

The Remarriage of Care of Creation and Spirituality.

Am I being cheeky copying from the title of the recent Ministry Conference? Some might call it plagiarism. You would have to ask Martin Smith. It was all very much to do with thinking about what we are doing in church. Out of church though, spirituality is important. What I want to have you remember is that around the world most people living close to the land felt themselves part of the natural world and saw spiritual forces at work in it. Here in New Zealand the names of Ranginui i runga and Papa-Tuanuku e takoto nei, are still printed with capital letters in our Prayer Book. In the Bible we find the Hebrew prophets interpreting a plague of locusts as a punishment from God for evils done by the people. For them the land was given by God and His blessings could be withheld if people turned away from Him. They understood that God had given them a good land and that they should look after it. Farmers today continue to care and use electric fences to give the pastures a break. Crop rotation and various processes maintain the fertility of arable land. Whole nations have perished where they did not care for their land, and at sea quite recently profitable fisheries have disappeared where there was no restraint. *There is no getting around the truth* whether the Creator gives written instructions, people learn the hard way, or scientists find out how living plant and animal life best works. Hence we have Care of Creation as a part of our mission as a Church.

Here in the Auckland diocese we have a Christian group called A Rocha sharing with others such as The Friends of Oakley Creek, and the Kaipatiki organisation on the North Shore, in clearing and planting along streams, and helping serve bait stations in the Waitakere area so as to allow native bird life to survive.

Since Bishop Randerson was Dean and set up the Diocesan Climate Change Action Group there have been actions such as getting General Synod to move against church investments in fossil fuel companies, professional advice to parishes on insulation and lighting in our buildings, and now a move to encourage community gardens where city people can keep up with and take a lead in promoting the improvement of soil health as we face a world with much pollution and an increasing population to feed.

The question arises as to how we relate to the many other groups working to reduce and cope with Climate Change? As Anglicans we reach out to other Christians with similar views, but is that all? Are we just another group among many who see the dangers, worry about 'climate deniers' and the financial and political systems we have inherited which so often oppose what we stand for? My answer is No. Whatever we do should be to the glory of God. Outwardly we may be seen to be handling the same tools, voting for the same changes, buying the same products, but in one way or another we must be pointing to the truth that was seen as a glimmer of light by early tribal people and has been growing ever clearer. Whether a person's interest is in computer power or astronomy, or the contents of a living cell, or one is moved by music or beauty in nature or art God is there. Those early tribes were onto something. We are mistaken if we do not see God in all the wonderful things we are seeing today and tell people about it.

Jim Hunt, for Care of Creation Committee