

ECO BOX



CULTIVATING A HEART FOR GOD'S CREATION

Inside is a wealth of material to encourage and enable people of all ages to respond to God's invitation to care for creation...

- * twelve monthly sheets with theological thoughts and a prayer; activities for all generations to share in and enjoy together; some pointers to the environmental actions taking place each month
- * an Eco Church leaflet
- * a wooden bauble and a leaf shape formed from bark - these can be purchased from Baker Ross if you want to give one to each member of your congregation
- * a star shape to act as a template for use during December
- * a packet of seeds - we would encourage you to make seed bombs (see March 2023); they are a very simple and effective way of brightening even the most dismal corners of our communities

Maybe get together as a group and plan your year - decide what things you want to do, how they can be done and when you want to do them.



CULTIVATING A HEART FOR GOD'S CREATION

HELLO! – The twelve devotional sheets that follow lead us through a theme for each month. Each sheet will begin with ‘Surveying the Scenery’ followed by an opportunity to ‘Dig Deeper’ then a time ‘Conversing with the Creator’ in prayer and culminating in getting out there, ‘Wandering in the Wilderness’, or simply taking some responsive action.

Please use these sheets to stimulate your own thoughts, ideas, devotions, Bible Studies, discussions, plans and actions. Hopefully, as you journey through you will begin to see changes in your own life, your community and our world. Please do share this with as many people as possible and we hope you will be inspired and inspire others - let us know any stories that arise.

Email your thoughts and stories of inspiration to greenadvocate.urcwailes@urc.org.uk

Surveying the Scenery – spending time together thinking about and discussing the particular themes for that month and sharing experiences and knowledge.



Digging Deeper – building on your Surveying the Scene, here are some resources to help you continue that conversation.

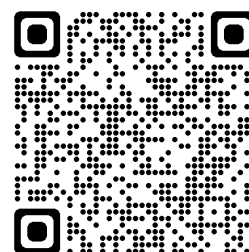
Conversing with the Creator – now is the time to offer your thoughts, discoveries, concerns, hopes and dreams to God and to be still and listen and look for the Holy Spirit working around you and within you.



Wandering in the Wilderness – let us get out there! Into this wonderful world and act! Turn over each page for lots more ideas and activities to encourage and inspire you as we share and discover together how to be good stewards of all that God has given us.

QR Codes are scanned using the camera on your mobile phone, tablet or laptop and take you directly to the webpage indicated. Try it now on this one which will take you to our United Reformed Church Wales Eco Church Page:

[Hold the QR Code up to the camera on your device, filling as much of the screen as possible. Hold it steady and the camera will read the code and put the link on your screen for you to press/click. Once you click the link, the relevant page will appear on screen.]





Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit

(John 12:24)

Ponder

Thomas Merton wrote in 'Seeds of Contemplation' : *"A tree gives glory to God by being a tree. For in being what God means it to be it is obeying [God]. It "consents," so to speak, to [God's] creative love. It is expressing an idea which is in God and which is not distinct from the essence of God, and therefore a tree imitates God by being a tree"*



Ponder some more . . .

Think of the fruit tree, any fruit tree. The fruit tree freely GIVES of itself – it stands firmly rooted and its branches reach out into the world offering goodness, freely, to anyone who will take it. What if this was an image of the church? Giving, giving and giving again, year after year, time after time, because through the giving of itself, of its fruit, the tree plants the seeds of new life, new fruit trees grow, new branches develop, and new fruit comes forth. So it is with the kingdom of God. The Church that gives of itself, that reaches out into the world with life-giving goodness will fulfil its purpose in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, giving glory to God.



Let us pray:

Read 2 Cor 5:14-21

God of new life, help us to die to self. God of new life, in

Christ you reconciled the whole of creation to you. God of new life, help us to live for Christ. God of new life, may we fulfil your ministry of reconciliation by living carefully in this beautiful world. For Christ's sake, Amen

Get Active:

- ✿ Prune some of your 'non-eco' habits and replace them with new life-giving habits.
- ✿ Give new life to old stuff—recycle and reuse.
- ✿ Plant a fruit tree and give thanks for its gifts.
- ✿ Check out Countryfile's website, in particular its section on

"How to live a greener life"








Playing with Plants



You will need: A collection of objects, or a list of them – e.g. cotton clothes, rice, plastic, glass, woollen jumper, milk, chocolate, toothpaste, honey, teabags, aluminium can, mobile phone, wooden furniture, newspaper, rubber, cork, metal.

What you do: Collect a selection of items – be imaginative with these items, as you might be surprised the mistakes that will be made when sorting them out.

-  Sort items into 2 piles (or lists) – those that are made from plants and those that are not.
-  Make a display with all the items, demonstrating which are made from plants and which are not.
-  Think about what is made from plants across the world and make a giant poster showing everything you can think of (use pictures from old magazines).
-  Find out about the importance of plants for food, medicines, and the world environment.
-  Create an information poster about this.

WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH

World Earth Day 22nd April <https://www.earthday.org/>

Take a look at the **Fashion for the Earth** section on this website:

Cotton is called the ‘dirtiest’ crop.

Pesticides from cotton farming get into rivers and groundwater contaminating land, air, food and drinking water.

Every year 150 million trees are cut down to make fabrics.

The fashion industry is a major contributor to biodiversity loss.

You could organise:

A swishing (clothes swap) event.

A secondhand, thrift or vintage fashion show.

A nearly new sale.

Share information and concerns about the environmental impacts of fast fashion.



Eco Church webinar 25th April

Thinking of becoming an Eco Church?

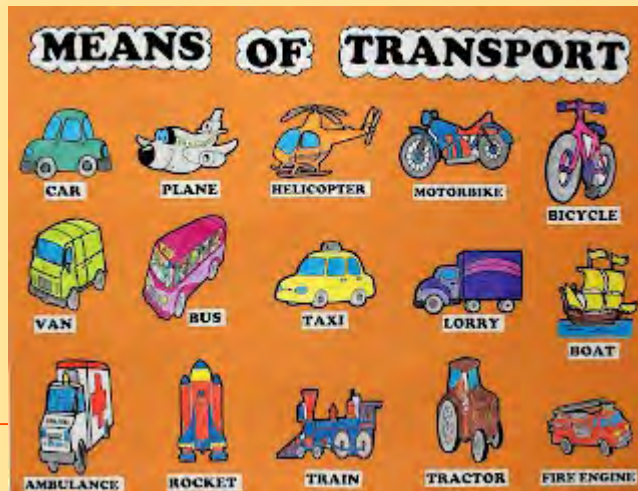
Why not sign up for this webinar ...

An introduction to Eco Church and getting started https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZFeTWDIfSVOcIlGJTl22Q



This material was written, compiled and published by Eileen Newington (Synod Green Advocate), Judy Harris (Children and Youth Development Officer), Jason Askew (Training and Development Officer).

Journeying



Which have you used in the past year?



Get Strolling

You will not be surprised to read that walking is the primary mode of transport in the Bible. There are also other means of transport, donkeys, horses, camels, wagons, chariots, and of course, the Queen of Sheba came through the desert with a train and the Lord's train filled the temple! But walking is most popular and even God participates. In Genesis God walks in the Garden and Enoch, Noah and others 'walked with God'. So go on, reflect together

- what does it mean to be someone who "walks with God"?
- How is your walk with God going at the moment?



Let us pray:

Ponder these ways and use them to pray for yourself, your family and friends, your community and our world.

In the Old Testament there are references to "Walking in the ways of . . . Righteousness, Justice, Integrity and Wisdom."

In the New Testament there are references to "Walking in . . . Obedience, Truth, Love, Light and by the Spirit".



Get Active:

- ✿ Go for a walk, look around you at God's creation. Give thanks for what you see and know that God is walking with you.
- ✿ Calculate your carbon footprint with Climate Stewards at www.climatestewards.org/offset. Scan this QR Code to take you there:



- ✿ Use Public Transport and Car-sharing

Summer is (nearly) here!
Hold an outdoor service!



Walking Buses

What you do:

Have a walking bus around your local area.

Before you go out, make a chart of the things you think you might see and mark them off on your walk.

Check out the Safe Routes to School initiative in your area. Ask whether the Road Safety Officer could come to visit your church.



Fascinating fact:

“Einstein never learned how to drive a car.”

WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH



Walk to School Week 16th - 20th May

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/products-and-services/projects/walk-to-school-week>



Christian Aid Week 15th - 21st May

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week/resources>

Christian Aid will be focusing this year on rural Zimbabwe where seven out of ten women rely on farming to earn a living and provide for their children. But with no rain, they can't grow enough food. Christian Aid Week follows the lives of resilient women who are standing strong against the threat of drought.



Letters for Creation

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/schools/letters-creation>

Throughout 2021 - 2022 Christian Aid is inviting children and young people to share their views on climate change in a creative project called Letters for Creation.

Schools and churches are invited to hold Letters for Creation exhibitions - and to create their own artworks - so that the prophetic voices of children and young people can be heard.



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First Fruits

My Father is glorified
when you produce
much fruit and in this
way prove that you
are my disciples
(John 15:8)



Picking at Pentecost

Pentecost is the festival of the harvest of the first fruits (cf Deut.16). Read again the passage above from John's Gospel 15:8. Now take a look at the nine fruits of the Spirit pictured above and as mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23.

- ✿ Have a discussion to draw out what each fruit might look like in your lives?
- ✿ Which fruits do other people see in your life? How are they made manifest?
- ✿ Which fruits need a bit of work? Perhaps you lack patience because your self-control is failing.
- ✿ How might you help one another in your church or your family to bear more spiritual fruit?



Let us pray:

Loving God, you provide all our needs in this, your beautiful creation. Help us always to appreciate and care for it.

Today we also thank you for the farmers of our nation, for our shop workers, lorry drivers, factory workers, all these and more who help to bring food from the ground to our tables.

Bless them all Lord, in Jesus' name, Amen!



Get Active:

In our crazy modern world where we can eat Strawberries all year round and fruit like Avocado from 1000s of miles away, perhaps we could take the "First Fruits" to mean those nearest to us. Those grown locally.

- ✿ Buy locally grown food.
- ✿ Check out the mileage your food has travelled to get to your plate.



<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-46459714>

Have a Pentecost 'First Fruits' Harvest Festival—
Celebrating all that is good
in your local environment





Blow away art

You will need: twigs; leaves; seeds; flowers; any other natural item already detached from trees and plants.

What you do:

Find a space away from the path and create a picture or pattern on the ground using the things you've found.



Show your friends what you have made and look at theirs.

Enjoy your art before it blows away in the wind!

What's on this month



Churches Count on Nature 4th - 12th June

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>



Why not open up your churchyard to the local community to discover, identify and record the wildlife and plants you find there? The different species can be registered onto the National Biodiversity Network database.

You could:

Run a small organised event of some kind or simply open your gates.

Advertise it to the public or keep it private to the church community.

Lead the activity yourself or work with a nature group or school.

Ask your local Wildlife Trust or RSPB to run a workshop.



30 Days Wild 1st - 30th June

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/30dayswild>

Take the Wildlife Trusts' annual challenge and do one wild thing a day through the month of June.

Some favourite 'random acts of wildness' last year were:

- * Listening to birdsong
- * Exercising and eating outdoors
- * Identifying and planting wildflowers
- * Going on a bug hunt

"Our vision is of people close to nature, with land and seas rich in wildlife.

Our mission is to bring about living landscapes, living seas and a society where nature matters".



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Plastics



As dead flies give perfume a
bad smell,
so a little folly outweighs
wisdom and honour
(Ecclesiastes 10:1)



Human Creativity

From Tubal-Cain mixing elements to make bronze in Genesis 4 to Lydia mixing fibres and snail shells, with perhaps a bit of madder root to make her purple cloth, the Bible is full of clever craftspeople messing and mixing the ingredients of God's creation in order to create ever more new composite materials for every kind of use you can think of. For better or for worse.

The quote above from Ecclesiastes 10:1 reflects on the truth that a small bit of foolishness can greatly overshadow any wisdom. So it is then, that in our wisdom we can split an atom and because of our foolishness we cause mass destruction. In our wisdom we refine oil into monomers, then use polymerisation to create complex chains resulting in plastic, from the Greek word *Plastikos* which means "can be molded," and it sure can. Plastic is everywhere, absolutely everywhere! In our folly we are clogging up life, and destroying environments, and killing wildlife in their millions.

"God saw that it was good . . . God saw all that he had created and it was very good!" (Gen 1)



Let us pray:

Creator God, who made human beings in your own creative image, forgive us our folly, our arrogance in our relationship with your good creation. Forgive us for the way we take life and living things for granted. Forgive us for the ways we exploit your creation and by making 'dead flies' we turn your perfume into a sickly odour, polluting the oceans and destroying the earth.

In your grace forgive
us and help us. In
Jesus name, Amen!



Get Active:

Get involved with 'Plastic Free July', let this be the beginning of the way you use plastic in your life.

<https://youtu.be/ByayHG5CscE>

- ✿ Recycle and reuse the existing plastic in your home.
- ✿ Think twice before buying anything packaged or made out of plastic.
- ✿ Celebrate all the creativity in your church, get people to bring things they have made and create a service of thanksgiving to God for all that is GOOD.

PLASTIC FREE LIVING -
Scan the QR code or visit
www.citytosea.org.uk for
brilliant ideas



SAND CREATURES

What you need:

buckets and spades

pebbles and empty shells you find on the beach, or stones, twigs etc. from the playground

home-made flags

What you do:

Use a sand-pit or take a trip to the beach.

Create sand creatures and make it into a competition.

Use lots of things you can find on the beach or in the playground.



Do not take pebbles or anything else from the beach. Leave them there!



Fascinating fact: “The Atacama Desert in Chile is the driest place on earth.”

WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH



Plastic Free July

<https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>

Plastic Free July is a global movement that helps millions of people be part of the solution to plastic pollution.



Could your church take the challenge?

You can do **Plastic Free July** for a day, a week, ALL of July or from now on!



Ocean Emergency

Our ocean is at a tipping point.

The **Marine Conservation Society** is fighting to turn the tide.

Together as communities, businesses and governments we can help fight the war on plastic, keep beaches clean and protect marine wildlife.

Why not take a look at the Marine Conservation Society website and learn more about their campaigns and fundraising. Visit their amazing online shop as well!

<https://www.mcsuk.org/what-you-can-do/fundraising-and-events/plastic-free-seas/>



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Holidays



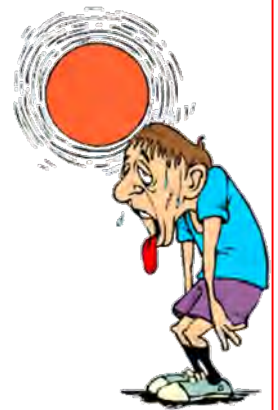
Six days you shall work, but on
the seventh day you shall rest
(Exodus 34:21)



Timeout!

When you contemplate your holidays, what do you think of?

Are you looking to book a flight to foreign climes? Are you looking to laze on the beach all day and party by the pool all night? Would you rather go sight-seeing, travelling around Europe or even a road-trip in Canada, New Zealand or the States? Benidorm or Barbados? Either way you can look forward to long queues, early morning flights, at least 3 hours in a flying tin can with 200 other adventurers. Another hour searching frantically for your suitcase and the delight of 4 hours on a coach, stopping to drop off at every hotel on the way knowing yours is going to be the last one. You finally arrive, middle of the night, exhausted. You just about recover, before your reverse the arrival scenario, arriving home with sun-burn, tummy trouble and some bug you caught on the plane! But, hey! Do not let me put you off.



Maybe it is time to recapture the sense of the Holy Day as being a time of resting not roaming, of chilling not roasting, of having time to be, rather than somewhere to be. Just be. Just be still . . .

Let us pray:

Jesus said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' So they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. (Mk 6:31)

Lord Jesus, help us to find rest in you.
Help us to take 'sabbath' time weekly.
May all our holidays be Holy Days.

We pray for all who find no rest or peace
in their lives. Help us
to help them to 'be
still' and to know you.
Amen



Get Active:

It is not only human beings who need rest,

the whole of creation needs
time out too. Lock downs
changed many habits, including the desire
to travel great distances for holidays. Why
not try . . .

✿ Looking to holiday closer to home.

✿ Discovering your holiday carbon
footprint and trying to reduce it. Remember
the calculator is at

www.climatestewards.org

✿ Take up the discipline of taking time out
with God every week.



STATISTICAL SCAVENGER HUNT

What you need:

a list of 20 questions

pencils

What you do:

Divide players into small groups.

Give each group a list of 20 questions like these:

Add together:

The total number of miles travelled by each team member from home to church.

The number of flights the team has taken in their lives.

The number of cars each family owns.

Minus points for the following:

The number of times the group cycled this week.

The number of times in the last month the group has used the bus or train.

Your questions could focus on transport or address general environmental issues.



WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH



Measuring and reducing our carbon footprints as individuals and churches

Carbon footprint = the amount of carbon dioxide emissions associated with all the activities of a particular individual, organisation or community.



Climate Stewards helps you to measure your carbon footprint across categories including flights, driving, public transport, home energy, food and household expenditure. You can look at ideas for reducing your footprint and then compensating for your unavoidable emissions (offsetting) in global community carbon projects. <https://www.climatestewards.org/>

360Carbon is an easy tool that allows you to work with others to calculate the carbon footprint of your church. It's free to use! Give yourself time to explore the website and decide how to set about the process. It's a good idea to start in January. <https://360carbon.org/>

You could contact Claire Boot, Synod Property Officer, for advice: claire.boot.urcwailes@urc.org.uk

Could your church divest from fossil fuels and invest in clean alternatives?



Operation Noah's Bright Now campaign has seen churches across a number of denominations and networks make a commitment to divest from fossil fuels. (In October 2019 the Synod of Wales decided to end investments in fossil fuel companies).

<https://operationnoah.org/what-we-do/bright-now-our-divestment-campaign/>



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Harvest



As long as the earth endures,
seedtime and **harvest**, cold
and heat, summer and winter,
day and night, shall not cease.

(Gen 8:22)



Give thanks with a grateful heart!

Harvest Festival is a time to focus on

the beauty of God's creation and God's provision for us.

Perhaps one of the most sung hymns at Harvest Festival is "WE plough the fields and scatter," but we don't though, do we? When was the last time you did? When did you get your Massey Fergusson out and make lovely straight furrows in your field? Most of us would have to admit that we have never in our lifetime ploughed a field! And yet every year we proclaim that we have. Are we just lying to ourselves, and to the world, about how we spend our time? Are we in fact asking God to bless something that we have never done? How much more honest and relevant would it be if we were to sing:

We push our supermarket trollies,
and gather all our tins,
we use our great tin-opener,
and throw it in the bin.
Our food it all comes to us,
with such a great ease,
and most of all we all love:
Y Fenni's lovely cheese.

All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above
then thank the Lord,
o thank the Lord,
for all His love.

Now that is relevant!

Let us pray:

God of grace and gift, we thank you for the wonderful provision that we find in all you have made. For the miracle of seed, plant and fruit. As we celebrate these bountiful wonders, we pray for our world to be saved from exploitation and devastation caused by greed and over-farming. We pray for those who endure pressures of an extravagant world and those who work the land and care for our environment.. In Jesus' name, Amen



Get Active:

- ✿ Make your harvest festival the theme of the month.
- ✿ Include Climate Sunday in your Harvest Celebrations
www.climatesunday.org
- ✿ Support local farmers, produce, farm shops, butchers, greengrocers and let them know you will be praying for them.

CHECK OUT

<https://climate.cymru/> website



SUNFLOWER AND CHOCOLATE CAKE



What you need:

150g cooking chocolate
50g cornflakes
25g ready-to-eat sunflower seeds
25g raisins
paper cases



What you do:

Melt the chocolate.

Crush the cornflakes by placing them in a bag and crushing them with a rolling pin.

Add the cornflakes, sunflower seeds and raisins to the melted chocolate and mix well.

Place a spoonful of the mixture into paper cases and leave to cool.

Enjoy!

Why not sell these to friends and family at the Great Big Green Week?

WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH

Use your LOAF to make a difference!

Locally produced

Organically grown

Animal friendly

Fairly traded



Food matters. The kind of food we choose should demonstrate our care for creation.

What food do we provide in our churches?

You could order some LOAF place mats and posters from info@greenchristian.org.uk and share in a LOAF meal together.

Great Big Green Week 24th September - 2nd October



Why not sign up to get involved in the Climate Coalition's Great Big Green Week 2022?

<https://greatbiggreenweek.com/>

The first Green Week was held in 2021 ahead of COP 26. 5,000 events took place across the UK with 200,000 people coming together to call for action to tackle climate change and protect people and nature.

Holding a Green Week event is a great way for your church to engage with the local community.

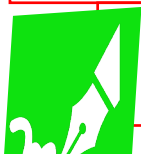
You could:

- host a plant-based or low-waste coffee morning
- plant a wildlife friendly flowerbed
- hold a climate themed service
- organize a nature trail or an allotment tour

See if you can collaborate with your local Christian Aid group and nature groups.

Why not invite along your councillors, AMs and MP?

Go to the Great Big Green Week website for lots of ideas and fantastic resources!



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Little children, let us love, not in word
or speech, but in truth and action

(1 John 3:18)



Reflecting on The Vision of OWW

Here is the vision statement from the One World Week website www.oneworldweek.org together with relevant Bible passages. Take time to reflect on the Bible passage and discuss it in relation to One World Week's Mission.

We are "People working together to build a just, peaceful and sustainable world"

Our MISSION We want to build a network of co-operating individuals and organisations to provide opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to come together to:

- *acknowledge our interdependence:* Acts 2:42-47; what does this say about our interdependence on God and one another? Mark 3:20-29
- *learn about global justice, spread that learning and act on it:* Proverbs 2:1-15; how can we learn about justice and share that learning? Psalm 36:5-9
- *take action to increase equality, justice and the health of earth's natural systems, locally and globally:* Micah 6:6-8; why should we act with justice, desire mercy for all and actively walk humbly with God? Colossians 3:5-17



Let us pray:



Read or sing Bryn Rees' hymn "The kingdom of God is justice and joy."

Look over the Lord's Prayer. Such familiar words and yet

words that speak of the coming of the kingdom of God.

Wow! Let us pray for the kingdom to come [pray the Lord's Prayer slowly, dwelling on each phrase].

Get Active:

- ✿ Discover the true meaning of 'UBUNTU', read Archbishop Desmond Tutu's book "No Future Without Forgiveness"
- ✿ One World Week is about actions, just like Acts 2, Proverbs 2 and Micah 6 are. Commit to God's kingdom way of life.
- ✿ Commitment For Life—have a look using the QR code.



Make sure that your church has a "ONE WORLD WEEK" service. Resources are found at www.oneworldweek.org/resources



GREEN BINGO



What you need:

- pencils
- green bingo sheet (see below)

What you do:

Talk to one another to find out who has done the different things listed on the sheet. Add their name to the relevant box.

After a set time, share the results of the bingo. Did anyone manage to fill all the boxes?

has helped in a litter pick	often travels by bus	recycles their rubbish
has rescued an injured wild animal	can name an extinct animal	has weeded a garden recently
regularly buys environmentally friendly products	has been on holiday in the UK	grows their own fruit or vegetables
has planted a tree	uses energy saving light bulbs at home	has ridden a bike recently
has a bird box in their garden	has visited a nature reserve	remembers to turn the lights off when leaving the room
saves water in a water butt	buys things from charity shops	can name an endangered animal

WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH

Coed Cadw (Woodland Trust Cymru) are working with the Welsh Government to give households in Wales a free tree to plant in their garden or in a community space.



Trees will be available from over twenty hubs across Wales from October 2022. There will be guidance and support on how to plant and care for your tree. Full details at:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/wales/>



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Remembering



I thank God every time I
remember you
(Philippians 1:3)



Thinking it through

One of the most poignant World War epitaphs is

“WHEN YOU GO HOME, TELL THEM OF US AND SAY,
FOR YOUR TOMORROW WE GAVE OUR TODAY.”

For our present generations, we ought to look back with gratitude to those who gave so much that we might enjoy the world we live in. But we must also look forward, for in our day we are fighting a different kind of war which requires alternative ways to bring victory. We are defending our world, God’s creation, against human destructive practices. We find ourselves looking for ever new offensive strategies against the armies of pollutants and those who violate and desecrate the earth. So in the present, what would we be willing to give of ourselves so that future generations look back and can say that we gave our today for their tomorrow?

Read and reflect on what is said about creation in Romans 8:18-30



Let us pray:

Remember and give thanks for those who have given of themselves to create a better world for us to live in.

Remember and give thanks for all whose lives have been selflessly dedicated to caring for God’s creation.

Remember that you too are called to care, to give, to serve, that others may have a world which they look at and give thanks for your part in being a good steward and passing it on to future generations as a place that reflects the glory of God.



Get Active:

- ✿ Remember to act:
- ✿ Nov 6 is the United Nations’ International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict. Discover more at www.un.org/en/observances/environment-in-war-protection-day
- ✿ Plant a tree in Remembrance of someone who is special to you.
- ✿ COP 27 is taking place in Egypt during November. Bring it to the attention of your MP, remind them of the promises from COP26.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM!





REMEMBRANCE TREE

What you do: Use the wooden leaf in your pack or collect fallen leaves, (these will need to be pressed and moisturised to maintain their flexibility).

Thread the leaves and carefully write on them the names of people or situations you wish to remember.

Dear Tomorrow (<https://www.deartomorrow.org/>)

DearTomorrow is a climate storytelling project where people write messages to loved ones living in the future. These messages describe how they feel about climate change, why it's important and what actions they will take to help ensure a safe and secure future.

DearTomorrow is a good way of opening up conversations across generations and making the climate crisis more personally relevant.



Create a story scrap book of stories about why you care about climate change. These stories can be written or drawn, or in spoken word if you want to create a sound scrapbook.

Combine all of the stories together for your church to share with others. Your stories could form a powerful display, or you could share DearTomorrow action pledges on social media. Take a look at the website for lots of ideas.

WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH



UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE SUMMIT
COP 27 IN EGYPT

7TH - 18TH NOVEMBER



Following the UN climate summit in Glasgow in 2021, A Rocha UK CEO Andy Atkins wrote:

“The success or failure of COP 26 will ultimately depend on what happens next ... What the public, including Christians and Churches, do in the next twelve months could be decisive ... Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke some strong words about climate change - but will the UK government follow through?”

The single biggest thing you can do to tackle climate change is to engage with your MP. You can work with them to support the government's legislation on reaching net zero emissions by 2050.



Hope for the Future offers faith groups tailored research, training and ongoing support to build a working relationship with their MP. For help in preparing for an in-person meeting with your MP, contact

leah.lapautre@hftf.org.uk



This material was written, compiled and published by Eileen Newington (Synod Green Advocate), Judy Harris (Children and Youth Development Officer) Jason Askew (Training and Development Officer)

Green Christmas

For God so loved the world that
he gave his only Son that
whoever believes in Him shall not
perish but shall have eternal life.

(John 3:16)



Opening the Presence

If there is one time of year when our world groans under the pressure, then it is Christmas. From wrapping paper to wish-lists, trees made of plastic to transporting millions of tons of gifts, fairy lights to food waste, Christmas is the time of extravagance. So much food we cannot possibly eat, so many presents we did not need, maybe even want, more than £1 billion spent in the UK alone on Christmas cards, at a cost of 200,000 trees. Of course in the good ole days at least the world got a couple of days off when the roads went quiet, but nowadays even Christmas day the motorways are full. We have not even mentioned the airmiles travelled and not just visiting relatives, but your average proper Christmas dinner is calculated to have travelled a total of 260,000 miles to your table, unless you are sourcing everything locally.

Surely it is time to forget white and even blue Christmases and start dreaming of a greener Christmas. As we celebrate the birth of the infant Jesus, let us remember Paul's words from Romans 8:22

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved."



Let us pray:

Loving God, you came to us, Emmanuel, with us, in the most humblest of ways: an upcycled feeding trough for a bed and a shed full of animals for a nursery. Help us to see and celebrate the humility of your birth, not with extravagance, but let us look to the interests of others in our world and the interests of creation. Help us to follow your example, not grasping for yourself, but giving of yourself. Help us to

make this Christmas more meaningful by having less, more special by making a difference and more spiritual by leaving alone the material. Help us in Jesus' name. Amen.



Get Active:

- ✿ If you have a plastic tree make it last a lifetime. If you are replacing it get a real live sustainable one.
- ✿ Only buy the food you will eat and look at where it has travelled from. Buy locally sourced food.
- ✿ If you have to send cards, send E-Cards or a WhatsApp message telling your friends that you bought a cow with the money you saved and you've left it in Africa.
- ✿ Buy recycled gifts, charity shop gifts, or UNICEF or other charity gifts.



FIND OUT MORE AT - arochoa.org.uk/our-activities/living-lightly-take-action/





KINDNESS TREE

Use the Star in your box as a template to make stars for every member of your church. On each star write a pledge for a random act of environmental kindness. Hang them on a Christmas tree or a tree outside to make your pledges.

These could be things such as :

- Plant trees.
- Conserve water by turning off water when not in use, fixing leaks and installing water-saving devices.
- Economize on car use. Do as many things as possible in one trip. Keep your car tuned up.
 - Walk, ride a bike, car pool, take the bus or other public transportation.
 - Compost food products to use in gardens.
 - Turn off lights, heaters and fans when not in use.



Reindeer food

What you need:

wild bird seed

oats

leaves

What you do:

Mix the oats and the seed.

Using a star or snowflake shaped cutter, cut shapes out from fallen leaves and then mix them into the seed. On Christmas eve, sprinkle it around for Santa's reindeer to have as a tasty snack.

WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH

Sustainable Christmas Tips



Every pound we spend at Christmas is a vote for the world we want to create.

Let's make our festivities friendlier for our planet.

We could start with presents ...

quality not quantity - ever received a gift you don't want and will never use?

gift an experience - reduce demand for physical resources and bring people together

think about materials - keep sustainability in mind

test you wrapping skills - avoid plastic ribbon and tape ... and glitter!

There's so much more we can think about, discuss and share together around food, decorations, party outfits, winter walks and nature.

Why not visit these websites for some great Eco Christmas ideas:

WWF <https://www.wwf.org.uk/>

Friends of the Earth <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/>

Greenpeace <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/>



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The Lord God planted a garden in Eden and he put the human he had formed in it. In the fertile land, the Lord God grew every beautiful tree with edible fruit, and also he grew the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:8,9)



Getting back to our roots

If there is one occupation that all human beings should be involved in it has to be gardening. Caring, tending, weeding, cultivating, it is in our DNA, it is where we belong. Strange then that the 21st century idea of a front garden is paving for parking. Look around your neighbourhood, see just how many front gardens that once were gardens are now car parks. This destruction of hedges, flowerbeds and trees so that we can park our pollution wagons is largely ignored as part of the problem, but the loss of habitat for birds and beetles, worms and weevils, moths and mice is incredible, particularly in our cities. Furthermore, look at the trend for back gardens, patios, decking, hot-tubs and wicker furniture. It is time to get back to our roots, to return to the good garden God had planted. To get back to where we belong. Let the adjacent poem be an inspiration, for prayer and for planting. See what habitats you can create, what animals and birds you can befriend.



"Then he took the human being and put them in the garden to work it and to care for it." (Gen 2:15)

Let us pray:

THE Lord God planted a garden
In the first white days of the world,
And He set there an angel warden
In a garment of light enfurled.

So near to the peace of Heaven,
That the hawk might nest with the wren,
For there in the cool of the even
God walked with the first of men.

And I dream that these garden closes
With their shade and their sun-flecked sod
And their lilies and bowers of roses,
Were laid by the hand of God.

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth, –
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.

(Dorothy Frances Gurney 1858-1932)

Get Active:

The 'go-to' website for this month is

ECOGREENLOVE

<https://ecogreenlove.com/2016/02/19/ecofriendly-garden/>

- ✿ Church gardens are wonderful wildlife spaces. Develop a more wildlife friendly church.
- ✿ Put in place bird boxes, hedgehog homes, bat boxes, insect hotels, composting areas.
- ✿ Have a wild flower area.
- ✿ Plant a fruit tree.



HAVE GARDEN PARTIES AT CHURCH AND IN YOUR HOME GARDEN.
SHARE IDEAS, SKILLS AND LABOUR—COFFEE AND CAKE, CULTIVATE A
CONVERSATION—JOIN TOGETHER AND HELP ONE ANOTHER.

BIRD BOX: What you need:

1 board 152mm x 19mm (not planed), approximately 1450mm long
24 oval 38mm nails
2 brass hooks and eyes
several copper tacks
strip of rubber/waterproof canvas/leather 150mmx50mm
saw, hammer, brace and 28mm bit



What you do:

Cut the wood as shown in the diagram.

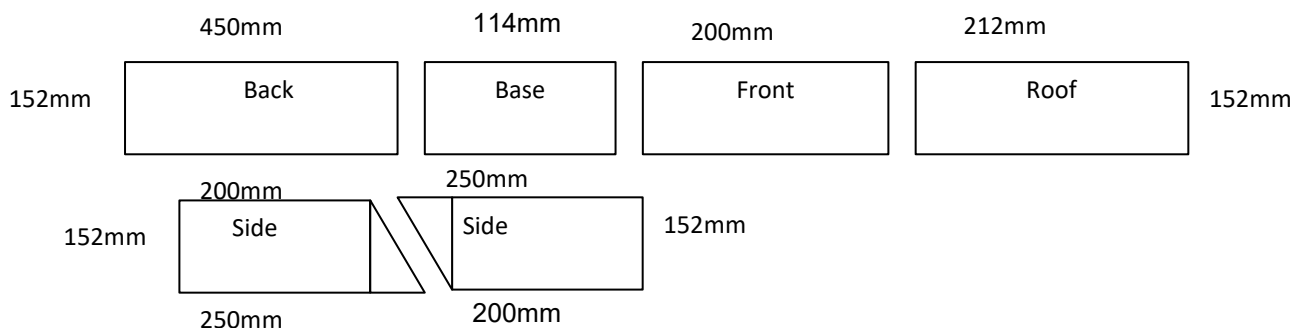
One diagonal cut will form the slopes of the two sides.

Make an entrance hole in the piece that will form the front of the box 28mm in diameter and about 25mm from the top to attract Blue Tits and Great Tits.

Make a box using nails. It should be a box shape with a slanted roof.

Hinge the roof with a piece of rubber, waterproof canvas, or leather, and attach the hooks and eyes to secure the box. This will help you to clean the box out in autumn ready for the spring.

Position the box high up on a tree or wall so that predators cannot get to it.



Bat Box: What you do:

Bat boxes must always be made of untreated wood. Use the same measurements as described for the bird box.

Bats need holes in the bottom, towards the back of the box about 12mm wide.

On the inside of the box on the back wall, make grooves with a saw. These should be about 3mm deep and 9mm apart. These enable the bats to hang in the box.

Site the box high up on a tree, with no branches near it so the bats have easy access.

Paints or preservatives must never be used on the box as they can harm or kill a bat.

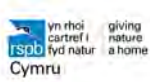
Bats like different temperatures at different times. So, it is best to make two or three boxes and position them around a tree. This means in colder weather they can generate more heat.



Bats (and their living quarters) are protected by law. You must not harm them or destroy where they live. If you need to move them for any reason, you need to get a licence from the Countryside Council for Wales or contact your local bat group to find a licensed member who might be able to help you.

WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH

Be one in a million - take part in *Big Garden Birdwatch*



In the last 50 years, 38 million birds have been lost from UK skies. The RSPB depends on your support to save nature and to look after places where nature can

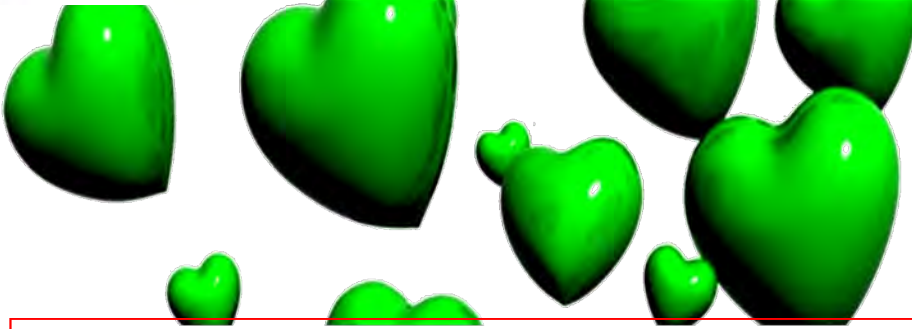
thrive. Join a million other people and count the birds you see in your garden or local park for one hour at the end of January. Sign up and get your free guide at <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/>



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Show the Love



The Lord "loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD."

(Psalm 33:5)



Heart to Heart

Rejoice, Sing, Praise the Lord! So begins Psalm 33. Why? Well, because of God's *Hesed* that is God's steadfast love, mercy, kindness. Hosea speaks God's word against the people because of their corruption, the injustice and unfairness with which they treat the poor and the marginalised. But into this judgement, in ch 12: comes hope, in the echo of words spoken to Jacob at Bethel, "*The Lord God is Almighty and you must return to your God*" . . . How do you return to God? Hosea continues "*commit yourselves to love and justice and never give up on God!*"

The focus for February are two campaigns: Climate Coalition's "Show the Love" and Fairtrade's campaign to emphasise the need for justice with Fairtrade Fortnight. But we do not want to pick up these things for a couple of weeks, we want these things at the centre of our heart. Fairness, justice, mercy, steadfast love, this is God's love, this is Jesus' love shown on the cross—where love and justice meet and evil is defeated.

Jesus said "a new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all people know that you are my disciples." (Jn 13:34)



Let us pray:

Reflect on the words of Psalm 33.

Sing for joy; Praise the Lord; Sing to him.
Then sit in silence and wait for the Lord, the God of steadfast love and justice.

God is the awesome creator of all things. Pray for creation. Pray for the people. Pray for the nations. Pray for those suffering famine and disease.

Wait again on the Lord and pray the words of Psalm 33:20-22 together.



Get Active:

Two websites for ideas and actions:

<https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/>

[https://](https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/show-the-love/)

www.theclimatecoalition.org/show-the-love/

- ✿ Get crafting, make some green hearts and turn the page for lots more ideas on the Show the Love website.
- ✿ Let your MP get to know you and your passion to see love and justice prevail when it comes to climate matters in our nation and our world.
- ✿ If you are not already then commit to becoming a Fairtrade Church.

HAVE A CHURCH SERVICE THAT FOCUSES ON "FAIRTRADE". SEE THE WEBSITE FOR RESOURCES.



RECYCLED PAPER RECIPE



What you need:



- old newspapers or scrap paper
- bucket
- wooden spoon
- square frame with mesh stretched over it (you can buy a paper making kit with this frame in it)
- flat piece of wood
- plastic tray/container larger than the metal frame

What you do:

- Tear up 2 or 3 single sheets of newspaper and add them to a bucket with about 5 cups of water. Leave to soak overnight. When the paper is soft, use a wooden spoon (or your hands if you prefer) to break the mixture down to a pulp.
 - Place the metal frame in the plastic container and pour about 2 cm depth of water into the container so that the mesh is immersed in water.
 - Pour a cupful of mushy paper from the bucket over the mesh and spread it evenly with your fingers.
 - Lay out a piece of newspaper on the table. Carefully lift out the mesh and let the water drain. Then place the mesh with the pulp on it onto the opened newspaper.
 - Close the newspaper onto the pulpy mesh and **carefully** turn the whole thing over so that the mesh is now on top of the pulp. Keep the newspaper closed.
 - Place a piece of flat wood over the newspaper and push it down hard to squeeze out the water.
 - Open the newspaper and take out the mesh, then leave the newspaper open for at least 24 hours so the pulp can dry.
 - Once it is dry, peel off your new sheet of paper and use it!
- Why not mix grass or flower seeds with your newspaper when you create the pulp.



Use this paper to create a card for someone you love and show them the love of Creation. If you have added seed then you can place it on the ground to show the love.

Use only flowers, leaves, and seeds that have fallen from trees, or pick a few from your garden. Do not take plants from private land, parks, or nature reserves.

WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH

Show the Love

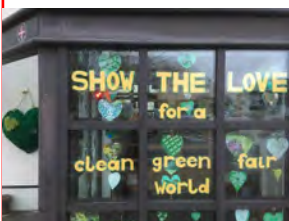


<https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/show-the-love>

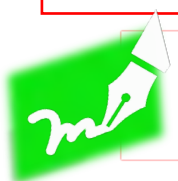
Every February since 2015, people from across the UK have taken part in the Climate Coalition's Show the Love campaign. They've used the power of green hearts to ask politicians to keep up the momentum on the climate crisis. When you make and share a green heart, you're sending a clear message to decision makers that you care about climate, nature and people.

Why not get involved with your church? You could:

organise an event during February

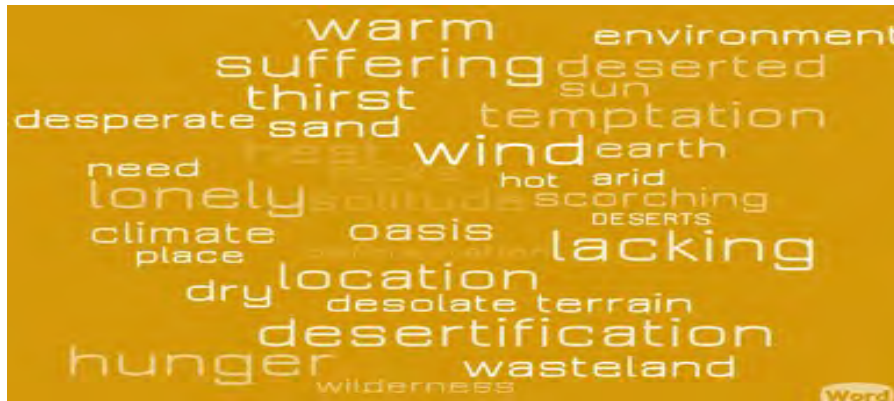


- reach out to the local community
- get together to do a green heart crafting session
- hold a green heart cake sale
- invite your congregation to write to their MP about why climate action is important.



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Deserts



What do you think of when you hear the word ‘desert’?



Isaiah 35

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, ²it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendour of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendour of our God .

In the Gospels the desert is the place where . . .

- ✿ the Good News was first preached
- ✿ Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit
- ✿ evil was resisted
- ✿ people flocked to hear the Gospel
- ✿ people were baptised
- ✿ there was time for prayer
- ✿ people followed Jesus
- ✿ people were fed
- ✿ the lost sheep are found

Discussion All over the world human beings, without a second thought, create deserts through deforestation, destruction, and dumping. Including in your neighbourhood. Where are the places in your community that have become ‘urban deserts’? Talk together about places near you where people thirst for righteousness, hunger for justice. Are there areas of wasteland in your area? Who are those who suffer from lack of housing, food, work, faith?



Let us pray:

Read Psalm 107:1-9

God of life we pray for the places of desolation and death. May new life blossom. We pray for those who hunger and thirst for justice. May their hope grow. We pray for those who are in distress. May they find joy in Jesus, our Saviour. Amen

Get Active:

- ✿ Get involved in a local litter pick.
- ✿ Learn about ‘Seed Bombing’.
- ✿ Transform a ‘local desert space’.
- ✿ Check out greenchristian.org.uk

Including the inspirational
“Nine Ways of Living
Gently on this Earth”



RAINDROP SPOTS



What you need:

blotting or sugar paper
pencils, crayons, felt tips

What you do:

When it is a rainy day, place blotting paper on the ground to catch a few raindrops.

Draw around and colour around the drops.

You then can make this into a picture, or wrapping paper.

Create your own rain by dripping water onto paper and then try and identify shapes e.g. cat, car, cloud etc.



Fascinating fact: “Raindrops aren’t really shaped like drops; they are perfectly round”

DIY Seed Bombs

What you need:

compost
seeds
clay or clay soil or flour

What you do:

1. In a bowl, mix together one cup of seeds with 5 cups of compost and 2 - 3 cups of clay powder (you could use clay soil instead if you have it, or plain flour works as well).
2. Slowly mix in water with your hands until everything sticks together like a dough.
3. Roll the mixture into firm balls or press it into a heart shape.
4. Leave the balls to dry in a sunny spot.



Now for the fun bit! Plant your seed bombs by throwing them at bare parts of the garden or on waste land and wait to see what pops up!

WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH

WaterAid



<https://www.wateraid.org/uk/>



Clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene are basic human rights. They should be a normal part of daily life for everyone, everywhere - but they aren't. Water Aid works with partners in some of the toughest parts of the world to install taps and toilets.

Why not share this video with your church and think about how we use water in the UK?

Let 85 year old Dadabe from Madagascar show you how to celebrate turning on the taps for the very first time!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CR5PmltpSI>



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ECO CHURCH RESOURCES

WORSHIP AND TEACHING

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

<https://ctbi.org.uk/climate-sunday/>

<https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/materials/ideas-for-action/>

BUILDINGS

<https://360carbon.org/>

<https://greenjourney.org/>

LAND

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>

<https://arocha.org.uk/wildchristian/>

LIFESTYLE

<https://www.climatestewards.org/>

<https://360carbon.org/>

<https://brightnow.org.uk/>



COMMUNITY AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

Email: wales@christian-aid.org

<https://greenchristian.org.uk/>

<https://operationnoah.org/>

<https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/>

<https://www.hftf.org.uk/>

<https://transitionnetwork.org/>

<https://climate.cymru/>

Green Advocate URC National Synod of Wales

Please get in touch with your questions, ideas, comments and stories.

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