



This pack of materials has been produced as a resource for use by churches to get their congregations talking about climate change, care for creation and how we as Christians can engage with and support COP26 when it is able to come to Glasgow. Sharing stories offers a very powerful way to leverage change in behaviours for many people, where being presented with scientific facts may not. Giving voice to the challenges and successes we face can offer hope and help other people see ways to make changes that will fit into their lives. The scale of the issues we face can seem completely overwhelming but offering each other permission to not understand it all and not get it right all the time is important if we are not to become discouraged. Knowing that it is a journey we are not walking alone gives us strength.

Having started work on developing this before the start of the pandemic the intention was that congregations could arrange a discussion about the climate once a month over a shared breakfast time or coffee time. While meeting face to face to do this isn't possible with the current restrictions and the ongoing need for social distancing, meeting online from the comfort of our own homes over a cup of coffee is possible. Platforms such as Zoom can provide an opportunity for up to 100 people to meet for half an hour for free. Eco-Congregation Scotland staff can support congregations who have not tried this way of meeting before to get them started.

The pack includes twelve discussion sessions. They are themed around different aspects of our climate, care for creation and the change that is necessary to address the climate emergency. For each session there is a description of the theme, some questions to start conversation, a Biblical reference to explore and a prayer. There are also some ideas for things to keep the wee folk (and older ones too) busy which might result in a display for the halls or even outside the building -to show local communities that the church is thinking about these issues, as well as some slightly longer term projects. We have a space on our website where we would love to post pictures and stories about these activities and the kind of things you have done as a result of the conversations you have had with others in your church and community.

There is a set of accompanying documents with the conversation starters and prayer points on them. These could be displayed on a screen, printed to share or emailed in part to participants.

The table in the next few pages gives an overview of the year. This is followed by separate pages for the various months.

Some Points to note for leaders-

Please remind everyone taking part:

Please take time to listen carefully to each other and respect each other's points of view. These materials are intended to give us a time to start conversations and give space for us to reflect on our world as it is. We can talk about what people are doing to address issues around the climate, and how the pandemic has impacted both positively and negatively on this. The conversation starters are not intended as arguments to be won or points to be scored.

Encourage other people to share their stories. Tell your own stories. Talk about things that have gone well and also things that have been difficult. Commit your worries to God in prayer, ask for His help with all of this.

Perhaps you may find ways and be inspired to take action beyond these conversations.

Month	Topic	Activity	Bible Reference/ Prayer
January	Storms and weather patterns	<p><i>Conversation starters</i> (weather patterns/ climate change/ personal recollections)</p> <p><i>Ideas for activity/actions:</i> art/ creative idea Good neighbour suggestions</p>	<p><u>Bible ref Acts 27:18-26</u> which is also part of the material for the Week of Prayer for Unity</p> <p>Prayer- for COP 26 and government actions. For personal actions</p>
February	Keeping warm /Powering our homes	<p>Conversation Starters- How do we keep warm/power our homes? Types of power sources? Craft- Collage of energy and homes Making windmills Knit a twiddlemuff or a blanket for someone in a care home or hospital. Consider hosting a fuel poverty workshop/ find out more about the work being done to address fuel poverty</p>	<p><u>Bible Ref: James 2:15ff</u> - a balance of faith and action, integrated with each other.</p> <p>Prayer- For people living in fuel poverty For changes in the way we heat our homes, and the way we keep warm.</p>
March	Coasts and seas	<p>Organise a walk on a beach or beside a river or loch for your congregation. (maybe ask a costal or countryside ranger to come with you and talk to you about the area) Join in with a beach or river clean organised by Marine Conservation Scotland or other organisation. Make a wall display about the plastic pollution in our coasts and waters. Find out more about reusable sanitary products and how they can help reduce beach litter. Re-write the Footprints prayer.</p>	<p><u>Bible Ref John 21:4 and 21:15-17.</u> What conversations and insights come to you on the threshold of the sea and land?</p> <p>Prayer - for marine environment and those who work in it. Pray for COP 26</p>
April	New growth	Thinking about the	<u>Bible Ref Luke 13 6-9</u>

	and the web of life.	interconnectedness of life on this planet. Conversation Starters- Talking about our experiences of spring, new growth, growing things, trees. Ideas for action Planting ideas in homes, gardens and allotments.	Planting needs to be followed by tending. It won't always work first time. Keep at it ! Prayer: For our world, for creation, for our relationship with the world. For COP26
May	Plastic Fantastic?	The controversy around plastic- is it good or bad? Conversation Starters; Thinking about where we experience plastics Should we get rid of all plastic from our lives? <i>Activities</i> Thinking about the 4 'R' s. Reduce, Refuse, Recycle, Reuse. What personal action can we take?	<u>Bible Ref (which will not lessen the controversy)</u> <u>Romans 14:1-23...</u> Plastic may not be good or bad, but what we do with it certainly may be. Prayer: For change and action. For COP26
June	Healthy Transport	Think about the different kinds of transport we use in our daily lives. Conversation Starters Discuss the choices we make about transport and why we make them. Think about how that might be different depending on where you live. Activities. Posters Going for a walk Setting up a car share scheme Trying a bike/ or electric vehicle.	Bible refs: the relationship of the Bible with wheeled vehicles is quite extensive.: Utilitarian (Genesis 45:21) Sacred (Exodus 25: Ark of God) and violently destructive (2 Kgs 9:20). Is your vehicle a cart or a chariot? Prayer For change, for making good choices. For COP26
July	Breathe!	Rights to good health - how do we	<u>Bible Ref Exodus 9:8-9.</u> A

	(Fresh Air for all)	<p>impinge on others enjoyment of their rights? Forms of pollution</p> <p>How does air pollution affect you and your family?</p> <p>Finding out about air pollution in Scotland and the effects on health/ breathing.</p>	<p>plague is an avoidable disaster. These verses show for how long we have understood the need for clean air for the good of all life.</p> <p>Prayer For health, for reduction of pollution, for caring for others For COP26</p>
August	Sharing! (tools/cars/circular economy)	<p>In many garages and sheds expensive tools are sitting quietly unused for most of the year. Do we need to own them or can we hire and share? How can we reduce the demand for new tools and gadgets? Is second hand only ok for cars?</p> <p>Investigate tool libraries and repair cafes. Find out about the idea of a circular economy, repurpose something that would otherwise be thrown away.</p>	<p><u>Bible ref: 2 Chronicles 24:12</u> the tools and skills for the job: it isn't enough just to set stuff aside to be recycled: you have to see it through and be aware of where things go when you have finished with them. No ancient church or monument is still in existence without recycling/restoration/maintenance. OR: Exodus 32: Is recycling/repurposing always sufficient in itself?</p> <p>Prayer: Reflection on sharing, on caring, on vanity? Pray for COP26</p>
September	Harvest of	Food is a gift from God. Do you	<u>Bible Ref: Deuteronomy</u>

	the land	<p>know where your food comes from? Is it fair that some people have more food than they can eat while others have too little? Find about growing/ harvest/ seasonal produce. Discover the work of Christian Aid and Tearfund in other countries to support farmers.</p>	<p><u>24:19:</u> Think about this also in reference to wildflower strips and hedges at the sides of crops, which also take the place of pesticides, as well as providing for pollinators.</p> <p>Prayer Thankfulness for gifts from God, for fairness and justice Pray for COP26</p>
October	New clothes?	<p>Fast Fashion - quickly in the shops, cheap to buy and almost as quickly discarded. Is fashion important to you? What impact does the fashion industry have on the world? Reusing/ remaking/ repurposing old clothes and textiles. Swap shops and second hand clothes stores.</p>	<p><u>Bible Ref: 1 Kgs 19:19-21:</u> the recycling of significant clothing has huge significance in the Bible: the use and ownership of an object adds value. A new item would have no such 'depth'. NB Kilts and clergy vestments may last for generations!</p> <p>Prayer For cultural change, for different values, for justice and care for creation For COP26</p>
November	Our Global Connections	<p>Thinking about the interconnectedness of all humankind. The impact of the way we choose to live on the lives of others. Justice and fairness to others. COP 26 is this month- so thinking about the message we would like delegates to take home about our country and what we are doing to address climate change.</p>	<p>Bible Ref Matthew 25 31-46: It's tough, but this is what we're faced with. We know what our species is doing. Additionally, include other species in those treated well or badly: "What you did to the Earth, you did to me!" Prayer For the world, for our place in it, for our relationship with the rest of humankind, and nature, For COP26</p>
December	A plastic	Thinking about the commercial	<u>Bible Reference:</u>

	<p>free Christmas</p>	<p>pressure to “make Christmas perfect.” How do we reduce the plastic in our Christmas celebrations? Second hand presents? How do we reduce the amount of food wasted? Suggestions for making and sharing some gifts and recipes.</p>	<p><u>Deuteronomy 14:24ff -</u> Yes, its’ vital and right, both to celebrate, and to share: though in changed circumstances, this may require creativity. Faithfulness remains undiminished.</p> <p>Prayer For light, for love and hope For the future and what it holds.</p>
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January is often a stormy month in Scotland. Wild, windy weather batters our shores from the Atlantic, causing mountainous waves to overtop coastal defences. Cold northerly air flows bring snow, piled high this beautiful white substance can change our noisy, busy towns to silent deserted places.

Scientists talk of the many effects of global warming, with increasing numbers of extreme weather events seen all around the globe.



Conversation Starters:

What changes in weather patterns have you noticed in your lifetime?

Talk about times when the weather has affected your plans to do things.

How do you feel about global warming?

Do you know what our governments are doing to address climate change?



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Paint/draw/make a weather picture.

Make a weather gauge to show what the weather is today.

If you have access to a weather station make a record of the weather where you live-record the temperature and rainfall.

Do you have an elderly neighbour that can't get out to the shops for fear of falling when the weather is very windy or cold. Could you offer to pick up milk and other vital supplies for them?



Bible Reference

Acts 27:18-26 , which is also part of the material for the Week of Prayer for Unity



Prayer written by Rev D Coleman (Eco Congregation Chaplain)

Dear God,
incarnate in the Earth,
who shares, whatever comes;

The first-month winds blow strong, and reassuringly:
for still the seasons come and go.

Yet mountain snow is scarce,
and spring flowers gatecrash
-risking leaves and buds-
the snowdrops' private party.....

The diary fills; our year now opens out
and nations stir themselves
for something more than conflict.
Our thanks for that!

Dear God, with us in each uncertainty
as Scotland stirs, and chances bud
and hopes rise cautiously
for vital, and decisive action
in a conference tied down in advance
by so many vested interests;
a circus of discussion
which nonetheless might nudge our course for good...

Dear God, we dare to hope,
and offer our readiness, our hospitality
to make the most of this time:
the impact and legacy of the COP
when the eyes of the human race will turn to Scotland.

And help us take to heart these words
from a letter which became our Scripture:

‘When we are weak, then we are strong’.

We value, therefore every prayer and action
great or small, measurable or otherwise,
success or stumble
offered in your name,
for Earth's good sake
which is your glory,
and our joy.
AMEN



February

Powering our homes and keeping warm.

Scottish weather means cold, wet weather for a large part of the year. We are only too glad to be indoors through the coldest winter weather, but our homes need to be heated to make them comfortable. Many of us live in older houses. The construction of these homes would not have included lots of insulation and double glazing. Gas, oil and electricity are commonly used to heat our homes. Wood burners and coal fires create additional heat sources in many homes too. All of these types of heating produce greenhouse gases contributing to global warming. Pollutants from some types of heating reduce the quality of the air we breathe.



Conversation Starters:

How was your home heated when you were a child? Do you use the same kind of heating now? How did your Great Granny keep warm in the coldest months of the year?

What kinds of things can we do to reduce our need for heating in our homes?

How do you think homes of the future should be kept warm?

Fuel poverty is a big issue in Scotland. Do you know what is being done to help address it?



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Create a collage of different kinds of homes and the various ways that they are kept warm.

Make windmills and watch them turn around in the breeze.

Knit a twiddlemuff or a blanket for someone in a care home or hospital.

Consider hosting a fuel poverty workshop.

Find out more about the work being done to address fuel poverty

Find out more about what you can do to reduce energy use in your own home. Have a look at the [Energy Saving Trust website](#) for ideas.



Bible References

James 2:15ff - a balance of faith and action, integrated with each other.



Prayer written by Mary Sweetland,
Chair of Board, Eco-Congregation Scotland.

Dear Lord,
we seem to have reached the tipping point for climate chaos,
and as all the world looks to Glasgow in November
let us follow your guidance to care for your earth
Help us ensure a just transition from a carbon economy to a carbon free one
Where the poor are supported and can continue to enjoy the beauty of your earth
Let us lovingly accept the changes we need to make to reduce our own carbon footprint
Encourage others to make changes to live sustainably and
for those who spend too much of their money on fuel,
help them take practical steps to live in comfort
God of Justice, you bring order and meaning when the time is right
Let us experience that time as we build up to COP 26
Amen



2020 is the year of Scotland's coasts and waters.

Scotland has a beautiful coastline, offering a variety of seascapes from the wild cliffs that are home to cathedrals of sea birds to flat rolling sandy beaches with mobile dune systems. The coast has always had an important place in Scottish life too, for example Nairn was known as the Riviera of the North and was the must-visit holiday destination for generations from wealthy victorians to family "staycations," peaking in the 1970's. "Going to the beach" has been a highlight of so many childhood memories, days spent making sandcastles on clean sandy beaches.

Marine pollution is now noticeable all along our coastline and also in our rivers. Plastic bottles, cigarette butts, cotton buds, crisp bags and sanitary applicators form the top five pollutants found on beaches. Much of this waste enters the food chain.

Fishing is still an important part of the economy and identity of many coastal communities. However, it is not without controversy - for example, fishing quotas lead to edible fish being returned dead to the sea and overfishing of sandeels has reduced a vital source of food for sea birds. Climate change will bring sea-level rises and more extreme weather, which will affect vulnerable parts of Scotland's coasts and threaten the very existence of some nations and communities across the world.



Conversation Starters:

Talk about a time when you have enjoyed time at the coast. How does the sea make you feel?

Do you experience connection to God at the seashore?

Have you ever found litter on the beach?

How do you feel about current fishing methods and quotas?



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Create an artwork on the theme of pollution of our coasts and seas. Could it be displayed outside your church or meeting place?

Organise a walk by the seashore, a loch or river. Perhaps invite a coastal ranger or sea shepherd to talk to you about all that you can find living on the shoreline.

Hold an open air service or lay out a reflective labyrinth by the shore.

Join an organised beach clean.

Rewrite the Footprints prayer.

Bible References



John 21:4 and 21:15-17. What conversations and insights come to you on the threshold of the sea and land?



Prayer written by Rev Jenny Adams one of the trustees of Eco-Congregation Scotland.

For all working in the marine environment, for the protection of the marine environment by all people and by politicians, for all communities and nations affected by increasing sea levels due to climate change.

Jesus,

you walked on the shore of Lake Galilee,

at a threshold of land and water.

You loved those who worked at that threshold,

calling them to come,

forgiving them their mistakes,

and sending them to share your love.



We live our lives surrounded by a beautiful, ordered creation. There are links between the plants and animals in the world, an interdependence exists in maintaining their lives. An example of this can be seen when you study food chains, but the links are deeper than this. We depend on trees to decarbonise the air that we breathe, and to produce more oxygen- they are the lungs of the world.

Fibonacci discovered a series of numbers which can be plotted to create a spiral, seen throughout nature, from the nautilus shell to the curve of spiral galaxies, the shape can be plotted following the same numerical sequence. The same pattern is evident in the growth of flowers and pineapples and in the golden ratio of the size of human limbs.



Conversation Starters:

What signs of spring do you look for? Do you notice a difference in the pattern of the seasons?

Talk about a time when you have enjoyed walking through woodland. What did you see, smell, feel?

Have you ever planted anything to eat? What was it and how did you eat it?

Palm oil is in many of the products on the shelves in our supermarkets, from chocolate spread to shampoo and make-up. Production of palm oil has led to deforestation, habitat loss and destruction of peat land. Do you know what products in the supermarket contain this oil? How can we avoid the use of this oil? What species are most affected by the production of this oil?

How does the promise of new life through Christ make you feel?

Did the experience of lockdown during the pandemic change your relationship with the natural world? What was different? Did you learn anything new from the time?



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Plant some seeds. Perhaps you might choose herbs or cress to grow in a pot. Could you give a planted pot to a friend or neighbour? If you have a garden try planting teasels or sunflowers for the birds to enjoy later in the year.

Sign up for an allotment. Join a gardening club or society.

Plant a tree in your church grounds, or in a local civic space.

Find out more about the green spaces and homes for nature in your neighbourhood.

Go for a reflective walk, noting with your 5 senses all that you experience.



Bible References

Luke 13 6-9

Planting needs to be followed by tending. It won't always work the first time. Keep at it!



Prayer written by Richard Murray, trustee of Eco-Congregation Scotland.

Creator of all,
We thank you for the gift of life and all that sustains it.
As we focus on COP26,
and the uncertainty of the climate emergency,
we have no idea how this will end.
But we turn towards you, our Lord of Creation,
And we pray -
that you will help us find the path to recovery;
provide us with wisdom as we develop our plans for a net zero lifestyle.
We pray that those who possess influence exercise greater diligence
In developing a more sustainable future for the world in which we live.
We ask you to support all those who are trying to rebuild their lives,
those who have been caught up in wildfires, floods and earthquakes.
We offer this prayer to you in Jesus name. Amen.



Going to the local supermarket will reveal foods packaged in different ways- tins, cardboard boxes, plastic wrappers, net bags. Plastic is used in many different items, from food storage boxes, cups, toothbrushes, dog food pouches and car tyres to clothing. Is plastic fantastic?

Plastic bags and boxes are waterproof, plastic is a material that is durable, that's great however:

Plastic doesn't break down easily.

Plastic items left long enough will start to break down into microplastics. Some plastics can be recycled locally but not all.



Conversation Starters:

Have you ever worn clothes made from plastic?

Are there any plastic items that you would find difficult to do without?

How do you feel about the use of plastics in medical settings such as for personal protective equipment? What other issues about the use of plastic did you encounter as a result of the pandemic?

Should we stop using all plastic items or only new plastic items? Should we replace our plastic keep cups and lunch boxes with metal or bamboo ones?

Have you ever tried to reduce, re-use, recycle or refuse any plastic items? Share what went well and what was difficult to do?



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Have a “rubbish event”. Get together with some friends and bring along a few items of clean household waste each. For each of the items decide which of the 4 R’s it belongs to. Can it be Reused, Recycled, Reduced (use less of it/ find an alternative) or Refused (said “No Thanks” to eg plastic stirrers in coffee shops).

Consider speaking to your local supermarket/shop and ask for all fruit and vegetables to be sold without plastic bags or nets. Take along your own containers and reusable bags to fill at the supermarket when you go shopping.

Try to reduce the amount of plastic you use in the bathroom. Find out about alternatives such as shampoo and conditioner bars, and try them out. Find out about plastic free periods.

Find out to recycle some of the items that can’t go in household recycling bins such as pens or pet food pouches? (Have a look at www.terracycle.com)

Could you set up a reuse point for bubble wrap and wrapping paper for people using your meeting place?

Find out more about what can be recycled in your local area. Arrange for a talk from the local council or a recycling firm about the work that they do to tackle waste.



Bible References

(which will not lessen the controversy) Romans 14:1-23...Plastic may not be good or bad, but what we do with it certainly may be.



Prayer written by Len Gregory, Trustee of Eco-Congregation Scotland.

It's our mess, God: A world full of toxic waste, a world of plastic that consumes our everyday living, like a drug that has possessed us.

Creating God, help us to take better care of this wonderful planet we call home. Teach us how to respect and be mindful of the gifts that you give, gifts that sustain our lives and the lives of others.

Enable us to understand the need to protect our fragile eco-systems that maintain the rhythm of life.

Empower us to become less reliant on plastic.

Let us pray for generations yet to come.

Let us begin today to reverse the effects of climate change for their sake.

Let us model our approach to recycling on your grace which regards no gift as trivial and no person as redundant.

Recycle our faith with new vigour and purpose.

Recycle our hope with conviction that things can change.

Recycle our love so that there is justice for all living things.

Amen.



Where you live and where you work will make a difference to the kinds of transport you use. If you live in a city with good public transport links, that may be your preferred way of getting around. If you live in the countryside with few buses going near your home you may rely on having your own car or motorbike to get to out and about, even to go to the nearest shops. If you don't have far to go from home to work perhaps you simply walk, roll in your wheelchair or take your bike.

Some types of transport have a larger impact on the environment than others. Engines that use fossil fuels have a larger carbon footprint and so do more harm to the planet than electric vehicles. Using public transport is better as one engine gets many people around. Active travel by foot, bike and wheelchair is even better. It's healthy for us and the planet too.

What transport choices do you make?



Conversation Starters:

Talk about a journey that you have taken fairly regularly.

How do you prefer to travel for short journeys? Do you make the same choice if you have to travel a long distance? Did lockdown change the way you prefer to travel?

What encourages you and what discourages you about using public transport? Has your view of public transport changed since the Pandemic?

Have you ever travelled by bike or wheelchair? What was your experience of these journeys? What made the journey easy and what made it difficult? Would you like to use a bike?

Have you ever tried car sharing? Is it something you would consider?



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Draw a picture of different kinds of transport. How many different kinds of transport can you think of?

Go for a walk in the local area with some friends.

Join in with a park run or walk if there is one near to you.

Hold a come and try day for bikes.

Ask the local police to put security markings on your own bikes.

Arrange a midsummer evening walk.

Could you set up a car sharing scheme for getting to church?

Find out about what the Scottish Government is doing to encourage active travel from [Transport Scotland](#).

Discover more about the active travel and what is available to support this in your area, from organisations such as [Energy Savings Trust](#) and [Sustrans](#).



Bible References

The relationship of the Bible with wheeled vehicles is quite extensive.:
Utilitarian (**Genesis 45:21**) Sacred (**Exodus 25**: Ark of God) and violently destructive (**2 Kgs 9:20**). Is your vehicle a cart or a chariot?



Prayer written by Iain McLarty- Trustee of Eco-Congregation Scotland.

Creator God,

We thank you that you for the miracle of our bodies
which let us move, walk, run, hop and jump.

We thank you for gifting us with creative minds
which let us create amazing machines to travel further:
bicycles, wheelchairs and cars to travel on the land,
boats, hovercraft and submarines to cross the sea,
planes, helicopters and rockets to fly through the air.

We thank you for the people they let us meet
and the places they let us see.

But in the midst of these wonders of human flourishing,
we acknowledge their impact on the rest of your creation.

We confess that the speed and ease of modern travel
have mattered more to us
than the pollution and destruction it has caused,
and we pray for change.

We pray that you help us understand the price of travel
not by the cost at the pump,
but by the cost to the planet.

We pray for scientists and engineers
as they work to create cleaner and more sustainable technologies.

We pray for decision makers in government and in business,
especially in the time leading up to COP26,
that they may have the wisdom and courage to make good choices
in the difficult decisions about our transport systems.

Amen



We all breathe. Our bodies are programmed to take breaths in and out for us. Breathing is not a function that we are conscious of, until it becomes difficult for us. Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, talks about children enjoying the right to the best possible health, with access to clean water, good food and a clean environment to live in, and lays an obligation on richer countries to help poorer countries achieve this. Yet air pollution is a problem in many parts of the world, including areas of Scotland. Air pollution has direct links to ill health and the presence of air pollution exacerbates health conditions such as asthma.

Air pollution comes from a variety of sources such as motor vehicles, aircraft, industry, volcanic ash and wildfires. Our actions and choices about the kinds of transport we choose and the goods we purchase can have a direct affect on the ability of children to enjoy their right to as good health as is possible for them.



Conversation Starters:

Have you noticed any effects of air pollution in Scotland?

How could we reduce our demand for newly manufactured goods?

How could we make sure that our use of transport, goods and other services doesn't stop children enjoying their right to as good health as is possible for them?

If you had to make one change to the way you travel or the things you buy tomorrow to help reduce pollution, what would it be?

Are there any practical actions that society could take to clean up the air we breathe?



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Find out about where the areas with the highest levels of air pollution are in Scotland.

[Friends of the Earth](#) have information about this.

Hold a debate about air pollution.

Create a wall display about air pollution and the effects it has on people and the planet.

Find out more about how our lungs work- ask a doctor or nurse to talk to your group about how this vital function of the body works.

Learn first aid- learn how to resuscitate someone who has stopped breathing.



Bible References

Exodus 9:8-9. A plague is an avoidable disaster. These verses show for how long we have understood the need for clean air for the good of all life.



Prayer written by Mark Kirkbride, Trustee of Eco-Congregation Scotland.

Loving God, gracious spirit you breathed life into all creation. We pray for those struggling with ill health and those who are caring for them. We think especially of those who suffer and need clean air to help their recovery. We pray that our leaders find just ways to reduce the pollution that collectively we make to the air that we all breathe and the environment we live in. We commend to you those planning for the CoP26 meeting in November and those lobbying, that they may seek to preserve and enhance this world that you breathed life into and placed in our care, for today's and future generations. May we not be the generation that took us beyond the point of no return.

May we all be guided by you God in repairing the damage we have done. We trust in the knowledge that you so loved the world you gave your only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Amen



Tools and gadgets. We seem to be obsessed with them. Have you any of the following items sitting in a cupboard, shed or garage at home?- steam wallpaper stripper, powerwasher, long ladder, tree loppers, sewing machine, steam cleaner. If you do, how often do you use them? Do they sit on the shelf for most of the year? All these tools have a cost to the planet to produce- they contain mineral resources, and the manufacturing processes have a cost in terms of the amount of carbon produced in making the goods. Are they items that you need to own or could you hire or share them with friends and neighbours?

A circular economy is one where we aim to make the very best use of the Earth's resources and eliminate waste, by recycling materials, repairing and repurposing goods, and sharing tools and other items.



Conversation Starters:

Do you have any tools and gadgets in your home that you rarely use? Have you ever hired or borrowed tools to do a job around your home?

Would you buy a second hand car? Would you buy a second couch or fridge? Is there a difference in how acceptable it is to buy certain goods second hand?

Have you ever had to put something to the recycling centre or in the bin because it was broken and you couldn't find a way to have it repaired?

Have you ever made something out of something else? (eg made a go-kart out of an old pram)



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Find out about repair cafes and tool libraries. Could you set up something similar with your friends or neighbours?

Watch a video about the circular economy and how it might work. Talk about what you think might help or hinder this becoming a way of life for us.

Make something useful out of something that would otherwise be put in your bin.



Bible References

2 Chronicles 24:12

the tools and skills for the job: it isn't enough just to set stuff aside to be recycled: you have to see it through and be aware of where things go when you have finished with them. No ancient church or monument is still in existence without recycling/restoration/maintenance. OR: Exodus 32: Is recycling/ repurposing always sufficient in itself?



Prayer written by Fintan Hurley one of the trustees of Eco-Congregation Scotland.

Lord Jesus Christ,

You came to live among us, to show us God's love, to show and to share with Creation everything you had, including your own self, even to your death on the Cross.

Grant us the love and the courage to be faithful to God and generous to one another, as you were.

Help us to see all our neighbours, far and near, as sisters and brothers that we share this planet with, as people who deserve its resources as much as we do. Help us to cherish, love and respect all the beautiful and fragile creatures with whom we share this 'common home'. *(continued overleaf)*

Help us to know and remember that there is enough in this precious world to go around if we use and share it wisely, if we respect both true humanity and the needs and gifts of the Earth. Help us “to live simply so that others may simply live”.

May we learn what it means to live up to your valuing of us.

Father,

Forgive us and heal us from our selfishness and hoarding, for grabbing and holding on to as much as we can, to more than our fair share, while others have so little.

Forgive us the little things, when as individuals and households we hold on to tools and gadgets and machines and clothes that we only use ourselves or don't even use at all.

Forgive us when we don't use the gifts and talents that you gave us, or when we use them only for our own narrow gain, and not for the community as a whole, near and far.

Forgive us especially for how we allow our big organisations, corporations and countries, to hoard resources for themselves, even taking the little that poor countries have, often along the way destroying environment and communities and cultures, and putting the whole world at risk.

Forgive us, and give us confidence in the liberation which that entails, free to find our place in a new and dawning Creation, as also to hold fast, and hold to hope, on frightening paths ahead.

Spirit of God, Breath of Life, Wind of Change,

Fall afresh on us, so that we may work with you to help “renew the face of the earth”, in the spirit of sharing that you nurtured in the early disciples; not just servants, but beloved friends.

May we breathe in your deep commitment to the sustaining of life; more than a job to do, and beyond the stewardship of property; the business of the human family, and what we're (still) here for ⁽¹⁾ and make it the business also of this your human family, through Christ our Lord

Sustain us in the knowledge that you are with us, in these difficult and dangerous times, that we may see the signs we need to encourage others and ourselves.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen

(1) ref. John 10:12



All our food comes from God.

As the seasons slowly change crops ripen and are gathered in. Fruits swell on trees and bushes, ready for picking. The smell of jam cooking fills kitchens. Food is stored away in readiness for winter by animals and humans alike.

We rely on the sunshine and the rain to ripen and water the crops. Yet the weather also has the power to destroy crops, high winds flatten wheat, plants in parched soils wither but flooding may wash away crops of winter vegetables, leading to shortages of specific foods. In other countries lack of food leads to severe famines and humanitarian crises.

In Scotland the average household wastes throws away about £460 of food a year, much of it still edible.



Conversation Starters:

What are your favourite foods? Have you ever tried to grow any of your favourites?

God provides food but access to good food is a real issue for many people living in this country. How can we make access to food fair for everyone? How can we ensure that the price we pay for food is fair to the producer as well as to the shop selling the food?

If you have grown food talk about your experiences of planting and harvesting food. What effect has the weather had on your crops?

Do you ever have left over food? What kinds of things have you tried to reduce food waste? Do you have any top tips or recipes that you could share with others?



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Ask a farmer or a gardener to share their experiences of growing food with you? Perhaps you could visit their farm or garden. Find out which foods are in season locally at different times of the year. How would your diet change if you ate what was in season?

Find out about community fridges and food banks. Is there one near you? Could you support it in any way?

Plant some food such as cress or herbs to use in your cooking.

Find out about how to reduce food waste in your kitchen- go to a Love Food-Hate Waste workshop.

Ask a chef or cook to do a cookery demonstration and tasting session for different plant based meals.

Find out about the work of charities such as [Christian Aid](#) and [Tearfund](#) in supporting people to grow their own food.

Find out more about Fair Trade. Invite a speaker from the [Scottish Fair Trade Forum](#) to speak to you about their work.



Bible References

Deuteronomy 24:19:

Think about this also in reference to wildflower strips and hedges at the sides of crops, which also take the place of pesticides, as well as providing for pollinators.



Prayer- written by John Seenan trustee of Eco-Congregation Scotland

God the Almighty, we humbly acknowledge you as the creator of the universe with all its diversity and wonders. In your wisdom you fashioned the Earth and its elements in abundance for the good of all mankind and every living creature. We are eternally grateful for your precious gifts of water, land, air, food and energy, to sustain and support us to live in peace and harmony, for without them our lives would be as of nothing. Teach us to ensure we manage these precious resources you have endowed to us with prudence and care, guiding us in our stewardship and understanding of them, that they may be preserved, enhanced, and enjoyed by all your children on Earth, in equal measure, for generations to come.

As we face the tasks of climate change, we pray that you will give guidance to those entrusted with responsibility of managing the many complex challenges which need to be resolved with wisdom, understanding and fairness. We pray, too, that the most vulnerable and poorest of your children, many of whose lives have already been blighted by this dilemma through drought and flood, will be afforded the justice they deserve.



Fast Fashion. Inexpensive clothing, produced quickly so that the latest trends are available almost instantly on the high street. Clothing that may not be of especially good quality, and may end up being thrown away almost as quickly as it is purchased. Low cost fashion? Perhaps the price paid at the till is low but what about the cost to the planet? Fashion has been credited with producing about 10% of humanity's carbon footprint, employing poorly paid labour, drying up water sources (2000 gallons of water are needed to produce one pair of jeans), polluting rivers and releasing microplastics into the ocean as clothes are washed.

Second hand clothing and swap shops are becoming a more common sight on our high streets. Textile recycling is available in many locations, yet a lot of clothing ends up in landfill.



Conversation Starters:

“Clothes make a man.” Do you agree or disagree? Why? Is fashion important to you?

What do you do with clothes you no longer want? How have you reused or repurposed old clothes? Can you sew or knit?

How do you feel about second hand clothes shops and clothes swaps?



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Hold a second hand fashion show - bring along the clothes you no longer want and swap them for something new to you!

Repurpose your old jeans into a handbag or a peg bag. Make a cushion cover out of an old cardigan, or some dolls clothes from an old skirt.

Make a patchwork memory quilt or memory bag using material from old clothes.

Learn to sew or knit - or share your skill with someone else.



Bible References

1 Kings 19:19-21:

The recycling of significant clothing has huge significance in the Bible: the use and ownership of an object adds value. A new item would have no such 'depth'. NB Kilts and clergy vestments may last for generations!



Prayer by Ruth Livingstone (Administrator - Eco-Congregation Scotland)

Dear Heavenly Father

Thank you that you have promised to clothe us as you clothe the colourful birds of the forest. Thank you that you care not only for our physical wellbeing but also for our sense of identity and self. We offer you today our self-image as an act of worship. We ask that you open our eyes to how precious we are in Your sight. Help us to see Your joy and allow that to overcome our doubts in our own appearance and worthiness.

Lord, move us to honour your image of us, purified by Christ's death on the cross, by honouring the planet He also created. Let us be conscious of how our fashion decision impacts the world and the peoples around us. Lead us to more sustainable choices. Like Elisha, let us turn our back on our old way of living, and look forwards to a more meaningful future. As we accept the cloak of our Elders, let us learn from them how to renew and repurpose that which is old or worn out without losing our God-given sense of style and identity.

Thank you Lord, that you lived among us, and understand what it is to be human. Thank you for understanding our need to define ourselves through the things we wear. Please help us both to learn and teach others how we can combine this fashion sense with compassion for Your creation and for the people who are worked so hard to create our clothes. Lead us we pray.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Amen



“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything in the Universe” (1)John Muir wrote in 1911. The idea that our lives are connected to those of the rest of mankind rings as true today as it did then, but perhaps when we consider climate change there is an urgency in the need for us to remember this.

How we choose to live our lives has a direct impact on the lives of other people. The way we choose to travel, the food we eat, the way we heat our homes, our continuing demands for goods and services and the way we deal with the waste produced all have a direct impact on other people. Certainly the worst of the changes in weather patterns can be seen in other areas of the world producing severe storms and conversely severe droughts leading to famines and other humanitarian crises. Pollution of water courses and air as other countries attempt to recycle our rubbish affect the health of many people. Effects of global warming on our oceans and on plants and animals threaten the web of life. Inequalities can be seen too in the ability of countries to respond to the Covid 19 pandemic, with less affluent countries struggling to provide basic healthcare, sanitation and access to food.

In this month where leaders from many countries across the globe were to have converged on Glasgow for COP26 to consider how best to address the issue of climate change and agree a way forward working together, how will we respond to ensure a fairer world for current and future generations?



Conversation Starters:

How do you feel when you hear about the effects of climate change on the planet and the effects it has on people's lives?

As Scotland comes to the forefront of international attention, what message would you like the leaders to take home to their country about what is happening in this country?

Is it easy to adopt the kinds of changes that experts suggest we need to if we are to reduce our impact on the world's climate? What makes these easy/ tricky to do? (eg: eating less meat, reducing waste, insulating our homes, using public transport, changing the kinds of energy we use, buying Fairtrade goods)

Do you feel differently about any of these changes in the light of the pandemic? How have the views and behaviour of other people changed?



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Make a display on the theme- "Everything is connected" -

Visit a COP 26 build up event. (See Eco-Congregation events page for details)

Choose 5 different foods and map their journey from producer to your plate. What is the impact of these different foods on the planet, and on people? Could you source any of these foods locally or grow them yourselves?

Look for Fairtrade goods when you shop. If you aren't already perhaps you could consider becoming a fairtrade congregation.

Find out more about other charities such as Christian Aid and Tearfund and the work they are doing. Could you find ways to support their work?



Bible References

Matthew 25 31-46: It's tough, but this is what we're faced with. We know what our species is doing. Additionally, include other species in those treated well or badly: "What you did to the Earth, you did to me!"



Prayer by Elizabeth South, Trustee, Eco-Congregation Scotland.

Thank you, God, for the richness and diversity of all you have created.

We thank you for the abundance of what Earth has to offer all humankind - air to breathe, light, water, energy, food, shelter, precious metals and minerals, and so much more...

For the beauty and the complexity of the eco-system which sustains our lives as well as every other living thing.

We ask your forgiveness that we have not always used the Earth's resources well, and have often exploited them for our own gain.

We ask your forgiveness that our choices and actions have impoverished other lives.

Renew our awareness of our global connections with people, and with all of your creation.

Renew our awareness that each life is important and that we are all equal in your sight.

We pray especially for those visiting Scotland for COP 26

Open our ears to hear their stories

Open our eyes to see their ways of life

Open our hands to give and to receive hospitality.

Inspire us with a sense of urgency to work together on reducing the harm to our climate and to preserving life on Earth for future generations.

In the name of the One who came to show us the way of love,

Our Saviour Jesus Christ,

Amen

⁽¹⁾ *My first Summer in the Sierra.*



Christmas is a wonderful time of the year, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the coming of the Light into our world. The streets are filled with coloured lights, shops filled with all sorts of things that advertisers suggest you must buy to make your Christmas perfect. Christmas Crackers, cards, wrapping paper, coloured foiled string, tinsel, decorations, garden ornaments, tree lights.... But how much of this will you be able to reuse and how much will end up in the landfill bin? Many of these Christmas “must haves” contain a lot of plastic and can’t be recycled. Are there alternatives to these?

Many of us will exchange Christmas gifts with friends and family. Will you have bought everything new from the shops or would you consider giving pre-loved items to friends and family? How would your child feel about receiving a second hand good as new bike? Is it ok to give second hand at this special time of the year?

Leftover turkey (and brussel sprouts)! How many households end up buying too much food for Christmas? A horrifying amount of food goes into the bin at Christmas time. Perhaps we need to rethink how we shop for our Christmas dinner and are there new ways in which we can use up our leftovers?

How can we reduce the carbon footprint of our Christmas celebrations?



Conversation Starters:

How do you feel about the advertising that surrounds Christmas? How can people access the true message of Christmas?

How would your friends and family feel about being given second hand, good as new goods for Christmas? How would you feel?

What changes could you make to the kind of things you buy to use at Christmas, to reduce your carbon footprint?

What kind of things do you make from leftover Christmas dinner? What are your favourite treats at Christmas?



Some ideas for actions for the young at heart (And not so young)

Make your own wrapping paper from brown paper. Consider using ribbons (which can be reused) to tie up parcels instead of miles of sticky tape.

Make your own gift boxes or bags and fill them with little sweets or gifts. Use these instead of crackers for the Christmas table. You could add your own jokes too.

Make a recycled nativity scene to share with your local community.

Hold a Christmas quiet day at your Church. Offer a space away from all the commerce to allow folk to explore the Christmas story.



Bible References

Deuteronomy 14:24ff - Yes, its' vital and right, both to celebrate, and to share: though in changed circumstances, this may require creativity. Faithfulness remains undiminished.



Prayer written by Stephen Curran, Manager of Eco-Congregation Scotland.

Lord, we are called to prepare, celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ your Son.
Light of the world,
Guide us, shining your one true light and banishing the darkness.

Lord, we are called to love our neighbour.
God of all creation,
Gather us, to demonstrate our love for all sharing our common home.

Lord, we are called to build your Kingdom on Earth.
God of justice,
Give us strength, to strive for fairness, sharing the world's wealth and respecting its natural resources.

Lord, we are called to look forward to the coming of Jesus Christ your Son.
God of hope,
Grant us joy and peace as we trust in You, overflowing with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, we are called.
Christ our light.
Hear our prayer.

Amen