

just actions

We're ruining our grandchildren's planet



Caring for people, transforming lives, reforming society by God's power



'Climate change is simply the most obvious symptom of a much deeper sickness ... We need to rethink not just how we treat the planet and its creatures, but who on earth we think we are as human beings.' David Bookless in *Planet Wise: Dare to Care for God's World*, 2008

Deforestation. Droughts. Earthquakes. Energy insecurity. Ice-caps melting. The extinction of ecosystems and irreversible losses of species. Flash floods. Increasing personal carbon footprints and the global impact of greenhouse gas emissions. Pollution. The menacing possibility of sea levels rising and impacting disproportionately on the poor and disadvantaged in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Rubbish—nationally we dispose of 3.4 million tonnes of waste into our landfills every year. All of creation is 'groaning' (see Romans 8) and pointing a long, condemning finger at humanity.

The current environmental crisis is human induced, a fated consequence of our short-sighted decision making and greed. Simply stated: we have lost sight of what is enough and have failed to notice that our continued acquisition of more and more stuff—our inflated love affair with cheap, novel goods—has inflicted injustices on people in this generation and has seriously threatened the opportunities of future generations. Some commentators label the current environmental crisis 'intergenerational tyranny' and 'stupidly suicidal'.

Jim Wallis of Sojourners speaks directly to the Church, saying: *The failure of Christians to live up to the God-given mandate to serve and preserve the earth, what Genesis 2.15 calls 'to till it and keep it,' and be good stewards of the resources God has given us means an additional failure to live out God's mandate to care for the poor. We cannot claim to care for the poor while we turn our backs on the destruction of the most basic resources our neighbours need for survival. Love for our neighbours and love for the planet on which our neighbours live cannot be separated.* (Jim Wallis, 2010, *Rediscovering Values*, pg 139).

The current environmental crisis is a critical matter of faith, justice and morality. It demands that we collectively re-examine what it means to be human, and what it means to be human together.

Re-thinking the stakes: get together and discuss

- 1 Read Genesis 1-2. What is the everyday significance of God calling creation 'good'?
- 2 'We've all heard about the importance of changing our light bulbs [and having shorter showers] to be more energy efficient, but changes that will impact generations to come need to go deeper' (Jim Wallis, 2010, *ibid*, pg.231). How do we have to change? Are we only known as 'consumers', or is there some other defining measure of our humanity?
- 3 What difference would it make if we were to rename the environmental crisis 'a crisis of over-consumption and over-production'? How can we live simpler and more sustainable lifestyles?

Re-actions: what can we do?

- 1 Visit with your local council and MP and share your concerns over the privileging of 'economic growth' over the environment and how you consider 'care of creation' and sustainability to be a defining political issues that will determine how you vote.
- 2 Contact the Department of Conservation to get involved in protecting bush, fresh waters and beaches, tree planting, or helping safeguard threatened species.
- 3 Start a personal/communal veggie garden. Celebrate a Harvest Festival and share with others what you have grown in your personal/neighbourhood garden.
- 4 Recycle, reduce, reuse ... resist the ever-present marketing hype that inflates desire and expectation. And remember to enjoy and play in what God has created.

Resources for re-formative worship: take a fresh look

- 1 Download The Salvation Army's Positional Statements on 'Responsibility for All Creation' from www.salvationarmy.org.nz/positionstatements
- 2 Watch *The 11th Hour*, a documentary that explores the pivotal changes this generation can make.
- 3 Visit arochalivinglightly.org.uk for more ideas, info and resources on 'living lightly' within God's creation.