

Module 2 - **celebrating creation!**



# **eco- congregation**

**an environmental toolkit for churches**

Module 2

# **celebrating creation!**

*Ideas and resources for worship*

*Eco-congregation Canada is a project of  
A Rocha Canada – Christians in Conservation  
512 172 Street, Surrey, B.C., V3S 9R3 Registered Charity # 86663 8943 RR0001*

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## **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 in the UK 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.

### **Weaving creation care into the life and mission of our Church**

The creation care ministry of **All Saint's, Brailsford in Derbyshire** started when Louise Doble, a church member and environmentalist, led a Lent series exploring Christian ethics and the environment. Having explored creation care from a Christian perspective the church decided to actively practice what they felt called to preach. After two years of action Louise Doble reflected:

“ The path of Eco-Congregation has been an immensely rewarding journey for All Saint's. Many people thought that 'green issues' had no place in church. Through our ministry we have discovered that the environmental agenda is inexorably interconnected with issues of poverty and development and deepened our concern for the Earth and all its inhabitants. It has connected many diverse groups within our church and local community in a unique and refreshing way. Young and old alike have been touched by the need to care for God's creation and come together to work on a variety of rewarding and fun projects.

Eco-Congregation has a great deal to offer, it provides a framework to explore in practical terms Christ's abiding call to love our neighbour. As Psalm 139 tells us, 'He (God) is in every place giving it existence and the power to be a place, just as He is in all things giving them existence, power and activity' ”

*Louise Doble – Green Co-ordinator All Saint's Church, Brailsford, Derbyshire*

## **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*

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## Approaching God

### Sound the trumpet! Scripture sentences

Sound the trumpet! My help comes only from the Lord,  
Strum the bass maker of heaven and earth.  
Let us worship God, *Psalm 121 Revised English Bible (REB)*  
The Lord of creation.

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.

### 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.  
    We confess that we have not always been our brother's keeper.  
Creating God, we have desecrated your creation and darkened your light.  
In a moment of quiet we confess our wasteful lifestyle and human greed.

### 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](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk)

### Care for Creation Calendar for Lent

The Presbyterian Church of Canada  
produced an excellent Care for  
Creation Calendar  
Download a copy at:  
<http://www.presbyterian.ca/node/2649>

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## 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.<br>For the beauty of the earth:<br>Majestic mountains, verdant vales,<br>Mighty oaks and beaming buttercups,<br>We bring our offering of praise.           | 4.<br>For the ugly of the skies:<br>Global warming and acid rain,<br>Choking pollution, thinning ozone layer,<br>We bring our confession of sorrow.                |
| 2.<br>For the beauty of the skies:<br>Singing larks and fluttering bats,<br>Warming sun and refreshing rain,<br>We bring our offering of praise.              | 5.<br>For the healing of the earth:<br>Guide us to restore our relationship,<br>With the rest of creation,<br>With future generations and with you.                |
| 3.<br>For the ugly of the earth:<br>Mountains of waste, valleys of landfill,<br>Resources depleted forgetting tomorrow,<br>We bring our confession of sorrow. | 6.<br>For the healing of the skies:<br>Open our eyes to our selfish ways,<br>Stir our hearts to live life today,<br>That all might enjoy real life tomorrow. Amen. |

On Sunday, June 3, 2007 we hosted a "Creation Celebration" which included a liturgical walk and hot dog roast.

*Phyllis Schouten - Bethel Community Christian Reformed Church, Edmonton, AB*

## 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,  
Grow the diversity and fruitfulness of life.  
And at the eve of the day, rest, and wonder at God's garden.

## The 'm' prayer

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

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### **Our Lord's Prayer – a responsive version**

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

### **An Acrostic Prayer\***

*written for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development*

**C**reating God, you have given us a vision  
of a new heaven and a new earth...  
**R**esources conserved  
**E**arth tended  
**A**tmosphere cleansed  
**T**rees planted  
**I**njustice ended  
**O**ceans teeming  
**N**ations at peace

**C**reator, Redeemer, Sustainer  
**A**lert nations, enthuse churches  
**R**ecieve our commitment and so entwine  
our lives with Your purpose.  
**E**arth and heaven will then sing of your  
glory. Amen.

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

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### **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)

<b>Reading</b>	<b>Activity undertaken in silence</b>
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**

Remember, reading the Bible in an outdoor settings can be very powerful. Don't just leave bible reading for church services & bible studies. Pick a dark night when millions of stars are out and read Ps. 103 or sing "How Great Thou Art".....Or standing on the beach by the ocean and sense the awe inspiring power of God in the waves crashing against the rocks....or go to a farm to watch the birth of a new animal....or go bird watching....or use a small beach seine net to catch a multitude of animals and plants that are found along the shoreline.....or walk through an old growth forest.....

#### **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:

Psalm 8	God's glory and the place of humanity
Psalm 46	Trust in God
Psalm 104	In praise of God the creator
Psalm 139	Adoration of the God of creation
Psalm 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 spoiled 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 spoiled. 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. Remember that we use things from creation in our doctrinal activities (water to baptize infants and adults) and human relationship activities (flowers for expressing sorrow and joy).

The churches in Duncan B.C. conduct a special harvest service on Thanksgiving Day to thank God for the abundance of His creation and at the same time bring some of the annual harvest to the local food basket society that distributes food to the needy.

*Dick Nagtegaal - Duncan CRC, Duncan B.C.*

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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.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org).

#### **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.**

### **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 from participating churches:

#### 1 Six days/4,600 million years

##### Creation

lighting  
founding  
breathing  
living

#### The past 10 generations

##### Desecreation

clouding  
flooding  
choking  
dying

#### 2 Creation in Reverse?

The following story was told by Jennifer Potter at the 2000 Methodist Conference in the UK 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."*

The Bible is God's redemptive story for humankind and all creation. What do you think? Does God have to start over again? Where do you see the renewal process already happening in our world? What will it take to complete the process?

#### 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.”*

Joshua challenges the Israelites to “choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.” How does the answer to this question determine how we live in God’s creation?

What would Moses say to your congregation?

### **5 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?”

### **6 Sufficiency?**

Born in a borrowed stable

Lived a simple life

Buried in a borrowed grave

The Way, the Truth, the Life

### **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

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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. **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

### A time for Creation at St Osmund's

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

Our service included the presentation of symbols of human misuse of creation (a plastic bag and a broken tool) and the bounty of creation (a basket of fruit, a clod of earth, a loaf of bread, a 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, Derby*

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 it's 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*

- **Lectionary cycle of readings**

If your church uses a **lectionary** or set pattern of readings, identify when the readings have a creation theme and plan a service appropriate for your setting.

### 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
- 2005
- 2006 Hope for the Planet
- 2007 The Heat is On (Climate Change)
- 2008 Planetwise

Consider inviting representatives of local wildlife groups to the service to talk about their work. Web [www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org)

- **St Francis of Assisi**

**St Francis** is remembered for his love of nature. St Francis is remembered for his love of nature and creation, including brother sun and sister moon to whom he felt related. His Feast Day is 4<sup>th</sup> October – consider holding a service to celebrate his love of creation.

### 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 -  
Evesham Methodist Church*

## 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:

#### **In the Garden**

If you have access to a quiet garden, consider arranging a meditative service, using natural sounds, sights and scents to worship God.

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*

#### **A Prayer Walk**

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

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*

#### **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.

We have a hiking club in the church that plans a hike after church on Sunday twice a month with the express intent to seek God in His creation.

*Dick Nagtegaal – Duncan CRC, B.C.*

## Module 2 - **celebrating creation!**

### **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 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 Millenium Hymn Writing Competition and was sung at the 2003 CEL Conference in Sheffield, England.

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

**Tune:** Sine Nomine, Vaughan Williams

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# Module 2 - celebrating creation!

## 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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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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# Module 2 - celebrating creation!

## 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  
God's will for 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  
Immortal, invisible, God only wise  
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  
Now praise the protector of heaven  
O come, and let us to the Lord (Psalm 95)  
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)

### 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  
*from* Carmina Gadelica  
T O Chisholm  
Gwen F Smith  
Isaac Watts  
Susan Sayers  
John Bell & Graham  
W Chalmers Smith  
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  
Christopher Idle  
Metrical Psalm  
Patrick Appleford  
tr. Stuart Hine  
A F Bayle  
Phil Lawson Johnston  
Arthur Scholey  
Robert Grant

## Module 2 - **celebrating creation!**

Oh the life of the world	Kathy Galloway
Onward, Christian pilgrims	Michael Forster
Over the earth is a mat of green	Ruth Brown
Praise and thanksgiving	A F Bayly
Praise him, praise him	Michael Perry
Praise my soul, the King of heaven (Psalm 103)	H F Lyte
Praise the Lord of heaven	Timothy Dudley-Smith
Praise the Lord, you heavens adore him	Timothy Dudley-Smith
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (Psalms 103, 150)	Joachim Neander
Praise ye the Lord, tis good to praise (Psalm 147)	Isaac Watts
Praise with joy the world's Creator	John Bell & Graham Maule
Push little seed	Susan Sayers
Roar of the waves, the waters pressing	Michael Perry
Sing praise to God on mountain tops	John Bell & Graham Maule
Sing for God's glory	Kathy Galloway
Sing glory to God the Father	Michael Saward
Sing to God with gladness	James Quinn
Thank you for the summer morning	Susan Sayers
The earth is the Lord's	Graham Kendrick
The heavens declare	Andy Silver
The universe to God in silence sings	David Fox
The universe was waiting	Michael Forster
The works of the Lord	Christopher Idle
There are hundreds of sparrows, thousands, millions	John Gowans
There's a seed in a flow'r on a plant in the garden	Susan Sayers
Think of a world without any flowers	Bunty Newport
This world you have made	Susan Sayers
To God who makes all lovely things	J M C Crum
Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently	Shirley Erena Murray
Warm as the sun, fresh as the breeze	Nick Fawcett
We are not our own. Earth forms us,	Brian Wren
When God made the garden of creation	Paul Booth
Who put the colours in the rainbow	Paul Booth
Yes, God is good	John Hampden Gurney
You can drink it, swim in it	Susan Sayers
You shall go out with joy	Stuart Dauermann
Your love's greater	Mike Anderson

### **Hymnbooks**

Many hymn books have a selection of hymns with a creation theme, here are a few:

- ◆ 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
- ◆ Common Ground Published by Saint Andrew Press 1998
- ◆ Habel Hymns Volume One—Songs for Celebrating with Creation by Norman Habel Downloadable from [www.seasonofcreation.com/songs](http://www.seasonofcreation.com/songs)
- ◆ 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.**

## Module 2 - **celebrating creation!**

### Further Resources

- 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.uk](http://www.arocha.org.uk)
- Footprint Files - Ideas to help congregations care for creation and reduce their footprint developed by the Diocesan Environmental Commission (DEC) of the Anglican Diocese of British Columbia Tel. (250) 386-7781. E-mail: [synod@bc.anglican.ca](mailto:synod@bc.anglican.ca)
- *The Best Preaching on Earth: Sermons on Caring for Creation*. Stan L. LeQuire, ed. Judson Press, 1996 – *Great sermons to encourage pastors to preach creation care.*
- Harvest service, LOAF service, resources on climate change (Operation Noah) and daily prayer guide - from Christian Ecology Link downloadable from [www.christian-ecology.org.uk](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk)
- Faith Alive Christian Resources – Many resources are available here with creation themes from adult to children's bible study materials and many topical books. [www.faithaliveresources.org](http://www.faithaliveresources.org)

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### About **Eco-Congregation**

Eco-Congregation is an ecumenical environmental project for churches in Britain, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Canada. It provides free resources, support and an Award program to help churches to 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). It is now overseen by CTBI and delivered by a partnership of organisations.

In Canada, Eco-congregation is managed and delivered by A Rocha Canada.

Contact: A Rocha Canada, 512 172 Street, Surrey, B.C. V3S 9R3

Tel: 604 542-9022

Email: [canada@arocha.org](mailto:canada@arocha.org)

Web: [www.arocha.org/canada](http://www.arocha.org/canada)

In England, Eco-Congregation is managed by A Rocha UK and supported by a grant from the Methodist Relief and Development Fund. The office base is at The Arthur Rank Centre (ARC).

Contact: 024 7669 2491, Email: [ecocongregation@arocha.org](mailto:ecocongregation@arocha.org), Web: [www.ecocongregation.org/englandwales](http://www.ecocongregation.org/englandwales)

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. Contact : +44 (0)131 556 2953, Email: [ecocongregation@srt.org.uk](mailto:ecocongregation@srt.org.uk), Web: [www.ecocongregation.org/scotland](http://www.ecocongregation.org/scotland)

Churches in Wales are supported by Eco-Congregation based at the Arthur Rank Centre.