**Bishop’s Isle of Wight Lent Course 2017**

**Living the Marks of Mission**

The Five Marks of Mission

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

3. To respond to human need by loving service

4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation

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

Tell Teach Tend Transform Treasure

**The last weekly reminder**

* What in the life of our Church shows this Mark matters to us?
* How is this Mark reflected in our worship?
* What more could we do as a Church to live this Mark?
* Who else in our community does this? How can we help them?

**Where are we now?**

Introduce yourself to the group.

God loves people, who are made in God’s image. In what ways does the rest of Creation – the planet, the universe, plants and animals – reveal God?

‘We are near God’s heart in a garden.’ Is that true for you?

**Reflection**

*To the leader. A Psalm of David. A Song.*

*1 Praise is due to you,  
   O God, in Zion;  
and to you shall vows be performed,   
2   O you who answer prayer!  
To you all flesh shall come.   
3 When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us,  
   you forgive our transgressions.   
4 Happy are those whom you choose and bring near  
   to live in your courts.  
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,  
   your holy temple.*

*5 By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,  
   O God of our salvation;  
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth  
   and of the farthest seas.   
6 By your*[*\**](javascript:void(0);) *strength you established the mountains;  
   you are girded with might.   
7 You silence the roaring of the seas,  
   the roaring of their waves,  
   the tumult of the peoples.   
8 Those who live at earth’s farthest bounds are awed by your signs;  
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.   
9 You visit the earth and water it,  
   you greatly enrich it;  
the river of God is full of water;  
   you provide the people with grain,  
   for so you have prepared it.   
10 You water its furrows abundantly,  
   settling its ridges,  
softening it with showers,  
   and blessing its growth.   
11 You crown the year with your bounty;  
   your wagon tracks overflow with richness.   
12 The pastures of the wilderness overflow,  
   the hills gird themselves with joy,   
13 the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,  
   the valleys deck themselves with grain,  
   they shout and sing together for joy.* (Psalm 65)

How does this psalm describe God’s relationship to His creation?

**Discipleship and Creation**

Review the following. Which represents your view?

*Trudi Tree Hugger - too many environmentalists are New Age nature worshippers. Ecology and environmentalism should be avoided by Christians.*

*Soul-Saving Sam - caring for the earth is not very important for people’s eternal salvation. The gospel is about saving souls, not saving seals. Environmentalism is a distraction.*

*Boxed Barry - caring for creation is right and proper for some – it is good to have Christian lawyers and Christian conservationists – so long as I don’t have to be one!*

*Integrated Ian - caring for God’s world is a core part of Christian discipleship – found throughout the Bible and is an essential part of Christian discipleship, worship and lifestyle.*

Which of the views seems more Biblical?

What other things shape our response to creation?

Have your views on this changed?

**Making a difference**

Choose an ecological issue that concerns you, perhaps energy use, water scarcity, deforestation, oil and mineral extraction, global warming or climate change. How can starting small make a difference?

*Come and spend a day with me, and you’ll see I’m riddled with compromise. It’s impossible to live an ethically pure life, but I know I live in the “now and the not yet”; so I’m fine with that. The main thing is not to let the hugeness of the problems either paralyse you, or make you apathetic, but always to be looking for ways that we can live more kindly towards both people — those who live near to me, and those who live far away and pick my tea, or make my clothes — and the wider natural world.* (Ruth Valerio)

*Telling reporters he was ending a "war on coal" and putting a stop to "job-killing regulations", President Trump said: "This is about bringing back our jobs, bringing back our dreams and making America wealthy again. We love our coal miners."*

How can we as Christians balance the apparently conflicting claims and aspirations that are mentioned here?

**Stewardship**

What does it mean to have good stewardship of the earth?

*Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16for in*[*\**](javascript:void(0);) *him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. 17He himself is before all things, and in*[*\**](javascript:void(0);) *him all things hold together. 18He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.* (Colossians 1: 15-20)

*Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’   
So God created humankind in his image,  
   in the image of God he created them;  
   male and female he created them.   
God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’ God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.* (Genesis 2:15, 19-20)

**Our Big Questions:**

* What in the life of our Church shows this Mark matters to us?
* How is this Mark reflected in our worship?
* What more could we do as a Church to live this Mark?
* Who else in our community does this? How can we help them?