

God and the Environment – Through him all things were made - Session 4 of the Conference “Faith and the Future of the Countryside” with Bishop Alan Smith, held at Lee Abbey, Devon, 23rd to 27th September 2019

Notes from the lecture taken by Susanna Metz

Caring for God’s Creation

— mentioned the Extinction Rebellion movement and Greta Thunberg. BAS wonders: why weren’t WE doing that? This is absolutely core Christian business. It’s what young people are talking about.

— Last core Mark of Mission: “To safeguard creation...”

— mentioned the theology of “Jesus came to save me” and the “end times attitude” being a problem. These attitudes take scripture out of contest.

— God is creator of entire cosmos....it’s not all about us only. First Creation narrative is clearly a strong statement that all comes from God and we are given responsibility to be stewards of creation. Second Creation narrative then goes on with Adam and Eve story to try to explain why there’s evil in the world. Caring for creation demonstrates our love of God.

— *Kabash*...about how we bring order, well-being

— Also the word for *dominion* is also intended to order the world to be in connection to God, not that we abuse creation for our own use.

He offered 5 models:

— *The Stewardship model*: notion that we are in charge of something, responsibility for something that doesn’t belong to us. We have to reverence the land, soil, and all that’s being given to us. Downside is that it can become very human centred.

— *Co-creator Model*: connected with some of the ways God is connected to humanity. Picked up in Ps 8 as well as the creation story of humankind. A joining in the creative work that God has begun. It’s a model of privilege but one

— *The Image of God Model*: Picked up by Orthodox Church...notion of priest taking on notion of priest mediating between God and people....connected also to care for creation. Acting *for* God, not *being* God.

— *Covenant*: An agreement or binding relationship....testament/covenant....is developed in the NT where through Christ God offers grace to imperfect humanity. Obedience gets us blessing. Blessing is contingent on us obeying God’s command which includes care of creation.

— *Human beings are fellow members of the community of creation*: We are participants in whole community of creation....we are called upon to celebrate with all creation....shouting out to glory of God as in Psalms.

SO WHAT;

There is overwhelming scientific evidence that climate change is taking place, as is extinction of animals, and deforestation in spite of what folks like Trump is saying.

— it’s already affecting us now. Diocese of Norwich is the fastest disappearing diocese in the country because of coastal erosion.

- question pressing us is what are we going to do about it?
- how do we act as individuals AND as churches. (clip shown of the Church's Environmental Program and a Lent book is being developed on this theme.)
- We're in the midst of "The Season of Creation"we can find stuff on the website.
- Caring for God's Acre* very keen to engage with us.
- What projects can we develop that will then be incorporated into liturgy, bible studies, etc.
- Food is a very different issue. We can do without somethings for a few years, but we can't do without food. If worse comes to worse, we won't be able to produce enough milk here. Issues like this
- Ruth Valerio "L is for Lifestyle"good A to Z book on a lifestyle change.