

PRESS RELEASE

Churches Together in England

Press Release from the co-presidents of Churches Together in England for 'A Time For God's Creation'.

Church Leaders Call For Worshippers to Make 'Time For God's Creation'

June 5th 2008

Church leaders have called upon Christians throughout England to use the period from 1st September until 4th October as an opportunity to put the environment at the heart of their worship. The 'Time For God's Creation' initiative, which would run annually, follows a resolution made at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in 2007, attended by representatives of Europe's Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant churches, that the period *"be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change."*

At a meeting on 3rd June the four co-presidents of the ecumenical body 'Churches Together in England' – Archbishop Rowan Williams, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Commissioner Elizabeth Matear, and Bishop Nathan Hovhanissian – affirmed together their shared commitment to making the environment and collective responsibility for tackling climate change a fixed annual feature of the worship and shared witness of all the churches in England.

'Time for God's Creation' incorporates several existing dates related to Creation themes in the different church calendars. In 1989 the Ecumenical Patriarch invited all Christians to observe 1st September as a day of thanksgiving for Creation and an occasion for petitions for its preservation and healing. The period also incorporates Harvest festival, celebrated by Anglican and Protestant churches and concludes on 4th October with St Francis' day, when Roman Catholics reflect on Creation themes.

Commending the initiative, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams said:

"Every Sunday in the creed, Christians confess their faith in God who created the world we inhabit. It's his gift. As stewards of that gift, each of us has a responsibility, both to God and to the generations to come, to ensure that this remains a sustainable world. Placing environmental concerns at the heart of our

Christian worship for this fixed time each year, demonstrates our shared commitment to that end.”

The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Cormac Murphy O’Connor, said:

“In his World Day of Peace message for 1990, Pope John Paul II draws our attention to the figure of St Francis, and reminds us that ‘he offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation.’

I have always been struck by the witness of St Francis for he helps us to see that the beauty and goodness of creation are a reflection of God’s own Beauty and Goodness.

‘Time for God’s Creation’ is a sobering reminder of our obligation to respect and care for our world. Inspired by St Francis we pray and work together for the common good.”

Moderator of the Free Churches of England and Wales, Commissioner Betty Matear, said

“We believe that God is our Creator and humanity, created in His image, has been given responsibility for the care and stewardship of the world’s resources. We are accountable to those who will follow us, to leave behind a world that would please its Creator but our lifestyles also affect the lives of others – today. ‘Time for God’s Creation’ will be an opportunity for us all to look at our choices, to reflect on how our lives impact on others and to allow God to challenge us to become positively involved in caring for His world.”

Primate of the Armenian Church of Great Britain and co-president for England’s other Churches, Bishop Nathan Hovhannisian, said:

“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it (Gen 1:28[a]).

Our Creator has entrusted us with this planet as a gift: may we always treasure it, and ensure that we are its good stewards, so that we remain also worthy of it. “

Notes:

1. The four co-presidents are: The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, The Free Churches Moderator, and a fourth co-president nominated by the other churches in England – including Orthodox, Black Majority, Lutheran and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
2. The Third European Ecumenical Assembly was held in Sibiu, Romania, in September 2007.
3. More information on Churches Together in England can be found at: www.churches-together.net
4. A list of liturgical texts, Scripture readings and ecumenical resources is being made available to local clergy wishing to take the proposal on board. Further details and a set of resources will be available online on the website of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland at: www.ctbi.org.uk/BAB/295

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