked at. Individually we are encouraged to undertake an audit (See September Connection) to see how carbon-hungry our life-styles are with a view to making changes to reduce it.

“Care for Creation and the Gospel” annex gives us a toolbox for you and your fellowship to choose the tools you need and put them to good use. They are helpful starting points or hints for moving forward.

For the individual

1. Don’t be shy – make a public declaration of your beliefs by signing the Jamaica Call to Action and telling your family, friends, small group, pastor and so on. It can be signed at: <http://www.lausanne.org/creationcare>
2. Make creation care an integral part of your personal Bible study, prayer life and discipleship – and think about how to share this with others.
3. Be enthusiastically teachable – look into some of the books, organisation, and programmes listed below. Learn new ways of doing things – like composting, vegetarian cooking, biking to work, sharing cares and other implements, or shopping second-hand.
4. Find local and national environmental groups you can join, learn from, and share with. If possible, contribute financially to their work.
5. Actively seek ways of living ‘more lightly’, either finding more environmentally friendly alternatives, or by living a more simple life and doing without what is unnecessary. Be aware how much the world encourages us to engage in consumerism.
6. Use things for longer before replacing them, repairing them if possible. Recycle materials rather than throw things away.
7. See what you can do to save energy in the home – for instance, by heating or cooling a little less, turning things off when not in use, and buying more efficient appliances. Also, use less water (in showers, toilets, washing, etc) which includes reusing water for watering gardens, flushing toilets etc
8. Consider your diet; eat food grown locally – perhaps buying direct from a local farmer. Try to waste less. Eat less dairy and meat (which have a high environmental footprint).
9. Try to drive less and fly less.
10. Contact your elected representatives, encouraging them to take action on issues like climate change and funding adaptation measures for low-income countries. Talk to businesses encouraging them to adopt more environmentally-friendly practices.

Discussion: each person pick 2 from the list and tell others which you feel strongly about.

With others

1. Share with Christians and others what you are doing to care for creation personally, and why you are doing it. This is a good way of sharing the gospel with environmentalists!
2. Encourage your church to include creation care in its activities: to teach on it, to display and share resources, to organise book reading and discussion groups, and to include it in mission. Ask them to sign the *Jamaica Call to Action*.
3. Make your church buildings and surroundings as environmentally-friendly as possible, using the space both to demonstrate the beauty of creation and to enhance biodiversity.
4. Call for social action, strong political will, and church dedication to creation care. Try to get your denomination and wider church groupings to take creation care more seriously.
5. Learn about threats to the environment in your area and take action to address them, either joining existing groups or starting your own.
6. Develop a vision for sustainable agriculture and for ministering to communities facing chronic food shortages by learning about (and supporting) effective interventions such as Farming God's Way.
7. Encourage others to cook economically and efficiently. For example, in areas where electricity is easily accessible, perhaps promote the use of economical methods such as slow-cookers.
Abbreviated
8. Identify new skills to practise as a group, for example, lift-sharing or riding sharing, starting or joining a community garden, reducing wasteful habits.
9. Identify a passion, and create a pledge to reach that certain creation care goal – for instance, pledge to eat and drink only fair-trade, organic snacks and teas for health of our bodies, for the sake of our neighbours across the planet, and to protect God's world.

Discussion: Which steps would you like to see the church take?

Are there some that are too difficult?

Would you like to be more involved in any aspect?

In what area do you feel you need more information?

Suggested reading:

Just Living: Faith and Community in an age of consumerism by Ruth Valerio .

Ruth sets a biblical and historic context for the age of consumerism before setting practical steps to improve our footprint on this planet. Her suggestions include big steps that you can take, like switching to 100% renewable energy and driving less, to many little steps which together do make a difference.

"I have a clear vision. I want it to be commonplace for the Church to be engaged in acts of environmental care as it is for it to be engaged in acts of community and social involvement. . . . if we are in or leading a church that is not integrating environmental concern and action across its life, then we should feel that the church is not fully living out its Christian faith."

Creation Care and the Gospel: Chapter 8 by John Houghton 'Global Warming: Climate Change, and sustainability; Challenges to Scientists, Policymakers and Christians.' Sir John Houghton, formerly of the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change, summaries the basic science behind climate change and will help to answer the questions that inevitably arise and the Christian response to this existential threat.