

Renewing Creation

A newsletter for Christians
in Newcastle and Northumberland

April 2009

Countdown to Copenhagen

The United Nations will meet in Copenhagen in December 2009, when countries are due to agree an international climate deal. In January this year the European Commission launched its proposals for the EU negotiating position in Copenhagen ("The Copenhagen Communication"). A number of Church experts on climate change met in February to look at this Communication and to suggest ways in which European Churches could make representations to the EU Heads of State and Government on this issue.

The House of Bishops' Europe Panel wrote to the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, in March. The text of their letter can be viewed at <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/pr2609.html>.

A Monastic Garden at St. Mary the Virgin, Holy Island.

From Richard Binns

Since 1986, when weeding began along the lane verge of the west churchyard wall, the question has been, What to do with this space? The answer was to plant the kinds of herbs and wild flowers that St. Cuthbert might have known.

The initiative was aided in 1998-9 by a Sacred Land grant. In return, the promise was made to support Holy Island's fauna and flora. Gradually, the Monastic Garden has become less like a cottage garden with windbreaks and more like a hedgerow. Maintenance has decreased with clumps of hardy, salt-tolerant wild flowers and plants. Wild life has increased with sightings of 33 different birds, including dunnock and linnet, as well as 6 species of butterfly and 2 species of moth.

'The Age of Stupid'

This is the recently released and acclaimed film starring Pete Postlethwaite as a man living alone in

the devastated world of 2055, looking at old footage from 2008 and asking, 'Why didn't we stop climate change when we had the chance?' It's being shown at 1.30pm and 3.30pm on Saturday 30th May at the Tyneside Cinema as part of the Diocesan 'Fire Works! Pentecost 09' festival. Tickets, £3.

News from Operation Noah

Operation Noah has launched its Church Action Starter Pack for communities wanting to learn and take action on climate change. There are resources suitable for all the different sectors of the church community, including the workbook 'Between the Flood and the Rainbow,' the DVD 'God is Green,' liturgical resources and specific ARK campaign actions people can take, such as the celebrated origami ARK petition, the ARK building competition and instructions on how to organise an event.

Packs cost £20 and can be purchased by contacting Operation Noah at 28 Charles Square, London, N1 6HT, Tel. 020 7324 4761, Email campaigns@operationnoah.org. For more details, visit <http://www.operationnoah.org/blog/admin/weve-launched-our-church-action-starter-pack>.

A film of the Ark Campaign launch in Cardiff is now on youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PwVIrbZ1-0>. Mark Dowd, Campaign Strategist for Operation Noah says that, at 4 min 43 secs, the film 'is a very strong message and there is nothing like this around in campaigning terms that can join up so many disparate forces.'

News from Eco-congregation England and Wales

As from 1 April 2009, the Eco-congregation England & Wales office has moved to the following address:

David Hughes,
Eco-congregation,
Groundwork Sheffield,
The Innovation Centre,
217 Portobello,
SHEFFIELD S1 4DP.
Tel. 0114 263 6423
Email ecocongregation@arocha.org

Lots going on in Alnwick!

Alnwick Area Friends of the Earth are making an effort to reach out to local churches in the hope of working together. They've offered the following items of information that might be of interest.

A Community Orchard for Alnwick. Alnwick Area Friends of the Earth is exploring the possibility of using open, underdeveloped land to plant fruit trees with local residents and young people as a community initiative in the town. Discussions have led to the identification of a possible site and funding source. For more information, contact rachaelroberts@phonecoop.coop

Speaking Events – public lectures open to all. These events have moved to St James URC Hall in Pottersgate in Alnwick and are attracting audiences of 25–30 and growing. The format of speaker and question time is meeting with approval. The next event is at 7.30pm on 4th June, when Barbara Sexton will be discussing 'Taking Alnwick off the Grid – fact or fiction?' All will be welcome. Admission fee of £2 includes light refreshments.

Carbon Reduction – tracking and reducing your carbon footprint or emissions. People who want to find out more about calculating their carbon footprint, possibly over a longer period of time, and gathering with a small group of like-minded people to share progress, inspiration, lessons learnt etc are also welcome to join Alnwick CRAG (Carbon Rationing Action Group). Alnwick CRAG is one of many such groups around the UK, dedicated to show that treading lighter can be instructive and enjoyable, and does not require huge self-sacrifice. Interested people can find out more on the Alnwick Friends of the Earth blog, <http://alnwickfoe.blogspot.com/2008/06/return-to-rationing.html> or the Alnwick CRAG site, <http://www.carbonrationing.org/alnwick/files/draft-crag-rules-v2>.

Alnwick Area Friends of the Earth and the local Churches. If you are engaged in any environmental activities and are able to share this information with our Group, please do get in touch. We are interested to learn what is happening in our area and where interests lie. To get in touch, please ring 01665 603033. Together we can make a difference.

On Earth as it is in Heaven: Environmental Decline and the Christian Response

This is the title of a 32 page, A5 booklet, written by Isobel Murdoch of Christian Ecology Link. She writes as follows:

The booklet ... covers four sections. The first, 'Christianity and the Earth,' is an overview of creation seen in the Bible, in Celtic Christianity and in today's church. In the second, 'The Created World,' I look at how different elements, from seas and oceans to plants, are faring now, and in the third, 'Industry's Impact,' I assess the footprints of the cotton, wheat, oil and holiday industries. In the last section, 'Tomorrow is in Our Hands,' I explore our responses, concluding that Christianity was indeed "never intended to be a 'conventional' path."

Copies are available from Isobel at Hopp House, Back Lane, Old Bolingbroke, Spilsby, Lincolnshire, PE23 4EU. They cost £2.99 including postage and packing.

A selection of future environmental dates

23rd May: Car-free Sunday

5th June: World Environment Day

1st Sept – 4th Oct 2009: 'Time for God's Creation.' Resources are available from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. Contact mary.gandy@ctbi.org.uk.

And finally ...

Contributions to *Renewing Creation* are welcome. Please send them to Rob Kelsey. The copy deadline for the next issue is **5th July 2009**.

Contacts

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