

Commendation from Christian leaders

The World Summit in Johannesburg will be one of the most significant world events of 2002. More world leaders are expected to attend than at any previous event. Decisions made and actions initiated could have far-reaching impacts on development in the poorest nations and good stewardship of the environment across the world. **We urge you to support the event with prayer and action.** We commend the World Summit Prayer for use in churches across Britain and Ireland on the eve of the Summit. We also hope that some of the information and stories within this briefing will inspire churches and their members to act positively in their mission and personal lives.

Joint Presidents of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

A Prayer *(for use in churches on Sunday 25th August)*

Creating God, you have given us a vision of a new heaven and a new earth. . .
 resources conserved
 earth tended
 atmosphere cleansed
 trees planted
 injustice ended
 oceans teeming
 nations at peace

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer
 alert nations, enthuse churches,
 receive our commitment and so entwine our lives with Your purpose
 earth and heaven will then sing of your glory. **Amen**

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Environmental Issues Network (EIN)

EIN is a formal network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) that brings together representatives of member churches, Christian environmental organisations and other appropriate bodies. EIN aims:

- To raise the level of awareness on environmental issues within member churches in line with the Five Marks of Mission, particularly the fifth mark: "To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation; to sustain and renew the life of the earth."
- To find ways of helping member churches and other organisations to explore together their theological understanding of creation and redemption and its ethical implications for environmental policy and action.
- To provide a means of presenting Christian and ethical perspectives on environmental matters to secular bodies.



Global Alert!

Christian teaching recognises that God created a wonderful and beautiful earth, entrusting us with its care, but also that our experience of the world has often been hostile and negative. Technology has brought significant benefits, but has been a mixed blessing and has, in many cases, led to injustice and serious environmental problems. All life is affected with the severest impact often on the vulnerable and poor. For example:

- **Resource Depletion & Waste:** The growing global population consumes natural resources at an ever-increasing rate, and generates mountains of waste. In the West we use

more than our fair share, and far more than is sustainable, whilst much of the world goes hungry.

- **Climate Change:** There is widespread scientific consensus that increased burning of fossil fuels is leading to rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions. Although the speed and scale of the impacts are unclear, there are likely to be devastating consequences for people and wildlife in low-lying coastal areas, or on marginal land where malnutrition is already prevalent.

Although we know many of the facts about these and other vital issues including deforestation, pollution and

loss of bio-diversity, action to change things often seems painfully slow. Other forces tend to squeeze out care for the environment. There are conflicts between economic priorities and environmental action, both at personal and national levels.

World leaders now recognise that Governments alone cannot make the necessary changes. There needs to be a partnership between nations, organisations, businesses and individuals. Increasingly, the importance of faith communities - including Christian churches - is seen as essential to the process.

What is the World Summit on Sustainable Development?

The World Summit aims to bring together all interested parties, in order to tackle global environmental problems. The process began in the early 1970s with the Brundtland Report, the Stockholm conference on the Human Environment,

and then in 1992 the first World Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. From 26th August to 6th September, the world's attention will be focussed on Johannesburg, South Africa, for the next World Summit. An estimated

50,000 people will gather including governments, UN agencies, financial institutions, charities and grassroots organisations and individuals. **Such an important global event needs the support and prayers of Christians.**

1. What happened at Rio?

In 1992, scientists and senior policy makers from 179 countries brought to global attention the fact that environmental problems are intimately linked to economic conditions and social justice. They produced far-reaching plans on environmental and development issues:

- International Convention on Climate Change (within which the Kyoto Protocol was developed)

- International Convention on Bio-diversity

- Agenda 21 - a programme aimed at achieving global sustainable development in the 21st Century (including the adoption of national sustainable development strategies by 2002)

- A UN commission (the CSD) set up to monitor all the UNCED agreements.

Since Rio, more than 150 countries have signed both these legally binding Conventions, and made plans to implement Agenda 21. The British Government has produced a sustainable development strategy, *A Better Quality of Life*, and many local Agenda 21 groups have sought to raise awareness and encourage more environmentally sensitive lifestyles.

Agenda 21 is an all-embracing programme of action, from the local level to the international, aimed at achieving global sustainable development in the 21st Century. It is a manual for real long-term change, so how can we take it further? www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21.htm

Sustainable Development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (Brundtland Report, 1987)

All those initials!!!

U.N.C.E.D. = United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (= Rio 1992, the first World Summit).
C.S.D. = Commission for Sustainable Development.
W.S.S.D. = World Summit on Sustainable Development (= The World Summit 2002 in Johannesburg).



2. The Aims of the World Summit on Sustainable Development



The Johannesburg Summit will assess the agreements made ten years ago, including the conventions, national strategies and the implementation of Agenda 21. Obstacles encountered, lessons learned and necessary changes will be considered in the light of recent advances in science, technology and communications.

Stakeholder Forum:
www.earthsummit2002.org

Official UN Website:
www.johannesburgsummit.org

3. The World Summit - Why Christians must respond

Religious organisations have been invited to respond to the World Summit. **As Christians who are salt and light in the world we are called to demonstrate our commitment to help the poor and to care for God's creation, by responding practically and prophetically.**

Christian leaders have urged us to pray and prepare for the World Summit. But why should this be of particular concern to Christians? **"Sustainable development", the key theme of the Summit, encompasses several Biblical themes, including:**

Creation

God is the source of all good things, including the enormous diversity and abundance of the material creation. This earth is the Lord's, not ours to exploit as we wish. We are created

from "the dust of the earth" and are dependent upon the rest of creation.

Stewardship

We are made both "of the earth", and "in the image of God". We have a special role and responsibility towards the non-human creation, for which we are answerable to God. God encourages human innovation and use of creation's resources but there are constraints - respect for other creatures, wisdom about the impact of our actions, and humility regarding our abilities and understanding.

Love for Neighbour

Our actions must demonstrate love to fellow humans, who share God's image. Jesus commands us to care for the poor, hungry, disabled, prisoners, refugees - many of whom are victims of our policies and lifestyles. His

commands should lead to action for justice on their behalf.

Justice

God desires that all should share the benefits from the earth's riches - the poor as well as the wealthy, generations to come as well as people today. This continues to challenge our rich and unsustainable Western lifestyles.

Human Nature

Many involved in the World Summit are asking "Why hasn't there been more progress in ten years?" The Bible teaches about the spoilt state of human hearts, and the need for God to transform us from within. Some are beginning to recognise that the churches can be a key to change at the level needed for real progress.

4. The Bible and Creation

The Bible begins by telling of God's love for all creation, and the responsibility and privilege given to humans to protect and steward the earth. It ends with God's plans for a new (renewed and restored) heaven and earth, with Christ at the centre. In between, all the Bible's major themes have ecological implications.

- Genesis tells of a good creation, and, in the story of Noah, of God's saving plans for all living things. Yet it also tells of the Fall, leading to harmful and destructive relationships between humanity and the natural world. (*Genesis chapters 1-3; 7-9*)

- God's covenant with Israel, part of a wider covenant with all living creatures, (*Genesis 9.8-17*), is intimately connected to their stewardship of the land. The Old Testament offers insights into caring for the earth and those that live on it. The repeated failure of people to live out God's moral laws had catastrophic environmental consequences (*e.g. Hosea 4.1-4*).

- The Gospels reveal how Jesus knew and understood creation, drawing on natural imagery for many of his parables, revealing himself as Lord of creation in calming the storm, and ultimately in rising from the dead (*e.g. Mark 4.1-20, 26-41; John 20*).

- The Epistles show the wider implications of Jesus' life and work. His death and resurrection have a cosmic dimension, reversing the effects of the fall (*Romans 8.19-22; Colossians 1.15-20*). God's ultimate plan for creation is "to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ" (*Ephesians 1.10*).



5. What can Churches do?

Worship

Hold a special service linked to the World Summit. Invite local environmental organisations to contribute and local politicians to attend. Make celebrating creation more central to your services. Most of the worship material in the Bible begins with rejoicing in God as Creator. Does yours?

Study & Teach

Use the material above and from the organisations below.

Be informed

- Conduct an **environmental check-up** of your church's life and mission (information from Eco-Congregation).
- Keep a "Global Alert" **notice board** with a map of the world highlighting

information about major environmental issues.

- Register a member of your Church to receive **environmental information** (e.g. Agenda 21) from your local Council, and keep everyone informed.
- Find out more about **issues** such as climate change from, for example, Christian Ecology Link's "Operation Noah", and expert groups such as the John Ray Initiative.

Be involved

- Encourage Church groups to take part in **local activities** through Wildlife Trusts, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, or by getting involved with A Rocha – Christians in Conservation.
- **Adopt a local area** (churchyard, green, allotment) for responsible

management.

- As part of your **mission support**, resource the work of one of the Christian environmental groups mentioned overleaf.
- Promote **Fair Trade** in your church and local community.
- Contribute to the **public debate** on sustainability that will take place in the context of the Summit.
- Join or set up a **local group** of Christians to discuss the issues, take practical action, or both.

Be transformed!

Living sustainably in God's world is an essential part of discipleship. Lives, lifestyles, and whole communities can be impacted if we fulfil our calling as stewards of God's earth.

6. Examples of what Churches have done

● Wakefield Baptist Church undertook practical conservation work in a local nature reserve and have gained positive interest from their church, community and local press.

● Selly Oak Methodist Church, Birmingham, have a Big Green Machine in their vestibule for collecting items which church members and building users bring for recycling.

● St Oswalds, Durham, have implemented a management plan for their ecologically valuable churchyard and are working on an environmental policy to guide management of their church hall.

● Friary United Reformed Church, Nottingham, launched their Eco-Congregation programme with an environmental service at harvest.

● St Thomas More Roman Catholic Church, Seaford, have undertaken a base-line audit to identify what they are already doing and what they want to prioritise next.

● St Molua's Church of Ireland at Stormont, Belfast, have developed a website illustrating their environmental mission and activities (www.molua.org.uk).

● Kippen Kirk (Church of Scotland), near Stirling, invited a willow weaver to help tell the story of Moses in the basket. This was part of a series helping children appreciate natural materials.

● The Church in Wales at Peterston-super-Ely worked with their community to green their neighbourhood through planting bulbs.

● The New Testament Church of God in Handsworth, Birmingham, collects new and nearly-new clothes and footwear to send to a community in the West Indies.

The **WORLD SUMMIT - You And Your Church** Project

is a partnership of organisations within the CTBI Environmental Issues Network

Websites: www.churchesearthsummit.org.uk - the site this material came from

www.ctbi.org.uk/earthsummit - another way to the site this material came from





A ROCHA

A Rocha

Christians in Conservation

A Rocha ("The Rock" in Portuguese) is an international conservation organisation working to show God's love for all creation. Founded in 1983, it has projects in eight countries, sharing five core values: Christian, Conservation, Community, Cross-cultural, Campaigning.

The first UK project "A Rocha Living Waterways" was launched in 2001 in multiracial Southall and Hayes, London. Here work has commenced to create a nature reserve and country park on formerly derelict land, with an environmental education project amongst the local communities. Longer-term plans include a floating classroom and a permanent environmental centre. A Rocha has over 1,000 member households in the UK, and encourages local support groups to be involved in local conservation issues. A Rocha operates a membership scheme (£15 annual subscription per household) and a Supporting Churches Scheme. A Rocha UK also produces an annual "Conservation Sunday" pack. The 2002 pack is on "Healing the Land".

A Rocha UK, 13 Avenue Road, Southall, Middlesex UB1 3BL. Tel./Fax: 020 8574 5935
E-mail: uk@arocha.org Website: www.arocha.org



Christian Ecology Link

Christian Ecology Link was formed in 1981 to support Christians from all backgrounds and traditions who wish to demonstrate care for God's creation in their faith and lifestyle.

CEL offers a wide range of informative leaflets, publishes a magazine (*Green Christians*) and monthly prayer guide, hosts conferences on topical themes (most recently on food and consumption), and has a comprehensive web-site on which material for a **World Summit service** is available.

We seek to inspire and enable personal change while recognising that structural (i.e. institutional) reform is needed in order to realise a vision of peace, environmental sustainability and social justice. Our current **LOAF campaign** promotes food that is Locally produced, Organically grown, Animal friendly and Fairly Traded. Place mats for Harvest Supper meals with this thought-provoking message are available. A forthcoming campaign, **Operation Noah**, will encourage a Christian response to climate change.

For full information about our resources and membership details: **Christian Ecology Link, 20 Carlton Road, Harrogate, N.Yorkshire HG2 8DD Tel: 01423 871616**
E-mail: info@christian-ecology.org.uk
Website: www.christian-ecology.org.uk

John Ray Initiative

The John Ray Initiative (JRI) is an educational charity with a vision to bring together scientific and Christian understandings of the environment in a way that can be widely communicated and lead to effective action. It was formed in 1997 in recognition of the urgent need to respond to the global environmental crisis and the challenges of sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

John Ray (1627-1705) pioneered the classification of plants and animals. His writings proclaimed God as creator, whose wisdom is 'manifest in the works of creation', and Christ as redeemer of all things. Inspired by Ray, JRI seeks to teach appreciation of nature, increase awareness of the state of the global environment and communicate Christian understandings of environmental issues.

JRI conducts **projects**, often in **partnership** with others. Current areas of work include global climate change 'stewardship and agriculture', and the development of a Certificate in Christian Rural and Environmental Studies in association with Christian Rural Concern. JRI **publishes** Briefing Papers and Online Briefings (see www.jri.org.uk) and other publications.

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Eco-Congregation

Eco-Congregation is a programme designed to encourage and enable churches to respond to their environmental concerns in practical and spiritual ways. The programme, which is free of charge to churches, includes:

- Church-orientated environmental resources covering topics from worship to children's work and looking after church premises to working in the community
- A process to support the work of churches
- An award scheme to recognise excellence

Some examples of the activities of Eco-Congregation Churches are included in 'Examples of What Churches Have Done', above. For more information about Eco-Congregation: **Eco-Congregation, ENCAMS, Elizabeth House, The Pier, Wigan WN3 4EX. Tel. 01942 612639**
E-mail: ecocongregation@encams.org
Website: www.encams.org/ecocongregation

