

WORSHIP



WORSHIP & TEACHING

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WORSHIP & TEACHING

Worship

WHY?

Jesus said that the entire teaching of the Old Testament rests on two guiding principles: love God and love your neighbour. When it comes to the care of creation, we find the same twin foundations. To care about the plight of our planet is to love our fellow humans, both those alive now and future generations, and to love our fellow creatures in every diverse ecosystem and habitat. But it is also to love our creator. If we love God, then we will love what God has made. We express our worship by humbly tracing and echoing the divine glory exhibited in the created order and, where it is our part to do so, holding it with precious care in our hands. Environmentalism must, for all Christians, be a worship issue which affects both our lives and our gathered devotion.

But there is also a more pragmatic reason for addressing our corporate worship. Christians learn so much theology from songs and liturgies. Worship is formation, not simply adoration. What we do, say and sing informs what we believe. Repeated prayers and actions become our mantra. Captivating melodies and rhythms imprint ideas on our minds. And that which is not mentioned in our worship is, by strong implication, not part of our core identity and purpose. If our churches are to be eco-churches full of eco-Christians, then we must sing, say and act out our love for God and the whole creation. And if we are truly worshipping, these things should all come very naturally.

HOW?

MAKE IT INTENTIONAL

There are an increasing number of resources – prayers, songs and activities – available for acts of eco-worship. Seek them out and, when you use them, be very clear in your presentation and explanation. If you're asking people to do something a bit different, it can be very powerful, but it's often good to bracket it with something more familiar like a favourite hymn or song.

MAKE IT NORMAL

Perhaps more importantly, choose songs and prayers for your regular repertoire which express a healthy view of creation and our place and role within it. Make these themes part of your 'normal' worship vocabulary by including them amongst others. If you can find songs, for example, that



WORSHIP & TEACHING

Worship

sound just like the ones you usually sing, they'll probably fit in seamlessly. And do consider being a bit ruthless with those items (even the old favourites) that are compelling but don't describe the right narrative.

MAKE IT PORTABLE

Think about your own worshipping environment. We are often surrounded by pews, projectors, pianos and maybe some creative artworks in tapestry or glass. But we have another sanctuary, usually just outside the church doors, where we could gather. Let nature be the auditorium, but be sure to choose ways of worshipping appropriate to that environment – you won't simply be able to act outside as if you're inside.

MAKE IT RICHLY FLAVOURED

If we take the psalms as our example, they are full of praise, lament, confession, remembrance, hope and more. Eco-worship takes on all these flavours. You can also look for ways to address themes of creation and ecology in those 'liturgical' moments that are common across so many traditions: gathering, praise, hearing the word, credal statements of faith and more.

LONGER READS & OTHER RESOURCES

Resound Worship has produced a study guide exploring the relationship of worship and creation care from a biblical perspective: <https://www.resoundworship.org/store/product/doxecology-study-guide>

WEB RESOURCES

Here are a few curated collections of links to many other resources:

- <https://www.climatesunday.org/service-resources>
- <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/worship-resources-for-creation-care/>



WORSHIP & TEACHING

Worship

- <https://www.faraday.cam.ac.uk/churches/church-resources/posts/resources-for-outdoor-worship/>
- Resound Worship has created an album of contemporary worship songs combining praise (doxology) and ecology – thus 'doxecology'. You can listen to all the songs and download the chord sheets free from the website: <http://www.doxecology.org>
- <https://www.engageworship.org/> offers creative worship resources, including many for outdoor worship.