

- Remind yourselves of the things you've identified in Question 6 and consider the difficulties you might face with making those changes.

Pray for the needs identified above, and for God's strength to overcome the difficulties we face.

- Winchester Diocese has registered its intent to become an eco-diocese, and will support parishes and benefices who take part in the Eco-Church scheme. Consider how your answers to Question 8 might bear more fruit if the church engaged in a regional and national scheme.

Pray about these ideas and our ability to put them into action.

Please ask a member of the group to contact Rev'd Rachel (ramtopsrac@yahoo.co.uk) to share your ideas.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

We thank you God that you made us in your image, and called us to base our lives on Jesus 'the image of the invisible God'. Acknowledging that he is the one by whom all things were created and who shed his blood so that all things might be reconciled to him, enable, encourage and strengthen us as we work to reveal your coming Kingdom in our care for your creation. Amen

AT HOME: If you have internet, explore the Eco-Church website <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/> which is designed to help Christians, take more active responsibility for their care for the environmental in their own lives, and in their approach to the activities and the physical resources for which they are responsible as members of a church. Please contact Rev'd Rachel if you feel able to get involved in putting this scheme into action.

The material in this series has been adapted by Rev'd Rachel Hartland and Angela Spencer from "Generous God, Generous People" produced by Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich and Ruth Valerio's "Rivers of Justice" for Cover to Cover Bible Studies. September 2017.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, PARISH OF EVERSLEY AND BRAMSHILL

LIVING AS GOD'S GENEROUS PEOPLE 5

- CREATION-FOCUSED LIVING



Note: *The welcome and opening worship assumes that people will have brought images/pictures of God's creation with them to share. The leader/host may need to have some spare, and/or a laptop to show them on.*

WELCOME – Breaking the ice (10 mins)

Share the image of God's creation that you have brought, and explain why it is significant or meaningful to you.

WORSHIP – Meeting the Lord (15 mins)

With the pictures that everyone has shared laid out around you all, read Psalm 104 between you.

Consider prayerfully *Leviticus 25* using this form of Lectio Divina:

Read: One person reads it slowly, out loud.

Meditate: In silence, everyone reads it again, allowing the Holy Spirit to bring certain words or phrases into prominence, revealing God's word personally to them.

Read: Someone else reads the same passage again.

Share: Going round the group you can then share the words, phrases and thoughts the passage has described.

WORD – Applying scripture to our lives (up to 50 minutes)

1. Up until now, where would you have placed ‘the environment’ in terms of God’s plans for salvation and your list of priorities? What is more important? What less important?

Read Genesis 1:-2:3 silently. God created us, in his own image, to look after everything else that he had made. The grammar of the original Hebrew carries the sense of ‘Let’s make humans in our own image, so that they may rule over...’ In other words we are God’s representatives on earth; placed here to ‘take care’ (Genesis 2:15) of the rest of creation so that it is enabled to fulfil its purpose of existing for God’s glory.

2. What do we learn about God, the land and the people from the commandments of *Leviticus 25*?
3. Do you think the land still acts as a spiritual barometer today? Explain your answer.
4. Read *Matthew 6:9-13*: What do you think it means for God’s will to be done ‘on earth as it is in heaven’?

Read *Romans 8:18-22* and *Colossians 1:15-20*.

5. In the light of these passages, and the others read so far, how would you answer the charge that our Christian responsibility is to be ‘saving souls’ and nothing more?

Read *Revelation 4*.

It has sometimes been taught that the Earth will be destroyed when the Kingdom of God is finally brought to perfection at Jesus’ coming again. But in fact in a manner similar to our own resurrection bodies, there will be both continuity and discontinuity. The emphasis is on transformation rather than destruction.

In the ‘now and not yet’ of the Kingdom of God, the continuing responsibility to reveal God’s will for all of his creation rests with us. It is because of us that the rest of creation is in ‘bondage to decay’ and only when we come back to God and recover our calling to care generously for it as well as for each other, will it (and we) be set free.

To put it very crudely (there are so many other things we could look as well) there are four basic areas in our lives in which we can make a difference to God’s world:

- the way we travel
- the food we eat
- the energy we use
- the things we throw away

6. Look at each of these areas and discuss any practical changes you can make to your lives.

Consider the physical building of St. Mary’s Church, Eversley and the way we use it. Also think about the graveyard, its near surroundings, and the wildlife that exists in the area.

7. Do you know what mammals, plants and insects in the area around the church are endangered as a local population or be nationally scarce? If you know little, or find yourselves guessing, how might you find out?
8. Consider what we as Christians could do in and with our church building and the area around it to show the community that we are taking our responsibilities for God’s creation seriously? You could start by thinking about the four basic areas of our lives outlined above, but in the context of our church life.

PRAYER AND WITNESS – caring for each other and the world (20 mins)

- Take time to share concerns that each of you may have brought.