



Climate and Nature

Here you can find resources to help you think about the links between climate and nature and join with others to call for change. This resource has been produced by A Rocha UK.

This resource packet includes:

- A short introduction to the issue.
- Advice for holding a climate focused service inspired by nature, including a section on prayer and nature.
- Suggestions for committing to long term action.
- Campaigns to support to call for a greener future
- Further resources for more information on Climate and Nature.

The link between Climate Change and Nature - and how it's relevant to the churches

Christians should care deeply about climate change for two reasons. First, the devastating effects of climate change fall disproportionately on the most poor and vulnerable locally and globally: it is a massive *justice* issue. Second, the natural environment is a part of God's creation which he loves and mandated humanity to care for. Environmental degradation flies in the face of that mandate. So, churches have a calling to be concerned with both people and the wider environment - wild nature, habitats, 'natural systems' which sustain us, like the climate

Climate and Nature have long been treated as completely separate issues, yet the links between the two issues are multiple and growing. Climate change increasingly affects biodiversity - think of the Australian megafires of 2019/20 which killed more than a billion animals. At the same time, restoring natural habitats - such as forests, peat bogs and grasslands, and simply changing our farming practices - could take vast quantities of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and lock it safely away, providing a nature-based solution to climate change.

The UK government has chosen 'Nature-based Solutions' as one of its five priorities for COP26. The Church can make a major practical contribution to this approach. The Church - denominations and local churches - have influence over a very significant land area which can be made to work for both nature *and* climate, whether through thousands of local churches managing their churchyards for better or rethinking the use of 1000 acre farms owned by denominational pension funds. Along with the rest of civil society, the Church also has a role to play in helping hold the government to account for the commitments it makes, such as its recent pledge to plant 3 billion trees in the UK.

Read more about nature based solutions, their benefits and risks, in this [Climate Sunday blog](#).

Holding a Climate-focused service

Why not consider making your entire service focus around nature? Your service could have a celebratory theme, thanking God for the abundant life we see around us. Alternatively, it may have a more lament-based theme-reflecting on the hurt we have caused the planet.

Connect with nature by holding an outdoor service

If the weather is dry and warm, then why not consider having a church service outdoors. There is no better way to consider the majesty of God's creation than through outdoor worship. At a time where Covid 19 continues to dominate the news; a service in nature is a very safe way to undertake collective worship (if permitted by the current government restrictions on outdoor gatherings). It is also a place where it is easy to reconnect with Christ through the seasons of creation.

An outdoor service with a nature theme needs to consider a number of factors, other than the weather. Inevitably it is easier to be distracted outside and for younger members of the church, the temptation to run around will be much higher than when meeting inside. A clear youth focus is important, with plenty of activities for younger ones to do.

- Faith Action for Nature has put together seasonal packs to help congregations engage with nature and worship with information on things like foraging and planting for wildlife. These resources are part of Eco Congregation Scotland, find the Summer pack [here](#), and all four seasonal packs [here](#).
- Guidelines from the Church of England on how to hold an outdoor service can be found [here](#).
- The 2020 Season of Creation Celebration guide is full of resources for churches to plan a creation focused service. Find it [here](#). It's also available in Welsh, [here](#).

'Forest church'

Forest church is a new expression of an older tradition in which communities go beyond simply having a normal service outdoors to participating with creation. Over the past few years the concept of Forest Church has grown and become increasingly popular; where church members are finding that a regular connection with nature is a great aid to worship.

More information on Forest Church services:

- 1) A set of resources for creating a 'Forest Church' style outdoor act of worship from Roots [here](#).
- 2) Mud, mess and mystery: resources for outdoor worship including Forest Church can be found [here](#).

Other Nature service materials:

- 1) **Nature & Worship:** Many hymns and worship songs have a nature theme and are a great way of connecting people to God through creation. A full list of worship songs with a nature theme can be found [here](#). We recommend our friends at Resound Worship as a brilliant resource for worship which connects you with nature. Listen to their Doxology project [here](#).
- 2) **Nature & Liturgy:** Green Christian have produced an excellent list of nature themed liturgy, find it [here](#) and a range of liturgical resources in both English and Welsh can be found on the Cytûn website [here](#).
- 3) **Nature & Preaching:** Sermons and talks are one of the best ways to engage theologically with creation care and connect the mission of the church with the stewardship of the natural world.

Here are a few places to go to get started:

- Eco Congregation Ireland have produced an introduction to Eco Theology which can be found [here](#). They have also compiled a guide to green theological perspectives which can be downloaded [here](#).
 - A Rocha International has put together a bank of nature themed talks and sermons on topics such as forestry, waste and nature during Covid which can be accessed [here](#).
 - Finally, the Sustainable Preaching website has a huge list of sermon suggestions by a range of speakers. This can be accessed [here](#).
- 4) **Nature & Scripture:** There are numerous scriptures that can be used for a nature themed service. A good starting point, which contains an online summary of key verses can be found [here](#).

Prayer and the Natural World

1) Nature in the Psalms

One of the richest sources of celebratory prayer for Creation is the book of Psalms. It seems highly appropriate that Psalms start and end with the theme of celebration and at the heart of celebration is an outpouring of thanksgiving for all the Lord has made.

Key examples include:

Psalms 1: v3

Psalms 65: v9-13

Psalms 8: v5-9

Psalms 95: v4-5

Psalms 19: v1-4

Psalms 98: v7-9

Psalms 23

Psalms 104

Psalms 24

Psalms 147-148

2) St Francis of Assisi - *Laudes Creaturarum* or Canticum of the Creature

The most famous prayer that captures the essence of God's passion for nature is written by St Francis of Assisi (1181-1226AD). Also known as the *Laudes Creaturarum* or Canticum of the Creatures; it is the basis of many later prayers and the great hymn All Creatures of our God and King. The first lines are recorded below and the full version can be downloaded [here](#).

*Most High, all powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honour, and all blessing.*

*To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun,
who brings the day; and you give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendour!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which
You give sustenance to Your creatures.*

.....

*Praise and bless my Lord,
and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.^[3]*

3) Further Prayer resources

A Prayer for Our Earth from CAFOD

Published in Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, this prayer focuses on justice and stewardship of nature. Find it [here](#).

Prayers on Creation and Reconciliation from JPIT

The Joint Public Issues Team of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church, the Church of Scotland, and the URC have produced two prayers on creation:

- Reflection for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, found [here](#).
- On Reconciliation of the Environment, found [here](#).

Exploring Creation through Prayer with Eco Church

Eco Church has a resource guiding congregations in thinking about prayer and creation care. This can be downloaded [here](#).

Write your own prayer of lament or celebration

With climate change a core part of the demise of habitats and species, there is also the opportunity to create your own prayers of celebration for what we have and prayer of lament for what we are losing or have already lost.

Committing to long term action on nature

There are many organisations dedicated to the protection and restoration of nature; who are determined that climate change impacts on nature are mitigated. Here are 4 simple but effective actions you can take to make a difference for climate and nature:

1) Join one of the faith based greening schemes

Sign up for one of the national greening schemes which have guidance and resources to support you using your land well for nature. Find the one most relevant to your region here:

- If you're in Scotland, check out [Eco Congregation Scotland](#).
- For churches in England and Wales we encourage you to join the [Eco Church](#) programme.
- If you're from a church in Ireland, try [Eco Congregation Ireland](#).
- For Catholic congregations, we suggest signing up to [Live Simply](#).

2) Sign up for the Churches Count on Nature

Sign up for Churches Count on Nature, a joint initiative from Caring for God's Acre, A Rocha UK, the Church in England and the Church in Wales.

During 5th June to 13th of June 2021 local people are coming together to discover the wildlife in their local church yard, recording the species they find and combining their results with others which will be collated on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN), a nationwide database of wildlife in the UK.

Sign up [here](#).

3) Join a Conservation Organisation

Join a conservation organisation that is dedicated to slowing and ultimately reversing the declines of biodiversity caused by climate change.

A Rocha UK is the only Christian Conservation charity in the UK working for the protection and restoration of the natural world. Through our programmes we support individuals, churches, Christian landowners and leaders to care for creation and understand the crucial link between nature and the climate crisis. Find out more about our work [here](#).

RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) is the largest nature conservation charity in the UK and works across the four nations to protect and restore natural habitat. Find out more about their work [here](#).

4) Get your church involved locally with local organisations doing nature

Volunteer with an established conservation charity in your local area. Here are a few suggested organisations:

The Wildlife Trust is a national network of county level organisations working to protect nature and tackle climate change. Sign up to volunteer in your local area [here](#).

Friends of the Earth run local groups committed to improving the local environment. Find your local group [here](#).

The Woodlands Trust runs an initiative encouraging people to plant trees in their local area. Read their guide to tree planting and the climate [here](#).

Joining the call for a greener future

Climate and Nature is on the political agenda like never before. We need to make it clear to the UK government as faith communities that creation is precious and worth preserving and protecting. Here are a few suggested campaigning actions:

1) Sign the Time is Now Declaration.

We are asking all of the churches who take part in Climate Sunday to sign this common call to government that the time is now to lead the UK towards a healthier, greener and fairer future. This declaration includes a call to:

‘Protect, restore and expand our green and wild spaces; allowing nature to thrive, taking carbon from the air and boosting the nation’s health’.

[Sign it now](#) as part of your service to demonstrate your support for this and be counted among the thousands of churches who have already signed it as part of Climate Sunday.

2) Support one of the campaigns run by the RSPB.

The RSPB are running three campaigns around the issues of Combating Climate Change, Renewable energy and saving tropical forests. Explore these campaigns in more detail [here](#) and consider participating in and supporting them.

Further resources

Books

There are several useful books that tackle climate and nature issues from a faith perspective:

Hayhoe, K and Farley, A. (2009) *A climate for change: Global warming facts for faith based decisions*. Faithwords, Hachette Book Group

Hodson, M. and Hodson, M. (2021) *A Christian Guide to Environmental Issues*

Kim, Sebastian and Draper, Jonathan. (2011) *Christianity and the renewal of nature*. Society for Promoting Christian Living (2011)

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (Read it [here](#) and download the CAFOD study guide and further resources [here](#))

Research and Reports:

WWF report *Wildlife on a Warming World*, read it [here](#).

WWF web section on Nature Based Solutions, find it [here](#).

Royal Society report (2020) *Understanding the value and limits to nature based solutions to climate change*, available [here](#).

RSPB research on climate change. Selection of reports across a range of climate and conservation issues, found [here](#).

The Wildlife Trust *2019 State of Nature Report*, find it [here](#).