

Carbon Fast Church Resource

In the midst of climate chaos, hope is sprouting up around the world through the church. In Uganda, local churches are helping community members adapt by teaching new farming techniques. In Nepal, Christians are reaching out to neighbours affected by flooding. In the UK, thousands of Christians are giving generously, praying for mercy, calling on world leaders for justice and changing their lifestyles to better care for God's good earth and the people who live on it.



The *Carbon Fast* provides simple actions and prayers to help you and your church reduce your carbon footprint and protect poor communities from the changing climate.

This resource provides a weekly reading, reflection, prayer and action so that churches and small groups can take part in the *Carbon Fast* together. The *Carbon Fast's* weekly themes of simplicity, sacrifice, community, justice, creativity and generosity act as a focus for each reflection, with actions to help churches or individuals reduce their carbon footprint.

We hope your local church will be challenged and inspired through the *Carbon Fast* to take action and pray to tackle climate change on a regular basis as part of the global church's response to the problem.

We are grateful to all who have contributed to this resource:

- Rev Ron Elsdon, rector of St. Bartholomew's Church, Belfast (Church of Ireland - Anglican).
- Martin and Margot Hodson: Margot Hodson is vicar of the Haddenham Benefice, Bucks. Martin Hodson is Operations Manager for the John Ray Initiative.
- Marijke Hoek, Coordinator of Forum for Change, Evangelical Alliance
- Dewi Hughes, Tearfund's Theological Adviser
- Phil Jump: Regional Minister for the North Western Baptist Association, serving churches in North Wales, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire and Cumbria.
- Kate Wharton, Priest-in-Charge of St George's Church in Everton, Liverpool & Minister among deaf people

If you'd like to follow the *Carbon Fast* daily actions during Lent, please visit www.tearfund.org/carbonfast to download or order the guide. You can find further information and resources about Tearfund's climate change campaign at www.tearfund.org/climate

For more information, please visit www.tearfund.org/carbonfast, email enquiries@tearfund.org or call 0845 355 8355.



WEEK 1: SIMPLICITY

In the Walt Disney film *The Jungle Book* man-cub Mowgli wants to be a bear. Baloo sings a song which tells him how to do it: 'The Bear Necessities'. This week we look at signposts the Bible gives us about our 'bear necessities'.

Readings

Philippians 4:4-13

1 Timothy 4:1-5; 6:6-11, 17-21

In these passages simplicity is closely related to other important themes:

- Contentment (Philippians 4:12; 1 Timothy 6:6-8) – the 'secret' in Philippians 4:12 is not special knowledge but something 'hidden' when simplicity is a foreign idea and contentment difficult to find.
- Enjoyment (1 Timothy 6:17; cf. 4:1-4) – the background here is an asceticism which denies the goodness of what God gives us to enjoy.
- Thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:4-5) – a good place to start is at the table. Is there any good reason why you could not stop to give thanks before each meal?

Reflection

- Reflect on the abundance of all that God's creation provides that we can richly enjoy, using, for example, Genesis 1 and Psalm 104
- Christian sociologist Tony Walter wrote a book entitled *All You Love is Need*. What do you think you could not possibly do without? How often do you say, 'I need...' when you really mean 'I want...'? Can we train ourselves to speak accurately at this point?
- Simplicity is defined in 1 Timothy 6:8 as 'food and clothing'. We could correct Paul here, adding 'a roof over your head', but what do we then make of Jesus' words in Luke 9:58?

Prayer

Use Philippians 4:4-13 as a basis for prayer this week.

Father God,

Thank you for your provision and wonderful creation given to us to enjoy and to care for. Please show us where we haven't done this, and help us to live more simply and contentedly as part of our worship to you.

Amen

Action

Church action

Encourage your church to switch to a green energy supplier. This will cut your church carbon emissions significantly and send a positive message to your community that you're taking action to tackle climate change.

Tearfund partners with Ecotricity, who will donate £40 on behalf of every supporter who switches over through the scheme. See www.tearfund.org/ecotricity for details.



Additional actions

- What do you throw away that you could renew, reuse or recycle in your church or home?
- When you shop today, or any time, choose products with little or no packaging and recycle wherever you can.

Visit www.tearfund.org/carbonfast for more *Carbon Fast* actions.

Ron Elsdon



WEEK 2: SACRIFICE

Readings

Psalm 51:15-17
2 Samuel 24:18-25

Reflection

Here are some things sacrifice doesn't mean – it doesn't mean being falsely modest and declaring we're worthless and useless; it doesn't mean giving all our money away to

charity and then carrying on with our comfortable lives as though that were enough; it doesn't mean giving to God the leftovers of our lives.

We begin to get some idea of what sacrifice does mean when we look at the life of King David.

After David had sinned against God by having Uriah killed and committing adultery with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan came and challenged him about what he had done. David repented before God, and one of his responses to that was to write Psalm 51. He knew that the old style of sacrifice, of making an offering to God and then going on your way, was not what was required. He knew he needed to change his heart.

Later in his life, David wanted to build an altar to the Lord to praise and worship him. He wanted to buy a threshing floor for this purpose from Araunah. When Araunah learnt who it was that wanted the threshing floor and why, he didn't want to accept any money for it. David, however, insisted on paying him. He refused to take for free something that would be used in the service of God – he knew that God was worthy of more than that.

So sacrifice is about a whole-life attitude of heart and mind. It's about what we do, think and say, but even more than that it's about who we are. It's about recognising that God is worthy of everything we can give him, and much more besides. It's about putting God and other people first. It's about putting aside our own desires for the good of our neighbour's. It's about becoming a 'living sacrifice' (Romans 12:1).

As the world struggles under the burden of climate change and destruction of the environment, what sacrifices do we need to make to put God and his creation first and care for our global neighbours?

Prayer

Loving God, teach us what sort of sacrifice you require. Teach us how we need to live in order to become living sacrifices to you. Teach us to truly desire the good of our neighbour above our own. Help us to move beyond saying and doing 'good things' and towards a total transformation of who we are. Amen.

Action

Church action

Make a commitment as a church, church leadership or small group to reduce flying and fly only when absolutely necessary. Use Skype or phone for keeping in touch. Take the train to Europe or holiday in the UK.





Individual action

Short journeys are inefficient, so consolidate trips for minimal car use and try to walk, cycle or take a bus instead. Why not organise a church lift share scheme?

Visit www.tearfund.org/carbonfast for more individual and daily actions.

Kate Wharton



WEEK 3: COMMUNITY

Readings

Psalm 148
Acts 2:42-47

Reflection

Psalm 148 is a wonderful poem in which the whole community of creation praises God. Animals, plants, mountains and stars are involved in this praise. But today the community of creation is in serious trouble, with climate

change just one of many problems facing it. As long ago as 1940, Aldo Leopold, the founding father of environmental ethics, wrote in *A Sand County Almanac*, 'We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.' Leopold was concerned with land, but the same sentiments can equally be applied to climate. We abuse it at our peril.

The first Christians shared a very special community life together (Acts 2:42-47). Today we need to rediscover this community living and apply it to our lives. We can approach community in three ways: our local community, our common community with other creatures of the earth, and our shared humanity with the poorest people of the world. We can start very simply by doing more things locally and more together. This is one of the principles of the Transition Movement, which seeks to strengthen communities as they follow an energy descent plan towards a low-carbon future.

But the church in Acts was more than just a strong community - the Holy Spirit lit up their lives. As Christians, we have a spiritual task to bring hope as we are active in our wider communities and look outward to the world. As we do so, the ripples of our efforts will also support the other creatures in the global ecosystem to which we belong. We will also help those in the global South who are being heavily impacted by climate change.

Prayer

Please pray...

- that Christians across the world will help to connect church and local communities to tackle climate change
- for the worldwide church community, that these issues will be taken seriously
- for the world's poorest people and the community of creation coping with climate change

Action

Church action

Do an efficiency sweep around your church and find ways to save energy (and money!), such as insulating your loft or using curtains to prevent heat being lost. Suggest that church members do the same in their homes.

Individual action

- Share unwanted possessions with people in your community through The Besom www.besom.com or Freecycle www.freecycle.org



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- Community trading. Lend ladders, share shopping trips and find other ways to trade things in your church and community to reduce unnecessary purchasing and travelling.
- Find out about your local Transition Movement. See www.transitionnetwork.org

Martin and Margot Hodson



WEEK 4: JUSTICE

Reading

Isaiah 11:1-10

Reflection

This passage in Isaiah is a wonderful vision of the character and rule of the Messiah.

- That he is a 'shoot' of the family of Jesse indicates that he will be in the royal line of David. That he is a 'root' of Jesse indicates that he is also the divine origin from which Jesse and his family sprouted.
- This divine Davidic king will be so thoroughly endowed with the Spirit of God that out of a deep respect [fear] for God he will invariably do what is consistent with God's will – expressed in the words 'wisdom', 'understanding', 'counsel', 'might' and 'knowledge'.
- The result will be that he will establish 'righteousness' and 'justice' on the earth. These two terms occur together many times in the Old Testament. They are not abstract ideas but what one does in order to make relationships consistent with what God wants. Here in Isaiah, as in many other Old Testament passages, making things right for the poor who have suffered at the hands of the rich is fundamental to what justice looks like on earth.
- Not only will doing righteousness and justice bring peace between people, but also peace will be restored to the whole creation – between humans and God, among humans, between humans and animals and among the animals.

The coming of the Messiah will mean a comprehensive peace on earth. It will be a new heaven and earth indeed.

Prayer

Father God, we thank you that the Messiah described in Isaiah has come. We look forward to the day when this glorious vision will be fully realised in the new heaven and earth that will be the home of justice and righteousness. (2 Peter 3:13)

As we wait, fill us with the Spirit of our Messiah so that we will work for justice/righteousness:

- that the good news of salvation through our Messiah Jesus will be heard by all
- that the 'poor of the earth' will be raised up and the oppressive rulers of the earth brought low
- that the non-human creation will be worked and cared for out of love for the Creator and not exploited to destruction

Action

Church action

Ask your church to act for justice by taking the latest Tearfund *Act Fast* campaigns action or by writing a joint letter to your MP asking them to take action to tackle climate change. You can order *Act Fast* action cards from 0845 355 8355 or from <http://resources.tearfund.org>

Individual action

- Visit www.tearfund.org/campaigns to take the latest campaign action and to sign up to receive regular updates and actions to your inbox.

Dewi Hughes



WEEK 5: CREATIVITY

Reading

Exodus 31:1-11

Reflection

Some years ago in Africa, in the midst of a scene of immense poverty, I came across two teenage boys utterly absorbed in a game of draughts. What particularly caught my attention was that they had made their game from a sheet of paper, most of which was a board; the rest scrunched into tiny balls which served as pieces. Two hours later I passed the same spot, and they were still sitting in the afternoon sunshine, completely engaged.

As we reflect on our use of the earth's resources, a significant question we might ask is to what degree has our overconsumption robbed us of that kind of creativity? With so many products mass produced, what skills and abilities do we risk losing?

But does this really matter, or should we, as Christians, have other concerns? If asked to define 'spiritual gifts', we are likely to recall those catalogues from the New Testament epistles which include preaching, prophecy, discernment and the like. It is interesting to discover therefore that one of the earliest references to an individual being 'filled with the Spirit of God' results in their becoming not a great preacher or prophet but an artist.

When God commissioned the tabernacle, he wanted it to reflect the creativity of his people. In calling Moses to harness the skills of Bezalel and Oholiab, he identifies their extraordinary talent as being rooted in him. And let's be clear, God describes their basic skills as the gift of his Spirit – they do not become so because they happen to be used to create a worship centre.

This should not surprise us: from the outset, God presents himself as a Creator. Creativity is God's gift to us; it is part of what it means to be made in his image. When we engage it, we are reflecting his likeness within us – encouraging creativity in others can be an act of Christian mission, helping them discover something of the God who made them. To love and care for God's creation and to nurture and celebrate our own creativity go hand in hand.

When we use our creative skills, we glimpse something of God's nature, an opportunity which is denied us if everything we have and own is simply mass produced.

How can your church community use creativity to care for God's world and the poorest people who are most vulnerable when creation is harmed?

Prayer

Creator God, help us to treasure not only your creation but also the imagination and skill that you have given to work with its resources and make things of beauty and purpose.

Help us recognise the lasting value of all that is made rather than simply seeking gain by making more, and so may we reflect and discover the God in whose likeness we are formed.
Amen



Action

Church action

Encourage your church to have a meat-free Sunday! If everyone in the UK gave up meat once a week, the emissions savings would equal taking 5 million cars off the road.

Individual action

Grow vegetables, herbs and fruit in your churchyard or garden. If you don't have one, use pots on a windowsill or in a sunny spot indoors.

Phil Jump



WEEK 6: GENEROSITY

Readings

John 3:16
Romans 8:29
2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Reflection

The measure of God's generosity is illuminated in John 3:16: 'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'. This giving love characterises the Father who adopted us into his family.

Jesus' love for us is demonstrated in giving his life for us, becoming poor for our sake so that we might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). He is 'the firstborn among many brothers'. Paul lived and wrote in a time in which the siblings fulfilled a crucial function in society. Siblings upheld the honour of the father's house. The 'sibling' metaphor is central to Paul's view of the church and has consequences for our lifestyle. For our generosity should reflect values of the family.

We read in Romans 8:29 that we are being conformed into Christ's image. Paul, however, describes very little about Jesus' life and instead focuses on the cross. So, 'what the Son is like' is best expressed from the way Paul characterises Jesus' death: his love, obedience, self-giving and suffering. The measure of generosity Paul wants to encourage in the Christian community is anchored in the cross. The sincerity of our love and generosity is linked to the earnestness of Jesus' giving (2 Corinthians 8:1-15).

We are being shaped into Jesus' image. This sets high standards for our discipleship. So how do we mirror him? In our quest for justice, in our identification with the needy, in our concern for the vulnerable, in our humility and in our love. Such love will express itself in generosity. Out of our abundance a stream flows to where there is lack.

We are rich. Our homes, time, gifting, work and families are gifts. They are a huge blessing. They are also a good context in which to exercise our stewardship: stewardship that reflects God's image, his character, into the world. His family is truly good news.

Prayer

Give thanks for God's generosity in creating and sustaining the world.

Ask God to show you an action point for generosity and stewardship of the earth in four areas: (1) home, (2) time, (3) gifting/talent and (4) finance.

Action

Church action

Sign up to helping those already hit hardest by climate change with the Climate Justice Fund. This Church of England initiative is open to churches of all denominations:
www.climatejusticefund.org



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The Climate Justice Fund gives you the opportunity to support three highly effective Anglican projects – in Uganda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo – which help poor and vulnerable communities adapt to the challenges of climate change.

Individual action

Prepare a simple meal for neighbours or a family who could use one. New parents and elderly friends won't turn down the offer!

Marijke Hoek

