



Living Well

in God's world

A resource for Lent 2019

#lentlivingwell



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Bishops' Lent Challenge

Living Well in God's World

#lentlivingwell

This year, Bishop Peter and Bishop Ruth are inviting us to focus on caring for the world around us during the season of Lent. 'Living Well in God's World' will help you think about what our Christian faith says about how we live and how we care for creation¹.

This booklet is designed to be used throughout Lent, starting on Ash Wednesday. For each week you will find:

- A summary of the week's theme.
- A few passages from the bible. You may choose to look at these in one sitting, or read a smaller portion each day. Why not try reading them in a different version (e.g. The Message) to see if you notice new things from familiar passages?
- A biblical reflection.
- Some facts about the week's theme that might surprise you.
- A prayer
- Daily challenges to choose from. You could try all of them or choose just one or two. Once Lent is over, maybe some of them will have become a habit!

You can find dedicated resources for families and schools as well as short video clips, small group resources and useful links at: www.bathandwells.org.uk/Lent-Living-Well-2019

We would love to hear your stories and experiences of Living Well in God's World and trying new challenges during Lent – and beyond! Please share your stories by email to comms@bathwells.anglican.org or share your pictures with us on Twitter (@BathWells) and/or Facebook (www.facebook.com/bathandwells). Don't forget to use the hashtag #lentlivingwell.

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What a wonderful world!

Wednesday 6 March - Tuesday 12 March

Bible Readings: Genesis 1:1 - 2:3; Psalms 104 and 148

Reflection by Bishop Ruth Worsley, Bishop of Taunton

When reading the creation accounts in Genesis, there are lots of things to think about – order emerging from chaos, the responsibility of humankind to take care of creation, the incredible diversity of species, and the way in which God creates. But one thing that stands out for me is a short phrase at the end of each verse: 'And God saw that it was good'. It is as though God created a particular part of creation then sat down and looked at it, reflected on it and appreciated it.

When we appreciate something we do more than simply know, see or hear it. There is a sense of valuing, recognising the full worth of something. It takes time to appreciate. We should not rush it.

When I was at school a particular teacher took time to help me see the gifts God had uniquely given me and helped me to grow and develop in them. His recognition and appreciation helped me to see those gifts too. Since then, many people have helped me to see who I can be, what I might do, how God may use me. They've reflected and cared for me, appreciated what God is doing in me.

Last year I went on retreat and spent some time painting. I'm no Van Gogh, but I found myself looking carefully at the world around me, observing deeply, feeling, imagining, musing, and appreciating what I was painting. I'm not sure my tree looked much like the one in nature but I think I gained a much deeper appreciation of the care taken by the Creator and the call on us to tend the world He has given us.

Creation is such a wonderful gift to us. Galileo said, 'God is known by nature in his works, and by doctrine in his revealed word (scripture)', and the psalmist often muses on creation (Psalms 65, 104 and 148 for example). So let us stop, become aware, take time and then we can really, deeply, appreciate God's wonderful gifts to us.

A few facts – Celebrate!

- The earth is estimated to have formed around 4.56 billion years old. If you think of all of Earth's history as having taken place in just one day, then the earth formed at 12:00am, and cooled down from a molten state over the next several hours. The first aquatic animals don't arrive until after 8:00pm, followed by plants at 9:30pm and land animals at 10:00pm. Modern humans arrive just before the clock strikes midnight.
- The Earth is 93 million miles away from the Sun. Travelling at the speed of light (186,282 miles per second), sunlight is able to cross this vast distance in around 8 minutes 20 seconds. Scientists now estimate that there may be as many as 100 billion solar systems in our own Milky Way galaxy alone.
- Oceans cover 71% of the earth's surface, contain 97% of the earth's water, and absorb 30% of global CO₂ emissions.
- Nobody knows how many species of plant and animal exist on earth. So far, about 1.3 million animal species and 426,000 other species including plants, bacteria and fungi have been identified. It is estimated that there are between 2 and 100 million species still to be identified.

Prayer for the week

Lord, help me to stop being busy - just for a moment. Let me see what is really around me. Enable me to appreciate what you have given as your gift to us. And where it has been spoiled, exploited or defiled let me be part of its healing and re-creation. And where it shines out as a beacon of your creative grace, let me join in its rejoicing.

When all is done, and the day comes to an end, let me sit with you and appreciate what has been, what is and what is to come, your new creation. Amen

Challenges to choose from

1. Go for a walk. This may be a familiar route or somewhere new. Take time to stand still – what can you hear? Birds, insects, animals? What can you see? Notice signs of new life in gardens and hedgerows. Spend some time thanking God for the beauty and diversity of His creation.
2. Learn something new about the world we live in – watch a nature programme (how about Springwatch or something by David Attenborough?), download a podcast (try www.bbcearth.com/Podcast), read a book, or sponsor an animal (take a look at <https://support.wwf.org.uk>).
3. Get your hands dirty! Plant some vegetable or herb seeds, or buy seedlings ready to transplant. If you don't have a garden, how about a sunny window sill or window box?
4. Choose a clear night and spend some time outside looking at the sky. Download an app Sky Map (Android) or Sky Guide (iphone) to help you identify what you are looking at and learn more about God's amazing universe.
5. Visit a local nature reserve, an RSPB or Somerset Wildlife Trust site. Could you get more involved by visiting regularly, volunteering or fundraising?
6. Get creative! Make something, write a poem or a song, paint or take photos to celebrate the extraordinary world that God has made.

Creation is groaning

Wednesday 13 March - Tuesday 19 March

Bible Readings: Genesis 3; Hosea 4:1-4; Romans 8: 18-25

Reflection by Caroline Pomeroy, Director of Climate Stewards and diocesan Environment Adviser

We humans are part of a triangle of relationships – God-mankind-earth. We are made to live interconnected lives. Humans are completely dependent on the natural world to sustain life. But in the West we have become increasingly detached from the earth. We get to work in our own private bubble known as a car, and buy what we want, when we want, in supermarkets or online. We live as though creation was made for us. We define ourselves as consumers and we are consuming the equivalent of three planets worth of resources.

The third chapter of Genesis tells us how mankind has gone our own way, failing to obey God's good instructions designed so that all of creation – human and non-human – could flourish. The environmental crisis is at its heart a spiritual crisis. The prophet Hosea looked around him and saw crop failure and famine, and recognised that this was caused by moral failure, including human greed and selfishness (Hosea 4:1-3). The God-mankind-earth triangle had been broken and every side was affected.

As a result, Paul tells us in Romans 8:18-25 that 'creation is groaning', and is 'waiting in eager expectation for the children of God [you and me] to be revealed'. One day, God will redeem creation along with his people, but in the meantime it is up to us to sort out the mess we have made; we cannot simply trash the place and wait for God to whisk us off to heaven.

How does this affect the way I travel? I love cycling – it gets me out into creation, it keeps me fit, it connects me with my neighbours and the world around me, it saves money and it's carbon-free. It's a win-win. As a family we try not to fly – sure, trains take a bit longer, but I see the world around me, meet new people and have had some surprising adventures along the way, with a much lower carbon footprint.

These choices can take some effort, but when done in a spirit of joyful obedience they can be fun too, and can reflect something of God's love for the world and people around us.

What's the issue? Travel

- 23% of trips under a mile, and 33% of trips between 1 and 2 miles, are made by car.
- There are approximately 37.5 million vehicles on our roads. On average, each car in the UK is driven 8,700 miles and is responsible for 2.8 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year.
- 8% of cars purchased in the UK last year were electric cars. The highest percentage is in Norway; 37%.
- Only 4% of UK residents cycle daily, compared to 43% in the Netherlands.
- Every year over 70 million overseas visits are made by UK residents, 59 million of these by air. A return flight to the south of France is responsible for around one third of a tonne of CO₂ per person. The same trip by train will be responsible for around 10% of the carbon emissions per person.
- Transport accounts for 26% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions.

Prayer for the week

Creator God, I am sorry for the way in which we humans have taken your astounding, beautiful, fragile, generous world for granted. And I am sorry for my part in this; for failing to think of the impact of my lifestyle choices on the earth, its creatures and my poorest neighbours. Give me wisdom, courage and joy as I seek to make good choices which will protect and cherish the natural world. Amen

Challenges to choose from

1. Take one of your journeys in a different way this week. Could you take public transport and/or walk to work, school or church? Or try cycling one or two days a week?
2. Find out about lift sharing for regular or occasional journeys – check out www.liftshare.com/uk or www.blablacar.co.uk. Or why not join a car club to give you access to a car just when you need it – search online for one near you.
3. Take a look at the Sustrans National Cycle Network (www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/national-cycle-network). Why not get your bike out and explore your local routes, or try building one into your commute?
4. If you are thinking of buying a new car, look at hybrid and electric options (but make sure you are buying renewable electricity first!)
5. If you usually fly on holiday, why not look for alternatives? Explore the UK, or find a way to travel by train to the continent using www.seat61.com
6. Drive greener! Under-inflated tyres increase your fuel consumption. Air conditioning uses extra fuel. Remove heavy items, roof-racks and roof boxes unless you need them for the trip. Drive smoothly – braking and accelerating waste fuel. Driving at 50-60 mph means your emissions will be lowest, with up to 25% higher emissions at 70mph.

Good stewards?

Wednesday 20 March - Tuesday 26 March

Bible Readings: Genesis 2:15, Psalm 8, Psalm 24

Reflection by Revd Bill Lemmey, Rector of Porlock, Selworthy and Luccombe

Genesis 1 describes how God created a perfect world and gave mankind dominion (v28) – not domination! – over it. A good king exercises compassionate, loving dominion over his country – and the best example is Jesus, the servant king. So being made in the image of God, we humans are called to ‘rule over’ the earth in the same way that Jesus ‘rules over’ his people – in love and service.

Genesis 2:15 tells us that ‘The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it’. ‘Work and take care of’ can be translated ‘till and keep’ or ‘serve and preserve’. So Christian dominion is to be exercised by serving creation on God’s behalf – being good stewards on behalf of the landlord, God. This means ensuring that every part is able to flourish. As Margaret Thatcher, perhaps rather surprisingly, said, ‘No generation has a freehold on this earth. All we have is a life tenancy—with a full repairing lease.’

In our church we have recently followed the Exploring Christianity course, one session of which is on environmental ethics. It makes the distinction between anthropocentric (human centred) and biocentric (earth centred) ethics. There are, of course, problems with both approaches, and we concluded that we have to steer an even course between the two. In the past, humans have clearly exploited the earth for our material gains, both mineral and, arguably, animal and vegetable. This has been justified by an anthropocentric approach, which is clearly wrong. So too would be a biocentric approach, in which all life is, as far as possible, given equal value (a way of interpreting Gen 1: 31a). As Exploring Christianity points out, a little facetiously, few urban-dwellers want to give equal rights for rats!

One way to be good stewards of the earth might be to eat meat less often; a “flexitarian” diet uses less of the world's resources. Poorer quality land, which makes up a large part of rural Somerset, is not suitable for growing crops but can be successfully used for grazing animals, and bring biodiversity benefits too.

How can we change, and reduce the human impact on the planet? Let us not forget the words of Psalm 24: 1 “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it ...”

What’s the issue? Food, plastic and waste

- In Somerset, much of our meat production is on a grass-based system in areas where cereal crops cannot be grown, but that is not the picture globally. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN, Meat and dairy production takes three quarters of all the available agricultural land in the world. One third of that land is used to grow animal feed such as rather than directly feeding people.
- Friends of the Earth tell us that, in 2050 the world is expected to be eating 76% more meat than it did in 2005. Growth in meat consumption in China, the biggest meat consuming country, is projected to be over four times of the next fastest-growing consumer, Brazil in absolute terms.
- Globally, 33% of fish are being fished at unsustainable levels.

- Over 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic have been produced since the 1950's, and most of it is still here! If placed end to end, the 480 billion plastic bottles produced worldwide in 2016 would extend more than half way to the sun.
- By 2050 plastic waste is estimated to outweigh all the fish in the sea. Most of the plastic produced since the 1940's still exists; the petrochemical-based compound takes hundreds of years to decompose.
- The average UK household wastes £470-worth of food per year. Roughly 250,000 tonnes of edible food is unnecessarily wasted, which is equivalent to 650 million meals. With an estimated 8.4 million people in the UK struggling to afford to eat, it's easy to see how this food could be better used.

Prayer for the week

Lord God we thank you that you rule over us; help us to rule your earth in love and service as you taught us, in the name of our Servant King, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Challenges to choose from

1. Could you reduce your meat or dairy intake? How about a meat-free Monday and/or a dairy free day each week?
2. Find out more about the environmental impact of food at www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-46459714.
3. Shop 'smarter' in the supermarket. Look for free-range, non-processed, local produce, fish from sustainable sources and fill up with fruit and vegetables, pulses and nuts.
4. Reduce your intake of processed foods. This will keep you healthier as well as reducing your impact on the planet.
5. Find out what fruit and veg are in season, and choose these over imported, unseasonal foods. Check the 'food miles' of what you are thinking of buying, and choose local produce over air-freighted. Why not sign up for a local Veg Box scheme or go along to a Farmers' Market?
6. Put on your calendar a visit to a local farm on 9 June, Open Farm Sunday.
7. Can you find ways of reducing single use plastics? Take your own re-useable bags to the shops, choose unpackaged food when possible, check out your local market, use re-fillable bottles (your local health food store will probably offer top-ups of washing up liquid, laundry liquid, shampoo etc.) Look out for your local 'milk station' where you can buy fresh milk direct from the farm in reusable bottles.
8. Try not to buy water and fizzy drinks in plastic bottles, or takeaway drinks. If you are on a journey or off to work, take your own re-usable bottle or travel mug – more and more cafes are giving discounts if you do this.
9. Try and reduce food waste. Only 'Buy one and get one free' if you will actually use it, or share with a friend. Make sure you understand the difference between 'use by' and 'best before' – it could save you money and stop food being wasted.
10. Replace liquid soap with bars, look out for shampoo bars, try re-useable beeswax wraps or tinfoil instead of cling film, ditch disposable razors (gents) and check out Mooncups (women) – see www.mooncup.co.uk. You will save money and the planet!

'For God so loved the world'

Wednesday 27 March - Tuesday 2 April

Bible Readings: Colossians 1: 15-20; John 3:16; John 1: 1-14

Reflection by Bryce Tangvald, Lay Pioneer and Youth Leader at Holy Trinity Frome

As a child raised in part by my grandparents, when I wasn't in school I followed them everywhere. When out and about, in order to make the journey bearable my grandpa would buy me a soft drink. My favourite was a bottle of non-alcoholic Root Beer. I remember reading the bottle labels to pass the time. There was a portion on these labels which always intrigued me. It read something like "CASH REFUND ME-VT-MA-NY-OR-IA 5¢, CA 10¢". This labelled the various areas that gave a refund per bottle. At 7 years old, I daydreamed that I'd become rich collecting bottles and cans discarded by restaurants or used by individuals once and tossed into the nearest hedge. This dream never materialised. However, I still dream of what the world might be like if we, as the people of God, went about redeeming from dark corners those who've been discarded by society.

Much like the above bottles and cans, the whole of the *cosmos* is being *redeemed*, bought back, through Jesus. In Colossians 1:15-23, we read that the whole of the *cosmos* was made *in, through* and *for* Jesus and that all things will be reconciled back to Him. When we see Creation as though we are looking through God's eyes, we see His redemptive love through the life of Jesus Christ. Creation is about Jesus!

How can we better steward our use of God's Creation? Could we be more considerate about what we use once only to discard immediately after use? Humans have been the culprits of *misuse* of this planet. To wisely care for the earth does not mean *disuse*, but *wise use*. In God's economy, we see *reuse* by His reconciliation through Jesus. All things have been made to provide for humanity. Taking it a step further, how can we be better stewards of the relationships with *people* that God has put into our lives? When we begin to see God's intention for Creation, to be made complete in Christ, we begin to realise our own part within it: to represent Him as adopted sons and daughters of the Creator of the Universe.

Take a moment to think about all that God has provided.

- *Misuse*: Are there things that we are frivolous with?
- *Disuse*: Consider how can you cut down on using things that are environmentally destructive?
- *Wise use*: What ways could we be more considerate about our purchases/lifestyle?
- *Reuse*: In what ways can you repurpose things you might otherwise discard?

What's the issue? Energy and consumption

- We are buying more clothes and wearing them for less time. Globally, almost 90% of clothing is not recycled in any way, and fashion is a highly-polluting industry, contributing to climate change, microfibres in the ocean and water pollution.
- Our houses are responsible for 30-40% of energy use in the UK. Last year, 33% of the UK's electricity was generated from renewable sources (solar, wind, hydro and biomass) - the highest ever. The rest comes from fossil fuels (coal, gas and oil) and nuclear power.
- Over 90% of the world's fresh water supply is located in Antarctica.
- An average UK household uses 136,000 litres of water every year, equivalent to 4.5 bath tubs full every day. A running tap wastes 6 litres of water each time you clean your teeth.

Prayer for the week

Father, Thank you for the gifts that you've given. Today, I ask for wisdom to see ways in which I can join You in reconciling creation back to Christ. Amen

Challenges to choose from

1. Cut your carbon footprint and your electricity bills by replacing old bulbs with LEDs. Replacing 40 bulbs (the average per home) with LEDs should pay for itself in less than 6 months, and should save about £120 per year in electricity bills. And don't leave appliances on standby – switching off could save you another £50 - £90 per year.
2. Consider adding more insulation to your home, or installing secondary glazing. If you can choose your electricity supplier, look into buying renewable energy. Most of the 'Big 6' suppliers have a green tariff, or check out www.ecotricity.co.uk or www.goodenergy.co.uk
3. Don't forget to **reduce, repair, refuse, reuse and recycle**. Why not have fun choosing clothes in charity and vintage shops or boot sales rather than buying new? Check out www.oxfam.org.uk/shop or sign up for Freecycle and donate or request items at www.freecycle.org.
4. Find out where the money in your bank account, savings or pension is invested. Consider switching away from companies which extract fossil fuels – find out more at www.campaigncc.org/timetoswitch
5. Save the bath for a treat – a bath uses about three times the water of a 5 minute shower (though power showers can use more than a bath, so keep them short!). Put a brick or a 'Hippo' in your toilet cisterns to reduce water use, and don't forget to turn off the taps while you're brushing your teeth.
6. Look around your home or office – could you use recycled printer paper, print back-to-back, print in greyscale, use recycled ink cartridges – and try and avoid printing at all wherever possible.

How do I love my neighbour?

Wednesday 3 April – Tuesday 9 April

Bible Readings: Luke 10: 25-37; Micah 6:8; Psalm 65

Reflection by Archbishop Albert Chama, Bishop of Northern Zambia, Archbishop and Primate of Central Africa.

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, we see what injustice can do to humanity. All of us at some point have experienced misfortune, abuse and violation of our very own existence. Our lives have been at risk and almost extinct from our very core of existence. This parable teaches us that, for the sake of our neighbour, we must have compassion and also mercy and kindness which brings restoration. But who is our neighbour?

I want to ask you to look beyond your own community and think of your global neighbour in Zambia who is feeling the impacts of climate change caused largely by those in the western world. In recent years Zambia has seen increasingly erratic rainfall patterns causing droughts, floods and crop failure. As a result, hunger, malnutrition and disease are on the rise.

Meanwhile in Zambia, where forests cover 60 percent of the country, some 45.8 million hectares of land are affected by a deforestation at a rate of approximately 300 000 hectares per year. This is caused by poverty and greed. Deforestation contributes to many local problems including soil erosion, flooding, loss of habitat for wildlife, as well as reducing the capacity of the trees to absorb dangerous greenhouse gases. So within Zambia we too are failing to love our neighbours as we cut down our trees for short-term gain.

So how can we all love our neighbours better? The Samaritan did what he could out of compassion. He took care of the man who was at the point of death and took the responsibility to meet the bills of nursing him. What about us? Stewarding all of creation well, which naturally includes both wise use of our resources and care for our environment, harkens back to the cultural mandate and our original job description. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Genesis 2:15).

Eco Justice has to do with the way we treat creation as part of the very essence of God's initial act of His creativity. Like the Samaritan, we are expected to take care of God's creation and our acts of responsiveness to reversing the acts of degradation of the groaning creation is one of paying the cost for the damage that has been caused. We will save the dying world by our small acts of justice to His creation. We should be able to see the ears, eyes and tears in the environment so that we can hear, see and listen to its groaning and pains which we have subjected our creation to.

What's the issue? Eco Justice

- Scientists are calling the current geological age the 'Anthropocene' - the period during which human activity is the dominant influence on climate and the environment.
- The planet is warmer than it has been for 800,000 years, and we are using up 2 to 3 planet's worth of resources each year – an unsustainable situation. If we can't keep global warming to under 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, the UN tells us that we will see widespread sea level rises, droughts, floods, extinctions and coral death.
- Around 50% of all carbon emissions are emitted by the richest 10% of the world's population (that's all of us!). But climate change affects our poorer global neighbours first and worst – as desertification, salination of groundwater, crop failure, floods and droughts lead to hunger, poverty, disease and refugees. Up to 200 million people could be displaced by climate change by 2050.

- By the end of this century sea levels will rise between 20cm and 80cm – it doesn't sound much , but a great deal of the world's population live on the coast – think of London, New York, Shanghai, Rio; and in Bangladesh where it is estimated that a 10cm rise makes 10 million people homeless.
- We are in the middle of what is being described by scientists as the Sixth Mass Extinction. The total number of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish on the planet has fallen by 60% since 1970, with extinction rates of all species currently running an estimated 100 to 1,000 times higher than the natural 'background' extinction rate. The main causes are climate change and habitat loss.

Prayer for the week

Almighty God

We pray for a more just society where all people and creatures can live in harmony, free from exploitation. We pray for Zambia and other nations feeling the impact of climate change, that we would have the resources we need to adapt and thrive.

We pray that you would have mercy on those people facing hunger and poverty, and creatures facing extinction, as a result of human greed.

May we plant seeds of mercy and compassion that will germinate into everlasting fruits of joy.

We pray for a desire to show our faith with our actions. Through the merits of your son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

Amen

Challenges to choose from

1. Calculate your household carbon footprint at www.climatestewards.org, and think about offsetting part or all of your carbon emissions to help people whose lives are being impacted by climate change.
2. We are all global citizens, and our neighbours include our global neighbours, our future neighbours (grandchildren and beyond), and our non-human neighbours. How much do you know about the challenges facing some of our poorest neighbours in Zambia? Watch this week's video on Zambia and spend some time finding out more about the country and praying for its people as they feel the impacts of climate change alongside other challenges.
3. Here in the UK, there are many ways of making our voices heard on the issues we are looking at during Lent. Why not contact your MP? You could write a letter or a tweet, or arrange a meeting with some other like-minded people. Get some tips from Hope for the Future at www.hftf.org.uk
4. Look into local environmental organisations and choose one to get more involved in – how about your parish or town council, your local Transition Town group, your local allotment or wildlife group, a food Co-op or a group tackling fuel poverty and energy-saving.
5. Find out where your church is investing its money. If they invest in companies which are extracting fossil fuels, could you persuade them to divest – take a look at Operation Noah's website www.operationnoah.org/articles/bright-now-towards-fossil-free-churches for tips.
6. Consider giving financial and/or prayer support to A Rocha UK www.arochoa.org.uk. A Rocha helps churches care for creation in lots of different ways (including the Eco Church programme and Wild Christian), and they need our support in this vital work.

Earthing heaven

Wednesday 10 April – Saturday 20 April

Bible Readings: Luke 11:1-4; Luke 12: 13-21; Micah 6:8; James 1: 22-25; John 3:16

Reflection by Cheryl Govier who is youth and children's adviser for Wells Archdeaconry as part of the Bath and Wells Go Team

The 'Kingdom of God' reflects God's ideal for human life in the world – a vision of life lived in the way God intended for human beings. We live in anticipation of a future heavenly Kingdom, seeking to live life in God's Kingdom on earth, following the example of Jesus, inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Do we ever consider that this includes our attitude and actions toward the environment?

It is easy to segment life, give certain parts to God, while holding on tightly to others. The parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12: 13-21) tells us of a man who on the outset, looks to have it sorted, so much so, we could argue that he was being wise in making provisions for the future. But in so doing, he was not 'rich towards God' (v21).

What does 'being rich towards God' mean for us? Could it include not just caring for other humans, but caring for all of God's creation and the earth itself – on which we all rely. There is no Planet B!

As a youth and children's adviser for the diocese, my heart is to see children and young people encounter Jesus, choosing to live their lives fully for him. I see part of my role being to model that and to live by example, which includes my attitude and actions towards the environment. I want the next generation to be able to enjoy God's playground! Through working with children and young people. I have become acutely aware, of their desire to make a difference. When children are alerted to an issue, such as plastic waste, I have been challenged by their passion for change, recognising that our misuse hurts God and his creation.

Phillip Donnell, formally of A Rocha, New Zealand, now the Director of New Creation, New Zealand says, "We must be doers and not just hearers (James 1: 22-25). I believe we must be utterly realistic, acknowledging the disturbing challenges that confront us. We cannot afford to press the snooze button, roll over and go back to sleep. Nor should we be presumptuous, expecting God to save us from our folly. It's up to us to begin to remedy our ways, because doing what is right and responding to the Spirit of God is important and valuable at every point in our lives."

I believe God calls us to stand up and take responsibility. In Micah 6:8 we are called to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. We are people made in the image of God and we have been entrusted with the care of the Earth and its resources. God invites us to share responsibility for the care of his world, but how well are we doing?

Easter is now rapidly approaching. In churches throughout the world, we will be remembering Jesus' journey to the cross and his ultimate sacrifice. We will follow that by celebrating his resurrection. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus teaches us that we are to walk in his footsteps, living in hope of a future heavenly kingdom. As we seek to reflect Jesus' sacrifice, a quote used by many famous names comes to mind "Why live simply? So others may simply live!" If we live irresponsibly, it goes against all that Jesus taught us. We need to take care of our natural resources, be responsible with our waste and take care of our ecosystems, so that others may enjoy them. We need to be the change we wish to see. This does not only apply to our individual lives, but it applies to us as churches and communities. How can we shake things up and take our responsibilities as stewards of God's planet seriously? How can we bring God's kingdom here on earth?

What's the issue? Being the change

- There are currently around 57,000 churches of all denominations in the UK, and just over 1,200 registered Eco Churches - see www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk for a map of where they are.
- Christians have a strong record of speaking up for justice and doing the right thing – think of William Wilberforce and the abolition of slavery in the 19th century and the 'Drop the Debt' and 'Make Poverty History' Campaigns at the end of the 20th century. The church and individual Christians are also playing a key role in tackling climate change and the environmental challenges we face today.
- The Fifth 'Mark of Mission' of the Anglican Church is *'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'*.
- The bible doesn't use the word environment, but it contains over 2,250 references to the land, soil, air, water, plants etc.
- Bishop Peter says "Our care for the environment and for all that God has created is an obligation for us as Christians and part of our response to the gospel. What we now know about climate change and the impact we humans make on the world we live in means that it is imperative that we take this responsibility seriously. The Earth is our home. It is beautiful beyond words. It is God's gift to us and so we must take care of it!"

Prayer for the week

Father God, we praise you for our wonderful world. Help us not to store up earthly treasure, but to build your Kingdom here on earth. As we seek to follow you, may our attitudes and actions towards the environment mirror your heart. Amen.

Challenges to choose from

1. Have you heard of Eco Church? Take a look at their website www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk and think about whether your church could take on this challenge. Come along to one of our EcoChurch events on 30 March and 25 May. See the diocesan events calendar for more details: www.bathandwells.org.uk/events.
2. Could your church plan an outdoor service or a pet service this summer? Have a chat with your vicar or churchwarden, or check out the latest events and resources from the Diocese of Bath and Wells Outdoor Church learning hub www.bathandwells.org.uk/outdoor-church-hub
3. Could you organise a litter pick around your neighbourhood – perhaps with members of your church? Or just make a point of collecting litter when you are out walking.
4. For your next shared church meal or picnic, why not ask people to try and stick to **LOAF** principles (Local, Organic, Animal-friendly and Fairly-traded) and to avoid single-use plastics.
5. Start planning for Creationtide (in September) or a special harvest service – see www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint/worship-resources/creation-time or www.atyourservice.arocha.org/en/about for resources.
6. Find out what green activities your local school is doing, and see if there are ways to get involved. Could you volunteer to help, or do some fundraising, or just write a letter encouraging them to keep going?
7. How about arranging a swishing social – a fun way to swap unwanted clothes or belongings – with your neighbours and friends? See www.getswishing.com.
8. If you have a churchyard, could you make it more of a wildlife haven? Check out Caring for God's Acre www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk and EcoChurch South-West's Living Churchyards project www.ecochurchsouthwest.org.uk/actions/living-churchyards.

9. Go for a walk on the same route you chose at the start of the challenge. Look and listen. What do you see and hear? What has grown or sprouted since you were last here? What new things do you notice as a result of doing the Lent Challenge? Take time to pray, giving thanks for the beauty and diversity of creation, and asking God to point out ways in which you can care for the earth and 'Live Well in God's World'
10. As a result of taking part in this challenge, what two things are you going to commit to doing differently to help look after the world God created and calls us to look after? Why not stick a note on your fridge or in your bible to remind yourself what you have promised to do. Or tell a friend or family member and pledge to do things differently together.