WORCESTER CATHEDRAL

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
DIOCESE OF WORCESTER



LIVING GENTLY ON THE EARTH

In 2024, Worcester Cathedral's programme ***Living Gently on the Earth*** won the *Church Times* Green Church award in the education category. Now the diocese and cathedral have worked together to bring this version of the programme to parishes.

What's the course about?

We live in an era of unprecedented environmental threats to our future prosperity and way of life. This threat is compounded by political and social upheavals, wars, cost of living crises, and frightening new technologies. How should Christians respond to these threats?

Living Gently on the Earth

- ✓ looks at faith, lifestyle, and justice in God's creation.
- ✓ builds awareness of the environmental and social issues the world is facing
- ✓ roots itself in the biblical story of creation and redemption
- ✓ enables participants to respond in practical ways
- ✓ encourages churches and individuals to act with hope in our hearts



What sort of course is it?

The course is in five sessions based, first and foremost, in scripture. These sessions provide an understanding of the biblical foundations for caring for the planet and one another. Each session is accompanied by a video designed to build on those foundations by setting out the practical implications. So the course bridges from doctrine into practice.

Each session provides

- ✓ Study Notes for use by participants.
- ✓ A Leader's Sheet giving the detailed thinking and a suggested approach to be used with the group. Leaders can amend the approach so that it works for them and their group in their own context.
- ✓ A video focused on factual environmental issues, to be used to help stimulate practical awareness and discussion.
- ✓ There is a 'Take the Jump' challenge in each video designed to help participants consider appropriate lifestyle changes. How each individual participant responds is up to them: the challenge does not tell people what they should do.

When might we use it?

Parishes and groups could use this at any time of the year. However, it has been developed in five sessions to be the right length for a Lent course. It would also be appropriate to use in the new focus given to the ecumenical "season of creation".

Season of Creation

This was first proposed by the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch in 1989. It runs from the first day of the Greek Orthodox year, 1st September, to the feast of St Francis of Assisi on 4th October. In 2016, Pope Francis declared 1 September an annual World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. The idea of a season of creation was commended by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland in 2008.

Session 1: Beyond Greed to Abundance

Text: Luke 12:15-21 **Video:** Consumerism

This opening session uses Jesus' parable of the rich man who built bigger barns (Luke 12:15-21) to explore attitudes to hoarding possessions and greed. The **Consumerism** video investigates aspects of modern consumerism, and some of its harmful effects. It outlines the key environmental threats: climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and the overexploitation of land and sea.

Participants are invited to consider how God has provided enough for everyone. The session encourages an 'abundant community' mindset, rather than an individualistic approach to scarcity. We think about how we live generously with one another, take collective responsibility, and respect the resources that others also depend on.



Session 2: Liberating Creation

Text: Romans 8:18-25 **Video:** Climate

This session takes a factual look at climate change, and its consequences: extreme weather, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, food insecurity and displacement.

It then turns to Romans 8:18-25, and sets this against a hope for the future that extends beyond humanity to the whole of creation, which 'yearns' to be set free alongside the children of God. The session asks how to hold that hope together in the face of doom-laden headlines. Hope is not passive: as God's children we are called to be active in hope. Hope calls us to the healing and liberation of creation, tackling injustice and poverty, and making our own practical lifestyle changes.



Session 3: Empowered for Good,

Text: Genesis 1:24 - 2:15 **Video:** Food

This session looks at underlying assumptions about how humans relate to God and creation. It takes three perspectives: dominion, which has been criticised for justifying exploitation; stewardship, in which human authority is delegated by God and carries accountability; and kinship, in which humans are fellow creatures within creation, formed from the same ground and sharing the same breath of life. Each is explored in Genesis 1:24 to 2:15 and leads to themes of responsibility, accountability and humility.

The **Food** video applies these perspectives to the way we have industrialised food. It particularly focuses on issues surrounding cheap meat, considering animal welfare as a God-given responsibility, and looks at practical steps in reducing food waste with the meat and other foods we consume.



Session 4: The Community of Creation,

Text: Psalm 104 **Video:** Habitats

Psalm 104 sees creation as a whole, and the very glory and joy of the Lord. In it, God values all creatures, whether or not they are useful to humans. So the psalm leads us to see creation as an interdependent community of life and gives us a reason to live gently on the earth rather than exploit it.

The **Habitats** video looks at the state of nature in the UK, where wildlife abundance has fallen by more than half in recent decades. It looks at pressures on land and sea from intensive farming, overfishing and plastics. It suggests practical responses and steps we can take to make a difference.



Session 5: Justice in Action

Text: Luke 10:25-37 **Video:** Justice

The final session looks at environmental action through the lens of justice. It asks who benefits from the way we live, who bears the consequences, and whose voices are heard. It considers justice between nations, since those most vulnerable to climate change have often contributed least to it, and justice between generations, since future generations cannot take part in decisions that will shape their lives.

The parable of the Good Samaritan challenges us to widen our idea of 'neighbour' beyond those we see and know, and to act as the Samaritan did. The **Justice** video explores how ecological injustice arises and how all share some responsibility. The session and the course close with practical questions. What can we do, as individuals and as churches, through both personal and collective action?

