

GREEN CHURCH NEWS



Green Church Advocate: Rev Dr Clive W Ayre

Green Church Associate: Rev Judith Dalton

Issue No 3

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Celebrate with all Creation: God has joined the Web of Life¹

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1. Celebrating Christmas

The Word became flesh, and lived among us (John 1:14).

As we celebrate the birth and “incarnation” of Christ this Christmas, let us indeed “Celebrate with all creation: God has joined the web of life!” Christ has entered the

¹ Norman Habel, *Seven Songs of Creation*, Pilgrim Press, 2004, p169

web of life, and taken on the suffering of creation, to bring reconciliation and renewal for the whole creation. (Col1:20)

Peace on earth (Luke 2:14)

“Shalom” is often translated by the single word “peace”, but it means so much more than the absence of conflict: Peace and Wholeness, Health & Wellbeing, Safety & Soundness, Tranquility & Rest, Fullness & Harmony

In the midst of our consumer society, let us tread softly on the earth and ponder the question: Is my lifestyle proclaiming “in the flesh” peace on earth and Good News to the whole creation? (Mark 16:8)

May we all be more open to continual ecological conversion and transformation, and sow seeds of hope for the Earth.

**May the blessings of Christ’s birth permeate the Earth:
Love, Peace, Hope & Joy**

Judith Dalton

2. Community Contact

- Help please... Source of *biodegradable* disposable cups?

- Coal Seam Gas Web links for consideration
Queensland Conservation
http://www.qccqld.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=408&Itemid=160
National Water Commission Statement
<http://www.nwc.gov.au/www/html/2958-coal-seam-gas.asp?intSiteID=1>
Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Petition
http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/EPetitions_QLD/CurrentEPetition.aspx?PetNum=1592&Index=-1

- NCYC 29 December 2010 -3 January 2011

- 2011 Calendar: UN International Year of Forests
 - March 6 Clean Up Australia Day
 - March 26 Earth Hour

3. From the General Secretary - Rev Douglas Jones

Green Church Profile Gets a Lift

During 2010, the commitment of the Uniting Church to being a green Church has been given a significant boost through the commitment of Rev Dr Clive Ayre as the Synod's Green Church Advocate and more recently through the appointment of Rev Judith Dalton as a Green Church Associate. Both of these positions have been recognized by the Synod as non-stipended placements. The church is certainly being well served by two very capable and committed people and it is appropriate that I take this opportunity to acknowledge that in this issue of Green Church News.

Cancun Climate Change Conference & a Post Carbon World?

On another matter, as I write this piece, the United Nations Climate Change Conference is being held in Cancun, Mexico. Following the disappointing outcome from Copenhagen last year, expectations for real outcomes for Cancun are low. Regardless of what may emerge from Cancun and be translated in government policies around the globe, the issues of climate change, sustainability and peak oil and peak carbon are simply not going to go away. Responses will (or will not) be made internationally, nationally, regionally, locally and individually.

As individuals consider their own responses, the Post Carbon Institute in California has recently published a resource, ***The Post Carbon Reader – Managing the 21st Century Sustainability Crises***. This book is a useful collection of essays on a range of issues that seeks to both highlight the sustainability crises that are now engaging us or will do so in the not too distant future and possible ways to respond. For anyone interested in being better informed about, and equipped to deal with these crises, this book is a worthwhile resource. For all Christians with an understanding of their role as stewards of creation, there is certainly much to learn from some of the leading thinkers in the field.

(Note: The *Post Carbon Reader* is now available in Trinity Library, and extracts may be downloaded from our website or <http://www.postcarbon.org/reader/toc> - Judith)

4. Green Church Website Update www.greenchurch.ucaqld.com.au

Thanks to everyone who has made helpful suggestions for developing our website. Keep comments and suggestions coming!

Here are some great new **Reading Resources for the Christmas holiday:**

- ***Growing Mission with Community Food: A Practical Resource for Church Congregations*** Uniting Earthweb Group, November 2010
<http://www.unitingearthweb.org.au/files/CommunityFood.pdf>
- ***State of the Climate Report*** CSIRO and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, with excellent graphs and charts.
<http://www.bom.gov.au/inside/eiab/State-of-climate-2010-updated.pdf>
- ***The Post Carbon Reader: Managing the 21st Century's Sustainability Crises*** International experts with the Post Carbon Institute covering social and ecological issues. Several chapters are available for free download.
<http://www.postcarbon.org/reader/toc>

- ***Australian Conservation Foundation Green Home Guide***

Queensland http://www.acfonline.org.au/uploads/res/QLD_GreenHome_web.pdf

Other States http://www.acfonline.org.au/default.asp?section_id=4

- ***Earth Charter papers – Noel Preston***
 - i. Ethics *sans frontieres*: the vocation of global citizenship
 - ii. Exploring Eco-theology, Eco-spirituality and Eco-justice
- ***Eco-theology papers – Clive Ayre***
 - i. Eco-nomy of Life from the Perspective of the Earth
 - ii. Science, Faith and the Eco-Crisis
 - iii. Divine Grace and Creation Care

5. Green Church Stories

Individuals and groups can make a difference! It is encouraging to hear Good News stories! Please let us know what YOU are doing to reconnect with the wonder of creation and sustain life on earth. Thanks to Arnold, Linda and Dom for their stories below.

- **Arnold Rieck: Rosewood Scrub Arboretum**

I enjoy reading the poetry of Genesis 1, the story of God's creation of the universe. It is fascinating that seven times in this chapter, it is recorded that "God was pleased with what he saw" (GNV), or "God saw that it was good" (KJV). This is the clearest and strongest message in the bible of the sacred character and value of the natural world. Verse 11 pleases me. "Let the earth produce all kinds of plants", as if the earth is in co-operation with God's creative purpose.

Humans are God's final and finest creation. As we are made in God's image we have the responsibility to care for all of creation, I believe that our first and foremost role is to care for the plant life on earth. Without our plants, animal and human life would not be possible.

In this **Year of Biodiversity**, many people are struggling to discover a way that they can make a practical contribution to saving the variety of living plants on our earth.

For the past 15 years I have been doing my little bit. I live in Rosewood, west of Ipswich. In the 1860s and 70s settlers from Germany and England were given land within the Rosewood Scrub to clean and convert into productive farms. That they did this with axes and saws only is an amazing feat. In the process the scrub was devastated. Today only 2½% of the scrub remains. Originally the scrub stretched from Lowood to Rosewood and Haigslea to Hatton Vale on the better volcanic and sedimentary soils of the hills.

Through the *Society for Growing Australian Plants*, Ipswich branch, I have been co-ordinating the planting of trees, shrubs, vines and grasses that are indigenous to the scrub. To date we have 160 species of the 220+ known species of the scrub. We have named the site of these plantings the Rosewood Scrub Arboretum. It is on Ipswich City Council land, as part of Peace Park, Rosewood.

These plants have all been grown from seeds or cuttings of plants still in the scrub. Some are listed as rare and threatened species. Many plants have now reached a maturity where they are self-generating. Last year the Arboretum supplied thirty different species of seed to interested folk who are trying to re-generate patches of the scrub on local properties.

In my research of plants that the aborigines used for food and for medicines, I have found that the plants of the Rosewood Scrub provided them with much of their

vegetative food and medicines. Over thirty local plants were used as medicines and over sixty plants for food. Many of these are highlighted at the Arboretum.

If you are interested contact me at ajrieck@bigpond.com and I could send you a booklet on the species in the Arboretum and/or arrange a visit.

- **Linda Watt: Abundance in the Bush – A Devotional**

A cool breeze bends the treetops. My untrained ears can hear at least five different bird songs along with the deep bellows of cows. The rare noise of a vehicle faded away long ago. I'm sitting at the cattle yards. I wish I could describe the beauty and the affect it has on me. I've tried to draw it and photograph it, but it's not something I can capture on paper or print. I guess it's really just trees and grass and cattle yards. Rusty iron and rotting rails wrapped with wire. As I sit in the midst of this country its beauty seeps into my soul. Clouds drift with all the time in the world and it makes me feel as though I've got all the time in the world too.



Amazingly, this is my job - mustering cattle in challenging country, riding top quality horses, training and working intelligent dogs, working with rock solid people...

It all began when my husband and I moved from the city to minister

in a small country church. The word had got around that I loved horses and was keen for a ride. A couple in the congregation mustered cattle, and asked if I'd like to tag along. Would I! From that first ride I was on the mustering team and began to see God's abundance all around me in the bush.

To start with I felt guilty because I wasn't out sharing the gospel, ministering to the needy or working in the church. I was spending hours in the saddle, in the midst of hundreds of acres, many times with just my horse and dog and God for company. Over time, God showed me that life is so much more than just existing to fulfil obligations and that He was giving me a good gift and He wanted me to enjoy it.

Through what God has shown me, I've written a 31 day devotional called, **"Abundance in the Bush"**. Here's a sample: **Fair Dinkum**

*For we are God's workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus to do good works which
God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10*

Some people love the country. Incredibly, as hard as it is to believe, others actually enjoy city living! But take a country person to the big smoke and on the way there, their stress levels begin rising. After a short stay, they get to feeling shut in, crowded out and that they are breathing heavy air. Keep them in the city too long and they will get sickly, longing for the solitude of the bush, their familiar jeans, old hat and work boots... When they return, their first thought is 'it's good to be home'. Their lungs fill with that country air, and there is no holding them back.

There are almost 7 billion people in the world. Of the approximate 134 million born every year, no two people are exactly the same. Your unique life is a good gift from a good God. Your Father in heaven thought about you and had you all planned out before you were born. (Psalm 139:13-16). You were no accident of nature. Now, your challenge is to be the best 'you' that you can be for God. How has God designed you? Check your vital signs. What godly activity gets your heart pounding? What do you love doing? When you do what God designed you to love doing, you get energised, like a country person coming home from the big smoke. No one has to twist your arm to get you going.

What are your dreams? Give them a place in your prayers and plans. Work out what sets your heart aflame, then live fair dinkum, doing your best for God.

*Father, thank You for the way I am created.
I want to be the best 'me' I can be for You,
using my strengths and passions
to live for Your glory. Amen*

Check your vital signs...
Is that country blood pumping through your veins?
Is that heartbeat for the Lord Jesus Christ?
31 days of bush devotions are just the thing
to stir, strengthen and refresh your country heart.

If you would like to purchase a copy of
"Abundance in the Bush",
email Linda at dusterduck@hotmail.com

• **Dom Piacun: Brisbane Boys College - Sustainability**

Sustainability is the next megatrend. Changing habits, introducing new practices and redesigning old practices is vital to ensure a sustainable future for everyone. Ensuring young people have an awareness of this important issue is vital to bring about success.

Some Brisbane Boys' College students are embracing the **sustainability challenge** and creating awareness of the need to act sustainably. Toward the end of last term students planned a number of activities for the week designed to encourage students and staff to implement sustainable practices at school and home.

Assisting students to drive change, Mr Dominic Piacun said that "Four large herb gardens were planted across the campus with compost bins installed near the Boarding House kitchen which will be used to fertilise the College gardens."



"The Junior School will also be planting natives, edibles and drought tolerant plants in their existing gardens," he said.

"Students have created small signs with a creative message reminding everyone to reduce energy consumption by switching off the lights and electrical equipment when leaving the classroom. These will be placed above all the light and air conditioning switches throughout the College.

"Whilst these may seem like small measures, they can make a big difference in creating a sustainable future for us all over time." The small projects taking place at Brisbane Boys' College are sustainable and encourage discussion and action among students, staff and parents.

*"This curious world which we inhabit is more wonderful than convenient,
more beautiful than it is useful; it is more to be admired and enjoyed than used"*

Henry David Thoreau, American writer (1817-1862)

6. Mission Stories – Growing Mission with Community Food

<http://www.unitearthweb.org.au/files/CommunityFood.pdf>

For anyone interested in eating and sharing food, this is a fantastic new and very practical resource produced by the Uniting Earthweb Group, bringing stories from Uniting Churches in NSW/ACT that have developed various forms of Community Food Initiatives in their contexts. It discusses community gardens, community supported agriculture and food buying groups, and shows links with mission to the whole earth community, human and non-human.

More information on **Uniting Earthweb**

<http://www.unitearthweb.org.au>

7. Book Review: Chris Dalton's reflection on *Here on Earth: an Argument for Hope* by Tim Flannery (2010)

HEAVEN'S PERFORMANCE

In his book 'Here on Earth', Tim Flannery moves on from Darwin's reductionist view of evolution, Dawkins' 'selfish gene' theory and the neo-classical Chicago school of economics and embraces a 're-enchantment of science' by invoking Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis to find hope for the future amidst the prospect of environmental disaster. His holistic vision almost takes on a spiritual as well as physical dimension. He speaks of a 'commonwealth of virtue', of striving to love one another and the planet as much as we love ourselves; in this vision evolution is described as 'heaven's performance'.

In reflecting on Flannery's book, Chris Dalton has extended the Gaia metaphor as a way of giving a new insight into the Cosmic Christ and 'God's economy of salvation'. It portrays Gaia as the Suffering Servant, who absorbs into herself all environmental sin and its consequences, and then transforms into a New Heaven and a New Earth.

For the full reflection see

<http://www.greenchurch.ucaqld.com.au/files/file/Flannery101020adobe.pdf>

8. From the Green Church Advocate: THE AYRE LINES

We want to place on record our appreciation of the interest and encouragement of the retiring General Secretary, Rev Douglas Jones, in enabling the Green Church initiative to get under way. Thank you Douglas, and may God bless wherever your journey of discipleship takes you.

Clive Ayre and Judith Dalton

The First Year of Green Church

It may be hard to believe, but we are in the final quarter of the first year of this new approach to the Synod's vision for a Green Church. There has been a lot to learn, and there have been many possibilities; but much has also been accomplished, thanks in no small measure to the involvement of Rev Judith Dalton. I think it fair to say that our gifts and interests are compatible, and I like to think we form a good team. Thank you, Judith.

Recently I had the opportunity to speak at Murgon, where this picture was taken. All their water is provided by two 5,000 litre tanks. Rural areas face particular environmental problems. I liked the theme offered by Jeremiah 29, in which God expressed the dream of "a future with hope." But the way into that future means facing the facts and then building your dreams. It's a provocative approach for creation care.



My initial appointment as Green Church Advocate was for twelve months with a Review in the final quarter. That Review has now taken place and I have accepted an invitation to continue for a further year.

Melbourne Visit

Recently I visited Melbourne mainly for the purpose of delivering a paper on "Divine Grace and Creation Care", which will be added to the list of resources on the website. I have also been advised that the Assembly plans to publish my paper on "Eco-nomy of Life from the Perspective of Earth", which is already on the website.

National Coordination

Some discussions have been held about the possibility of closer cooperation between The Synods and Assembly to promote a Green Church. The precise shape of that cooperation is not yet clear, but watch this space. While in Melbourne I took the opportunity to meet my Victorian counterpart, Cath James, and to discuss issues of mutual interest.

At a broader level, Norman Habel, Jacqui Remond (Catholic Earthcare) and I had a meeting with the General Secretary of the NCCA in Sydney to discuss the possibility of a national ecumenical network. Discussions are on-going, but this would be a big step forward.

AAMS Conference

As you may be aware, the next Conference of the Australian Association for Mission Studies will be held in Sydney from 22nd to 25th September 2011. This is national and ecumenical in orientation, and the hope is that folk from the wider region will also attend. The theme will be “Mission in a Globalised World: A New Vision for Christian Discipleship”, and it will have five focus areas. One of those will be Ecology and Mission, of which I am the Convenor, and it is anticipated that this will be one of the larger groups. While in Melbourne we had a meeting of the Planning Committee, and I am excited about the way the program is starting to emerge.



Prof Ernst Conradie from South Africa has been confirmed as a keynote speaker, and this is good news. Ernst has emerged as one of the strong new voices in eco-theology and mission. Prof Norman Habel is also a confirmed participant, and is hoping to launch an Earth Mission Charter.

I also took the opportunity to meet my Victorian counterpart, Cath James, and to discuss issues of mutual interest. One hope is that this Conference will be a useful regional prelude to the 2012 World Symposium on “Christian Faith and the Earth” to be held in South Africa, and at which I am a listed speaker. A Call for Papers has gone out, and responses are due by 25th February 2011. Spread the word and plan to attend!

NCYC

The National Christian Youth Convention gets under way at Southport on 29th December, and Green Church will be there. A number of electives have been planned and we are hoping for some strong interest, including a young adult network that might enable a stronger youth voice in Earth Mission.

UnitingGreen

We are thinking about the possibility of a new group that might be called “UnitingGreen”, the idea being that it would provide the opportunity for interested and concerned people to meet together occasionally. The program might be varied, and range from some kind of practical project to an interesting speaker, an exchange of ideas, or whatever seems relevant. It might also be a way in which we can cooperate ecumenically, for example by sharing a joint meeting with AngliGreen. I must admit that the idea of this group was prompted by the successful Anglican model. **What do you think?** Please let us have your ideas and feedback.

Towards 2011

What are your hopes for 2011? My hopes for this office include:

- Consolidation of work commenced.
- Teaching seminars on request.
- Meeting with congregations and Presbyteries.
- Significant follow-up in CQ.
- Expansion of Green Church network.
- Further liaison with Assembly and other Synods.
- Ecumenical possibilities.
- Planning and preparation for the AAMS Conference in September.

Thank you for your interest and support. We look forward to hearing from you and to the challenge and opportunity this work affords.

Clive W Ayre

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