

Mecology Newsletter 9

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Walk for the Planet

Work is well underway for the Walk for the Planet. A Christchurch based group is meeting regularly to plan the event.

Dates: Through the entire Lenten Season 2009

Starting: Launched at Rakiura (Stewart Island) on Ash Wednesday. Beverley Osborne is coordinating with the local Presbyterian parish.

Ending In Wellington at Easter

Along the way people are taking responsibility to plan an event in their city or town. Each Sunday will be spent as Sabbath, staying in a town resting and participating with local people. Think about Maundy Thursday in Picton with those tired and dusty feet, Good Friday on the water crossing the strait etc.

From meeting notes:

“Lent is a time for putting things right, changing direction and addressing critical issues. Something is fundamentally wrong in our relationship with the planet. It is a time for re-thinking this relationship and changing to a direction that can bring about healing. Jim talked about Lent as coming from a word to do with “length”. So it’s about expanding ourselves spiritually and maybe shrinking ourselves materially. In this way it is a kind of ‘re-lenting’. It’s about expanding our perspective to include the health of the whole planet. The symbolism of walking as explored in the proposal paper emphasizes all of this.

There was agreement that we would want the walk to gather up good news stories of people and communities who are putting things right in their relationship with the earth. In this way there would be a pilgrimage sense to the walk – connecting up along the way with places of inspiration

where people are working and living in greater harmony with creation.

We agreed that it is important to brief and gain the support of church leaders for the Walk for the Planet if it is to be ecumenical.

More news and resources for you will follow. So what about the North Island? In conversation Mark Gibson and Gillian discussed this. There will be *opportunities for individuals or groups to travel to do the South Island walk; for groups to organise their own walk to Wellington; travel to Wellington for Easter to greet the walkers from the South and to share in events; and organise local Sunday events “caring for creation”. If you are thinking of something to do please let us know.

***** General Resources

Christian Aid – a position paper All creation Groaning , a theological approach to climate change and development
http://www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/climatetheofinal_tcm15-26498.pdf

Presbyterian resources for sustainable ministry

Excellent links to really useful websites.

<http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/4968.0.html#c16619>

From Gillian

While preparing this newsletter I reflected on the proliferation of resource, websites, books etc now available to assist the conscientious. I also wondered how many parishes have made a deliberate effort to encourage individual and corporate life changes. It isn’t necessarily as easy as the papers and TV programmes make it out to be. And all in all what are we really seeking to change? Do any of us have a particular purpose statement other than as David Hill stated in our last newsletter “to save the world for our Grandchildren”

Changing location has given me opportunity to really experience winter, even though we missed the storms. I am eagerly and somewhat impatiently awaiting spring so that the garden can be planted. It seems to me that this truly is the Lenten season, bare earth, plants in the ground with no visible sign of growth putting down roots, treasures killed by unexpected

frosts, are all a challenge holding back the living out of the dream. The conversation of the land is of weather – out of human control, I look forward to the dawn under resurrection time. A British magazine is running a campaign to bring back Nature tables in schools as a way of encouraging children to observe the world around them. Perhaps that is something to think about for Sunday schools and children's church.



From Jan Fogg

Attached please find my report (which I have sent to MM&E because they encouraged my attendance) to the "Ecology, Economy and Accountability in Asian Perspective" workshop, which I attended in May in South Korea. It was a workshop organised by CCA to think about the churches voice and involvement in the environmental crisis.

**REPORT TO THE METHODIST
CHURCH OF NEW ZEALAND**

Te Hahi Weteriana O Aotearoa

Attendance at an International Workshop on the Church's response to Climate Change.

~Jan M Fogg

In May 2008 I was invited to attend an International Ecumenical Workshop in South Korea by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK).

The workshop took place between May 13 - 18. I was funded to attend by CCA, NCCCK and also by some members of the Hornby Riccarton Parish. I am very appreciative of the opportunity to attend the workshop and sincerely thank those who provided the funding.

The workshop was entitled, "Ecology, Economy and Accountability in Asian Perspective." It was organised by CCA, who wanted to initiate a reflection with its constituencies on the ecological challenges facing the world, and in particular to redefine our understanding of development, stewardship, human freedom and accountability to one another and to God's creation. The workshop was small, with 13 invited attendees and 4 resource persons,

plus participation from a few members of the NCCCK. Although it was quite brief in time, the small numbers and shared accommodation meant that we came to know one another quite quickly. Participants came from Thailand, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar (arriving late), South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

It was an uplifting experience to gather together on the first morning for devotions led by Rev Kim Hong-Il, from the Anglican Church of Korea. We sat around tables making a U shape, struggling with differences in both our ability with English and our accents, but brought together by Rev Kim in the oneness of our faith in God (although it was interesting to find part way into the workshop that one of the young participants from Thailand was Buddhist).

And so we joined together in singing:

“Come now, O prince of peace
Make us one body;
Come O Lord Jesus
Reconcile your people.”

Freddy de Alwis, Joint executive secretary for CCA welcomed us all and said that the selection of participants had been focused on those who could contribute back into their local areas; he briefly outlined the work of CCA and said that the organisation might be able in some cases to assist with issues at people's local level. Later it became clear through Dr Rienzie Perara, secretary of CCA, that the organisation would value greater input from New Zealand, particularly for possible resource people in the future.

There were two main themes which became apparent through the Workshop:

1. The links between poverty, development, agricultural practice and ecology:
2. The nature of global warming and the Church's response.

We began each morning with a bible Study on the theme, "A theology of Accountability

in God's creation." These were very well presented by Dr Perara and by Dr Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar, a biblical scholar from Bangalore, India. They explored the meaning of *oikos*(eco-) in relation to economy and ecology, and the importance of realising that what is most important for 'habitat earth'(oikos) is that it be habitable! The development of economics has contributed greatly to the earth's present crisis, both because of an understanding of 'nature' as simply interchangeable parts, and because of the shift in focus of economics from the household, to the firm or corporation. We explored a biblical focus on anthropocentrism versus cosmocentrism, the bible and pantheism, and God's 'ecological covenant' the Noahic covenant made with "all flesh" ie with humans, other-than-humans and the whole earth itself.

Challenging issues were raised in papers addressing poverty and globalisation. "In recent years the world has begun to become aware of some other factors that put the whole world into a situation that demands serious rethinking about the way the world has been moving or the way the world is being moved."¹ The environmental crisis, the crisis of hunger and the world crisis of high food prices were addressed, and related to the one major factor which the author saw as a distortion in human history: that human survival and the survival of nature is being threatened by the accumulation of capital through greed. Mr Fernando drew on a major new report by over 400 scientists, published by IAASTD in April 2008 which says, "The way the world grows its food will have to change radically to better serve the poor and hungry if the world is to cope with a growing population and climate change

¹ Sareth Fernando, "Globalisation – The Myth, Reality and Alternatives," Paper presented at the CCA Ecology, Economy and Accountability workshop, South Korea, 14-18 May 2008, 9.

while avoiding social breakdown and environmental collapse."²

Rev Yang Jae-sung presented "Global Warming and Ecological Mission" from a Korean perspective. He gave a brief overview of global warming, including the fact that if the earth's average temperature rises by 1°C this will cause the disappearance of 10% of living creatures; however if the degree average rise is 3°C then 50% will be lost. Moving on to ecological mission as a solution, he suggested there were two kinds of Christian faith: the one focused on salvation and human beings, which is dominant; or the alternative view which has been much ignored, that of faith in Creation, which recognises that in God's creation all life is precious. He offered ecological practices based on simplicity as the way through this crisis.

Mr Geoff Rigby, a retired engineer from NSW Australia, gave an excellent paper on "A Climate for change", which included 38 references.³ He discussed a series of significant consequences of climate change, looked at the mitigation of, or adaptation to, climate change and asked. 'What role can the church play?' His paper brought out the fact that the Asia/Pacific region contributes over 35% of global greenhouse gas emissions, but that there are major differences between nations in their emissions. Many nations contribute only

² IAASTD(International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development), "Agriculture – the need for change," Report from the Intergovernmental plenary session in Johannesburg, April 2008, www.agassessment.org (25.6.08)

³ Geoff Rigby, "A Climate for Change: Climate change in the Asia Pacific regions, some thoughts on consequences and actions – an Australian perspective," Paper presented at the CCA Ecology, Economy and Accountability workshop, South Korea, 14-18 May 2008.

small amounts but will be severely affected by the consequences of climate change. He challenged us to a greater awareness, to accept responsibility and to put actions in place at both the individual and the organisational level to minimise the effects of climate change.

On the third day of the workshop we travelled out to the Taaen Peninsular on the West Coast to hear from a local Pastor and church members of the oil spill disaster which had occurred in December 2007.⁴ We symbolically took part in the ongoing clean-up which had affected so many lives and indeed the life and mission of the Korean church. I have written about this for Touchstone.

Attendance at the Workshop caused me to reflect on a number of things. Firstly it was apparent to me that we are very fortunate in New Zealand, both in terms of the natural environment of which we are stewards, but also because there is significant participation in conservation by many individuals and groups and thus a necessary counterpoint to the voice of big business (although we should note the big changes that are rapidly taking place now in environmental awareness and positive action of significant numbers of companies and their workplaces.)

The way in which much farming is now carried out in New Zealand however, present challenges in an environment such as this Workshop. New Zealand farmers are increasingly moving into a highly industrial model of farming which is seeing the size of farms increase dramatically, with ownership being lost from single families to a corporate model. This model however, does not helpfully address issues of poverty amongst small farmers in developing countries, not

⁴ Jack Kim, "South Korean town fights for life after oil spill," Reuters UK, 16.1.08.

does it best serve the interests of the earth, its biodiversity and sustainability. In terms of the churches' response to global warming and climate change, there was considerable variation between countries as evidenced by those attending the Workshop. Helpful resources developed by the NSW Anglican Synod which are being disseminated amongst the churches there, gave a great example of what the Church could be doing.

I believe the Methodist Church of New Zealand could do more than it currently is in this country, and could well be a leader amongst churches here. If funding was made available, there could be action on both the development and distribution of resources, and specific action to heighten awareness of our care and concern for the future of the creation of which we a part.

The Christian Conference of Asia would also seem to have a fairly low profile within our Church, yet it is doing some very worthwhile things in which New Zealand could play a greater part. I wonder if there are further ways in which we could make a positive contribution.

This workshop was ambitious, with minor challenges in its organisation; it was well resourced, and it was great to have the opportunity to participate in it.

27.6.08

A Rocha Conference, Raglan, May 31-June2, 2008

Peter and Miranda Harris began a field study centre in Portugal in 1983, at A Rocha, in Portugal.

Scientists studied birds, others were invited to help, to learn, to marvel, to see the place of men and women in caring for other parts of creation. It was not easy – imagine Peter, a birdwatcher from childhood, meeting a group of local men who had been

netting birds for the pot, - some even with rings on their legs which his group had put on the previous year!

Now there are A Rocha groups in eighteen countries around the world, including Aotearoa/New Zealand, each one suited to its own situation and the animals or fish or plants being studied there.

At Raglan people from Christchurch to Warkworth, Maori, Pakeha, Asian, gathered, listened, prayed, formed groups and went home full of ideas about how to express the A Rocha message in their own districts.

I am one of the Auckland group. There are places here where we could have a centre, there are scientists studying birds, marine life, the forests – and many, many groups – starting with school children – who are learning about these things. We want to begin by finding out more about them.

New Zealand is not like Portugal, where the idea of preserving bird or plant species was a new thing.

A speaker from the Department of Conservation told us that there were 130 different conservation groups in the Waikato area alone, where he worked. Of his own field he spoke pessimistically of winning a few battles but losing the war. He was thinking of having insufficient staff or money to do more than preserve a few species out of the thousands at risk. On the other hand he knew how much more could be done if more people became involved.

A Rocha began with Peter and Miranda Harris, Christians who take seriously the story of God telling the first people that their place was to manage the rest of the creatures. Since this was done before there were any other commands, nations, religions, wars, disputes, murders, or even their own disobedience, it seems quite reasonable now to reach out to every one who will join in this work in this present time when we are realising what a mess we have made in thinking and acting as if only we are important.

The Methodist Ecology network is exactly that, a network of people from around the country who have a commitment to seeing things happen within their church community. There is awareness that “our” church should be paying attention to matters of creation and the care of the planet. Everywhere we turn [people and organisations are begging us to change our ways and change our light bulbs, to measure our footprints and tread lightly on the world.

We would love to hear from you, your thoughts, your opinions, report of your challenges and in fact anything that you would like to tell others on the broad subject area. Book and websites reviews would be helpful..

The newsletter is collated by me, Gillian Watkin and if you want something explored, or don't have time for a big write up I might be able to help. Time stretches in Hawkes Bay, days here equal two days of Auckland time.



Winter is here

"Abandon the urge to simplify everything, to look for formulas and easy answers, and to begin to think multi-dimensionally, to glory in the mystery and paradoxes of life, not to be dismayed by the multitude of causes and consequences that are inherent in each experience -- to appreciate the fact that life is complex."
--M. Scott Peck