

Module 2 - **celebrating creation!**

Ideas and resources for worship

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Sound **the trumpet**

Preparing for worship

The Psalmist proclaimed:

Praise the Lord, my soul!
O Lord, my God, how great you are!
You are clothed with majesty and glory;
you cover yourself with light.
You spread out the heavens like a tent
and built your home on the waters above.
Psalm 104:1-3a Good News Bible (GNB)

And the hymn writer echoed:

Praise my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored forgiven,
who like me his praise should sing?

Praise him! praise him!
Praise him! praise him!
Praise the everlasting King!

H.F. Lyte

Introduction to Celebrating Creation

The collection of Psalms in the Bible witnesses to the worship that people have offered to God in hymn and prayer, personally and as a community, in sorrow and in joy, in the everyday and in the festival, for thousands of years. Through time new lines have been written and liturgies developed to enrich worship. It is in this tradition that this collection of resources is offered for churches to use and adapt for their worship, and hopefully to inspire new prayers and new songs.

Some of this material has been prepared especially for this Module; other material has been compiled from a variety of sources. May these words, thoughts and ideas come alive when they are taken from the printed page and offered to God in worship.

Rooting Creation Care into your church's mission

Feedback from Award winning churches reveals that success stems from rooting their environmental work in worship, so helping the whole to church appreciate that creation care is part of church mission and personal discipleship and not just good citizenship.

All Saint's Church, West Bromwich, has engaged with environmental issues over a number of years as a part of their mission. Their Green Co-ordinator, Rev Liz Brown, reflected that the incorporation of creation care themes into their worship has underpinned this ministry. All Saint's hold an annual Environment Sunday, usually the Sunday nearest 5th June – World Environment Day. Their Environment Sunday includes creation-focussed Bible readings, hymns, prayers and sermon, usually accompanied by an appropriate display and task or challenge for their congregation. One year they distributed water hippos for people to place in their cisterns and save 1 litre per flush.

In addition, All Saint's annually hold what they describe as an 'Eau de Nil' or 'light green' Sunday, to help maintain the momentum of their creation care ministry through the year.

How could your church weave creation care perspectives into its worship?

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Approaching God

Sound the trumpet!

Sound the trumpet!
Strum the bass
Let us worship God,
The Lord of creation.

Scripture sentences

My help comes only from the Lord,
maker of heaven and earth.
Psalm 121 Revised English Bible (REB)

To the Lord belongs the earth
and everything in it,
the world and all its inhabitants. *Psalm 24 (REB)*

Te Deum

We praise you O God,
We acclaim you as Lord;
All creation worships you,
The Father everlasting.

Call to worship

In the beginning was the Word – the dawn of life.
In the end will be the Word – the living hope.
In between is the evolving Kingdom of God.
Come to us Lord,
Mingle your purpose in our lives,
Your promise with our hope.

Prayers

Prayer of Praise

Creating God,
You are the source of light and life,
so we praise you.
You became flesh to bring light and life,
so we praise you.
You sustain the world with your light and life,
so we praise you.

Monthly Prayer Guide for the Care of Creation

Christian Ecology Link publish a
monthly prayer diary written by Philip
Clarkson-Webb. This is accessed
from a link on the CEL home page
www.christian-ecology.org.uk

Prayer of Confession

Creating God, you give light and life,
and express delight in your creation.
You gave the command to till and care for your garden,
but we have abused the beauty of creation and the keeping of your word
 We confess the plundering of finite resources.
 We confess to stealing our descendants' birthright to life.
 We confess the flagrant pollution of land, sea and air.
 We confess the churches' lack of concern for the well-being of creation.
 We confess the excesses within our own lifestyle.
Creating God, we have desecrated your creation and darkened your light.
In a moment of quiet we confess our profligate lifestyle and human greed.

Words of Renewal

God of life and God of light, as we seek a new relationship with your created order,
may we sense the grace and peace of a new relationship with You. Amen.

For the beauty of the earth

1.
For the beauty of the earth:

4.
For the ugly of the skies:

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Majestic mountains, verdant vales,
Mighty oaks and beaming buttercups,
We bring our offering of praise.

2.
For the beauty of the skies:
Singing larks and fluttering bats,
Warming sun and refreshing rain,
We bring our offering of praise.

3.
For the ugly of the earth:
Mountains of waste, valleys of landfill,
Resources depleted forgetting tomorrow,
We bring our confession of sorrow.

Global warming and acid rain,
Choking pollution, thinning ozone layer,
We bring our confession of sorrow.

5.
For the healing of the earth:
Guide us to restore our relationship,
With the rest of creation,
With future generations and with you.

6.
For the healing of the skies:
Open our eyes to our selfish ways,
Stir our hearts to live life today,
That all might enjoy real life tomorrow.
Amen.

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The 'm' prayer

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | God of microbes and mammoths,
Moths and moons,
Moving creative forces,
Making a beautiful world,
We marvel at your majestic movement. | 3 | God of the manger and maiden
Master craftsman and miracle maker,
Moved to tears,
Mourned by three Marys,
We marvel at your servant ministry. |
| 2 | God of Moses and mountain,
Manna and meandering,
Moving towards milk and honey,
Motivating hearts, mentoring minds,
We marvel at the migration of freedom. | 4 | God of mission and ministry,
Mystery and magnificence,
Move across the depths of our mean
minds,
Mould our hearts to mirror your manner,
That others may sense your creative
love |

A Gardening Prayer

In the dawn of the day lead us to the garden of life that we might...
Prune the excess,
Root out injustice,
Water the wilting,
Nourish the withered,
Empty the potting shed of poison ,
And at the eve of the day, rest, and wonder at God's garden.

Our Lord's Prayer – a responsive version

Our Father, who art in heaven...	You are also at home in the air, soil, forests and oceans,
Hallowed be Your name...	By the care we take of your creation,
Your Kingdom come...	All that you see is good,
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...	Your will to till and care.
Give us this day our daily bread...	That all may have sufficient to live life in fullness
Forgive us our trespasses...	our greed, our exploitation, our lack of concern for other species and for future generations,
As we forgive those who trespass against us...	by reconciliation with justice and peace.
Lead us not into temptation...	the temptation to equate dominion with exploitation,
And deliver us from evil...	the evil of destroying your gift of creation,
For Yours is the Kingdom...	Yours Lord, not ours,
The Power and the Glory...	in the cross and the resurrection,
For ever and ever...	You were the beginning and you are the end.
Amen.	And so be it.

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An Acrostic Prayer*

written for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development

Creating God, you have given us a vision of a new heaven and a new earth...

Resources conserved

Earth tended

Atmosphere cleansed

Trees planted

Injustice ended

Oceans teeming

Nations at peace

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer

Alert nations, enthuse churches

Receive our commitment and so entwine our lives with Your purpose.

Earth and heaven will then sing of your glory. Amen.

**in an acrostic verse the first letter of each line spell a word or phrase*

The Millennium Resolution

Let there be

Respect for the earth

Peace for its people

Love in our lives

Delight in the good

Forgiveness for past wrongs

And from now on a new start.

Dismissal

May God who established the dance of creation,

Who marvelled at the lilies of the field,

Who transforms chaos to order,

Lead us to transform our lives and the Church

To reflect God's glory in creation.

Blessing

As the air sings with songs of glory,

as the water flashes with the silver of creation,

as the forests bloom with leaves for the healing of nations,

so may God's light and love,

fill our hearts and souls and minds.

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Listening to the **Word of God**

A Dramatic Reading: Genesis 1:1- 2.4a

(Setting: reader to one side, a space for the presentation of articles/activities)

Reading	Activity undertaken in silence
Genesis	1:1-5 A light/candle is switched on/lit or brought forward
Genesis	1:6-8 A dancer of creative activity
Genesis	1:9-13 Soil is brought forward, seeds are planted or flowers arranged
Genesis	1:14-19 A representation of the sun and moon are presented
Genesis	1:20-23 Children come forward dressed and moving as fish & birds or art representing birds and fish are brought forward
Genesis	1:24-31 A person moves to the front and curls tightly into a ball then slowly stretches to marvel at and embrace the rest of creation
Genesis	2:1-4a The whole created order rests

Selected Bible passages with a creation theme

Old Testament

Genesis 1:1-2.4a	The first (six days of activity, one day of rest) story of creation
Genesis 2:4b-15	The second (garden) story of creation
Genesis 2:15-3:24	The Fall
Genesis 6-9	The story of Noah's flood and God's rainbow promise
Job 38-39	God's answer to Job from out of the storm

Many of the Psalms have a strong focus on creation, including the following:

Psalms 8	God's glory and the place of humanity
Psalms 46	Trust in God
Psalms 104	In praise of God the creator
Psalms 139	Adoration of the God of creation
Psalms 145	All creation praises God

Proverbs 8:22-31	Wisdom in creation
Isaiah 65: 17-25	The new creation

New Testament

Matthew 6: 25-33	Worrying about possessions: birds and food, lilies in the fields
John 1: 1-18	The Word
John 3: 16-17	Salvation for the whole cosmos
Romans 8: 18-25	The groaning of creation
Colossians 1: 3-20	Thanks to God for the redemption of creation through Christ

Module 6, 'Exploring God's Green Word' contains some Bible notes and studies.

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Responding to the **Word of God**

I. **Caring for creation** – An all-age worship address

1. Ask those present to name something precious that they have made or contributed to its formation. Examples might be a picture, a model, a flower garden, a flower arrangement.
2. Ask how they would feel if they gave or lent the item to another who spoilt it.
3. Explain that you are now going to tell the story of creation. Take a green balloon, inflate it and tie it. Next, tell the story of creation using pre-prepared coloured pictures illustrating the activity of the 6 days. Examples include sun and moon, waves and earth, fish, whales and birds, flowers and trees, and humans too. Stick these onto the balloon with glue (a glue stick works well).
4. Ask the congregation: What do you think God thought about creation? Remind the congregation what God actually thought by reading part of the creation story, for example Genesis 1:1-4 which concludes with the words: 'and he was pleased with what he saw.' (GNB). Ask the congregation how they think God would feel if creation was spoilt. Make the point that we should care for creation not just for what we might be able to gain from it, but because all of creation has value in God's eyes.
5. Brainstorm ways that the church and its members could show their care for God's creation.

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II. **Wildlife and God's people** – Ideas for an all-age service

A Rocha produce an annual set of worship resources for Environment Sunday (formerly Conservation Sunday) – the first Sunday in June. The following all-age service is from the A Rocha 1999 worship pack. A Rocha is committed to the conservation of important habitats and species, campaigns for the care of God's world, and draws on the cross-cultural strength of the world-wide Christian community. More information, including A Rocha worship resources, can be found at www.arochoa.org. Alternatively, Tel: 0208 574 5935.

Part 1 - Match the Pairs

Match the pairs in the following two lists of names and actions.

List 1

Adam

Noah

David

Solomon

Ezekiel

Jesus

Paul

Hosea

List 2

Foresaw a day when God would renew and restore his ravaged creation, and make it abound with abundant, diverse life

Gave names to animals

The first conservationist

Longed for the day when all creation would be liberated from bondage and decay

Used birds, flowers and agricultural images to illustrate his teaching

Studied and described plants, birds and fish

Wrote about the weather, the elements and wildlife in his poetry

Taught that environmental degradation can be caused by human sin

Use the following as answers or to give clues:

- Genesis 2:19-20 link Adam and naming
- Genesis 6-9 The story of Noah – reveals how he built the ark to save the animals, thereby becoming the first conservationist!
- Psalms 8, 29, 36, 65, amongst others, are attributed to David and mention weather, elements and wildlife
- Solomon studied and described plants, birds and fish (see Part 2 for details),
- Ezekiel 47 records that Ezekiel foresaw a day when God would renew creation
- the gospels record that Jesus used birds and flowers (for example Matthew 6:25-34) and agricultural references (for example Luke 15:8-14) in his teaching
- Paul wrote that he longed for the liberation of creation from bondage in Romans 8:19-20
- Hosea (Hosea 4:1-3) taught that environmental degradation can be caused by human sin

Reflection: the Bible is full of references to the value and importance of wildlife.

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Part 2 - Spotlight on 3 biblical characters

(pick and mix from these three characters)

1. Noah

Read Genesis 9:8-17. With whom did God make this covenant? What did God promise? Why had God ordained such awful judgement? Consider illustrating the story with a colourful rainbow. Think of current situations where wildlife and natural habitats are being destroyed because of human sin. Is it reasonable to describe Noah as the first conservationist? In Hebrews 11:7 Noah is commended because of his faith. Think of people of faith in our generation who are concerned about the well-being of both people and wildlife.

Reflection: Noah cared for all of God's creatures in a very practical way!

2. King Solomon

We can use resources like wildlife identification books, binoculars and magnifying glasses to study and describe plants and animals (you could illustrate this point with such equipment). Read 1 Kings 4:29-34. How might Solomon have gone about his research?

Think of a famous naturalist and consider how he or she has contributed to our understanding of wildlife. Read Proverbs 30:24-28. What do the verses suggest about Solomon's attitude to other species? How might Solomon's studies of animals and flowers have contributed to his reputation for being a wise person?

Reflection: Solomon enjoyed and gained much from studying nature.

3. Jesus

The gospels record that Jesus often gave his time to others, sometimes one needy person, sometimes the disciples, sometimes huge crowds (invite those present to think of examples of each category). There were other times when Jesus needed to be alone.

Invite those present to name the places/situations where Jesus wanted to be alone in the following passages: Mark 1.12, 1.35, 6.32, 6.46 & 14.32.

How were these times important in the life and ministry of Jesus?

List some of the different habitats where Jesus prayed.

Ask if others have ever prayed alone and out of doors, as Jesus did.

If so, was the experience different from praying indoors?

What are, or might be, the benefits of praying alone, or with just a few friends, in a quiet place out of doors?

Reflection: Jesus valued quiet places outdoors to retreat to and pray.

Part 3 - Responding as a Church

Noah cared for all creatures, Solomon enjoyed studying the wildlife around him and Jesus enjoyed places of quiet and solitude. Think of ways in which your church or its members care for or study nature and value quiet places. How can we as a church do more to follow in the steps of these biblical characters?

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III. Reflections on Bible stories:

1 Six days/4,600 million years The past 10 generations

Creation

lighting
founding
breathing
living

Desecreation

clouding
flooding
choking
dying

2 Creation in Reverse?

The following story was told by Jennifer Potter at the 2000 Methodist Conference and was drawn from a Radio 4 'Thought for the Day' given by Colin Morris. It was inspired after Colin Morris had watched tonnes of rock fall into the sea near Beachy Head - a process accelerated by global warming and the subsequent rise in sea-level.

"If the Bible were to be rewritten for the twentieth century, it would have to begin not like the original one with Genesis, the story of how God created the world, but with a sort of Genesis in reverse, the story of how we, humankind, dismantled it. It would tell of the pollution of the air and of the seas and rivers, of the piling up of waste materials from an ever-expanding consumer society and of the diminishing varieties of plants and animals. It would tell of the enormous difference between those human beings who have too much and those who barely survive. It would end with a ravished and uninhabited Earth, made uninhabitable by humankind itself. God would shake his head sadly, realising that he had to start all over again."

3 Esau's story... The loss of a birthright

"I don't suppose that I wanted for much – we lived off the land, grew crops in the fields and hunted where the deer lay low. It provided for the whole family. It was the way that my family had lived for generations and I imagined that it would always be this way. One day my father would offer me his blessing to live off the land. One day I would offer the same to my family, and on the cycle would go."

"I knew my father was growing old and weary, but it still came as a surprise the day he called me to his side, asked me to hunt for meat and make his favourite meal from the kill. I went out with a heavy heart: I was pleased to hunt for my father, but sensed with sadness that this would be the last time."

"The hunt was successful, and I cooked a meal that my father would love. Once prepared, I approached my father to offer him the meat. As I drew near he began to shake. He told me in a broken voice that he had given his blessing away. My brother had stolen the blessing of God to provide dew from the heavens to make the fields fertile and provide corn and wine in abundance."

Esau was cheated of his inheritance, of fertile land from which to live. Will our grand-children's generation view our generation as Esau viewed Jacob, as one who had stolen the birthright of God-given abundance?

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4 choosing life

Moses spoke the following to the wandering people of Israel on the edge of the Promised Land.

“Today I am giving you a choice between good and evil, between life and death. If you obey the commands of the Lord your God, which I give you today, if you love him, obey him, and keep all his laws, then you will prosper and become a nation of many people. The Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are about to occupy.”

(Deuteronomy 30:15-16 GNB)

The following is one suggestion of what Moses might say to God’s people as they stand on the threshold of the 21st century:

“Today I am giving you a choice between good and evil, between life and death. If you care for God’s creation, walk gently on the land, live life today that others might have life tomorrow, respect other creatures, care for your neighbour both near and far, then you will enjoy life in fullness in the Kingdom of God, on earth and in heaven.”

What might Moses say to your church?

5 Sufficiency?

Born in a borrowed stable

Lived a simple life

Buried in a borrowed grave

The Way, the Truth, the Life

6 The lilies in the field

“Look at that man”, said one lily to another, “consider his life. He walks from village to village, from door to door, not asking for anything, yet gives and receives”.

“He seems different from the other folk around,” replied a second lily. “He appears to have turned his cares upside down. It’s God’s cares that come first in his life, the poor, the widows and the outcasts, so different from town’s top nobs.”

“Do you think”, asked the first lily, “that when his time comes, God will look more kindly on him than the ‘smart’ Jerusalem set?”

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7 The prodigal race

There was once a ruler who had two sons. The younger said to the ruler:

“Let me have my share of the property”.

After a few days the younger son took his property and got busy – releasing the assets to create wealth for his use. He dug for coal, drilled for gas and oil and used the wealth released to go on a spending spree: fast cars, holidays across the world and every kind of modern convenience. The more he had, the more he wanted – he enjoyed every new gadget, unconcerned that the more he used, the inheritance that he would pass on to his own children would change from a fruitful world to one laid to waste.

If the story ended now, would he come to his senses before it was too late?

When one machine wore out, a new one was ordered and he amassed more and more until one day, his oil well ran dry, his coal was exhausted and he realised he had spent his inheritance and scarred the earth. He sat amidst the waste, thinking of the life that those in his father’s community lived, and he wondered if it was too late to say sorry.

8 DIY Biblical exercises

Think of a favourite biblical passage or story, and consider how it may be viewed from a different perspective and through ‘green’ tinted lenses.

Imagine the reaction if a Biblical character travelled through time and space to visit the world or your church e.g. Noah, Moses, Isaiah, Peter, Paul.

What would they say to you? What would you say to them?

These exercises can be a creative challenge for a group of people and could be developed for use in worship.

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IV. We did this: stories from worship

Candlemas Service

Having gained the Eco-Congregation Award we arranged a community service and celebration at Candlemas. An Energy Advice Officer spoke on 'using efficient lights', our Bishop, the Bishop of Bradford presented us with the Award and then dedicated and switched on our new energy efficient lighting. We worshiped and celebrated with the whole community.

Clare Hyde – St John the Evangelist (C of E), Hurst Green, nr. Clitheroe

Litter bugs in Bramford

Church members in Ipswich were shocked when they arrived for worship. It was if a waste bin had been emptied and its contents strewn around the church. Inspired by the large Cornish attraction, the all-age service had the theme of 'The Eden Project'. During the service, the world was described as the garden of God and we have been placed in the garden to look after it. To the relief of worried worshippers, our young people then tidied up the church and collected all the rubbish. Of course, the rubbish was not collected to be thrown away, but bagged for recycling.

Rev Philip Turner - Bramford Road Methodist Church

First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church

First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church launched 10 **GREEN GOALS** in worship:

Give unwanted clothes and household items to recycling points

Recycling points for glass, plastic and papers can be found in Ballymoney at...

Energy saving light bulbs could be used to replace ordinary light bulbs

Economise with water – conserve water by placing a water hippo in cisterns

Never leave lights or electrical equipment switched on when not in use

Get insulated: water tanks, lofts, windows and doors

Operate heating systems efficiently - 1° less on thermostats saves 10% on fuel bills

Avoid waste by reusing plastic bags for shopping etc.

Look for recycled paper products

Share transport, e.g. to church!

What Green Goals could your church include in worship?

Going bananas

Wanstead United Reformed Church marked Fairtrade Fortnight in March with a presentation during worship using a giant banana – symbolising the world's favourite fruit. Church members were helped to reflect the difference that trading fairly makes to small scale producers of the banana. Feedback from the congregation revealed that a number would be changing their shopping habits and a High Street greengrocer was successfully persuaded to stock fairly traded bananas.

Vic Danzelman – Wanstead United Reformed Church

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More **stories from worship...**

Worship in Wellies

Planning a clear out of their overgrown churchyard St John the Evangelist organised a service entitled 'Worship in Wellies'. On a nominated Sunday in September worshippers arrived in their 'gardening best' - old clothes and wellies! The service was followed by a picnic lunch before an all-age gang set to in the churchyard. Overgrown shrubs were cut back, a meadow area was cleared and planted with bulbs and some wood was stacked up to form log piles. The event helped members worship the God of creation with hands as well as hearts.

Clare Hyde - St John the Evangelist, Hurst Green nr Clitheroe

P.S. Their next churchyard project is to make and install some nest boxes for birds.

Treefest

Dalbeattie Forest Partnership, along with other Forestry areas, had been mandated with increasing recreational and social use of the Forest. Treefest was a national event to heighten awareness of the local forestry and its resources for the public. A Tree service seemed to be a way of widening local involvement in the Forest and the local churches were bemused to be asked.

What did we do? Fortunately relationships with the Episcopal and Catholic clergy are excellent and they agreed to participate. We walked as a large group with staff from the Commission, sang "All things Bright and Beautiful", stopped at points in the Forest and read what each of us thought was appropriate in terms of Creation and our responsibility to care for and manage the created order.

A cross roads in the forest made a challenging point, offering us a way forward or the way back to where we started. The challenge was to move on, reflecting on our part in conservation.

Rev Norman Hutcheson - Dalbeattie with Urr Parish Church

Guest preacher

We celebrated gaining the Eco-Congregation Award by inviting leading environmentalist Jonathan Porritt to undertake the presentation. Jonathan congratulated us on what we had done and achieved and then challenged us to widen and deepen our ministry.

Mark Boulton – Bethesda Methodist Church, Cheltenham

Advices and Queries by the young people of Dorking Quaker Meeting

'Advices and Queries' are short suggestions and questions which Quakers use to help them think about the way that live. The following was written by the young people of Dorking Meeting:

- ◆ The Bible says that God created everything. A lot of things in the world are very beautiful. Do you remember to thank God for these beautiful things?

What suggestions and questions could be brought to your worship?

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V. Planet Doctor – a humorous story/ dramatic sketch

The first edition of Module 2 included a piece entitled Planet Doctor. Alan Gaunt, hymn writer and member of Parkgate and Neston United Reformed Church, adapted the piece into a sketch which was used as part of their Harvest Festival. Churches are welcome to reproduce it for use within their worship. (PD=Planet Doctor, E=Earth)

- PD: The earth. Give me her file nurse. Thank you
Yes, right. (*looking at a file*)
Four thousand six hundred million years old. Quite young for a planet.
Ah! What's this?
A hundred thousand years ago. Signs of human life.
That's worrying.
- Air, water. Yes good. Plants. Yes good.
Extinction of dinosaurs. Mmmm.
Oh! Flu like symptoms:
Warm and sweaty for long periods, then freezing cold.
Show the patient in, nurse. (*nurse ushers Earth in*)
- PD: Good morning. Take a seat.
- E: Oh! I can't sit down doctor, far too painful.
- PD: We'd better stand up then.
You've been loosing weight, I gather.
- E: Oh, Yes doctor, It's awful.
Me coal and gas and oil are getting really low.
- PD: That's obviously due to too much liposuction.
Too much being drawn out,
You can't take millions of years to build these things up
And then remove them all in a couple of centuries.
We'll have to do something to slow that down.
But then you've had all this radical surgery!
- E: Oh yes doctor. It's been so painful,
That's why I can't sit down. All these painful scars.
It's been 250 years, and they've only just got round to sending me to you.
And I'm feeling so hot all the time.
- PD: Yes, you will be.
That's because of all the extra carbon dioxide you're breathing,
from the burning of all that coal, oil and gas.
- E: Ooh! And I get these storms doctor, raging storms and floods,
And then these terrible droughts,
And me sea levels rising something shocking!
- PD: Yes, the prognosis is pretty grim actually,
And you're seriously addicted to oil burning aren't you?
If we don't wean you off that
The fever could be fatal.
- E: Ooh! I hope you can doctor
I already have such terrible trouble breathing.
- PD: Trouble breathing you said?

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- E: Ooh, yes doctor. I wheeze like a black hole at times.
- PD: That's because you're losing your forests.
I'll have to prescribe trees. High doses of tree planting.
I mean, looking at these notes, this problem's been increasing for 5000 years,
But in this last six hundred or so, it's got rapidly worse.
You'll soon have no fresh air at all.
- E: I get this terrible itching too, doctor.
- PD: Humans. That's humans, swarming all over you.
Most of your problems start with humans.
- E: You mean like all these wars I've got? Ooh! They're really painful!
And then there's me water retention, and me circulation problems.
- PD: Yes, I can see your seas rising,
And your dry areas getting more and more arid,
But then there's your temperate zones.
- E: Me temperate zones, doctor? What's wrong with me temperate zones?
- PD: More and more rain, increasing vulnerability to flooding.
Things are not good, Mrs. Earth, not good at all.
- PD: You've got an acute halitosis problem as well.
- E: I've been worried about that for two hundred years doctor.
- PD: It's your air pollution.
Humans again. Oh! Yes.
Industrial revolution
Damaged living organisms,
Including your humans,
With asthma and lung disease,
Not to mention damage to buildings.
- E: Oh! Dear. It sounds awful.
And Ooh doctor just look at me ozone layer!
- PD: Yes, it's very thin. It could possibly right itself.
But we can't make that assumption.
And your humans are going to get more fatal skin cancers
And problems with cataracts.
- E: What's your verdict Doctor?
Is there any hope for me at all?
- PD: Well, Mrs. Earth I don't want to give you any false hopes.
I have to say that you are suffering
From an unsustainable growth in your human species.
If you current human activity doesn't change,
I'm afraid your ailments could prove terminal
For the balance of planetary life.
- E: Ooh! Doctor what are we going to do?

Module 2 - celebrating creation!

Times to celebrate God's creation

Churches worship the God of creation as a natural and regular part of worship. However, it can be useful to focus on creation issues at particular times in the church calendar. The following are some suggestions, what would suit your church?

Traditional Services

Barnstaple Parish Church draws on the rural tradition of guardianship of the land and its care for God's creation through traditional services including:

- **Plough Sunday**, where furrows are dug and human endeavour is mingled with soil and climate
- **Rogation Sunday** in the early summer when prayers of intercession are said, especially for the swelling of the harvest. It is a time when the potential bounty of creation's harvest can be prayed for along with the commitment to nurture the crops and land with care
- **Lammas Sunday**, a name which derives from a combination of the loaf and the mass. Traditionally the first corn to ripen was used to produce bread which was consecrated in worship. The tradition has widened to a service of first fruits.
- **Harvest Festival** may be celebrated as a time of giving thanks for the bounty of the earth together with a commitment to care for the planet.

Our 2003 Harvest Festival marked the Harvest of the Sea, during which children and adults presented readings, poems and prayers together with symbolic offerings. The service helped us express our thanks to God for the bounty of the seas and encouraged us to be good stewards of his gift.

Mary Pearson - Barnstaple Parish Church

Palm Sunday Parade in Evesham

To bring **Palm Sunday** alive we invited two donkeys to participate in the service – symbolising how a part of creation bore Christ into Jerusalem. Following the traditional procession the donkey deposits were swept up and put in the church compost pit!

Graham Gooderham -

Special occasions

◆ **Second Sunday before Lent**

If your church uses the Revised Common Lectionary you will find that the second Sunday in Lent has a 'creation' theme.

● **Environment Sunday**

Environment Sunday (formerly Conservation Sunday) is marked on the first Sunday in June. Each year A Rocha produces an excellent worship pack to help churches mark the day. Themed packs include:

- 2002 Healing the Land
- 2003 The Bible, Creation and Celtic Christians
- 2004 Jesus and the Earth

Consider inviting representatives of local wildlife groups to the service to talk about their work. Web www.arocha.org Tel 0208 574 5935

● **A time for Creation at St Osmund's**

In 2003 we chose one Sunday during the European Churches 'Time for Creation' (1st September to mid-October) and drew on worship resources of the European Christian Environmental Network www.ecen.org

Our service included the presentation of symbols of:

Human misuse of creation:

- **plastic bag**

- broken tool

Bounty of creation:

- basket of fruit
- clod of earth
- loaf of bread
- fairly traded product

Our worship related the concern for the environment with the Eucharistic, and was appreciated by those present.

*Rev'd Canon Donald MacDonald -
St Osmund's, Dorchester*

Module 2 - **celebrating creation!**

Places to celebrate God's creation

Church buildings are a traditional place of worship but people can experience God when hiking in the hills or sitting in a garden. Consider the following settings for worship:

1) Worship in **Gardens** at Silver End and Rivenhall

During the summer we held two services on Creation and environmental care – one in a garden at Silver End and the other at Rivenhall. Both services were moving, brought us together and involved the worshippers. One parishioner gave an inspiring talk and a 16 year old young man wrote a poem on 'Creation'.

Mrs Kathleen Smith – St Mary's and St Francis, Silver End and Rivenhall, Essex

If you have access to a quiet garden, consider arranging a meditative service, using natural sounds, sights and scents to worship God. See Module 9 'Planting and conserving Eden' for a story and information about the Quiet Garden Trust

2) Saffron Walden Prayer **Walk**

We invited our congregation to join a picnic and prayer walk around town, Before the event a suitable route was identified with seven places to stop and pray, with consideration given to the age of participants, walking ability and safety.

Twenty people aged from 6-80 joined the event which was blessed with a beautiful day. A different person led each of the prayers, which were linked with the site we visited, for example we gave thanks for emergency workers outside the fire station and in the park the children led prayers thanking God for the wonders of creation. Our walk included a picnic lunch in a park with an opportunity for the children to play and concluded with tea and a prayer in a neighbouring church.

We all enjoyed what was a thought-provoking event which helped us bring before God the local environment in which we live.

Mrs Jean Wheeler – Saffron Walden Methodist Church

Consider holding a prayer walk. Prepare by identifying places in your community which speak of the wonder of God's creation, the scarring of creation and care for creation. Ask people their thoughts at each place and draw these together in prayer

3) A Creation **Pilgrimage**

The Bible draws on natural scenes to point to God: for example in Psalm 23 green pastures, quiet streams of water, paths of righteousness and even dark vales are all associated with the care of God. Walk to a beautiful place and read some appropriate biblical passages. Ask those with you if they have any fresh insights of God having heard the familiar passage in a new setting

Singing Creation – some home grown hymns

'Singing creation' can help congregations praise God in worship, confess failure to exercise sufficient care for the world and commit churches to be good stewards of

Module 2 - **celebrating creation!**

God's gift. Many hymn books or collections include hymns with a creation care perspective to help congregations 'sing creation' and some churches include competent or budding hymn writers. The hymns below were written by green enthusiasts – would your church like to use of one these or do you know someone who could write an original?

Creator God

Creator God, your children's voices rise,
Fed by your earth, uplifted by your skies,
Thankful for all its beauty and surprise,
Praise ever singing, ever singing.

Where forests range their canopies of trees,
May we sustain such vital gifts as these,
Let woodland shelter still resound with bees,
Birds ever singing, ever singing.

Beneath the moon the ocean lifts its tide,
Help us to curb our poisoned human pride
Still may the whales, the fish and dolphins ride
Seas ever singing, ever singing.

From south to north, from deeps to thinnest air,
Kingdoms of creatures flourish everywhere,
Open our hearts and let us learn to share
Life ever singing, ever singing.

God gave the word, and earth spins out in space,
Made us custodians of this glorious place,
Then let us give the future human race
Worlds ever singing, ever singing.

The hymn was inspired in part to introduce new words to a much loved tune, widely associated with the hymn 'For all the Saints'.

The hymn was entered in the Christian Ecology Link Millennium Hymn Writing Competition and was sung at the 2003 CEL Conference in Sheffield.

Words: Jenny Baines, Selly Oak Methodist Church (An Eco-Congregation Award winner)

Tune: Sine Nomine, Vaughan Williams

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We're an Eco-Congregation

Words

We're an Eco-Congregation
We're as friendly as can be
Help us all to be protectors
Of God's Earth, for you and me

We must look to the future
Remember the three R's theme
Reduce – Re-use – Re-cycle
Help to make our planet green

Don't leave on the lights
Or let the water taps run
Do you need all that wrapping
When all is said and done

Think before you throw it
Can it be used again?
Can it be recycled
And given another name?

Please care for what's around you
All animals, plants and birds
Take care to feed and nourish them
Its action we want not words

Optional actions

shake hands
arms around each other
point to each other

hand on brow
three fingers in air
hands push down/forward/cycle
hands spread out

switch off action
turn off action
shake head and
push away with hand

fingers on temple – mock throw

cycle with hands

hands on heart and spread out
show toys
sowing seeds action
card signs held up

Tune: Match of the Day

Words: Gill McDonnell -
St John the Evangelist
Hurst Green, nr. Clitheroe
– an Eco-Congregation
Award winner.

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to churches to reproduce
the hymn for worship
provided that the author is
acknowledged.

What the Lord Creates

Praise him, Praise him, Praise the Lord
For the wonders of the world

For the people big and small
For the animals short and tall
We will care for all these things
That our Lord Creator brings.

Praise him, Praise him, Praise the Lord
For the wonders of the world

For the sea and for the sky
For the animals and birds that fly
We will care for all these things
That our Lord Creator brings

Praise him, Praise him, Praise the Lord
For the wonders of the world

For the seasons of the year
For the plants that re-appear
We will care for all these things
That our Lord Creator brings

Tune: Twinkle, twinkle little star

Words: Jessica, Emily and Sam
Crawshaw, Burton Leonard,
N. Yorks

The hymn was the winner in the
Children's Class of the CEL Hymn
Writing Competition.

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worship provided that the authors are
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Singing Creation - The Eco-Congregation Hymn Board

Title

All creatures of our God and king
All the nations of the earth
All things bright and beautiful
All things praise thee, Lord most high
Alleluia: All the earth
Beauty for brokenness
Bless the Lord, created things
Boisterous, buzzing, barking things
'Cheep!' said the sparrow on the chimney top
Come let us worship the Christ of creation
Creator of the earth and skies
Dance and sing, all the earth
Ev'ry bird, ev'ry tree helps me know, helps me see
Fairest Lord Jesus, Lord of all creation
Fill your hearts with joy and gladness (Psalm 147)
Fishes of the ocean and birds of the air
For beauty of meadow, for grandeur of trees
For the beauty of the earth
For the fruits of all creation
For the healing of the nations
From you all skill and science flowed
Give to our God immortal praise (Psalm 136)
God in his love for us lent us this planet
God of grace and God of glory
God turned darkness into light
God who made the earth
God who spoke in the beginning
God, who stretched the spangled heavens
God, whose farm is all creation
Great is thy faithfulness
I love the sun
I sing the almighty power of God
If I were an astronaut out in space,
Inspired by love and anger

Author

St. Francis/W H Draper
Michael Crockett
Cecil Alexander
G W Condor
Hubert J Richards
Graham Kendrick
Judy Davies
Winifred Elliot
Estelle White
Allred & Saward
Donald Wynn Hughes
John Bell & Graham Maule
Peter Watcyn-Jones
Lilian Stevenson
Timothy Dudley-Smith
Susan Sayers
W H Farquharson
F S Pierpoint
Fred Pratt Green
Fred Kaan
Michael Perry
Isaac Watts
Fred Pratt Green
Harry Emerson Fosdick
Michael Forster
Sarah B Rhodes
Fred Kaan
Catherine Cameron
John Arlott
T O Chisholm
Gwen F Smith
Isaac Watts
Susan Sayers

John Bell & Graham Immortal, invisible, God only wise

W Chalmers Smith

Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it
Joy to the world
Let us gladly with one mind
Let us sing your glory, Lord, alleluia
Like a mighty river flowing
Lord, bring the day to pass
Lord of all life and power
Lord of creation
Lord of the boundless curves of space
Lord of the changing year
Morning has broken
Not the grandeur of the mountains
Now join we to praise the creator

David Mansell
Isaac Watts
Michael Saward
Maria Lydia Pereira
Michael Perry
Ian Fraser
Timothy Dudley-Smith
Jack Winslow
A F Bayly
David Mowbray
Eleanor Farjeon
Michael Perry
Fred Kaan

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Now praise the protector of heaven
O come, and let us to the Lord (Psalm 95)

Christopher Idle
Metrical Psalm

O Lord, all the world belongs to you
O Lord my God
O Lord of every shining constellation
O Lord our God, how majestic is your name
O praise him, O praise him! (Song of Caedmon)
O worship the King (Psalm 104)
Onward, Christian pilgrims
Over the earth is a mat of green
Praise and thanksgiving
Praise him, praise him
Praise my soul, the King of heaven (Psalm 103)
Praise the Lord of heaven
Praise the Lord, you heavens adore him
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (Psalms 103, 150)
Praise ye the Lord, tis good to praise (Psalm 147)
Praise with joy the world's Creator
Push little seed
Roar of the waves, the waters pressing
Sing praise to God on mountain tops
Sing for God's glory
Sing glory to God the Father
Thank you for the summer morning
The earth is the Lord's
The heavens declare
The universe to God in silence sings
The universe was waiting
The works of the Lord
There are hundreds of sparrows, thousands, millions
There's a seed in a flow'r on a plant in the garden
Think of a world without any flowers
This world you have made
To God who makes all lovely things
Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently
Warm as the sun, fresh as the breeze
We are not our own. Earth forms us,
When God made the garden of creation
Who put the colours in the rainbow
Yes, God is good

Patrick Appleford
tr. Stuart Hine
A F Bayle
Phil Lawson Johnston
Arthur Scholey
Robert Grant
Michael Forster
Ruth Brown
A F Bayly
Michael Perry
H F Lyte
Timothy Dudley-Smith
Timothy Dudley-Smith
Joachim Neander
Isaac Watts
John Bell & Graham Maule
Susan Sayers
Michael Perry
John Bell & Graham Maule
Kathy Galloway
Michael Saward
Susan Sayers
Graham Kendrick
Andy Silver
David Fox
Michael Forster
Christopher Idle
John Gowans
Susan Sayers
Bunty Newport
Susan Sayers
J M C Crum
Shirley Erena Murray
Nick Fawcett
Brian Wren
Paul Booth
Paul Booth

You can drink it, swim in it

John Hampden Gurney

Susan Sayers

You shall go out with joy
Your love's greater

Stuart Dauermann
Mike Anderson

Hymnbooks

Many hymn books have a selection of hymns with a creation theme, notably:

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- ◆ The Only Earth We Know - Hymn Texts by Fred Kaan Published by Stainer Bell/Hope 1999
- ◆ Big Blue Planet and other songs for worship in God's world - by Judy Jarvis Publ. Stainer and Bell
- ◆ The Iona Community (Wild Goose Publications) publish a range of hymnbooks, many of which have hymns and songs with a creation theme

Congregational hymns can also be valuable resources in personal devotions.
Further Resources

- ◆ Cherish the Earth – Reflections on a living planet by Mary Low. 2003 Wild Goose Publications
- ◆ What a World! – An anthology embracing the issues of ecology, the environment and justice. 2002 Publ. Granary Press (the imprint of the United Reformed Church)
- ◆ What a wonderful world! Stories and poems that celebrate creation by Pat Alexander. 1998 Publ. Lion
- ◆ Environment Sunday Packs – several, each with a different creation themes, from A Rocha UK. Tel: 0208 574 5935 or see the A Rocha website: www.arocha.org

About **Eco-Congregation Ireland**

Eco Congregation Ireland has been recently formed and is based on the wider Eco Congregation programme, which has been operating in Britain and Ireland for the last five years. It is an environmental project for churches and provides free resources, advice and an award scheme to help churches consider environmental issues in the context of their Christian life and mission, and to take positive action.

Eco Congregation was originally developed by the environmental charity ENCAMS on behalf of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI).

In Ireland it is managed by a team formed from the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (see the 'Contacts' page of the website). Initial funding has come from the Inter Church Committee on Social Issues with administrative support from the Representative Church Body, Dublin.

Web: www.ecocongregationireland.org

In England, Eco Congregation is managed and delivered by the Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) and supported by a grant from the Methodist Relief and Development Fund. In Wales, support is also received from the Arthur Rank Centre.

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Web: www.ecocongregation.org

In Scotland, Eco Congregation is managed and delivered through a partnership between Keep Scotland Beautiful (an associated company of ENCAMS) and the Society, Religion and Technology Project (SRT) of the Church of Scotland. It is endorsed by Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) and is supported financially by the Scottish Executive's Sustainable Action Fund.

Web: www.ecocongregation.org/scotland