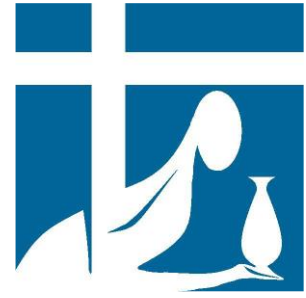


**The Benefice of Tilehurst
St George and
St Mary Magdalen**



CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY
(EPISCOPAL)

EUCLID, OHIO

An Intercontinental Bible Study

God and Climate Change: Creation and Re-Creation

An eight-part conversation crossing
boundaries of country and culture to explore
God's good creation and our place in it

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Introduction

Welcome to this intercontinental Bible Study, a joint project between the Church of the Epiphany, Euclid, Ohio and the Benefice of Tilehurst St George and St Mary Magdalen, England. We hope you find studying the Bible with people from another continent stimulating and enjoyable.

Following positive feedback from a previous successful bible study we are delighted to be sharing our studies across continents once again.

This course consists of eight 75-minute sessions, led and hosted on Zoom by ministers from our three churches. The subject of God in Creation is crucial to the future of humanity. This year, we have doubled the number of weeks so that we can have more time to share with each other, something that came up in feedback from last year. We shall still cover four topics again. There will be one week on each topic, much like last year, but spend two weeks on each one so that there is time for us to reflect before coming back for more open discussion.

How to Use this Booklet

There are two pages of preparatory material for you to have a look on each topic, including texts that we are going to use. Have a look through these and make notes if you feel that will help you. We have used a variety of different translations, but do feel free to use another version.

Netiquette and Technical Stuff

We want people to feel safe in every possible way. As with all Christian conversation please observe the highest levels respect and tolerance for each other, and remember that what is said should be kept in confidence.

On a technical front, you may find it helpful to switch off your camera if you are having connection issues. Using a local area network cable into your router may also be useful, if your Wifi is playing up. If there is a lot of background noise where you are please switch off your microphone unless you want to say something. You can wave or use the hand icon to get the leader's attention.

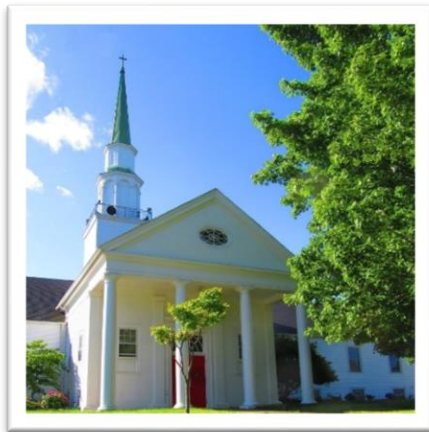
Our Churches

Three churches from different sides of the Atlantic. What a joy it is to share our common life in Christ! Here are some brief descriptions of our church buildings and communities, but to find out more, head to our Facebook pages.

[Church of the Epiphany | Facebook](#)

[The Benefice of Tilehurst St. George and St. Mary Magdalen | Facebook](#)

The Epiphany, Euclid



The Church of the Epiphany, Euclid, was founded in 1928 by a group of Episcopalians settling in this suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, on the shores of Lake Erie.

Some 90 years later, Epiphany serves a broad geographical area from the outskirts of the city to the depths of the suburbs beyond its county borders. It is a small but energetic, progressive but mainline church with deep roots in and a deep love for its community.

St George's and St Mary Magdalen's, Tilehurst



St George's Church, Tilehurst was consecrated by the Bishop of Oxford on 30th April 1886. They couldn't do it on St George's Day (23rd April) that year because it was Good Friday!

St George's was the barracks church for the Royal Berkshire Regiment and still maintains its historic links with military. The densely-populated parish of St George (c.9,000) is one of the most deprived parts of England, but enjoys many benefits of cultural diversity.

St Mary Magdalen's Church in Tilehurst is in the next parish to St George's. Built in the 1960s to replace its small predecessor following a fire, St Mary Magdalen's serves a similar population, though spread over a larger parish. Like St George's it has a small but faithful congregation that prays hard and serves its community well.



Authors

Rosalind



The Revd Rosalind C Hughes has been Priest-in-Charge and Rector of the Church of the Epiphany, Euclid since 2012. She moved to Ohio from Reading with her spouse and family in 2003.

Now that the family is grown, Rosalind spends her spare time writing and swimming in the great Lake Erie when the Cleveland weather permits, and huddling with her cats throughout the winter.

Polly



The Revd. Polly Falconer was ordained as a Deacon in September 2020 and is in her second year of curacy in the benefice of St. George's and St. Mary Magdalen in Reading UK. She is a mother of 5 and grandmother of 4. Her passion is social justice and mental health recovery, an area she has worked in for over 30 years. Polly's leisure time is spent travelling, eating out and singing karaoke. She enjoys these with her family who she describes as her heartbeat.

Cyrus



Cyrus Regis presently serves as Sr. Warden of the Church of the Epiphany in Euclid, Ohio. This is his second term in this position (not consecutively) and also serves as a member of the vestry board. He has served as a Lay Preacher for 3 years.

He is married to Raymond. He enjoys cooking, baking, talking one on one with people, traveling and gatherings with family and friends.

Adam



The Revd Dr Adam Carlill is the Vicar of St George's and St Mary Magdalen's. He was ordained 1990 and came to Reading as Vicar in 1998. He is married to Gill who works in the Royal Berkshire Hospital and has two children, Harriet (17) and Ranulph (15).

Adam's passion is for the Old Testament, talking about it to anybody who will listen. He likes music, walking, along with good food and drink.

Week 1: Chaos and Order



Introduction

Is creation good or bad? When we read the Bible we find some passages that exult in the wonder of God's creation, while others present the natural world as hostile and dangerous. Symbols of chaos compete for our imagination with images of ordered prosperity. In this session we are looking at a few of these texts.

Psalm 74 / Psalm 104

Psalm 74 shows how dangerous the forces of chaos are and how God has to challenge their power over humanity.

Psalm 74.12-17 (NJB)

Yet, God, my king from the first,
author of saving acts throughout the earth,
by your power you split the sea in two,
and smashed the heads of the monsters on the waters.
You crushed Leviathan's heads,
gave him as food to the wild animals.

You released the springs and brooks,
and turned primordial rivers into dry land.
Yours is the day and yours the night,
you caused sun and light to exist,
you fixed all the boundaries of the earth,
you created summer and winter.

Psalm 104 is a celebration of the wonders and glories of creation. It feels like a David Attenborough documentary, and yet the processes of life and death are all acknowledged.

[Psalm 104.25-30 \(NJB\)](#)

Then there is the sea,
with its vast expanses teeming with countless creatures,
creatures both great and small;
there ships pass to and fro,
and Leviathan whom you made to sport with.

They all depend upon you,
to feed them when they need it.
You provide the food they gather,
your open hand gives them their fill.

Turn away your face and they panic;
take back their breath and they die
and revert to dust.
Send out your breath and life begins;
you renew the face of the earth.

[Philippians 4 / Revelation 6](#)

In Philippians 4 we see that creation is good (vv.6-8), while in Revelation 6 the four living creatures (representing the entire created order) are the triggers for judgement.

[Genesis 1-2](#)

Genesis 1 holds these two ideas in tension – primeval chaos (v.2) is created into something very good (v.31). In Genesis 2 we see paradise, humanity in harmony with creation in the Garden of Eden.

[Questions from the Bible References](#)

1. What do you think of the different ways in which Leviathan is presented in Psalms 74 and 104? Why do you think that is?
2. What for you is the most positive part of Psalm 104 and why?
3. Why do you think St Paul (Philippians 4) and St John the Divine (Revelation 6) had such different views about the positivity or negativity of creation?

[General Questions for Further Discussion](#)

1. How does God create very good out of chaos in your life?
2. What other passages of the Bible can you think of that refer to the creation as good or dangerous? How might creation be our judge now?
3. What is the best example you can think of in which humankind and creation work in harmony?

[Week 2: Discussion Week](#)

Week 3: Individuals and Community



Introduction

This is our home, which God has made for us. Does that make us owners or stewards of it? What is our inheritance in it, and what heritage do we leave for those who follow us? Does calling ourselves Christian make a difference in answering those questions? Whom do we trust (or listen to) when deciding how, as individuals and communities, to respond to the climate crisis? What kind of repentance and repair are needed? What would the prophets have to say to us about it all?

Jeremiah 2:4-9

It's a bit challenging where we find ourselves with regards to climate change when we are the real culprits and it seems many of us refuse to accept and address the situation. Prophetic scripture is looked upon as it really does not apply to this day and time. Looking closer "we" the inhabitants and the generations that followed those of our ancestors have lost our way. We can say that as humanity, we have neglected our responsibilities. The realization is we want to rely heavily upon the scientists and their findings. That is a good thing, but that isn't all. Do we believe that God made heaven and earth? Or, are we unsure? This is our home, which has been made for us.

Jeremiah 2.5-7 (NRSV)

Thus says the LORD: What wrong did your ancestors find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves? They did not say, "Where is the LORD who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that no one passes through, where no one lives?" I brought you into a plentiful land to eat its fruits and its good things. But when you entered you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination.

[Genesis 1:1-2:3; Genesis 2:4-9,18-23](#)

The two major creation stories found at the beginning of Genesis differ on the place of humanity within the order of creation.

In one, the days and nights, lands and seas, birds, fish, and other animals claim their place first, along with the plants and the stars. Only after all else is finished does God choose to create a human, made in the image of a god, to take care of it all.

In the other, God creates the human first, then everything else that might make for a conducive environment, from the garden to companion animals, finally even dividing the human itself in two so that the one might not be alone.

[2 Chronicles 7:12-14](#)

“..and my people, who are called by my name, humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Note here that some action is required on our part in caring for our land and each other. Can we acknowledge what our part is? The appearance is that we have become a selfish generation. Encouraging words can dispel mind pollution. There are some neighbors needing to hear the good news of God’s mercy and compassion. And can you imagine the beauty of this understanding. As removing trash from our own yards helps us feel better, so to can we be a part of restoring one to our Father. It’s wonderful to walk pass a beautifully manicured property and a smile comes on our face. Now walk pass a property that is poorly maintained and what is our reaction? We are given the ability to cultivate, grow good crops and have beautiful fields. Caring for this world in which we live includes caring for the climate of the individual.

[Questions from the Bible References](#)

1. Was humanity made to tend to the rest of creation, or was creation made for the use and comfort of humanity?
2. What other approaches to interpreting these stories that might be helpful?

[General Questions for Further Discussion](#)

1. How does your view of creation and our Creator shape your response to the current environmental crisis?

[Week 4: Discussion Week](#)

Week 5: Science and Wisdom



Introduction

We cannot properly think about creation without acknowledging how much science has opened our eyes to its wonders. In Proverbs 8, Lady Wisdom describes how she was with God right from the beginning imbuing the cosmos with order and joy. In 1 Kings 4.30-34 we have a description of Solomon the scientist. In his divine wisdom he observes and describes flora and fauna in great detail.

Job 28

Like a Greek chorus commenting on a tragic story, Job 28 interrupts the drama of Job's plight with a philosophical poem about Wisdom. It is a poem which plumbs the depths of the natural world in its search for divine Wisdom, but the mysteries of God's creation are unsearchable.

Job 28.20-27 (NRSV)

"Where then does wisdom come from?
And where is the place of understanding?
It is hidden from the eyes of all living,
and concealed from the birds of the air.

Abaddon and Death say,
'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.'

"God understands the way to it,
and he knows its place.
For he looks to the ends of the earth,
and sees everything under the heavens.

When he gave to the wind its weight,
and apportioned out the waters by measure;
when he made a decree for the rain,
and a way for the thunderbolt;
then he saw it and declared it;
he established it, and searched it out.

And he said to humankind,
'Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is understanding.'

[Genesis 3.1-7](#)

Eve perceives that knowledge is good, a delight and to be desired. Although unsearchable the mysteries of God's creation are very good, greatly to be desired and pursued, but they will not be found by exploiting creation for gain.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. (NRSV)

[Questions from the Bible References](#)

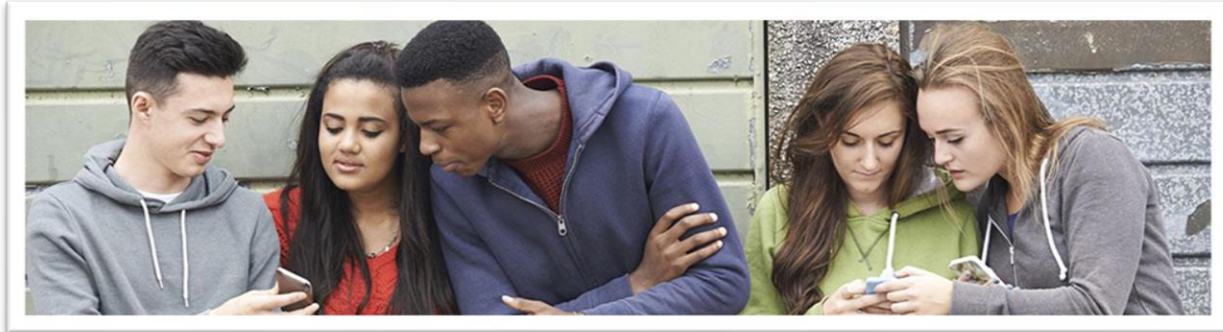
1. What surprises you about the Wisdom poem in Job 28?
2. How does it make you feel about the world today and our relationship(s) with it?
3. Where is wisdom to be found?

[General Questions for Further Discussion](#)

1. Has eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil exposed us to both: to uncovering the secrets of the atoms for convenient power and for unthinkable destruction, to take an overused example?
2. How has our pursuit of *knowledge* helped and harmed our relationship with creation?
3. How can our pursuit of *wisdom* inform our current and future efforts to repair that relationship?

Week 6: Discussion Week

Week 7: Justice and Young People



Introduction

Years ago when I was in my pre-teens and our church counselors took us to conventions and outings, we were reminded to pick up and return our areas the way we found them. Today as I reflect on camping trips, I am amazed at the bottles, cans and now masks that are strewn throughout the streets of the city especially when trash receptacles are all around. These past few years, we have seen the dramatic changes of our climate flowing and evolving daily. As humans and citizens of this earth we are to flow and evolve, yet there are times in our lives as the infiltration of demagogues' seeps into our conscious and we stop flowing and growing in the knowledge of God. Seemingly a new direction is locked into our areas of thought that stimulate for only a short while and then we look for another. Today in this new climate of change more and more people are searching. The question is "what are we searching for"? Often our searches lead to dead ends because the Director of Life has been closed off. We refer to climate change as the physical things causing natural disasters, the building or accumulation of trash being precariously discarded with no further thought. There are many caring about this world and its continuation. However, I believe these have given themselves to a deeper meaning of life that goes beyond this physical day to day existence. This is a door to enlightenment which indicates a rich awareness of each other and God the giver of Life. So much of our lives have been molded around economics and we tend not to reflect on what God has created for us. We are the caretakers. We do enjoy our surroundings along with the beauty of our respective countries. However that beauty must be maintained as well as in each other.

1 Kings 17.1-5

Elijah had predicted a drought farther down in 1 Kings chapter 17, yet the Lord told him where to go and what to do. He had food, water and shelter. Elijah opened himself to the words of the Lord and spectacular things happened. Have we opened ourselves to God so that wonderful things might happen for us?

The definition of "just":

- Guided by truth, reason, justice and fairness
- Done or made according to principle; equitable; proper

As we have the responsibility to care for one another and this world, we honor God. We wrap ourselves in God's glorious majesty.

There is so much work in cleaning and removing debris physically and spiritually if we are to emulate the teacher Jesus: 'Love ye one another as God loves us.' He gave us a world in which to live and sustain us. Let's take good care of it

[Young People & Climate Change](#)

On World Environment Day in June 2021, a Virtual Youth Forum was held and was attended young people from across the world. What a joy to know that young people are taking climate change seriously. Sudanese climate activist, and 2020 United Nations Young Champion of the Earth, Nzambi Matee said she was encouraged to see the active role young people were taking in the "battle" to reverse decades of environmental decline. "We have the tools, like social media. We have the tools in the technology space, in the activism space, in the policymaking space," said Matee. "I choose to say we will win this battle." The Bible gives us as adults, the responsibility to teach our children about God and creation and about the love of all people and all things.

[Psalm 78.5 and Proverbs 22.6](#)

He established a decree in Jacob,
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach to their children;

Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

[Questions](#)

1. How can we teach young people when our generations got it so wrong?
2. Can we encourage the growth of passion in regard to repairing and taking care of God's creation, and if so how?

[The Fifth Mark of Mission](#)

- *To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth*

[Week 8: Discussion Week](#)

Acknowledgments

Page 5 images: [Water.jpg \(512×384\) \(chemistryland.com\)](#)


Page 7 image: Adam names the animals (icon)

Page 9 image: [Cascade Mountain Night Sky Photograph by Russell Wells \(fineartamerica.com\)](#)

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