FAITH IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

Stories from the world church. Ideas for prayer and action.

With contributions from

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

USP G
Climate change is a complex subject that many of us struggle to get to grips with. For some, the issue seems so big it’s hard to imagine we can do anything to help. Others might assume the issue is being dealt with already by the UN, governments and aid agencies.

So what is the role of mission and the church in all of this?

We believe we can all do something to help combat climate change, whether by making changes in our personal lives or by acting collectively as a church or community – and we hope this resource will help us to get involved.

We have included the voices of some of our world church partners who are experiencing the extremes of climate change. We have also highlighted the creative and inspiring response of these churches.

Britain and Ireland are among nations in the minority world that have contributed the most to the emissions causing climate change. It is therefore imperative as part of our Christian commitment that we respond.

We hope you will be challenged and inspired by this resource, and that you will discover we can all play a part in helping reduce the impact of climate change.

Cover: Paye, in Mountain Province, Philippines (USPG/Leah Gordon).
Opposite: Flooding in a slum in Pargandaria, Dhaka, India (USPG/Leah Gordon).
The Challenge of Climate Change

The issues are complex but there is plenty that we can do as churches and communities to make a difference.

Climate change is not an easy topic to talk about, and when we do it tends to provoke passionate reactions. However, we need to engage in these conversations because climate change is the most crucial issue facing our generation.

As people of faith, we believe that God gifted us this planet. We have a responsibility to treat it wisely and lovingly, acting as caring stewards of Creation. The Fifth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion calls to ‘strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth’. In the context of climate change, it is clear that we are abusing this responsibility, with many of us in the minority world living a lifestyle of unsustainable over-consumption.

A Justice Issue

At its heart, climate change is a justice issue. Climate change disproportionately affects the most vulnerable and the least culpable. Essentially, those that are most responsible for creating the problem tend not to be the ones that experience the most severe consequences.

Climate change is causing us to think deeply about who our neighbour is. It causes us to consider how the decisions we make have a huge impact on people in other parts of the world and on future generations. For this reason, we are challenged to hear the prophetic voices of our brothers and sisters around the world. Their experiences call us to live radically and transform our lifestyles while we have the chance to make a difference.

For real and sustained change to occur we have to look beyond ourselves to challenge the systems and structures that do not go far enough to protect our shared future. To achieve this, we will have to work constructively with people from all places and backgrounds, drawing on our common ground and interests to move forward.

We need to hold our governments accountable to national and international agreements and encourage them to dream bigger and push further. The 2015 UN Paris Agreement – the first universal legally-binding climate deal among the world’s nations – aims to limit the global average temperature rise to well below 2°C more than temperatures before industrialisation. But this agreement is based on voluntary pledges by countries to reduce carbon emissions that contribute to climate change. Unless these pledges are put into action the agreement will be nothing more than empty promises.

Targets

In the UK, in 2008, our Parliament supported the Climate Change Act, committing to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the UK by at least 80 per cent of 1990 levels by the year 2050. To reach these targets the UK needs to do much more. At the time of writing, the UK is not even on track to meet its interim target of a 50 per cent reduction by 2025.

In light of this, we have a responsibility to ensure that in our homes, churches and communities we are doing our part to meet these targets. But we also have to engage constructively with our politicians to hold them to the pledges they have made – and you will find ideas for how you can do this in these pages.

Climate change is a global issue. However, it is imperative that we each respond locally and contextually to make the changes necessary for a sustainable earth.
IS CLIMATE CHANGE A NEW THING?
The earth’s climate has always been changing. This is caused by variations in the amount of energy from the sun that reaches the earth. There are many factors that contribute to this, including long-term gradual changes in the earth’s orbit, the amount of solar activity and the amount of volcanic activity. Current concerns about climate change have arisen because human activity has become a significant influence on the earth’s climate.

HOW DO WE KNOW ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?
Evidence comes from many sources, including direct temperature measurements, pollen analysis, tree-rings and ice cores. Ice cores taken from Greenland and Antarctica provide records of both temperature and greenhouse gas concentration for the past 800,000 years (for reference, modern humans have only been around for 200,000 years). From this, scientists can see that temperature and concentration of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere the greater the warming effect.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE?
Since the industrial revolution in Europe, the magnitude and rate of increase of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere has been unprecedented. This change cannot be explained by natural processes alone. Human activities are also key drivers in recent warming. This is largely due to the release of excessive quantities of greenhouse gases through the burning of fossil fuels, together with changes in land use, such as deforestation.

WHAT IS THE ‘GREENHOUSE EFFECT’?
The ‘greenhouse effect’ is a natural process and a good thing. It describes the link between greenhouse gases in the atmosphere – in particular carbon dioxide, methane and water vapour – and the temperature on earth. Scientists have known about it since the nineteenth century. Energy from the sun reaches the earth. The heat is absorbed which warms the planet. This heat is then ‘re-radiated’ back out, with most of the heat escaping from our atmosphere. However, the greenhouse gases trap some of the heat in our atmosphere to warm the earth further. The more greenhouse gases in our atmosphere the greater the warming effect.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WEATHER AND CLIMATE?
Weather describes the atmospheric conditions at a certain time in a certain place. Climate describes the long-term trends in weather patterns that occur over decades or centuries (sometimes described as average weather). Therefore, when we are considering climate change we cannot look at individual weather events in isolation, we need to look at longer term trends.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GLOBAL WARMING AND CLIMATE CHANGE?
Global warming refers to the earth’s rising surface temperature, while climate change includes warming and the ‘side effects’ of warming, such as melting glaciers, heavier rainstorms and more frequent drought. Put another way, global warming is a symptom of the larger problem of human-caused climate change (climate.gov).

WHAT IS HAPPENING?
There are a number of impacts of climate change, and their severity differs from place to place. Average global temperatures are rising. Oceans are warming and becoming more acidic. Sea ice and glaciers are melting which, together with thermal expansion, is causing sea levels to rise. Extreme weather events are also becoming more frequent. All of this impacts on both the environment and society.

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?
Scientists and policymakers want to limit the rise in global temperature to well below 2°C more than temperatures before industrialisation. There are two key responses to climate change, both of which are needed:
• Adaptation – this means adjusting to actual or expected changes in the climate therefore reducing vulnerability to the impacts of climate change (eg houses at risk of flooding could be built on stilts).
• Mitigation – this means reducing climate change by lessening the sources of greenhouse gases or by increasing stores of carbon (eg this could be achieved by using renewable energy sources or encouraging reforestation).

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?
• The UK Met Office climate guide provides accessible information. It can be found at http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate-guide
• The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) produces a comprehensive overview of current scientific research on the causes, impacts and projected impacts of climate change. We recommend starting with the ‘Summary for Policymakers’ at www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1
CLIMATE JUSTICE IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Anglicans around the world have been taking important steps and significant action to address climate justice in recent decades. Here are some highlights.

ANGLICAN COMMUNION ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

The Anglican Communion Environmental Network was formally recognised in 2002 after bishops at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 had highlighted the need for environmental concerns to be raised higher up the agenda of the whole Communion.

THE WORLD IS OUR HOST

In February 2015, a meeting of Anglican ‘eco-bishops’, hosted in South Africa and convened by the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, issued an urgent call for action on climate justice. They released a statement, The World is our Host, which can be found at http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/media/148818/The-World-is-our-Host-FINAL-TEXT.pdf

ANGLICAN CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

In April 2016, the worldwide Anglican Consultative Council, meeting in Zambia, made an important resolution regarding global climate change. This included encouraging Anglicans in all places to:

- Fast and pray on the first day of each month and to undertake a carbon fast in Lent;
- Shift investments towards a low carbon economy;
- Pressure leaders to address the climate change crisis as the most pressing moral issue of our day;
- Support indigenous peoples’ rights to free, prior and informed consent in decisions concerning the environment and the well-being of communities;
- Advocate for sustainable water and agricultural practices consistent with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030).

FIFTH MARK OF MISSION

The Fifth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion highlights our responsibility to care for the environment. It calls us to ‘strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth’.

Below: Murugan provides training in sustainable agriculture at the Women Workers’ Training Centre, Nagalapuram, India (USPG/Leah Gordon).
I am indigenous to the village of Rukurukulevu, in the province of Nadroga. Like every indigenous Fijian, I derive my identity and sense of belonging from the vanua (land); I am defined by my attachment to my vanua.

Today, the land to which I belong is in crisis. The source of my identity and belonging is threatened by the immense changes being brought about by climate change.

Over the years, there has been increased erosion of the beach surrounding my village: the beach and habitable soil has been gradually washed away into the lagoon. In the early 1980s, the village leadership became so concerned that a seawall was built to try and slow down the rate of erosion. But their initiative has proved to be ineffective; the seawall around Rukurukulevu village has collapsed in places, with a detrimental impact on the lives of the villagers. During storms and high tides, sea water reaches the village green and damages roads, gardens and homes.

The lagoon has become shallower because the physical landscape has changed. The water has become dirtier. Sedimentation and thick deposits of sand have also damaged the marine ecosystems that we rely on for our livelihoods and daily sustenance. We are at a crucial juncture in our history. As members of the Anglican Communion, and as appointed guardians and stewards of the environment, we have a responsibility to act. Climate change is upon us; we can never go back to before it was an issue. The onus is on us to honour our commitment to God.

Fiji and the Pacific are at the centre of the changes our world is going through.

In response, we have made great strides in the areas of climate change adaption and mitigation and nations across the Pacific are taking up the Fiji example. But more can be done. To shore up the Pacific, and indeed the whole world, we need to focus on proactive approaches, multi-lateral co-operation and innovation. If we are of one mind, one heart and one spirit, we can challenge leaders and decision-makers to work effectively to end the calamity that surely awaits us if we continue blindly down this road.

The seas rise a little more every year, and more frequent, more deadly and more extreme weather events are occurring. It is our task to stand in solidarity and approach those who would lead us, making our voices heard. We are working to safeguard a future that is not ours, but our children’s. Work must begin now for that future.

If we are of one mind, one heart and one spirit, we can challenge leaders and decision-makers to work effectively to end the calamity that surely awaits us if we continue blindly down this road.
Myanmar is facing many consequences of climate change. Since 2006, cyclones, which were once rare, have been battering the country almost every year. Myanmar is also experiencing extreme heat which is causing water scarcity and chaos in the livelihoods of the people, especially farmers.

Myanmar has a population of around 52 million and is one of the most impoverished countries in Asia. Shrinking resources, an eroding economy and poor governance mean people are struggling and too pre-occupied to address matters such as climate change.

Let me tell you about a recent disaster. In 2015, Cyclone Komen generated a vigorous monsoon in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal. Heavy rains started falling in mid-July, causing flooding throughout the country for many days and landslides in some areas. The levels of the main rivers – Ayeyarwaddy, Thanlwin and Chindwin – rose dangerously high. Hundreds of riverside villages were flooded, homes were washed away and lives were lost.

The impact of Cyclone Komen was devastating. Schools and health clinics were closed. Many children had to stay at home, waiting for the floods to recede, their precious school books, bags and uniforms destroyed. Church-supported communities in Toungoo Diocese experienced landslides; people who earned their living from small-scale private mining in the mountains lost their livelihoods and have since found it difficult to get other work.

The whole country continues to feel the impact of changes in temperature and weather patterns. The rainy season has shortened to about three months a year, compared with a decade ago when the rains lasted five months. We have never seen drought like this before. Elsewhere, the lowlands no longer have a cold season and, even during the so-called cold months, it is so hot we need cooling fans. These changes in weather have brought with them different kinds of diseases, which people are only just becoming aware of and are trying to tackle.

The Church of Myanmar, along with our global partners, are supporting thousands of people with food supplies, sanitation, water systems, livelihood initiatives and education. This practical support has been critical in people’s lives.

Families experiencing water scarcity or water-borne diseases have been helped by the installation of clean water systems. This has also benefited families returning from the Thai-Myanmar border, where they have spent decades seeking refuge from conflict, by helping them to slowly resettle. These families have been able to start growing vegetables, banana plants, mango and different kinds of trees. One family I know has even built a small fish pond. All of this is greatly contributing to their food security and health needs in the context of a drier environment. The Church of the Province of Myanmar has been developing how we can integrate climate justice into our mission practice.

The church has been developing how we can integrate climate justice into our mission practice.

Opposite: May replants rice seedlings in Ma U Daw Kyuusaung village, Myanmar (USPG/Leah Gordon).
Brazil has been badly affected by climate change, which is putting entire communities at risk, as well as increasing poverty and inequality.

In the Amazon, it is estimated that almost 70 per cent of the region is affected by the changing climate. A decade ago there was an extensive drought. Communities were isolated and rivers disappeared, making communication and travel impossible. It is predicted that these dry periods will become more frequent.

In addition, deforestation continues to damage the Amazon. The growth of agri-business (primarily for export), with the support of government policy, means deforestation is virtually unhindered. Profit is the goal and this comes at the cost of human life and the destruction of the ecosystem. Deforestation combined with the impact of climate change means the region is extremely vulnerable.

Bishop Humberto Maiztegui, of Meridional Diocese in southern Brazil, said his region is experiencing more frequent and more intense climate events. For example, for two years running, in 2016 and 2017, the city of São Francisco de Paula was hit by large tornados that destroyed many homes. These communities had not experienced such weather before, so their houses were not storm-resilient and were easily wrecked.

The bishop also reported that his diocese had seen an increase in heavy rainfall and flooding which had caused dams to break. This has increased the vulnerability of a large percentage of the population and created impossible conditions for agriculture. As a result, poverty and forced migration are on the increase. Some areas that were flooded are now inhospitable, so communities have had to leave their homes to go in search of better ground to cultivate. As a consequence, many small cities have received an influx of migrants, and this has created its own challenges as existing communities try to adapt to accommodate their new neighbours.

Bishop Humberto also talked about the impact of climate change on health.

Environmental conditions have changed, resulting in an escalation of diseases caused by mosquitoes, including malaria, dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever – of which the latter has reappeared in the area after a long absence.

Communities throughout Brazil are trying to adapt to this new context, but it is a struggle because there is a lack of public attention and in 2016 the government stopped many social welfare programmes which would have helped those most affected.

As a church we have joined the global campaign to advocate for environmental justice and have been involved in ecumenical initiatives to create change. We have designed training programmes and are meeting with other churches to explore the biblical rationale for environmental justice. Our goal is to influence faith leaders to act and speak to those who are in power.

The Anglican Church is also supporting social movements that are committed to agro-ecology that helps to protect the environment. We have stopped using plastic, such as cups and other items, and individual churches have set up initiatives such as using rainwater – rather than tap water – for cleaning, toilets and gardening. Our ecosystem is jeopardised and we are acting to reduce the impact of climate change now and into the future.

As a church we have joined the global campaign to advocate for environmental justice.

Below: Living in harmony with the River Amazon, near Belem, Brazil (USPG/Leah Gordon).
In my experience, as a Malagasy person, the most obvious experience of climate change is how unusual it is to have so many cyclones. During the hot season we now have three or four cyclones each year. Not only is the number of cyclones increasing but so is their speed and strength.

At the same time, because the temperature is also rising, the south part of the island is becoming drier. The drought is critical and has led to famine. Last November, the Bishop of Toliara visited a parish to perform a christening, and a week later five of the children that had been christened had died due to a lack of food and drinking water.

Across all the islands in our province, climate change is having a significant impact on our economic lives. As island people, much of our livelihood is based on fishing. The sea is getting warmer so fish are becoming rarer as they swim at deeper levels. This means fishing has become difficult, and I think that even the government is beginning to realise the need to find alternative livelihoods.

In rural inland areas, the population relies on agriculture and farming. However, reduced rainfall has ruined harvests, and this has been compounded by the impact of cyclones. For nine months of the year, the land receives too little rainfall, then in the remaining three months, cyclones destroy the land even further.

Food prices are on the increase so people, whose livelihoods are already suffering, are going hungry. This has a knock-on effect on other aspects of life. For example, during dry periods, some parents don’t send their children to school because they are needed to help the family work and find food. Also, parents are usually required to send children to school with their meals, which they aren’t able to do.

As a church, our communities are helping with reconstruction after disasters. Often in such times the best thing the church can do is open its doors and offer a safe place for the people to stay while they are rebuilding their lives.

The church has also started to think more about how we can protect the land, manage our water and support communities hit by disasters. We are also looking at how we can make our communities more resilient. We are having these discussions as a province and are receiving training from the government as well.

Globally, we know that we are facing different degrees of climate change and that some parts of the world are more exposed than others. But the impact of climate change cannot be denied: it is visible and real and we need to help each other.

As Christians, Creation – and re-creation – must be part of our liturgy and teaching.

The impact of climate change cannot be denied: it is visible and real and we need to help each other.
In many ways, Britain and Ireland are protected from the worst impacts of climate change. Because of our global location, we do not experience the extreme climatic conditions seen in many other parts of the world. Furthermore, we have developed technology, such as strong coastal defences, that reduce the vulnerability of our isles. However, increasingly we are experiencing changes to our climate and it is predicted to continue.

One key observation is that there has been an increase in average temperatures. Records from the Met Office show that temperatures are on average 1°C higher than 100 years ago and 0.5°C higher than the 1970s. Higher temperatures in the summer put us at greater risk of heatwaves, such as in 2003 when hot weather resulted in an additional 2,000 heat-related deaths. This is most worrying for vulnerable people such as the elderly, infants or those with pre-existing illnesses.

We are also experiencing sea level rise. As well as threatening our coastline, this can have a knock-on impact on agriculture in low-lying regions – such as the East Midlands, where the intrusion of saltwater reduces soil quality.

There have been signs of decreasing summer rainfall and increasing winter rainfall. Less rain in the summer has been a particular challenge for the naturally drier parts of the country, with many places adopting emergency water-saving measures such as hosepipe bans, while more rainfall during the winter is likely to cause more flooding. It is expected that there will be an increase in the frequency and strength of storm events in Britain and Ireland, with some coastal areas being particularly exposed. Along with sea level rises, storms increase rates of erosion, endangering homes and land.

The causes of individual storm and flood events are complex but they are much more likely in the context of a warmer climate. Past flood events indicate the massive costs and disruption that they can cause. Speaking after the 2015 winter floods in York, USPG volunteer Helen Dawe described the destruction and confusion in parts of her city, with power cuts taking down communications. One immediate impact was that cash machines or bank card devices could not be powered so people were unable to pay for items in shops.

In Bingley, Canon Bev Mason reported how members of All Saints Church waded through waist-high water to help people salvage their belongings from the flood, and they helped the flood victims with accommodation and refreshments and helped them to charge their phones. And churches continued to respond long after the waters had receded, by helping residents to clean their homes and by fundraising for families who didn’t have insurance. With a prediction that these sorts of events will become more likely, we are reminded about the role churches can play in our communities.

Many churches are at the heart of educating communities about climate change. My last church celebrated the season of Creationtide using environmental liturgy, hymns and prayers in the Sunday Service. Our Sunday School has included games and crafts looking at the Creation story: and as part of their learning the children undertook an environmental audit of the church, counting the number of lights and heaters and examining energy usage.

In Britain and Ireland climate change will have an impact on many areas of our lives. We need to learn more about this and be willing to adapt our lifestyles.

**1. PRAY**
As people of faith we can pray trusting that God knows our heart. As we read in Romans 8:26: ‘Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.’

USPG supports *Fast and Pray for the Climate*, a global movement of Christians praying and fasting on the first of each month for climate justice. You can sign up to receive monthly prayers and you can find worship material on their website www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk

Please see also the prayers on pages 22 and 23 of this booklet.

**2. THINK ABOUT YOUR LIFESTYLE**
Each of us contributes to the emission of carbon. The amount we produce is determined by our lifestyles: we call this our carbon footprint. Measuring our carbon footprint (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year) allows us to reflect on the way we live our lives. There are many websites that will walk you through this process. We recommend www.climatestewards.org

By knowing our carbon footprint, we can commit to small changes that reduce our footprint. This could mean looking at energy use in our homes or changing how we travel or the way we shop. By taking small steps, greener practices can become habits! Why not measure your footprint each year and see what difference you could make?

Small actions like turning the heating down by 1°C, turning off electrical devices when they aren’t in use, reducing our use of plastic, and buying second-hand can also save you money. Reduce, Reuse and Recycle is such a great mantra to bear in mind.

**3. GET TOGETHER... START AN ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP**
Taking long-term sustained action is easier when you are working in a group. Find like-minded individuals in your church and start an environmental group. This will raise awareness of climate change in your church. As a group you can commit to praying together for the planet and you could use our bible study on page 24. You could ask church leaders to include environmental themes in services and you could put on events to bring more people into the conversation. Setting up a group will help you to maintain your focus for greater impact.

**4. BE INSPIRED... INVITE A SPEAKER**
Have you been inspired from the voices from the world church in this booklet? Would you like to learn more? USPG would love to visit your church and share how local Anglican churches around the world are experiencing climate change.

We can supply speakers for all sorts of events, including your Sunday Service, a PCC meeting, and more.

Get in touch by emailing info@uspg.org.uk

**5. AUDIT YOUR CHURCH**
In the same way that it is helpful to look at our personal carbon footprint, institutions and organisations can do the same. The Church of England, through its *Shrinking the Footprint* campaign, is helping churches and dioceses to do just that.

The campaign has a target of reducing carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, with an interim target of 42 per cent by 2020. There are some great ideas and practical guidelines to help you and your church at www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint

Your local diocese may also have some resources on this.

**6. GET LINKED UP**
Effective action for climate change happens best when we work together, and where better to start than by contacting local like-minded people. Find out about, and get linked in with, local environmental groups. Find out what your diocese is doing and connect with your diocesan environmental officer, who will be encouraged to hear from you.

Many dioceses have environmental strategies, with resources and conferences to attend. You may be inspired and surprised to know how much is already happening in the diocese.

**7. TURN PASSION INTO POLITICS**
While campaigns may come and go, effective political engagement comes when we have constructive and long lasting relationships with our MPs. We can work with them to ensure that climate change remains on the political agenda. The UK-based grassroots organisation Hope for The Future provides support and accompaniment to help churches and individuals engage with climate concerns. Find out more on pages 26 to 29.
There is an intimate connection between our prayer life and the planet. Consider that prayer is the breath of God – it is dependent on the Spirit and the earth’s atmosphere. So, with these prayers, begin by becoming conscious of your breath and how it connects you to Creation.

A PRAYER FROM ARCHDEACON TAIMALELAGI
FAGAMALAMA TUATAGALOA, SAMOA

Walk with love and care on God’s earth;
walk with vital awareness
of God’s comprehensive vision
and purpose for creation;
walk with awe and gratitude
to ensure justice to the trees and rivers
as well as the person next to you –
they are not without purpose in God’s vision.

A PRAYER FROM THE ANGLICAN CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL
AND ANGLICAN COMMUNION ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

Almighty God,
You created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them.
And you created humankind in your own image and it was very good;
Grant us the courage to recognize our failure to maintain your creation.
And by your grace help us to halt the degradation of our environment.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Who came that we might have life in all its fullness
Amen

(Published in The World is Our Host, 2015)

A PRAYER FROM ECO-CONGREGATIONS ENGLAND AND WALES

Our Father, who art in heaven...
You are also at home in the air, the soil, the forests and the oceans,

Hallowed be your name...
By the care we take of your creation,

Your kingdom come...
All that you see is good,

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...
Your will to till and care,

Give us this day our daily bread...
That all may have sufficient to live life in fullness

Forgive us our trespasses...
Our greed, our exploitation, our lack of concern
for other species and future generations,

As we forgive those who trespass against us...
By reconciliation with justice and peace,

Lead us not into temptation...
The temptation to equate dominion with exploitation,

And deliver us from evil...
The evil of destroying your gift of creation,

For yours is the kingdom...
Yours Lord, not ours,

The power and the glory...
In the cross and the resurrection,

For ever and ever...
You were the beginning and you are the end.
Amen and so it be
This bible study explores the Anglican Communion’s Fifth Mark of Mission: ‘To strive to safeguard the integrity of Creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.’

The Fifth Mark of Mission reminds us that God longs for harmony in the whole of Creation, not just in the human family.

By contrast, humanity has become proficient in spoiling the planet, poisoning seas, rivers and land, cutting down rainforests, and endangering plants and animals. It is a terrible legacy to leave to future generations.

OPENING REFLECTION

God loves people, who are made in God’s image. What does the rest of Creation – the planet, the universe, plants and animals – reveal about God?

BIBLE READING: DEUTERONOMY 26

1 When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it; 2 you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. 3 You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, ‘Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.’ 4 When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, 5 you shall make this response before the Lord your God: ‘A wandering Aramean was my ancestor... 6 When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, 7 we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression... 10 So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me... 13 Then you shall say before the Lord your God... 14 I have obeyed the Lord my God, doing just as you commanded me. 15 Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our ancestors – a land flowing with milk and honey.’

Questions

• In the passage, for what reasons did God give the land to the people?
• The land is given, but with strings attached. What are the conditions that God gives for ‘possessing’ the land?
• The Native American Black Hawk said: ‘My reason teaches me that land cannot be sold. The Great Spirit gave it to his children to live upon. So long as they occupy and cultivate it, they have a right to the soil. Nothing can be sold but such things as can be carried away.’ How does this attitude compare with our own relationship to the earth?
• With the ecological issue of climate change, how can starting small make a difference?

A WORLD CHURCH PERSPECTIVE

Chose and read one of the case studies in this booklet (see pages 10-19)

APPLICATION

• Choose some areas of modern life – perhaps transport, leisure, diet, TV, advertising – and consider some of the ways they contribute to or are impacted by climate change.
• What practical action could you take – individually and as a community – to live more sustainable lives so that Creation can thrive?

Questions

• What interested or surprised you about the experience and response of the global church to climate change?
• Share what you know about how the church – at home or around the world – is tackling climate change.

Below: Tamil Nadu, India, which was hit by the devastating tsunami in 2004 (USPG/Leah Gordon).
GET POLITICAL: WORKING WITH YOUR MP

The following ideas have been offered by Hope for the Future, UK specialists in training citizens to work with policymakers on climate change.

When asked why climate change isn’t higher up the political agenda, politicians often tell us that it is not an issue that matters to their constituents. ‘People write to me about the NHS or immigration’, politicians regularly tell us, ‘but hardly ever do I hear about climate change’. There is therefore an opportunity and an invitation to bring our voices to our MPs, no matter which party they belong to. Here are some ideas for how you and your church can build a lasting relationship with your MP, leading to action on climate change.

STEP 1. WRITE TO YOUR MP

As an Individual

The first step to alerting your MP about climate change is to write a letter. MPs prefer to receive handwritten personal letters as it suggests more effort has been put into it. You can find printable template letters at www.hftf.org.uk/template-letters To find out who your MP is visit www.theyworkforyou.com This will bring up MP profiles with information such as parliamentary roles, interests and voting records. This will help you to search for common ground with your MP and find out where their interests align with yours. Find their contact details at www.writetothem.com

With your church

A ‘Climate Write-In’ is a great way to involve your whole church or climate group in convincing your MP to take action against climate change. This can be done through handing out template letters; having a pre-written letter and getting your group to sign it; or providing materials for personalised letters. For more information see www.hftf.org.uk/at-my-church

STEP 2: MEET YOUR MP

You can set up a meeting with your MP by sending a letter or email or by phoning their office. Make sure to let your MP know how many people are coming and send an outline of what you are planning to discuss.

Research your MP’s interests, values and stance on climate change. Find common ground between you and your MP so you can tailor your strategy and increase the likelihood of a positive response. Identify two or three issues you would like to raise and what you would ask your MP to do. This can also be a great opportunity to share stories from the global church to help make your point.

The job of an MP is highly pressurised with heavy time constraints. MPs have to balance a range of different opinions, may not be very knowledgeable about climate change and are often restricted by the party line. To build a constructive conversation, we remind people to ‘Assure, Assert, Adapt’.

• Assure your MP that you are on their side, frame yourself as an ally who is searching for areas where you can work together.
• Be assertive: remain polite but don’t let your MP go off topic. Prepare your opening phrase; outline the purpose of the meeting; introduce a hook (eg why your MP should be interested, for example, an opportunity to meet new constituents or the mandate to take action on an issue of concern) and map out which areas you would like to cover. This asserts your determination to cover the topics you have planned and helps your MP relax by knowing where the conversation is going with no big surprises.
• Finally, be willing to adapt as the conversation develops. Does your MP show interest in a topic that wasn’t on your list but is related to climate change? Keep an eye out for these golden opportunities.

STEP 3: BUILD A WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MP

After meeting with your MP, send a letter of thanks and clarify what you agreed in the meeting. You might like to suggest a date to meet again. Ensure your MP is aware of the ‘rewards’ you can offer them. For example, good publicity if they speak at an event or undertake a photo opportunity at a local community energy project. You could write an article about your meeting in a local newsletter.

You can continue the relationship and ensure climate action remains on your MP’s radar by inviting them to a climate change event. This could be a service at your church, an evening event, coffee morning or workshop in a school. This is a fantastic opportunity for your MP to show public support for action on climate change and see how many of their constituents care about it.

HELP AVAILABLE

Hope for the Future is happy to support anyone wishing to engage with their MP on the topic of climate change. You can ask for one-to-one support in creating a tailored strategy for your MP. Also, Hope for the Future can accompany you to your meeting and can help organise an event at your church.
SUCCESS STORY 1: RENEWABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Philip Davies MP is one of only five MPs who voted against the 2008 Climate Change Act, demonstrating a reluctance to act on climate change. Marilyn (a USPG supporter) and fellow members of the Reach Out climate change group at St James’ Church Baildon, decided to organise a meeting with Philip.

Marilyn’s research found that Mr Davies had shown prior interest in reducing fuel bills for his constituents, so her group decided to raise the issue of fuel poverty. They discussed Philip’s concerns about how the development of renewable energy had been increasing the cost of people’s fuel bills. They shared the potential for the development of locally-produced clean energy and the benefits this would have for local job creation and energy security. Local vicar Sandra described the financial and community benefits of using ground source heat pumps at the church, saving on bills and keeping the congregation warm.

Reach Out had a constructive discussion with Philip about building standards for new homes and also the need for retro-fitting to provide insulation to existing homes. Philip agreed to take this issue further and offered to contact the Housing Minister about standards for new homes, retro-fitting and to raise the issue of charging business rates on Community Energy projects (such as solar panels on school roofs) with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The outcome was a positive meeting with an MP who, despite voting against the Climate Change Act, was willing to work with constituents where they found common ground on local issues.

SUCCESS STORY 2: MEETING MY MP

USPG staff member Emma Bridger met with her Conservative MP, who is also a Cabinet Minister, expecting to receive an uninterested response. However, following training from Hope for the Future, she took a collaborative approach and was able to form the beginnings of a working relationship in her goal to take action against climate change.

Emma said: ‘I had no idea what to expect. Hope for the Future helped me draft an email that highlighted some of the climate issues that concerned me most and asked my MP for a meeting to discuss these issues further.

‘I was horrified when he agreed! I nearly didn’t even call the number to arrange the meeting: I had expected him to be far too busy to see me. I thought, What could I possibly tell my MP that he didn’t already know?!’

Emma found one aspect of the training from Hope for the Future to be particularly helpful. She explained: ‘I was advised to make friends with my MP – which sounded like a challenge because he is a MP who hasn’t exactly been an advocate for the environment in the past! However, I followed the advice to focus on where we were in agreement and where we could find common working ground.’

Emma continued: ‘The meeting went so well! One of the issues I decided to tackle was how to reduce air pollution. I mentioned some of the easier solutions, such as installing Green Walls. My MP agreed, but shocked me by saying even more action was needed!

‘It turned out he fully supported a pollution charge on vehicles in London and wanted to get “dirty vehicles” off the road altogether. Indeed, he wanted to tackle the real problem: the cars themselves. I couldn’t believe it! My MP was saying how much more we could do to tackle pollution and suggesting he would be willing to support that.

‘Our conversation has continued since, with me making more suggestions. I think I have his ear because I endeavoured to build a relationship rather than simply lobby him. In fact, there is no need to lobby – it seems we are on the same side.’

Visit www.hftf.org.uk, email info@hftf.org.uk or call 0114 453 6002.

Hope for the Future (HFTF) began in 2013 as an initiative of the then six Yorkshire dioceses with the aim to inspire congregations to get climate change onto the agenda for the 2015 general election. With the support of USPG, HFTF trains faith communities, local groups, NGOs, academics and individuals in the UK to work effectively with policymakers on climate change.
PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

Please use these questions to inspire you to keep focused on climate justice.

Speaking about his experience in Fiji, the Rt Revd Apimeleki Qiliho said: ‘I derive my identity and sense of belonging from the vanua (land); I am defined by my attachment to my vanua... Today, the land to which I belong is in crisis.’ How are we attached to the land and in what ways is our land in crisis?

What have we learned from the prophetic voices of our global church partners?

How has your understanding of climate change and its impacts changed?

What is the implication for the mission of the church?

How might you put these new insights into action? How do you think that this resource might affect how you live out your faith?

Finally, where will you go from here? What are your next steps – individually and as a church or community? How will you take forward any resolutions you have come to?

Below: May replants rice seedlings in Ma U Daw Kyusaung village, Myanmar (Adam Kyaw Thu Ya).

KEEP IN TOUCH

We want to keep the conversation going, in Britain and Ireland and around the world.

We want to hear what you are thinking and how you are responding to climate change.

Please share your thoughts and action through USPG’s Facebook and Twitter pages.

Please write to us info@uspg.org.uk so we can inspire and encourage others by sharing what you are doing.

Please keep informed about the mission of the world church by visiting the USPG website. Look out for updates in our email newsletter, our magazine (Transmission) and our prayer diary.

Below: May replants rice seedlings in Ma U Daw Kyusaung village, Myanmar (Adam Kyaw Thu Ya).

USPG
Harling House,
47-51 Great Suffolk Street,
London SE1 0BS
020 7921 2200
info@uspg.org.uk
www.uspg.org.uk
www.twitter.com/USPGglobal
www.facebook.com/USPGglobal

Registered charity number 234518
USPG is an Anglican mission agency supporting churches around the world in their mission to bring fullness of life to the communities they serve.

Theologically, practically and financially, we encourage and enable churches within the Anglican Communion to act as the hands and feet of Christ.

Together, we are working to improve health, tackle poverty, put children in school, challenge discrimination, nurture leaders, give a voice to women, and much more.

Founded 1701.