



Caring for Creation: Leading the Church Forward

15th Oct 2024 - 11th March 2025

Session 1: Our Calling

Tuesday 15th October 2024, Zoom

Revd Dr Dave Bookless

What is humanity's God-given vocation and mission towards the natural world? Do the concepts of 'dominion' and 'stewardship', based on traditional interpretations of Genesis 1:26-28 need re-examining in the light of an ecological crisis caused by human behaviour? This talk will explore our vocation within the community of creatures, using passages from Job, the Psalms and the New Testament to shed fresh light on how the Genesis mandate should be applied today. It will argue that, taken as a whole, the biblical texts points us away from extreme anthropocentrism or ecocentrism and towards an approach categorised as Theo-eco-centrism. The practical, missiological and socio-economic implications of this will also be explored.

Revd Prof. Andrew Gosler

We have no evidence of life on any planet but this, and the fossil record shows that we are living in the most biodiverse time in the earth's history. Yet, we are living in the midst of the sixth mass-extinction event in the history of life on this planet, and our species, *Homo sapiens*, is the cause. More specifically, the cause might be linked to a certain mindset, a specific perception which sees us as separate from nature, separate from the mainstream of life of which we are a part, from which we evolved, and upon which we depend. This is the scientific reality of what we know theologically as The Fall. In this short talk, I shall give some background to the science of conservation and ecological sustainability, which explains why 'creation care', is the only demonstrable ecological purpose, our niche if you will, and so also our calling.

Session 2: Big Ideas

Wednesday 20th November 2024, Zoom/Westminster College, Cambridge

Dr Ruth Valerio

One of the wonderful things about the Gospel is how totally integrated it is. It is *good news* for humanity and for the whole wider creation, and is about the restoration of relationships: with God, with each other and with the natural world. That means we don't pit evangelism against community engagement, or poverty relief against environmental care, or a life of prayer against a life of action – they all blend together into a harmonious whole. In this lecture we will consider how all these areas work together as multiple facets of a single thread, and we will turn our attention to the virtues and to how living those out enables us to live integrated, sustainable and gospel-focused lives.

Prof. Deepa Senapathi

We find ourselves in the sixth mass age of extinction when there is unprecedented loss of global biodiversity both in terms of species and habitats. We are also dealing with the climate emergency and simultaneously facing the immense challenge of ensuring that 7 billion plus people in the world have access to healthy and nutritious diets and this places a huge demand on land for agricultural purposes. Are these major issues of our time, in conflict with one another or can we find ways to conserve biodiversity whilst ensuring food security despite environmental challenges?

Agro-ecological approaches such as regenerative agriculture and ecological intensification are increasingly being adopted to support both biodiversity conservation and sustainable production. However, a one size fits all approaches rarely work and therefore the challenge of finding context specific solutions is one faced by researchers every day. Linking scientific evidence from the Global North and the Global South, this talk will explore whether balancing biodiversity conservation and food security will always be a case of minimising trade-offs, or whether win-win solutions can be found amongst the choices we make.

Session 3: All Creation Praises God

Wednesday 22nd January 2025, Zoom/Westminster College, Cambridge

Prof. Richard Bauckham

The praise of God by all creation is a major theme in the Psalms and recurs in the New Testament, especially in the Book of Revelation. Is it just a poetic fancy? Or some kind of pre-scientific animism, attributing conscious intention to all creatures? No, it offers a key theological insight into the relationship of God and creation, including ourselves. It depicts creation as a theocentric community, existing for God's glory, and our own place among God's creatures, called to participate in their worship.

Cara Parrett

As stewards of creation, we hope for our God-imagining rule to be characterised by relationships between humans and non-human creation that allow God's creation to flourish, and thus praise him, as he intended. This leads to important conversations about the practical ways we can respond to protect/restore the health of ecosystems and species, but, we are part of creation too, so there is also space in the conversation to think about how we can more intentionally listen for creation's song, and see ourselves as joining in – connecting our desire to live lives that praise God, with the beauty and needs of his creation.

Session 4: Grief, Anxiety, and Radical Hope

Wednesday 19th February 2025, Zoom

Dr Bethany Sollereeder

Every year brings new record-breaking heat waves and more extreme weather events. The world's climate is changing, with 2023 breaking the 1.5°C threshold as an annual global average above Holocene temperature norms. How can we theologically and emotionally encounter the possibility that serious enduring climate change is now inevitable? What does hope look like in this new world here and now? Drawing on Jonathan Lear's concept of

“radical hope”, this presentation will look at how to build hope when the previous set of hopes are lost.

Jasmine Kwong

Many of us face a range of emotions in the reality of a groaning creation. Fear and worry would be expected, but what about hope?

In light of the ongoing climate crisis, let’s consider relationships within the wider scope of creation. As part of God’s design, our dynamic relationships within creation, enable us to notice and name signs of hope in the here and the now.

By diving deeper into the web of life, and exploring the intimate connection between people and the places they live, we will find evidence of *shalom* - wholeness and harmonious relationships.

Amidst a still groaning creation, let’s explore some inspiring stories from communities in different pockets of the world. May these signs of shalom point us to Christ Jesus and propel us into hopeful action wherever we are planted.

Session 5: Ultimate Hope

Tuesday 11th March 2025, Zoom

Dr Vinoth Ramachandra

Christians have always believed in the final "renewal of all things" in Christ. But controversy still surrounds how we relate this to planetary catastrophes, and what it means for how we act today. While the original creation was *ex nihilo*, the new creation will be a re-creation. This talk seeks to identify and understand the continuities and discontinuities between the two, and what our ultimate hope means for a Christian vision for today?

Prof. Darren Evans

With a focus on biodiversity, I will review the ‘state of the planet’ by focussing on data from a range of global sources, including the WWF/ZSL Living Planet Report, examining the roots of the ecological crisis, and exploring the international response through the Global Biodiversity Framework’s “30x30” Target. I will reflect on my experiences of Defra’s vision for nature recovery in England, discuss some of the barriers and suggests ways in which we can make a positive impact on nature in the places where we live.