**The Church and the Environment: Getting Real About Creation Care**

**Notes from group discussion at Bristol Diocese Environmental Day 14 April 2018**

In the final session of the day, participants were divided into groups and discussed three questions:

1. What are we already doing (to care for creation)?
2. What could we be doing in addition?
3. What kind of support would we like from the Diocese?

After each topic discussion ideas were shared. Here is a summary. (Note: not all churches are doing all of these actions)

**What are we already doing?**

* Prayers for environmental issues; using prayers from official liturgy (often very creation aware)
* Special days (with a focus on creation) e.g. Harvest, Rogation, Earth Day
* Sowing wildflower seeds in churchyards
* Creation-care themed services
* LED lightbulbs in church buildings
* Recycling facilities installed/church members take recycling home
* Toilet twinning
* Food redistribution – e.g. for refugees or via church food bank
* FairTrade
* Reccyled paper e.g. for service sheets (although this is sometimes more expensive)
* The **Five Marks of Mission** visibly and prominently displayed
* Concern for animals (Quakers)
* A Youth Group Environmental Day involving teaching and worship (Yate)
* An Ecology session on a church weekend
* Local Methodist preacher speaks on creation care
* Young people have led a worship service
* Inviting visiting speakers to church with emphasis on creation care
* Church website may have an environmental section
* A “Repair Café” where people can learn how to repair broken items
* Creation Care section in church magazine
* Walking/cycling to church
* Carbon Fast e.g. in Lent
* Beginning the Eco-Church conversation
* Renewable energy switch (Big Church Switch)
* Community kitchen (food resourcing)
* Consumables minimisations (e.g. paper in office)
* Creation care embedded in services and liturgy
* Solar panels
* Exploring “Together for Bristol”

Some comments were that church initiatives may move more slowly than community initiatives (or even stall); it’s important to be involved in the local community; communication both within churches and toward the community is very important.

**What could we be doing in addition?**

* Pay carbon offsets for Mission partners/trips (Climate Stewards)
* Pray for people involved in environmental work
* Encourage recycling/walking to church/cycling/energy saving
* Install cycle racks/solar panels/electric car charging points
* Engage with local community groups/what’s happening in the city
* “Pray before you pack” – find out about your holiday destination and pray for it
* Encourage PCC/church leadership to take creation care seriously...
* ...leading to more preaching/teaching
* Link facts and figures with Christian faith, e.g. on website
* Sign up for Eco-Church – aim for it to be in church’s DNA – whole lifestyle
* Offset church energy use with Climate Stewards
* Support specific issues, e.g. microplastics, avoiding plastics, zero waste, deforestation
* Using church land/gardens – wildflowers for pollinators, vegetables and fruit, prayerful spaces. Living churchyards.
* Campaign – e.g. engage with the Mayor
* Bring a spiritual element to all schemes
* Eco-friendly cleaning products
* Workshops/Bible study groups on Biblical basis for creation care
* Positive money i.e. ethical use of money. Bristol Pound. Triodos
* Save energy e.g. turn down heat
* Forest church
* Breakfast before worship
* Teaching creation care in Sunday School/youth groups
* Get involved with Bristol Noise/Hope 18
* Local clean-up – litter picking
* Begin relationship with Wildlife Trusts

**How can the Diocese help?**

* Take the lead in creation care; speak up publicly; disseminate stories of encouragement, best practice, successes, news
* Recognise and engage with Bristol’s “green” status
* Provide feedback from conference and slides from today’s presentations
* Provide speakers to talk to PCC/Deanery Synod/at services etc
* It would be great to have the strong backing of the Bishop, providing leadership
* Facilitation of other local partnerships/denominations to work together
* Can environmental issues be brought up at clergy meetings/Bishop’s staff/Deanery or Diocesan Synods?
* Possibility of funding e.g. for solar?
* Informal support group for people working on environmental issues (e.g. in pub)
* Easy access to database of links/contacts close to churches e.g. for speakers
* Communication from Bishop/Diocese is crucial – leadership in Diocese and structures of the church is very important
* Easy communication between individuals/churches as well as with Diocese – help make connections
* Networking – social media
* Information on how to fund and organise new environmental initiatives – sharing experiences – between churches. Can Diocese facilitate this?
* Publicise EcoChurchSouthWest
* Diocese could provide a central sharing of resources and networks, e.g. national networks
* Promote Green Capital Partnership. “Green Mingle” secular gathering of environmentally conscious people within Bristol.
* Provide resources for house groups/Bible study; resources for educating congregations
* Provide some kind of accountability/networking so we can see progress locally and across the Diocese.

**Some links:**

1. Carbon offsetting: [www.climatestewards.org](http://www.climatestewards.org)
2. Resources to use in churches: <http://atyourservice.arocha.org/en/>
3. [www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org) and [www.arocha.org.uk](http://www.arocha.org.uk) have further resources
4. Green Christian <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/>
5. A list of helpful resources from the Evangelical Alliance <https://www.eauk.org/church/resources/christian-environmental-organisations.cfm>
6. From the Earth Day Network <https://www.earthday.org/christian-environmental-resources/>
7. From CBTI (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland) <https://ctbi.org.uk/environment-links>
8. From GreenFaith: <http://www.greenfaith.org/resource-center/spirit/greenworship-resource/christian-resource-1>
9. EcoChurch: <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/resources/>