

AN ACTION CHALLENGE TO COUNTER CLIMATE CHANGE

Carlops Parish Church Eco-Service, 2021

Hymns are Church Hymnary, Fourth edition (CH4)

At Carlops, we used four voices in the Reflection, partly to involve several of our eco-team in delivery, partly to emphasise a shift of focus. This may not suit everyone and is optional.

LIGHTING OF CANDLES

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader	We have life here because God gave us this planet Earth
<i>Congregation response</i>	<i>Let us love God and honour the Earth</i>
Leader	We are all stewards of God's creation
<i>Congregation response</i>	<i>May we live in ways that protect the Earth and preserve it for our children and their children</i>

WELCOME & THEME

Welcome to the 2021 Carlops Eco-service. Our theme is the urgent need for action, not words, to counter climate change and mitigate its irreversible and potentially disastrous effects.

COP26, the 2021 UN Climate Conference, will be held in Glasgow in November 2021. COPs (Conference Of the Parties) have been held for about 30 years; they bring together national decision-makers and senior scientists to talk, learn, set targets to protect the environment, and devise practical plans for achieving these targets.

As COP26 approaches, attention is naturally focussed on governments and international organisations, on global policy and legislation. Governments must initiate systemic change and ensure its implementation. But if individuals do not change their ways too, any mitigation achieved will be insufficient. For this reason, our eco-service explores what each of us can do, individually and together, if only we develop and exercise the will to do it.

The inspiration for this service came from a hymn we sang recently, so we begin by singing some of its verses again. Please think especially about the words of the fourth verse.

HYMN 710, verses 1-4

“I have a dream” a man once said ...

“I have a dream” a man once said,
“where all is perfect peace;
where men and women, black and white,
stand hand in hand, and all unite
in freedom and in love.”

But in this world of bitter strife
the dream can often fade;
reality seems dark as night,
we catch but glimpses of the light
Christ sheds on humankind.

Fierce persecution, war and hate
are raging everywhere;
God calls us now to pay the price
through struggles and through sacrifice
of standing for the right.

So dream the dreams and sing the songs,
But never be content;
For thoughts and words don't ease the pain:
Unless there's action, all is vain:
faith proves itself in deeds.

REFLECTION: AN ACTION CHALLENGE TO COUNTER CLIMATE CHANGE

Responsibility and action (Voice 1)

At this time each year, we celebrate Creation Time, giving thanks for the wonders of creation and reminding ourselves that on the sixth day, God commissioned us to *be responsible* in caring for all of creation.

Genesis 1: 22, 28

in the version of *The Message*

When God had created human beings to reflect his nature, he said “Prosper!
Reproduce! Fill the Earth! Take charge! Be responsible ... for every living thing that
moves on the face of Earth.”

We will consider what it means to be responsible in the face of worldwide climate disasters: drought, fire, flood, plague, starvation. As Emmanuel Macron, President of France, put it: *There is no Planet B*. So how do we fulfil our responsibility to care for Planet A?

In our reading, we find guidance for life in general, and for these present times in particular.

READING

Proverbs 1: 20-33 *Wisdom calls*

In the version of *The Message*

Lady Wisdom goes out in the street and shouts.
At the town centre she makes her speech.
In the middle of the traffic, she takes her stand.
At the busiest corner she calls out:

“Simpletons! How long will you wallow in ignorance?
Cynics! How long will you feed your cynicism?
Idiots! How long will you refuse to learn?
About face! I can revise your life.
Look, I’m ready to pour out my spirit on you; I’m ready to tell you all I know.

“As it is, I’ve called, but you’ve turned a deaf ear.
I’ve reached out to you, but you’ve ignored me.
Since you laugh at my counsel and make a joke of my advice, how can I take you seriously?

“I’ll turn the tables and joke about *your* troubles!
What if the roof falls in, and your whole life goes to pieces?
What if catastrophe strikes, and there’s nothing to show for your life but rubble and ashes?
You’ll need me then.
You’ll call for me, but don’t expect an answer.
No matter how hard you look, you won’t find me.

“Because you hated knowledge and had nothing to do with the fear-of God;
Because you wouldn’t take my advice and brushed aside all my offers to train you;
Well, you’ve made your bed – now lie in it.
You wanted your own way – now, how do you like it?

“Don’t you see what happens, you simpletons, you idiots?
Carelessness kills; complacency is murder.
First, pay attention to me, and then relax.
Now you can take it easy – you’re in good hands.”

REFLECTION RESUMES

An action challenge to you (Voice 1)

The report published in August 2021 by IPCC (the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) confirms that irreversible and potentially catastrophic climate change is now certain unless significant change in human activity is achieved in the next very few decades; one or two decades, not four or five. For the first time, the panel stated without qualification that climate change is driven by human activity. Not government activity; *human* activity. That means every one of us.

We are going to propose some simple, practical ways in which each of us can contribute to helping planet Earth, and thus protect the lives of our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. It is as close as that – saving our grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

In addition, we issue you a challenge. It is very simple, but if it works, it will have a powerful effect and could well secure victory in the climate battle ...

Everyone: do one thing for the environment, once a week, in each of three areas

Energy use and transport

Food and diet

Use of consumer products

Easy to remember; not too demanding; excellent cumulative impact on environment. Let us consider each of these three areas.

Energy use & transport (Voice 2)

The mastery gained over electricity and fossil fuels, and the invention of railways, motorised vehicles and ships, and aeroplanes have changed energy use and transportation out of all recognition, and out of all control.

We are accustomed to choosing the temperature of our immediate environment irrespective of external conditions. We are accustomed to go wherever we want, whenever we please. Freedom of choice is our totem and we have allowed it to become our master. Constraint and restraint are largely absent.

Belatedly, we are realising that our individual actions have a cumulative effect that is inflicting unintended but terrible change upon the Earth. Our actions, individually insignificant, are driving systemic change. To halt or slow that change, we all need to act.

That last sentence sounds simple because it is simple; we all need to do things with similar effects if the overall impact is to be as we desire and as the Earth needs.

Here are three simple things each of us could do about transport and using energy to mitigate the impact of our activities and help turn things around.

- a. Eliminate one car journey every week: walk, cycle, bus; or bundle two or three trips into one by better planning
- b. Turn down your heating; wear a jersey!
- c. Invest in alternatives: solar panels; heat pumps; electric vehicles

Food and diet (Voice 3)

Once, we ate what grew relatively nearby, and what was in season; meat was an occasional luxury, except for the very rich. Now, in the developed countries, most people eat meat every day, and they eat fruit and vegetables irrespective of season or country of origin. These are delivered by the transport revolution already mentioned, with the concomitant energy consumption and emissions.

Diets in the developed countries have become alike, governed more by the jet engine, the marine diesel and their fuel, than by ready availability or human need. But that could change. Diets could recapture a local emphasis. What once was, could be again – if not completely, at least sufficiently to make the difference that the Earth needs desperately.

Now, some people depend on growing meat for their livelihood; their land will not reliably or economically produce anything else. In the UK, that is true of 65% of land. And Peruvian asparagus growers and Kenyan rose growers have been encouraged to supply our airline-serviced European supermarkets. All these activities are legitimate; all these livelihoods must be protected. That is where governments can play a part: funding to compensate for necessary change and restraint, could replace funding to produce irrespective of need or long-term global impact.

Here are three simple things each of us could do about our food and diet to mitigate the impact of our activities and help turn things around.

- a. Buy local produce
- b. Grow your own vegetables & fruit: enough for one family meal per week
- c. Swap one steak or burger meal every week for an omelette with salad

Use of consumer products (Voice 4)

The age of consumerism. *Buy it now. Get it before Tuesday. Change it for the latest model. I can't wear that – it's last year's style.* These are the 21st century mantras. Choice and the freedom to acquire reign supreme and go largely unquestioned; constraint, make full use of things, repair not replace, are forgotten.

The driver of all this is the pursuit of economic growth to the virtual exclusion of other objectives. Now, growth undeniably raises living standards and the material quality of life for producers and consumers alike; and higher tax revenues fund better infrastructure projects and more generous benefits systems. But other factors need consideration too.

We may have lost the necessary balance between pursuing growth and safeguarding other necessary objectives. A tipping point has been reached and then exceeded, both in demand for finite raw materials, and in the emissions that are the by-products of manufacturing and distribution; and which are driving climate change.

We need to reduce our use of Earth's finite resources and lower emissions significantly. That means that each consumer must consume less. If you don't buy it, the manufacturer won't make it. Simple. And down to individual action.

Here are three simple things each of us could do to about our approach to consumer goods mitigate the impact of our activities and help turn things around.

- a. Re-cycle clothes and household goods; not just paper and glass
- b. Focus on maintain and repair, as well as replace; give your local cobbler some business!
- c. Choose clothing made from natural fibres; and dare to wear last year's shirt, or dress!

Choice and imagination are allowed (Voice 2)

It's perfectly reasonable for you not to like the changes we have suggested; in that case, take other actions that would have a similar effect. It doesn't take too much imagination to come up with alternative ideas that would serve the planet just as well.

You could also include some bigger changes alongside simple, every week ones. Electric car next time? Staycation instead of long-haul? Well, coronavirus is trying to help us there!

Or, just make sure your existing equipment is working properly. A recent job to fix a wonky radiator in our home revealed that the whole heating system was not working properly and was using more fuel than it should. Fixing it took longer and cost a bit more than expected, but the rewards will be more comfortable winters, lower fuel bills in future, and above all, lower emissions from reduced use of fossil fuel: a virtuous cycle.

You may think *I could do these things, but surely that's not enough*. No, on its own, it isn't enough. But if other people, and organisations large and small, make similar changes, then cumulatively, it *will* be enough. Each of the small actions suggested could reduce your consumption in that area by 10% to 15%, which is roughly the improvement level that the climate scientists say is needed.

The road of hope and good habits (Voice 3)

We have known for decades that this time would come. We have been told about the extinction of many species of animals and plants. We have remarked upon changes ourselves: extreme and often unseasonable weather; early and late flowering in our gardens; and myriad other ways.

The work of climate scientists tells us beyond reasonable doubt that our present lifestyle is unsustainable, and that the prevailing philosophy of consumption and growth at all costs will ultimately destroy the life that God called good.

But we are human, and we are God-made, so there is hope ...

Lin Yutang, a Chinese linguist, imagines hope as a road in the country, created simply by many people walking where there was no road before. As they continue to walk the same route, others join them, and the road gradually comes into existence. The more a road is travelled, the clearer it becomes, and the more people use it. And once established, a road is almost indestructible. Aerial photography helps archaeologists discern roads and settlements created hundreds, even thousands, of years ago.

It is the same with habits: if we start something good, it is likely to flourish and take off. Good ideas attract involvement and change behaviour for the long term. Here is an example that will be familiar to people here ...

In 2012, we started a project in Carlops: could we possibly raise the substantial sum of £7,000 to enable the charity *Mary's Meals* to build a kitchen in a school in Malawi and feed all the children there? All of Carlops liked the idea, and it took off, became a habit. In three months, we raised, not £7,000, but £15,000. People still donate to that cause today, nine years later; over £25,000 has been donated.

It seems very likely that an appeal to everyone to do some simple things which could save their grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have a similar effect. Try it! Do it!

Lobbying works (Voice 4)

One more plea: lobby your elected representatives: councillors, MPs, MSPs, government ministers. Tell them you want action to counter climate change. Tell them you are willing to accept some higher taxes and prices, and some personal inconvenience caused by the need to change your customs and habits.

This is powerful and it works. Politicians are motivated by their desire for your vote. They are elected by a cross on a ballot paper every five years and mostly, are then left to get on with the job. If one of these crosses on paper takes the trouble to contact them about something, they pay heed. And if several people contact them, they act, and they leave their superiors in government in no doubt about what constituents want, and what the politicians need to do if they are to retain their votes in future elections.

It's like Lin Yutang's road of hope just described: the more people walk the road, the more established it becomes. The more people lobby, the greater the effect it has. So please: do this; do it soon; and do it often.

The action challenge restated (Voice 1)

Human activity has its impact on more than transport, food and consumer products, but these three do most to drive harmful emissions. They feature in the lives of everyone, and everyone can act to contain them – if only they choose.

Over and above selfish and short-sighted consumption, and poor stewardship of resources, there is a crisis of values and spirituality, driven by a distorted view of “profit”. The Christian family has a problem here, but it also has a calling and an opportunity. Let us bring together mission, justice, stewardship, and study; let us bring our spiritual treasure, our priorities, and our values to bear; let us use them to influence and change the practices of those who are piloting planet Earth towards catastrophe

So dream the dreams and sing the songs,
But never be content;
For thoughts and words don't ease the pain,
Unless there's action all is vain;
Faith proves itself in deeds.

So please, take up our challenge ...

Everyone: do one thing for the environment, once a week, in each of three areas
Energy use and transport
Food and diet
Use of consumer products

PRAYER

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, we pray this morning for Creation. We pray for the vastness of galaxies and the wonders of the universe beyond our understanding. We pray for the small miracles around us, like the bees and the butterflies, and all the animal species struggling to survive; for the flowers and the trees, and all the plants endangered by our actions.

We ask for your wisdom and blessing as our world faces the effects of climate change. May the COP26 delegates from nations across the globe come to Glasgow in November prepared to negotiate with sincerity and truth, and to disregard self-interest for the greater good. Let those in authority take decisions that address, not only climate change, but also climate justice: justice for the countries that have done least to cause the problems but are most affected by the catastrophic acts of nature witnessed around the world. Bring your comfort to all those in distress.

As the twentieth anniversary of 9/11 passes, we remember all those who suffered and died on that dreadful day, and we bring to you in silent prayer, others for whom we ask your blessing.

We thank you for the courage of men and women labouring to bring hope and relief to all those who live in the homelessness, hunger and fear that climate change is causing.

We thank you for the work of those who develop medicines and vaccines, and for those who care for patients in hospitals.

We thank you for the love of families and the fellowship of communities that enrich our lives.

We thank you for the encouragement of friends as we share our thoughts and plans, and as we challenge ourselves to live in a more sustainable manner.

Heavenly father your gifts to us are endless.

We marvel at your creation, and we give you thanks and praise.

Amen

HYMN 240

God in such love for us lent us this planet ...

God in such love for us lent us this planet,
gave it a purpose in time and in space:
small as a spark from the fire of creation,
cradle of life and the home of our race.

Thanks be to God for its bounty and beauty,
life that sustains us in body and mind:
plenty for all, if we learn how to share it,
riches undreamed-of to fathom and find.

Long have our human wars ruined its harvest;
long has earth bowed to the terror of force;
long have we wasted what others have need of,
poisoned the fountain of life at its source.

Earth is the Lord's: it is ours to enjoy it,
ours, as God's stewards, to farm and defend.
From its pollution, misuse, and destruction,
good Lord, deliver us, world without end!

CODA (Voice 1)

The team who created and delivered this service believe that tackling climate change in this individually-but-together way is important, so we plan to keep it at the forefront of your mind. We hope you find this acceptable, and we hope you join in!

The service is already on Carlops Church's website: visit www.carlopschurch.org and navigate to *About us > Worship > Eco services*. You can read our environmental challenge and invitation there and think about it in your own time. Please do.

The *Newsletter* will repeat the challenge and explain how to get involved. And over the next several months, it will feature occasional *Columns* from invited contributors; they will describe their own response to the challenge and hopefully, offer more ideas. Wait for the tap on your shoulder!

Last, but not least, we will try to develop some easy, fun way of recording how Carlops people respond to this challenge: changes they make; new things they try from week to week; what worked well; what needs some re-thinking. We'll try to provide an online space that everyone can see and contribute to. We hope that might keep interest up and serve as a mechanism for exchanging ideas. Watch the *Newsletter* and the website for details.

So please, accept the challenge. Change your habits. Restrain yourself, just a little. Keep it up. And lobby your MP. You won't save the planet on your own; but you'll be part of the team that saves it for our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren.

BENEDICTION

May we tread lightly upon this Earth that God has given us
May we use its resources wisely, sparingly and to good purpose
May we care for Earth's future, as well as our own present.
And so, may we serve God and each other and our children, constantly and with love

SUNG BLESSING

May the God of peace go with us, as we travel from this place
May the love of Jesus keep us, firm in hope and full of grace

EXTINGUISHING OF CANDLES

CLOSE