

Rural mission and the Environment



The 5 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

A holistic vision not either or

- The gospel, Good News, is of the Kingdom which encompasses a call to all 5 marks
- None of the marks can be properly embraced without the others
- A call to follow Christ and become disciples is essential for care and justice for all of creation
- A call to follow Christ without care and justice for all creation is not a call to the gospel of Christ which always proclaims the Kingdom
- The 5 Marks are Anglican, but the vision for holistic or integral mission is shared by the World Evangelical Alliance, the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church and many others

In the beginning



- God
- in Jewish understanding with the 'Elohim' and 'Wisdom'
- In Christian the three in one, unity and diversity of Trinity
- Creation flows out of divine relationship and multiplies diversity
- Note Missio Dei is founded in the same idea – indeed creation can be seen as a missionary act

In the Beginning.....



- Humanity made in the image of God
– male and female
- 'It is not good for man to be alone' – made for relationship
- Relationship to other creatures
- Humanity in God's image given a mission – subdue the earth, multiply and fill it and have dominion over it

Subduing, multiplying and having dominion?

- Other creatures also told to multiply – so why is humanity told to also subdue and have dominion? Why is this seemingly linked to being in God's image?
- Subdue – Kabash, Dominion – Radah
- Radah – used to describe God's rule or that of those who act as shepherds and protectors as opposed to those who are tyrannical or self-seeking. One could apply Jesus teaching on servant leadership to those who exercise 'Radah'. Here being in God's image can be seen as being given responsibility to look after creation on God's behalf.
- Kabash – not so simple usually does imply violence but can be used to subdue an enemy and thus protect others – but if humans made in God's image are acting as God has done in creation has God been 'subduing' creation?

In the Beginning



- Genesis a commentary on Near Eastern accounts
- Canaanite – Baal and Anat battle Lotan
- God and the dividing of the waters
 - 12 Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the earth.
 - 13 You divided the sea by your might;
you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters.
 - 14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
you gave him as food for the creatures of the
wilderness.
 - 15 You cut openings for springs and torrents;
you dried up ever-flowing streams.
 - 16 Yours is the day, yours also the night;
you established the luminaries and the sun.
 - 17 You have fixed all the bounds of the earth;
you made summer and winter. Psalm 74

In the Beginning.....



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- Extending the ‘Garden’
- Eden/Temple/Heaven – humanity as Priests of creation of the earth (Adamah) and in God’s image
- East of Eden – broken relationships and environmental consequences

Restoring the whole story of salvation



creation



sin



salvation



New creation

← ***Individuals saved*** →

← ***Creation saved*** →

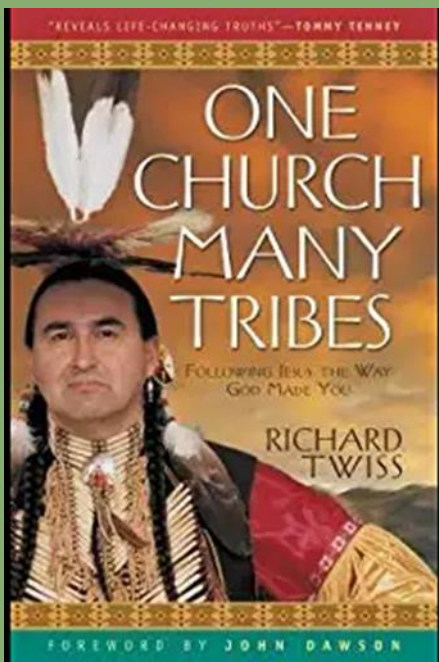
- The transformation of people, salvation from 'sin', linked to the transformation of creation – Romans 8, 2 Cor 5
- The New Creation used by Paul where Gospels use the Kingdom.
- Kaine Ktisis (not Nea Ktisis) the same creation made new not a replacement. 'There is no Planet B' (also Kaine in 2 Peter – fire purifies and renews creation rather than destroys it)

Intercultural mission

- 'Do not try to call them back to where they were,
- and do not try to call them to where you are, beautiful as that place may seem to you.
- You must have the courage to go with them to a place neither you nor they have been before.'

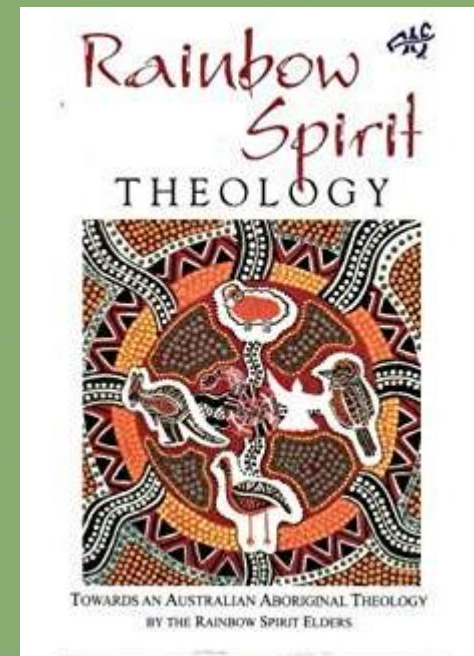
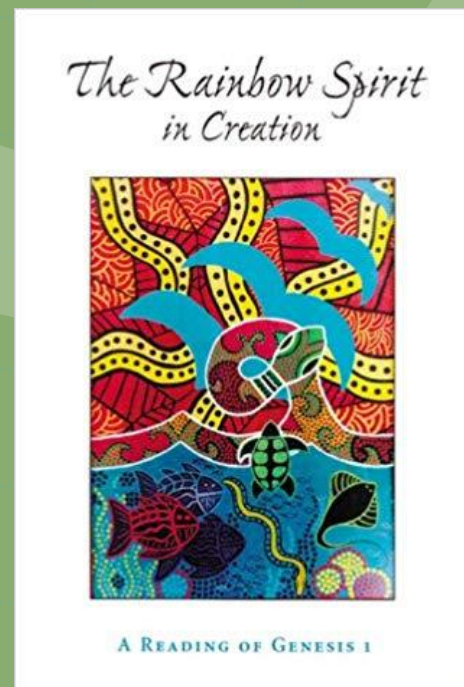
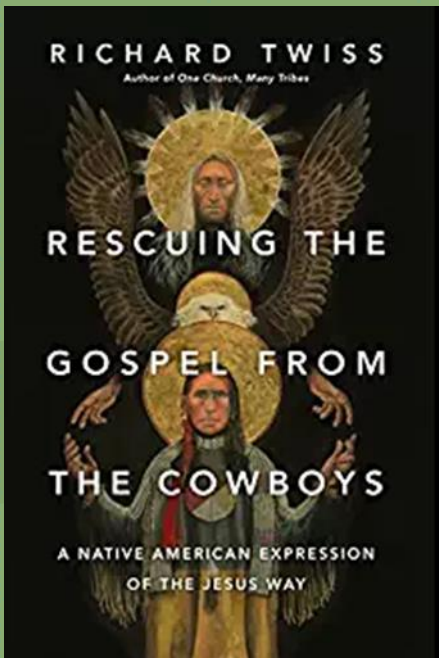
*Vincent Donovan – 'Christianity re-discovered'
from the preface to the second edition SCM 2001*

- Traveling not only with people but with creation, what might that look like?
- How do we listen to and build a relationship both with our local community and our environment?
- Mission as the conversion of the Church (Nigel Rooms 'the faith of the English' 2011)



Re-indigenising Christianity

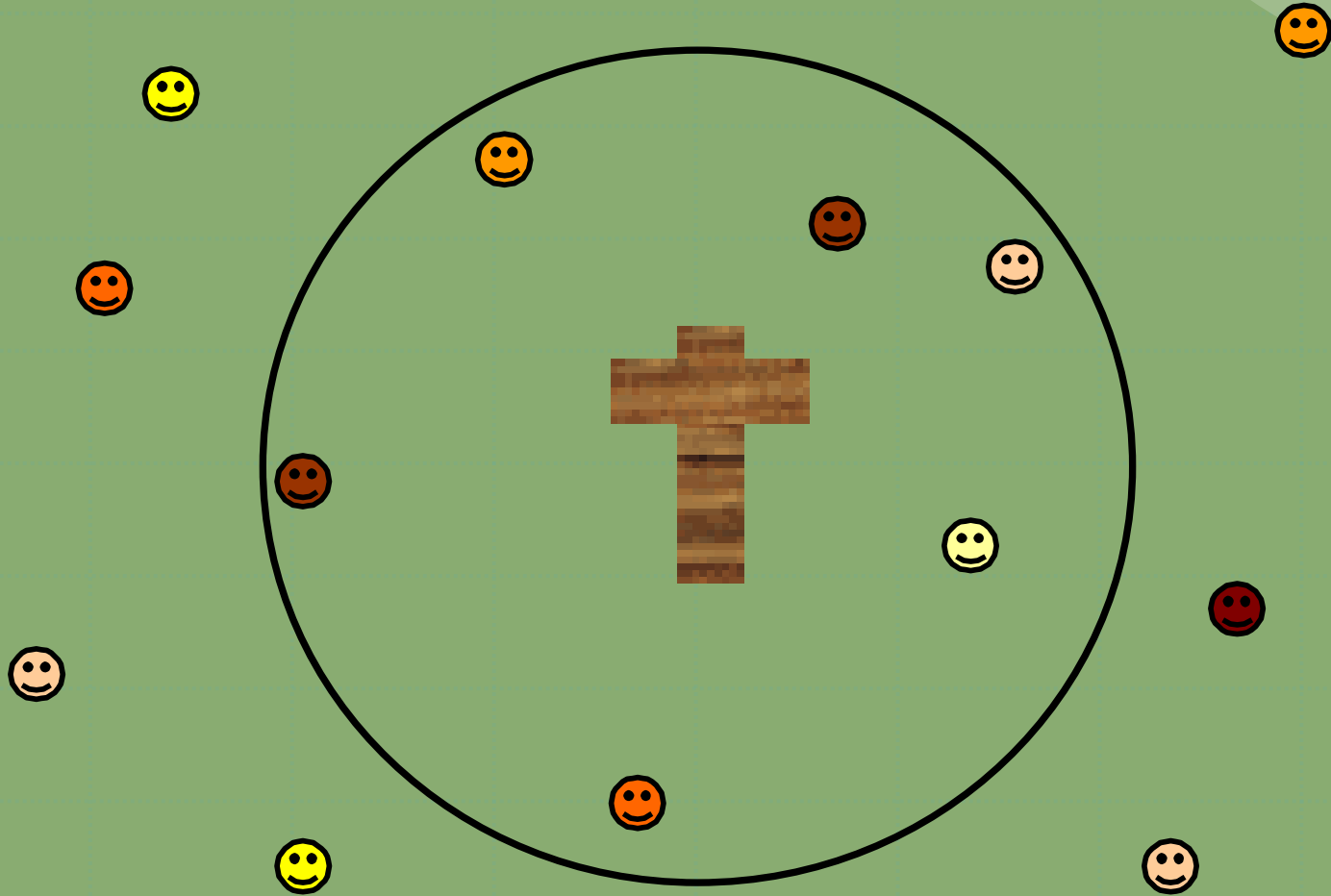
- Learning lessons from those who had culture suppressed as a result of Christian mission and have since used a process of indigenising Christianity as part of a recovery of culture
- Finno-Ugaric tribes and mission from Estonia
- First nation American Christians
- Aboriginal Christians in Australia
- More emphasis on living with creation
- The lack of indigenous spirituality among white settler populations and the need to forge this with indigenous people
- Loss of British/English? Christian identity after Colonialism – what might such a Christianity look like?



Christianity – saving humans from the world

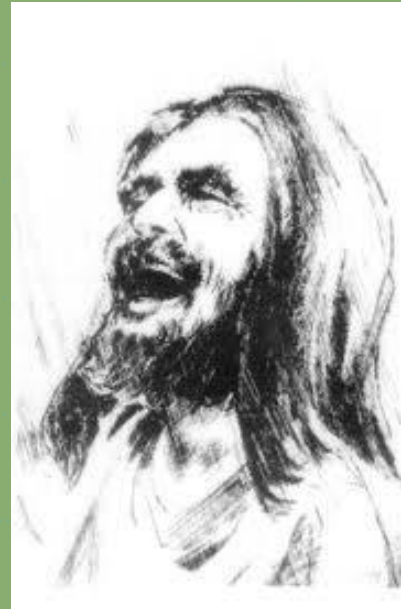


Conversion?

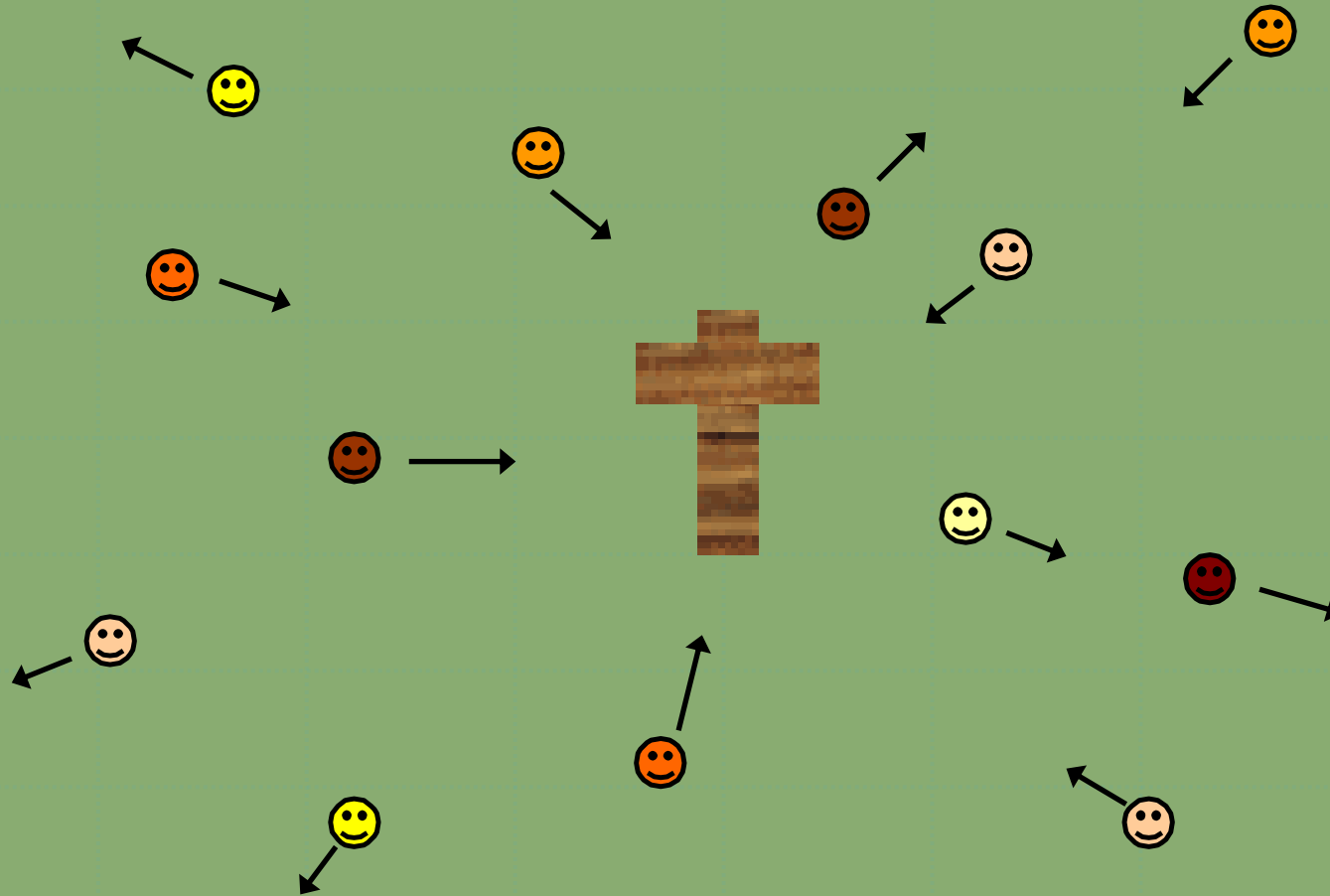


Bounded set ? Or..

Christianity – transforming people for the world



Conversion?



Bounded set ? Or.....Centred Set?

Implications for environmentalism

- There is no 'planet B'
- The future of creation is dependent for good or ill on humanity – there is no human extinction plan.
- Humans are both fully part of creation 'of the earth' yet not the same as the rest of creation 'in the divine image' with a unique role of responsibility within creation on God's behalf and to protect creation from destruction and evil. We are clearly failing in this calling!
- What are the implications for food production or mineral extraction of all creation 'enjoying the liberty of the children of God'? Is this about where we are going not where we are now? Might we have things to learn from indigenous people groups and attitudes some have to hunting, tree felling etc? do we need to 'go back to the diet of Eden' that is eating only fruit and nuts?
- In our mission we need to listen to creation and form expressions of faith with creation in intercultural mission



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Environment Programme



@CofEEnvironment

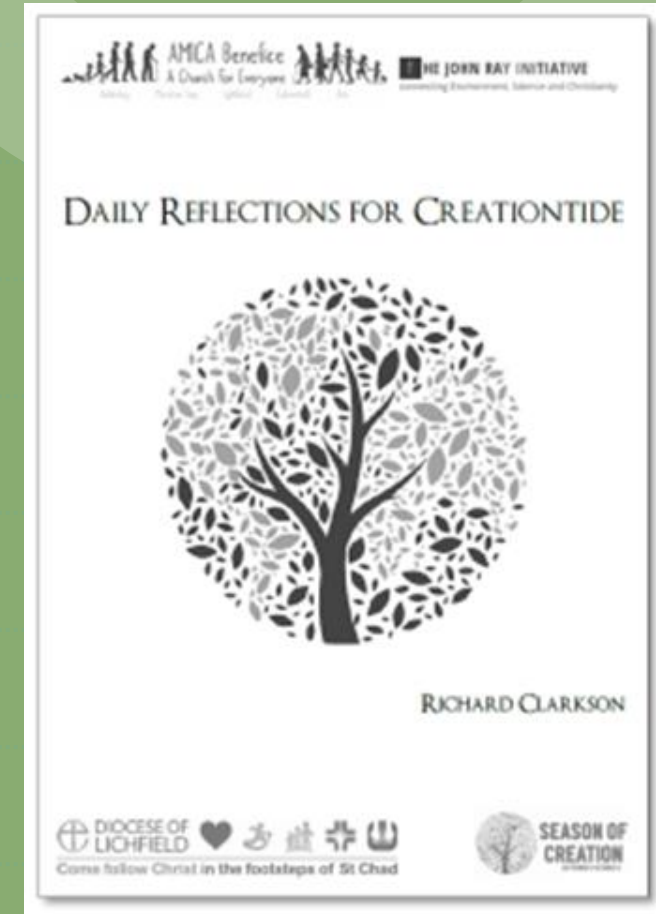
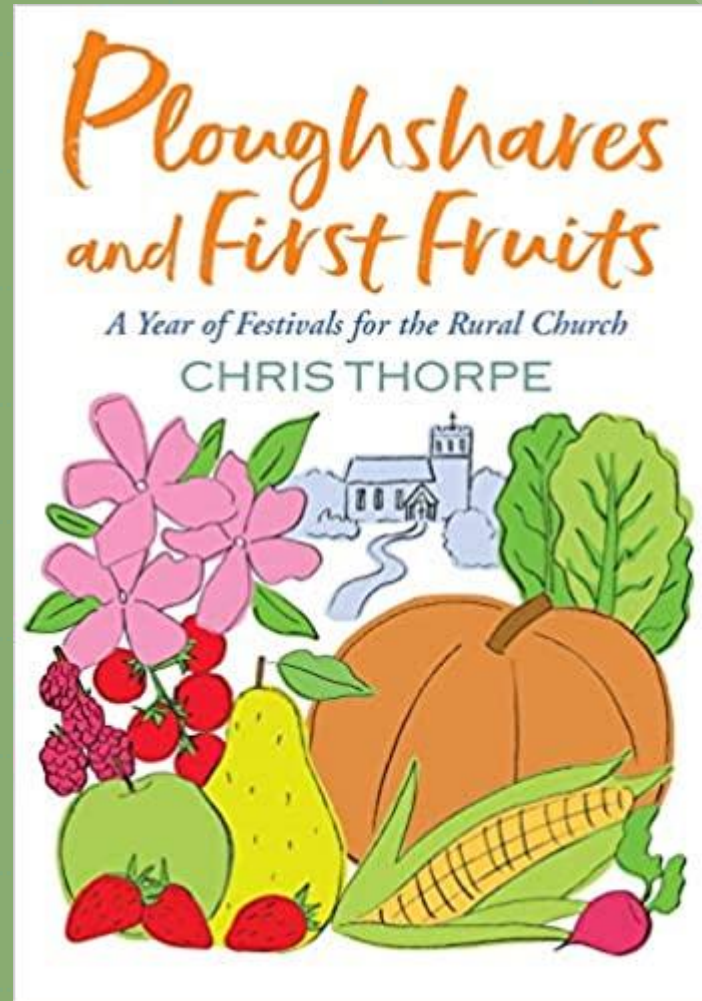
www.churchofengland.org/environment

environmentprogramme@churchofengland.org

Worship and Teaching

- Forest Church

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/forest-church/>



Preaching notes for the environment

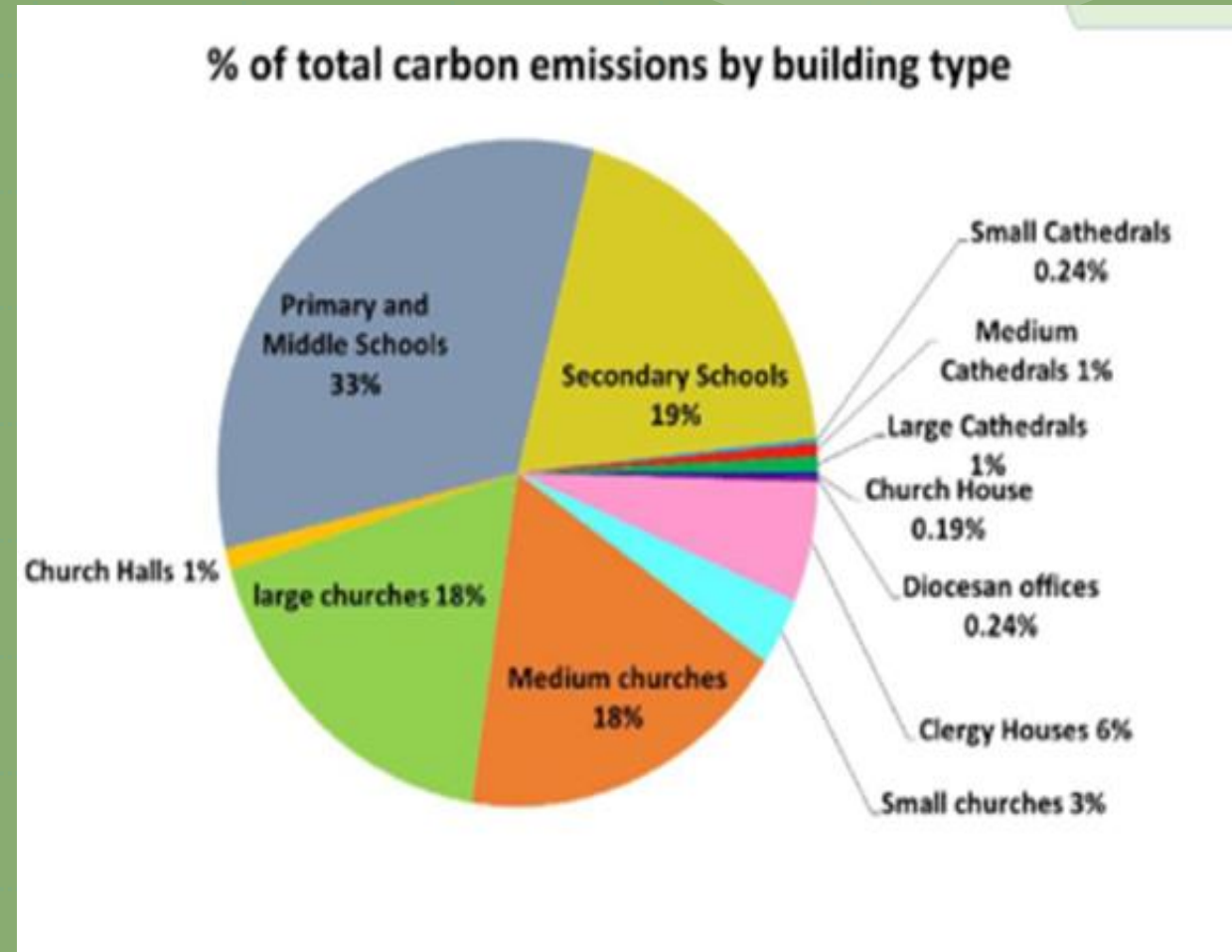
<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/find-advice/environment/sunday-lectionary-and-environment/>

Community and environment

- The church as main community centre – perhaps only one
- The school? The shop? The Pub? As possible others
- How to connect these with people and land and spirituality?
- Festivals and events? Environmental action?
- Getting out of the building into the community

Net Zero and Climate Change

- A holistic approach needed that includes buildings, land, food and farming – the danger of a 'climate crisis only' approach
- Difficulties of poor access to utilities.
- Net Zero ignores the carbon footprint of congregation and community
- Eco-Church a more holistic approach alongside Net Zero



Land and Nature

- Biodiversity loss more significant than climate change
- Care for Churchyards –Caring for God's Acre
- Glebe land
- Agriculture – relationship of farming and environmentalism crucial and sometimes difficult
- Care for farmers often a significant area for rural mission
- Sacred landscapes



A Strong Faith Voice

- Care for creation is not firstly about technology and policy but lifestyle and belief
- Christian community as a prophetic witness and example
- Christians in advocacy and action – Green Christian, Christian Climate Action (part of Extinction Rebellion), Arocha (Eco Church and more), Operation Noah, John Ray Initiative – and others.

Mission is.....

- Not getting people to Church
but getting people to be Church
- Not taking God to people
but seeing what he is already doing in their lives
- Not about getting people into heaven
but getting heaven into people
- Not about saving people from the world
but allowing God to transform them
as part of a plan to transform the world also
- Not just about what happens to human people.....
But about enabling and sharing this paradise with all the non human people

**Your Kingdom come your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven**