

Encouraging, Informing, Inspiring

STALBANS.ANGLICAN.ORG

ISSUE 5 | ADVENT 2019

ALBAN

Life

 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

In Beds, Herts, Luton and Barnet

Election and Environment Issue

Seeking truth

- + In inter faith work
- + In the climate crisis
- + In politics

DIOCESE OF
ST ALBANS

Living God's Love

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

There is no Planet B

If you want a well laid-out and easily mined, yet erudite, volume of questions and answers about climate science, Mike Berners-Lee's book, *'There is no Planet B,'* is for you.

There is both passion and scientific rigour on its pages. It abounds in fascinating tables such as how far you can travel on the energy from a square metre of (Californian) land, depending on whether it is used to grow wheat, willow grass or covered with a solar panel. A wheat-powered biofuel car would travel one mile: a solar powered bike, 21,243.

Mike Berners-Lee consults, thinks, writes and researches on sustainability and on responses to 21st century challenges. This is his third book.

About his first book, *How Bad Are Bananas? The Carbon Footprint Of Everything*, Bill Bryson wrote "I can't think of

the last time I read a book that was more fascinating, and useful and enjoyable all at the same time"

His second book, *The Burning Question*, co-written with Duncan Clark, explores the big picture on climate change and the underlying global dynamics, asking what mix of politics, economics, psychology and technology are really required to deal with the problem. Al Gore described it as "fascinating, important and highly recommended" and has been among MPs' top ten summer reads.

Mike is the founder of Small World Consulting, an associate company of Lancaster University, which works with organisations from tech giants to supermarkets. Small World is a leader in the field of carbon metrics and their use.

He is a professor at Lancaster University's Lancaster Environment Centre, where his research includes sustainable food systems and carbon metrics. He co-ordinates the Global Futures Event series which is freely open to all and explores big global challenges in multidisciplinary ways.

"... a far-ranging and truth-telling handbook that is as readable as it is instructive." - Elizabeth Kolbert, The New Yorker, author of *The Sixth Extinction*

"... a lively and cogent assessment of what is happening to the Earth's biosphere and resources ... All citizens should be grateful for this information-packed and wide-ranging primer." - Martin Rees, Astronomer Royal

"... you'll come away wiser, healthier and also entertained ... could not be more timely." - David Shukman, BBC Science Editor

"I absolutely love this book ... a beacon of common sense, clarity and - crucially - hope." - Caroline Lucas, MP

We have the chance to live better than ever. But, as humans become ever more powerful, can we avoid blundering into disaster?

Feeding the world, climate change, biodiversity, antibiotics, plastics - the list of concerns seems endless. But what is most pressing, what are the knock-on effects of our actions, and what should we do first? Do we all need to become vegetarian? How can we fly in a low carbon world? Should we track? How can we take control of technology? Does it all come down to population? And, given the global nature of the challenges we now face, what on Earth can any of us do?

Fortunately, Mike Berners-Lee has crunched the numbers and plotted a course of action that is practical and even enjoyable.

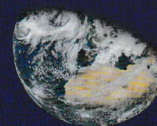
There Is No Planet B maps it out in an accessible and entertaining way, filled with astonishing facts and analysis. For the first time you'll find big-picture perspective on the environmental and economic challenges of the day laid out in one place, and traced through to the underlying roots - questions of how we live and think. This book will shock you, surprise you - and then make you laugh.

And you'll find practical and even inspiring ideas for what you can actually do to help humanity thrive on this - our only - planet.

Mike Berners-Lee

THERE IS NO PLANET B

"a massively entertaining compendium ... also massively important" - Bill McKibben



THERE IS NO PLANET B
A Handbook for the Make or Break Years

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
www.cambridge.org





Environment *Climate Crisis: Time to Seize the Day*

Introducing Rachel Johnston, Diocesan Environment Officer

Below, Rachel introduces herself and right, she explains our call to bring hope in the face of 'climate anxiety'.



Becoming DEO at a time of climate emergency is both a huge privilege and a great responsibility. I have been the Environment Officer for the parish of St Stephen with St Julian, St Albans for two years and have a long-standing interest in environmental issues. During this time, working towards an Eco-Church Award has challenged our parish to place sustainability at the core of our church life and witness to our local community. My role as DEO will be to extend and develop the resources needed for our diocese to respond to the challenges posed by climate change. As a first step I will be creating a network of enthusiastic volunteers to support parishes through the sharing of good practice, expertise and inspiration across the diocese. If you have experience, expertise or are keen to be involved, please contact me at environment@stalbans.anglican.org. I'd be delighted to hear from you.

The climate crisis is ever more insistent. As protest and politics gear up, so does the Church of England.

February's General Synod mandated action. In October, at Diocesan Synod, Bishop Alan set out the theology behind caring for God's Creation and suggested ways we can take action. One of his first acts was to appoint a new Environment Officer. Now, in November, the CofE Environmental Working Group has launched its plan. Worldwide, major statements from Pope Francis and a focus on climate at the 2020 Lambeth Conference of bishops from around the Anglican Communion contrast with the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Climate accord in just over a year.

Christian hope for God's Creation

There is no longer any question - climate change is a fact, and if no action is taken our world is facing a mass-extinction of species that threatens to destroy our civilisation. It's no wonder then that young people despair at the apparent apathy and lack of concern shown by governments. School strikes have hit the headlines, with frustration and anger driving children and young people to protest at the destruction of their futures. Hopelessness and despair lie at the root of a new mental illness particularly affecting young people, Climate Anxiety. As a society we need to recognise and respond to their very real concerns.

What then can we as Christians do to support our communities, particularly young people? How do we live in a world where those with power and influence are in denial, in conflict or seem set on a course of self-destruction?

Taking practical action to adopt a more sustainable life-style is an essential first step, but we can also make a difference by living hopefully. As Christians we have hope for the future based on the evidence of God's love for his Creation

described throughout the Bible, and the promise that in the fullness of time there will be a new Creation when the earth will be renewed. While we might seem to be heading for climate disaster and destruction in the present time, we can still have hope based on the Gospel and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to bring new life.

Writing in 'Sustainable Faith: A green gospel for the age of climate change' Nicola Bull and Mark McAllister describe three main ways in which we can bring the hope of the resurrection into our communities based on the example of Jesus. We can act as teachers or prophets, cherishing the richness of God's Creation, teaching about its value and warning against the destruction of biodiversity. We can follow Jesus' priestly example, praising God with gratitude for his gifts and respecting the earth as a sacred place to be offered back to Him. Just as Jesus is Lord over all the Earth, we can act as good stewards of Creation, living more sustainably.

Sustainable Faith: A green gospel for the age of climate change

Nicola L. Bull and Mark McAllister, 2017.

Care for God's creation: based in Christian teaching

Giving a recent presidential address to Diocesan Synod, Bishop Alan remarked on the engagement of young people with the climate crisis and gave a concise and clear scriptural basis for caring for the environment and responding to the crisis.

He began these remarks to Synod talking about Greta Thunberg and her vast following of young people who care passionately about the environment. He commented: "In passing, I would observe that if we want to grow younger as a diocese one wonderful point of contact with tens of thousands of young people is working together on protecting and cherishing the environment."

He then set out a Christian basis for the care of God's creation, starting with the fifth of the Anglican Communion's five marks of mission: "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth."

HERE'S WHAT HE SAID:

"This fifth mark of mission arises from the biblical teaching that God is creator of the entire cosmos.

"The book of Genesis begins with two accounts of creation: Genesis 1.1-2.4a and Genesis 2.4b-3.24. These first three chapters give us two different creation stories. The first one (1.1-2.4a) comes from what is known as the Priestly source, whereas the second account - running from Genesis 2.4b to the end of chapter 3 - is from the Jahwist source.

"The first is the story of creation in six days. The seventh is a day of rest. It is a carefully crafted text and some scholars think that the refrain 'And God saw that it was good' which comes seven times might indicate that it was used in worship.

"The whole point of the narrative is to stress that absolutely everything in the entire cosmos comes from God. It's not trying to give us what we consider a modern-day scientific rationale about how the cosmos came about but to claim that God is the source. It climaxes in the creation of humanity - we are 'made in God's image' and as such we

are given responsibility for overseeing God's creation.

"The second account, which starts in Genesis 2.4b, makes a short, factual statement about creation ('In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens...') and then focuses on the creation of humankind in the Garden of Eden. It culminates with the story of the 'fall' which explains why there is evil and sin in the world.

THE FIVE MARKS OF MISSION

Dating from 1984, the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission express the Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission. The first mark of mission is based on Jesus' summary of His mission. It is sometimes said that the first four make no sense without the fifth.

- 1. TELL: To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom**
- 2. TEACH: To teach, baptise and nurture new believers**
- 3. TEND: To respond to human need by loving service**
- 4. TRANSFORM: To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation**
- 5. TREASURE: To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the Earth**

"Both of these creation stories in Genesis have shaped the doctrine of Creation: the world and all that it contains comes from the free creative actions of a loving God; it is good but it is, in some sense, fallen. It's not quite as God intended it to be. However, the key thing we need to take from these two narratives is that it is God's world and we are his stewards. We are responsible for his creation."

He also observed: "Well, although I know something about theology, I am not a scientist, so I only want to make two observations. Firstly, despite the misgivings of President Trump and President Bolsonaro, the overwhelming scientific consensus is that global

warming is taking place and we are losing species of animals at an alarming rate. Secondly, the only sensible approach is to take the precautionary principle and act on it. So now we come to the question 'What are we going to do about it?'" **See opposite for his suggestions.**

OTHER VIEWS?

Supposing the opposition of some climate deniers is not about science but about belief?

In the face of Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox staunch support of action to combat climate change, including from the US mainline Protestant denominations, in contrast, some other N American denominations including the largest, the Southern Baptists, express strongly anti-environmental attitudes.

They even attempt to suppress green activities, citing suspicions that stewardship, improperly understood, smacks of neo-pagan-style nature worship or even that it might lead to anti-capitalist sentiments.

These beliefs also depend on a reinvigorated belief in end-times apocalypics that makes it pointless to worry about global warming and other environmental problems. Could it be that these views are having a disproportionate political influence?

There is evidence from American academics of a correlation between faith and climate scepticism in the US.

American Christians, as a whole, have lower levels of environmental concern than do non-Christians (Jews, people of other faiths, and non-believers). Tellingly, the higher the level of religious commitment, the lower the level of environmental concern. Another recent study showed, similarly, that American Christians, collectively, when considered without regard for denomination, have less environmental concern than do Americans of other faiths or those who say they are not affiliated with institutional religion.

GofE's Environmental Group's call to action

The Church of England's senior advisory group on the environment has called for urgent action on the climate crisis.

The Environmental Working Group has recommended that all sectors of the church from national institutions to parishes and church schools should recognise their shared responsibility in a time of crisis for creation, and work together to avoid the devastating consequences of climate change.

The statement has been issued to provide an update and an overview of the current position of the church and how it is responding to recent scientific evidence revealing the severity of biodiversity loss and habitat destruction.

It acknowledges the 'urgency and significance' of climate change and it demands a more comprehensive response from the church to what Archbishop Welby has described as 'the greatest challenge that we and future generations face'. Care for creation must be placed at the centre of the church's mission and ministry, recognising that it is 'our sacred duty to protect the natural world we've so generously been given, as well as our neighbours around the world who will be the first affected.'

Our diocese will also be revising and updating our environment policy and establishing our own environment

working group to respond with 'swift and decisive action'.

Nationally, a motion is in preparation to go before the General Synod at the earliest opportunity for a target for carbon reduction across the church to net zero by 2050. Wherever possible, it is expected that churches will, however, take steps to achieve net zero far earlier. In our diocese there is a strong consensus in support of a similar target and wide-ranging action within a framework similar to that provided by the Eco-Church scheme devised by the Christian environmental charity, A Rocha. The challenge will be to provide the resources needed, but in this we will have support of the national EWG in finding solutions to the complex issues involved in working towards a more sustainable future.

Reaching our target as a diocese will require comprehensive action to meet the demands of an uncertain future. Our churches will need to be prepared to support their local communities and be proactive in mitigating the effects of climate change as churches in other parts of the country are already doing, responding to extreme weather events or coping with refugees.

At the same time, there is an opportunity for us to bring hope to those around us. As we act to protect biodiversity and reduce our

carbon footprints we will not only be making a positive contribution to the environment, we will also be witnessing to the message of the Gospel. Christians across the country are being encouraged to join in and take action, starting with prayer. Two recommended websites of prayer points on environmental issues can be found at www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org and <https://greenchristian.org.uk/faith-and-hope/prayer-guide/>

Three key events are taking place next year:

- Environmental and theological issues surrounding the climate and social justice are explored in the Archbishop's Lent book, *Saying yes to life* by Ruth Valerio.
- The Lambeth 2020 conference in August will enable opportunities for dialogue on climate issues with fellow Christians in other areas of the world.
- In November Glasgow will host the United Nations COP26 climate talks.

We also want to establish a network to share expertise, experience and encouragement across the diocese. If you would be interested in being part of this team I would be delighted to hear from you: environment@anglican.org.uk

Rachel Johnston, Environment Officer

More resources and actions from Bishop Alan:

Shrinking the Footprint/the Environmental Working Group www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/church-englands-environment-group-calls-greater-action-climate-change-across

Observing Creationtide: the season in our Christian calendar which runs from 1 September to 4 October, when we give a particular focus on creation. There are many resources for worship and teaching available on the Church of England website.

Letters for Creation is a project which brings together young people from across the Anglican Communion to pray, speak and act on climate change.

Eco Church and Eco Diocese A Rocha's programme: ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/denominational-awards/eco-diocese/

Archbishop's Lent Book: 'Saying Yes to Life' by Ruth Valerio.

It will focus on care for creation, lifting our focus from every day concerns to issues that are impacting millions of lives around the world, and suggest actions we can take to protect the environment. Linked to it will be two practical booklets (for adults and children) and a Lent campaign of daily social media, offering reflections and challenges.

