

Caring for God's Earth: Why should we bother?

We live in a society where we are constantly encouraged to consume as much as possible; we often measure ourselves and others by the amount and type of 'stuff' we have acquired. Shopping is described by many as their preferred hobby. We are bombarded with adverts which tell us that we need the latest... car, shoes, convenience food, shampoo... to be better people!

We are also increasingly aware of the devastating environmental and social problems facing our world: climate change, deforestation, habitat destruction, species extinction, pollution in our oceans, on the land and in the air we breathe, global hunger and poverty, war, famine and mass displacement of people.

It is estimated that, if everyone on Earth lived in the same way we do in the rich countries (i.e. using as many of the Earth's resources) then we would need at least three planet Earths to sustain us all!



ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

Why should Christians (and people of all faiths) care about the Earth?

A Rocha UK outlines the main reasons...

✓ God made the world and loves it:

- God is the creator of the world and thinks it is 'very good' (Genesis 1:31).
- God is involved with her/his creation, sustaining it and caring for it (Psalm 65:9–13; Matthew 10:29; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:16–17).

If God loves the world, then we want to love what God loves and take care of it for God's sake.

✓ God created us to look after it:

- We are created beings, part of the whole community of creation, joining together to praise God (Psalm 148).

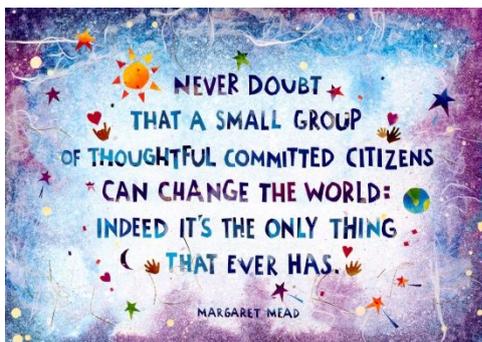
- But we have also been given a special task – to look after the rest of what God has made (Genesis 1: 26–28; Gen. 2:15). This is not an optional extra for a few keen environmentalists, but a fundamental part of what it means to be human.

✓ **It has gone wrong because of us:**

- It is a sad truth that the many problems our world and its inhabitants face are caused by human activity.
- Our acts of human sin have ecological consequences (Hosea 4: 1–3; Amos 8: 1–8).
- We bear the guilt for the state our world is in (Isaiah 24: 4–6) and so we have a responsibility to act.

✓ **God has a purpose for it:**

- God's plans for salvation involve **all** s/he has made (Colossians 1: 19–20).
- God has promised that, when Jesus returns, this world will be radically renewed: all that is evil will be destroyed; all that is good will shine out (2 Peter 3: 10; Revelation 21 – 22:6).



So, what can we do to live more sustainably and compassionately?

How can we be the change we want to see in the world?

Eco Church is one example of working together to make a difference in our community:

Boughton and Hernhill Churches have both signed up to work towards becoming Eco Churches as part of our on-going stewardship and our Mission Action Plan.

Eco Church is an award scheme developed by A Rocha UK (and launched in 2016) for churches in England and Wales who want to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God's earth.

A Rocha UK is a Christian charity working for the protection and restoration of the natural world.

Eco Church involves an online survey to gauge how well we are doing in caring for God's world based on five key areas:

- Worship and teaching,
- Management of church buildings,
- Management of church land,
- Community and global engagement,
- Lifestyle (encouraging our congregation and community members to reduce their ecological footprint and live more sustainably).

The actions we take will count towards an Eco Church Award at Bronze, Silver or Gold level.

Canterbury Diocese is also signed up to Eco Diocese, which is an initiative to encourage diocesan-level engagement with Eco Church, and promote local church participation in the scheme.

Did you know?

Launched in 2013, Green Up! is the Eco-Award scheme for mosques and Islamic groups in the United Kingdom.

The scheme supports schools, mosques and Islamic institutes to make a commitment to work towards becoming more environmentally friendly.

The parent organization of Green Up! is the Muslim Action for Development and Environment (MADE). As stated on MADE's website,

“Our response is rooted in the Islamic traditions of social action, justice and environmental stewardship. It's about being smart, ethical and green in the way we live.



At times, it can feel as if we are hopeless against the enormity of such problems and we imagine that, as individuals or even communities, it is pointless to even try to make a difference.

However, there are so many things we can do,

from the individual and, seemingly small, to the collective and community or Church-based. Each month, I will be writing about a different issue, asking questions and suggesting some ideas to help us all make a positive difference.

No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible.

-Voltaire

Please do get in touch with your questions and ideas ☺



Thank you

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Email: jo.kidd@abbotsmillproject.co.uk

Useful links:

www.arocha.org.uk

www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk

www.made.ngo

www.sarx.org.uk

www.storyofstuff.org

www.footprintnetwork.org