



Outline ideas for a talk to church leadership

This is just an outline. Add stories, local examples, quotes and pictures to bring it to life. Feel free to focus on the aspects that fire you up the most as you will deliver these with most conviction. But also try to anticipate what your audience's questions will be. Decide how much time each section merits with this audience. Remember that even brief points can be very effective if they are clear and authoritative. One aim of the talk should be to leave people wanting to find out more, so don't go on longer than agreed and leave plenty of time for discussion.

*You may also want to look at other Operation Noah resources for further ideas. In particular there are some **Powerpoints for presentations specifically about Operation Noah and Climate Change and the Purposes of God.***

Preliminaries: Make eye contact / smile / check you can be heard!

Why should Christians choose to get involved?

1 God cares

- Nature and the material world is a gift lovingly made by a creative God. John 3:16, 'For God so loved the world (*Kosmos* = he made the whole universe, not just people) that he sent ...'
- 'God saw that it was good.' Genesis 1 repeats this refrain seven times – this is the point of the story.
- Humans are called to make it fruitful and to care for it as a gardener or a farmer on their land.

2 There's a big problem

- It's already an issue, eg, extreme weather...
- Generally, the more pessimistic predictions are being borne out by events.
- It's not going away – many people have unconsciously hoped it would be a single event like a tsunami or an earthquake and we'd move on ... but it's not like that.

3 Whole Bible approach – (*make the general point but don't feel you need to use all of these!*)

- You might feel it's just a theological fad for people who want to be green, but look at how the whole Bible is permeated by a doctrine of creation.
- Books of the Law talk of sustainable use of the land.
- Book of Psalms calls on us to see God's power and love in the natural order.
- History books and Prophets talk about how power / dominion can be abused, and as well as making God sad, it often has environmental consequences linked to war, famine and destruction.
- Gospels: numerous references to Jesus as Lord of creation (eg, John 1), and Jesus is very in touch with nature (time in the desert / miracles / many references in his teaching / parables).
- Epistles: Jesus as God (Colossians 1:16); Christians as part of a new creation.
- Revelation: the world will be renewed (not obliterated or replaced) at the second coming.

4 Justice

- The poorest will suffer most.
- The poorest have done least to create the mess (*eg, the average person in Bangladesh creates just 2% of the emissions of one person in the UK, yet 10 million people live below 1 metre above sea level in Bangladesh*).
- We have a responsibility to future generations who will suffer (cf. Pope Benedict and 'Intergenerational Justice'); perhaps Jesus' death on the cross is the best example of God caring for future generations in that he gave his life for people in our time hundreds of years in advance. Jesus showed his concern for people in future times and so should we.

What can we do as a church?

In general we know enough about the science and what we should be doing, but the problem is that we are not doing it. If humans are to act effectively we need wider and deeper understanding, hope, commitment and working together. The most important thing that the church can do to help is to stimulate people and help them get involved. For example, if you improve your church boiler it will make a difference, but if even just one in four of your church congregation improves their own boiler and then persuades someone else to do the same then the effect will be much greater.

The actions can be summed up very simply in four positive commitments

- ✓ Learn more
- ✓ Simpler lifestyles
- ✓ Shared action
- ✓ Speak up

Put this way it might not sound very Christian but if you stop to consider it is really a recipe for discipleship. We learn, live it out, share with and tell other people.

- 5 Spirit and Truth.** Climate change is a big issue. We can't expect to get it all in one go. But we can commit to making some time to deepen our knowledge and learn from others.
- Don't just make climate change a niche issue but look more deeply at the whole doctrine of caring for creation.
 - Heart as well as head: worship, praise and prayer – hymns are great!
 - Could you turn over Lent or Creation Season (September leading up to harvest) to the issue?
 - Small groups and Bible studies.

- 6 Practical Improvements** that PCCs can do in the medium term – a PCC is in a very good position to work out what is best for the church.
- Improving insulation and boilers: this may save many ££s in the long run.
 - Look at other buildings the church may own or influence, eg, vicarage / church hall / school.
 - Installing PV to generate clean electricity – quite good financial returns.
 - Do workshops with congregation members to help tackle the practicalities of simpler living.

- 7 Shared Action** – as you pray and think about the issues ideas will come.
- Are there people in your congregation who feel God's call to look after creation and would be only too pleased if the church were to get more involved? Have you asked?
 - Action in the community. Maybe local people want to improve the local infrastructure or environment. Instead of waiting for them to come to you, could you go out to them? This may be a way to connect with your community in a new way.
 - Perhaps action could be taken as part of a group of churches acting interdenominationally?
 - Localism and Neighbourhood Plans.

- 8 Speaking Up** – The biggest problem isn't climate change but that people feel fearful / helpless / guilty / confused. The issue has become something of a taboo, and we need people to be able to listen to the scientists and encourage the politicians and community leaders to take action.
- Join in Operation Noah's latest campaigns.
 - Share concerns with your MPs and councillors.
 - Encourage people by your example – St Francis quote.

Possible video: A Rocha produced a video about St Luke's, Crosby – lots about the church grounds and community gardening. <http://www.arocha.org/int-en/resources/videos/7713-DSY.html> (7 mins 41 secs)
