

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



UNITING GREEN (QLD)

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Stewards of God's Shalom
(David Field, quoted by Ernst Conradie)

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1. SEASONAL REFLECTION

From Easter to Pentecost we celebrate the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then Trinity Sunday, June 3, is an excellent time to celebrate the triune God... Creator, Restorer and Sustainer of the whole creation. This is the Sunday before World Environment Day, June 5. This year's theme is *Green Economy: Does it include you?*

Oikos is the Greek root of the words ecology, economy, and ecumenism. *Oikos* means the "Household". Economy means the management of the household, not just the financial aspects as we tend to think of economy, but the whole wellbeing of the household... the whole household of God, the whole creation. The *Green Economy* looks at our interconnectedness, and the sustainability of the planet Earth. Does it include you, working for sustainability? Does it include the wellbeing of the whole of God's creation?

The Triune God is a relational God: interconnectedness of Father, Son and Spirit, or Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, also connecting with the whole creation, not just humanity. How are we involved with the Economy of Life in the whole household of creation?

Ernst Conradie takes up David Field's creative suggestion that *being in the image of God is a calling to represent God's interests and to reflect God's character, and thus to participate in God's action to bring shalom to the earth and thus not primarily stewards of the earth, but stewards of God's shalom.* (Ernst Conradie, *An Ecological Christian Anthropology*, Ashgate Publishing, 2005, pp 171, 214)

Shalom... PEACE... **Wholeness...**

HEALTH... *Wellbeing...* Safety...

SOUNDNESS... Tranquillity...

REST... **Fullness...** Harmony...

2. ECO-MISSION CALENDAR

May 17 5.45 for 6.00 to 7.30pm at University of Queensland
JUST IN! **From Durban to Rio: Ian Fry, International Climate Change Negotiator for Tuvalu**, at Level 1 Conference Room, Social Sciences and Humanities Library, Duhig Building, off the Great Court, University of Queensland. From Queensland Churches Together:
http://www.qct.org.au/index.php?option=com_jevents&task=icalrepeat.detail&evid=135&Itemid=153&year=2012&month=05&day=17&title=between-durban-and-rio-by-ian-fry&uid=047e875f7bb8de1fec7f705783a20ffb

June 5 **40th World Environment Day**
Green Economy: Does it include you?
<http://www.unep.org/wed/theme/>
UCA Worship Resources available May 9.
(See Section 3: World Environment Day)



June 20-2 **Earth Summit 2012, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**
<http://www.earthsummit2012.org/>
The Earth Summit 2012, or Rio+20, after the initial conference held in Rio in 1992, will focus on two specific themes: a green economy in the context of poverty eradication and an institutional framework for sustainable development.

June 26-30 **Youth Climate Embassy, Canberra**
Australian Religious Response to Climate Change,
<http://www.arrcc.org.au/>
(See Section 6: Eco-Mission Development)

Aug 6-10 **International Conference, Capetown, South Africa:**
“Christian Faith and the Earth”
<http://fore.research.yale.edu/calendar/item/christian-faith-and-the-earth-respice-et-prospice/>

September **Season of Creation 2012**
<http://seasonofcreation.com/worship-resources/liturgies/series-b-the-word-series/> (See section 7: Resources Trinity Library)

3. WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY WORSHIP RESOURCES

June 5 – World Environment Day (40th)

For general info: <http://www.unep.org/wed/>

Theme: *A Green Economy: does it include you?*



Worship resources compiled through UnitingJustice Australia, including activities for all ages, will be available **from May 9** at:

<http://www.unitingjustice.org.au/environment/information-and-action-resources>

Meanwhile, some good ecological lyrics to traditional tunes may be found in *Sing A New Song* from George Stuart. (No copyright for use in worship)

<https://sites.google.com/site/george007site/>

4. QUEENSLAND CHURCHES ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

A NEW ECUMENICAL GROUP

Old Churches Together has established a new Task Group to be known as the Qld Churches Environmental Network. In the course of time this may well become a Commission of the Council; but in any event, this is potentially a very significant development in terms of our ecumenical cooperation in eco-mission. It is also being proposed as a model for the rest of Australia.

The membership of the Task Group will initially be drawn from the member Churches of QCT, hopefully with a good gender and age mix. While membership has not yet been finalised, it is anticipated that there will be approximately 12 people drawn from the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, and Uniting Churches, the Salvation Army, the Society of Friends and possibly several others as well. This would make the group one of the most representative of its type in the country.

The Rev Dr Clive Ayre has accepted the Executive's invitation to be the initial Chair of the Task Group. Hopefully it will become operational by about June.

The frequency of meetings will be determined by the group, but initially it will probably be on a monthly basis; an occasional public meeting may also be a possibility. The Task Group will report regularly to the Council and Executive as may be required.

The infrastructure required will be minimal, and effective functioning should not require funding, which is just as well, since funds are not available! Any projects that may be proposed will be assessed on their merits at the time.

Terms of Reference are as follows:

- To be a resource and advisory group for the QCT in matters relating to environmental care.
- To provide a forum for dialogue and the sharing of information and resources for the care of creation.
- To promote eco-mission as an integral part of the church's mission.
- To encourage and enable ecumenical action for Earthcare.
- To promote appropriate study material and educational models.
- To have an advocacy role in encouraging church bodies and congregations to participate in a public stand against practices that pollute, degrade or destroy God's creation.
- To explore interfaith possibilities in Earthcare.
- To relate to the NCCA Eco-Mission Project Group.

Watch for further details in due course.

Clive Ayre

5. GREEN STORIES

a) **Uniting World Climate Change Response Program in Tuvalu**

<http://www.unitingworld.org.au/hereandnow/>

<http://unitingworld.org.au/blogs/this-is-what-i-saw-climate-change-in-the-pacific/>



The Church in Tuvalu have asked the Uniting Church to help in their plans for a Climate Change Response Program. They want to develop resources for theological workshops and community action.

As they see their land being flooded by salt water, they are facing questions of faith. Where is God in this situation? Workshops enabling reflection and discussion from a Christian perspective will help people discern what God is saying about land, identity and responding to cataclysmic change.

Resourcing communities to adapt, reduce risk and keep preparing for the consequences of Climate Change will involve practical steps such as sea wall construction, planting methods and waste management.

(Further info on Tuvalu... see Calendar May 17 Presentation at UQ)

b) Christian Aid helps Kenyan farmers adapt to Climate Change

(From *Old Churches Together Newsletter*: Written by ENI Tuesday, 24 April 2012)

On the southern slopes of Mount Kenya, a Christian charity is helping small farmers adapt to climate change through the use of both traditional and modern forms of weather forecasting.

In the Anglican diocese of Mbeere, U.K.-based Christian Aid and the Humanitarian Futures Project of King's College (London) are funding the pilot project.

"We would like farmers to interact more with climate scientists and understand where climate science comes from, but not forgetting there have been mechanisms among the farmers to predict and forecast weather situations through traditional methods," said Eston Njuki, an East Africa program officer at Christian Aid.

The project, known as Sustainable Agricultural Livelihoods Innovation (SALI), seeks to improve crop and livestock production for the farmers, according to Njuki. It is being implemented on the ground by Christian Community Services of Mt. Kenya East, a development agency serving five Anglican dioceses, and Trade Craft East Africa, a non-governmental organization.

Some farmers in Mbeere follow seasonal forecasts from radio and television, according to the official, but many shun the forecasts delivered by the Meteorological Department, doubting their validity since there is no weather station nearby.

They prefer to predict the weather through such indigenous practices as observing the appearance of low flying dragonflies, large numbers of low-swooping swallows or the flowering of acacia trees.

"This traditional knowledge on forecasting has some scientific basis in it. That is why we are bringing the two to interact," noted Njuki who works directly on the project.

In an interview with ENInews in Nairobi he explained that when science based forecasting is compared against the direction of winds and how humid they are, for

instance, the flowering of certain types of trees or the migration of bees, the farmers can make better decisions when to plant and what crops to grow.

"Getting [forecasts] right leads to good harvests and families having plenty to eat and sell. Getting them wrong can lead to hunger, poverty and suffering. This is the reality for millions of people across Africa," said Richard Ewbank, Climate Adviser at Christian Aid.

When the project started a year ago, farmers were experiencing the consequences of climate change -- higher temperatures, intense rainfall, stronger winds and longer dry seasons. The effects were disrupting weather patterns, according to Njuki, making it difficult for farmers to predict the seasons.

"One of the methods has been to deliver an area-specific climate information and weather forecast" using SMS texts, he explained.

In the diocese, farmer Nelson Githaiga is happy with the innovation. He recalled that when the first forecast said the rains would be good, he got a better harvest after planting on time and choosing drought-resistant crops.

"It came as an SMS and we replied saying it works since the rains came the same day. Now, we are joyful since we have a forecast that represents our area. We were usually put together with a tea-growing area in the national forecast, while ours is a semi-arid area," said Githaiga.

For Lucy Muriuki, it is liberating to know when to plant or harvest. She is among the farmers who have received training on how to interpret data from the Meteorological Department and recommendations on how best to grow maize, cow peas, mung beans and sorghum, the main crops here.

"I can now decide on the right kind of crop, since I can predict when the rains are coming. At first we would 'guess' using the traditional forecasting methods. I am happy that this is going to help farmers in our area," Muriuki said.

The project will continue through 2012 and 2013, bringing the total number of people affected to 12,000.

6. ECOMISSION DEVELOPMENT

- **ARRCC Youth Climate Embassy, Canberra**
(Australian Religious Response to Climate Change)
<http://www.arrcc.org.au/>

ARRCC will be erecting a tent Embassy on the lawns of Parliament House to draw the attention of Australians, particularly people of faith, to the fact that we need to ensure a safe climate future for the children/grandchildren of the world and future generations. The Embassy will open during the **week leading up to July 1st**, when the Clean Energy Future legislation (the so called 'Carbon Tax') will be implemented.

As part of the Embassy, children and young people are invited to share their visions for a just and sustainable future. Send in your opinion pieces, poetry, YouTube video clips, stories, photos of art work, cartoons to: <http://youthembassy.org.au/> These will be displayed at the Embassy and publicized in the media as well as published on the website. Hopefully these messages will counter the likely media outcry about the cost of the legislation.

Please help make the Embassy a success by encouraging the children or young people you know to add their voice. Simply pass on the web address above and encourage them to upload their submission.

- **ARRCC Meat Free Day**
(Australian Religious Response to Climate Change)

ARRCC, a Multifaith network committed to taking action on Climate Change, is in the process of producing a series of materials to help you encourage people to have at least one Meat Free Day per week. We would love our members and supporters to encourage their places of worship to adopt a Meat Free Day as a whole faith community. We are also encouraging faith communities to have Meat Free Meals as part of their religious gatherings and conferences. More information and materials will be available over the coming months!

Do you have examples of Meat Free Meals or Meat Free Days in your home or place of worship? Then please [contact ARRCC](#) to share your story!

<http://www.arrcc.org.au/meat-free-day>

http://www.arrcc.org.au/images/stories/webpages/Meat_Free_Day_brochure.pdf

7. RESOURCES: NEW BOOKS AT TRINITY LIBRARY

i. *The Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary*

David Rhoads, H. Paul Santmire, Norman C. Habel (Editors)

Fortress Press 2011

From the Publisher:

“As the global climate crisis worsens, many churches have sought to respond by instituting a movement to observe a liturgical season of creation. Scholars who have pioneered the connections between biblical scholarship, ecological theology, liturgy, and homiletics provide here a comprehensive resource for preaching and leading worship in this new season. Included are theological and practical introductions to observance of the season, biblical texts for its twelve Sundays in the three-year lectionary cycle, and astute commentary to help preachers and worship leaders guide their congregations into deeper connection with our imperiled planet.”

ii. *Eco-Theology* Celia Deane-Drummond, St Mary’s Press, 2008

From the Publisher:

Designed for College Students Taking Eco-Theology Courses

Here is comprehensive coverage of the rapidly growing field of eco-theology. Eco-Theology evaluates the merits or otherwise of contemporary eco-theologies and introduces readers to critical debates, while tracing trends from around the globe and key theological responses. The emphasis is on the theological aspects of Christian engagement with environmental issues, rather than primarily ethical or spiritual concerns. Included are further reading sections and discussion questions.

**iii. *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics*
Hilary Marlow, Oxford University Press, 2009**

Book Review by Chris Dalton:

Sir David Attenborough once said *Judeo-Christians believe . . . people who lived in the desert believed that nature was hostile. You can see in the old testament [sic] that the natural world was there to exploit – it was there for their benefit. This has cast a long shadow* ('Natural World', 2005, p 18). This sentiment draws on Lynne White's infamous article in 1967 that criticised Judaeo-Christian religious beliefs for contributing to the emerging environmental crisis.

One of the objectives of Hilary Marlow's book is to offer an alternative view on what we can learn from the Old Testament with regard to environmental ethics. This is timely, as with the growing emphasis on eco-mission that many parts of the church are now embracing, it's only reasonable to question its biblical foundations. Does the Old Testament, then, promote an anthropocentric and exploitative view of the world around us, that it is our servant, there for us to settle, mine, grow crops, raise livestock and enjoy? Does the Old Testament teach us that the land is primarily there for humanity's benefit, or does it have an intrinsic value in its own right?

Her scholarly and well-researched book is just one contribution in an expanding body of literature that establishes the centrality of ecotheology in the life and mission of the church. The lens she uses is an 'ecological triangle' based on three fundamental relationships – between God and humanity, humanity and non-human creation, and non-human creation and God (where she uses the term 'non-human creation' as shorthand for the whole created order apart from humanity). This contrasts strongly with the classic dualism of soul and body, mind and matter, a concept that has been exceedingly influential in Christian thought over the centuries.

In applying this approach she provides a helpful overview of the history of ecological thought in the church down the ages, analysing the contributions of many early church leaders (Philo of Alexandria, Origen, Irenaeus, Augustine,

Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, Calvin), and finishing with a look at the Earth Bible Project established by Norman Habel in Adelaide.

Her book, however, is not just an academic exercise in conceptual theology. She also outlines a robust ecotheological hermeneutical framework within which she uses her interrelational lens to derive environmental ethics from the Old Testament by examining three eighth century BCE prophets, where each explores just one of the above relationships (Amos: God and non-human creation; Hosea: God and humanity; First Isaiah: humanity and non-human creation). Her biblical exegesis in this regard is both technical and thorough.

Her final chapter applies the principles discerned in the three Old Testament books to environmental ethics. At face value they seem unremarkable. Her core principles address (a) the ascription of value to non-human creation; (b) reasons for human morality; and (iii) the priority of community. These are principles that already exist within the environment movement. What is significant about them, particularly for those within the church, is that they are principles with a solid biblical foundation that question classical Christian theology's embrace of dualism (which comes from Greek rather than Hebrew philosophy), hierarchy of creation (where humanity represents the pinnacle of creation), individual privatised faith (compared to community) and focus on the world to come (rather than the here and now).

It is not light reading, but for those who wish to dig deeper into the biblical credentials of ecotheology and the green movement within the church, it provides an informative and well-argued analysis of relevant Old Testament texts.

Marlow concludes that the challenge before religious communities such as the church is that of being prepared to exercise the moral leadership needed to prevent isolationist and reactionary attitudes to change and to demonstrate an ethic which values all people and the whole of creation.

8. RESOURCES: IN THE NEWS

- **CSIRO State of the Climate 2012 Report**

<http://www.csiro.au/Outcomes/Climate/Understanding/State-of-the-Climate-2012.aspx>

- **Bureau of Meteorology climate summary for 2011**

“While 2011 was cooler than average for Australia as a whole, below-average temperatures were mostly confined to northern Australia; southern Australia was warmer than average.”

http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/annual_sum/2011/AnClimSum2011_LR1.0.pdf

- **Australia’s Emissions**

Australia remains on track to meet its Kyoto Protocol target of limiting emissions to 108 per cent of 1990 levels, on average, over the period from 2008 to 2012. The Accounts show Australia’s carbon pollution is currently tracking at 104 per cent of 1990 levels. However, emissions from the electricity generation sector rose by 50 per cent from 1990 to 2011, the strongest growth of all sectors in Australia.

<http://climatechange.gov.au/climate-change/emissions.aspx>

- **Beyond Zero Emissions**

Zero Carbon Australia Stationary Energy Plan

Download full plan, or synopsis

<http://beyondzeroemissions.org/>

- **Listen to Uniting Church National President Rev. Alistair Macrae**, talk about **climate change (including Tuvalu)**:

<http://beyondzeroemissions.org/media/radio/mindful-climate-show-120418>

- **Alternative Technology Association**

Listen to a panel of speakers present their slide shows about **retrofitting your home** for energy efficiency

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcGiAu0wzR4>

9. 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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