

Uniting Church in Australia – Queensland Synod
Together on the way, enriching community



UNITING GREEN (QLD)

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Live simply so that others may simply live
(Mahatma Gandhi)

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1. SEASONAL REFLECTION

As I write this on Australia Day, foil wrapped Easter bunnies are already in the shops and I am aware of being well into the New Year. Halfway between the Church seasons of Christmas and Lent. Between celebrating the incarnation of Christ (often with excesses), and following him on the road of costly discipleship all the way to the Cross. Through death and resurrection we move to new life.

Lent has traditionally been a time for self-examination and giving up things that hold us: a time to learn self-discipline and self-control, and deepen our discipleship, our walk with Christ.

May this be a time for self-examination, an audit of the impact we have on the Earth, both as individuals and as congregations. May we be open and responsive to the challenge of God's Spirit, ready for eco-conversion: to turn away from our abuse of the environment and change our ways; to be forgiven, healed, transformed and enabled. May we learn to *live simply, that others may simply live*: other people, other creatures and the whole Earth.

In this Uniting Green News there items to challenge, inspire and encourage you, and to invite you to find that caring for the Earth is a core part of both your individual discipleship and the Church's mission.

In particular, please note the Rainbow Covenant and hymn. Talk about it with others in your congregation, and friends in other churches.

Let's continue on the journey of Life in 2012, serving the Earth for Christ's sake: *together on the way, enriching community*.

Judith Dalton
Eco-Mission Facilitator

2. THE RAINBOW COVENANT AND HYMN

A RAINBOW COVENANT: FOR EARTH MISSION

Introduction

At the Australian Association for Mission Studies conference in September 2011, the following document entitled *A Rainbow Covenant for Earth Mission* was submitted for consideration by the participants in the conference. This charter document represents a significant development in mission within the Christian Church of Australia, moving beyond mission texts such as Matthew 28 and Luke 4 to embrace the commission of Christ to share the good news with all creation (Mark 16.15).

Norman Habel gave a powerpoint presentation at the beginning of the conference which explored the biblical bases for each of the seven foci of the covenant document. During the course of the conference the document was refined with input from various participants, including Ernst Conradie the keynote speaker at the conference. At the close of the conference the *Rainbow Covenant for Earth Mission* was endorsed as a draft document for future discussion and planning both for the AAMS and the NCCA.

We who are present at the AAMS Conference on Saturday Sept. 24, 2011, affirm A Rainbow Covenant: For Earth Mission and support its use for:

- a) *Launching the Earth Mission stream of the AAMS,*
- b) *Consideration by the NCCA for the work of its Eco-mission Project Team,*
- c) *Developing an eco-mission manual for use in the churches of Australia,*
- d) *Circulating to appropriate interest groups for comment.*

The promotion of a mission to Earth emerges at this point for the Christian church for several reasons. These include:

- a) A growing awareness that the environmental crisis is no longer one which Christian churches can ignore,
- b) Ecological insights have led us to re-read crucial parts of the Scripture and rethink traditional creation theology,
- c) A mission to Earth is found already in the injunction to Adam to 'serve and preserve' God's garden (Gen. 2.15) and persists through the Scriptures until the commission of Christ in Mark. 16.15,
- d) We have become aware that Earth is not only our home and our habitat, but also a planet permeated with God's presence, a planet we are called to preserve as sacred.

Churches and mission groups are invited to discuss this document and explore where and how it might serve as a vehicle for promoting our mission to Earth as an important dimension of the mission program of the church. The question being asked is how best to promote and utilise this document. Would a manual be useful for parishes and groups to study the biblical basis of the document and provide

guidelines as to ways in which an Earth mission might be implemented? Would it be helpful to include a network of resources, examples of how people have been motivated to engage in Earth mission and practical ways in which homes, schools and parishes were able to implement this mission? Would your congregation endorse this mission?

Please send any comments and suggestions to Clive Ayre, who is a member of the NCCA Eco-mission Project Team. clive.ayre@ucaqld.com.au

A RAINBOW COVENANT: FOR EARTH MISSION

Following the lead of our Creator, who made a covenant with all Earth creatures and with Earth herself (Gen. 9.8-17), responding to the call of Christ to relate the good news to all creation (Mark 16.15), and moved by the urging of the Spirit (Rom. 8.26-27), we hereby affirm a rainbow covenant as the basis for what we call Earth mission.

Red - Radiant Presence

Given the good news that planet Earth is a sanctuary filled with the radiant presence of the Creator, the fire of God's glory (Isa. 6.3), *we affirm the call to celebrate Earth as sacred and not to desecrate this sanctuary with many forms of pollution.*

Orange – Primal Origin

Given the good news that all living beings are Earth beings originating from the same orange clay (Gen. 2.5), and the Breath of our Creator, *we affirm the call to activate our primal mission to nurture the land (Gen. 2.15, the soil from which we emerged, and to resist all practices that denigrate the land.*

Yellow – Intrinsic Worth

Given the good news that all creation was created 'very good' by God, who thereby affirmed its intrinsic worth (Gen. 1.31), *we affirm the call to respect the integrity of creation, to protect the rights of all life and all domains of this planet, to celebrate the abundance of God's grace and to resist the many forms of consumerist greed that devalue our planet.*

Green – Pulsing Life

Given the good news that the Breath of God animates the face of Earth and all life on Earth (Ps. 104.30), *we affirm the call to nurture Earth as a green planet by working to preserve all species of fauna and flora as well as their habitats amidst the many threats to biodiversity.*

Blue – Deep Voice

Given the good news that all creation is groaning in hope, from the ocean depths to the ozone layer (Rom. 8.9-25), *we affirm the call to empathize with the cries of Earth and the groaning of creation which is subjected to many forms of violence, and, as the prophets of old, proclaim publicly, on Earth's behalf, the pains and hopes of her deep blue domains, both above and below.*

Indigo – Encoded Wisdom

Given the good news that the 'ways' of wisdom are encoded by God in creation (Job 28.23-27), *we affirm the call to understand the ways of wisdom in nature, and prepare for impending difficulties resulting from human disturbance in the balance of these ways through unwise and unjust uses of science and technology.*

Violet – Cosmic Compassion

Given the good news that the crucified and risen Christ is now the cosmic Christ reconciling all creation (Col. 1.19-20) with God, *we affirm the call to explore how the Gospel is good news for healing and transforming our planet (Mark 16.15) in order to establish an all-encompassing peace on Earth.*

Rainbow Covenant Hymn
Tune: *Morning Has Broken*
Norman Habel, 2010

Red is the fire of God's holy presence
Filling with life the planet we share;
Here is our vow to hold the Earth sacred,
Tend it with love and covenant care.

Orange the clay that makes us all mortal,
Filled with God's breath since humans were born,
Given a mission: treat Earth as partner!
Now we affirm that calling once more.

Yellow, like gold, means all things are precious,
Each with a right to sing and be free;
This is our pledge to hold all that's living,
Valued as part of Earth's majesty.

Green pulses flow through veins of creation,
Yet humans clear great forests in seed;
This is our promise: keep all things growing,
We will reverse our violent greed.

Blue is the song felt deep in the ocean,
Blues are the groaning deep in the sand.
Now with our souls we promise to listen,
Publicly giving voice to the land.

Indigo sounds a signal for danger:
Refugees facing drought and despair;
Here we respond as climates are changing,
We will take steps, find ways to prepare.

Violet announces Christ in our cosmos,
Holding our Earth in all of its pain.
Christ now invites us: join in my mission!
Cov'nant with me to heal Earth again.

3. RESOURCES

Australian Religious Response for Climate Change

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

- News on Durban Conference of Parties on Climate Change (Dec 2011)
- Oz Green - One Planet Week <http://www.oneplanetweek.net.au/>
- Videos from Multifaith Eco Forum on Environmental Ethics 2011, with speakers from Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islam, and Jewish faiths.

LentEvent <http://www.lentevent.com/>

This Uniting Church program has resources for studies, worship, reflection and action in the season of Lent, the six weeks before Easter. LentEvent links with UnitingWorld projects, which also include their new *Pacific: Climate Change Response Programs*. <http://www.unitingworld.org.au/programs/church-solidarity/church-solidarity-pacific/pacific-climate-change-response-program/>

TEAR Australia encourages a 40 day CARBON FAST during Lent and provides a series of 7 studies, and 40 simple actions to reduce our impact on the Earth for each day. <http://www.tear.org.au/advocacy/campaigns/climate-change/carbon-fast/>

World Vision: Ethical Easter Eggs?

Foil wrapped Easter bunnies are already in the shops. Is this how you want to celebrate Easter? World Vision can help out here, referring to interesting information on justice issues of child labour and the environment, what chocolate to buy and where to buy it. You might even like to make your own Easter Eggs with the children.

<http://www.worldvision.com.au/Act/ShopEthically/DemandEthicalChocolate.aspx>

http://trans.worldvision.com.au/news/actionnews/viewArticle_enh.asp?articleID=286

<http://www.fairtrade.com.au/get-involved/campaigns/make-fairtrade-choice-easter>

<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/agriculture/crops/cocoa>

4. GREEN STORIES

- **SOLAR TINTING AND FANS COOL TOOWONG UNITING CHURCH**

In order to provide more comfortable ambient conditions within the church for the Sunday morning congregation it was decided to install 6 new ceiling fans in addition to the 3 existing ones to provide an environmentally friendly solution rather than outlay further capital and running costs installing an air conditioning system.

Also the solar window tinting in the church had reached the end of its useful life. Much of it had either already peeled off or was still peeling off. Fortunately, the church property committee was advised that Energex had an “energy conservation community benefit fund” to which we could apply for funding for an energy conservation project.

The committee chose as its project, the removal of the existing solar tinting to the church windows and the installation of new more environmentally and technically advanced solar tinting.

Subsequently our application to Energex with this project was successful and a cheque was presented to the church during December 2011 for just over \$5,000. Samples have now been installed and the full installation should be completed shortly.

The funding from Energex will benefit the congregation from a comfort aspect from both a reduction in heat load and glare and from lower operating costs. The local community will benefit from the savings in capital and operating costs in that these savings can be directed to community activities that are currently provided and supported by our church.

Rob Hubbard

5. ECO-MISSION CALENDAR

*Building links with the wider community
and serving the Earth for Christ's sake*

2012

- UN International Year of Sustainable Energy for All
- International Decade for Action: Water for Life
- Education for Sustainable Development

Feb 20-6 One Planet Week

We only have One Planet, yet we are living as though we had the resources of four! Oz Green have developed a list of simple actions you can do to reduce your ecological footprint. They have split the actions into five key areas: Water, Waste, Energy, Food and Travel. Try choosing at least 8 easy, 3 challenging and 1 long term action:
<http://www.oneplanetweek.net.au/>

March 2 World Day of Prayer: Let Justice Prevail

(prepared by Malaysia)

March 4 Clean Up Australia Day

See how churches have worked together in the community:

<http://www.unitingearthweb.org.au/explore/maroubra-junction-uniting-church-clean-up-australia-day-clean-up-and-festival>

There are many different Clean Up groups already registered in Queensland. Join one, or start one in your community.

<http://www.cleanupaustaliaday.org.au/join/?kw=&location=&state=QLD>

March 22 World Water Day

<http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday/>

March 31 Earth Hour

<http://www.earthhour.org/>

June 5 World Environment Day (40th)

Green Economy: Does it include you?

<http://www.unep.org/wed/theme/>

Worship and Education Resources are being prepared by Uniting Justice and people in different States.

Aug 6-10 International Conference, Capetown, South Africa:

“Christian Faith and the Earth”

(Google, as weblink not working properly, or contact Clive Ayre)

6. UNITING GREEN 2012

Uniting Green will contribute to the priority directions of the Synod, working towards becoming a “green” Church by

- A. establishing *safeguarding creation and sustaining the earth* (eco-mission) as an integral part of the mission of the Church
- B. promoting eco-spirituality
- C. organising for eco-mission
- D. resourcing eco-theology education
- E. encouraging eco-justice links with the wider community

I am planning to use the Synod email circulation “UCInfo” more this year for breaking news, reminders and helpful weblinks.

Further help with ideas in developing our website, Uniting Green News and Presbytery groups would be much appreciated. I would really love to have at least one contact from each Presbytery to keep in touch with things that are happening. Please let me know!

Please send us your news and views, questions and suggestions, and we’ll nurture as many seeds as we can to produce fruit!

7. CONTACT UNITING GREEN (QLD)

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 **by email as we are not often in the office**. Please include your phone number.

The emails and website for Uniting Green are still the same as for Green Church. We will let you know when they change.

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