

# Caring for creation

## Theological background

The Christian doctrine of Creation is imbedded in Scripture and the later tradition of the Church. Yet for many years so many people have ignored the teaching concerning the relationship of human beings with the world that God created. The themes of the doctrine of Creation include the goodness of Creation itself, the way that our fallen human nature has done damage to Creation, the redemption offered by Christ and the hope of the new Creation, established by His resurrection. Thus 'Caring for Creation' immediately goes to the heart of what we as Disciple of Jesus Christ are about.

### **1. God made the world and loves it**

God is the creator of the world and declared it to be 'very good' (Genesis 1:31).

God is involved with creation, sustaining it and caring for it (Psalm 65:9–13; Matthew 10:29; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:16–17).

If God loves the world, then we are called to love what God loves and take care of it.

### **2. God created us to look after it**

We are created beings, part of the whole community of creation, joining together to praise God (Psalm 148). But we have also been given a special task – to look after all that God has made (Genesis 1: 26–28; Gen. 2:15). This is not an optional extra for a few keen environmentalists, but a fundamental part of what it means to be human.

### **3. It has gone wrong because of us**

It is a sad truth that many of the problems our world and its inhabitants face are caused by human activity. Our acts of human sin have far-reaching ecological consequences (Hosea 4: 1–3; Amos 8: 1–8). Our thankfulness for the gift of creation that God gives us prompts us to act.

### **4. God's amazing plan for this world**

For Christians, the doctrine of Creation is bound up with the whole saving mystery of Christ himself. John 3:16 states: 'For 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'"

God's plans for salvation involve all of creation (Colossians 1: 19–20). Jesus died on the cross so that the whole of creation could be redeemed. Through his death on the cross and resurrection, death was defeated and the long-awaited Kingdom ushered in. In sharing in Christ's mission and bearing witness to the Kingdom of God which Christ inaugurated, we work to bring all of creation back into harmony with the Creator, looking with faith and hope to the fullness of time, when all things are made new. (Revelation 21 – 22:6).

## **5. Celebrating God and God's Creation and Calling for a Human Response**<sup>1</sup>

Psalm 104 is one of the most significant expositions of creation in the Bible. It is a hymn praising God the creator and sustainer of the world and at the same time it paints a beautiful picture of the created world, the whole cosmos in front of our eyes. Continuing the narrative set "in the beginning" in Genesis. 1, the psalm is a song of praise to God's continuous activity and care of Creation.

The psalm indicates that the ecological crisis we are confronting is, at its root, a spiritual crisis. Many human factors have brought us to this point, but fundamentally – as "Laudato si" has also pointed out – it is a spiritual crisis where humans have forgotten their origin in and dependency on God, the giver and sustainer of life. A spiritual crisis calls for a conversion, a new thinking, and a new search for a lifestyle in accordance with God's will.

Human beings are portrayed in the psalm not so much as the "crown of creation" ruling over the earth, but as creatures, living amid many other creatures. It is an ecological vision of the co-existence of all beings created and cared for by God.

The text calls for a four-part human response to God's continuous acting and concern for creation. The psalm paints a portrait of God and God's creation and there are four human responses that emerge:

- Praising and celebrating God and God's creation – the liturgical dimension in ecological concern;
- Opening up for the experience of nature and world – the emotional dimension of human response;
- Exploring the world – the cognitive and educational dimension of celebrating God and creation;
- Protecting creation – the ethical dimension of human response to the beauty of God's creation.

The motto of the Anglican Community in South Africa can help us in the Diocese in Europe, too, to move forward: God made it all and said: 'It is good'. We are trying to keep it that

## **6. Summary – Our calling to Care for Creation**

Our mandate could also be summed up in the following words of Jesus

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and  
with all your soul, and with all your mind.*

*This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it:*

*"love your neighbour as yourself"*

*Matthew 22. 37-38*

<sup>1</sup> Extracted, edited and adapted from a Bible Study presented by the Rev Dr Dr H.C Klaus Schaefer at a German Deanery Synod in 2021.

We find ourselves in the middle of a world-wide crisis, which if not immediately addressed will bring distress and chaos throughout the world – not just the areas which are already suffering from years of neglecting our responsibilities. We are not called to SAVE God’s planet, but we are called to care for it, responsibly - whatever the eventual outcome.

Climate change and ecological breakdown are facts we can no longer deny. The evidence is plain to see all over the globe, in drought, flooding, pollution of air, water and land, deforestation, loss of species and biodiversity.

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