



Archdiocese of Southwark
Commission for
Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation



Newsletter ~ Autumn 2010

Eco-Congregation - Going "Green"

Eco-Congregation is an ecumenical programme helping churches to make the link between environmental issues and Christian faith, and to respond in practical action in the church, in the lives of individuals, and in the local and global community.

There are three elements to becoming an eco-congregation: spiritual, practical and mission. The independently-assessed Eco-congregation Award is designed to affirm good practice in environmental stewardship and help churches witness to the importance of caring for God's creation.

At the time of writing 174 churches in England & Wales have received the award but very few of these are Catholic and, although I would love to be corrected, I do not think any of these few are in our diocese.

The lack of enthusiasm for this project from within the Catholic community is disappointing particularly as Pope Benedict has been well ahead of most faith leaders in his pronouncements and actions. The Vatican has become the first carbon neutral state and the Pope VI Audience Hall is now covered in solar panels.

As well as the moral arguments there are economic benefits in going green. The government are encouraging the fitment of solar panels by allowing anyone generating their own electricity to be paid for all units produced in addition to payments for any surplus sold back to the grid. The payments are guaranteed for 25 years after the installation of the system. These Government-backed Feed In Tariffs are also known as the Clean Energy Cash-Back Scheme.

The maximum sized installation costs around £18,000 to install but should produce a return of around 9% for the next 25 years.

Is this something your parish should consider?

Alternatives are air or ground source heat pumps, wind turbines or systems able to extract heat from nearby running water.

National Justice & Peace Network Conference "Our Daily Bread"

- Food Security, People and Planet"

Around 400 people, including a few familiar faces from Southwark, attended the Hayes Conference Centre for the annual NJPN conference.

We were treated to a most thought provoking weekend of speeches and discussion sessions which left me more fully aware of the problems facing the planet in the immediate future and greatly concerned that the political and commercial will is not there to solve them.

Elizabeth Dowler, Warwick University professor and member of the Food Ethics Council, told us that the "world comes to us in the UK on a plate" but at huge environmental cost to the planet. The food system is very economically efficient, with globalised distribution networks and concentrated ownership all helping to bring efficiency. "We have cheap food in Britain because other people and the environment are paying the price". The system is efficient but destructive, exploiting

**We thank God for and work & pray that it
His bounty..... may be shared fairly by all**



people in the food chain as well as the environment. "Some 20 per cent of the UK's annual carbon dioxide emissions come from the food system and that is not just transport," said Elizabeth, more emissions still come from consumers driving to the shops. Shops don't invest in poorer areas and the products often cost more there. At time of dire poverty people may have to cut back on food in order that they can pay other bills. (cont...)

Elizabeth called for more people to be growing their own food, eating less meat and reconnecting with the earth. "We must bring food with shorter supply chains,"

Alistair McIntosh, a Quaker and broadcaster, warned that today society has become "spiritually blinded by the love of money." The relationship between humankind and the earth has been broken and needs mending. "People have become richer, money has replaced relationships,"

Our supermarkets only hold 24 hours supply of goods. "We have a just in time supply system - all driven by oil," said Alistair. He called for land reform, a reconnection with the earth and deepening of the understanding of grace in ecological terms. In short, communities must be rebuilt that are resilient and not dependent on oil.



Food growing in South London (MI6 HQ in the background)

Columban Father Shay Cullen told that there are 1 billion people hungry today, some 642 million of them in Asia. There are a further 265 million in Sub Saharan Africa and 53 million in Latin America. Some 15 million of the hungry live in developed world countries. Children are the first to be deprived, if they don't get nutrition in the early years, they can suffer brain damage."

Shay told of how developed countries were making grabs for land in the developing world. This has seen large parts of Africa effectively taken over by European nations. China has moved into the Philippines. The move to running vehicles on bio-fuels, means even greater pressure on land.

It was not all gloom and doom though with Shay offering a ray of hope in the work of his Preda Foundation in the Philippines in developing fair trade products like dried mango to sell into countries such as Germany and the UK. Some of the funds raised are used to support a project that helps girls who have been the victims of trafficking.

International environmentalist Vandana Shiva accused bio-technology companies of peddling lies with their claims of saving the world using genetically modified technologies. She dismissed the companies claims of saving the world as a public relations ploy intended, in the main, to disguise a grab for control of the food chain. One company that received much criticism for this grab at life sources was Monsanto. "Monsanto doesn't create seed, it corrupts seed." She told of the damage already being done by GM technology across the world, including 5.4 million acres in the US that have now been taken over by superweeds, after using genetically modified products.

"Genetic engineering is a crude technology, not a science," said Vandana. Terminator technology, that stops plants reproducing, she referred to as "evil." Although It is banned by UN convention, in India they are getting more and more cases of seeds not reproducing themselves. Rather than saving the planet Vadana claimed that GM technology is at the heart of new hunger and poverty, "There is no yield gain. How can it be cheaper if there are royalties on each seed". She called on countries in the North like the UK to look to "a transition to ecological agriculture."

LIFESTYLE CHOICES

- **Use the LOAF Principles to Source Food**

Locally produced. Organically grown, Animal Friendly and Fairly traded.

- **Protect soil and grow food in urban areas**

Fruit and nut trees can be grown throughout our towns, garden and on church land: vegetables can be grown in window boxes.

- **Avoid Wasting Food**

Plan ahead so that we buy only what we need for a limited period; reuse leftovers.

- **Reduce meat consumption**

The European Christian Environmental Network is recommending bringing down meat consumption as an important tool in combating climate change.

- **Eat grass fed or free range meat**

Meat and dairy products from animals largely raised on grassland creates much less carbon than meat from grain fed animals. (Humanely caught grey squirrel was suggested as the ultimate free range meat!?).

- **Compost your greens**

Composting is more environmentally friendly and rotted down compost adds fertility to your garden

- **Preserve Gluts**

Buy local fruit and vegetables when they are in season and cheap and preserve them or make jam, chutney or pickle to enjoy in the winter.

Our Christian Duty to care for Biodiversity through Spiritual awareness, Understanding, Respect and Community Stewardship.

by Juliette Cox (St John Fisher Parish, Rochester)

Biodiversity or the diversity of life is diminishing at an alarming pace as species extinctions exceed speciation at ever increasing rates.

It is accepted now that we have entered a human-dominated Anthropocene' geological era and are heading for a Sixth Mass Extinction. As we know, human populations are suffering the consequences of climate change particularly in drought- and flood-prone regions of the world.

The UN declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity to celebrate and raise awareness of the incredible diversity but also the crisis we are facing.

Scientific researchers predict that 15-37% of all the world's species will be committed to extinction by 2050, based on a global warming of 1.5-2.5° C, due to the reduction in habitable area. Chris Thomas, University of York says 'we are subjecting our biota to environmental conditions not seen for more than 10 million years'. The loss of biodiversity is also part of the same problem so the worse it gets, the worse it will get!



Crested Cow-Wheat – lost from the South-east during 1990's

Our Earth is infinitely precious but its resources are not infinite and we need to be more aware of wealth distribution. Economists and businesses need to address biodiversity when considering climate change, water scarcity and human rights issues as all are interconnected.

Globalisation is making us become increasingly disconnected from nature so that we forget its immense value and importance, the fact that it is our one and only life-support system. There is no Planet B; time is running out; we must act now! (Operation Noah, 2010)

Yes it is a frightening reality and we in our materialistic societies live in constant denial of this truth. It is easy not to look beyond the comforts and

riches that buffer us and empathise with our ailing planet, including our vulnerable brothers and sisters suffering environmental disasters and crises who are actually the people treading most lightly on the planet, the ones who depend and care most about their lands and seas, the ones who are least attached to possessions and the ones who live in true

community spirit. These are the people, Jesus has said, who will inherit the Earth; these are the people who have so much to teach us, about our need to treasure and protect our cradle of life.

In addition to our global impact on biodiversity, over the last 200 years England has lost nearly 500 species of plants, animals and fungi. This includes 15% of dolphins and whales, 12% of land mammals and almost 25% of England's butterflies and amphibians (Natural England, March 2010)

We are finally waking up to the fact that we must end exploitation and degradation (habitat destruction, killing creatures, introduction of exotic predators/diseases and pollution) of the worlds' ecosystems at all scales and indeed value all life and focus on its restoration.



The red backed shrike was lost from England in 1988

This seems an impossible task, but we must make every possible effort to achieve these goals including national/international targets for Carbon emission reductions.

As Christ's followers we have an important leadership role to play – let's recognise that a spiritual crisis is at the centre of the problem (Paul Bodenham, 2008). We need to ask the Holy Spirit to bring forth His gifts in us as we confront our weaknesses so that we may have hope and strive to face the truth and re-connect with nature, thus transforming ourselves and our parish communities, becoming true stewards of creation.

Due to budget constraints the additional colour which used to appear on the printed and posted copies of our newsletters has been removed. E-mailed copies will, of course, remain in full colour and current and back copies can be downloaded from our web site.



September 12th - Racial Justice Sunday www.carj.org.uk



September 18th - Eco-congregations national conference

Growing Organically - practical examples of projects and opportunities to see what conservation potential church land may hold and to explore ideas for imaginative ways to use it for the benefit of church, community and wildlife. The venue is close by New Street railway station in Birmingham, 10.30 start. For more details and to book email kajsa.brittsjo@arocha.org or call David Hughes on 0114 263 6421

September 18th Drones War Conference organised by Fellowship of Reconciliation www.for.org.uk 10am – 4pm at University of London Union, Malet Street. Cost: (which includes buffet lunch) £10.00/£6.00 conc. For more information and to register, contact Mary 01865 250781 or mary@for.org.uk

September 20th Delivering Effective Penal Policy - A radical Approach to Short Term Sentences
Stop minor offenders becoming tomorrow's hardened criminals.

A seminar at the Royal Commonwealth Society 9am to 4.30pm. For further information see www.cppseminars.org.uk or call 01442 845004

September 21st Housing Justice invites you to a free evening forum - "Mentoring & Befriending".

There will be short presentations from Caroline Ewart of Spear and Shona Macpherson of Housing Justice followed by discussion. 6.30pm – 8.30pm at Housing Justice. 1st Floor, Royal London House. 22-25 Finsbury Square, London. EC2A 1DX
RSVP to info@housingjustice.org.uk

September 21st - Peace Day www.peaceday.org



October 1st CAFOD Harvest Fast Day

October 2nd Knights of St Columba Annual Seminar

2pm - 4.30pm, The New Barn, Aylesford Priory
Speaker: Jim Simmons CAFOD Diocesan Manager.
Free Entrance - Everybody welcome



Our Autumn Assembly "Why Justice and Peace" Saturday 16th October 10.30 am to 4pm

To be held in the newly refurbished Amigo Hall, St George's Cathedral SE1

Keynote Speaker: Archbishop Peter Smith



October 17th - UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

October 17th - Poverty Sunday
Designated by the Bishops' conference of England & Wales.

October 17th to 24th One World Week
Peacing together one world www.oneworldweek.org



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