



Caring for Creation

Putting it into Practice

The sermons last September reminded us of our responsibility to care for God's creation. This leaflet provides a checklist of things to consider in our own lives.

We suggest you take one page at a time, and find one or two actions to improve your relationship with God's creation. There are also many other actions you could take that aren't listed here.

Some further reading:

'L is for Lifestyle' by Ruth Valerio – chatty bite-sized chapters of Christian reflection and practical advice (IVP revised 2019)

'Planetwise' by Dave Bookless – a readable survey of the Biblical basics (IVP 2008)

If you want to go further:

St Marys Creation Care Group is applying creation care principles to the life of St Marys. To find out more, contact James Faulkner, Anthony Harris, David Hesketh, Edward Jarvis or Roger Peppiatt.



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1. Wildlife

God made a good world to be enjoyed, even though we've messed up a lot of it. Our actions are leading to an appalling increase in the number of species becoming extinct. We can play our own part in encouraging, or damaging, the world around us. We can also join with others to make our voice heard in government and business.

- Enjoy wildlife – starting with your garden, if you have one. We are blessed in St Neots with easy access to green spaces including the river and flood plain, and nature reserves close by
- Provide birdfeeders and bird boxes. Choose plants and shrubs for the garden that welcome wildlife. Leave some untidy areas, such as a pile of sticks, for bugs to make home. Perhaps dig a pond and look forward to the frogs and dragonflies. There are lots of ideas at wildaboutgardens.org.uk/
- Avoid harmful chemicals in both house and garden – look out for eco-friendly methods and products. There are lots of garden tips at rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=1023
- Support or join charities that love and champion the environment, such as
 - Friends of Paxton Pits – paxton-pits.org.uk/
 - RSPB – rspb.org.uk/
 - the local Wildlife Trust – wildlifebcn.org/
 - Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust – wwt.org.uk/
- Support a group driven by Christian convictions such as
 - Tearfund – tearfund.org/
 - A Rocha – arocha.org.uk/



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2. Reduce, Re-use, Recycle

A lot of what we buy and use is made from 'raw' materials, taken from the earth where it won't be replenished. Manufacture often involves a lot of energy and water. Much of it is discarded where the materials can't be recovered, and where they may pollute air or water, or cause harm to other creatures.

We can all take steps to cause less harm:

- Reduce what you buy, or consider buying second-hand
- Re-use old things for new purposes. Or offer them for others to re-use via a charity shop or 'Freecycle' (ilovefreecycle.org/)
- Recycle as much as you can – use local council guidelines for what can go in the recycling bins. (For those who live in Huntingdonshire, see huntingdonshire.gov.uk/bins-waste/what-goes-in-which-bin/. Does your blue bin get fuller than your black bin?) Take old batteries, bulbs, electrical items, etc to the tip where the valuable materials can be extracted, as well as scrap wood, metal etc
- Garden waste and kitchen vegetable waste can go in the green bin or on your own compost heap. (Don't put meat or cooked food on your compost heap, but they can go in the green bin.)
- Never drop or leave litter – it's unsightly and often dangerous for birds and animals. That includes roadsides, parks, beaches and even the oceans



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3. Food

We all need food to live, but many of us have lost touch with how and where it's produced. What we choose can have a big effect on deforestation, water usage, soil fertility, energy use and the treatment of animals. See for example ethicalconsumer.org/food-drink, but we don't pretend that it's always straightforward to make a good choice.

Meat needs a lot more water and land than fruit and vegetables. So less meat in your diet would mean less pressure on resources as well as less greenhouse gases.

- Reduce food waste – only buy as much as you can use, freeze excess and left-overs to use later
- Apply the **LOAF** principles (greenchristian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/leaflet/UseYourLoaf.pdf):
 - Local** – support local producers eg buy from farmer's markets. Buy food that's in season in this country – eattheseasons.co.uk/
 - Organic** – buy 'organic' food, whose production sustains the soil rather than depending on fertilisers and chemicals with the associated watercourse pollution – soilassociation.org/
 - Animal-friendly** – we don't need to become vegetarian or vegan, but how about trying meat-free Mondays? In any case, avoid produce from intensively-reared animals or birds. Look for fish that's caught sustainably
 - Fairly traded** – look for the Fairtrade mark as the best guarantee of fair treatment of farmers and workers both in the UK and the developing world. See fairtrade.org.uk/
- Grow some of your own vegetables



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4. Water

We take clean water, flushing toilets and good drainage for granted, but many communities around the world don't have any of these and health suffers dramatically as a result. Even in England clean water is surprisingly scarce – water has to be piped to East Anglia to meet our needs, large reservoirs are needed to get through the summers, and too much water is pumped out of some rivers and aquifers.

- Get a water-butt to collect rainwater for the garden
- Use a bucket, not a running hose, to wash the car
- Turn the tap off while you brush your teeth
- Make sure your toilets are dual flush
- Only run the washing machine and dishwasher when they're full
- Avoid products with microplastics – they will find their way to the oceans (mcsuk.org/)
- Avoid large areas of concrete, tarmac or continuous paving in the garden, so that water soaks into the ground rather than running off to the drains
- Help those less fortunate – join Tearfund's toilet-twinning and tap-twinning schemes, for example, and consider renewing annually (toilettwinning.org/)



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5. In our homes

The natural gas that most of us use to heat our homes, and perhaps to cook with, is a fossil fuel that creates carbon dioxide as it burns. Our electricity is generated in a variety of ways but much of it, as at Little Barford, comes from burning gas. Due to government efforts to phase out coal and introduce renewable generation, the average amount of carbon dioxide per electric kWh is less than half what it was just eight years ago, but is still very significant. (See the graph at nationalgrideso.com/news/introducing-our-carbon-intensity-app.) We can take several steps to lessen our own impact, including:

- Make sure your house is well insulated – walls, roof and windows
- Reduce your central heating by 1 degree; put a pullover on before you turn the thermostat up
- Use LED light bulbs – they quickly pay for themselves over traditional bulbs, and also last much longer
- Don't overfill your kettle – heating water you don't need wastes energy
- Turn off the lights when you leave a room
- Buy gas and electricity from companies that invest in renewable generation – greenelectricity.org/
- Fit solar panels to your roof – the generous government grants have ended, but the cost of solar panels has come down and they will still cover their costs over 15-20 years on many houses



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6. Transport

Transport is one of our biggest contributors to carbon emissions. Every litre of petrol or diesel used puts over three kilograms of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. And vehicles are a major source of air pollution.

- Walk, cycle or use public transport when you can; use the car less. (Short car journeys are not only often unnecessary, but they're bad for your car's mpg, while walking or cycling are good for your health.)
- Share journeys – if you know someone else going the same way, can you share transport?
- When driving, be gentle on the accelerator and keep within the speed limit or below 60mph to reduce fuel usage
- The greenest car is probably the one already on your drive or in your garage! So keep your car for longer. When you do need to replace it, why not buy electric? There's lots of food for thought at nextgreencar.com/
- Air travel and cruise liners are among the most polluting forms of transport per passenger mile. Try to avoid or reduce your use of them



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7. Our Finances

Some of the suggestions under other headings will cost us a bit more, while others will save money. How we spend and invest our money affects the future of our world.

- Buy from shops and brands that care for their employees and suppliers. Too often, food and clothes are cheap because suppliers have been squeezed, workers have been exploited or animals have been abused. ethicalconsumer.org/ provides a lot of information, though you may not agree with all of their criteria
- Direct some of your giving to people or organisations caring for or campaigning for the environment
- Calculate your carbon footprint, and see how it changes from year to year. Offset your carbon footprint by giving to projects that neutralise it. climatestewards.org/ is a good place to start
- Make sure any investments are doing more good than harm. For a long time many Christians have avoided investing in alcohol, gambling, arms and tobacco. Now there is a wide range of funds which are also trying to avoid environmentally harmful activities, and positively investing in companies with sound employee practices, governance and sustainability credentials. See for example ethicalconsumer.org/ and yourethicalmoney.org/. Or invest some of your money directly in Christian philanthropy at <https://www.greenpastures.net/>.