

(PPx1) The Way x21. Sunday 26 May_2019.

The Way of Newness: I AM MAKING EVERYTHING NEW.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZubnepG34kw> - YouTube Princess Carlie – I have posted on VPBC Facebook.

READ: (PPx2) Isaiah 43: 18-21 and Revelation 21: 1 – 8.

JESUS declared himself to be **the Way** (to the Father *John 14: 6*) and his followers are described as those who ***belonged to the Way.*** (*Acts 9: 2*). Therefore individually and as a local church we are part of the **one NEW PEOPLE who are in union with Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2: 15)** who are seeking to walk together in the **Way of righteousness** (*Proverbs 12: 28, Righteousness is the road to life; wickedness is the road to death*)

A full understanding of **Salvation** from the whole of Scripture is the Good News that God is making EVERYTHING NEW through the work of Jesus. This does not just mean human beings who believe in and receive Jesus into their lives but the renewing the whole of creation – will be completed on the Day of the return of Jesus when a New Heaven and Earth is unfolded. Salvation spans not just the past and the now but also the future. Jesus therefore in his teachings on the mountain is insistent that his followers are to **give priority to seeking God's Kingdom rule by living righteous lives (Matthew 6: 33)** rather than being anxious about the things that concern unbelievers. **READ** Vv 31 – 33 Jesus says that God is aware of the human need of food, drink and shelter and if we put God's Kingdom and living righteously as a priority that there will be provision enough. (Satisfaction, contentment, less greed etc). **Please note that Jesus is NOT telling his followers to sit back and do nothing. He is saying that if we prioritise the right things then the rest of our lives will follow on. In these days where we are very informed about climate change and extinction of many species including the dying and possible extinction of humanity due to climate change and environmental decay, we as followers of Jesus have a responsibility in seeking to find God's way through this wilderness.** We must quite literally seek to find the way to live – streams in the desert – both physical and spiritual stream as we have been thinking the last 3 weeks. There is a need to join in working with others who are also concerned for “green issues and eco-friendliness”...since October 2018, and highlighted at Easter 2019 **Greta Thunberg's** attendance at the “*Extinction Rebellion protest in London*” and other parts of the world and recent European Elections has shown the growing and widespread concern there is for the future of the human race and the planet with its depleting number of species especially the pollinators like the bees.

Judeo-Christians have always believed that from the Genesis of the planet Earth we who are made in God's image (1:26) are to be “Guardians of Creation”, (*Lawrence Osborn, IVP, 1993*).

As Guardians of Creation the ordinances set out in the Genesis account gives human beings the “rule” or power of creation and the opportunity not just to reproduce BUT to see that the provision of all that is “good” is shared fairly and that creation does not only

work for humanity but for God's glory and is given seasons of rest and recovery.
(*Streams and rivers 2:10 and humans called upon to cultivate and guard it 2: 15*).

Stewardship and not exploitation. Humans are depicted as not just made in the image of God but also from the earth/soil and returning to the soil – we are very much part of the creation and not superior to it. *The earth is the LORD's and everything in it. Psalm 24.* God is the Freeholder of the land – we are just tenants and managers.

In discovering the way through the dessert of climate change, loss of species and loss of human life due to climate change – famine, desertification, flooding and the like we as part of the ONE NEW People of GOD surely have a part to play (with others).

Our message about the “end of this world” and the “Day of Jesus” Christ does not mean we ignore the plight of the planet. We recognise that *the whole of creation is indeed groaning and eagerly waiting for the Day of Christ's glory and his followers to inherit as God's children (Romans 8: 19 – 23 fol)* but we also *if we have the Spirit* also groan inwardly.

Caring about the planet need not be a diversion from the message of Salvation – it is part of the message. We do not stop preaching the message of repentance and the need to believe in Jesus as turning back to God (personal salvation). **But our need to repent includes the need to repent of our human greed, exploitation of the planet as well as other people – taking more than our fair share of the minerals, water, fuel and food at the expense of others. If our message doesn't include this call, then it will make no sense in today's world and for today's people.**

Repentance means a change of mind, heart and action about the way that we do things (individually and as churches or other groups of people). What should and can we do differently in the way we treat others and the rest of creation?

How green is your church? Suggested actions.

<https://operationnoah.org/resources/how-green-is-your-church-suggested-actions/>

OPERATION NOAH. Suggestions adapted

BEGINNER CHURCHES: we've done or could do at VPBC....(Discuss in groups & share)

Worship

- Go for walks and encourage use of Mile End Park, Vicky Park and Canal walks.
- Hold a service or have quiet times of contemplation outside – Big Bar BQ
- Sing hymns and songs celebrating God's creation
- Preach on the goodness of creation as a life-giving gift from God and our role as stewards to love and protect what God has made and to love our neighbours as ourselves

- Include prayers about environmental concerns in your church services
- Use poetry/reflections which emphasize the awe and wonder we feel in response to the beauty of God's creation; how we feel closer to God when we are surrounded by all that he has made
- Celebrate Harvest – Global Gourmet meal and worship.

Education and awareness raising

- Display materials on climate justice / caring for creation from the Christian charities supported by your church (eg Christian Aid, Tearfund, All We Can, CAFOD)
- Hold a Global Gourmet serving/displaying national foods sourced locally
- Leaders Residential: breakfast and explanation of how items sourced

Church resources

- Fairtrade church using tea, sugar coffee only
- Reduce, re-use, recycle, refuse (to buy something new if possible) e.g. wooden tables and book shelves made out of old pews
- Use washable plates, cups and cutlery mostly but instead of plastic plates and cups use paper or card ones. Should we ever use plastic cutlery?

Church building and grounds

- Use Green electricity from SSE
- Take simple energy efficiency steps (eg switch to LED bulbs, put heating on a timer switch, eliminate draughts, improve insulation, service the boiler & heaters annually, turn off lights, switch off computer equipment and copiers when not in use)
- Installed raised flower beds and herbs in front of chapel - pollinators

Other possibilities:

- Preach on climate justice and how climate change is impacting those who are least responsible, stressing the need for simple, low-carbon lifestyles as part of Christian discipleship
- Start a 'green group' in your church which leads worship, carries out green actions, holds workshops on living simply, and writes green articles for church publications
- Display a wide range of materials on environmental/climate issues from faith-led organizations (eg Operation Noah, Tearfund, Christian Aid, A Rocha, CAFOD), including actions people can take
- Undertake a Carbon Fast for Lent: see the [Catholic Climate Movement](#)
- Share information about the [Lambeth Declaration](#) (updated in 2015) on the response of faith communities to the environmental crisis of climate change.

- Introduce environmental activities into children's/youth work. Recycling stuff.
- Hold a 'swishing' event to swap clothes (BGMC) and encourage congregational sharing of goods (eg power tools, ladders) rather than buying new.
- Become an Eco- congregation <http://www.ecocongregation.org/> Eco Church- A Rocha UK <https://arocha.org.uk/our-activities/churches/eco-church/>

Eco Church is the successor to Eco-Congregation (in England and Wales only) which will challenge and equip you to care for God's world in all areas of your life together.

- Solar panels and other renewable energy sources. (Quote for VPBC from "Solar Spirit"). See "Our Green Journey: High Street Baptist Church – Tring" - <http://tringbaptistchurch.co.uk/eco-church/>

Conclusion: The Way of Newness: I AM MAKING EVERYTHING NEW.

TODAY we READ: Isaiah 43: 18-21 and Revelation 21: 1 – 8.

The Salvation that God speaks of is personal for every individual but also it speaks of the Salvation and Redemption of the whole of the planet – indeed Paul writes to the *Ephesians* (4:10) that when Jesus ascended, he ascended to FILL THE WHOLE UNIVERSE with his power. **Let us not reduce the power and scope of Salvation but see it in its full biblical glory.**