

## The environment's for everyone

If you live in today's world, whatever your age, race, sex or beliefs, the environment affects you, and you affect it, whether you like it or not.



This year's Holiday Club for children, run jointly by the Prudhoe and Stocksfield churches in the first week of the school holidays, had the title "Transformers". Alongside the Bible-based teaching, craft construction and junk modelling activities, games and food provided for over 100 5–11 year-olds together with involvement of some older children as helper Apprentices and a first-time toddler group and parent café, we included topical environmental themes.

For 10 minutes each morning we acted out the production of a children's TV programme with themes including waste and pollution, energy and other resources, water, food, and biodiversity in the context of caring for the good world God has made and entrusted to us.



We talked about reducing, reusing and recycling waste, especially plastics. Genuine scientific demonstrations, some prepared beforehand, included a simple filter for dirty water, how paper is recycled, and powering a torch with a battery made from a pile of pennies, bits of cooking foil and cardboard with a dose of salt and vinegar. And can you explain why an orange floats in water – until you peel it?

These topics were easily understood and responded to by the children, who have a strong basic concept of fairness and could see that selfish and greedy western lifestyles are harming the environment and the poorest people in the world are affected the most. Some will have thought about how they might change their own habits or get involved in environmental projects when they get back to school, or support relevant campaigns.

Of course, for consistency, the Holiday Club organisers had to look carefully at practical arrangements for the week: out went single-use convenience plastics and a "reduce, reuse, recycle" policy was followed. The adults, too, were seriously challenged to be Transformers in our own lifestyles.

One environmental topic we mentioned only briefly at the Holiday Club was climate change, because we thought it too complex for the youngest children and also they would be less able to do something about it themselves. There's no doubt, however, that it is increasingly hitting the news, even pushing Brexit out of the headlines. This summer has brought yet more weather extremes across the world and unusual features with some records broken for both temperatures and rainfall. It has been reported, and these are definite facts rather than opinions, that the 10 hottest years in the UK since records began have all been since 2000. We've seen the impact in strain on resources and infrastructure, including a major national power failure and a near disaster for a Peak District reservoir dam.





It's recently been suggested that climate change is increasing the incidence of aircraft flight turbulence –ironic, given that air travel is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Some would say that nature is fighting back in self-defence.

Despite continuing scepticism by those who refuse to accept the overwhelming scientific evidence because of self-interest, there is essentially no doubt that major climate change is a reality and it is largely caused by human

activity. Scaremongering isn't going to change people's habits enough, it seems, so we have to hope that technological advances, such as further reductions in the relative cost of green energy and the development of more environmental travel, will be rapid and effective, and we need to have greater investment in these and public demand for them.

We're approaching the traditional season for harvest festivals. Although many people no longer appreciate our dependence on the earth's land resources and their produce, it is still real; indeed, with current environmental concerns, the relevance and importance should be clearer. Many churches are combining the traditional harvest themes with ecological

issues. For some years international Christian aid agencies such as TearFund have provided useful up-to-date material for use in harvest services, and increasingly now the EcoChurch initiative ([ecochurch.arocha.org.uk](http://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk)) is attracting attention and involvement. My own church, Stocksfield Baptist, for example, has recently joined the EcoChurch movement and our all-age harvest service on the first Sunday in October will follow this theme. I expect there will be a number of others in the area too.

EcoChurch includes commitments to reduce waste, use green energy (and less of it; not all churches are old and cold!), and follow the "Reduce, reuse, recycle" principles. What we seek to teach our children we need to adopt for ourselves.



**ECO CHURCH**  
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The environment's for everyone – and it's everyone's responsibility.

**Bill Clegg**

*Modified version of the article in the Tyne Valley Express for September–October 2019*