

Celebrations / Festivals

Celebrations and festivals have always been an essential element of religions so it's hardly surprising that they feature in more than half of the faith long-term action plans on the environment. As well as introducing new music, prayers, liturgy and art to celebrate the beauty of creation, many faiths are now adding a Creation Time or Environment Day as a new festival to focus attention on the environment to their annual calendar of events.

As well as exploring a spiritual approach to nature and encouraging a sense of environmental responsibility, these new festivals are also aimed at remembering, in the words of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, that "the Earth is not a problem but a source of wonder and joy".

Some groups, such as the Armenian Orthodox Church and Judaism, are rediscovering traditional festivals and imbuing them with a new significance. Others, such as the Shanghai Buddhists, have decided to designate an existing festival as an environment day, while some are taking major steps to weave their new creation/environment festivals into their annual life calendar of worship.

The Church of England, for example, intends that by 2016 all dioceses and cathedrals will be holding annual Creation Time festivals and services of worship and prayer; running courses, retreats, artistic events and celebrations; and commissioning new art works, hymns, choral pieces, stained glass and other church art.

As well as traditional celebrations involving prayer and music, the new faith environment festivals include other activities, from practical initiatives, such as planting trees, to pleasurable, such as going for a walk in faith-owned grounds.

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Buddhists Shanghai

11. CELEBRATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

We will highlight one Buddhist festival day as an environment day for the monasteries;

- *to distribute booklets about environment issues;
- * to hold seminars, lectures to educate followers to take care of the environment in their everyday life, and to take care of the environment in their pilgrim activities (for example, recommending that they walk, ride bike, or carpool when they visit monasteries);
- * to promote the significance of vegetarianism to health and environment and to advocate vegetarianism among Buddhist followers and their families
- * to have activities such as reading poems and playing music, and use these kind of art forms to help pilgrims and visitors understand the concept of Buddhist Ecology.

Christian

Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference

Celebration

- Celebrate local beauty, diversity, challenges and connections in local parishes and communities.
- Recognise a Creation Time in the year and celebrate it with relevant liturgy, prayer and music.
- Celebrate the beauty of creation that is reflected in the local Church grounds and cultivate the grounds with native endemic species so that people enjoy nature where they worship.

Armenian Church

Celebration of Creation Day

Sustainable land management, theology of land: The writings of the Armenian Church-Fathers are full of examples of, and references to, the preservation of fertile land. Some of the Armenian Church celebrations and ritual liturgies can serve a good example. During the celebration of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, grapes are blessed. Several

times a year there is a special blessing of the world. There are strong recommendations in the mediaeval writings of the Church Fathers on how to respect nature. The book "Nature Protection and Theology" was the first example of such publications. However, with the establishment of a special department, there will also be an opportunity to create a theological research group to create publications of theological books and booklets on Green Theology.

Creation days: It is a new ecumenical introduction in the life of the churches. There is a plan to organise an event with the Christian Education Centre of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. There are a few alternatives that are planned to be organised each year:

- A composition on ecology by the pupils of the public schools,
- Performances by the kindergarten children,
- A drawing or photo contest with the participation of Youth Centre children.

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales

Celebration in Liturgy

It is easy to forget that the Earth is not a problem but a source of wonder and joy. Surrounded by the despair and depression that accompanies any reporting on the environmental crisis, it is understandable that people feel a sense of foreboding about the future. But Catholicism brings a new voice that sings praises to God for the sheer wonder of the created world and our place in it. Catholicism celebrates our human existence on earth. It teaches that we are meant to be here; we are an integral part of God's plan; we are meant to enjoy creation in all its facets and that creation allows us to learn more about God. The profound hope embodied in Christianity gives us confidence to believe that we can work towards a more just and loving future.

Building more celebration of creation into liturgy and Parish life is a fundamental start to exploring a spiritual approach to nature. The new season of Creation Time (<http://www.ecen.org/cms/index.php?page=creationtime>) is a particularly good time to begin; it encompasses Harvest Festival and St Francis Day. Music, singing, prayer and joyful praise are at the heart of caring for the earth. We suggest that more opportunity is found throughout the year to celebrate the gift of creation and that it becomes an integral part of our liturgy.

Finding Joy in the Natural World

*"I lift up my eyes to the mountains; where is my help to come from?
My help comes from God who made heaven and earth."*

Psalm 121

Direct experience of the natural world is part of embodying celebration into our lives and we encourage parishes to experience their local environment as part of creating change. No church or community exists in isolation, it is embedded in the natural environment that surrounds it and nuanced by the history of an area.

As part of a long term plan we encourage all to celebrate local beauty, diversity, challenges and connections. This can be done throughout the year so that seasonal changes are celebrated. These experiences could take the form of a nature walk through a local beauty spot with a guide, experiencing the dawn or evening chorus, arranging a visit to see the spectacles of nature in the local area and many other ideas.

Celebration

- Celebrate the beauty of creation through liturgy and music and recognise a Creation Time in the year.
- Make church grounds a manifestation of care for the earth so that they form part of, and celebrate, our understanding of our role in nature

Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

7. **Celebration:** how well are we highlighting the themes of stewardship and care for creation in our liturgies and feast days and what new initiatives might we consider to help the Catholic community better understand a reverence for Creation and the Creator? How can we more effectively draw the link between care for creation and care for poor people in our liturgical life?

- Music: The Coalition has already been approached by one of the top Catholic music talents, John Michael Talbot, to develop songs that lift up the themes of stewardship, creation and care for the poor amidst environmental degradation. The Coalition will seek funding to commission new works that support these themes with other Catholic musicians.
- Celebrating St. Francis: For the first time this year, the Franciscan Action Network (a Coalition partner) and the Coalition together developed resources for the 800th Anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi. These efforts will continue in the coming years and encourage more and more Catholics to honour St. Francis' unique witness to the poor and to Creation.
- Liturgical Commissions and Organizations: the Coalition will encourage national liturgical organizations to become key Coalition members and encourage their full participation in our activities, including the development of prayers, homily

suggestions, and specific ways to integrate the themes of stewardship and creation into our liturgical life.

- **National Gatherings:** the Coalition will explore ways to celebrate our collective work by hosting large gatherings every 3 to 5 years. These celebrations will be an opportunity for the partners to highlight their efforts and to train more Catholic leaders on the many ways to integrate stewardship, care for creation and care for the poor into their ongoing programs and activities.

Church of Norway

2. The General Synod challenges parishes and local joint church councils to:

- to celebrate "Creation Day" and to use the times of Advent and Lent to focus on environmental involvement.

Church of England

15. Expositions, explorations, celebrations The following are a taste of activities taking place and programmes around England:

- **Exeter: 'Roots of the Cathedral'** This DVD project, based on a concept by Christopher Southgate, brings together the work of Robert Harris (Architect), Peter Kyrke-Smith (Composer) and Andrew Millington with singing by the Cathedral Choir. In sound and image, the project highlights the ecological link between humanity and the natural world, the connectedness between natural beauty and human endeavour, a spiritual perspective of God's total creation. The project looks in particular at the influence of trees on the life and history of Exeter Cathedral. Woodland and trees provided raw materials for all ancient buildings and the tools required in their construction; they stimulated architects and masons in roof design, pillars, vaulting and bosses; the canopy of the forest is reflected in the vaulting and arches. The disc will be used with the Cathedral's education work. This is seen as the first step of an initiative to be developed further in the years ahead.
- **London: St Martin-in-the-Fields** 25 October – 31 December 2009. The *Hard Rain* exhibition by Mark Edwards is being hosted in London, at the Courtyard of St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square. This acclaimed outside exhibition is based on Bob Dylan's prophetic song 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall', and explores the issues of climate change, poverty, habitat loss and human rights. At the 16 November evening session of St Martins autumn education series, entitled Inspiring Creation, Mark Edwards will talk about his exhibition and the ecological crisis.
- **The Church's year** The traditional harvest festival in early autumn may now form part of Creation Time from September to October (see panel on page 15 above), which concludes on October 4th, St Francis Day. Earlier each year, many churches are also

celebrating Creation Sunday on the second Sunday in Lent, and Environment Sunday on the Sunday nearest World Environment Day (5th June). The Lent Carbon Fast is establishing itself as a regular fixture. In addition to these annual events, in 2009 Education Sunday on 8th February was dedicated to the theme “The Earth is the Lords”, and a “Ready Steady Slow” campaign is being introduced for Advent. It is appropriate that as much time is now given by the Church calendar to the environment as any other topic, save the Life, Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord – through and for whom the world was created.

7. **Celebration** *Done or commenced*

- Claire Foster and David Shreeve have produced two comprehensive and imaginative guides and source books for churches to use in bringing environmental concerns, care for creation and sustainable living into the Church’s calendar of festivals and holy days – see Appendix B.
- Many dioceses and churches have devised ‘eco-celebrations’ and innovative events and projects inspired by the concerns of *StF* and other projects. A number of cathedrals having developed their own material for celebration and reflection concerning their local environment and place in it and its history, drawing on the example of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton’s *Sound of Running Waters* project.
- There are many ideas and projects from the Christian environmental networks and initiatives of the UK – see Appendix C – for liturgy, festivals, community celebrations and connection of church life to the local environment. In particular, the international Christian environmental charity A Rocha’s *Eco- congregation* website also offers a wealth of ideas. Church of England members and congregations have played a full part in these efforts. *New challenges*
- Following previous publications, David Shreeve is collaborating with Natan Levy, Harfiyah Haleem and Lindsay Swan on a new title, *Whose Light is it Anyway?*, developing ideas for interfaith collaboration in environmental action between the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths. This should be disseminated as widely as possible within and outside the Church of England.
- *StF* will encourage dioceses to build on progress in developing local projects for celebration and integration of environmental concerns into liturgy and church life.
- By 2016, dioceses and cathedrals will be holding annual Creation Time festivals and services of worship and prayer; running courses, retreats, artistic events and celebrations connecting the themes of *Shrinking the Footprint* to the church calendar; commissioning new art works, hymns, choral pieces, stained glass and other church art inspired by *StF* and the *Climate Justice Fund*.
- Cathedrals and as many churches as possible should be encouraged to take part in *Big Lunch* street parties in future years.

Church of South India

1. CELEBRATION

With your small group or other Christian friends, plan an Earth keeping Day for your fellowship, campus, church or community. Share what God has been unfolding to you about our responsibilities toward the earth, and offer resources to help others begin to practice an earthkeeping ethic. (Biblical Study Sheet)

“We need to recognise that what we do with God's creation around us will have a tremendous effect, for good or ill, on the lives of our grandchildren and on the generations of their children and grandchildren. By our attitude to God's creation now, we determine the nature of the society that will be inherited later this century by the children of our children.” Bishop Thomas Samuel

- **Celebrate an Environmental Festival** with all age groups participating. Make it an annual event. The theme for World Environment Day 2009 was “Your Planet Needs You-UNite to Combat Climate Change”. The CSI Synod has already conducted one seminar and a National Consultation on Climate Change to conscientize our Church leaders. We are really proud that as a Church we have taken the initiative in India in thinking Globally and acting Locally to mitigate the effect of global warming.
- **Green Diocese, Green Parish, Green College, Green School Awards**
- **Celebrate Ecology Sunday and Eco-vision month**

Diocesan Action on Celebration:

Kanyakumary diocese ,Tirunelvely Diocese, Trichy Tanjore and Karnataka Northern Diocese are all celebrating World Environment day.

Madras diocese is holding Eco-vision Sunday in February and celebrating all of February as Eco-vision month

Jesuits

Jesuit parishes around the world celebrate harvest or creation time according to their local customs and traditions.

8. Celebration

We will announce this “Seven Year Plan.” for the Society of Jesus in November 2009 at a special mass at the Gesù Church in Rome and in Jesuit parishes around the world.

Possible candidates for Jesuit environmental celebrations could be the anniversaries of two people who were closely involved, in very different ways, with the environment:
Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ who died on April 10, 1955 in New York City.
Georg Kamel SJ who died 2 May 1706.

New Psalmist Baptist Church

7. Celebration

New Psalmist has mounted many successful outreach celebrations locally, nationally and even internationally. Our increased awareness of the current state of the environment has found its way into the traditional religious fabric as themes are woven for planned events of celebration.

Activities:

New Psalmist has worked with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation over the past several years, and as a culminating present to the Alliance and other conservation officials, will present an original musical composition titled "That's What the Cross Would Say", as an offering in recognition of Creation. The composition is drawn from a 7th century poem called The Dream of the Rood and will be released in the United States on October 18, and in the United Kingdom on November 3.

During the third week in October, New Psalmist will launch Science Week, which is designed to inspire young people to care about the earth's resources. There will be "teach-ins", science competitions, prizes, and special education opportunities for many grade-levels. In addition to young people, many adults will participate as instructors, workshop leaders, and contributors.

New Psalmist has held theatrical productions, Holiday-related concerts (Easter, Christmas, etc), and other festivals, but it has never initiated a concert based upon Creation. This fall, we will inaugurate our first Creation Celebration. This Celebration concert will honor the magnificence of creation, and every composition will have an environmental theme. This will become an annual event, supplemented by other ongoing festivals and concerts in ensuing years.

Polish Orthodox

VII. Celebration:

The World Day of Prayer for Creation initiated by Ecumenical Patriarch should become an occasion for deeper concentration on the natural environment. Its celebration should be accompanied by meetings, seminars, symposia as well as

practical conservation oriented actions – i.e. planting trees and/or shrubs around newly constructed churches, on churchyards, parish grounds and elsewhere.

Lutheran Church of Tanzania

From their table:

SITUATION

The Diocese has no festival targeting the environment

WHAT TO BE DONE

The post-harvest Thanks-giving festival should also focus on the environment which supports production and life.

Daoist

Sixth: Advocacy and Celebration

a. Festivals and temple fairs

We will emphasise ecological concepts in traditional Daoist festivals, such as the birthday of the Supreme Lord Laozi and other religious festivals. Some provinces have already begun to preach Daoist ecological concepts during Daoist festivals. From 2010 onwards, we will require all temples to emphasise ecology protection during both Daoist festivals and temple fairs.

b. Art and dance

We will produce Daoist ecology songs, dances and paintings, and will use these kind of art forms through TV and radio, Internet, concert celebrations and temple fairs to help pilgrims and visitors understand the concept of Daoist Ecology. From 2012 onwards, we will promote practices across the country.

c. To incorporate International Environment Day activities into the Daoist religious calendar

Hindu

Green festivals and gatherings

Hindu festivals attract large numbers of pilgrims to temples – often tens of thousands. Some temples attract thousands of visitors on a daily basis. From travel to the temple to the plates on which food is served – all can have a significant impact on the environment.

A team will be formed to help each Hindu festival and gathering to incorporate a respectful and protective attitude towards the planet. The team will work with individual temples and communities to implement best practice based on a series of workshops and seminars.

Aspects of the festival that will be considered are:

- Using recycled paper for printing promotional materials.
- Using bio-degradable plates, cups and cutlery for serving food.
- Promoting greener ways of transport to the temple, e.g. public transport or car sharing.
- Ensuring all energy is used efficiently.

Temples will also be encouraged to network and share resources. The task-force will encourage and provide resources for temples to promote greener living to visitors during festival celebrations.

By the end of nine years we aim for all Hindu celebrations and gatherings to follow the highest standards of environmental practice. Temples will be encouraged to meet a set of targets, and raise standards every three years during the initial Nine Year plan.

Interfaith

Operation Noah

1. We aim to grow the *Reclaim Christmas* campaign year on year by raising awareness across communities via staff and volunteer visits, speaking engagements and through our website. Our ambition is to establish a movement of people around the country who are advocates for a simpler, less consumer and more celebratory Christmas. With a movement being established, the momentum for changing attitudes to Christmas and to ending the culture of buying needlessly will gain sway

Jewish

What We Have: Jewish Celebration:

Celebration is one of the key areas in which religious approaches have something unique to contribute to environmentalism, since environmental activism is often dour. Combining a celebration of the natural world and a vision for sustainability adds joy to the work and Judaism has unique celebrations over the course of year and a lifetime that bring people together. Love of Creation is manifested in celebration. If we celebrate the world we will be inspired to work to save it.

Tu B'Shvat, Jewish Arbor Day and a New Year for the Trees

The Jewish calendar is synchronized with the seasons, and each year on the 15th day of the month of Shevat, just as the almond trees start to bloom in Israel, we celebrate Tu B'Shvat, New Year for the trees. Tu B'Shvat is celebrated globally by adults and children and marks a dedicated time on the Jewish calendar for celebrating the natural world.

Shalosh Regalim, Pilgrimage Festivals

The Shalosh Regalim, the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot, (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles) are the central celebrations of the Jewish calendar, and were originally intimately related to the cycles of the agricultural year. During the past 2000 years, these meanings have been largely superseded by the historical and theological significance of those festivals, however at the heart of those festivals is ecological significance.

Communal Celebrations and Lifecycle events

Personal celebrations and lifecycle events such as weddings and b'nai mitzvah, need to be undertaken with sensitivity to the environment.

Where We Are: What is going on in The Jewish Community Now

Tu B'shvat

Tu B'shvat has made its mark in schools, synagogues and communities across the world. There are many diverse celebrations which occur in the week surrounding Tu B'shvat ranging from a Green Kiddush to a Tu B'shvat Seder and tree planting.

Holidays

Canfei Nesharim provides Torah-based activities, program resources, and divrei Torah which relate environmental themes to seven different times of the Jewish year: Sukkot and water, Chanukah and energy, Tu b'Shevat and the environment, Purim, Passover, Counting the Omer, and the Three Weeks.

Celebrations

Where Jews United for Justice has published a Green and Just Celebrations guide used by Jewish Communities across the Greater Washington area for making greener purchasing decisions.

Vision for the Next Generation: Jewish Celebration

- Tu B'Shvat celebration is expanded as a modern Jewish environmental holiday and celebrated as the New Year for Trees.
- The ecological significance of the holidays and seasons in the Jewish calendar are renewed and integral to the celebration.
- Communities and families celebrate life's milestones and accomplishments by enriching the natural world.
- To reclaim the ecological significance of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot.

Jewish Celebration Goals for Generational Change: September 2015

- Guidelines to help people make more sustainable decisions when it comes to celebrating a lifecycle or communal event.
- Communal norm to integrate the natural world into lifecycle events.

EcoSikh

We include here several suggestions that can be followed by individuals/families, Gurdwaras/Sikh organizations, and the wider community:

Individuals/Families:

- Plant an EcoSikh garden or tree
- Visit your local parks monthly as time for spiritual reflection and renewal

Gurdwaras/Organizations:

- Have the ragis sing more shabads with environmental themes (see appendix; a list of suggested shabads will be created and included)
- Distribute tree saplings
- Participate in EcoSikh holidays

Wider Community:

- Become an active part of Earth Day celebrations
- Join interfaith environmental work camps and celebrations