

## GREEN HEARTS

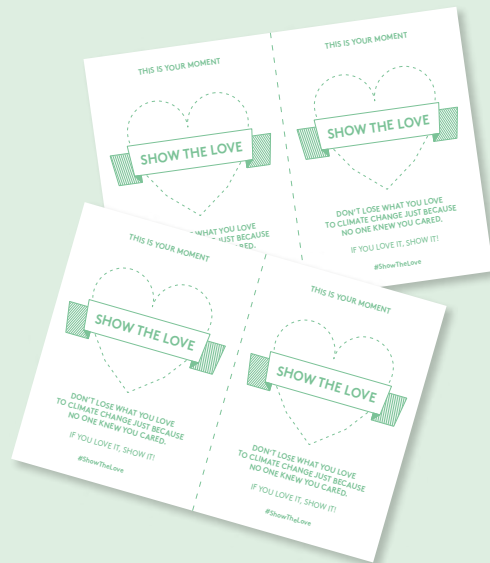
This Valentine's day we want to turn everything green to raise awareness of climate change and how it is affecting everything we love.

We can turn our church services up and down the country 'green' by exploring together how the issue of climate change relates to our faith.

From the Book of Genesis to Revelation, there is a thread that runs through the Bible which binds creation and humankind together in a relationship of love, respect and protection.

All people, all around the world, share this, our common home. We are called to care for the earth and one another with joy, recognising that the earth cares for us all.

There are many themes and passages found in scripture which can help us reflect on this biblical thread.



## SUGGESTED READING

### Our relationship with creation

*Genesis 1:26–31; Genesis 2:15; Psalm 104, Job 38–41*

Throughout scripture countless voices praise the beauty and the wonder of God's gift to us in creation. In the first chapters of the book of Genesis, we see that God invites us to share in creation through our unique relationship with the earth, and that God makes us to 'till it and keep it'. Our purpose is twofold; to enable the earth to be fruitful, and also to take care of it so that it will not be used up, but sustained for the future. In recent centuries, we have been good at 'tilling', but not so good at 'keeping' and we need to remember this our dual vocation.

We are also made in God's image, in the image of the creator, and so just as God carefully created the world to flourish, we are called to take our part in the goodness and flourishing of creation, cherishing, protecting and keeping what God values and calls good.

Richard Bauckham, a Christian theologian, suggests we have for too long imagined a vertical structure to describe the relationship between God, humankind and creation, as though we human beings are somehow 'above' creation. Yet through the unique relationship God set out in Genesis, we can know ourselves to be part of a horizontal community of creation. We are not called to dominate over other creatures, plants or minerals, but rather to live in good relationship with them, like sisters and brothers of the same family.

### Looking to Jesus: wisdom for creation

*Matthew: 25: 34*

Jesus' own life and death offer us a model for how we live in relation to creation. He lived in creation, walked the earth, lived a simple life, not accumulating possessions, but also enjoying life to the full and sharing in the gifts of creation, like good wine and plentiful bread. The early church was shaped by Jesus' passion for fellowship and sharing.

His ministry was shaped by relationships of restoration, from the blind being able to see the paralysed getting up and walking, and also by the abundant sharing of a joyful and simple life. His life offers us an inspiring example to follow, and also the promise of the renewing of creation in the promise of the Kingdom of God. Jesus's life is the model of what it could be like to live life in all its fullness.

The Gospels shows us Jesus as one who was at peace with the animals in the wild places of creation in the wilderness, one before whom the most terrifying storms are stilled, and one whom death could not defeat and who was raised to new life in a garden.

**"We need to regain a sense that our relationship with the earth is about communion not consumption"**

Rowan Williams:

## REFLECTIONS/PRAYER

### A prayer based on Psalm 102:25

**'In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.'**

Loving God,  
thank you for the gift of creation.  
As we experience each day,  
as we take every step on our life's pilgrimage,  
may we take time to wonder and give you thanks.  
From each sunrise to every sunset,  
in all the seasons  
and with every breath,  
may we celebrate our home in creation,  
and the gift of life.

As our climate is changing,  
give us the compassion to care deeply  
that people are suffering now,  
from spoiled harvest and violent storms,  
from drought and flood.  
Give us the imagination to see  
that future generations are in peril  
and may not know the beauty we see.

May our actions reflect a love for your world  
our prayers be shaped by a longing for justice for all,  
and our imaginations inspired to hope for  
a world free from poverty.  
Amen.

A number of faith agencies have all created prayers and reflections on climate change, which you can find here: [ShowTheLove.org.uk](http://ShowTheLove.org.uk)

## WHAT WE CAN DO NOW

**A great way to raise awareness is to start making & wearing green hearts now! Whether you know how to knit, sew or use scissors, everybody can make and wear green hearts.**

Why not get together with your home group, encourage kids at messy church or Sunday school, organise a craft club, or make together whilst watching a climate-themed movie. And bring your hearts along to church to make a display or prayer wall for the people and places we love.

