

Creation Care and the Kingdom of God

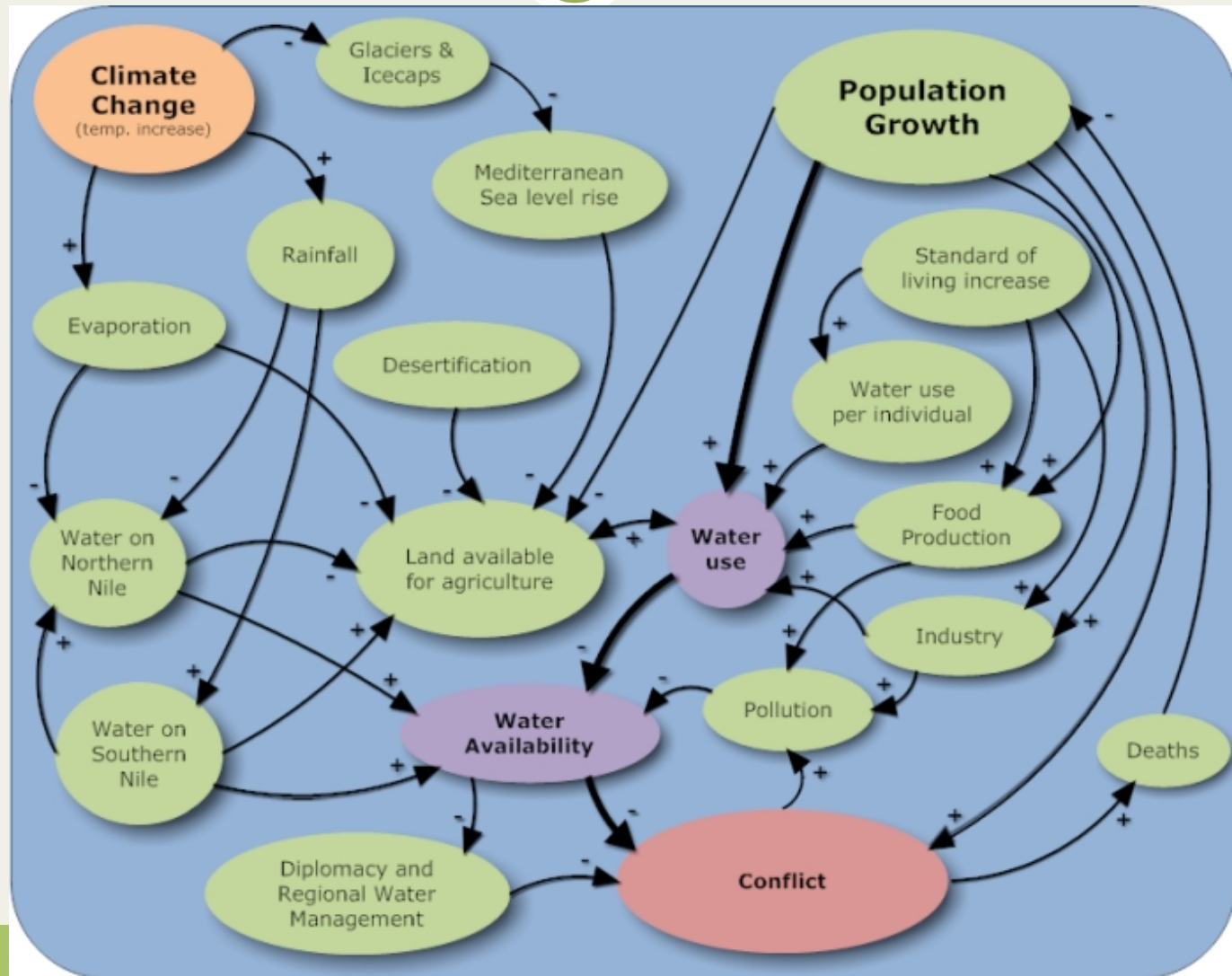


Dr Hilary Marlow

19th January 2018

Christians in Science, Bristol

Environment: What are the issues?



The Guardian, 4th Jan 2018

Oceans suffocating as huge dead zones quadruple since 1950, scientists warn

Areas starved of oxygen in open ocean and by coasts have soared in recent decades, risking dire consequences for marine life and humanity



i A fisherman on a beach in Temuco, Chile that is blanketed with dead sardines, a result of algal blooms that suck oxygen out of the water. Photograph: Felix Marquez/AP

Science 05 Jan 2018:
Vol. 359, Issue 6371

Christian responses to environmental issues



Fear and suspicion

Other worldliness

Ignorance

Apathy and inertia

Powerlessness

What has faith to do with the environment?

YOUR ENVIRONMENT EXTRA

ISSUE 17 NOVEMBER 2007 – JANUARY 2008



things that will save
THE PLANET

Results from a poll of 25 experts



‘It’s time the world’s faith groups reminded us we have a duty to restore and maintain the ecological balance of the planet...

...Christians, Muslims, Hindus and others already believe that it is morally wrong to damage the environment. The problem is that many people simply choose to ignore this’

(Environment Agency, *Your Environment Extra*, Issue 17, Nov 2007)

A moral and spiritual issue



In the final analysis, our economic and social behavior is rooted in ***our deepest moral and spiritual motivations***. We cannot expect to make the fundamental changes needed in our economic life unless they are based on the highest and best of our moral, spiritual and ethical traditions, a reverence for life, a respect for each other, and a commitment to responsible stewardship of the earth.

(Maurice Strong, 4th Kew Environmental Lecture, 1998)

The Five Marks of Mission



To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

To respond to human need by loving service

To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Countering decline and irrelevance



“Just three per cent of those aged 18 to 24 said they belonged to the Church of England”

(British Social Attitudes Survey, 2017)

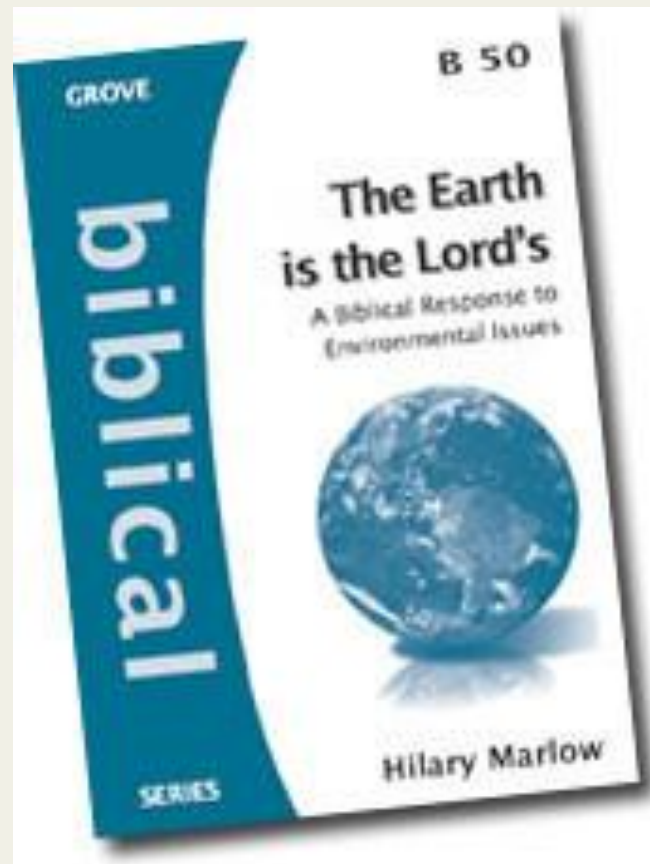


“We can make cultural connections
with the unchurched by our
common goal of going green”

Sarah Guldalian (Lutheran Church)

Biblical and Theological Perspectives





“Ancient Israel may not have been anxious or fearful about the plight of the physical planet in the way we are, for the very good reason that we have made a far greater mess of it than the ancient world ever did. So to that extent many aspects of what we would regard as urgent ecological issues were not explicitly addressed within the Old Testament. Nevertheless, the theological principles and ethical implications that they *did* articulate regarding creation do have a far-reaching impact on how biblically sensitive Christians will want to frame their ecological ethics today.”

(Christopher Wright, 2004)

God as creator ...



We believe in one God ... maker of heaven and earth and of ***all that is***, seen and unseen. (Nicene Creed)

The earth is the Lord's and ***everything*** in it (Ps 24:1)

God saw ***everything*** that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. (Gen 1:31)

Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; ***Everything*** in the earth is his glory. (Isa 6:3)

...and sustainer



Ps 104

- ²⁴ O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures...
- ²⁷ These all look to you to give them their food in due season; ...
- ²⁹ When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.
- ³⁰ When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

The purpose of creation



Creation reflects God's glory (Ps 19:1-3)

Creation praises God (Ps 148, 150)

Creation mourns over human sin (Hos 4:1-3, Isa 24:3-6)

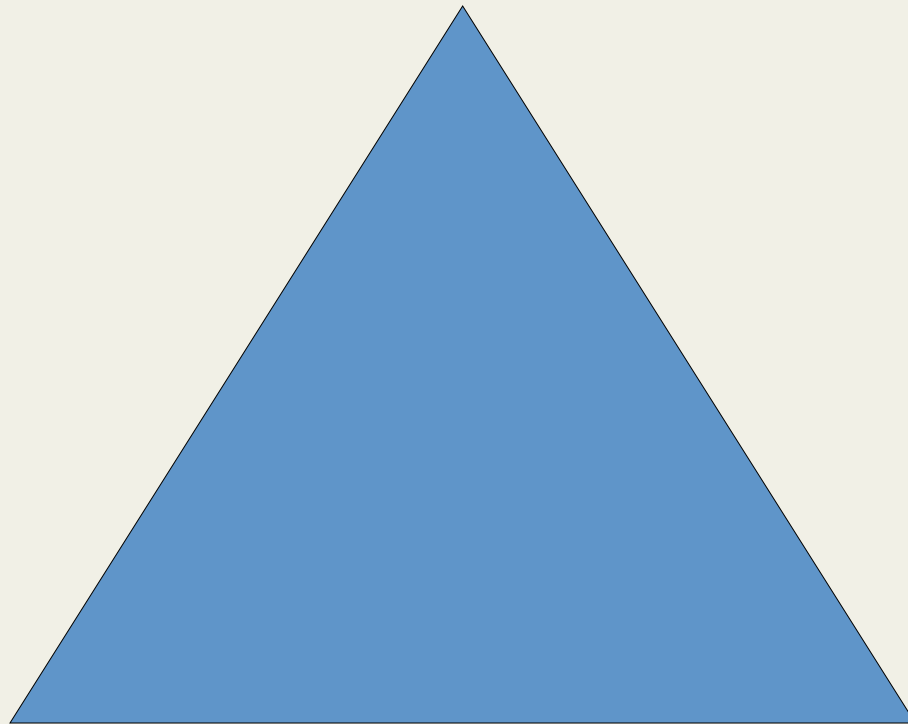
Creation cries out for justice (Amos 8:4-8)

Creation has intrinsic value (Job 38:25-27)

Made for relationship



God



Natural world

Humanity

Broken relationships



Cause and effect (Gen 3)

Justice and righteousness (Amos 8)

The earth mourns (Hosea 4)

Hosea 4



- ¹ Hear the word of the LORD, O people of Israel; for the LORD has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land.
- ² Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed.
- ³ Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing.

Humanity – part of creation



In the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. (Gen 1:27)

The Lord God formed the human from the dust of the earth. (Gen 2:7)

Human purpose



God blessed them and said to them, “...fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion...”(Gen 1:28)

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend it and keep it. (Gen 2:15)

Principles



Dominion not domination

Responsibilities not rights

Representative role

Servanthood

Relationships – with God, with fellow humans and
with the earth

Christ and creation



John 1

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us

The earth responds



‘For we observed his star in the East’ (Matt 2:2)

He was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. (Mark 1:13)

‘Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’ (Mark 4:41)

The earth shook and the rocks were split open
(Matt 27:51)

Creator and redeemer



[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him *all things* in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers-- *all things* have been created through him and for him. He himself is before *all things*, and in him *all things* hold together. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself *all things*, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.
(Col 1:15-20)

Waiting in hope



For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God ...

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8: 20-23)

What kind of hope?



Richard Bauckham:

Ultimate hope *and*
Proximate hope



Future transformation

Rev 21



¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. ...

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more.



Isaiah 35

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing...

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

Characterised by ...



Earth as well as heaven renewed (Isa 65:17, Rev 21:1-3)

All creation worships (Rev 4:11, 5:13)

Creation set free (Rom 8:18-23)

God's judgement: 'for destroying those who destroy the earth' (Rev 11:18)

“Our proximate hopes are for what we can desire and envisage that reflects, within this world, the ultimate hope of new creation...

But proximate hopes depend partly on what humans do. God’s providence is constantly at work engaging with human evil, limiting its effects, bringing good out of it, but he does not abolish it in this world. ”

The Kingdom of God on earth

31

Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come, your will be done ***on earth***, as it is in heaven.

Mark 12:31 The second [commandment] is this, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.

Mark 16:15 And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news ***to the whole creation***.”

A mark of mission



“To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth”

Spheres of influence



Personal lifestyle choices

Local and community engagement

National and international action

Resources



A Rocha – Christians in Conservation
(www.arocha.org)

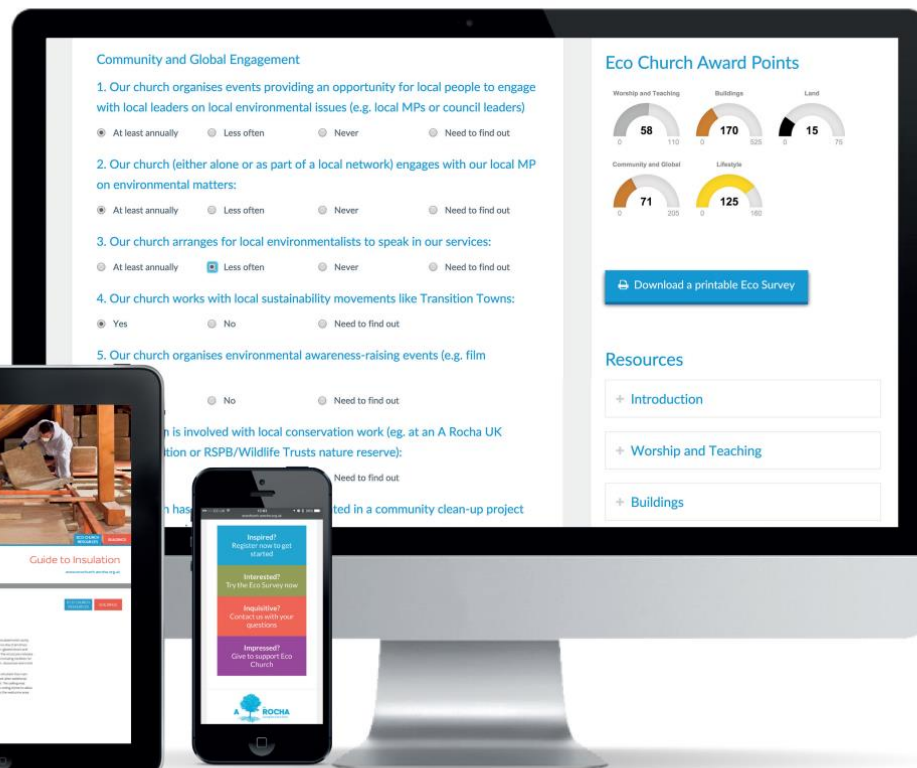
Green Christian (www.greenchristian.org.uk/)

John Ray Initiative (www.jri.org.uk)

Operation Noah (www.operation-noah.org)

ECO CHURCH

AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT



 **THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

tearfund

christian aid

The Methodist Church 

Welcome to the Eco Survey! Answer the following questions as they relate to your church to find out if you already qualify for an Eco Church Award.

You can see your Eco Church Award points accumulate, section by section, on the gauges on the right. When all the gauges that apply to your church turn bronze, silver or gold, you qualify for that level of Eco Church Award. The survey should take you less than 20 minutes, and you can save your answers at any time by clicking the 'Save' button at the bottom of section 5 (Lifestyle) of the survey. You will then have the option of editing your saved survey next time you login.

1 Worship and Teaching [2 Buildings](#) [3 Land](#) [4 Community and Global](#) [5 Lifestyle](#)

1. Special Sundays relating to caring for God's earth (e.g. Creation Time, Environment Sunday, Rogation Sunday etc.) are celebrated in our church:

☒ At least annually ☐ Less often ☐ Never ☐ Need to find out

2. The hymns and songs (and liturgies if used) in our church services enable us to celebrate God's creation:

☐ Regularly ☒ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐ Need to find out

3. Our church prays for environmental issues

☐ Weekly ☒ Monthly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Never

4. Caring for God's earth is preached in our church

☒ At least annually ☐ Less often ☐ Never ☐ Need to find out

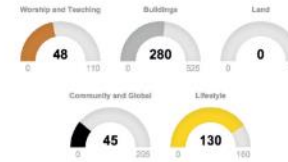
5. Our church hosts guest speakers from A Rocha UK or other Christian environmental organisations (e.g. Christian Aid, Tearfund, Green Christian, The John Ray Initiative) to talk about environmental issues

☒ At least annually ☐ Less often ☐ Never ☐ Need to find out

6. Caring for God's earth features as a teaching theme in our church's youth work:

☐ At least annually ☐ Less often ☐ Never ☐ Need to find out

Eco Church Award Points



On saving your Eco Survey you will receive a copy of your responses via email.

[Download the Eco Survey questions in PDF format](#)

Resources

[+ Introduction](#)

[+ Worship and Teaching](#)

[+ Buildings](#)

[+ Land](#)

[+ Community and Global](#)

[+ Lifestyle](#)

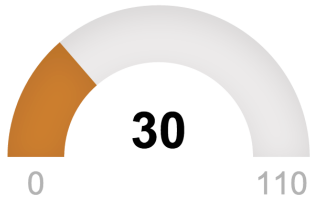
Eco Survey



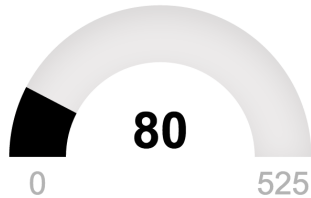
Worship and teaching
Management of church
buildings
Management of church land
Community and global
engagement
Lifestyle

Eco Church Award Points

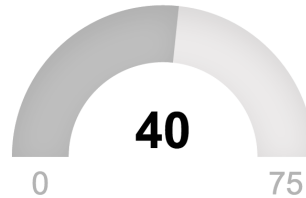
Worship and Teaching



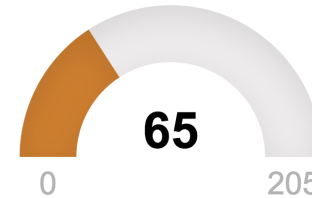
Buildings



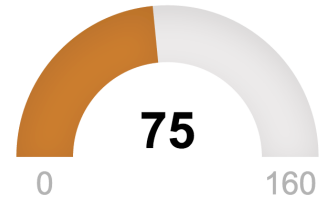
Land



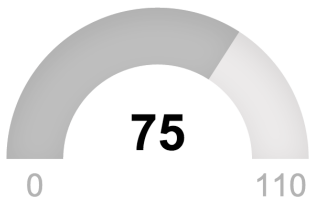
Community and Global



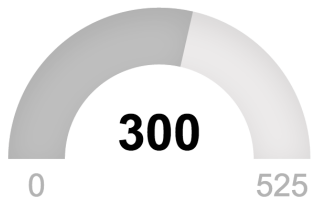
Lifestyle



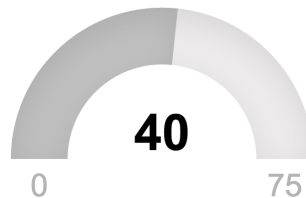
Worship and Teaching



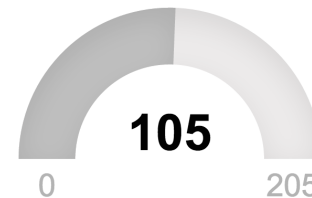
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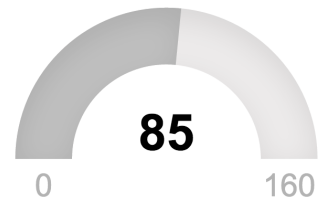
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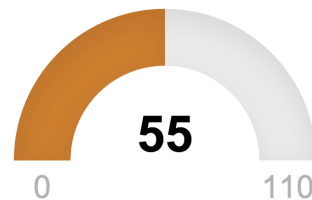
Community and Global



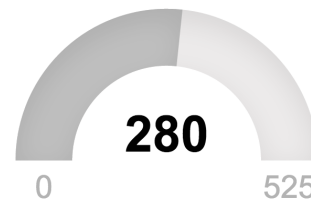
Lifestyle



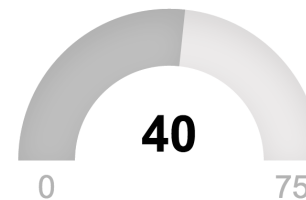
Worship and Teaching



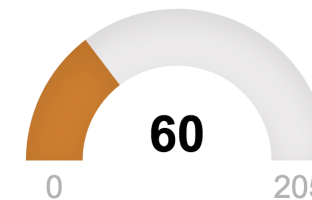
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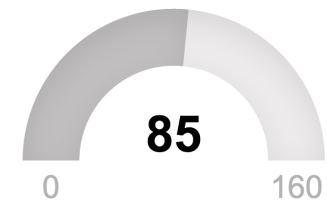
Land



Community and Global



Lifestyle





Silver Eco Church Award Certificate

This is to certify that

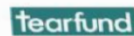
_____ has won a Silver Eco Church Award in recognition of their efforts to care for God's earth in each of the following areas (as applicable):

Worship and Teaching
Management of Buildings and Land
Community and Global Engagement
Lifestyle

Signed _____

Date _____

CEO, A Rocha UK



ecochurch.arocha.org.uk
arocha.org.uk



Register at:
www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk



Francis Schaeffer:

“We should be looking now, on the basis of the work of Christ, for substantial healing in every place affected by the Fall.”

Pollution and the Death of Man
(1970)

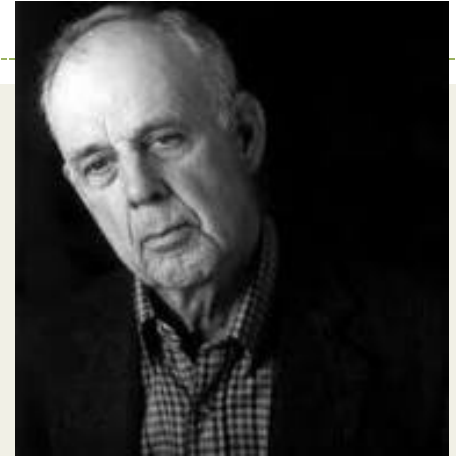




Wendell Berry:

“To live we must daily break the body and shed the blood of creation. When we do this knowingly, lovingly, skilfully and reverently it is a sacrament. When we do it ignorantly, greedily, clumsily and destructively it is a desecration. In such desecration we condemn ourselves to spiritual moral loneliness and others to want.

The Gift of Good Land (1981)





The prophet Micah:

**He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic
6:8)**