

*“Na, ka hanga houtia e ahau nga mea katoa.”
“Look, I am making everything new!”
Revelation 21:5*

new creation nz
inspiring and equipping Christians for creation care

CHURCHES GOING GREEN PACKAGE

**PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD
ENABLING YOUR CHURCH
TO ENGAGE IN CREATION CARE**

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Green is more than just a colour. Today, "green" means better for the environment, more energy efficient and more responsible stewardship of resources. Some people may have negative connotations to the idea of going green, associating it with a political agenda, but churches should take concern about the environment seriously. Both the Biblical imperative and the current state of the planet mean it is the right thing to do. Taking better care of God's creation and treating others as we would want to be treated are moral concepts Christians should clearly understand.

Another good reason is simply better stewardship of the church's resources. Being green can save the church money and reduce impact on the natural world. Being environmentally friendly should be seen as an investment with a guaranteed rate of return. "Investment" and "rate of return" are words that may seem out of place when talking about the church. Whatever you call it, investing a little today in the right ways can save a whole lot more in the future. Reduced operation and maintenance costs and better use of resources are long term benefits that should be viewed by the church as part of good stewardship.

Further, going green will hugely enhance your church's profile, relevance, credibility, reputation, magnetism, and impact.

This package contains **hundreds of practical steps** which any local **church** can pursue in order to pursue and participate in creation care. There are also hundreds of suggestions that can be taken up by **individuals** and **families** within any community of faith.

For churches, it is important that you **begin by exploring the mandate for creation care in the Bible**. This exploration begins with the church's leaders and can then expand across all age groups. Having done that, you are in a good position for your total constituency to prayerfully make a decision as to whether creation care should become an integral part of their future mission, and you are more likely to gain a broad-based "buy-in".

If the decision is positive, you are ready to embark on your creation care journey. Your next step is to **form an initiative team**. This team will shape, guide and facilitate this aspect of your church's *raison d'être*. It is preferable that this team includes at least one of the church staff, but if that is not possible, effective liaison with church leaders is critical.

The initiative team's key responsibility is to **gradually implement specific strategies**. They should first determine "where the church is at" and then meet regularly (maybe quarterly) to determine "where the church should go". The list below may act as both as a checklist and as a source of practical ideas. Use it to identify your church's current environmental good practice and future priorities.

It is recommended that in order to maintain momentum in the "going green" process, at least 3 new strategies are adopted every 3 months. Some will be small steps and others will be big steps. The important goal is to move forward and continue to "give legs" to the truth. Planning, informing, inspiring, equipping and resourcing are involved.

For the initiative team, some of these questions are important to ask:

- Where do we already see God at work in creation care?
- What strengths and skills do we have in our faith community?
- What do we feel called to invest time and energy in at the moment?
- What are our goals for the next 3 months? 6 months? 12 months?
- Who is going to do what and to whom should we delegate?
- What should we be celebrating and sharing with others?

CREATION CARE STRATEGIES: A CHECK-LIST AND IDEAS CATALOGUE FOR YOUR CHURCH / PARISH / AGENCY

CHURCH / PARISH / AGENCY	
DATE OF REVIEW	
PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN THIS REVIEW	

Listed below there are over 200 strategies, divided into the following sections:

Leadership
Teaching, Education, Inspiration
Worship
Prayer
Children
Young People
Property – The Big Picture:
 Long-Term Management, Best Use, Development and Redevelopment,
 Managing Cultural and Heritage Places
Land and Grounds
Procedures and Operations:
 In the Office, Communication, Waste and Waste Minimisation,
 Finance and Purchasing, Water, Energy, Cleaning, Transport
Engaging with the Wider Local Community
Engaging with the Global Community

At the end of the list is a chart that you can use periodically to record an ACTION PLAN

The list of strategies refers to, and is followed, by some valuable resources:

Resource A: Making Creation Care Happen (the formation of an initiative team)
Resource B: Formulating an Environmental Policy
Resource C: The Biblical Mandate for Creation Care
Resource D: Developing a Sense of Place
Resource E: The Cathedral of the Outdoors
Resource F: A Major Modern Means of Mission
Resource G: *Envirohubs*: Harnessing People Power to Protect the Planet
Resource H: Live Simply So Others May Simply Live
Resource I: Green Choices: Hundreds of Practical Ideas for Eco-Friendly Living

**You are free to use all this material, but please do so with appropriate
acknowledgement.**

STRATEGY	HAVE DONE OR ARE DOING	SHOULD CONSIDER	LET'S DO THIS SOON!	NOT A PRIORITY AT THE MOMENT
LEADERSHIP				
Leadership identify caring for creation as something God commissions us to do.				
Leadership identify caring for creation as part of their vision for the church.				
Establish a creation care initiative team (to lead this aspect of the church's mission). See Resource A below.				
Formulate an environmental policy statement. See Resource B below.				
Make it possible for leaders to attend training opportunities on the theme of creation care.				
Assist leaders to learn through books, videos, podcasts, etc.				
Institute a programme to train <i>future</i> creation care leaders.				
Gradually incorporate potential leaders into your creation care initiative team, and mentor them.				
Aim for eco-friendly weddings, baptisms and funerals.				
TEACHING, EDUCATION AND INSPIRATION (all ages) The aim is to help your members explore the interface between environmental issues and faith, acknowledge their role in caring for the local and worldwide environment, know where to find information about environmental issues, and understand that this is a discipleship/mission issue.				
Find out what your denomination/organisation's stance is on creation care.				
Promote a deeper understanding of Biblical teaching on creation and creation care by intentionally including it in the teaching and study programme. See Resource C below.				
Communicate and inspire care for creation through a range of media (e.g. sharing stories through newsletters, magazines, video slots, online).				
Include preaching and reflection which connects Scripture with ecology and inspires creation care.				
Ensure access to resources which highlight the theology of creation and the care of creation, e.g. books, videos, websites.				
Organise study/exploration events that include environmental issues, e.g. workshops, seminars, conversation cafes, contemplative walks.				

Start an environmentally-themed Sunday class, book study, or small group.				
Invite guest speakers on creation, creation care and environmental issues, e.g. from NCNZ.				
Produce or purchase study material on creation, creation care and environmental issues.				
Produce or purchase care-of-creation materials for personal devotional use at home – readings, reflections, prayers, e.g. a Lent series.				
Organise a care-of-creation emphasis for a particular season of the year.				
Distribute information pamphlets on the environment and how to care for it.				
Conduct eco-retreats or camps, incorporating learning, worship, prayer, reflection and action.				
Include punchy short reflections or quotes in the church bulletin, on screen during services, etc.				
Foster a sense of place. See Resource D below.				
WORSHIP				
The aim is to help your members connect with God’s gift of creation through worship. How regularly in the year are environmental concerns included in worship? _____ Frequently _____ Occasionally _____ Never				
Prayer walks.				
Outdoor services, e.g. once a month in summer. See Resource E below.				
Establish a WING (Worship-In-Nature Group). See Resource E below.				
Special services e.g. Harvest Festival, Earth Day. Season of Creation, Climate Sunday, Green Communion.				
Use nature and natural materials (objects, images, symbols, etc.) within worship occasions.				
Sing hymns or songs that celebrate the wonder of creation and express the calling to care for the environment.				
Use readings, liturgies, poetry, creative ministries, etc. that feature creation care.				
Use other worship elements that respect creation, e.g. decorations, flower arrangements, organic bread and wine.				
PRAYER				
How regularly in the year are environmental concerns included in your collective prayer life (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication)? _____ Frequently _____ Occasionally _____ Never				

We praise God the Creator.				
We say sorry for the harm done to the environment (repentance, lament).				
We give thanks to God for the gift of creation.				
We pray for environmental concerns and issues.				
We pray for the healing of creation.				
Hold special prayer meetings for people affected by environmental changes and natural disasters, seeking wisdom to know how to help and the strength to carry it out.				
CHILDREN (Sunday School, play groups, intergenerational gatherings, after-school clubs, school assemblies, etc)				
Our children's ministry includes some focus on creation, creation care, and environmental issues. <i>Note: some of the suggestions for young people below may also apply here.</i>				
YOUNG PEOPLE				
Involve young people in auditing and improving the environmental management of the premises.				
Have studies, discussions and debates on environmental issues and personal responsibility.				
Get them to develop creation-care materials to offer in worship.				
Involve them in practical environmental projects.				
Take them to camps that encourage and facilitate care of creation.				
Take them on bush walks and other outdoor experiences.				
Organise environmentally-focused community events (with other young people from the wider community).				
Hold a periodic think tank to solicit ideas for creation care which appeal to young people.				
PROPERTY: THE BIG PICTURE				
LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT				
Audit your whole property register for functional use (include usage, fitness for purpose, size, cultural and heritage value).				
Develop a forward plan to transform properties and uses, allowing more effective and environmentally-efficient usage.				
Develop convenient procedures / instruction manual for routine environmental management of all properties, including those with cultural heritage value (to be used by all building users).				

BEST USE				
Ensure those who use facilities are aware of, and comply with, your environmental procedures and policies, e.g. notices about turning off lights, recycling, waste minimisation, etc).				
Ensure those who use facilities utilise eco-friendly products.				
DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT				
When considering any development, redevelopment, or renovation, place a high priority on sustainability, considering the environmental impacts of water, power, green-scaping, location, building products, etc.				
Use recycled/reclaimed materials where appropriate.				
Choose building materials produced in a sustainable way, e.g. timber from sustainably-managed forests.				
Refuse to allow any development or renovation that will be detrimental to future generations.				
MANAGING CULTURAL AND HERITAGE PLACES				
Identify the conservation issues of significant cultural or heritage places and develop conservation management guidelines for them.				
Utilise the conservation/management guidelines for building development/restoration and conservation of places of cultural or heritage value.				
LAND AND GROUNDS				
The aim is to make outdoor spaces attractive, inviting, and eco-friendly.				
Identify whether land owned or leased contains features of ecological significance.				
Identify whether land owned or leased contains ecosystems that are polluted, contaminated or otherwise threatened.				
Establish a management plan for land and grounds, including gardens, burial plots, carparks.				
Consider caring for adjacent land areas, e.g. vacant lots, road berms.				
Engage in wildlife-friendly management, e.g. minimal use of weed killers and pesticides, leaving some areas to grow, valuing old trees, hedges, walls, stones.				
Grow native trees and shrubs on church grounds, especially those that benefit wildlife.				
Grow fruit and vegetables on church land.				
Establish a community garden.				
Engage in pest control and predator trapping on church land.				

Include features to benefit wildlife, e.g. bird bath or feeding station, nest or roosting sites, bug hotels, bee- and bird-friendly plants, pond or wetland.				
Undertake wildlife surveys on church land (birds, animals, plants).				
Encourage members and the public to use church land for recreation, contemplation, picnics, prayer, etc.				
Offer an area for outdoor recreation, prayer, worship, contemplation.				
Install a labyrinth for reflection, meditation, prayer.				
Maintain grounds using green waste options, e.g. compost system, worm farm.				
Remove weeds and plants, or other features, that endanger the natural environment.				
Use eco-friendly chemicals. Avoid pesticides, herbicides, fertilisers.				
Take part in improving the properties of other churches, especially those with smaller congregations.				
PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS				
IN THE OFFICE				
Use recycled paper and envelopes.				
Minimise photocopying and printing.				
Set the printer to double-sided default to save paper.				
Turn off all office equipment at night.				
Install power strips to avoid phantom loads that keep equipment partially powered up 24-7.				
Use the power management software on computers so they switch to energy-saving mode when not in use.				
Avoid unnecessary plastics, e.g. laminating, corflute signage.				
COMMUNICATION				
Distribute documents electronically to church staff and members whenever possible.				
Use e-newsletters instead of physical mailouts.				
WASTE AND WASTE MINIMISATION				
Develop a waste minimisation and recycling strategy for materials used at/by your church.				
Do regular waste checks / monitor waste volumes.				
Ensure all church events have a waste reduction agenda.				
Organise waste management teams for large events to help people do the right thing with their waste.				
Reduce food waste, e.g. through composting, minimising leftovers, partnering with a local food waste scheme.				

Hold jumble sales/bring and buy sales/commodity exchanges, or run an Opportunity Shop, to raise funds, recycle goods and promote the availability of goods at affordable prices.				
Set up collection facilities (for recycling items) which can be used by church members, building users or the local community (e.g. paper, cans, spectacles, stamps, printer cartridges, clothes, shoes, batteries, foil).				
Ensure bins are available throughout our facilities for both organic waste and recycling (with adequate signage).				
Install separate bins for the recycling of different materials, e.g. paper, plastic, glass, plastics (soft and hard).				
Put recycling bins in the church kitchen and anywhere else people are likely to dispose of recyclable materials.				
Place recycling bins at the exit doors to the sanctuary to make bulletin recycling easy.				
Reduce the size of church bulletins, encourage people to share them, and print on recycled paper.				
Use screens rather than booklets, leaflets, etc.				
Re-use paper that has been printed on only one side.				
Use crockery rather than disposable cups and plates.				
If not using crockery, use compostable cups and plates. Avoid polystyrene.				
Use washable communion cups or take communion by intinction.				
FINANCE AND PURCHASING				
Adopt purchasing policies that are conducive to creation care and sustainability (e.g. waste reduction).				
Use farmers' markets and other local suppliers to promote the local economy and reduce food miles.				
Ensure church funds are ethically invested.				
Check your bank's approach to ethical investment.				
Purchase recycled paper (to boost demand for recycled products).				
Purchase fair-trade products (e.g. tea and coffee).				
Use local suppliers where possible, thus promoting a sustainable local economy and reducing transportation).				
Purchase paper products with a high post-consumer recycled content.				
Purchase recycled toilet paper.				
Purchase eco-friendly cleaning products.				
Avoid buying disposable cups, crockery, cutlery.				
Avoid buying items with excessive packaging.				
Look for refillable, bulk, or home-made options.				

WATER				
Monitor water consumption regularly, e.g. by installing a water meter.				
Check water outlets for drips and leaks, and ensure they are fixed.				
Install water-saving devices, e.g. dual flush and low-flow toilets, low spray flow or auto turn-off taps, controlled shower heads, drip irrigation systems, etc.				
Install tanks to collect rainwater from downpipes, for use in buildings and gardens.				
Avoid excessive water use for lawns and/or review land use for lawns.				
Install composting toilets or water re-cycling toilets where appropriate.				
Install grey-water recycling systems.				
Enlist your church as a water refill station (see the RefillNZ website)				
ENERGY				
Conduct an energy audit or consultation, either through your local utility or a performance contractor. Many church buildings can be made more efficient through simple changes (such as those below!)				
Measure energy use. Monitor energy consumption regularly to check trends. Read your meters frequently and assess your energy usage.				
Calculate your carbon footprint and take steps to reduce it. Go to: https://environment.govt.nz/publications/measuring-emissions-a-guide-for-organisations-2024-detailed-guide/ https://www.tools.business.govt.nz/climate/ (the Climate Action Toolbox).				
Participate in carbon off-setting for things that you cannot reduce.				
Adopt plans and targets to reduce energy use.				
Develop a <i>long-term</i> plan to implement energy saving recommendations.				
Power off. Turn off electronic devices in the church when they're not in use.				
Switch to 'low carbon intensity' energy sources (e.g. biogas, bioLPG, solar heating, etc.).				
Buy electricity from a 'green' supplier that uses renewable energy sources.				
Generate your own electricity from a renewable source, e.g. solar, wind.				
Regularly service heating and cooling appliances.				
Consider ways to improve ventilation effectiveness.				
Choose appropriately-sized rooms for activities.				

Timetable meetings to minimise heating/cooling.				
Fit heating/cooling systems with timer and thermostatic controls.				
Insulate church buildings wherever possible – floor, ceilings, walls, windows.				
Fit draft excluders around windows and doors.				
Install double glazing.				
Install solar passive designs in any new buildings or rebuilding programmes.				
Clean windows to maximise natural light.				
Replace cracked or broken windowpanes.				
Install low-energy, energy-efficient light bulbs where appropriate.				
Encourage building users to switch off unnecessary lights and appliances, and not leave items on stand-by (e.g. photocopier).				
Limit energy consumed by floodlighting, billboards, security sensors, signage lighting.				
Install programmable thermostats for adjusting the temperature when the building is not in use.				
Use dishwashers only when full. You'll save energy, water, and detergent. Or better yet, ask for volunteers to wash and dry dishes by hand.				
Set coffeemakers on a timer to ensure their heating elements are not operating longer than necessary.				
Avoid using the oven in summer.				
Unplug unused refrigerators and appliances.				
CLEANING				
Use cleaning products that are not harmful for the environment, e.g. contain no phosphates.				
Schedule cleaning shifts and special events on days immediately preceding and following worship services so the building is warmed or cooled on consecutive days.				
TRANSPORT AND VEHICLES				
Consider lower emission vehicles when purchasing vehicles.				
Ensure vehicles receive recommended maintenance.				
Identify and manage traffic flows on and around your site to minimise impact on the area.				
Rideshare. Organize carpools to and from church, especially if you have many people coming from one area (such as students or senior citizens).				
Encourage walking or cycling to church.				
Install cycle racks at church premises.				

ENGAGING WITH THE WIDER LOCAL COMMUNITY				
Ensure our website and social media express our environmental values.				
Value <i>tangata whenua</i> and build relationships locally, seeking their wisdom and advice in <i>kaitiakitanga</i> , promoting awareness of their aspirations, and supporting Treaty of Waitangi commitments.				
Establish links with community organisations with a view to working together on environmental projects (e.g. youth groups, local volunteer groups).				
Participate in community events that promote sustainability and care for the environment, e.g. beach/river clean ups, Predator-Free initiatives.				
Work with (and learn from) local social justice groups.				
Work with local schools to support their sustainability initiatives and foster projects which bring generations to work together.				
Establish a community garden. Soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and local after-school programs will welcome your fresh produce. A church garden is also a great way to engage people who normally don't go to church but are interested in gardening or community service.				
Host community events that foster sustainability, e.g. repair café, clothes swap days, crop swap days (no cash), green fair, op shops, second-hand book sales.				
Host events to promote environmental awareness in your local community, e.g. film screenings, discussion evenings. Or promote and attend such events hosted by others, e.g. Forest and Bird.				
Organise opportunities for members and the local community to enjoy the natural world, e.g. walks, cycle rides, picnics.				
Make your church a recycling collection point (open to everyone) for such things as bread tags, ballpoint pens, batteries.				
Share your space. Share buildings with other organisations. Multiple congregations can share one church building on Saturdays and Sundays. Soup kitchens and community groups can use the building during the week.				
Engage with local community leaders, groups, MPs, businesses and councillors on environmental and sustainability issues, seeking to influence policy formation and good practice.				
Support community gardens. food banks and food cooperatives.				
Establish or support a car-share scheme.				

Engage in advocacy: Either alone or as part of a local network, make submissions on local and national issues relating to the health of the environment, e.g. to MPs, Select Committees, councils.				
Participate in protest marches on environmental issues.				
Link with creation care resourcing networks, e.g. NCNZ, A Rocha, denominational groups.				
Draw on links that members have with environmental bodies, e.g. Forest and Bird, Environmental Defence Society, Greenpeace, WWF, Friends of the Earth, etc.				
Celebrate care of creation achievements in a range of ways, both those achieved by your own faith community and those achieved by other groups.				
Promote and support the work of local conservation projects and organisations.				
Participate in periodic sustainability initiatives, e.g. Conservation Week, Plastic-Free July.				
Share stories and resources with other churches.				
Get involved (e.g. as a small group) in specific existing local environmental projects as a means of forming friendships which may eventually influence others towards faith. Build friendships through hands-on participation, extending hospitality, etc. See Resource F below.				
Form neighbourhood <i>Envirohubs</i> to become involved in specific local environmental projects as a means of forming friendships which may eventually influence others towards faith. Build friendships through hands-on participation, extending hospitality, etc. See Resource G below.				
ENGAGING WITH THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY				
Examine your church's world mission and social justice involvements to ascertain whether they have any environmental aspects.				
Support the work of Christian development agencies, e.g. Christian World Service, Tearfund, World Vision.				
Have an active and Peace and Justice group.				
Support a specific overseas environmental project, e.g. prayer, finance, labour.				
Promote Fairtrade (e.g. develop a church stall or method for selling goods from Trade Aid etc.).				
Explore environmental issues through any linked or twinned overseas community or church, e.g. in Bangladesh, Pacific nations like Kiribati, Tuvalu.				
Financially and prayerfully support the work of local and international conservation, eco-justice, and eco-				

action agencies or charities, e.g. NCNZ, A Rocha, WWF, Friends of the Earth.				
Purchase organic, fair-trade products. Show your love for our neighbors across the globe by paying them a fair wage and not polluting their water supplies or tearing down their forest canopies.				
HELPING PEOPLE TO LIVE SUSTAINABLY (PERSONAL LIFESTYLE AND ECO-FRIENDLY LIVING)				
The aim is to encourage your members (in positive, cheerful and grace-filled ways) to pursue sustainable lifestyles. This can be fostered through both education and demonstration.				
Encourage every family in your faith community to undertake a personal lifestyle audit to reduce the carbon footprint in their everyday lives and minimise the impact of their consumer choices.				
Demonstrate and create awareness about eating sustainably by using locally-grown, animal-welfare-friendly, organic, low-carbon, Fairtrade, ethically-sourced foods at church events.. including vegetarian and vegan options.				
Encourage your members to live simply. Living simply that others may simply live is a facet of Christian life. See Resource H below.				
Publish regular green tips in any church / parish/ school magazine bulletin or newsletter, e.g. reducing waste and energy consumption at home, eating sustainably, ethical investment, using public transport. See Resource I below.				
Promote awareness through posters or information from environmental organisations, e.g. on how to conduct a home energy audit.				
Encourage recycling by providing collection points or informing people of local facilities.				
Promote wider awareness through posters or information from environmental organisations.				
Provide opportunities to re-use and repair items, e.g. men's shed, clothes swap.				
Provide opportunities for members to connect with nature and thereby gain a passion for protecting it, e.g. walks, picnics.				
Curb clutter. Hold a church yard sale. The fewer things we have, the less distraction in our lives and the more time we have to spend with God. Donate the money raised to church outreach, missions, and charities.				
Share. Start an exchange program. Set up a bulletin board for people to post items they need and items they want to give away.				



The changes we make will not earn our way to heaven, but they do two important things for our souls: they connect us with the family of humanity around the globe, and, more importantly, they bring us closer to God. If he asks us to give up everything we have and follow him, I now know with certainty that each member of my family would gladly do so. This lack of attachment to things brings us priceless freedom and allows us to hear his call.

- Matthew Sleeth, 2010: *Hope for Creation*, p.105



RESOURCE A

MAKING CREATION CARE HAPPEN

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SUMMARY

- Often nothing happens because no-one takes responsibility for it.
- This is a common scenario in relation to a local church's involvement in creation care.
- Every local church needs an initiative group to lead its creation care mission.
- What you call this team matters little, but their role is vital.
- They perform a range of significant and timely tasks.
- Look for people in your midst with the necessary aptitude, giftings and skills.
- Whatever they do (and help others to do) is in partnership with God.
- Inspiring and equipping congregations for creation care is now urgent.
- There is no time like the present to form such a team!

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have.

The story may be confusing but the message is clear: no one took responsibility so nothing got accomplished. It's a story that plays out often in organisations, companies and groups — anywhere there is culture that lacks accountability. Unfortunately, in relation to the church's God-given mission to care for the natural world that God has made (Genesis 2:15), this scenario occurs frequently. Little is done because there is no specific individual or team taking responsibility for making it happen.

Any organisation, in order to advance and progress, needs strong, enthusiastic and gifted leaders who will dream, encourage, galvanise, and empower. A local church is no different. God bestows his special gift of leadership on certain individuals and they are enabled to discern and cast vision, motivate, and direct people to harmoniously accomplish the purposes of God (see Luke 9:51, 22:25-26; Acts 7:10, 15:7-11; Romans 12:8; I Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17).

That is why every local church needs an initiative group to head up its creation care mission. What you call that team matters little. "Green Team" has connotations, so you may prefer another name, such as "Eco-Leaders", "Creation Care Leadership Team", "Enviroforce" or whatever. Their role is to inspire and equip the congregation to actively pursue and engage in creation care, both individually and collectively. It is a vital and timely function.

Here are some of the significant things such a team may do:

- Research information on creation care: biblical insights, reasons, trends, projects, equipment, practical ideas, etc.
- Keep the congregation informed and inspired: newsletter inserts, a designated noticeboard, seminars, discussions, studies, promotions, presentations, etc.
- Provide counsel, advice and resources on creation care.
- Help the church to decrease its carbon footprint and operate in an eco-friendly manner.

- Get the congregation involved in a practical creation care project (or projects).
- Advocate on issues affecting the environment – to local bodies, MPs, government.



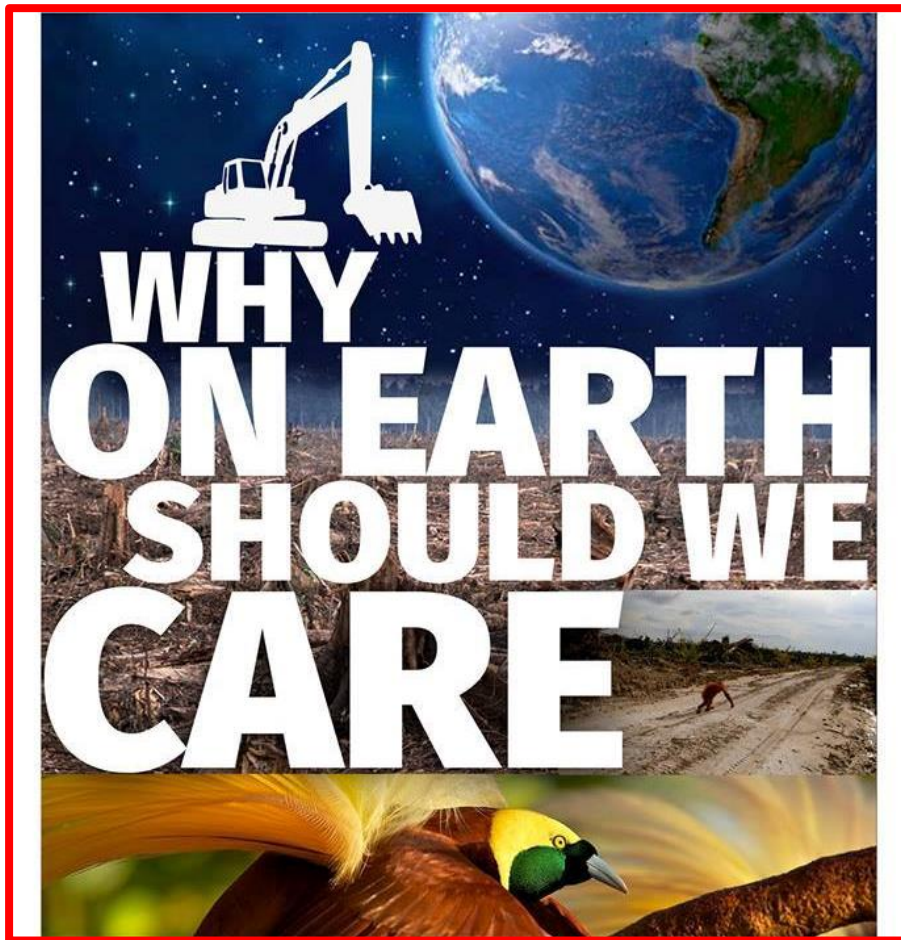
Does your local church have such an initiative group? Who in your midst might be gifted and prepared for such a role? Such people may already be obvious. They're already known for waving the creation care flag, as very eco-conscious or as environmental activists (in the best sense). Alongside that they have good organisational ability and people skills. Get 3-4 of them together, establish a chain of accountability and *modus operandi*, and let them loose to "do their thing."

Of course, whatever they undertake (and assist others to undertake) is done in partnership. God is committed to transforming the natural order, and invites our help in that endeavour. I find John 9:4 very instructive and encouraging in this regard. Jesus said: "*As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.*" The key word here is the pronoun "we". The Lord does not hesitate to describe himself as specially designated to do a certain work, but he graciously conjoins his disciples and friends in it, saying "We must do". It is as though he says, "I have a designated work to do which must be done, but I cannot do it alone. We must do it, you and I together." Every achievement in the mission of creation care is due to the combination of divine impetus and human agency. "We must do" is God's constant appeal: "Come and let us work together, you and I." Is not this exceedingly tender and beautiful?

The Lord also sounds a note of urgency. The period for "doing" is apparently limited. That is surely a message that has already been sounded in relation to saving our planet from ecological destruction. Scripture says that no one but the Father knows when the Christ will come again (Mark 12:32), and until he does we must continue to carry out God's commission to care for the earth. Even if the power by which God holds the whole world in existence were to be withdrawn next week, we still must give an account to Christ for our stewardship until that moment. We want him to say to us, "Well done, good and faithful stewards" (cf. Matthew. 25:22).

Your church urgently needs a creation care initiative group to "make it happen." As Christians we have the power of the Holy Spirit and the indwelling Spirit of Christ to give us hope and courage. Confident in that power, cooperating with God, we may act with energy to make God's good earth a fit dwelling place for all of God's creatures, now and for the future. Your church will be much more effective in carrying out that commission if it has a team in place to maintain focus and keep it on track. Why not make it a priority to form such a team within the next few months!?

RESOURCE C



Before any of us do anything significant, we usually need a reason. When a course of action is suggested, we need to be persuaded that it is worth pursuing. Creation care is no exception. This is why it is essential to take time to answer the “why” question – for all ages. By doing so, you will establish a solid foundation and an ongoing reference point. You are also likely to get much broader support for, and involvement in, this aspect of your church’s witness.

The rationale for creation care may be presented in a number of ways. For example, you could focus on the worsening state of the natural world, the existential threat that environmental degradation poses, or the duty we have to future generations. These are all good reasons for seeking to improve the health of the planet.

Christians, however, generally look to God for guidance and instruction in matters of belief and practice. They are interested in what God has to say on the matter. Is creation care something that God wants Christians to engage in? And for this, our first point of reference is the Bible. Teaching and discussion on the biblical mandate for creation care is very important. *The Green Bible* highlights hundreds of references to creation and creation care.

The “education/edification” aspect of creation care is not something merely for the beginning of your church’s journey, but is continually needful. Frequent and ongoing reminders of the case for creation care will encourage frequent and ongoing participation.

Songs, prayers, liturgies, sermons, seminars, workshops, studies, conversation cafes, testimonies, talks and contemplative walks are all ways of “getting the message out there”, and establishing creation care as an integral part of our discipleship. Worship services, camps, conferences and retreats are ideal situations to mix some of these together in a multi-pronged fashion.

New Creation New Zealand specialises in helping churches to explore the case for creation care, and our facilitators are always willing to come and share. We also have resources for children, young people and home groups.



“We scientists don’t know how to do that”

“I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change.

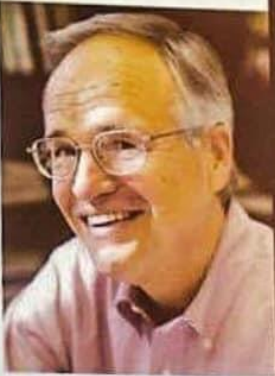
I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address those problems.

But I was wrong.
The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy...

...and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation

- and we scientists don't know how to do that.”

Gus Speth



THE BIBLICAL MANDATE FOR CREATION CARE: SUMMARY

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One of the best hopes for resolving current environmental challenges is that the global church (25% of the world's population) will recover the earth-keeping vocation it pursued strongly in earlier centuries but gradually relinquished after the Industrial Revolution. That is more likely to happen if Christians become convinced that God wants them to care for what he has made, i.e. that creation care is a right response to God. Our behaviour is rooted in our deepest moral and spiritual motivations. We change our ways if we're persuaded that something is God's calling and commission to us. That is where Scripture comes in...

1. SOURCE: God made all things out of nothing and keeps them in existence. God is grieved if we damage what he has made, which should prompt us to lament and repent.

Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; Psalm 19:1,33:6-9,90:2,102:25,104:24,139:13-16; Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 40:28,42:5,44:24,45:12,66:2; Jeremiah 10:12; John 1:3; Acts 17:24-25; Romans 4:17; I Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2-3,11:1; 2 Peter 3:5-6; Revelation 4:11,10:6.

2. STEWARDSHIP: God owns the planet, but appointed humans to be faithful managers, caretakers and custodians, with the right to use but not abuse. This is a commission for which we will be held accountable.

Genesis 1:28,2:15; Exodus 19:5; Leviticus 25:23; I Chronicles 27:31; Psalm 24:1,89:11; Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 12:42-48; I Corinthians 4:2; Colossians 3:23-24; I Peter 4:10; Revelation 11:18.

3. SANCTITY: Because God made, sustains, reveals himself through, is present throughout, values, delights in, provides for, loves/redeems, and is worshipped by/within creation, it is sacred and therefore worthy of great respect.

Genesis 3:8; Exodus 3:4-5; Numbers 35:34; Deuteronomy 4:39; Job 38-41; Psalm 19:1, 65:9-13,104:27-31,139:7-10, 145:16; Isaiah 6:3, 66:1-2 (c.f. Matthew 5:35, Acts 7:48-50); Jeremiah 23:24; Luke 12:24; Acts 14:17,17:24-28; Romans 1:19-20; Ephesians 4:6.

4. SUSTAINABILITY: God is concerned to preserve the fruitfulness and productivity of the earth as part of extending and expressing his faithfulness to all generations – past, present and future.

Genesis 2:2-8; Exodus 20:8-11,23:10-12; Leviticus 19:23-25,22:28,25:1-22; Deuteronomy 20:19-20,22:6-7; Psalm 89:1,100:5,119:90; Isaiah 58:13-14; Philippians 4:11-12; I Timothy 6:6-8; Hebrews 13:5.

5. SIMILARITY: Jesus had a deep connection with creation, shown by his participation in bringing it into being, the creation references in his teaching, the incidents involving nature in his life, and his resurrection which inaugurated the new creation. He deeply cared for the natural world. God's intention is that we should be like him in this aspect as in any other.

Job 19:25; Matthew 6:25-34,7:15-20,10:29-31; Mark 1:12-13,35; Luke 8:4-15/22-25,15:3-6; John 1:3/10, 10:1-16,13:12-17; Romans 5:12-19,8:29,13:14; I Corinthians 15:1-57; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 4:19; Ephesians 4:15,5:1; Philippians 2:5; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:2-3; I Peter 2:21; I John 2:6,4:17; Revelation 4:11.

6. SALUTATION: Caring for creation is an act of worship because it honours, blesses, delights, and glorifies God. It also preserves creation to be a context/inspiration for our worship and enables it to praise its Maker without hindrance.

I Chronicles 16:29-34; Psalm 19:1-4, 29:1-2, 69:34, 96:11-13, 98:7, 103:22, 145:10, 148:10,150:6; Isaiah 55:12, 66:1-2 (c.f. Acts 7:48-49,17:24-25); Mark 1:35; Luke 19:40; John 4:23-24; Revelation 5:13.

- 7. SALVATION: Christ came to redeem the whole of creation, human and non-human, setting it free from sin, evil, curses, corruption and death. Therefore, as the agents through whom God advances his redemptive purposes, we should be actively concerned about rescuing and renewing not only people but also nature.**

Genesis 6-9; Jonah 2:9,4:11; Psalm 36:6; Mark 16:15; John 3:16-17; Romans 3:23, 6:23, 8:18-25; 2 Corinthians 5:19,6:2; Ephesians 1:9-10; Colossians 1:20; I Peter 1:9-10/18-21,3:18; 2 Peter 3:9-10; Revelation 5:11-14, 21:5.

- 8. SOCIAL JUSTICE: We have a responsibility for the welfare and wellbeing of others, which includes protecting the physical contexts in which they live, and their means of livelihood, as well as ensuring they are treated fairly and justly.**

Genesis 4:9; Deuteronomy 15:7-11, 24:14-21, 27:19; Psalm 11:7, 72:1-4; Proverbs 14:21/31, 19:17; 31:8-9; Isaiah 1:17, 3:14-15, 10:1-2, 58:6-7; Ezekiel 16:49; Amos 2:6-7, 5:11-13/24; Micah 6:8; Matthew 7:12, 19:21,22:39, 25:31-46, 26:11; Luke 4:14-21, 10:25-37, 11:42, 12:33, 14:12-14, 16:19-31; Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-37, 6:1-6; Romans 12:13/20; I Timothy 5:3; James 1:27,2:14-17,5:1-6; I John 3:16-17.

- 9. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP: Leaders endued and empowered by the Holy Spirit are crucial if we are to overcome the ecological challenges of our time, because supernatural enabling is required to address them in the best possible ways and because behind them are spiritual and moral issues that lie deep within the human heart.**

Exodus 36:1-2; Leviticus 26:3-6; Numbers 11:25; Deuteronomy 7:12-14,11:13-17,28:9-12/15-24/38-42; I Chronicles 12:27-31; I Kings 3:9-12; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Isaiah 24:5-7; Jeremiah 4:22-28,9:10,12:4; Hosea 4:1-3; Luke 1:4b; John 14:15-17,16:8-11; Acts 1:8,2:4,8:29,13:1-3,15:28,16:6-8; Romans 8:9/12-14,12:6-8; I Corinthians 1:24-30,3:16,6:19,12:7-11/27-31; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 3:20,4:11-12,5:18; 2 Timothy 1:7; I Peter 4:10.

- 10. SHALOM: God's invites us to join with him in restoring creation to the state of full *shalom* he originally intended, and will one day fully accomplish, working together to realise the vision of a new heaven and a new earth.**

Psalm 96:10-13,104:30; Isaiah 11:1-9, 35:1-10, 40:1-11, 43:19-21, 55:12-13, 65:17-25; Micah 4:1-4; Habakkuk 2:3,14; Matthew 6:10,19:28; Acts 3:17-21; Romans 8:18-25; Ephesians 1:10-11; Philippians 3:21; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:1-13; Revelation 11:15 and chapters 19-22.

**Caring for creation is a significant and repeated theme throughout the Bible!
It is a definite responsibility that God has given us. It is part of the Church's mission.**

Which one of these principles do you find most cogent? convincing? personally impactful?
What will you do to apply this truth (John 13:17; James 1:22)?

These ten principles are explored in depth in a forthcoming book (authored by Phillip Donnell), The book is entitled *The Case for Creation Care: Ten Biblical Themes That Demand a Green Faith*. The book is due for publication by the end of 2024.

For help with your mission of creation care, please contact us: newcreationnewzealand@gmail.com
or visit our Facebook website: <https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationNZ/>

THE BIBLICAL MANDATE FOR CREATION CARE: ELABORATION

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Note: This script was originally presented as two sermons (5 points in each), or one seminar.

As Christians, the Bible is the primary guide for what we believe and what we do.

It is one of the key means by which God speaks to us.

So does God have anything to say to us in the Bible about this issue?

I want to share with you 10 big biblical ideas, which together comprise a convincing and cogent mandate for intentionally looking after everything that God has made, both collectively and individually.

All ten ideas begin with the letter “s”.



14

Here's the first one.

- **SOURCE**

God is the source, the originator of everything that exists.

“In the beginning,” says Genesis 1, v.1...(can you finish it off?). And there are dozens of other Scriptures that affirm this fact.

Father, Son and Spirit were all involved in bringing the universe into being.

The mechanism they used to create, and how long they took to do it, are very interesting questions for another time.

Some may assert that life evolved by chance from non-living matter, and all that exists simply constitutes cosmic vomit, but to my mind the mathematical probabilities of that occurring require far more faith to accept than belief in a Creator.

The early chapters of Genesis are not, of course, subtitled *A Scientific Treatise: How I Made the World*, by God. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 should not be understood as historical and scientific accounts of origins but as *proclamations of basic theological truths* about creation. They were written to emphasise that everything is dependent for its existence and meaning upon the sovereign God.

The key fact is that God is the Creator, the Maker, the one who brought everything into existence. Creation is the first gift that God gave to us!

If you don't accept that, then you have to believe that -

- Nothing produces everything
- Non-life produces life
- Randomness produces fine-tuning
- Chaos produces information
- Unconsciousness produces consciousness, and
- Non-reason produces reason

Those, to me, are not viable options!

Some may assert that life evolved by chance from non-living matter, and all that exists simply constitutes cosmic vomit, but to my mind the mathematical probabilities of that occurring require far more faith to accept than belief in a Creator.

One might just as well maintain that the Golden Gate Bridge would arise spontaneously if one just gave the iron ore, of which it is constructed, a few billion years or so to organise itself, or that the Oxford dictionary resulted from an explosion in a print shop,

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth – and he continues to create. God's action is necessary not only for the universe *coming* to be but also for it *continuing* to be (John 5:17, Acts 17:28, Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:2, Colossians 1:17, Revelation 4:11).

- Do we have any creative people in our midst today? Have you created anything recently, even this week? (a cake, piece of pottery, item of clothing, garden shed, etc.?)

Here's something that I made when I was in a Year 8 woodwork class. A small bookcase. Call me sentimental, but I've never quite got to throwing it away, because there's a little bit of me in it.

Tell me, how would you feel, if having made something, someone then came along and deliberately damaged it or destroyed it?

You'd feel the same as I would if someone smashed this bookcase to pieces.

So how do you think God might feel when he sees people doing exactly that to the things that he has made.

The English poet John Drinkwater wrote:

When you defile the pleasant streams

And the wild bird's abiding place,

You massacre a million dreams

And cast your spittle in God's face.

In other words, destroying what God has made is like spitting in his face.

And he is not only insulted. He is grieved! He is sorrowful. He laments!

It certainly doesn't meet with his approval or make him happy. Quite the opposite.

And I for one do not want to be a cause of that. I do not want to grieve the heart of God.

- Our second big idea is **STEWARDSHIP**.

What does that idea mean to you?

When I was a boy I remember the church I attended having a "stewardship" week – which meant promising to give a certain amount of money over the ensuing year by way of tithes and offerings!

But that is a little misleading. The concept is a lot broader than that.

It may come as a surprise to some of our politicians, business people, and other would-be claimants, to learn that we don't actually own the earth. They may act as though "This place is ours. We're in charge!", but they are mistaken.

Psalm 24:1 says: *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.*

God still holds the title deed to the planet. He owns it.

Adam Clarke says: *All abuse and waste of God's creatures are spoil and robbery on the **property of the Creator*** (Clarke's Commentary on the Bible).

- What God said way back in Genesis 1 was this: "Yes, I own it, but I'm going to give you a certain amount of control and jurisdiction over what I own".

That's why you find words there such as "take dominion", "subdue" and "rule over".

Unfortunately, those words have made some people think that God has given us the go-ahead to exploit, conquer and pulverise nature. To treat it in whatever way we please.

But that's not the idea at all.

In Genesis 2, v.15, God went on to spell out what our role involves.

He took the man (representing humans) and put him in the Garden of Eden (representing the natural world) "to tend and keep it" (NKJV).

So what does "ruling" and "subduing" look like? According to Genesis, it looks like...gardening

- "Tend" there (Hebrew *'abad*) means "to work or serve."

If you apply the word to the ground, it can be defined as "to till or cultivate."

Another nuance of the word is "to dress", implying adornment, embellishment, and improvement.

We may have been placed in a position above the other creatures of the world, but it is first of all a role of service, meeting the needs of the garden of creation so that it will persist and flourish.

- "Keep" (Hebrew *shamar*) means "to exercise great care over."

It is variously translated: to watch over, guard, safeguard, look after, take care of, protect and preserve".

it is the same word used in the great Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:24: "The Lord bless you and **keep** you" which is always appreciated as a benediction because it implies a protective nurturing, a providential attending to our health, well being and safety.

- We see in this verse that right from the outset humans were appointed as caretakers. Managers. Benevolent custodians.

Ours is very much a loving, sustaining, nurturing role - using but not abusing.

And one day God may hold us accountable for how well we have fulfilled that role.

- Let me illustrate.

Imagine you are sixteen years old, and you just got your driver's license (awesome!!). Your gracious and loving parents hand you a strange set of keys, and your heart starts to pound. They lead you outside, and there, in the dimly lit garage, is near-new Chevrolet Camaro. Your parents say, "We technically own this car, but it's yours to drive to school, to work, and anywhere else you need to go. You need to put petrol in it, make sure the oil gets changed, and please wash it regularly. It's your responsibility to take care of it."

Are you going to take care of that car? You bet!

So too should it be for the incredible gifts God has given to us!

Scott Hoezee sums it up:

*The creation's usefulness to humanity is **not** the end of the matter; God's wishes for **how we are to act as his designated vice-regents** must be the final consideration.*

(Scott Hoezee, 1998: *Remember Creation - God's World of Wonder and Delight*, p.61).

Idea # 3: **SANCTITY.**

This is the idea that creation, the natural world, is a holy place.

Sanctity essentially means "the quality of being holy or sacred, and therefore deserving of the utmost respect."

It has some affinities to the Māori concept of *tapu*.

Wendell Berry, the great American conservationist, says:

*...we and all other creatures live by a **sanctity** that is inexpressibly intimate, for to every creature, the gift of life is a portion of the breath and spirit of God... The Bible leaves no doubt at all about the **sanctity** of the act of world-making, or of the world that was made, or of creaturely or bodily life in this world. We are holy creatures living among other holy creatures in a world that is holy.*

(Wendell Berry, 2002: *The Art of the Commonplace*, pp. 308, 310-311).

Why is creation sacred?

2 reasons come to mind.

- # 1: God *inhabits* nature.

Do you remember the story of when God revealed himself to Moses in a bush which was burning but not consumed (In Exodus 3)?

What did God say to Moses on that occasion?

"Come no closer. Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." (v.5).

The ground was holy because God was manifestly present right there.

But isn't God present everywhere?

According to the Bible, he is.

The Bible speaks of God being omnipresent (God is everywhere).

The writer of Psalm 139 asks:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? (v. 7 NIV)

In Jeremiah 23, we read: *Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?" says the Lord.* (v.24 NLT)

We read in Ephesians 4, v.6: *"There is...One God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all"* (Ephesians 4:6 NLT).

God inhabits nature.

- And #2: God *reveals* himself through the created order.

- According to Psalm 19, God shows himself to us through the Word (special revelation) and the world (general revelation). It begins: *"The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship"* (v.1 NLT).

- Romans 1:20 declares: *For ever since the **world** was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature* (NLT).

- Some writers use the term "sacramental".

We live in "a *sacramental universe*" they say, and they define it as one in which God chooses to use material things to be present to people, and where these material things function as vehicles of grace.

The inward and spiritual grace intrinsic to creation is encountered via its outward and physical manifestations.

- Here's another thought. In his 2009 book, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, John Walton develops the concept of the earth as God's temple –carved out of space.

He compares the accounts of building temples in the ancient world with Genesis 1 and he finds many similarities.

He writes: "God not only sets up the cosmos so that people will have a place; he also sets up the cosmos to *serve as his temple*"

It is entirely legitimate, Walton says, to view God's world as a great outdoor cathedral in which he dwells and wants to connect with us.

In Isaiah 66, v.1 we read: *This is what the Lord says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you build me a temple as good as that?"* (NLT)

Acts 17:24 reminds us that "God does not dwell in temples built by human hands." (NIV).

- God inhabits the natural world. He reveals himself through it. It is his temple.

So nature, I am suggesting to you, is sacred. It has an intrinsic sanctity.

And like any sacred place, it should therefore be treated with the **greatest respect**.

To live and act in ways that harm it, is a sign of huge disrespect.

It is similar to desecrating a church, a shrine, a graveyard or some other holy place.

- Our fourth big idea is **SUSTAINABILITY**.

How would you define it?

Sustainability simply means: *the capacity for continuance into the long-term future*.

- It's a term that is very much in fashion in these times - a modern buzzword. Put it on a label, be it chocolate bars or toilet rolls, and your sales will go up!

But did you know it is also a very *ancient* principle, enunciated by God himself.

Sustainability is without doubt a concept that God believes in and endorses.

- This is reflected in the many eco-friendly laws and practices dotted throughout the books of Moses. Let me show you some examples:

- Genesis 1:11-12 talks about seed-bearing trees and plants.

Here we have a vision of a healthy world that is not only able to generate prolifically, but is also able to diversify and sustain itself. The author is at pains to portray a world that will continue *on its own* in perpetuity, with little or no help from people.

- Deuteronomy 20:19–20 refers to preserving trees in war.

Ordinarily, when laying siege to a city, its trees were destroyed in great numbers. God forbade this, not only so that they could eat what the trees produced but also because there is no justification for making war against non-human living things, or preventing any chance of the trees producing in the future.

- In Deuteronomy 22:6-7 the Israelites are told that when they are raiding a nest, they are not to take the mother bird since this would preclude any hope of the bird producing more offspring in the future.
- A key principle of sustainability is, of course, the *Sabbath-keeping principle*: the Sabbath day, the Sabbath Year, and the Year of Jubilee.

The Sabbath laws laid out in Leviticus provided not only for people to rest every seventh day, but also for cultivated land to lie fallow every seventh year, as well as every 50th year.

The idea was for both people and nature to "take a break", to have "time off" to rejuvenate and recover, and thus maintain their productivity over the long-term. It has been called "the break that remakes."

- Such laws as those I have shown you also underscore something else, namely not jeopardizing the welfare of future generations”

Tim Flannery suggests that sustainability is essentially about extending the 8th commandment "You shall not steal" to those who come after us.

In his eyes, failing to live sustainably is akin to intergenerational theft.

*A few years ago, this was brought home to me in a way that was so unusual and so challenging that I wrote a poem about it. It's called "Rude Awakening"

*It's sometime in the dead of night
and I've been woken with a fright.
My grandkids come to me in dreams
with searching questions, so it seems:
"Granddad, what things did you avoid
in case our planet was destroyed?"
"Granddad, how was your life re-shaped
to save the earth from being raped?"
"Granddad, how did you seek to care
once tragic trends made you aware?"
"Granddad, with nature treated wrong,
did you resist, or play along?"
"Granddad, what actions did you take
when all our futures were at stake?"
"Granddad, we'd really like to know,
because you said you loved us so!"*

That dream was a wake-up call.

It made me realise that people around the globe were paying for the unsustainable lifestyle that I considered normal, and one day my descendants would pay for it. I was compromising their futures.

God expects us to maintain the productivity and fruitfulness of the natural world.

In this way his faithfulness will be extended "to all generations" (in the words of Psalm 89:2; 100:5).

Let's come to the fifth idea: **SIMILARITY**.

Romans 8:29 tells us that -

God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son (NLT).

Or in The Message translation: *God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son.*

According to that verse, what is God's ultimate desire and purpose for us?

What is his continuous and ongoing goal for our lives?

Can anyone tell me? "**to become like his Son**" (NLT)

He wants us to be just like Jesus. No more, no less!

- So, what was Jesus' attitude and approach to the natural world?

Our Lord's primary desire was to do his Father's will while on earth.

"Not my will, but yours be done" he prayed (Luke 22:42 ESV)

So his attitude towards, and response to, the natural world inevitably reflected that of his heavenly Father, which is revealed in such verses as:

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside of your Father's care?" (Matthew 10:29 NIV)

Or *"Consider the ravens. They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn, yet God feeds them."* (Luke 12:24 NIV)

According to Jesus, God is actively caring for the natural world. He loves this physical earth.

So Jesus, as *"the exact imprint of God's very being"* (Hebrews 1:3 NRSV) did likewise.

- There is no doubt in my mind that Jesus loved creation.

After all, as we noted earlier, he was involved in making it.

- John chapter 1 says of Jesus: *"nothing was created except through him."* (v.3 NLT)

- Colossians 1 declares: *"by him all things were created"* (v.16 ESV)

- Hebrews 1, v.2 says that: *"through the Son" God "created the universe."* (NLT)

Jesus was integrally involved in making everything that exists.

Not only was he involved in everything *coming* to be, but he is currently the key player in everything *continuing* to be.

- Paul declares in Acts 17, v.28: *in him we live and move and have our being.* (NIV)

- Colossians 1:17 asserts that *He himself (Christ) is before all things, and in him all things hold together* (NIV) – which applies right down to the structure of atoms and molecules.

- Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Jesus is currently *sustaining all things by his powerful word.* (NIV)

- In Revelation 4:11 the 24 elders worship our Lord saying: *you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.* (NIV)

Jesus is the "Great Sustainer" – the one who responsible for both originating the cosmos (then) and operating the cosmos (now).

* In the fullness of time, of course, Jesus actually entered his own creation.

He chose to become flesh - which tells me that matter matters.

While he was here in human form, he had a special attachment to, and appreciation of, the natural world.

He took delight in it - which tells me that he really cares about the physical, material earth, not just human souls.

- Creation theologians, like Sean McDonagh, say that Jesus showed a deep connection to the environment in two ways...

- First, through the many *events and incidents* in his life involving nature (such as being born with animals, being tempted in the wilderness, calming the storm, getting a coin out of the mouth of a fish, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, or frequently heading into the backcountry to commune with His Father).

- and second, through frequent references to natural objects in his *teaching* (such as salt, light, birds, flowers, seeds, mountains, rivers, fruit, trees, sand, stones, wheat, vines, sheep, goats, and water).

Even some of our Lord's *general principles*, when you think about *them*, have profound implications environmentally.

For example, *"Love your neighbour as yourself"* (Mark 12:31 NLT) or *"Do to others as you would have them do to you"* (Luke 6:31 NIV)

- If we bring all these strands together, we can only conclude that care for creation springs from the very heart of Jesus.

I think there is a pretty strong case for saying that Jesus was green (in the best sense of the word)! I say that very respectfully.

And we are called to imitate him.

Relationship implies resemblance. We're to be mimics and mirrors.

In the words of I John 4:17: "*As he is, so are we, in this world*" (NRSV).

Caring for creation is part and parcel of that.

It should be an integral part of our discipleship, of what it means to follow Christ.

- The sixth biblical reason for our engaging in creation care can be placed under the heading **SALUTATION.**

A salutation is not only a greeting. It can also be a tribute, an act of homage, a way to honour another person. So I am using it as a euphemism for worship.

Worship is, in effect, saluting God.

What has creation care got to do with worship?

Here I make 3 observations.

To begin with, creation care itself is *an act of worship*.

Psalm 29 defines worship as giving God the *honour* he deserves (vs.1-2 NLT)

Rick Warren says "anything we do that gives God *pleasure* is worship".

So worship is not a "Bless me" exercise. It's a "Bless God" exercise.

- Caring for what God has made ticks all those boxes.

It is as much worship as what goes on in a church building, because those caring actions bring God honour and pleasure and blessing.

* Second, creation care preserves a *context* for worship.

Nature is a place where we can worship God.

Can you think of any occasion when the sheer magnificence of a scene inspired you to break into praise? I can think of many.

And I actually find it much easier to connect with God in a natural setting that within 4 walls.

*Third, creation care preserves the natural creatures and features that actually offer worship.

Worship is not confined to humans.

"*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord*" says Psalm 150 (v.6 NIV).

God intends **all** of creation to render praise and glory - mountains and hills bursting into song; trees of the field clapping their hands, stones crying out, seas roaring, wild animals/cattle/ birds (indeed everything that has breath) joining in – not always by making any noise, but simply by being.

- All of this, for me, is a key reason why I want to preserve and protect the natural world.

The way we treat nature either facilitates or frustrates worship.

We either help it or hinder it. When we damage the environment, we are damaging not only a *context* for worship, and a source of *inspiration* for worship, but also some of the *very phenomena* that God created to *render* worship.

- Our next idea is **SALVATION**

What is the scope of God's saving purposes?

Well, Scripture indicates very clearly that Jesus died to redeem both the human and the non-human creation – the entire created order – anyone and anything that looks to him for rescue and release and renewal.

- When John 3:16 declares "*God so loved the world*", the word "world", in the original biblical language, is the word "**cosmos**", referring to everything in the universe.

- In Colossians 1:19-20 we are told: *God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (i.e. Christ), and through him to reconcile to himself **all things**, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.* (NIV)

I'm reminded of Noah's Ark - 8 humans, thousands of non-human species. That's the breadth of God's redemptive programme.

It is comprehensive and holistic!

Salvation is creation healed – all of it - people and penguins, souls and seals.

- Which has big implications for how we carry out mission in the church. Jesus said in Mark 16:15 that we are to "*proclaim the good news to the **whole** creation*" (NRSV). So we need to work out not only what constitutes the good news for people, but also for kauri or kakapo.

Question: Is God currently in the business of rescuing **humans**?

Does he want **us** to cooperate with him in this endeavour?

If so, then why would we imagine he is not also currently in the business of rescuing the **non-human** creation and wants us to participate in that mission as well?

- The Anglican church includes creation care in its *Five Marks of Mission*, alongside evangelism, discipleship, compassion and social justice.

The Lausanne Movement, in its Cape Town Commitment, asserts that the mission of God addresses not only individual persons, along with society and culture. It also includes the non-human creation.

"All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God's people."

(Lausanne Movement: *Cape Town Commitment*, 2010, I.7a)

- There is now strong evidence from around the world that the most productive approach to evangelism at the present time is to integrate it with creation care.

- It is an ideal approach "*for such a time as this*" (Esther 4:14 NIV). Why?

+Because it is so highly relevant and timely!

+Because it's out there, not in here. Don't keep it in-house.

+And because it scratches where people are itching!

- There's no point fishin where they aint!

But they are certainly present when you get involved in environmental projects.

Involvement in creation care gives us a golden opportunity to befriend and influence others towards personal faith in the Creator.

- An eighth biblical reason for engaging in creation care is **SOCIAL JUSTICE**.

Question: Can we really care for people without caring for the contexts in which they live?

I don't believe so.

It is hard to separate creation care from social justice because people and nature are interdependent.

Harming nature inevitably harms people as well.

The true cost of living the modern western lifestyle is not actually measured by what we pay at the cash register.

Rather, it is measured by what we have done to other people's rivers, valleys, oceans, air and land. And, more precisely, what we have done to the poor and disadvantaged.

Without a doubt the ones whom Jesus calls "the least of these," are the ones most adversely affected by environmental degradation - locally, nationally and internationally.

They are most prone to suffer the consequences, such as exposure to hazards and disasters, displacement, poverty, pollution, health problems, poor wages and conditions, property damage, and harm to organisms on which they depend,

- All made worse by the fact that they simply do not have the resources to mitigate environmental problems or adapt to changing environmental conditions.

So they become victims. They end up:

- Buying property near landfills because that's all they can afford.
- Working in the dirtiest factories to produce all the odds and ends we purchase.
- Drinking groundwater contaminated by mining.
- Living next to smokestacks, polluting the air and harming their health.
- Residing in areas prone to flooding due to low-lying location or deforestation.
- Scavenging on refuse tips to eke out a few dollars for the most basic supplies.

Many significant problems affecting people around the world today have direct environmental causes, or environmental issues have exacerbated them.

So engaging in creation care has a direct bearing on the welfare and wellbeing of our neighbours.

By protecting the *physical contexts* in which they live, we also protect their means of livelihood, as well as ensuring they are treated fairly and justly.

I mentioned previously the commands of Jesus: "*Love your neighbour as yourself*" (Mark 12:31 NLT)

And "*Do to others as you would have them do to you*" (Luke 6:31 NIV)

Micah 6. v.8 (NRSV) says:

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

Creation care is part of that.

- Our next idea is **SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP**

Why do Christians need to get involved in creation care?

Because the environmental movement desperately needs the benefit of not only the wisdom of God but also the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

It needs modern-day Issacharians.

You will recall that when the tribes of Israel were rallying to support David as the new king, the tribe of Issachar sent 200 gifted leaders who had one special and outstanding skill.

We are told in I Chronicles 12:32 that they had *“understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.”* (NRSV/ESV).

The GNB says: *“These men knew what Israel should do and the best time to do it.”*

The words used to describe these men indicate that they had deep understanding, keen awareness and discernment, including knowledge, insight and guidance derived from a supernatural source.

They were like a think tank of divinely-inspired public policy gurus.

God raised up such people during a critical period of adjustment and transition and challenge.

- Our planet today is similarly at a watershed point, and what is most needed today is the same kind of leaders.

But sadly, when it comes to the environment, the wise input of godly people, sensitive to the times and sensitive to what the Spirit is saying, is in short supply.

- Spiritual leadership is also needed because creation care impinges on significant moral issues. After a lifetime as an environmental advisor and advocate in the United States, Gus Speth commented:
I used to think that top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that thirty years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that.
(widely quoted but exact source unknown)

If people are to change their behaviour, they need to be changed inwardly. You can't just pass a law.

So the involvement of people in whom the Spirit of God dwells, in creation care, is vitally important.

- The final idea I'd like to highlight is **SHALOM**

The Bible indicates that God's original perfect creation was corrupted by both angelic and human rebellion.

Sin and evil blighted it.

But when that happened, God embarked on a project which is so grand and so great that it defies imagination, namely to bring into being the new creation.

By "new creation" is meant the totality of God's redemptive and transformative work, encompassing the entire creation, human and non-human.

God's great goal is to restore shalom – the complete peace, harmony and wellbeing that was lost.

- In Matthew 19, v.28 Jesus refers to *"the renewal of all things"* (NRSV)
- Acts 3:21 says Jesus must remain in heaven *"until the time comes for God to restore **everything**, as he promised long ago..."* (NIV).
- Ephesians 1:10 reveals that God's plan, which he *"will complete when the time is right, is to bring **all creation** together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head"* (GNT). A Christian universe.

God *has* to do this.

And he has to do it with the *same* material that has been corrupted.

Romans 8 clearly indicates that it is the *present* groaning creation, that is going to be renewed - not by doing away with it, but by cleansing and purifying it (which is actually what 2 Peter 3 teaches).

You see, the materiality of the cosmos is not the essential problem. The problem is sin and evil that have brought ruinous consequences. Anthony Hoekema comments:

If God would have to annihilate the present cosmos, Satan would have won a great victory. For then Satan would have succeeded in so devastatingly corrupting the present cosmos and the present earth that God could do nothing with it but to blot it totally out of existence. But Satan did not win such a victory. On the contrary, Satan has been decisively defeated.
(*The Bible and the Future*, 1979, p.281)

- The new creation *commenced in the past*.

It began with the resurrection of Christ 2000 years ago.

When Jesus rose from the dead, he inaugurated it.

The resurrection introduced a completely new state of affairs - a world full of potential and possibility.

- The new creation *continues in the present*.

+ According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, a person who puts faith in Christ becomes *"a new creation"* (ESV,NRSV). They begin a new life, and the process of transformation is ongoing.

+ But according to several other Scriptures, God **also** desires to bring *"new heavens and new earth"* into being - to transform the **natural** world as well – today! (Isaiah 65:17/66:22; 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1).

- The new creation will *culminate in the future*, when God makes *"all things new"* (Revelation 21:5 ESV). (Note; not all new things)

In his book on "Heaven", Randy Alcorn argues that while the current heaven is located in an undisclosed spot somewhere in our universe, the eternal Heaven, where the Redeemed will live forever with God, will be located on a new earth — this earth refined, renovated, and refreshed. In a word, perfected.

- In the meantime, we can at least make **some** things new.

We can, as Bishop Tom Wright says, *"go and make new creation happen in the world"*.

We are, he says, to be *"agents of that new creation here and now."*

(2011: *Simply Christian*, pages 99,202)

Douglas and Jonathan Moo sum up our role very well when they say:

*As redeemed "image bearers," God enlists his people in the work of prefiguring and preparing for the work of ultimate transformation that he will accomplish in the last day. Therefore, perhaps more as a matter of **working toward** rather than divine accomplishment, the transformation of the natural world inherent in "new creation" **has a present aspect**.*

(2018: *Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World*, page 144)

I Corinthians 15:58 assures us that whatever we do to heal creation, whether people or nature, will not be *in vain* (ESV), *fruitless* (Weymouth), *useless* (GNT, NLT) or *wasted* (ISV).

When engaging in creation care, we are not simply polishing the brass on a sinking ship.

As for people, so for nature. It will count for eternity.
It will be carried over and preserved in the new order.

CONCLUSION

We have explored what to my mind is one of the significant values of the Judeo-Christian ethic, namely *kaitiakitanga* – caring for the natural world, and in particular whether the Bible tells us so to do.

From the Bible, we have extracted ten principles: source, stewardship, sanctity, sustainability, similarity, salutation, salvation, social justice, spiritual leadership and shalom.

Put these ten biblical strands together and you have a pretty cogent and convincing case for creation care, an eco-friendly and green-orientated faith.

Which leads us to the critical question: In the light of what we have explored over the past two Sundays, do you think that God wants us to engage in caring for creation. Yes or No?

If you answered “Yes” John 13:17 applies to you. Jesus said: *“Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.”* (NLT)

Also James 1, v.22: *Don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.* (NLT)

In other words: Give truth legs. Apply it. Translate it into practice. If we don’t, what is the point of receiving it?

So that is your challenge for the weeks and months and years ahead – both as individuals and as a community of faith.



THE BIBLICAL MANDATE FOR CREATION CARE: DEALING WITH THE MOST COMMON EXCUSE

If this present earth is going to be destroyed eventually, what's the point of taking care of it now?

The fate of the Earth is certainly a key aspect of biblical eschatology. Peter says that our great hope for the final state of eternity is new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells — the same as John in Revelation 21. Debate rages, however, as to what precedes that final state.

My grandfather liked charts, especially ones that depicted “the last days”. I recall his explaining one on the lounge wall which graphically portrayed dispensational stages in human history and beyond, including the eternal state. One glaring and frightening feature was an image of our planet engulfed in flames. It was an image that always bothered me.

Keith Dyer has summed up what he calls "the eschatology of inevitable disaster that dominates much of popular theology" in six broad principles:

1. *The principle of imminent cataclysm* - Earth is headed for disaster (sooner rather than later).
 2. *The principle of disconnectedness* - we humans don't have to share or feel responsible for Earth's fate (salvation is for humans, not Earth).
 3. *The principle of inevitability* - there's nothing we (or Earth) can do about it.
 4. *The principle of transcendence* - what really matters is the next world (or 'heavenism' as Habel describes it).
 5. *The principle of sovereignty* - God is in ultimate (even direct) control of all this.
 6. *The principle of self-interest* - God will rapture 'believers' out of this mess in the nick of time.
- in Habel and Balabanski (eds), 2002: *The Earth Story in the New Testament* (London: Sheffield Academic Press), p. 45.

A key question arises out of these six commonly-held notions: Will the new earth really be the result of God destroying the present material universe and starting all over again, or will it be the culmination of a more gradual restoration process which I may participate in and which God will ultimately complete? For many people, the answer to this question significantly determines whether there is any point at all in seeking to care and conserve creation in the here and now. **Their reasoning goes like this: Isn't God going to destroy this earth anyway? If it is all going to be annihilated and obliterated, then who really cares?** Why get sentimental about a container that has served its purpose and is about to be completely replaced? Why bother? Negative attitudes to creation's future inevitably lead to neglect at best, rampant destruction at worst. But if it can be shown that the Earth is not actually going to be destroyed in judgment, the primary objection to Christians combating environmental degradation vanishes.

After outlining his six principles, Dyer goes on to comment: *It comes as no surprise that within this kind of operational framework, every ecological disaster and every sign of degenerating human behavior is seen as proof that 'the end times' are indeed upon us. This in turn tends to reinforce faith as a kind of grim paralysis, stoically enduring the decline of our planet in the hope of something better in the next life... Long-term policies to address the underlying causes of environmental and social degradation are simply irrelevant to those who are convinced that things have to get worse before they can get better and that they will only get better through the direct intervention of God to bring this sorry planet to an end. In Norman Habel's words, those who hold such a perspective 'reduce Earth to a ball of corrupted matter about to be thrown into the waste dump of eternity'*

- in Habel and Balabanski (eds), 2002: 46

For years, I heard that this world would be destroyed completely when Christ returned in judgment. But deep down something felt wrong, and as I started reading the Bible myself, my questions grew, so I looked into the issue. I wanted to know whether the Bible really does teach that the creation itself has no future. I discovered some interesting facts. Here are some reasons why modern thinkers increasingly struggle with the “do away with/start over” scenario...

- THE "OBLITERATION" IDEA IS RELATIVELY RECENT

According to Dave Bookless, the notion that earth will be destroyed *“isn’t what most people have believed down through the ages. It’s a relatively modern view that grew up alongside the Industrial Revolution”*. He says: *“Perhaps the link is unfair, but I sometimes think it’s been very convenient to believe the earth is disposable, at a time when we’ve been exploiting and destroying its resources as never before.”* (2008: 15)

It has been rightly noted that the view of Earth being obliterated only emerged as the cosmic understanding of redemption lost ground in Western Christendom after the Reformation as a result of the powerful force of the Enlightenment and the growth of secularism. In particular, the origin of the bleak apocalyptic outlook espoused by so many may be found in nineteenth and twentieth century America. Western science, fundamentalist biblicism, and the pressure to find a religious justification for the exploitative components of industrialization, combined to change the landscape of eschatological interpretation, finding expression in the dispensationalism of Darby and Schofield. The outcome was *“large numbers of Bible-believing Christians who seem to be trapped into inactivity by such a world view (or rather, world-denying view) - faithfully tending our rose gardens while the tropical rainforests are destroyed to appease our profligate consumption”*

- Keith Dyer in Habel and Balabanski (eds), 2002: 48.

Over the past 30 years, an increasing number of voices have echoed the great leaders of the early church (before the King James Version!), asserting that the new earth will not be something totally different and divorced from the present one, but more like a renovation and restoration of it. They reject the concepts of annihilation of the present cosmos and of a sharp discontinuity between the old earth and the new. Wayne Grudem, for example, states categorically: *“The Bible leads us to believe that the earth will be renewed, not recreated”*

- Grudem, Wayne. 2009: *Christian Beliefs Study Guide* (Blackpool: Clear Cut Media), p.166.

As many prominent theologians from the mainstream of Christian tradition have insisted in the past, including Irenaeus, Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Wesley, we hope for the redemption of all creation, a notion which lies at the very heart of the gospel.

- THE REAL PROBLEM IS SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

If God’s going to destroy the creation, why does he make it ‘very good’ (Genesis 1:31), and continue to sustain it, delight in it, and renew it (Psalm 104)? The problem is not the materiality of the creation, from which we need to be released. The problem is sin and its ruinous consequences. Angelic rebels, and later Adam and Eve, took nature with them when they fell. When God sets out on the long road of redemption, his goal is to remove sin and its effects so that the good creation can again be his kingdom. His plan is to destroy the enemy of his good creation (Genesis 3:15; I John 3:8), not to destroy the creation itself. In short, God did not create matter just to throw it away.

Anthony Hoekema makes a valid point when he says: *“If God would have to annihilate the present cosmos, Satan would have won a great victory. For then Satan would have succeeded in so devastatingly corrupting the present cosmos and the present earth that God could do nothing with it but to blot it totally out of*

existence. But Satan did not win such a victory. On the contrary, Satan has been decisively defeated. God will reveal the full dimensions of that defeat when he shall renew this very earth on which Satan deceived mankind and finally banish from it all the results of Satan's evil machinations."

- *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p.281.

It is salient to observe that in Revelation 21-22, the great passage where heaven and earth are braided together, seven elements of the old order are abolished. The sea, symbol of primeval chaos and the beast's abode, is gone. Death, both untimely and natural, is no more. Mourning, crying and pain disappear. God's curse (of Genesis 3) is repealed, lifted, and abrogated. And last, the night, realm of darkness and deception, is banished. The end result is a world of *shalom*.

- THE SYMBOLIC NATURE OF APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Jewish writing contained a genre known as apocalyptic literature. It used highly symbolic language to describe this-worldly events, or as Tom Wright puts it: "to evoke the cosmic or theological *meaning* of events in the space-time world by means of a sometimes complex system of metaphors" (1999: 27). The chapter in question clearly fits within this genre.

For example, Isaiah depicts the destruction of the city of Babylon as a time when "the sun will be dark at its rising and the moon shall not shed its light" (13:10), possibly referring to the obscuring effect of smoke. Jesus spoke of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple being accompanied by earthquakes (Mark 13). The former does not allude to astronomy nor the latter to geology. Rather both events are to be understood as metaphorically "earth-shattering".

Peter's writing here very much reflects the apocalyptic genre found elsewhere in the Bible (such as Matthew 24, Isaiah 13 and 34, and Malachi 3), so any expectation that the fire of 2 Peter 3 is literal may well be misplaced.

- MISTRANSLATIONS HAVE HIDDEN A VERY DIFFERENT INTERPRETATION

2 Peter chapter 3 is, in my experience, the passage that is most often used as a "proof text" by those who see the earth as doomed and therefore abrogate any responsibility to exercise environmental stewardship. Poor and confusing translations of 2 Peter 3 from the original Greek have a lot to answer for. Here are several examples:

- **vs.7,10: annihilated or purified? Burned up or disclosed?**

The question is whether the fire of judgment will annihilate or purify the world. Fire can do both. In Scripture the fire of judgment destroys that which is evil but purifies what is good. Malachi speaks of the refiner's fire that destroys impurities but purifies metal. In a similar way Paul speaks of fire of judgment that tests the quality of human work. It will either burn it up in destruction or purify it (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). It is like that with the creation; the creation will be purified but the evil that pollutes it will be destroyed. The language of 2 Peter can mean both things.

- Michael W. Goheen in his 2011 article *(Re)New(ed) Creation: The End of the Story*

<https://www.scribd.com/document/371514317/Re-New-ed-Creation-The-End-of-the-Story-by-Goheen-pdf>.

Michael Goheen is one of many recent commentators suggesting that Peter is describing a "cleansing fire" rather than a destructive fire. They come to that conclusion because the word translated "burned up" (in verse 10) in the KJV (*katesetai*) does not appear in the oldest Greek manuscripts, which contain a word meaning "found" or "shown" (*heurethesetai*). This word enjoys the earliest and best textual support. It refers to finding or discovering. Our word "eureka" comes from it. It is translated "laid bare" in the TNIV, NIV and

NEB. The NRSV has “will be disclosed.” The Bauer Lexicon suggests a slight modification of this: be found as a “result of judicial investigation.”

Mick Pope comments as follows:

*This understanding of purification and renewal is made clear when we think carefully about how we are to understand verse 10 and the phrase "the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed." The word "disclosed" reflects, as Bouma-Prediger notes, the Greek word **heurisko** from where we get our English word heuristic, which is a method of finding things out. This helps shape our understanding of the role of the fire, and what it means for the elements to be dissolved. In this reading, the fire is for the purification of the Earth from sin, and not the physical Earth's actual destruction. The idea of a process of refining is alluded to back in 1 Peter 1:7 where Peter writes "so that the genuineness of your faith - being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire - may be found to result in praise and glory when Jesus Christ is revealed". The phrase "may be found" reflects our word **heurisko** again, and the revelation of Jesus refers to his return to earth as described in the book of 2 Peter.*

It is in this context that the language of destruction in verse 11-12 should be properly understood. The day of the Lord's appearing is about the judgment of deeds: the works are laid bare or revealed (verse 10) so that the new heavens and Earth may only consist of righteousness (verse 13). This has implications for the current lifestyle of the believer - which should be characterized not by the abandonment of the world to its fiery fate, but rather by holy living.

Dawson, Claire and Dr Mick Pope. 2014: *A Climate of Hope: Church and Mission in a Warming World*, (Dandenong: UNOH Publishing), p.63.

What this passage seems to be all about is that the earth and everything in it will be ‘found out’, that is, exposed and laid bare before God’s judgement so that the wicked and all their works will no longer be able to hide or find any protection. Everything that prevents humanity standing naked before God will be removed.

Theologian Cornelis Venema adds another shade of meaning:

*“The word used in the older manuscripts conveys the idea of a process that does not so much destroy or burn up, but uncovers or **lays open for discovery** the creation, now in a renewed state of pristine purity” (2000: 468, emphasis mine) God's fire of judgment will consume the bad but refine the good, exposing things as they really are (compare Malachi 2:2-4, 1 Corinthians 3:13-15). Once the judgment has taken place and the fallen powers have been destroyed, the earth will be revealed again for what it was originally intended to be. For Venema, the emphasis is “all about the cleansing fire of purifying judgment, rather than the destructive furnace of blind anger...God judges in order to enable a new beginning, not in order to completely wipe out.”*

- 2000: *The Promise of the Future* (Trowbridge, UK: Banner of Truth), p.468.

Dave Bookless says of verse 7: *“...the Old Testament background is critical. Mention of ‘fire’ and ‘burned up’ would not have taken people to images of exploding planets, but to Malachi 3:2-3 where God’s judgment is seen as a refining fire, purifying and cleansing, not destroying but leaving the final result without blemish. What is destroyed is not the earth, but ‘ungodly men’ (verse 7)...”*

- 2008: *Planetwise* (Nottingham: IVP), p.83.

- v.10: physical or spiritual elements?

The original word used here for “elements” is *stoicheion*. In the New Testament this word usually refers to the basic principles that had rebelled against God (see Galatians 4:3,9; Colossians 2:8,20). Accordingly, “the ‘elements’ that will melt with heat are not the iron or carbon of the periodic table but the elemental spirits of

this world. It is the distorted powers that have turned against God and prevented his righteous and just rule that are to be destroyed, so that God's kingdom rule might be fully established" (Bookless, 2008: 83).

Like a good surgeon, God will remove all the cancerous growth caused by sin and evil in our world, so that a healthy new earth can be established, truly "the home of righteousness" (v.13)

-v 10: pass away/vanish or be transformed?

In v.10 Peter describes how the present earth and heaven will "pass away." He goes farther and three times says that there will be destruction of the present world:

Verse 10: "the elements will be destroyed with intense heat."

Verse 11: "these things are to be destroyed."

Verse 12: "the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat."

The question then is: Does this mean that the earth we live on and the heavens we live under will be totally done away with? And will God start over with a totally new creation?

It is salient to observe that the word Paul uses to describe what happens to the old nature of the believer in 2 Corinthians 5:17 is the same word Peter uses v.10, and which John uses in Revelation 21:1, to refer to the fate of the old heavens, namely *parerchomai*. Like the old nature, the heavens will "pass away", but this does not have to mean that they go out of existence; rather, there will be such a change in them that their present condition passes away, somewhat like metamorphosis.

Dave Bookless comments:

"...the New Testament speaks of Christians as 'new creations in Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:17). Does this mean that if I become a Christian my old physical body is thrown away like a cast-off snakeskin, and I now grow a different biological set of clothing? Of course not! I am the same flesh and bones and DNA as before, but in God's eyes I have indeed become a new creation, and a process of transformation has begun. At present this is invisible, but one day (when Jesus returns and God's kingdom is fully here) I will become a new person, not brand new, but fully renewed and restored... Just as God is into recycling broken, spoiled, messed-up people, and making them into new creations in Christ, so this whole damaged and groaning creation will be made new again." (2008: 80).

- v.13: new in origin/time or nature/quality?

In English we have only one word for "new", but in the Greek New Testament there are two: *neos* and *kainos*. The word *neos* means new in time or origin (as in our expression "brand new"), whereas the word *kainos* means new in nature or quality - different, unlike anything previously known.

Both in 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1 the Greek word used to designate the newness of the cosmos is not *neos* but *kainos* - *not brand new but new in nature and quality*. *Kainos* refers predominantly to a change in quality or essence rather than something new that has never previously been in existence. It does not imply replacement but renewal. Creation is restored, repaired, redeemed, renovated and rejuvenated, not a cosmos totally *other* than the present one, but one which stands in glorious continuity. This is no cosmetic makeover, but a comprehensive remodelling. God is an expert in recycling.

If Peter and John wanted to speak of something that was new in origin or time, they would have used *neos* instead of *kainos*. Again, this makes perfect sense when we go back to 2 Corinthians 5:17, which speaks of Christians as 'new creations in Christ' - *kainos*: new in nature, not new in origin.

Therefore, the expression "new heavens and new earth" means "not the emergence of a cosmos totally other than the present one, but the creation of a universe which, though it has been gloriously renewed, stands in continuity with the present one"

- Hanegraaff, Hank. 2000: *Resurrection* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing), p.87.

• PETER'S ALLUSION TO THE NOAH STORY IS NOT CONSISTENT WITH THE TOTAL OBLITERATION VIEW

There is another cogent argument from 2 Peter 3 to show that the theme of continuity and restoration after judgment is what the author actually had in mind. In vs.5-7 the coming judgment is compared to the flood at the time of Noah (Genesis 9). Peter says that the fire of judgment the present world will face will be just like the floodwaters which engulfed the earth at the time of Noah. Yet of course, the earth was not completely and utterly destroyed by the flood. It was cleansed, purified and finally laid bare, so that a new start - a new world - could begin. Cleansing without complete obliteration.

We also have to ask: Why did God rescue all those species in the Ark, and what about that saving Covenant with all living creatures and the Earth itself (Genesis 9:9-17)? In the Noah story God demonstrated that his saving intentions included all creation, both by the passenger list for the ark and, more remarkably, by who was included in the covenant promise not to destroy the earth ever again in such a way. God says: "I have set my rainbow in the clouds and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." God has a unique and precious covenant with the earth itself, a promise he cannot break.

Consider the following four reflections on this analogy:

...even though Peter predicts a destruction by fire, and even though in verse 6 he says that the world was "destroyed" by the original flood, Peter knows that as it was for Noah's flood, so it will be in the end: The result will not be destruction but renewal. Through Noah's ark God kept alive the variety of creatures he had made. When the waters dried up, the beautiful creation of God was still intact, ready to be rehabilitated.

- Hoezee, Scott. 1998: *Remember Creation: God's World of Wonder and Delight* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans). Pp.99-100.

With the whole planet freshly scrubbed and spouting life anew, God agreed to a covenant of contract that bound him not just to Noah but to every living creature. It promised one thing only: that God would never again destroy all creation. You could view the covenant with Noah as the barest minimum of a relationship: one party agrees not to obliterate the other. And yet even in that promise God limited himself. He, the sworn enemy of all evil in the universe, pledged to endure wickedness on this planet for a time - or rather, to solve it through some means other than annihilation.

Yancey, Philip. 1992: *Disappointment With God: Three Questions No-One Else Asks Aloud* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p.69.

The analogy that 2 Peter uses in the immediate context is telling: the future judgment by fire is compared to the Flood of Noah's day, when 'the world of that time was deluged and destroyed' (3:6). The reference to the Flood narrative reminds readers of God's 'everlasting covenant' with all the creatures of the earth (Gen 9), of his faithfulness and commitment to his creation, of the promise anticipated in his call of Noah to save all non-human life through the waters of judgment. The waters of the Flood, like the fire of final judgment, certainly meant 'destruction' for a world corrupted by injustice and polluted by evil. But it is not a destruction into nothingness, a rubbing of this earth and a starting over with something else (all anachronistic ideas for first century readers). The earth that Noah and his family discovered after the waters receded was the same earth they had stood upon before the flood, yet it was also a new world, cleansed of the human evil and violence that had been corrupting and destroying it (cf Genesis 6:11-12). The 'new' world that emerges on the other side of judgment is quite clearly this world made new, a world purified and reclaimed: 'a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells' (2 Peter 3:13).

- Moo, Jonathan. 2016: 'The Biblical Basis for Creation Care' in Bell, Colin and Robert S. White (eds): *Creation Care and the Gospel: Reconsidering the Mission of the Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson) (Lausanne Library), Chapter 2, pp.28-42. This quote is on p.37

The second thing to note about this passage is the comparison between the return of Christ and the fire, with the Flood of Noah... in the Flood, the waters above the earth and the oceans which were separated at creation come together in an act of "uncreation". The world returns to formlessness. This is not a material destruction as we would think of it, a complete obliteration of the Earth. Instead, the proper functioning of the creation is disrupted. Furthermore, Peter fails to mention the Ark, by which both humans and non-humans were saved from destruction. He also doesn't mention that the waters eventually retreated as an act of re-creation. He failed to mention these things because they were understood by his readers. Does this drawing of parallels between "destruction by fire" and the Flood help us in understanding Peter's approach to the "end of the world"? Certainly it does. It means that the destruction by fire is not an obliteration of what is, but an apocalyptic way of talking about its purification and renewal.

(Mick Pope in Dawson and Pope, 2014: 62-63)

- BIBLICAL IMAGES OF THE NEW EARTH SOUND VERY MUCH LIKE THIS PRESENT EARTH MADE NEW

In Acts 3:21 Peter refers to *"the times of the restoration of all things of which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets."* What did the prophets say about the new earth? Isaiah 11:6–11 gives us an example:

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze; their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Cf. Isaiah 65:25; Micah 4:3.)

If we're heading for an otherworldly heaven or a completely different version of the planet, why are the biblical images of 'new creation' so full of landscapes, rivers, wild animals and fruit trees, e.g. the lion and the lamb (in Isaiah 11), fruit trees with leaves for healing (in Ezekiel 47), the river flowing from the throne of God (in Revelation 22)?

This point is colourfully interpreted by Edward Thurneysen (1931: 209): *"The world into which we shall enter at the Parousia of Jesus Christ is therefore not another world; it is this world, this heaven, this earth; both...renewed. It is these forests, these fields, these cities, these streets, these people, that will be the scene of redemption. At present they are battlefields, full of the strife and sorrow of the not yet accomplished consummation; then they will be fields of victory, fields of harvest, where out of seed that was sown with tears the everlasting sheaves will be reaped and brought home."*

So history as we know it will come to an end with God at the centre. His glory will be so bright as to make a moon out of the sun (Revelation 21:23). And on the earth there will be a great sea of knowledge reflecting the glory of the Lord back to him. And just as the rejection of that knowledge brought a curse on the creation, so the restoration of that knowledge will bring blessing to the creation and the animals themselves with be free from the curse and reflect the beauty of the Lord.

Perhaps you used to think of heaven as some nebulous ghostly place where spirits wander around together, passing through each other, where you would reach out to shake someone's hand only to find nothing to hold on to. Do you picture clouds with ghost-like figures riding about the expanse of the sky? Bring your thinking down to earth. Literally. God is going to resurrect, redeem, restore this universe, this world, just like He will your body.

You will live here! You will walk on grass and feel it on your feet. You will walk on streets, stand by rivers, see mountains, trees, people. There will be a city with gates that you will walk through. You will eat with Paul, Peter, and John. You will be able to walk, run, jump, swim, stand, sit, kneel, and sing!

We will be raised in a physical body which will dwell on this physical earth (made new) for all of eternity, and our God will make His dwelling with us on this redeemed earth. In Matthew 19:28 Jesus calls it "the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne." Creation will be "born again."

- OTHER BIBLE PASSAGES DON'T AGREE

The "obliteration" understanding of 2 Peter 3 is out of sync with what the Bibles says elsewhere about the future of planet Earth. The Bible most often portrays God purposing to redeem the earth and to invert the effects of the curse. Jesus comes to end history, to raise the dead and judge the world, to impart to God's children their final glory and to usher in a reconstructed universe. I have alluded to Isaiah above. Here I mention three further examples:

- In *Romans 8:20-21*, creation is described as 'waiting to be set free from its bondage to decay', instead of waiting to be taken out of existence. When Paul tells us that the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God, so that it may be set free from its bondage to decay, he is saying that it is the *present* creation that will be liberated, not some totally different creation. The basic ideal expressed is that the new earth will issue from God's sovereign and redemptive work on what we have now.

Jonathan Moo and Robert White make a lengthy analysis of *Romans 8:18-24* (2014: 100-114), following which they comment:

Paul makes it unmistakably clear in Romans 8 that the same creation in which we now live will participate in the new creation to come, that the Christian's longing for resurrection is matched by creation's longing for its own future liberation. But for many readers 2 Peter 3 seems to challenge us with quite a different picture and even call into question Paul's hopeful vision for creation... While we must be careful not to miss the unique message that each of these letters has for us, we are also right to seek coherence and consistency in what they reveal about Christian doctrine and to allow that which is clearer in one text to help us interpret that which is less clear in another... As it turns out, the popular caricature of the message of 2 Peter 3 proves inaccurate in any case when we take the time to explore beyond a superficial reading and consider the passage within its wider context. We will see that the apparent conflict between 2 Peter 3 and Romans 8 reflects primarily a difference in emphasis between these two texts rather than a substantive difference in eschatological vision.

- Moo, Jonathan A. and Robert S. White. 2014: *Let Creation Rejoice: Biblical Hope and Ecological Crisis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic), pp.116-117.

A detailed examination of 2 Peter 3 is then presented (pages 117-124) before their summation:

We live in expectation of God's promise to bring in the new creation, living now as those who are Christ's subjects, renewed through the Holy Spirit and enabled to do work that has genuine value before God. In this passage, Peter merely expands the new Testament picture by suggesting that God actually uses our efforts now to speed the day of his coming (page 125).

- *Revelation 21:1* speaks of a new heaven and Earth. Spatial duality, however, is quite foreign to the world of prophetic and apocalyptic literature. Rather, this and other biblical texts portray heaven and Earth as interactive parallel universes. The language here is not to be taken as referring to the annihilation of Earth and its replacement by a totally new creation (Reid, 2000; Howard-Brook and Gwyther 1999). While maintaining the prerogative of the Creator to de-/re-create the creation, it also encourages our eager expectation of, and participation in, such a process.

In *Revelation 21:5* we read that God intends to make "all things new." Notice he says "all things new", not all new things. The word for "new" is *kainos* (new in the sense of nature or quality), not *neos* (new in the sense of origin or time). Dave Bookless puts it well:

“It is worth noting that God speaks of his ultimate plan in terms of ‘I am making everything new!’ (Revelation 21:5). If God were going to start again from scratch, surely he would speak of making lots of new things, rather than making every (existing) thing new. Like a great sculptor restoring a damaged work of art, God is going to remove all that is corrupted by evil and sin and re-mould all that is good and beautiful and right within creation by making everything new again.” (2008: 80)

Eugene Boring comments:

Even though the first heaven and first earth have passed away, the scene continues very much as a this-worldly scene. This is due, in part, that the other world can be spoken of only in language and images from this world. More importantly, it is an affirmation of the significance of this world and history, even after the new heaven and new earth arrive. The vision of God in chapter 4 is fulfilled: God is the Creator. Yet the one who does not quench a smoking wick or break a bruised reed (Isa.42:3; Matthew 12:20) does not junk the cosmos and start anew – he renews the old and brings it to fulfilment. The advent of the heavenly city does not abolish all human efforts to build a decent earthly civilization but fulfils them. God does not make “all new things” but “all things new” (21:5).

- Boring, M. Eugene. 1989: *Revelation*. Interpretation series (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox), p.220.

Jonathan Moo concludes:

Revelation reminds us from the beginning that the hope of God's people is not to escape to heaven but to 'reign on the earth' (5:10), and this reign is not confined to a temporary millennial period but encompasses the 'forever and ever' of the new creation (22:5).

- Moo, Jonathan. 2016: 'The Biblical Basis for Creation Care' in Bell, Colin and Robert S. White (eds): *Creation Care and the Gospel: Reconsidering the Mission of the Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson) (Lausanne Library), Chapter 2, pp.28-42. This quote is on p.38.
- THERE IS A CLEAR ANALOGY BETWEEN THE NEW EARTH AND THE RESURRECTION BODIES OF BELIEVERS.

Romans 8 and other passages indicate that there will be both continuity and discontinuity between the present body and the resurrection body. The differences, wonderful as they are, do not take away the continuity: it is we who shall be raised and it is we who shall be always with the Lord. Those raised with Christ, will not be a totally new set of human beings but the people of God who have lived on this earth, apparently with our current personalities but devoid of sin. By analogy, we would expect that the new earth will not be totally different from the present one, but will be the present one wondrously renewed.

Douglas and Jonathan Moo's remarks are helpful:

*The physical resurrection of Jesus is...a sign – the only one we have – of what our own future resurrection might be like, of what life will be like at the time of what Jesus calls the **palingenesia**, the “renewal of all things” (Matt.19:28). We see that God is not finished with our physical bodies, nor with the whole of his good creation.*

- Moo, Douglas J. and Jonathan A. 2018: *Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan). p.123.

We add to this exegetical support for a transformation model an important theological point: the resurrection of the body. The destiny of God's people is to live forever in resurrected bodies; our bodies will be changed (1 Co 15:51), not replaced. And this permanent embodiment demands a significant continuity of some kind between this world and the next.

(*ibid.*, p.164)

- THE LIFE, MINISTRY AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS BEGAN THE NEW CREATION.

Don't Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection show God's plans, not just for people but the whole creation: matter affirmed as Jesus took material form, the curse removed as he took the sin and alienation of all creation into himself, and creation radically renewed in Jesus' physically-resurrected body, providing a template for the renewal of all things?

Douglas and Jonathan Moo challenge us to look to Jesus for creation's goal: resurrection and new creation. In the kingdom of God that Jesus inaugurates, the new creation breaks into the old:

...any discussion of Christian eschatology and the fate of the cosmos must begin and end with the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is both the sign of the general resurrection and the new creation to come, and the means by which it has been made possible...(2018: 123)

Tom Wright develops the restoration scenario, pointing to *Easter* as a key argument. The Christian hope for "new heavens and new earth" has already come to life in Jesus, whose resurrection is "the utterly characteristic, prototypical and foundational event within the world as it has begun to be"

- *Surprised By Hope: Rethinking Heaven the Resurrection and the Mission of the Church* (London: SPCK, 2007), p.78.

In his 2011 book *Simply Christian*, Wright asserts that Christ's resurrection "inaugurates the new creation right within the middle of the old one." He speaks of "the launching of the new creation in the present" (p.186). He sees a new earth as our eternal home, and convincingly argues that our view of life *after* death directly affects what we believe about life *before* death. If God intends to renew the whole creation – and if this has already begun in Jesus' resurrection – the church cannot stop at 'saving souls' but also work for God's kingdom in the wider world right now. All of us are "commissioned to go and make new creation happen in the world" (p.99). We are "called to be agents of that new creation here and now" (p.202).

In light of the above, the only conclusion we can reach about the *traditional* interpretation of Peter's prophecy is "It ain't necessarily so". An equally, if not more accurate understanding is that God's judgment of all that is fallen, evil and sinful will mean a radical purification of the whole creation, but God's saving love towards all he has made will eventually lead to the remaking, reshaping and renewal of creation. 2 Peter 3 is not about the annihilation of this world in a final conflagration but about the refining fire of judgment leading to the earth 'laid bare' – like a farmer's field before planting.

Mick Pope agrees:

2 Peter 3 doesn't describe the literal burning up of the Earth but its refining. In the same way the Flood was an act of judgment and salvation, "uncreation" and re-creation, the fire in 2 Peter 3 talks about salvation as well as judgment (Dawson and Pope, 2014: 60).

A closing illustration may be helpful. Imagine a child who is healthy in every way but somehow contracts a disease that begins to have a devastating effect on her body. The doctor diagnoses the disease and seeks to prescribe a remedy that will remove the disease and its debilitating effects. The doctor that destroys the patient and proclaims victory over the disease would be a poor doctor indeed! Similarly, God's redemptive remedy has the goal of destroying sin and its effects so that the creation can be healthy again, the way it was supposed to be. Salvation is the healing of the creation, not an escape out of it, or a doing away with it. When properly understood, 2 Peter 3 actually gives us great hope for the future of this planet, a future that will include great trauma but will finally lead to a gloriously renewed and restored creation.

Anthony Hoekema sums up: *"In his redemptive activity, God does not destroy the works of his hands, but cleanses them from sin and perfects them, so that they may finally reach the goal for which he created them. Applied to the problem at hand, this principle means that the new earth to which we look forward will not be*

totally different from the present one, but will be a renewal and glorification of the earth on which we now live” (1979: 73).

Tomorrow morning, do yourself a favour. Get up and go to a window. Survey what you see. Where you are is where hope is coming. The new creation is the transfiguration of - not the doing away with - what you are looking at.

CARRIED OVER

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SUMMARY

- The belief that this planet will be destroyed hinders Christian participation in creation care.
- It is an erroneous belief because God must heal all that has been blighted by sin and evil.
- God invites us to cooperate with him in saving both the human and non-human creation.
- Scripture indicates continuity between this age and the next, this earth and the next.
- The efforts of both Christians and non-Christians to care for creation will be carried over and preserved in the new order.
- Anything humans do that is in line with God’s saving agenda has eternal significance. It is not wasted or in vain.

One of the greatest impediments to Christian participation in creation care is the notion that the world is going to be destroyed in a massive conflagration. This idea was popularised by Darby and Schofield’s premillennial dispensationalism, based on a misinterpretation of 2 Peter 3, which on closer examination, actually teaches no such thing. Regrettably the idea persists, especially amongst American evangelicals, reinforced by pundits such as Hal Lindsay, Tim LaHaye and David Jeremiah.

It is an erroneous notion, akin to a doctor prescribing death as the cure for a patient’s longstanding disease. The problem is not the material. The problem is what has happened to the material. It has been blighted by sin and evil. The solution is therefore to deal with what has blighted it, and that indeed is what God will do. He will purify and refine the whole universe. When Paul speaks of liberation and redemption in Romans 8:18-25, it is the *present* cosmos that he is referring to.

That is why biblical images of the promised “new earth” (Isaiah 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21: 1) have a remarkable resemblance to the earth as we know it – only vastly better. Through the cross, God “reconciled all things to himself” (Colossians 3:20). Salvation is creation healed – *all* of it, otherwise Satan wins. The end result will be a new creation, which commenced in the past (with the resurrection of Christ), continues in the present, and will culminate in the future. Some have called this “the earthing of heaven.”

What, then, of our current efforts to care for a creation in crisis, desperately in need of repair and restoration? Are they a waste of time? Should we just sit back and allow things to take their course until God finally intervenes to return everything to the original blueprint? Should we simply “let go and let God”?

I believe not. Just as God invites us to cooperate with him in saving people, he likewise seeks our participation in saving nature. And just as what we invest in the lives of people will count for eternity, so what we do for nature will also be carried over into the new order. Our care for creation will have beneficial effects in the here and now, but those effects will be preserved in the new creation which God will one day bring to its full realisation.

For me, one of the most exciting concepts to entertain and ponder is the fact of continuity between this age and the next, and between this earth and the new earth. The New Testament contains metaphors which suggest that what believers do in this life will have consequences for the life to come – figures like sowing and reaping, grain and ear, ripening and harvest.

Paul teaches that a person may build on the foundation of faith in Christ with lasting materials like gold, silver, or precious stones, so that in the consummation his or her work may survive and he/she may receive a reward (I Corinthians 3:10–15). The book of Revelation speaks about deeds which shall follow those who have died in the Lord (14:13). The continuity between what is done for Christ now and what we shall enjoy in the hereafter is often expressed in terms of reward or joy (Matthew 25: 21,23; I Corinthians 3:14).

It is clear from passages of this sort that what Christians do for the kingdom of God in this life is also of significance and value for the world to come. This truth is extremely important. As citizens of God's kingdom, we may not just write off the present earth as a total loss, or rejoice in its deterioration. We must indeed be working for a better world now, and our efforts to bring the kingdom of Christ into fuller manifestation will never be cancelled, negated, or rendered void.

We are not oiling the wheels of a machine that is about to fall over a cliff. We are not restoring a great painting that's about to be thrown in the fire. We are not planting roses in a garden about to be dug up for a construction site. We are accomplishing something which will become, in due course, part of God's dream, a renewed universe (Revelation 21:5).

Does this apply to the environmental care exercised by non-Christians? Undoubtedly it does. We cannot designate their efforts as valueless because they have not been undertaken by believers and have not been consciously dedicated to the glory of God. Christians who take this attitude fail to appreciate the working of God's common grace in this present world, whereby even unregenerate people are enabled to make valuable contributions to the divine agenda.

Since God is in control and Christ's sovereign power is so great that he can rule in the midst of even his enemies, I am firmly persuaded that products and outcomes furnished by unbelievers may yet be found on the new earth. God can cause those who do not know him to make contributions which serve his purposes. The powers awakened by the resurrection of Jesus Christ are active in the world today! The tension between the already and the not yet implies that we must not despise what God's Spirit has enabled unregenerate men and women to achieve, but evaluate all of it in the light of God's Word.

The bottom line is that anything humans do that is in line with God's saving agenda has everlasting significance. As we live on this earth, we are preparing for life on God's new earth. Through our *mahi*, ministry and mission the building materials for that new earth are now being gathered. Only eternity will reveal the full significance of what has been done in the service of Christ, and that applies to creation care as much as any other endeavour.

The promise of I Corinthians 15:58 is that "nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless" (NLT). *The Message* renders it: "Nothing you do for him is a waste of time or effort." Other translations say that it's never "in vain." What a hugely encouraging assurance! Tomorrow morning, get up and go and look out your window. The promised new creation is the transfiguration of (not the doing away with) what you are looking at! Where you are is where hope is coming! May God bless and empower you in all your efforts to bring it about!

RESOURCE D

A SENSE OF PLACE ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH © 2023 Phillip Donnell

SUMMARY

- The church comprises people who are “called out” spiritually but also geographically.
- Since place is about belonging and groundedness through community, the local church can be a vital component in any person’s sense of place.
- A local church needs to have a sense of place as a key determinant, stimulus, and inspiration of what it is and what it is about (ministry and mission).
- Espousing some basic affirmations are a starting point in making a sense of place integral to a local church’s aspirations and actions.
- Seven key guidelines for action, grounded by a sense of place, are suggested.
- Of particular importance is the material culture of the congregation, cogently revealed by their immediate environment and use of resources.
- Keeping a sense of place as pivotal and central results in counter-cultural pursuits, as yeast leavens a whole lump.

The Greek New Testament word for church is *ekklesia*, meaning “called out.” While this denotes a people set apart by a particular faith identity, it can also be interpreted geographically. When the congregation gathers, its members are called out from their varied and scattered locations into a particular place where the meanings and symbols of Christian faith are introduced and experienced. In what follows, I make two observations about a sense of place in relation to the local congregation.

Firstly, there is no doubt that a local church can be a vital component in any individual person’s *sense of place*. This is because place is essentially about a sense of belonging and a sense of groundedness. It is expressed by cultural heritage, memory, nostalgia, customs, commemorations, traditions, celebrations, values, beliefs and lifestyles. There is a shared sense of belonging in a community where being understood is important and you are part of a beloved group. A sense of belonging acts as an all encompassing set of beliefs, enriches our identity and relationships and leads to acceptance and understanding. We are in a context graced by acceptance, safety and security. It is home. Home is being part of a community and is an irreplaceable source of stability in a time of chaos.

A local church is one of these communities. It has a host of meanings for both churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike. The local church is a central part of the construction of place and people’s attachment to a cultural landscape and locality. When a person’s sense of place is threatened then their sense of self, identity, safety, stability, and security are challenged. Where there is a loss of a person’s sense of place and belonging to a place they go through a grieving process. We often see this in reactions to the closure, sale and de-consecration of a local church building. Such actions are felt as a threat to a person’s sense of place. People often have a loyalty to their local place well beyond their level of faith in Christianity.

My second observation is that a local church needs to have a *sense of place* as a key determinant, stimulus, and inspiration for what it is and what it is about. The physical location of the church has too often been regarded merely as a stage or backdrop rather than having a unique character within God’s redeemed creation and being a home place where God provides the resources for a congregation to fulfil its mission. If

we take seriously the human and non-human condition to which the gospel is addressed, not to mention the doctrine of creation, we can hardly justify ignoring the fundamentally and inescapably “placed” character of any congregation as both proclaimer and hearer of the Good News.

Unfortunately, although place is an important dimension of our individual and collective existence, it has received little theological attention in spite – or because – of being so obvious. Scant focus is given to the dimension of place in thinking about our ministry and mission. Such a focus may be dismissed as irrelevant, non-essential, trivial and sentimental. The various ways in which we connect to the life of our place may be disconnected from one another and categorised as “social” rather than “spiritual.” They are seldom subject to a process of deep and sustained moral or theological reflection.

That process begins perhaps with the acceptance and adoption of four basic affirmations: we affirm that the whole creation is God’s and that its care is a proper concern of Christian communities; we affirm the relationship between God and non-human life that exists independently of human life; we affirm the mutual support of human and non-human life in praising God; and we affirm humanity’s role to bring earthly orders to their fullest potential.

These affirmations are a worthy alternative to any fear-driven motive to “save the world.” They release us from the dangers of consumerism, dehumanisation, disregard for creation, and the quest for personal and collective security by obtaining power over others. They avoid the risk of engaging in fashionably “green” feel-good activities that raise no deeper questions about cultural values and public policies. They make a *sense of place* more integral to a local church’s aspirations and actions.

Jeff Wild and Peter Bakken, in their 2009 book *Church on Earth: Grounding Your Ministry in a Sense of Place* (pp. 79-80), summarise what a congregation can contribute, through teachings and practices grounded by a sense of place, to shape minds and hearts towards a more responsible and sustainable society. They list seven actions:

1. *Move* the physical infrastructure and systems on which we depend from the background to the foreground of our awareness, so that we can no longer take them for granted;
2. *Focus* attention on the intangible but physically and biologically grounded, factors that make for quality of life – such as beauty, community, and contact with nature;
3. *Enable* experiences that foster an individual’s “eco-identity”, i.e. attachment to, and empathy with, the natural world;
4. *Provide* opportunities for direct experience of one’s personal ability to preserve, enhance or restore creation;
5. *Cultivate* appreciation for the integrity and independent reality of the natural world as God’s creation;
6. *Foster* a social and environmental ethic of responsibility, hospitality, care, and interdependence;
7. *Witness* to the power of the gospel of Christ to sustain persistent and creative engagement with a wounded world, and to motivate opposition to all the forces that would degrade and destroy it.

In these seven ways, attending to place as a dimension of human experience can provide a new perspective on our church’s mission, ministry and proclamation, providing more concrete ways of relating a Christian theology of creation and redemption to people’s lives as well as engaging us more constructively with contemporary needs and possibilities in God’s world. We need to embody a sense of place in the way we cherish land and property, serve our community, and work for peace and justice. In the words of the old adage: “Bloom where you are planted!”

Of particular importance is the material culture of the congregation. The church’s building, grounds, and use of resources are the most visible, direct and concrete ways that a congregation relates to its place and the rest of creation. They are a good place to think how a congregation embodies and embeds itself in its place. I recommend that congregations should ponder their property and the activities therein, as a sphere in which

members can grow into a deeper understanding for, appreciation of, and wonder at, creation. Further, a church's daily operations involve a flow of materials and energy – water, electricity, food, paper – from the environment and back into it again. Assessing the impact of the church's premises upon the environment requires a deliberate act of consciousness raising and commitment, renouncing unnecessary use of non-renewable resources, non-recyclable materials, toxic cleaning chemicals and fertilisers, etc.

A local congregation that celebrates, individually and collectively, the whole creation as the theatre of God's grace in word, deed, and design; that cultivates an ethos of personal responsibility for the wellbeing of neighbour and neighbourhood; that advocates for a politics of compassion and an economy of care, is profoundly countercultural. All of these are expressions of having a *sense of place* as a pivotal influence on ministry and mission. Against the current backdrop of global injustice and environmental degradation, that sense of place may indeed become the yeast that leavens the whole lump (Matthew 13:33).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How does your church relate to the environment and creation?
2. Which of Wild and Bakken's seven courses of action resonates most strongly with you? Why?
3. Are there any affirmations and renunciations that you would add or remove from those mentioned above?
4. How does the landscape around your church enhance or detract from deeper appreciation and reflection on the wonder of creation?



RESOURCE E

THE CATHEDRAL OF THE OUTDOORS

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SUMMARY

- As unique persons, we each connect with God in one of nine unique ways.
- “Naturalists” encounter God primarily in and through the natural world.
- Over recent years groups have emerged that enable Christians to meet and experience God in the cathedral of the outdoors.
- Jacob described a wilderness place as the “House of God” and “the gate of heaven.”
- Hildegard of Bingen detected divine presence and power in nature.
- Giving congregations the opportunity to get into and appreciate nature motivates them to look after it.

Gary Thomas in “Sacred Pathways” (2002) and Myra Perrine in “What’s Your God Language?” (2007) identify nine ways that people connect with God. As unique persons, we connect with God primarily in one of nine unique ways. These unique ways of connecting make up our spiritual temperament or “God language”. Perrine suggests that we try to picture intimacy with God as a destination on a mountain top, with multiple trails leading up to that destination. Each God language, or way of connecting, is a separate trail leading to the same place.

For me, and many other people, nature is the foremost of those trails. Perrine refers to “naturalists” – those who feel closest to God when in the outdoors and engage in loving God through experiencing him in the natural world. In God language terms, I am a naturalist. It is the primary way that I connect with God. I have a “natural soul.”

For many years I wondered why I didn’t connect with God deeply through corporate worship within the confines of a church building. I thought there must be something wrong with me or with my relationship with God. When I first read Thomas and Perrine, I felt liberated. It was releasing to discover that my finding God easier to encounter in a natural setting than in a church building was both valid and legitimate.

God communicates most meaningfully to my heart through the beauty, grandeur, space, silence, symbolism and parable of the natural world. These are gifts that draw me deeper. It is simply how I am wired. For me, a tug towards nature may also be God’s special invitation to meet with him, and I am always open to that possibility. As I venture forth, I open my heart to hear what he has to say.

I have actually met with God many times in the cathedral of the outdoors, just as Moses did in the burning bush, or Elijah in the earthquake, wind and fire. Something inside my soul comes alive when I am surrounded by God’s splendour in nature, be it the mountains, the desert, the plains, the forests or the beach. Just being outside can dramatically increase my awareness of God. I feel unconditional love when touched by a sunrise and see resurrection hope when plants emerge in Spring. For me, nature has been experienced as a guide, as prayer, as a path of conversation with Christ, and as an avenue into God.

Because many people find that their most natural spirituality is outdoors, and that their most profound spiritual moments occur outdoors, some modern thinkers, looking for fresh expressions, consider that the outdoors is a place where the church needs to be. Alongside this is the fact that environmentalism is moving

away from attempting to “guilt trip” people into living differently with respect to the natural world, but instead is speaking of “falling in love with nature” as a route to active involvement in creation care.

Over the past five years a new movement has arisen within Christendom that recognises these notions. While its overall objectives and characteristics are similar, its expressions around the world have different names: Wilderness Church, Church of/in the Wild, Forest Church, Cathedral of the Outdoors, and WINGs International (Worship-in-Nature Groups). The leaders (and some of the participants) are generally those who are “edgewalkers” in relation to the Christ tradition.

The bottom line for each group is that it meets outdoors and connection with God via the natural world is a core part of the gathering. They put ancient-yet-new practices into place that reconnect us with the living world as sacred. It is not only reconnection between people and God through the natural world but also reconnection between people and the natural world for the sake of both human well-being and the future of the created order. Such gatherings therefore serve all the churches in a given locality. People from any faith community are welcome.

Leaders of these groups assert that they do not replace any established local church. They are in addition to, and in service of. Most meet 8–12 times a year. They vary enormously from quite formal and liturgical to very informal and non-liturgical. Using good contextual mission practices, each group discerns the appropriate form for their own community, including the extent to which engagement with various traditions or styles is appropriate.

Bruce Stanley is the foremost practitioner in the United Kingdom. He says that “Forest Church” isn’t just normal church happening outdoors; instead it seeks to participate with creation. Participants come with a readiness to connect with nature, in which God is present and can be understood. Victoria Looz became the leading figure of this movement in the United States after concluding that what was needed to coax Christians to engage in creation care is a heart-centred connection with the natural world rather than logic and statistics. Ultimately this led her to establish the Church of the Wild network.

Genesis 28 records how Jacob dreamed of a stairway with its bottom step on earth, leading up and out of sight, with the whole company of heaven passing to and fro upon it. No sooner does he behold this vision than he perceives the Lord declaring to him no less than nine stupendous promises of future blessing. When he wakes, he declares: “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (v.17).

It is significant that the place that he describes as such is a natural setting in the wilderness. What has looked to him like no place turns out to be God’s place. What has seemed to be an ordinary pile of rocks turns out to be a special point of encounter with the divine. So great was the impact of this experience that he set up his stone pillow as a pillar to mark the spot. Bethel, he called it, pouring oil on the rock: House of God.

The same perception was espoused by Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), the nun who loved the earth, who stood at the epicentre of medieval Europe as a visionary and mystic. It was her passion for the natural world and our place in it that makes Hildegard particularly relevant today. She had a profound reverence for nature and placed great importance on our relationship with the earth. Her ideas transcend religious tradition to embrace a grand and inclusive vision: “Every creature is a glittering, glistening mirror of divinity,” she wrote.

Hildegard saw the earth as a living organism endowed with the same vital power that animates all life forms. It was a central theme in her life and work. “The earth sustains humanity. It must not be injured; it must not be destroyed,” she declared. In Hildegard’s worldview, a beam of sunlight, the fragrance of a flower, or the graceful movement of a swan were all participants in the holy chorus of creation. To be out of sync with the

beauty and fecundity of nature is to deny the divine force which enlivens body and soul. She called this force *viriditas*, using the Latin word for “greenness.”

Hildegard wrote that “If we fall in love with creation deeper and deeper, we will respond to its endangerment with passion.” One way that a local church can motivate and mobilise its members to look after the non-human world is to take them into its midst. If your church is beginning its creation care journey, and desires to get people on board with it, opportunities to visit outdoor settings, and encounter God in and through them, may well help your cause. In the past, God has frequently used the elements of nature to impact lives and achieve his goals. It remains part of his toolkit for effecting transformation and blessing.

RESOURCE F

A MAJOR MODERN MEANS OF MISSION

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SUMMARY

- Creation care is a legitimate aspect of the church’s mission.
- Jesus told us to take the good news to the *whole* creation (human and non-human).
- The Lausanne movement has recognized creation care as an integral aspect of the church’s mission.
- Creation care resonates with the bigger biblical goal of *shalom*.
- Environmental stewardship is a ready-made and highly relevant opportunity for pre-evangelism and evangelism.

Mission is a word often used but it is not easy to find a concise definition of it, let alone one on which everyone can agree. Mission has many elements.

Decades ago, the Anglican Consultative Council identified five strands to mission which have since gained wide acceptance:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
 - To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
 - To respond to human need by living service
 - To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
 - To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.
- (Bonds of Affection-1984 ACC-6:49; Mission in a Broken World -1990 ACC:10)

The language of the *Mission-Shaped Church* Report reflects this definition, stating that: “*The mission of God as redeemer, through Christ, in the Spirit, is to restore and reconcile the fallen creation (Colossians 1.20). God’s missionary purposes are cosmic in scope, concerned with the restoration of all things, the establishment of shalom, the renewal of creation and the coming of the kingdom, as well as the redemption of fallen humanity and the building of the Church*” (2004: 85). It seems that the concept of mission is too rich to be reduced to a simple description. It is, in essence, finding out what God is doing and joining in. Mission is, and always has been, in the heart of God.

It was entirely appropriate that this attempt to define mission was broad in scope because Jesus signified there is Good News to be proclaimed not only to humans but indeed to the entire created order. In Mark

16:15, he commanded his followers: *“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the **whole creation.**”* (ESV, emphasis mine).

The nature of that Good News is fundamentally the same for both people and nature, namely the hope and assurance that they will remain in existence (material continuity) and be set free from all that currently blights and limits them (redemption, restoration and renewal). It is a message that Paul unpacks cogently in Romans 8:18-25, and which finds expression in Isaiah 65:17-25, Ezekiel 47:1-12, Colossians 1:15-20, and Revelation 21-22.

The breadth of this commission has been recognised in recent years by the Lausanne Movement. Its Cape Town Commitment (2011) stated:

“Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out, the biblical truth that the gospel is God’s good news, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for individual persons, and for society, and for creation. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God’s people.”

This was followed by their ground-breaking Jamaica Consultation in 2012, where delegates agreed that *“environmental issues represent one of the greatest opportunities to demonstrate the love of Christ and plant churches in our generation”*. They encouraged the church to promote “environmental missions” as a new category within mission work.

According to Edward Brown (2008: 156-160), the biblical goal of *shalom* is bigger than the truncated view of mission as just a simple message of salvation for human beings. In countries where mission has been carried out for over a century, environmental degradation is reaching the point of endangering much of what has already been accomplished. Moreover, we are commanded to love our brothers and sisters, which increasingly means helping them to cope with degraded environments. The opportunities for this are both global and local.

How does all of this translate into our backyard? A friend I occasionally used to fish with would climb into his waders and boots, gather up his gear, sit on the tailgate of his truck and scan the river for 15 minutes or more, looking for rising fish. “No use fishing where they ain’t,” he would say. Sometimes we fish for souls where they ain’t, but they are certainly present when you get involved in environmental projects.

Citizens of the kingdom of God yearn for *shalom*, but non-Christians often yearn for it too, and sometimes work so tirelessly for this that they put Christians to shame. Creation care furnishes an immediate point of mutual interest, shared vision, identification and commonality. It also provides a context in which to forge meaningful relationships as a prelude to evangelistic influence. For this reason, Christian environmentalism is currently the fastest growing missional enterprise in the global church.

In microcosm, if a local church engages in a practical environmental project, it raises the question among the neighbouring people, “Why are they doing this?” It gives opportunities for them to find out that their ecology is based on the gospel and their gospel is centred on the Lord Jesus Christ. As the life and light of Christ is gradually expressed through us, others are drawn to him.

Chris Wright astutely sums up the strong link between environmental stewardship and evangelism as he brings to conclusion a section on holistic mission in his book, *The Mission of God*:

The language of the 'priority of evangelism' implies that the only proper starting point must always be evangelistic proclamation. Priority means it is the most important, most urgent, thing to be done first, and everything else must take second, third, or fourth place. But the difficulty with this is that (1) it is not always possible or desirable in the immediate situation, and (2) it does not even reflect the actual practice of

Jesus. Rather, almost any starting point can be appropriate, depending possibly on what is the most pressing or obvious need. We can enter the circle of missional response at any point on the circle of human need. But ultimately we must not rest content until we have included within our missional response the wholeness of God's missional response to the human predicament - and that of course includes the good news of Christ, the cross and resurrection, the forgiveness of sin, the gift of eternal life that is offered to men and women through our witness to the gospel and the hope of God's new creation. That is why I speak of ultimacy rather than primacy. Mission may not always begin with evangelism. But mission that does not ultimately include declaring the Word and the name of Christ, the call to repentance, and faith and obedience has not completed its task. It is defective mission, not holistic mission (2018: 318-319).

So, yes, let's affirm it. 'Almost any starting point can be appropriate ... we can enter the circle of missional response at any point on the circle of human need'. Any of these issues will do fine. They reflect areas of serious 'human need'. Concern for them must not diminish. Combating environmental degradation just happens to be one that is extremely timely, relevant and cogent today.

But what do you do about *ultimacy*? As one belonging to Jesus, how do you know you've arrived, not just started? If you tend to be known as a single-issue person (or, even if you are able to hold multiple issues), you may be placing more hope in the changes you long to see than those changes are able to deliver. Unless you move further into the circle and ultimately see the importance of people having a transforming encounter with Jesus Christ, you will never be quite radical enough in your approach.

God's mission is to reclaim the world--and that includes the created order--and God's people have a designated role to play in that mission. God's people are the product of the *missio Dei*, the mission of God; we are called to participate with God and be partners in his mission. This challenges any understanding of mission which is understood in terms of 'come to church and join us' but rather requires us to share with God in being concerned for all in our communities and finding ways to go to them on their terms.

Creation stewardship as a means and mode of mission is a new frontier, wide open for exploration, and filled with opportunities as numerous as they are exciting. This is a mission field ripe for the harvest. If every congregation in New Zealand actively engaged in caring for the non-human creation as a witness to, and means of reaching out to, the human creation, and also as a way of increasing the wellbeing of both, the beneficial results would be barely imaginable!

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RESOURCE G

ENVIROHUBS: HARNESSING PEOPLE POWER TO PROTECT THE PLANET

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SUMMARY

- The early church operated through small groups.
- John Wesley successfully applied this structure to Methodism.
- Cells as an organising principle were rediscovered by the church in the 1980s and 1990s. Many churches adopted a decentralised approach.
- Imagine what could happen if people-power was harnessed through a growing network of neighbourhood creation care groups (**Envirohubs**).
- Each **Envirohub** sets its own agenda and has a local focus.
- Take the initiative! NCNZ can assist you in the formation and functioning of your **Envirohub**.

Anyone with a basic knowledge of church history is aware of the significant role of small groups across the centuries in the growth and renewal of the Christian church. Every time we read from the New Testament we need to remind ourselves that we are being exposed to a small-group movement which multiplied at an astounding pace throughout the Roman world. For the first 200 years of its existence, the church had no large public buildings available in which to meet. During that time, neighbourhood small groups were not an extension of the church – they were the church. When Paul wrote his letters to the church in Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, or Rome, he was writing to a federation of neighbourhood-based small groups meeting in scattered locations in those cities.

When John Wesley died in 1791, he left behind a church of 10,000 cell groups and 100,000 members. Cell groups were so important to the Methodist Church that a person could not enter the celebration service unless he or she showed a ticket that proved he or she was in a cell group during the week. God transformed people through Wesley's structure of cell and celebration. Many believe that God used Wesley and the Methodist movement to save England from spiritual, moral, and even physical destruction.

After hundreds of years of centralisation, the Christian church rediscovered the benefits of decentralisation through the home cell-group movement of the 1980s and 1990s. Cells are the basic building blocks of all life forms, and this fundamental insight was once again applied to the body of Christ around the world. The word spread that Paul Cho's church and several other huge churches in Seoul reached their massive size through home cell groups and that the technique would work anywhere. Many communities of faith shifted from a centralised approach in achieving their objectives to a decentralised approach.

It was realised by many that if you want your church to have a bigger impact – and experience more dramatic growth, it might be time to think smaller. When it comes to building a healthy and invigorated community that attracts visitors, small groups were seen as the key. The small group once again became the basic building block of the life of the local congregation and the most powerful and versatile structure for change. A quiet revolution took place, as cells became the organisational basis of many churches, particularly in South America, Asia and Africa. A pattern of rapid of cell multiplication became the common thread that linked all of the rapidly growing worldwide churches. A key feature of such churches was also that everyone participates.

The need to care for our planet, which is our common home, is one that now resonates with a wide range of people, whether they are followers of Jesus or not. Imagine the potential if the neighbourhood small-group principle could be translated into a vibrant, ever-expanding framework for creation care. What if one household invited others who live nearby to join them in pursuing a specifically-local creation care project? An initial gathering might agree on the parameters of involvement, and because the focus would be on a local project the whole neighbourhood would potentially benefit, quite apart from contributing in microcosm to the overall health of the environment globally.

Imagine a multiplicity of creation-care cells ("**Envirohubs**"), a vast network, one in every neighbourhood, each playing its own unique part in caring for the planet. Imagine people of faith rubbing shoulders with those who aren't yet, getting to know them, pitching in with them, and expressing the life of Christ as they do so. **Envirohubs** are a context in which relationships can blossom and in which others may gradually be influenced towards knowing Jesus. Most importantly, they are a way of harnessing the energy and skill of many more people in addressing the ecological challenges which we now face.

Each **Envirohub** is uniquely linked to its own immediate context. I live in Welcome Bay, Tauranga. Just across the road is Waipuna Park, and adjacent to it is the Johnson Reserve. The formation of an **Envirohub** to protect and preserve these two areas would be easy. On the other hand, the members of the **Envirohub** may decide to do something completely different, such as lobbying their local councillors or MPs. Each **Envirohub** sets its own agenda, but whatever activity the members determine, each is an opportunity to bring together neighbours who have never spoken to each other, develop community spirit and involve all ages in a common cause.

Envirohubs are a concept and enterprise developed by *New Creation New Zealand*. NCNZ wants to promote and facilitate the **Envirohub** movement throughout our country. Their vision is that hundreds of **Envirohubs** come into existence – a mass movement which is community-based, inclusive, and empowering, as well as rapidly and radically transformative for the natural world. Establish an **Envirohub** in your neighbourhood! NCNZ can provide guidelines, advice, liaison, networking and resources. Get in touch with them if you feel they can assist you. They would love to help you on your journey.

RESOURCE H

LIVE SIMPLY SO OTHERS MAY SIMPLY LIVE

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SUMMARY

- In the West, capitalism engenders the false view that more is better.
- Simplicity means we are no longer defined or driven by material affluence or socio-economic status.
- There are several cogent reasons for pursuing a simple lifestyle.
- Voluntary simplicity is an opportunity to live counter-culturally.

In his book *The Song of the Bird*, Anthony de Mello (1) tells the story of "The Contented Fisherman":

The rich industrialist from the north was horrified to find the southern fisherman lying lazily beside his boat, smoking a pipe.

"Why aren't you out fishing?" said the industrialist.

"Because I have caught enough fish for the day," said the fisherman.

"Why don't you catch some more?"

"What would I do with it?"

“You could earn more money,” was the reply. “With that you could have a motor fixed to your boat and go into deeper waters and catch more fish. Then you would make enough to buy nylon nets. These would bring you more fish and more money. Soon you would have enough money to own two boats... maybe even a fleet of boats. Then you would be a rich man like me.”

“What would I do then?”

“Then you could really enjoy life.”

“What do you think I am doing right now?”

Francois Fenelon referred to simplicity as “the pearl of the gospel” (2) but, if we are honest, many of us would rather have the pearls – spa pool, boat, holiday home, etc. In today’s culture, the pressure to embrace upward mobility and attain a certain level of living can be relentless. To try to convince ourselves that we haven’t succumbed, Richard Foster notes that we cleverly rename the vices: “Covetousness we call ambition. Hoarding we call prudence. Greed we call industry” (3). It’s hard for us to recognize this unsustainable and unhappy trap because it’s the only game in town. Most of us have grown up with a capitalist worldview which makes a virtue and goal out of accumulation, consumption, and collecting. It has taught us to assume, quite falsely, that more is better.

Simplicity offers a way of living where we are no longer defined or driven by material affluence or socio-economic status. It is characterized by three inner attitudes: what we have is a gift from God; what we have is to be cared for by God; what we have is to be shared with others. The focus should not be on getting rid of what we have, but rather upon cultivating the disposition of a life of joyful unconcern for possessions.

There are good reasons for pursuing a more simple lifestyle. The transformative gifts of a truly simple life are manifold...

- Because of Christ’s example. Jesus lived a very simple life and we are to be like him (Romans 8:29). Jesus focused on his ministry, relationships with others, sharing the good news, serving others, taking care of his health by resting when necessary, and spending time in prayer. All of these things come together to form the bedrock of a simple lifestyle. Sallie McFague argues that if Jesus reveals a life of sacrifice, servanthood, simplicity, and subverting the traditional view of dominion, it has practical implications: “For affluent Christians, it demands a different view of the abundant life, one that involves cruciform living, the practice of restraint, diminishment, the death of unlimited desire, and control of ecological selfishness”(4).

- Because the Bible deals clearly and forcefully with oppressive slavery to things (5). The economics of life is the number one topic in the Bible. The Psalmist says, *“If riches increase, set not your heart on them”* (Psalm 62:10). The tenth commandment is against covetousness, the inner lust to have, which leads to stealing and oppression. The writer of Proverbs understood that *“He who trusts in his riches will wither”* (Proverbs 11:28), reflecting the notion that God is more likely to be found in the time and soul-space that a simple lifestyle frees up. Jesus counselled against stockpiling treasures on earth rather than in heaven (Matthew 6:19-24). Lust for affluence and influence in our culture has the potential to kill us spiritually. We begin to lose touch with spiritual reality when we crave things that we neither need nor always enjoy.

- Because it was imprinted early into the DNA of the Church. The first century church is often looked to for a sense of authenticity, given their chronological proximity to Christ. These early Christians clearly understood the inherent economic implications of the gospel, putting their possessions to the service of their fellows and practising a measure of communal ownership (Acts 4:32-35). While not prescriptive or absolute, these practices revealed an attitude toward possessions that clearly valued the humane over the material; an ethos of stewardship rather than ownership. This ethos was

inseparable from life as a Christian, and the concept of a purely spiritual response to the Gospel was nonsensical.

- Because true happiness lies in *contentment*.

Contentment means aiming to have the things that will sustain us while not pressing beyond that. It is saying ‘Enough is enough’ and being satisfied with that. It is a way of saying to God, ‘I know my needs will be met by you. I trust you to supply all that is necessary.’ It is foundational to pursuing a simpler, more sustainable mode of living as a priority. In the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) Jesus indicated that true happiness is largely derived from things that are intangible and non-material. Further relevant Scriptures are Psalm 131:1-3, Philippians 4:12, I Timothy 6:6-8 and Hebrews 13:5-6. Such writers knew that simplicity is the antidote to acute or chronic acquisitiveness and that true happiness will never consist of things.

- Because it sets us free.

Pop-philosopher Alain de Botton has coined the term ‘status anxiety’ to refer to worrying that we are in danger of failing to conform to the ideals of success laid down by our society (6). Worrying too much about what others think surrenders to them an authority that rightly belongs to God, and in the end that becomes dehumanizing. Another shackle is *material anxiety*. The problem is not necessarily in the *having*; it’s in the excessive *hankering*. Again, this is profoundly dehumanizing and ultimately, deeply enslaving. When we agree to live simply, we put ourselves outside of others’ ability to buy us off, reward us falsely, or control us by money, status, salary, punishment, and loss or gain of anything. This is the most radical level of freedom, but, of course, it is not easy to come by.

- Because simplicity fosters sustainability and social justice.

Acquiring more ‘stuff’ has a direct effect on the sustainability of the planet and on the quality of life for people around the globe. They are paying for the unsustainable lifestyle that we in the West may consider normal, and one day our descendants will pay for it as well. By every unsustainable personal or societal choice, we choose to create more deserts and starvation, more impure and scarce water, more erratic devastating storms, etc., that will, cumulatively, harm millions of people (and other creatures). On the other hand, by every sustainable choice, we choose actions that will contribute to the feeding, housing, and clothing of our fellow human beings. There are poor on this earth and our living with less enables them to live with more.

Today for the first time in human history, our unbridled use of the Earth’s people and resources threatens us with a self-created apocalypse. Christians are called to live counterculturally (Romans 12:2), and voluntary simplicity is an opportunity to do so. Sharon Delgado (7) refers to the practice of living simply as another form of “spiritual defiance of the world as it now is”, notably “a basic form of spiritual resistance to commercial pressures to overconsume.” She encourages us “to extricate ourselves from cultural domination by the institutional Powers and to practice new ways of living into the future that we want to see.” In so doing we will “exercise our moral agency and develop our integrity, both of which are necessary if we are to rise to the challenge of taking conscientious action in the world.” In short, the things we choose or choose not to own can become tools for our service of God and creation.

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- (5) The number of Scriptures pertinent to this theme is extensive. See, for example: Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 46:10, 63:2-5,90:14-17; Proverbs 15:16-17, 16:8; Ecclesiastes 4:6,5:10-6:9; Isaiah 55:1-2; Matthew 6:25-34; Mark 1:35; Luke 12:13-34; Acts 2:44-47; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9; Philippians 4:10-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-11; Hebrews 12:1,13:5-6; James 5:1-8; Revelation 3:17-20.
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RESOURCE I

GREEN CHOICES: HUNDREDS OF PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR ECO-FRIENDLY LIVING

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The trouble with simple living is that, though it can be joyful, rich and creative, it isn't simple.

- Doris Janzen Longacre, 2010: *Living More With Less*, p.30.

Make small decisions consciously.

Nurture relationships.

Question technology.

De-clutter.

Go local.

Downshift (make living simply a priority).

CULTIVATING AWARENESS

- Join nature in praise. Read Psalm 98,104 or 148, taking note of how the Psalmists describe nature praising its Creator. Then go for a slow walk and witness how nature gives glory to God simply by being what it was created to be.
- Take ten. Commit yourself to spending 10 minutes each day outside, keeping an eye on the natural world and praying. This can be an unexpected source of wonder and beauty.
- Take time to study creation and learn from it, such as lessons on the interdependence of life.
- Write a haiku (17 syllables in 3 lines: 5-7-5), describing a paradox or contrast you observe in creation.
- Practise centering prayer outdoors. This needs a regular time and place. Breathe deeply, settle in and get comfortable. If words, images or symbols help you to be present with God, choose one or two and meditate on them. Look and listen for where God might be showing up in the world. Set an intentional response.

ENTERTAINMENT

- Replace half an hour of television with a stroll around the neighbourhood.
- Turn off all electronics when you leave the room, even when you think you'll just be gone for a few minutes. Unplug the TV and stereo when not in use, or turn them all the way off with a power strip.
- Avoid purchasing any food or drink in a disposable container.
- Turn off the radio when you are in the car, and instead spend time talking with your spouse and children or fellowshiping with God.
- Memorize one Bible verse about godly entertainment, such as Philippians 4:8:
And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. (NLT)
- Keep track of how much time per week you spend in front of a TV or computer screen; do the same for each of your children.
- Eat at least one more meal per week at home instead of at a restaurant.
- Patronize only those restaurants that serve on washable dishes and flatware.

- Buy rechargeable batteries instead of disposables and set up a battery-charging centre in your home.
- Buy smart power strips for the TV, audio equipment, and other electronics—especially anything that uses a remote.
- Pledge to spend at least 10 percent less time in front of a computer screen.
- Take a virtual break, e.g. go on a three-day media/technology fast—no radio, television, cell phones, email, computers, social media, video games, internet, newspaper, or magazine infotainment.
- Clean out bookshelves and donate books you haven't read in the past year to a library or charity.
- Go through your sporting goods and sell or donate any items you no longer use.
- Tally up the total number of hours your family spent preparing for, driving to, watching, and participating in sports in the last month; discuss how this affects your relationships with each other and with God.
- Modify at least one fitness or spectator sport habit to reflect your growing green awareness.
- Wait one month when you think you need a new iPod, computer, or TV; if you still believe you need one, consider buying used.
- Donate your old cell phone and electronic appliances to a good cause.
- Borrow books, CDs, and DVDs from the library instead of buying new.
- Use fewer paper napkins when you go out to eat.
- Donate some of the money you've saved to a good cause.
- Try one of these fun and educational alternatives to channel surfing:
 - Collect cans and bottles. Go on a walk through town with your kids and collect bottles and cans. Your kids will get exercise and help the environment all at the same time. If you live in an area that offers return deposits, let your children pick out a good cause and donate the "found" money.
 - Go on a scavenger hunt. Create a list of natural things that can be seen outside where you live — pinecones, acorns, flowers, leaves, feathers, insects, rocks. Have your children search for each item on the list.
 - Camp out. You don't have to drive to a national or regional park to go camping. Pitch a tent in the backyard and discover the sights and sounds of the night.
 - Visit a local farm. Find a nearby strawberry patch in summer or an apple orchard in autumn.
 - Stargaze. Relax on a blanket in your yard with an astronomy guide. Look for constellations and planets and teach your children about the night sky.
 - Dine in. Set up a restaurant in your home. Let your kids create menu items using only things you have in your kitchen. Take turns filling the roles of waiters, chef, and clean-up crew.
- Make gifts for friends and family. Homemade gifts save resources and are often more meaningful than the standard ones. Make photo frames, mini scrapbooks, and craft items to give throughout the year.
- Organize a block party. Get friends and neighbours on your street together for a potluck. Every family can bring their own dishes, silverware, cups, and cloth napkins.
- Volunteer. Many retirement homes and hospitals need volunteers to serve lunch or read to patients. Pitch in and make some new friends.
- Write a note. Write letters (on recycled paper or cards) to friends, grandparents, and mentors, letting them know how much you appreciate them.
- Watch a green movie, such as Baraka, Hoot, or WALL•E.

WORK

- Contact your local utility provider, and find out if the company offers energy audits for businesses — usually the cost is nominal. Then implement the changes that help the bottom line. Or hire a

performance contractor. Most charge nothing up front, earning their fees from the savings you garner.

- Use 100% recycled paper in your workplace. The typical office worker uses a quarter of a tonne of materials in a year, including ten thousand pieces of copy paper.
- Recommend that the thermostat be adjusted three or more degrees company wide. Turning the thermostat up in the summer or down in the winter can save about 3 percent in energy costs for each degree. Install programmable thermostats to adjust even further at night.
- Suggest that all light bulbs in exit signs be changed to LED bulbs—the payback is usually earned in a couple of months, and after that, the company is saving money.
- Post reminders next to all light switches to turn off the lights when leaving the room.
- Cut paper costs in half. Ask that the default on printers be set to double-sided printing. (Employees can still print single-sided when needed.)
- Suggest a simple way that all computers can be completely powered down at night—usually with a power strip or hard off switch. The last one out or the nightly clean-up crew can be asked to assure that all computers are completely turned off.
- Reset computers so that they go into sleep mode after five minutes of inactivity.
- Start a rideshare board. Ask that people who carpool be given special parking privileges.
- Monitors use up to 60 percent of the energy consumed by your computer system. Turn off the monitor when you leave your office for more than five minutes.
- Recycle electronic office equipment. When burned or dumped, cell phones, computers, and other gadgets release toxins—including lead, mercury, and cadmium—into the air and water.
- Your business can earn money by selling used equipment. Web sites purchase iPhones, cell phones, BlackBerrys, and other technology.
- If your computer is in working order, consider donating it to a local school or non-profit organization.
- Donate your old cell phone to an organization that provides refurbished phones for first-time users abroad or hospital patients for emergency 111 calls.
- Your business can earn money by selling used equipment.
- Use the draft mode when printing documents that aren't final. Your printer's draft mode uses about half the ink it would for a normal print job.
- Pack your lunch.
- Carpool, bike, or use public transportation. Employees use twice as much energy commuting to work as they do occupying their offices.
- Ask your employer about telecommuting/work from home one or more days a week.
- Turn off lights at the end of the day. Lighting an average-sized empty office overnight wastes enough electricity to make one thousand hot drinks or print eight hundred sheets of paper.

ENERGY

- Installing at least 20cm depth of loft insulation can save around 20% of heating costs.
- Houses with boilers older than 15 years are likely to benefit by changing to a more fuel-efficient model. Modern gas-condensing boilers are particularly efficient as they recycle some of the energy from exhaust emissions.
- Fitting and using timer and thermostatic controls can significantly reduce energy consumption, without loss of comfort.
- Fitting low-energy light bulbs requires an initial capital outlay, but can reduce energy consumption by up to 80% and the bulbs can last up to 10 times longer, saving both money and the need to change bulbs frequently.
- Taking a daily shower instead of a bath can save water and \$\$\$ per year on your fuel bill.

- Replace existing equipment with Energy Star–qualified products – you can cut annual energy bills by 30 percent.
- Get rid of phantom loads. In the average household, eight appliances are left on standby mode at any one time. The typical TV is left on standby seventeen hours per day. Leaving electrical equipment like TVs and VCRs on standby uses almost as much energy as when you are watching. Turning appliances off at the on/off button saves this waste.
- Insulate your water heater and pipes, and turn down the temperature on your water heater to 60-70 degrees. Look for a little metal box on the side of the water heater. If your water heater is not insulated, about three-quarters of energy used may be wasted. Not sure if your water heater needs to be insulated? If it's hot to the touch, you need a water heater jacket.
- Around 35% of heat energy is lost through walls that are not insulated, but by installing cavity wall insulation up to 60% of this heat can be saved.
- Up to 20% of heat can be lost by draughts around windows, doors and floors. Fitting draught excluders can save heat and money. It is important to ensure that adequate ventilation is maintained, particularly in rooms with gas or solid fuel fires.
- Use mains electricity rather than batteries when possible, and choose re-chargeable batteries if you need them.
- Avoid battery-powered electrical goods and toys as most use 50 times more energy to make as they give out in their lifetime.

WATER

- Fix leaking taps – one dripping at one drop per second will waste 1200l per year!
- Turn off taps fully.
- Water plants in the evening after the heat of the day (reduces evaporation).
- Have a shower rather than a bath.
- Use a plug in wash basins and sinks rather than washing under a running tap.
- Fit a water hippo in your toilet cistern to save 1 litre per flush (a brick or a one-litre plastic bottle filled with water works well too).
- Turn off the tap whilst cleaning your teeth, or use a mug of water instead.
- Install a water tank, linking it to a down pipe to collect water from a roof.
- Mulch water-loving plants in the garden to save on the need for watering.
- If you use a washing machine or dishwasher, reduce the frequency of running it by always having a full load.

WASTE AND TOXIC SUBSTANCES

- Pre-cycle, i.e. eliminate future waste by not buying it in the first place.
- Reduce and re-use. Buy fewer new things. Avoid disposable items. Take your own cup.
- Re-cycle paper, glass, plastic, aluminium, foil. Use local can banks or kerbside collections if available. Many local charities/organisations collect cans to raise funds.
- Repair and reconsider: Can your gadget be repaired before you toss it? If not, is there a recycler or "take-back" programme in your area?
- Minimise your use of phosphate-based detergents and bleach (try eco-friendly washing-up liquid, washing powder and cleaners instead).
- Minimise your use of toxic substances such as pesticides and creosote, which might get washed into the drainage system or water system.
- Safely dispose of waste oils, paints, solvents and batteries at a collection point rather than throwing them in a rubbish bin or pouring them down a drain. Some charities can use left-over paint and some batteries can be recycled.

- Wash your vehicles on the grass so that cleaning agents do not enter the waste water system.
- Use mains electricity rather than batteries, and choose re-chargeable batteries if you need them.
- Take or arrange for unwanted appliances or other bulky metal items to be deposited at a local authority metal collection/recycling site.
- If you have a suitable space outside, consider installing a compost bin and use it for all organic matter (though avoid composting meat and fish as these can attract vermin). Composting can reduce household waste by as much as 70 percent.
- Bread can be fed to birds at a feeding station.
- Carry a trash bag on your regular walks and pick up trash that you encounter

LAUNDRY

- Use the lowest temperature recommended for the clothing being washed.
- Avoid under-filling the machine to get the maximum amount of clothing washed for the electricity and water used.
- Measure detergent according to water hardness and the degree of soiling.
- Choose products to minimise packaging.
- Pre-sort laundry according to the recommended washing cycle.
- Use an eco-friendly washing powder or liquid.
- Where possible dry the clothing outside, to take advantage of the sun and the wind rather than using a tumble drier.

PAPER

- Save waste paper and deposit it in a local paper bank.
- Reuse envelopes, paper, wrappings and egg boxes.
- Choose to buy recycled paper products, including greetings cards.
- Reduce the amount of junk mail that you receive.

CLOTHES

- Take clean clothes to charity shops and clothing banks. Jumble sales are another place to recycle material clothing and cloth which cannot be sold can be recycled into industrial wipes, blankets and stuffing for furniture. After food, clothing has the highest environmental impact of any consumer activity.
- Only buy clothes that you really need and consider buying clothes second hand.
- Dress timelessly: quality over quantity, longevity over novelty, versatility over specialisation.

SHOPPING

- Avoid the advertisements that tempt you - by getting off junk mail and telemarketing lists, turning off the television, etc.
- Think globally: investigate the "history" of the products you purchase (the raw materials used, transport costs, whether workers were paid a fair wage).
- Shop in vintage, outlet, consignment and resale shops.
- Act communally, where others covenant with you to live simply, hold up mirrors for you (accountability) and share with their neighbours.
- Spend a whole year resisting buying new products (except food, medicine and hygiene goods).
- Take re-usable bags when you shop. Avoid completely the plastic v. paper debate!
- There are seven golden 'R's to consider before making a purchase:
 - Refuse – Buy judiciously by asking: Do I really need this? Can I afford it? Can I borrow it? Can I buy it second-hand? Can I live without it?

- Reduce – Ask: Do I need to consume as much, e.g. if buying a car I could buy one with a 1400cc engine rather than a 2.5l space cruiser, so saving resources used in manufacturing and running and fuel costs.
- Recycle – Ask: Can the item I am considering buying be easily recycled? What proportion of recycled and raw materials are used in its construction?
- Reuse – Ask: Instead of buying a brand new item, can I reuse an existing item that I already have or buy it second hand? Is it renewable?
- Refill – use containers which can be refilled in an eco-friendly manner.
- Repair and repurpose – Ask: Instead of buying new, can I have an existing item repaired? Can the item that I am considering buying be easily repaired and are spare parts available?



FINANCE

Utilise a bank with a clear and rigorous environmental policy. There are two positive routes that you can take to ensure this. One is to work with the bank that you currently use, and press them about their environmental policies, including their policy on Third World debt, investment in fossil fuel companies, etc. Concerted pressure from customers can bring about change.

A second option is to move your account to a bank that conducts business according to a set of ethical criteria that come close to your values. Some banks operate more positive environmental policies than others.

HOLIDAYS

- Use e-tickets.
- Bring your own luggage tag.
- If possible, only take a carry-on and skip the checked luggage.
- More and more hotels are becoming eco-friendly because it saves them money. Wherever you stay,

use the same linens and towels during your visit. Washing fewer sheets and towels can save up to 40 percent of a hotel's water use.

- Use online maps instead of paper ones. They're free, and you can print on the blank side of used paper, and then recycle after you're finished.
- If you have a GPS navigation system in your car, you can eliminate paper waste altogether. If you have an old map, use it as gift wrap instead of throwing it away.
- Take public transportation once you reach your destination.
- Use and refill a non-plastic water bottle, canteen, or thermos during your trip.
- Skip the souvenirs. Most trinkets end up on a shelf—or in the trash. Use a travel journal and digital photographs to capture memories, then only print the photos you like. If you must buy souvenirs, purchase from local manufacturers to help support the local economy.
- Before you leave for vacation:
 - Unplug appliances (except refrigerator) to avoid using standby energy.
 - Turn off the lights. Use timers on outside lights instead of letting the porch light burn constantly. Or leave the lights off and ask a neighbour to keep an eye on your house.
 - Stop the newspaper to avoid waste and save money. Ask your newspaper to credit your account for the days you are going to be away.
 - Close the shades. Depending on the season, drawn shades will help heat or cool your home while you're on vacation.
 - Set your thermostat. Depending on the length of your trip, you could save as much as \$100 in heating and cooling-related energy costs for your home while you're on vacation.

CLEANING

- Today's modern home is loaded with toxic and polluting substances designed to make domestic life easier. The cost of these commercial, chemical-based products can be high -- long term health concerns for the family, and environmental pollution caused by their manufacture and disposal. There are many inexpensive, easy-to-use natural alternatives which can safely be used in place of commercial household products. Here is a list of common, environmentally safe products which can be used alone or in combination for a wealth of household applications:
 - Baking Soda - cleans, deodorizes, softens water, scours.
 - Soap - unscented soap in liquid form, flakes, powders or bars is biodegradable and will clean just about anything. Avoid using soaps which contain petroleum distillates.
 - Lemon - one of the strongest food-acids, effective against most household bacteria.
 - Borax - (sodium borate) cleans, deodorizes, disinfects, softens water, cleans wallpaper, painted walls and floors.
 - White Vinegar - cuts grease, removes mildew, odours, some stains and wax build-up.
 - Washing Soda - cuts grease, removes stains, softens water, cleans wall, tiles, sinks and tubs. Use care, as washing soda can irritate mucous membranes. Do not use on aluminium.
 - Isopropyl Alcohol - is an excellent disinfectant. (It has been suggested to replace this with ethanol or 100 proof alcohol in solution with water. Note, however, here is some indication that isopropyl alcohol build up contributes to illness in the body.
 - Corn starch - can be used to clean windows, polish furniture, shampoo carpets and rugs.
 - Citrus Solvent - cleans paint brushes, oil and grease, some stains. (Citrus solvent may cause skin, lung or eye irritations for people with multiple chemical sensitivities.)
 - Trisodium phosphate (TSP) - a mixture of soda ash and phosphoric acid. TSP is toxic if swallowed, but it can be used on many jobs, such as cleaning drains or removing old paint, that would normally require much more caustic and poisonous chemicals, and it does not create any fumes.

HEALTHY HOME CLEANING HABITS

- Exchange Indoor Air:

Many modern homes are so tight there's little new air coming in. Open the windows from time to time or run any installed exhaust fans. In cold weather, the most efficient way to exchange room air is to open the room wide - windows and doors, and let fresh air in quickly for about 5 minutes. The furnishings in the room, and the walls, act as 'heat sinks', and by exchanging air quickly, this heat is retained.

- Minimize Dust:

Remove clutter which collects dust, such as old newspapers and magazines. Try to initiate a 'no-shoes-indoors' policy. If you're building or remodelling a home, consider a central vacuum system; this eliminates the fine dust which portable vacuum cleaners re-circulate.

- Use Gentle Cleaning Products:

Of the various commercial home cleaning products, drain cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners and oven cleaners are the most toxic. Avoid products containing ammonia or chlorine, or petroleum-based chemicals; these contribute to respiratory irritation, headaches and other complaints.

- Clean from the Top Down:

When house cleaning, save the floor or carpet for last. Allow time for the dust to settle before vacuuming.

COMMUNITY

- Get involved in your community. Serve local and national non-profit groups through a network of partnerships. Whether you clean up a park, tend a community garden, or give a child a second chance, you'll find opportunities to serve your neighbours.
- Initiate a creation care group in your community or church ("the green team") so that you can encourage one another, and work toward community-wide changes.
- Start a share board at the town hall or at church— people can list what they need, and you can list what you have to lend.
- Ask the recycling centre if they can set aside space for a permanent swap area. If you don't have access to clean energy options, petition the local utility.
- If you need better public transportation or bike lanes, ask the town council. Start a bike share programme by soliciting and repairing unused bikes, painting them a bright colour, and making them available for public use.
- Host neighbourhood gatherings in your backyard on a regular basis. Don't wait for someone else to initiate; if you plan it, they will come.
- Start a community garden or share your own garden: by coordinating neighbourhood gardens we can build community and ensure that everyone has just enough zucchini!
- Ask the post office if you can put out a sign-up sheet for local families to bring in a tray of holiday treats each day of December.
- Find a central gathering place and start your own community tradition: a shared produce table in late summer, a canned goods drive, handmade Valentine cards to give out in nursing homes, or a year-round board for posting free items.
- If your city or town doesn't have an official recycling programme, take action to get one started. Talk to your local officials.
- Take advantage of free events. Libraries often sponsor free performances for children.
- Band concerts in the park and parades are a big deal to a young kid, as is the annual open house at the fire station. Sometimes the best things in life really are free.
- Plant trees. Trees can increase a home's value as much as 10 percent.
- Organize neighbourhood-wide improvements to streetscapes (street tree plantings, container plantings, small parks, parking lot screens, and median plantings). They can add more than 25 percent to the value of a nearby home.
- Support area greenways and trash clean-ups. Neighbourhoods within 250m of a green corridor

increase in value 20 percent.

LAWN AND GARDEN

Lawns and Landscaping

- Landscaping doesn't have to cost a fortune. In spring and autumn, start a plant exchange board at your church. Ask if your town offers free mulch and compost, and check out demolition sites that may want to get rid of bricks and stones.
- Reduce the size of your yard. Petrol-powered lawn mowers lack catalytic converters, which are used in automobiles to treat exhaust before it escapes. As a result, a petrol-powered mower emits as much pollution in one hour as a car does travelling 150km. Combined with emissions from other petrol-powered garden equipment, petrol mowers account for 5 percent of air pollution during the summer months.

Watering

- Consider using drought-resistant and drought-tolerant plants in dry soil with sunny aspects to reduce the need for watering. Growing indigenous plants with low water requirements could save you up to 2000 litres of water per year.
- Install rain barrels or tanks to capture water from downspouts—more than enough to meet the average family's water needs, or simply a great supply for watering the garden.
- In many regions, only 2.5 cm of water per week is necessary to maintain a healthy lawn. Keep a cat-food-size can outside to monitor rainfall. If rain fills it to the brim each week, you don't need to water at all.
- Use water sparingly. Instead of using regular sprinklers, water your flower bed and garden using drip irrigation or a soaker hose. This method saves water by minimizing evaporation and watering only the base of your plants. Water savings: up to 70 percent of the water typically used.
- Use a shut-off nozzle. To prevent waste when the water is turned on and your hose is not being used, fit your garden hose with a shut-off nozzle. Water savings: up to 25 litres per minute.
- Reclaim your water. Collect water that has been used for bathing, washing dishes, and other household duties, and use it to water your plants. Water savings: up to 1100 litres per month.
- Cover your pool. When you're not going for a swim, cover your pool to reduce water lost to evaporation. Water savings: 90 percent of water typically lost through evaporation.

Garden

- Urbanisation and apartment living is no excuse not to get dirty! Explore planter boxes, container gardens, sky-rise farming, community gardens, city co-ops.
- Go organic. Avoid or minimise pesticides and fertilizers. Where possible use biodegradable sprays.
- Grow what you will eat – especially those crops that are more expensive to buy.
- Composting, rotating crops, mulching, cover crops, and giving land a sabbath rest (every seventh year – Leviticus 25:3-4) can keep soil happily productive.
- Plant a native garden. Conserve water by replacing little-used grass areas like your front yard with a native garden. A native garden can reduce street noise and offer more privacy for you and your family. Water savings: up to 75 percent of the water typically used.
- Use mulch. Mulching your plants reduces the amount of water lost through evaporation, limits weed growth, and improves soil conditions. Water savings: 70 percent of water typically lost through evaporation.
- Avoid using peat and choose plants from garden centres grown in coir or other non-peat mediums.
- Check out community-supported agriculture programmes in your community. Gather some like-minded friends and buy shares.
- Save seeds. Seed banks and seed exchanges help to preserve heirloom varieties.
- Know people with green thumbs who would like to expand their gardens? Ask if they would be interested in starting a cooperative venture next Spring. Or turn over some sod this autumn in a

sunny spot for your very own vegetable patch. Start small, and expand as your knowledge and skills grow.

- Install a compost bin to compost organic kitchen waste (avoid composting meat as it can attract vermin). Use it to fertilise your garden.
- Install a compost bin to compost organic kitchen waste (avoid composting meat as it can attract vermin). Use it to fertilise your garden.

Helping Local Wildlife and Fostering Biodiversity

- Install wildlife feeding stations, for example a bird table. Birds benefit from food provided throughout the year. Provide whole nuts in a mesh feeder and avoid putting out coconut in the breeding season, to prevent fledglings choking. It is also important to clean out the feeding station at least once a week to reduce the risk of disease
- To encourage wildflowers manage a section of grass as a meadow, allowing it to grow until early summer before cutting.
- Create habitats for insects and small mammals by leaving a section of grass uncut.
- Consider creating a bog area or small wetland.
- Leave a pile of wood to rot, to act as a home to ‘bugs’ and a grocery store for many small creatures.
- Maintain a supply of water such as a pond or bird bath to allow wildlife to drink and bathe, but ensure that it is not a hazard to young children.
- Provide wildlife nesting sites – consider bird, bat and hedgehog boxes.
- Provide a variety of habitats for wildlife including thick foliage, and habitats at various heights by planting shrubs, hedges and trees, mindful of the size of the plot.
- Plant species to provide a variety of food sources including nectar, berries and seeds: these can be planted even in relatively small pots.
- Use native plants i.e. ones that grow naturally in your country and region, as these are of most benefit to local wildlife.

Pesticides

- According to the *American Journal of Public Health*, children who live in homes that use chemical weed and insect killers are four times more likely to develop cancer than those who do not. Skip expensive and harmful chemicals, and get rid of pests the natural way. Adding French marigolds, borage, dill, nasturtium, garlic, parsley, thyme, onion, sage, and fennel to your garden will help repel insects without harming the watershed.
- Earth-friendly pesticides:
 - Basic insect spray—Repels insects; kills fungi and mites. Mix two tablespoons of dishwashing liquid soap into 3.5l of water. To target fungi, add one to two tablespoons of baking soda. Add sulphur to kill mites.
 - Peppermint tea—All-purpose insect spray; ant repellent. Brew peppermint leaf tea. Cool and place in a properly labelled spray bottle.
 - Garlic spray—Repels insects. Mix two teaspoons of garlic juice, one teaspoon of cayenne pepper, and one teaspoon of liquid soap in one quart of water.
 - Banana peel repellent—Repels aphids. Place banana peels around roses and other plants.
 - Lemon spray—Repels white flies and soft-bodied insects. Also gets rid of fleas. Boil three lemon peels in one quart of water. Let cool, remove peels, and put solution in a properly labelled spray bottle.
 - Lemongrass wasp repellent—Place lemongrass in a vase on your picnic table to keep wasps away.
 - Vinegar spray—Combats fungal disease and black spots on roses. Combine three tablespoons of apple cider vinegar with one 3.5 litres of water.

SABBATH

- Sanctify a day as set aside for a holy purpose and in which you cease the patterns of busy life.
- Talk with your family about how you all want to celebrate the Sabbath.
- Ask: What will we cease doing on the sabbath? What do we want to do on the sabbath?
- Build in preparation time: Sabbath-keeping requires thoughtfulness beforehand, e.g. planning meals, buying food, answering emails, etc.
- Clean the house as a family the day before the Sabbath.
- Get all your errands done before the Sabbath.
- Begin with Jesus, perhaps by celebrating the Eucharist.
- Read Psalm 92, the psalm for the Sabbath Day.
- Refuse consumerism by fasting from buying or making any transactions.
- Avoid eating out and buying things on the Sabbath.
- Select a devotional to share with your family.
- Take off your watch and remove all reminders of work during the Sabbath day.
- Prepare a special Sabbath meal.
- Light Sabbath candles.
- Bake challah (a special Jewish bread with twisted swirls)
- Bless your children and spouse.
- Encourage your family to take guiltless naps on the Sabbath day.
- Fill a special play box for children with quiet activities reserved for the Sabbath.
- Read Psalms 23, 24, 29, 93, 126, and 148.
- Find a church home, if I don't have one already.
- Say grace before every meal on the Sabbath.
- Share praises and concerns with family or friends on the Sabbath.
- Take a Sabbath walk.
- Spend at least ten minutes completely surrounded by nature each Sabbath.
- Take a media/technology fast on the Sabbath. Turn off your computer, and keep it off all day. Use the answering machine to screen calls on the Sabbath. Turn off the cell phone. Disconnect from news and media in order to relish loving relationships and rest in the love of God.
- Spend at least half an hour in silence on the Sabbath.
- Ask forgiveness from anyone you may have hurt or offended this week.
- Engage in a plan for reading the Bible regularly on the Sabbath.
- Prepare most Sabbath meals with local or organic foods.
- Invite someone to share a Sabbath meal.
- Read a book aloud on the Sabbath.
- Take a criticism break.
- Write a letter of appreciation.
- Engage in service outreach.
- Avoid driving on the Sabbath, except to church.
- Pick a cue throughout the week (your e-mail delivery chime, a glance at your watch) to bring in a moment of Sabbath peace to your weekday routine.

TRANSPORT and TRAVEL

- Walk or cycle more often, particularly for short distances.
- Be safe. If you have never seen a cyclist on your normal route to work, look for a bike route with bike lanes and wide shoulders.
- Use a map. Check to see if your city or local bike club offers maps of safe biking routes in your area.
- Get a second opinion. After choosing a potential route, ask other cyclists if they consider it safe.
- Take action to bring better cycling to your community.

- Use public transportation. Use the bus or train more often – the fares can be cheaper than the cost of driving per km combined with parking charges.
 - The manufacture and use of automobiles makes up 20 to 25 percent of carbon dioxide emissions.
 - Automobile traffic contributes significantly to noise pollution.
 - Increased road building negatively affects wildlife by breaking up their habitats and altering surface runoff. New roads built through sensitive habitats can damage ecosystems.
 - The materials required for roads come from large-scale rock quarrying and gravel extraction, which can harm sensitive ecological areas.
 - Road construction also alters the water table, increases surface runoff, and raises the risk of flooding.
- Combine trips. Plan to use one journey for a number of tasks and, if possible, share journeys.
- Check out long-distance bus routes. Buses are often the least expensive and most energy-efficient form of transportation.
- Consider a hybrid for your next car purchase. Check out the savings you can reap in fuel costs.
- Look for the silver lining! Nine great things about the high cost of gas: Less traffic, more demand for public transportation, four-day workweeks and telecommuting, more frugality, cheaper insurance, fewer traffic deaths, less air pollution–related deaths, less suburban sprawl, less obesity.
- Ask your local car-wash manager if they recycle the water; if they do, it's more efficient to use a commercial car wash—provided you don't make a special trip to get there. If you wash your car at home:
 - Park the car on your lawn instead of the driveway. It will act as a natural filter for the soap, dirt, and oil that would otherwise flow into storm drains, eventually causing damage to rivers, streams, and other wetlands.
 - Use less water. Buy a nozzle for your hose that controls the water flow or use a bucket.
 - Use a biodegradable soap or make your own eco-friendly car wash by using a few squirts of biodegradable liquid dishwashing detergent or laundry detergent mixed with a bucket of water.
- Ask if your employer would encourage the use of public transport through the provision of season ticket loans and encourage cycling to work by providing secure facilities for cycles together with showers and lockers.
- Use climate mitigation schemes such as *Climate Stewards* for air travel.
- Drive at slower speeds - driving at 100 kph uses 30% more fuel than driving at 80 kph.
- Develop a good driving technique - where safe, accelerate gently and avoid sharp braking. These methods can lead to a 25% reduction in fuel used.
- The average Kiwi could save about \$\$\$ a year by maintaining proper tyre pressure. Invest in a \$2 tyre gauge and check tyres every month. Incorrect tyre pressure can increase fuel consumption.
- Have your car serviced regularly – an incorrectly adjusted carburettor can waste up to 25% of fuel.

FOOD AND DRINK

10 Ways to Start

1. Buy local. When you support local coops, farmers' markets, and community-supported agriculture, you reduce the distance your food migrates and the amount of fuel and packaging it takes to feed your family. Buy locally grown produce where possible and support farmers markets. Get close to the food you eat; know its producers and where your food comes from. Find local sources for eggs, honey, meat, fruit and vegetables.
Make a goal to eat food produced less than 150 km away from where you live.
2. Shop seasonally. Eat food that is in season and fresh. Enjoy sweet corn in the summer, apples in autumn, and citrus in the winter. Not only will the fruits and vegetables be fresher when you buy what's in season, you'll also support local economies and reduce harmful emissions.

3. Eat less, especially less meat (producing it is more harmful to the environment than other foods).
4. Compost. Reduce your waste by composting food scraps in the backyard.
5. Filter. Stop drinking bottled water and buy a filter instead.
6. Pre-cycle. Pay attention to food packaging. “Pre-cycle” by purchasing food with minimal packaging. Avoid individually-wrapped items, food packaged in containers that cannot be recycled or food with excessive packaging.
7. Bag It. Bring your own cloth bags to the grocery store.
8. Eat at home and eat what you cook. Cooking at home does not have to be difficult or time consuming, and the payoff is big: fresh ingredients, less processed food, healthier eating habits, and more time together as a family.
9. Share. Get in the practice of inviting others to your table to share your food.
10. Pray. Say a prayer before meals, not out of routine but out of genuine thankfulness.

More Tips

- Read Matthew 15 to be reminded that Christ cares for our physical and nutritional needs.
- Eat together (a wonderful way to build relationships, celebrate life and community).
- Eat slowly. Join the slow food movement – it adds to the pleasure!
- Don’t eat. If you are able, fast for a meal and give the money saved to local food banks or international relief agencies.
- Visit www.betterworldshopper.org to educate yourself about food companies to support.
- Use less water. A diet with more plants takes less water to produce. Use a stainless steel thermos instead of bottled water. If your tap water is not agreeable, install a water filter.
- Shop from a grocery list and avoid impulse purchases.
- Choose organically grown crops and avoid buying too much produce that has been flown in from around the world. Increase your organic food purchases by at least 10 percent.
- Purchase food in bulk.
- Consider growing your own produce if possible and practical. Plant a vegetable garden and share the produce with others.
- Abstain from a less-than-ecologically-sound food.
- Avoid fast-food restaurants.
- Learn how to find meat that is raised locally and ethically.
- Cut back on sweets. Not only are they unhealthy, but processed sugar is a major cause of type-2 diabetes.
- Avoid the centre aisles in grocery stores. This is where you find most processed foods. Instead purchase more “real food,” on the outer aisles—meat, eggs, fruits, vegetables, etc.
- Cut down on soft drinks. Drink more water instead.
- Buy fair-trade coffee, nuts, oil, tea, chocolate, etc. “Fair trade” means that farmers are paid a fair living wage, that the work conditions are humane, and that employers are not destroying the environment for short-term gain. For more information visit www.fairtrade.net
- Volunteer at a soup kitchen or food redistribution centre.
- Learn to say “no” to the expensive, unhealthy junk foods that are marketed to your children.
- Use the most energy efficient appliance for the job. Toaster ovens and microwaves use less electricity than conventional ovens.
- Don’t preheat except when baking. Most dishes do not need it.
- Make sure the flame from your gas stove is not larger than the pot or pan sitting on it.
- Microwaves are 80% more efficient than traditional electric ovens. Save energy by precooking potatoes, carrots, and other vegetables in the microwave before putting them in the oven.
- Use some of the money you save to help end hunger through church or charitable organizations.
- Save leftovers instead of throwing them away, and eat them later.

- Make pickles, jams and preserves when produce is in season and cheap.

HOME

- Take that first step! An energy audit can help you save up to 30 percent on your energy bills. You can halve your energy costs by changing a few simple behaviours.
- Turn your refrigerator and freezer to a warmer setting.
- Activate the “sleep” mode on your home office equipment. Use laptops rather than desktops when possible.
- Turn off lights, TVs, stereos, and computers when leaving the room.
- Hang clothes on the line to dry. Even once a week helps!
- Reduce shower time by at least two minutes.
- Close curtains at night during the winter and on hot days in the summer.
- Only do full loads when using the dishwasher, clothes washer, and dryer.
- Consider down-sizing. The bigger the house, the more resources it consumes.
- Switch to energy-saving light bulbs, which use about one-quarter the energy of standard light-bulbs and last up to ten times longer.
- Purchase a programmable thermostat and use it to turn on heat or a/c just before you wake up or come home.
- Replace furnace and air-conditioning filters at least three times a year.
- Caulk between window frames, door frames, and walls.
- Add storm windows or use plastic film kits to improve single-pane windows. Replace inefficient windows.
- Install motion sensors, dimmers, and timers for indoor and outdoor lighting.
- Install ceiling or other fans to cut down on air-conditioning costs.
- Decide what you want before you open the door—refrigerator gazing can cost \$30–\$60 per year.
- Put hot food in a cold-water bath or place it outside in cold weather before refrigerating, so less energy is required to keep it cool.
- Keep your refrigerator and freezer full. Doing so uses less energy because less cooling is lost each time you open the refrigerator. Defrosting food in the fridge also keeps the fridge cooler.
- Unplug extra appliances (such as those in your garage or basement) when not in use.
- You can save \$\$\$ each year by making your own homemade cleaning products. Visit www.blessedearth.org for recipes.
- About 25 percent of the water supplied to the average home is used for showers. Installing a low-flow showerhead can save a family of four 1300l of water each week.
- As much as 40 percent of our water is flushed down toilets. Flush once less per day and you will save as much water as the average person in Africa uses all day for drinking, cooking, bathing, and cleaning.
- Turn off the tap while you brush your teeth.
- Avoid disposable products. Two billion disposable razors end up in landfills annually.
- Switch to organic makeup and natural healthcare products.
- Use fans instead of your air conditioner. It costs sixteen times more to run a room air conditioner than a ceiling fan; it costs forty-three times more to run a central air conditioner than a ceiling fan.
- Close the fireplace damper when not in use. An open damper can allow 8 percent of your home’s heat to go up the chimney. In the summer, an open damper can add about \$100 to your cooling costs.
- Eliminate the source of temptation: the average household could save \$2000 per year by banning mail-order catalogues from the house.
- Wash clothes in cold water. About 80 to 85 percent of the energy used to wash clothes goes toward heating the water.

- Drink tap water instead of bottled water. About 80 percent of our plastic waste ends up in landfills.
- Think before you print.
- Adjust the thermostat three degrees up in the summer and down three degrees in the winter— saving \$200 per year! Heating and cooling (including water) account for about 56 percent of the energy used in a typical household.

CHRISTMAS

- Agree as a family what you're going to do for Christmas gifts. One family decided that each person would receive three gifts each year to symbolize the gold, frankincense, and myrrh the wise men gave Jesus. They each received one thing they need, one thing they want, and one small surprise.
- Pick names out of a hat for extended family, so each adult only gets one special Christmas gift. Or opt for giving presents to children only.
- Spend less. It takes an average of six months for a credit card user to pay off holiday debt.
- Skip paper Christmas cards. If everyone sent just one less card per year, we could save a vast amount of paper.
- Reduce the trimmings.
- Wrap in reusable material, such as cloth bags or reusable gift bags. Even old maps or brochures.
- Celebrate close to home.
- Consider purchasing a live tree from a local nursery and replanting it later. Or purchase an artificial tree and save petrol on annual trips to a tree farm; artificial trees don't require pesticides.
- Instead of adding new ornaments this year, opt for edible or compostable items like stringed popcorn or cranberries for garlands. Making Christmas decorations can also be a fun family activity.
- Switch to LED holiday lights. They cost more per strand than standard lights, but use up to 100 times less energy and will last about ten years or one hundred thousand hours when used indoors.
- Give purposeful gifts this Christmas. Everyone appreciates homemade, personalized gifts more than store-bought options. Another idea is to give an "environmental starter kit" filled with items such as high efficiency light bulbs, a battery recharger, refillable bottles, canvas shopping bags, etc.
- Combine shopping trips to use less petrol. And remember to bring your reusable shopping bags.





THE LAST WORD

I have argued that a 'mission-shaped church' must have its mission shaped by its hope; that the genuine Christian hope, rooted in Jesus' resurrection, is the hope for God's renewal of all things, for his overcoming of corruption, decay and death, for his filling of the whole cosmos with his love and grace, his power and glory. I have argued that, to be truly effective in this kind of mission, one must be genuinely and cheerfully rooted in God's renewal of space, time and matter within the life of the church. There is no use (to re-adapt, once more, a metaphor I have already used more than once) trying to get fruit from a tree whose roots you have systematically dug up.

I am not, of course, saying, 'Do "traditional church" well and mission will follow.' Far too much 'traditional church' has been too much tradition and not enough church. What I am saying is, think through the hope that is ours in the gospel; recognise the renewal of creation as both the goal of all things in Christ and the achievement that has already been accomplished in the resurrection; and go to the work of beauty, justice, evangelism, the renewal of space, time and matter, as the anticipation of the eventual goal and the implementation of what Jesus achieved in his death and resurrection. That is the way both to the genuine mission of God and to the shaping of the church by and for that mission.

- Wright, Tom. 2007: *Surprised by Hope* (London: SPCK), p.282.



CAN WE HELP YOU FURTHER?

“...a problem exists as real and meaningful as a sinking ship with billions of people on board. The earth is our ship, an ark for everything that lives. It is the only vessel available to carry humans through the ocean of space, and it is rapidly becoming unseaworthy.”

- Matthew Sleeth, 2006: *Serve God, Save The Planet: A Call to Christian Action*, page 16.

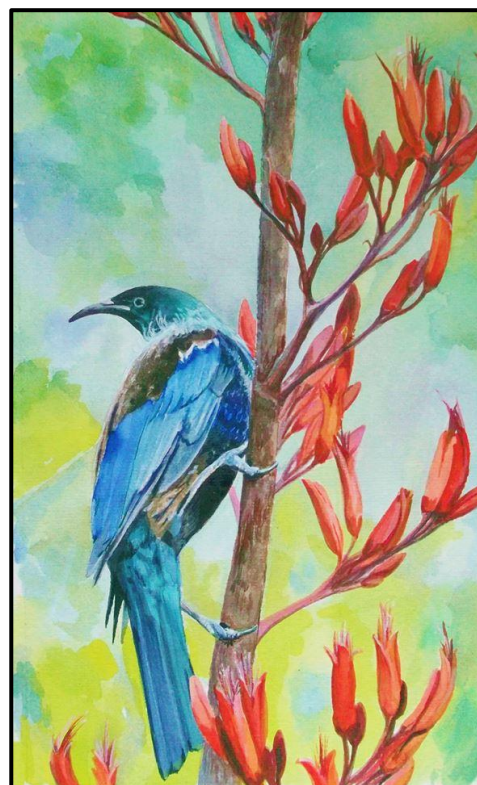
The environment is likely to be the defining issue of the 21st century. How should Christians respond?

Seminars and Workshops

*These workshops include teaching followed by time for questions.
Choose just one or string 2-3 together for a full-day, half-day or evening.
Ideal for training courses, church retreats and camps!*

- **An Ecological Crisis?**
(explores the current situation in New Zealand and/or around the world)
- **Why On Earth Should We Care?**
(explores the biblical basis/mandate for looking after what God had made, and why this planet matters to God)
- **Objections, Excuses and Eco-Myths**
(addresses the reasons commonly given by Christians to avoid creation care)
- **A Christian Response to Climate Change**
(sorts fact from fiction, delineates the extent and impact, explores how Christians might respond)
- **The Future of Planet Earth: Renewed or Replaced?**
(explores these options in the light of an understanding obscured for 250 years, but recently re-asserted)
- **Saving Souls *and* Saving Seals?**
(explores the scope of God’s redeeming and reconciling work through Christ and its practical implications)

- **Creation Care: A Matter of Morality?**
(explores whether caring for creation is a moral imperative and has ethical connotations)
- **Nature as Spiritual Practice**
(explores how delighting in the natural world can help us be attentive to God and enhance Christian life)
- **Creation Care as Mission**
(explores how caring for creation proclaims the Good News and can be utilised by churches to impact the community and draw people towards the Creator)
- **Eco-friendly Living**
(explores how to translate environmental stewardship from theory into practice - at both the individual and collective level)
- **Eco-Poetry**
(explores the natural world and creation care through the inspired works of poets, including some of our own NCNZ facilitators!)



Sermons and Talks

- 20-30 minutes of **inspirational, Bible-based teaching** on a creation-related theme, leading listeners to an application which is personal, practical and specific.
- presentations of any duration which point to the need for creation care (with or without referring to the Bible, depending on the audience).

We also facilitate contemplative walks, prayer retreats and camps, and conversation cafes.

Ages: We cater for all ages: children, young people and adults.

Cost: All these opportunities operate on a *koha* basis.

Facilitators: Rev. Phillip Donnell M.A., M.Theol, Dip.Tchg., CELTA

Rev. Warren Prestidge M.A., B.D (Hons)

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