

## Small Group Meeting on 'Taking Care of Creation'

### Review (20 mins)

Reflect together on your experiences over the last week. As our stewardship month has progressed how have you been reviewing your own stewardship of all that God has given you? Share with one another.

The focus this week is on our stewardship of the created order.

Did you keep a nature diary last week? If so, how many species did you see?

### Read (10 mins)

Recap on the sermon from last Sunday. Try to give a summary to those who were not able to be present.

### Genesis 2:4-15

Read the Bible passage for this week, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. Below, you will find background information in the 'Setting the Scene' section.

This is a very familiar passage, try and listen to it as if for the first time and be prepared for new things or new emphases to emerge.

If you have time, go back and read Psalm 104 and the picture of a balanced ecology that that psalm paints.

### Setting the scene:

- Genesis 2:4-15 forms part of an epic poem used to introduce the story of God's creating and God's relationship with the created order. The aim of the verses is theological not

scientific. There are hints of the writer's understanding of the cosmologies of their own day. However, there is a key difference in that the editors of these Genesis texts place God as over and above creation not part of it.

- Chapters 1 and then 2-3 act like a zoom lens. Chapter 1 is panoramic, in chapters 2 and 3 the camera has zoomed in close.
- In terms of Biblical theology these verses are before the Fall, so the instructions about creation care in chapters 1 and 2 are part of what are called the creation ordinances; foundational to how human beings are expected/designed to live in relation to creation.
- PARIS, 6 May 2019: Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history – and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world now likely, warns a landmark new report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the summary of which was approved at the 7th session of the IPBES Plenary, meeting last week (29 April – 4 May) in Paris.<sup>1</sup>
- IPCC report 2018: Climate models project robust differences in regional climate characteristics between present-day and global warming of 1.5°C, and between 1.5°C and 2°C. These differences include increases in: mean temperature in most land and ocean regions (high confidence), hot extremes in most inhabited regions (high confidence), heavy precipitation in several regions (medium confidence), and the probability of drought and precipitation deficits in some regions (medium confidence).<sup>2</sup>
- By 2100, global mean sea level rise is projected to be around 0.1 metre lower with global warming of 1.5°C compared to 2°C

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/> accessed 22/05/2019

<sup>2</sup> Source: [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2018/07/sr15\\_headline\\_statements.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2018/07/sr15_headline_statements.pdf) accessed 22/05/2019

(medium confidence). Sea level will continue to rise well beyond 2100 (high confidence), and the magnitude and rate of this rise depend on future emission pathways. A slower rate of sea level rise enables greater opportunities for adaptation in the human and ecological systems of small islands, low-lying coastal areas and deltas (medium confidence).<sup>3</sup>

## Reflect (20 mins)

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by sharing any new insights or emphases that you saw in these verses.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. In the light of these verses how do you respond to the UN reports on Climate Change and Species Extinction – despair, bias, something for ‘them’ to address, something for me to do or…?

Q2. What might repentance look like in this area of taking care of God’s creation?

Q3. Writing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Puritan divine Thomas Watson wrote ‘we cannot call this “our bread” which is taken from others by stealth or force’ when reflecting on the petition in the Lord’s Prayer.<sup>4</sup> To what extent do you allow principles of fair trade, environmental and species concerns to guide your purchasing decisions for everything from meat to clothes to electronic gadgets?

Q4. Go outside and just look!

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<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Watson *A Body of Divinity*

## Respond (20 mins)

As you draw near to the end of your session, consider how you might respond to your reading and reflection by “walking the talk”. What one thing will you do this week that will be the next step of your caring for creation? Be prepared to share what you plan to do.

### **Some new challenge ideas**

See separate sheet which is available on the church website and will be sent to small group leaders with these notes.

## Group Prayer

Spend a few moments in silence reflecting on what you have discussed. Use the ACTS acronym to guide your praying:

**Adoration:** Praise God that he is Creator

**Confession:** Be honest about ways we have not shown care

**Thanksgiving:** For the beauty and wonder of creation

**Supplication:** That our individual lifestyles will reflect God’s care for creation

That government policies will seek to consider climate and environmental concerns even when the impact of doing so may be uncomfortable or unpopular politically

For those already affected by changes to their environment by climate change