

Season of Creation 1: the greatest commandment, love your neighbour.

Sermon for 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost by Kandis Douglas on Roman 13:8-14.

One subject taken by all theological students at Trinity is Church Mission. The first week the lecturer entered class with a visual aid. He wanted us to be able to recognise mission and suggested we should be able to identify five different types – to help us remember he provided a visual aid, the picture of a hand (perhaps chosen to symbolise action – the living out of the faith of the church) and on each finger a word: tell, teach, tend, transform and treasure.

I'm sure we can all think of ways that the church tells people about God, teaches people about God, tends to those in need and seeks to transform our society into a just and fair one. But what about treasure? What does it mean for the church to treasure creation? What does it mean for me to treasure creation and do I need to?

I think we have all experienced the awesomeness of creation. Take a moment, close your eyes and picture the crashing waves of the ocean. Or how about a mountain range? Or perhaps something as simple as a tree or a sunflower.

A little later in the service we will be singing that hymn O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder consider all the works they hand have made. Rightly, creation displays the awesome wonder of the creator and encourages us to worship the creator.

When I think of the awesome splendour of our blue planet, I feel rather small ineffective. What possible difference would my small contribution make.

This reminded me of the cycling success of the 2012 GB Cycling Team, when Bradley Wiggins not only won the Tour de France not to mention his Olympic gold medals. After the Olympics Sky released a documentary explaining the vision behind the team's success: some sixty-support staff comprising coaches, strategists, carers, physios, drivers, dietitians, mechanics were all united and committed to the finding within their own area a marginal gain.

One such marginal gain was their hotel beds – as the team moved from venue to venue the care team would take bedding which included mattresses and pillows and set-up the bed in the same way - so that each night the cyclist would experience the same sleeping environment and so should sleep better.

This shared vision was explained by a member of the carer team as an obsessive quest for marginal gains, lots of little things, on their own they do not make a difference, but add them all together...

So, yes, Kandis as this small human on a huge planet, will make an un-noticeable difference. But as we the church all make our small contribution, when we put them together they will make a difference. And that to me seems to sum up what this season of creation is all about – celebrating the myriad of different little things each one of us is doing – perhaps taken by themselves each one would make no difference – but when we put all of these little things together we can each contribution combines towards change. Which is why we hope you will share through Facebook the many different things we are doing so that we can encourage each other – learn from each other – be inspired by each other.

Here are four friends who have kindly agreed to share the things they are doing

## Creation Tide: Love your neighbour - video

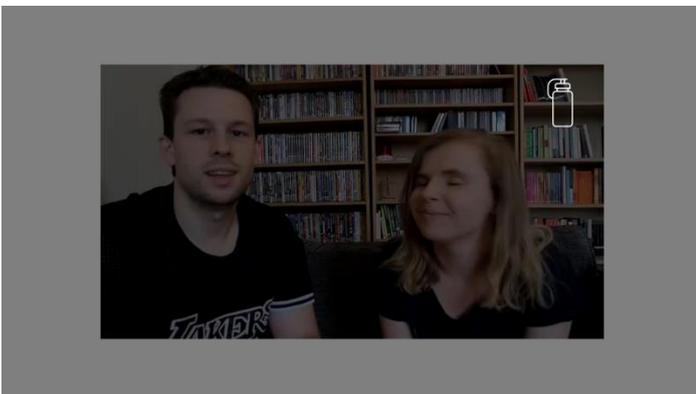
This week we have been sharing the different lifestyle changes which help us to care for creation.



Kathy: So, over the last couple of months we've started using recycled toilet paper we're really pleased that it's recycled that saves on the wood and the trees and it comes in paper and cardboard packaging and you can buy it in bulk so it's all very good for the environment and as well as that fifty percent of the profits go to help people before sanitation.



Bob: This is a hundred Jazz Hybrid Electric Vehicle, which we bought two or three months ago because our old car was on its last legs and I wanted to buy one that was more green. Now, I'm using only half the amount of petrol that used before and that's definitely an improvement on what happened before.



Elliot: Hi everyone, I'm Elliot one of the ordinands and this is Megan and we don't do anything big or extravagant but here are a couple of tips that we have for reducing your plastic usage. I now use a solid shampoo, so this is my shampoo here I use it instead of keeping on buying plastic bottles. I've had this one since mid-July so it's still going and that's going to save me a lot of plastic. We both have one of these which is a bamboo toothbrush and bamboo is compostable so when you finish

with a toothbrush you can just remove the bristles and pop this in the green bin and when we use our soap the bottle is recyclable but the pump isn't so we buy refill bottles which means we can just put that in there when this is empty and it means we don't have to keep on buying the pump which needs to go in the black bin you.

But I guess you may wonder how this might relate to our reading from Romans?

In this chapter of Romans Paul is explaining how Christians should live in their time, as we are today, living in a time between times when Jesus has risen and is reigning but has yet to return. Yet we are to live as children of the new kingdom – with new priorities and attitudes. In verses 8-10 Paul emphasises that the priority is love – that is agape love – the love which cares more for the flourishing of the other. He unpacks the word for them – to love is not to steal – to love is not to murder – to love is not to want what the other has. He summarises his instruction in v10 Commandments are summed up in the words “love your neighbour as yourself” Love does no wrong to a neighbour.

Sadly science has educated us that wasteful use of plastics is harming creation, that forty percent of food is wasted while half a billion people go hungry, that our pesticides are destroying the biodiversity, we have unsustainable fishing practices and that our meat production is a major cause of greenhouse gases.

As we each take what steps we can, we demonstrate not only our love for creation but for our neighbour – a selfless love for the beneficiaries will not know who we are nor how we have lived.

So let us share our stories and encourage one another in the marginal difference each one of us is able to make.

Creationtide prayers

Tearfund “Hope for Creation” prayer

Lord, make us people who recognise, nurture and act towards a more sustainable world for the benefit of all who draw life from this planet. Raise up campaigners who will speak out for wisdom, restraint and compassion. And teach us to partner you in protecting this precious world and the lives of our most vulnerable global neighbours.

Amen