

GREEN CHURCH NEWS

GreenChurch Advocate: Rev Dr Clive W Ayre

GreenChurch Associate: Rev Judith Dalton



Issue No 6

July 2011

*I want creation to penetrate you with so much wonder... that everywhere,
wherever you may be, the least plant may bring to you
the clear remembrance of the Creator.*

(St Basil of Caesarea)

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Welcome to another edition of Green Church News. We're coming into the Season of Creation (September) for which there are some great new lectionary resources. The Cry of the Earth Conference has helped build a network among churches in Brisbane, and there are invitations to several interesting activities. Enjoy!

I hope to meet up with some of you at the Synod meeting in October. Please introduce yourself! Let's try and reduce our impact through unnecessary waste... think about sharing lifts, reducing printing and disposable cups. Do let me know what your church is doing to become a Green Church. Walk lightly upon the earth!

Judith Dalton

Email: green.church@ucaqld.com.au

Web: www.greenchurch.ucaqld.com.au

COMMUNITY CALENDAR 2011

- International Decade for Action: **Water for Life**
- Education for **Sustainable Development**
- UN International Year of **Forests**



Theme: Forests –Nature at your service
Resources for worship, education and activities from
UnitingJustice
<http://unitingjustice.org.au/resources/world-environment-day.html>

July 19-23 **6th World Environmental Congress, Brisbane**
Explore, Experience, Educate
<http://www.weec2011.org/Home.aspx>

July 31 National Tree Day

Aug 1-2 **Fire and Rain Conference, Melbourne**
Social Innovation and Community Leadership
in Natural Disaster Management and Emergency Services
<http://www.civilsociety.org.au/FireandRainConferenceFlier.htm>

Aug 8 Hiroshima Day
Aug 22 Keep Australia Beautiful

September Creation Day/ Season of Creation
<http://seasonofcreation.com>

Sept 20 **United Theological College, Sydney**
The Climate Crisis as the Crisis of Humanity
Speakers: Prof Ernst Conradie and Prof Clive Hamilton
Email: davidr@nsw.uca.org.au

Sept 22-25 **Australian Association of Mission Studies Conference, Sydney**
Mission in a Globalised World: A New Vision for Christian
Discipleship (including Ecology and Mission)
<http://groupsthatclick.com/aams/index.php?type=page&ID=3515>

Oct 7-12 **UCA Queensland Synod meeting**

Oct 7-13 **Ride to Worship Week**
www.arrcc.org.au/ride-to-worship-week-2011

Nov 6 **National Day of Prayer for Climate Change**

INVITATIONS

1. Invitations from Earth Link <http://www.earth-link.org.au/>

- **Ecology and Christian Faith**
Saturday 16 July, 10am-3pm at Four Winds

Earth Link has taken up the challenge of looking at the connection between ecospirituality and the Christian tradition, especially as it relates to the interconnectedness between earth, human and the Sacred. Join us in this beautiful and restful place for a time of immersion in nature, reflection and interesting conversation. Cost \$70/\$65 conc includes materials, morning tea and lunch.

RSVP to Four Winds (3425 3138 or earthlink@mercy.org.au by Monday 11 July. You can follow up this day with the longer retreat being offered in August. However, you can also attend just one or the other.

- **Ecospirituality Retreat at Four Winds**
9am Wednesday, 17 August to 1pm Sunday 21 August (Exhibition Week)

Earth Link is offering a five day retreat which will allow us to take quality time for input, silence, ritual and sharing on ecospirituality and its connection to Christian faith. Numbers are limited, so register your interest early (see contact info above). A deposit of \$100 towards the total cost of \$350 is due by 1 August.

2. Invitations from AngliGreen (Brisbane Diocese)

- **Coal and Gas in Queensland - Why should city people care about these issues?**
Saturday 23 July, 2pm, All Saints' Church, Cobbitty Crescent, Arana Hills

Open Forum and screening of *Gaslands* documentary; Speaker Drew Hutton (Friends of the Earth). RSVP to Ann 3312 0207 by 19 July

- **AngliGreen Camp 17 & 18 September at Erapah Scout Camp,**
Cnr Cleveland-Redland Bay Road and Colburn Ave, Victoria Point.

Cost including all meals will be approximately \$20-35 per person. Less for part-time attendance. For more information contact Judy Seymour on 3203 4193.

- ### 3. Joel Salatin's "Local Farms and Community" Workshop,
- Saturday 5 August, Beerwah Community Hall**
<http://regenag.com/web/upcoming-courses/details/25-joel-salatin-workshop-beerwah.html>

- ### 4. Exhibition: Large embroidered tapestry – Cantic of the Universe
- 30 August - 17 September, ACU Gallery, Banyo**
<http://www.kopanang.org/Commissions--Exhibition-work/>

Inspired by Sr Sheila Flynn OP, following cultural historian and geologist, Thomas Berry and mathematical cosmologist, Brian Swimme, South African women of Kopanang community have embroidered a 35m tapestry. This is a religious hymn in stunning embroidery and it has the potential to call us all towards renewed environmental commitment.

The Exhibition, with free entry, continues from 9am till 5pm on week days at 1100 Nudgee Road or by transport from Toombul station.
For more information contact Margaret Moore on 3870 9427

5. Get on your bikes and ride during Ride to Worship Week 2011

The second annual Ride to Worship Week runs from **Friday 7th to Thursday 13th October 2011**. To join in the fun, all you need to do is to cycle, walk, or use another form of environmentally friendly transport to get and from church. You can join in as an individual, a family, or as a whole worship group or faith community. Check out the brand new Ride to Worship Week clip, read more about Ride to Worship Week, and register your participation at www.arrcc.org.au/ride-to-worship-week-2011. Ride to Worship Week is an initiative of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC).

2. SEASONAL FOCUS: SEPTEMBER - SEASON OF CREATION

• NEW LECTIONARY RESOURCES FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION

The Season of Creation has become an accepted Season of the Church's liturgical year in many countries, running for 4 Sundays from September 1, Creation Day in the Eastern Orthodox Church, to 4 October, St Francis' Day.

THE SEASON OF CREATION – 2011 Series A: The Spirit in Creation

<http://seasonofcreation.com/worship-resources>

September 1	Creation Day	
September 4	1st Sunday in Creation –	Forest Sunday
September 11	2nd Sunday in Creation –	Land Sunday
September 18	3rd Sunday in Creation –	Wilderness/Outback Sunday
September 25	4th Sunday in Creation –	River Sunday
October 4	St Francis of Assisi Day	
October 5	5th Sunday in Creation –	Blessing of the Animals

The Season of Creation website itself has readings, liturgies, children's stories, Bible studies and theological reflections and practical suggestions for each of the three years of the lectionary. There are also NEW outlines dealing with natural disasters and climate change. Well worthwhile exploring!

Perhaps you could form a small group to plan introducing the Season of Creation to your congregation.



Don't forget the **UnitingJustice** Resources on Forests for worship, education and activities from <http://unitingjustice.org.au/resources/world-environment-day.html>

i. The Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary

Editors: Norman C. Habel, David Rhoads, H. Paul Santmire

This includes an introduction to the Season of Creation and covers 4 Sundays for each of the 3 years of the lectionary cycle.

Contents, Preface and Chapter 1 may be viewed at

<http://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/item.jsp?clsid=283101&productgroupid=0&isbn=0800696573>.

ii. Seasons of the Spirit

Seasons of the Spirit has just released a short visual introducing the Season of Creation: http://www.seasonsonline.ca/30/season_of_creation/

Extensive samples of their material for worship, learning and service in congregations and various age-groups for September 2011 may be viewed at

http://www.seasonsonline.ca/30/2011_12_samples/

This will soon be available through the site for Australian orders:

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

• **REFLECTION: ON TREE AND FOREST**

Nearly two years ago our grandson William was born with very weak lungs, and until recently he needed assistance in breathing. It has been a difficult situation for all concerned. What about the future? We can't answer that definitively. But one thing is certain; good lung function is most important.

You may not be aware that 2011 is the International Year of the Forest, and trees may very well be understood as the lungs of the planet. Earth itself is starting to struggle with its breathing because of what we are doing to the trees. The danger comes from the removal of too many trees and the failure to plant more; but equally the danger comes through bush fires which, it seems, come with greater frequency and ferocity because of climate change.

If we go back to the ancient story in Genesis we find the image of the tree of life in the midst of the Garden; and that image is a powerful one. If we go to the other end of the Bible we find in Revelation 22 that "the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." In between of course we find Jesus talking about trees, and the cross itself described as the tree. There is plenty of scope for thought in all that!

Thus, the tree becomes an image of the source of life in both an immediate and in a more ultimate sense; and trees in community equal forests which equal the lungs of the world. Why not plant a tree, and reflect on its real and symbolic significance? It's all part of creation care!

Clive Ayre

3. GREEN CHURCH STORIES

PLEASE TELL US WHAT YOU ARE DOING TO CARE FOR CREATION! □

Email: green.church@ucaql.com.au

We love to hear from individuals, congregations, Presbyteries and Agencies around the Queensland Synod.

- **CRY OF THE EARTH CONFERENCE, 4 JUNE 2011**

- **From little things, big things grow!**

This Conference began as an idea and became a dream. Thanks to some funding from the Department of Environment and Resource Management and the good will of the Community Initiatives Resource Association in West End, the organisers, speakers, workshop leaders and volunteers it became a reality.



Participants came from many different church backgrounds. Some were “between churches” because environmental issues were not being addressed by their congregations. It was a good time to be learning, sharing and working together, and encouraging one another.

An ecumenical grass roots web has been formed, which I hope will grow as we journey “together on the way, enriching community” (in the words of the vision of the Queensland Synod).

Judith Dalton
Green Church Associate

- **Cry of the Earth – A Reflection**

I belong to a community group, the *Transition Town – Kenmore District* which actively promotes resilience of individuals and communities in the face of change through sustainable means in respect for the earth. So it was with interest when I read the promotional material for the church based up-coming eco-conference.

On Saturday June 4, the day prior to World Environment Day, I had the privilege of attending an ecumenical conference titled ‘Cry of the Earth’.

The registration details for this event indicated this was to be a conference of equipping participants with knowledge and practical action - this appealed greatly. I was impressed to be asked to bring my own name tag, drinking vessel, lunch and writing material. The venue chosen had easy access for using public transport and there were to be limited hand-outs and no conference bag. How refreshing!



On first walking in the door of the West End UC hall it was easy to feel a sense of oneness and unity with others. Some folk had organised displays reflecting their own passion in caring for the earth. Others sold eco-products. So much to see!

It was hard to choose just two workshop electives from the appealing list. One I attended was held in a carbon-neutral house where I was simply amazed at the expertise, commitment and passion displayed of those involved in the Beyond Zero Emissions movement, and afterwards was blessed with others as we shared our stories and experiences in the closeness of the eco-spirituality workshop.

A spirit of interconnectedness flowed throughout the entire day as organisers and presenters engaged with us.

A local business, FoodConnect, which specialises in sourcing local foods and offering employment and training opportunities to disadvantaged youth provided refreshments. With delight I sipped hot locally-produced lemon tea from an insulated mug most of the day!

While we produce and harvest most of our fruit and vegetable needs from our garden plot with any surplus being offered to the community, it was with a sense of wonder and shame when one of the presenters, Uncle Joe Kirk, revealed some bush foods to us. In my ignorance, in over 50 years of gardening I had been removing perfectly nutritious food plants believing them to be a 'weed'. Now I nurture all the little Bush Bananas I come across in the garden, and in the lawn as well!



Congratulations and thank you to the organisers of this most worthy event. The impact and significance of issues raised and shared at this conference will live on – I trust and hope something equally meaningful can be planned for 2012 – by which time, we do pray, the cry of the earth may not be as great as it is today.

Brenda Whybrow
Kenmore Uniting Church

○ **REVEGETATION OF UPPER ECHIDNA CREEK, MAPLETON**

Hearing the Cry of the Earth

The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it. Psalm 24:1
Love one another ... John 13:34

For us, eco-theology is expressed clearly in these two Bible verses. The rich diversity of the earth is God's design. Surely we must do what we can to protect it.

So, having retired from careers that kept us indoors most of the time, we took up the challenge of caring for 15.83 ha of land in the Sunshine Coast hinterland in 1994. Both of us grew up on farms, so we started with a love of the country. We didn't quite understand the depth of our ignorance, but were very willing to learn. The local Landcare group started us on the journey, teaching us first about weeds, and then about local native rainforest trees.

We understood the concept that one should work outwards from existing healthy areas, but the land had been so heavily cleared that we couldn't really do this.

Instead our initial efforts at re-establishing rainforest focussed on the steep gully lines, working outwards from our house.



In 2001 we benefitted from a major grant aimed at improving water quality. This project established a linkage along Echidna Creek (a tributary of the South Maroochy River), with fencing and off-stream watering points to exclude cattle from the creek, and the addition of around 18,000 trees on six neighbouring properties. That connection was vital in a fragmented landscape. The project gave us the impetus to accelerate our efforts to revegetate our lantana-

covered slopes. Since then we have received other smaller grants, primarily Land for Wildlife seedling grants, and grants from our local government. That funding has helped us to employ experienced revegetators, and to buy trees and other materials.

Somewhere along the way we lost track of the exact number of trees we had planted. We know we have exceeded 25,000, and that our survival rates are excellent (well above 95%). Wildlings – a lovely name for natural recruitment – arrive in larger numbers and variety each year. The leaf litter builds, the soil stabilizes, the rocky creek bottom is revealed, and wild creatures take advantage of their improved habitat. Each year we beat back a little more lantana, and add to the width of rehabilitated land.

A couple of years ago, the green catbirds arrived in the canopy and noisy pittas began trawling the leaf litter –indicator species confirming the value of the habitat. This year, the best news of all is in place. With the help of our local government, we now have a conservation covenant covering 10.1 ha recorded on our land title. This covenant binds us and future owners to protect the native vegetation.

For us, caring for the environment is a wonderful way to show love for one another.

Daryl Reinke and Craig Hosmer
Montville Uniting Church

• **SAY YES TO CUT CARBON POLLUTION**

Both UnitingJustice (National Assembly) and the Justice and International Mission Unit (Victorian Tasmanian Synod) are members of the Climate Action Network Australia (CANa), with over 70 non-government groups working for action on climate change. <http://cana.net.au>

Rev Tim Costello addressed the World Environment Day rally in the Botanic Gardens, amid placards, balloons and children's painted faces.



4. ECO-MISSION DEVELOPMENT

- **RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO THE 2011 BRISBANE FLOODS
INTER-FAITH STUDY: TRAMPLING THROUGH THE MUD**

In his appropriately-titled song, "Spirit on the Water," the poet Bob Dylan sings: "I've been trampling through mud / Praying to the powers above..." Trampling and praying are a fitting dyad for the way *spiritual* impulses intersected with *physical* muck, during and after the 2011 Brisbane floods. This presentation was based on in-depth interviews with religious leaders and communities who responded to the disaster-level flooding of South-East Queensland. While our previous research shows that natural environments hold a high-degree of spiritual and social significance for many Brisbanites, these values were recently challenged by a series of extreme weather events. Only short weeks after the January floods, Queensland experienced Cyclone Yasi, soon followed in neighboring regions by Cyclone Carlos and then the Christchurch earthquakes. By focusing on the actions of religious people amidst extreme weather events, the paper surveys ways Brisbane's spiritual communities make meaning and advance visions of the Ideal amidst ecological adversity.

In terms of "findings," the research found that religions tended to play down issues of belief, focusing instead on practical acts of service. There was an overwhelming emphasis on communal engagement, which we understood as a form of civil religiosity (see John Dewey's *A Common Faith*). We were interested that the flood did not make environmental issues any more or less important to religious leaders. Most reported that environmental issues were already an important part of their faith.

Aaron Ghiloni
Moreton Rivers Presbytery

- **ECO-MISSION PAPERS FOR MISSION CONFERENCE**

Sept 22-25, Sydney

Australian Association of Mission Studies Conference

Mission in a Globalised World: A New Vision for Christian Discipleship

<http://groupsthatclick.com/aams/>

Abstracts of Conference Papers now available on-line.

Prof Ernst Conradie

(South Africa) Keynote Address

Norman Habel

Towards a Rainbow Covenant: A Model for Eco-Mission

Clive Ayre	Christian Faith and the Earth: a Regional Response to a Global Issue
Miriam Pepper	Church-based Community Gardening: where Mission meets Ecology in Local Contexts
Richard Mallaby	Ecological Mission: Children encountering God in gardening care of animals and play in natural surroundings
Mick Pope	A Pauline Ecomissiology from his letter to Rome
Matthew Seaman	Red, yellow, blue and green: Eco-mission within the Salvation Army
Amy Ross	Integrating ecological mission into mainstream mission: Can it be done?

• **NATIONAL CHURCH LIFE SURVEY**

Every five years, alongside the National Census, churches around Australia participate in the National Church Life Survey (NCLS). Each survey contributes to the most comprehensive view of church life in Australia. In 2011, NCLS will run from September to November, involving thousands of churches from 20 denominations and movements.

Every local Christian church in Australia is invited to take part in the 2011 National Church Life Survey. It is designed to help your church reflect on your life and mission, and to build on strengths already in your church for the future. You can also be a part of something that helps inform the wider church and community of mission and ministry activities, including what is happening at the local level in terms of justice, **environment**, welfare, education and social activities. To take part, your church will need to order survey forms now. See www.2011ncls.org.au for more information.

Miriam Pepper

Australian Religious Response to Climate Change www.arrcc.org.au

5. NEW RESOURCES - TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY

<http://www.trinity.qld.edu.au/index.php?page=content&idcon=4663>

Membership of Trinity Library is now free for members of the Uniting Church, and anyone can explore the library catalogue on-line!

1. Zadok Perspectives, 111, Winter 2011 www.zadok.org.au

Consuming Creation: Faith, Hope and Love

Articles include:

Claire Dawson	Being Carbon Accountable
Janet Down	Transition Towns
Cath James	How Green is your Church?
Cathy Cook	A National Day of Prayer on Climate Change

Book Reviews

Note: Zadok Papers, but not Zadok Perspectives, may be accessed electronically. To do so, please contact Trinity College Library.

2. Horrell, David G, Cherryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate and Francesca Stavrakopoulou

Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives

London, T&T Clark, 2009

(Library Reference 220.83042 ECO)

This text reflects critically on the kinds of appeal to the Bible that have been made in environmental ethics & ecotheology; engages with biblical texts with a view towards exploring their contribution to an ecological ethics; & explores the kind of hermeneutic necessary for such engagement to be fruitful for contemporary theology & ethics.

Contents

A collection of papers, mainly from UK, but including:

Geoff Thompson, Trinity Theological College, Brisbane

Vicky Balabanski, Adelaide College of Divinity

Brendan Byrne, SJ, Melbourne College of Divinity

H Paul Santmire (retired) Wellesley College, Massachusetts, USA

Ernst Conradie, University of Western Cape, South Africa

3. Treston, Kevin

Walk Lightly Upon the Earth: Creation Spirituality for Daily Living

Creation Enterprises, Brisbane 2003

(Library Reference: 248.4 TRE)

“During the latter part of the 20th century, there has been a slow awakening in the global community about the ecological crisis facing the world. Christians began to stir from a long induced slumber about the relevance of creation to their spirituality. There are increasing signs in the 21st century that many Christians with people of other faiths and cultures are being drawn to a creation-centred spirituality.” BOOK COVER

Contents:

The Wonder of creation

Spirituality and creation stories

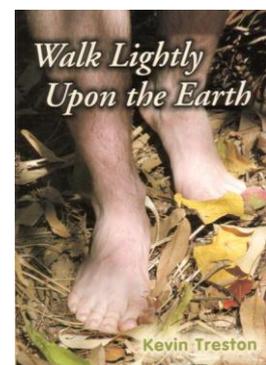
Relationships with creation

Peace and justice in creation

Work and sabbath in creation

Christians and the earth

The practice of creation spirituality



4. Theokritoff, Elizabeth

Living in God's Creation: Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology

St Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, 2009

(Library Reference 261:88 THE)

(See Book Review below)

"Few realize how ecological the vision of Orthodox Christianity really is. Yet it portrays creation as God's epiphany and the human person as a connecting link between creation and Creator. Christian love is manifest through "the right use of material things." To communicate this vision, Elizabeth Theokritoff draws on ancient sources, the Fathers, the liturgy, and saints' lives, on modern commentators, and on practical examples from our lived experience. The thematic arrangement makes it a convenient resource for teachers. It is compelling reading, and demonstrates that environmental concerns have deep roots in Christian tradition." BOOK COVER

Contents:

Themes in the Church Fathers
The Ascetic Tradition and the Use of the World
The Saints and their Environment
God's Creation in Orthodox Worship
Sacramental Life and Sacramental Living
Themes in Contemporary Orthodox Theology



Review by Rev Dr Clive Ayre

Elizabeth Theokritoff is an Orthodox scholar who is part of the 2012 network for the World Symposium on "Christian Faith and the Earth." As such she is well placed to make an essential contribution to the ecumenical discussion; this book is scholarly yet very readable, and provides a valuable insight into an Orthodox understanding of eco-theology.

It is not surprising that she draws heavily on the early Church Fathers, but what is interesting is that they were often much closer to nature than we may imagine. Consider St Basil for example: "I want creation to penetrate you with so much wonder ... that everywhere, wherever you may be, the least plant may bring to you the clear remembrance of the Creator" (p49). The approach of the Fathers reflects "a perception of the world around us that is profoundly theological" (p50); the whole created order is totally bound up with God, which therefore impacts on the way we treat the world. But there are many other examples as well.

I found her chapter on asceticism to be especially interesting; she argues that it is often misunderstood. The ascetic approach suggests that the key to the restoration of a right relationship with the world is the restoration of a right relationship with

God. She describes the term “despising” as “slippery”, but in the end it has to do with reducing our demands; “it is to *walk lightly on the earth*” (p104). So the way we use material things is crucial to our spiritual progress; these things are gifts, but not to do with as we like. In the end the ascetic approach is not so much about *giving up* as it is about *giving* – and that translates into what we do, for example in buying Fair Trade products. To *walk lightly on the earth* is more about giving thanks than giving up! (p190).

Theokritoff raises the question of what is at the centre, and for her anything other than God is an idol; that in turn leads to an interesting perspective on icons which the Orthodox love, together with a chapter on the sacramental life. She argues that “sacramental life connects us with the material world” (p193) in that, for example, the “spiritual ... runs through bread, through water, through the love of a married couple” (p193). Icons may be seen in a different light when the physical and the spiritual are not perceived dualistically.

There is so much more in this book. But I close with her thought that in our relationship with the earth and other creatures, the Church offers “a different lens” (p153), an icon if you like, of “the transfigured human being”. As Theokritoff says, “The ultimate contrast is not between shaping our environment or preserving it in a pristine state. The choice before us is whether or not we will embrace its potential, as the saints have done, so that the natural and manmade features alike become a sacrament of divine presence” (p153).

In short, this book makes a valuable contribution to the discussion, and we in the Protestant tradition would do well to give it careful consideration.

6 CONTACT THE GREEN CHURCH OFFICE

If you have any questions or suggestions for how we may be able to help creation care become an integral part of Christian discipleship and the church’s mission, please contact us, preferably by email as we are not often in the office.

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