

HOME AND OVERSEAS NOVEMBER 2021

“The earth turns gaunt and gray, the world silent and sad, sky and land lifeless, colourless. Earth is polluted by its very own people, who have broken its laws, disrupted its order, violated the sacred and eternal covenant”

(Isaiah 24:4-5 from “The Message”)

It would appear that there have been concerns about humanity’s relationship with planet earth for a very long time! However, I think we can all agree that this relationship has now reached a critical point where it is obvious to all, that humans have caused severe problems for our planet and that unless we do something urgently then the world as we know it may simply cease to exist.

This paper has been written to tie in with COP26 which is to be held in Glasgow from 31st October to 12th November 2021. By the time you read this, the conference will be well underway.

So, what is COP26?

COP stands for “Conference of the Parties”, the parties being 197 individual states which meet to discuss and make policy on environmental issues. This “COP” will be the 26th – the first being held in 1995. The main goals of COP26 are to keep the world within 1.5C of warming and to secure global net zero by 2050. Global net zero means that the amount of carbon dioxide – the gas that causes global warming – added into the atmosphere is no more than the amount taken away. The UN has called 2021 a “make or break year;” so we must hope and pray that COP26 produces not just plans but actions to achieve its stated goals. To really make a difference the international community needs to work together to help poorer nations achieve the goals.

What about the UK?

Our own UK government have already committed to some measures which will help achieve these goals – the end of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 for example. Only 2% of our energy now comes from coal – a decrease from 40% a decade ago. But our government has not ruled out opening a new mine in Cumbria and continuing with a new North Sea gas and oil project. Obviously, there is still much more to be done and we would hope to see further commitment at COP26.

Is the Moravian Church doing anything?

At Synod 2021, a proposal was passed that committed the church to look at tree planting. The idea is that PEC and congregations look to see if it would be possible to plant trees on land owned by the church. Trees really are very important for our health and the health of the planet. Some of you may remember from school learning about photosynthesis – the process by which green plants absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. Trees therefore help to keep the world cooler and provide the oxygen we need to breathe. Trees also purify the air by trapping pollutants in their leaves and on their bark. If these are not sufficient arguments for planting trees, trees also do the following:

1. Provide wildlife with a habitat
2. When planted near rivers they help prevent the river from flooding and they also stop soil erosion
3. Being in green spaces has proven benefits to our mental and physical health.

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What about us? What can we do to help?

The Synod proposal also asked individual members to consider planting a tree or trees in their own garden. If you are interested in planting a tree then visit www.woodlandtrust.org.uk for ideas of what tree would suit your space. You can also buy a tree from this website. If you don't have space for a tree then how about a wildflower patch? The UK has lost a huge amount of wildflower meadows which are vital for the health of insects known as pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Pollinators are needed for healthy fruit and vegetable crops. They reduce or remove the need for pesticides.

There are many other things we as individuals and church communities can do to reduce our ecological footprint. A small book by Claire Foster and David Shreeve entitled "How Many Lightbulbs Does It Take To Change A Christian?" (£4.99 Church House Publishing) contains lots of suggestions and I warmly recommend it.

We can also put pressure on our government to take the ecological crisis seriously and we can pray. We need to remember that God put us in charge of the earth to work in partnership with Him and His creation for the good of all.

The prayer below is part of a prayer of Intercession taken from Prayer Rhythms for Busy People by Ray Simpson. Perhaps you could use it at your Circle meeting or privately at home throughout COP26 and after.

This we know, the earth does not belong to us.

The earth is God's and we will serve it.

This we know, we did not weave the web of life.

The earth is God's and we will serve it.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.

The earth is God's and we will serve it.

Caring Father God, we offer to you the fuels and forests, the seas and soil, the air and animals. May we steward your creation to your glory and for the benefit of future generations. In dependence on the God of life may we cherish the precious earth:

the earth of the God of life,

the earth of the Christ of love,

the earth of the Spirit Holy.

In dependence on the God of Life may our life this day have blessing:

The blessing of the God of life,

The blessing of the Christ of love,

The blessing of the Spirit Holy. Amen

Sr Janet Cooper