ECO-MISSION MOTIVATION

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(Photo by Silvia Purdie)

Contents

Introduction

The church is called by God to care for Creation. This research dissertation investigates this claim and describes an emerging eco-mission movement. It explores the motivation of those who see the environment as integral to Christian faith in action, across a diversity of expressions of Christian environmental mission.

Eco-mission is a response to the call of God; we love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). 'Eco' theology invites the extension of love beyond our fellow humans to other living things, from a conviction that God loves the world that God has made. Different individuals, communities and churches experience this invitation in different ways, leading to a diversity of motivations. A growing body of literature advocates that a concern for the natural world be incorporated in Christian discipleship and mission. My discussion of the literature seeks to identify the human motivations that inform the missiology, theory, research and projects described. Twelve distinct perspectives are identified.

These inform a piece of qualitative research, undertaken with three local church groups in New Zealand who are leading in 'Creation Care'. I interview each group about what they are doing and why. The twelve aspects of eco-mission are used as a framework for clarifying different motivations and how these shape the projects the groups are engaged in. The insights of the three Creation Care groups interviewed provides a rich resource for environmental missiology, particularly in a New Zealand context. I explore some implications emerging from this research.

This dissertation explores the connection between motivation and mission in relation to ecological Christian action. One facet of this is an understanding of Christian calling, which functions at both individual and collective levels. Christians are called to follow Christ, called to serve and called into mission.[1] My research highlights the vitality of an experience of calling as inspiring and sustaining care for Creation for Christian people.

[1] For example, in the first 7 verses of the epistle to the Romans Paul uses the word 'called' three times to refer to both himself and the Christians in Rome, underpinning both belonging and leadership (Romans 1:1-7).

Defining Eco-Mission

Within the vast body of writing about the role and purpose of the church in a changing world there is a growing collection of work advocating the place of the created world in Christian mission. Those writing in this space share a common commitment but bring various perspectives and different emphases which are reflected in a range of key words. In this section I clarify my understanding of mission and five commonly used terms in this area: 'oiko' mission, 'eco-mission', 'creation care', the development of 'eco churches', and the idea of being 'green'. I conclude with some comments on the New Zealand context.

Mission

Mission is how Christians participate in what God is doing in the world, how we express the kingdom of God. The mission of God is "the defining reality of the church", [2] its purpose looking toward the redemption of all things through the gospel of Christ. "Mission is about extending the claims and realities of the New Creation into the present order."[3] Within this timeless sense of purpose the church works out its mission in each time and place, in partnership with the Spirit of Jesus, responsive to changing contexts.[4]

Oiko-Mission

An 'oiko'-mission perspective emphasises the interconnectedness of humanity and the earth. Clive Ayer claims that ecological mission "becomes not only possible but indeed also inevitable" when the place of the whole earth in the reign of God is acknowledged.[5] An all-encompassing metaphor for mission is the Greek word 'oikos', meaning household. The whole household of God provides for the practical needs of people, expressed in economics and social justice, the relational needs of community and partnership, as well as caring for the environment and ecosystems that support and sustain the whole 'household' of the *oikoumene*, the whole world.[6] The prefix "eco" carries with it this root Greek meaning. This has been the perspective of international inter-church organisations such as the World Council of Churches.

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[2] Clive W. Ayre, "Where on Earth Is the Church? Theological Reflection on the Nature, Mission, Governance and Ministry of the Church amidst the Global Environmental Crisis," in Sigurd Bergmann, Celia Deane-Drummond, Denis Edwards and Ernst M. Conradie, eds, *Christian Faith and the Earth: Current Paths and Emerging Horizons in Ecotheology* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014): 140-159, 144.

[3] T.C. Tennant, quoted in Cornelius Niemandt, "Ecodomy in Mission: The Ecological Crisis in the Light of Recent Ecumenical Statements," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, Pretoria, vol. 36, iss. 3 (2015): 1-8.

[4] This involves translating the gospel into the language and issues of each context, transmitting the gospel in effective ways, with the goal of transforming each context with the love of God. Simon Benjamin, "Mission and Its Three Pillars," *International Review of Mission*, Geneva, vol. 107 (Dec 2018): 399-412.

[5] Ayre, "Where on Earth Is the Church?", 145.

[6] "The English words 'economics', 'ecumenics,' and 'ecology' all share the same root and reference." Ernst Conradie, "The Earth in God's Economy: Reflections on the Narrative of God's Work,." *Scriptura,* 97 (2008): 13-36, 22.

Eco-Mission Movement

"Mission with creation at its heart" is increasingly being acknowledged as a valid and distinctive movement in the global church.[7] Mallory McDuff researched local church projects across the USA and writes about "a new environmental movement, where justice as a priority for the church means a clean and safe environment for all." She describes how "a focus on God's earth transforms both people and congregations, creating more relevant and powerful ministries for today. As a result, people of faith are creating a new environmental movement with a moral mandate to care for God's good earth."[8] This is motivated primarily by the realisation that environmental degradation has become a major defining feature of our age with massive implications for every nation and ecosystem from the smallest to the largest; an acknowledgement, in the words of Pope Francis, of "the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face."[9]

Creation Care

The term 'Creation Care' has become well used within the global church to refer to a concern among Christians for ecology and sustainability. It has explicit theological and biblical underpinnings which are accepted across a breadth of evangelical and traditional churches; for example, the Evangelical Environmental Network in the USA calls their website 'CreationCare.org'.[10] Creation does not just refer to the origins of the universe as created by God. As Neil Darragh points out, Creation "includes the entire creative act of God in all its initiating, sustaining and culminating aspects."[11] In this dissertation I have chosen to capitalise 'Creation' to refer to the universe in general and specifically to the natural non-human environment of the Earth.[12] I use the phrases 'care for Creation', 'Creation care' and 'eco-mission' interchangeably.

Eco Church

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[7] Jooseop Keum, ed., *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2013), 10.

[8] Mallory McDuff, *Natural Saints: How People of Faith are Working to Save God's Earth* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2010). DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195379570.001.0001.

[9] Francis, *Laudato si'* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2015), sec. 15.

[10] The Evangelical Environment Network's purpose is to be "a ministry that educates, inspires, and mobilizes Christians in their effort to care for God's creation, to be faithful stewards of God's provision, to get involved in regions of the United States and the world impacted by pollution, and to advocate for actions and policies that honor God and protect the environment. Founded in 1993, EEN's work is grounded in the Bible's teaching on the responsibility of God's people to "tend the garden" and in a desire to be faithful to Jesus Christ and to follow Him." https://creationcare.org/who-we-are/mission.html, viewed 19 March 2020

[11] Neil Darragh, *At Home In the Earth: Seeking an Earth-Centred Spirituality* (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2000), 14.

[12] The Biblical understanding of 'the world' is complicated by the flexibility of usage of the Greek word 'kosmos' which tends to refer to sinful human society, e.g. John 15:19, Romans 12:2, Galatians 6:14, but can also refer to the 'whole world', e.g. Matthew 13:35, Acts 17:24. 'Creation' is not a New Testament word but I believe it is helpful in articulating a distinctive Christian understanding of the world in which we live. I use it to refer the 'natural' world as distinct from the 'human' world.

Eco-mission is "authentic eco-theology grounded in communities of eco-practice."[13] Celia Deane-Drummond advocates that "the mandate of all Christian communities is to work together at a local level to build ecological responsible forms of flourishing."[14] This goal of enhancing the eco-mission of local churches has led to an international Eco Church movement. Organisations such as A Rocha have promoted the development of 'eco congregations', in which local churches are resourced to work across five areas: "Worship and teaching, Management of church buildings, Management of church land, Community and global engagement, Lifestyle."[15] Eco Church programmes provide a wealth of resources for churches, including for children and youth engagement. As well as practical projects and initiatives the Eco Church movement places a high priority on worship, celebration and thanksgiving, with a spiritual foundation connecting with God-in-action.[16]

Green

The word 'green' has become associated with environmentally aware groups, politics, products. It is also used in relation to theology and mission in phrases like 'greening the church',[17] or Bron Taylor's advocacy of "dark green religion."[18] In Europe the image of 'green' is widely used in the church, such as the 'Grønkirke' (Green Church) movement in Denmark. However, Neil Darragh explains that 'green' is not commonly used in the church in NZ, partly to play down political associations but also because the church's mission is a long story that predates current trends.[19]

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[13] Mary Hale, Anne Marie Dalton & Nancie Erhard, "Crossing Borders: Eco-Theology in the Shadowlands," *Scriptura,* vol. 111 (2013): 362-375, 363. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7833/111-0-24, 362.

[14] Celia Deane-Drummond, "What are the Resources for Building a Christian Ethos in a Time of Ecological Devastation," in Sigurd Bergmann, Celia Deane-Drummond and Denis Edwards, Ernst M. Conradie, eds, *Christian Faith and the Earth: Current Paths and Emerging Horizons in Ecotheology* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014): 160-181, 175.

[15] "How Eco Church Works," *Eco Church: An A Rocha UK Project,* <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/how-eco-church-works> (accessed 26 April 2020).

[16] Ayre, "Where on Earth Is the Church?", 147.

[17] Frank Hoffman describes "the Church's recent reawakening to the value of God's creation" as "greening"; "Greening my faith communion," in Neil Darragh, ed., *Living In the Planet Earth: Faith Communities and Ecology* (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2016): 239-246, 245.

[18] Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (University of California Press, 2010).

[19] Neil Darragh, "What have faith communities to do with ecology?" in Neil Darragh, ed., *Living In the Planet Earth: Faith Communities and Ecology* (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2016): 7-14.

Eco-Mission in New Zealand

Despite New Zealand's 'clean and green' image the environmental movement has had a low profile in the church here. Several NZ denominations include eco-mission statements in their official documents, but despite stated intentions by churches there have been few NZ based research or projects. The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa NZ describes its mission as having "Five Faces", the fifth of which is "Caring for God's creation."[20] The 2018 General Assembly called on the church to "express its mission of care for creation in achievable and manageable acts of waste reduction, recycling, conscious consumerism, and educational awareness."[21] However, there is no national body within the PCANZ charged with implementing these policies. Selwyn Yeoman comments that "Even among those who sign up to such convictions it is not at all clear that we have worked out what they mean. … for the most part care of creation does not feature in our parish life, our review documents or the missional projects which our funding agencies support."[22] The PCANZ is not unique here. Neil Darragh observes that most churches in NZ "carry on with their own community development, pastoral care, and religious practices as if there were no environmental crisis requiring their attention."[23]

This dissertation is exploring what I observe to be an increasing interest within churches in NZ in environmental issues. An increasing number of local churches have 'Creation Care' groups, such as Grace Vineyard in Christchurch who describe themselves as "a team of people from Grace Vineyard Church who deeply care about the natural environment that God has placed us in. We believe caring about it is an integral part of following Jesus, and we want to serve him wholeheartedly!"[24]

The Aotearoa New Zealand branch of international para-church agency A Rocha co-ordinates ecology and educational projects around NZ, working towards restored biodiversity, "active conservation through engaging communities, providing environmental education and having sustainable partnerships."[25] Their 2019 Annual Report describes a diverse "web of threads … from stream and wetland restoration to predator control, environmental leadership development, school education, seabird monitoring, tree planting, an eco-theology

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[20] "About Us", PCANZ. <https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/about-us> (accessed 29 April 2020).

[21] "Responsible Stewardship of God's Creation", PCANZ GA reports, Oct 2018. <https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/speaking_out/Responsible%20stewardship%20of%20God.pdf> (accessed 5 May 2020).

[22] Selwyn Yeoman, "Witnessing Christ in the Care of Creation," *Candour: Ecological Christianity*, issue 8 (July 2013): 5-8, 5. Selwyn wrote this seven years ago, and there is little sign of change that I observe.

[23] Darragh, "What have faith communities to do with ecology?", 8.

[24] Grace Vineyard Church, "Creation Care," <https://grace.org.nz/en/ministries/creation-care> (accessed 27 April 2020).

[25] "Karioi Project: Vision and Mission," A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand. <https://www.arocha.org.nz/projects/karioi-maunga-ki-te-moana> (accessed 26 April 2020).

conference, bike workshops – and much more."[26] My own involvement in A Rocha includes planning towards introducing Eco Church in NZ through seminars and practical projects such as 'towards zero waste'.

Two recent edited publications make a significant contribution to a NZ perspective. *Creation and Hope* is an in-depth academic text.[27] *Living In the Planet Earth: Faith Communities and Ecology* is more personal, with 30 contributors across several faith traditions sharing their experiences.[28] Catholic publication 'Tui Motu' has regular eco-mission articles, and the Anglican Diocese of Wellington has an active Social Justice website including excellent eco-mission resources. Other NZ authors include Dick Tripp,[29] and Bob Eyles who argues that "Ecological Christianity is not just an optional extra for the Church but must be at the heart of our struggle to be agents of God's love."[30]

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[26] Kristel vanHoute, "Our Year," *2018-2019 Annual Report, A Rocha Aotearoa NZ*, <https://www.arocha.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2019/08/Annual_Report_2019_V3.pdf> (accessed 10 May 2020).
[27] Nicola Hoggard Creegan and Andrew Shepherd, eds., *Creation and Hope: Reflections on Ecological Anticipation and Action From Aotearoa New Zealand* (Auckland: Pickwick Publications, 2018).
[28] Darragh, *Living In the Planet Earth*.
[29] Dick Tripp, *The Biblical Mandate for Caring for Creation* (Wellington: Avery Bartlett, 2011).
[30] Bob Eyles, "Ecological Christianity," *Candour*, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, vol. 8 (July 2013): 3-4, 4.

Literature Review: Aspects of Eco-Mission

The literature around environmental issues is vast and growing. I chose to focus on authors who identify as Christian and discuss questions of faith and church mission in relation to environmental concerns. I have not attempted a comprehensive review of this large body of literature; my goal was to gain an overview, looking especially for the personal motivations of the writers and those they had interviewed in their work. This is essentially a 'why?' question. To ask about motivation is to ask: 'why bother?', or 'why act?'. The answers reveal foundational assumptions about faith and the world, as well as social and individual attitudes and goals.

The literature on the role of the Christian church in responding to environmental crisis is written by people who are themselves passionate about ecological faith and mission. The language is often urgent about what this "requires" of the church.[31] Mark Keown urges his readers to "stop vacillating, procrastinating and hesitating" about ecological issues.[32] Religion is seen as an untapped resource which could be applied to motivating people to care about the environment.[33] But what actually motivates Christian people toward involvement in eco-mission?

From my overview I identified twelve distinctive aspects of Christian ecological concern. These aspects overlap but I found it helpful to form these categories in order to explore sources of motivation. Some could have been combined or further differentiated. As I read the literature and discussed it with others informally I became comfortable with the twelve categories as being sufficiently broad but also simple enough to be grasped and discussed. Each brings its own perspective. Each is a place from which to view the world and engage with Christian faith and practice. They have enabled me to connect the work of academics with the work of local churches in my qualitative research. They are not discussed in any particular order in this section.

1. Faith in God as Creator
2. Responsibility to be Stewards of Creation
3. Confession that Human Greed has Damaged Creation
4. Fear of Impending Disaster
5. Hope for the Restoration of Creation
6. The Ethical Imperative to Live Sustainably
7. Caring for Ecosystems (Practical Action)
8. Justice for "the Least of These" (Concern for the Poor)
9. Respect for the Place of Indigenous People

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[31] For example: "It requires not only ecological action but also self-assessment and self-correction by communities." Darragh, "What have faith communities to do with ecology?", 13.
[32] Mark Keown, "The Apostolic Green Imperative," in Neil Darragh, ed., *Living In the Planet Earth: Faith Communities and Ecology* (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2016): 33-39, 39.
[33] Willis Jenkins, "After Lynn White: Religious Ethics and Environmental Problems," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 37, iss. 2 (June 2009): 283-309.

10. Desire for the Church to be a Community of Creation Care
11. Wellbeing: Physical and Mental Health
12. Delight in the Beauty of Creation

1. Faith in God as Creator

The identity of God as Creator and the universe as Creation is the undisputed starting point of Christian theology. Christians care for the natural world because God does.[34] A faith perspective begins from affirmation of God; whatever our view of God, the shared foundation is that the universe is powered by a force that is not human. We recognise a divine hand at work in the natural world, from the origins of the universe as 'creation' to the vast intricacies of interconnected ecosystems. At its core this is expressed in the most simple of Jesus' parables, the parable of the growing seed in Mark 4:26-29. While the gardener sleeps the plant grows: the gardener "does not know how" (Mk 4:27, NRSV). No matter how much people understand the mechanisms involved, no matter how much we control or damage the systems of life, ultimately "The earth produces of itself" (Mk 4:28). This, says Jesus, is a picture of the Kingdom of God, how God works and who God is. From this perspective, Christian motivation for ecology is not about improving human control through greener technology, but understanding the world as gift from God.

The foundational claim of the Judeo-Christian tradition is that God is the source, initiator and sustainer of the physical universe. The Bible begins with "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The Nicene Creed begins with "We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen." The Lausanne Commitment affirms that "We cannot claim to love God while abusing what belongs to Christ by right of creation, redemption and inheritance."[35]

Before the act of creation, time and space did not exist. There is an emerging consensus among scientists around the origins of the universe, that it began in a single moment in an explosion known commonly as 'the big bang'. There is no evidence of anything existing prior to this. Theologically the significance of creation being 'ex-nihilo' (out of nothing) refutes the dualism (common in other religions and in some strands of Christianity) which sees God as eternally opposed to matter, and the spiritual and the physical as fundamentally different and irreconcilable. In Christian theology, spiritual realities as well as tangible realities are created by God, dependent upon God for their continued existence. The created universe is not inimical to the divine but is as able to be an expression of God as the human, the spiritual or the intellectual.[36] Ernst Conradie states that "The message is not primarily the

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[34] "The Sierra Club's publication Faith in Action reveals that 67 percent of Americans say that they care about the environment around them because it is God's creation." McDuff, *Natural Saints.*
[35] "A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action," 7-A, The Lausanne Movement, 2011. <https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctcommitment> (accessed 1 May 2020).
[36] Shirley Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine: Teachings of the Christian Church* (Richmond, VI: CLC Press, 1968).

imperative that we as humans should embrace God's creation (for we are part of that), but the gospel that the world only exists in God's embrace."[37]

The inherent value of the universe is further emphasised in the Genesis 1 creation liturgy as God repeatedly declares "It is good".

> Despite everything, the created world we live in is a *good* world, and it is *good* to be alive in it … Christians do not affirm the world because they are optimistic about the world as such, or unrealistic about all the suffering and injustice in the world. They affirm it because *God* says Yes to it … An other-worldly religion may seem very pious but it is not Christian.[38]

Reformation theologians such as Calvin taught a world-affirming faith, in response to the medieval monastic emphasis on contempt for the world.[39] Conradie suggests that "knowledge of God's character is what enables us to look at the world in a different light, in the light of the Light of the world. Then we recognize that the soil on which we are standing is holy ground."[40]

The Old Testament emphasis on God as Creator is radically monotheistic. Nature is affirmed but not worshiped. Other ancient religions saw things such as the sun or moon, or local features such as mountains, as divine beings. The Old Testament celebrates natural things as created, as in themselves expressing in their own way worship of God.[41]

2. Responsibility to be Stewards of Creation

Christians care for the natural world because they feel called by God. This is shaped by our creation stories. In Genesis 1:28 God blesses the first human beings and says 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" (NRSV). How people have understood the word 'dominion' has had vast implications for human impact on the natural world. In 1967 Lynn White argued that the idea of human dominion over creation led to the assumption that nature exists only to serve human needs. He accused Christianity of legitimating exploitation of the environment, and being partly to blame for the modern ecological crisis.[42] Responses to White's argument have sharpened Christian thinking about humanity's role in relation to the planet.

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[37] Ernst Conradie, "Creation and Mission," *International Review of Mission*, WCC, vol. 101, issue 2 (Nov 2012): 339-344, 344. DOI: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.otago.ac.nz/10.1111/j.1758-6631.2012.00107.x> (accessed 15 April 2020).
[38] Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine,* 159 (emphasis in original).
[39] Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction (3rd ed)* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). McGrath quotes from Thomas a Kempis, *Imitation of Christ.* "There is a dialectic in Calvin's thought between the world as the creation of God himself, and the world as the fallen creation. In that it is God's creation, it is to be honored, respected and affirmed; in that it is a fallen creation, it is to be criticized with the object of redeeming it", 299.
[40] Conradie, "Creation and Mission," 344.
[41] "Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made." (Romans 1:20, NRSV).
[42] McGrath, *Christian Theology,* 304.

Theologians such as Douglas John Hall re-defined 'dominion' in terms of 'stewardship; creation "is entrusted to humanity, who are responsible for its safekeeping and tending."[43] Hall describes stewardship as "the vocation that God intended and intends for the human creature in the midst of God's good creation."[44] Stewardship is a biblical concept, rooted in Genesis 2:15: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it" (NRSV). The word 'till' is more about 'serving' than digging, according to Calvin DeWitt, in a mutual way a "con-serving", or 'serving-with'.[45] The word 'keep' "conveys the idea of keeping the dynamic qualities of the thing being kept … a rich, full, and fulfilling 'keeping'."[46]

Stewardship is looking after something that does not belong to you, taking care of something on behalf of someone else. The Bible is very clear that the Earth belongs to God; he is literally the 'landlord', "Lord of all the land" (e.g. Psalm 24:1).[47] The word 'steward' is equivalent to Jesus speaking about 'tenants' or 'servants' in his parables which emphasise human responsibility to God for caring for the land and the gifts they have been entrusted with (e.g. Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 20:9-19). John Stott argues that scripture subordinates property rights to the principle of caring for all the community, and that we continue to be accountable to God for our stewardship. "We have no liberty to do what we like with our natural environment; it is not ours to treat as we please. 'Dominion' is not a synonym for 'domination', let alone 'destruction."[48]

Many Christians are motivated to keep the Ten Commandments. The fourth of these is to keep sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11), which applies to the natural world as well as in human community. Rest and re-creation is an essential biblical principle, integrated into the act of creation and the ethics of human responsibility. As a stewardship principle this means that the environment must be allowed to recover from human use of its resources.[49]

For New Zealanders an understanding of the Māori ethic of *kaitiakitanga* is essential, especially as it is now written into law as a unique role for *iwi* in managing natural resources including reserves, rivers and food sources.[50] Māori see themselves as *tangata whenua* as

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[43] Ibid.
[44] D.J. Hall, quoted in Clint Le Bruyns, "Re-placing Stewardship? Towards an Ethics of Responsible Care," *Religion and Theology*, vol. 16 (2009): 67–76, 72.
[45] Calvin B. DeWitt, "Biodiversity and the Bible," *Global Biodiversity*, vol. 6, iss. 4 (Spring 1997): 13-16, 13.
[46] Ibid.
[47] John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today,* 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 146.
[48] Ibid., 151.
[49] McGrath, *Christian Theology,* 304.
[50] However, Lyver et al. warn that "The failure to interpret legislation in accordance with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi suggests that te ao Māori constructs and values of biocultural approaches are neither recognised, nor well understood by Crown representatives, or that the Crown does not want to share power." Phil Lyver, Jacinta Ruru, Nigel Scott, Jason Tylianakis, et al.,

'*kaitiaki'*, guardians or caretakers. This springs from their sense of direct connection with all aspects of the environment through *whakapapa* (ancestry). The purpose of kaitiakitanga is to uphold the life force, *mauri*, of all elements of the natural world. It means "guardianship, preservation, conservation, fostering, protecting [and] sheltering."[51]

A central aspect of stewardship is a commitment to future generations. As the saying goes, 'we do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children'. Pope Francis affirms an ethical obligation to those who will come after us and warns that "We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth."[52] Even Christians who expect an imminent end to this world still want their grandchildren to be able to swim in a lake without fear of toxins.

3. Confession that Human Greed has Damaged Creation

Christian theology of sin and forgiveness motivates concern for Creation because we recognise human pride and rebellion as part of our story. The Lausanne Commitment confesses "with sorrow" that we "often disfigure our Christian presence and deny our gospel witness" by fitting too comfortably into the "world of sinful desire, greed, and human pride."[53] Confession arises from an awareness of 'transgressing' against God's laws and best intentions for us (Psalm 51). It is fascinating that this biblical idea of 'transgression' has been used in the 'planetary boundaries' model of understanding current human effects on the earth's ecosystems.[54] Human sin is deeply personal but also far wider than any individual action.

Many liturgical churches now keep a 'Season of Creation' during September each year (culminating with the Feast of St Francis). This was initiated by the Greek Orthodox church in 1989, and now includes the Catholic and Anglican communions internationally (among others), with resources in six languages.[55] In this season, prayers of confession focus on sin against the environment. Australian Norman Habel has been a leader in this movement:

"Building biocultural approaches into Aotearoa–New Zealand's conservation future," *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, vol. 11 (2018): 394-411, 404. DOI:10.1080/03036758.2018.1539405.

[51] Chanel Phillips, "Mahinga kai - He tāngata. Mahinga kaitiaki - He mauri," Thesis, Master of Physical Education, University of Otago (2015), 73. <http://hdl.handle.net/10523/5852 > (accessed 20 May 2020).

[52] Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 161.

[53] "A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action," 7-E, The Lausanne Movement, 2011. <https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctcommitment> (accessed 15 May 2020).

[54] "Transgressing one or more planetary boundaries may be deleterious or even catastrophic due to the risk of crossing thresholds that will trigger non-linear, abrupt environmental change within continental- to planetary-scale systems." Johan Rockstrom, et al. "Planetary boundaries: exploring the safe operating space for humanity." *Ecology and Society*, vol. 14, issue 2 (2009): article 32 (page numbers unavailable).

[55] Season of Creation, "About the Season of Creation", <https://seasonofcreation.org/about/> (accessed 24 May 2020).

> In the past we have tended to confess only our personal sins against God and one another. In *The Season of Creation* we also acknowledge the sins we have committed against creation, both individually and collectively as human beings. Our sins have hurt both creation and our kin in creation. The very first sin our human parents committed affected the ground (Gen. 3.17). Our greed and selfishness still bring hurt and harm to many parts of creation.[56]

Prayers of confession draw on Biblical metaphor and story and express repentance, for example:

> You delight in creation, its colour and diversity;
> yet we have misused the earth
> and plundered its resources for our own selfish ends.
> Lord, have mercy.
> **Lord, have mercy.**[57]

"Through myriad forms of ecological degradation we are disrupting a fundamental quality of God's garden—its life-generating capacity. We are *uncreating*."[58] Cynthia Moe-Lobeda highlights the ways in which we in the affluent West are embedded in 'structural evil': "This is not the evil of intentional or willful cruelty. Rather, it is evil that inhabits our lives by virtue of the economic policies, practices, institutions, and assumptions that shape how we live." She calls on the church to recognise this and repent in order to receive God's love and be "bearers of that divine and indomitable love."[59] This is echoed by Pope Francis' warning that "We can be silent witnesses to terrible injustices if we think that we can obtain significant benefits by making the rest of humanity, present and future, pay the extremely high costs of environmental deterioration."[60]

In prayer we confess that "we have sinned … in the wrong we have done."[61] The problem for Western Christians is that at a day-to-day personal level, the things that contribute to the global evils of deforestation and pollution do not seem 'wrong'. Is it wrong for me to fly to Wellington to see my mother? Is it wrong to buy a packet of brazil nuts (even if I suspect they are unsustainably sourced) and throw the plastic bag in the rubbish bin? Moe-Lobeda challenges us to look beyond our prayers of gratitude for the things we have, to confront the points at which our 'blessings' may be 'stolen' from others or the earth.

> Is it possible that our prayers and attitudes of gratitude for our many blessings subtly rationalize and normalize the ways of life that produced my material blessings while also generating global warming and toxic dumping? Do those prayers conceal the enormous

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[56] Norman Habel, "Seasons of Creation Liturgy, First Sunday." <http://normanhabel.com/?page_id=271> (accessed 24 May 2020).
[57] "'Let All Things their Creator Bless': Liturgy for use during the Season of Creationtide." Diocese of Guildford, Church of England, 13. https://seasonofcreation.org/clergy-resources
[58] Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation* (Augsburg Fortress: 2013), xvii.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Francis, *Laudato Si*, 36.
[61] Church of the Province of New Zealand, *A New Zealand Prayer Book: He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa* (London: William Collins, 1989), 407.

> extent to which those blessings are stolen goods, stolen primarily from the world's peoples of color? To conceal that theft is to perpetuate it.[62]

4. Fear of Impending Disaster

There are no shortage of commentators warning of dire consequences if humanity continues on its current course, and calling the world to change with a sense of urgency. Christians share with many others in the world today the conviction that we are currently in a critical moment in history. Scientists tell us that we are now living in the Anthropocene as "a period where the human impact on earth is equal to the great forces of nature of previous periods."[63] This human impact brings with it the very real possibility of mass extinctions, and has been described as a "suicide machine."[64] Larry Rasmussen poses the questions:

> How, on a hot, changing, and crowded planet do we move from industrial-technological civilization to ecological civilization? How do we accomplish a durable future for the children, all the children, human and other-than-human? And how do we do so when the global human economy of corporate capitalism collides with the very economy it is wholly dependent upon; namely, the economy of nature?[65]

Bronwyn Hayward writes about the impact of carbon emissions on climate change: "We are now gambling with the futures of everyone born since the millennium. For the sake of young people alive today and future generations, we have to believe it is not too late and work as hard as we can to change the ending of this carbon story."[66] Hope for the planet involves "the transition from a doomed economy of industrial growth to a life-sustaining society committed to the recovery of our world."[67] This has been called the 'Ecocene', an ecologically focused global era emerging from "creative transformations in all domains and on all levels."[68] L.E. Sponsel argues for a new 'spiritual ecology':

> If not pursued voluntarily in an informed and enlightened manner, then the spiritual ecology revolution and consequent transformations will be forced on humankind by circumstances of ecocatastrophe, and that at far greater expense, including human suffering as well as economic and social costs. Ultimately, the choice is either ecocide or ecosanity.[69]

5. Hope for the Restoration of Creation

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[62] Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 94.
[63] Johann-Albrecht Meylahn, "Doing Public Theology in the Anthropocene Towards Life-Creating Theology," *Verbum et Ecclesia,* vol. 36, no.3 (Oct 2015), art. 1443. DOI:10.4102/ve.v36i3.1443.
[64] Ibid, quoting Brian McLaren.
[65] Larry Rasmussen, Foreword, in Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation* (Augsburg Fortress: 2013), xi.
[66] Bronwyn Hayward, *Sea Change: Climate Politics and New Zealand* (Bridget Williams Books, Kindle Edition, 2017), 62.
[67] Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in Without Going Crazy* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2012), 26.
[68] Joanna Boehnert, *Design, Ecology, Politics: Towards the Ecocene*, Ecocene website, <https://ecocene.wordpress.com/home/the-ecocene> (date accessed?)
[69] L.E. Sponsel, "Spiritual Ecology." *Encyclopedia of the Anthropocene*, vol. 4 (2018): 181-184. DOI:10.1016/B978-0-12-809665-9.10486-0.

Christians care for Creation because it has an ultimate future. God is not finished with the earth, and will one day make all things new. It is on the question of the future of the earth that Christians find themselves most divided. Many genuinely believe that we are living in the 'end times' prophesied by Jesus. Those living in Christchurch over the last decade have seen plenty of "violent earthquakes, and famines and plagues" (Luke 12:11, HCSB). We have seen the mosque massacres and the skyline lit red with fire; it is not hard to relate to the apocalyptic. Christians look towards a miraculous transformation of the earth by God, which some imagine as the destruction of the earth as we now know it by divine judgement and people of faith sharing eternity in an alternative heavenly dimension. Compared to this cosmic drama, "catastrophic climate change and environmental deterioration do not effectively compete for concern."[70] From this perspective, trying to address carbon emissions or climate change is pointless, a distraction from the truly important issues of personal salvation and eternal life.

There are a range of theological positions on ultimate Christian hope and the destiny of Creation. At the opposite end from the 'fire and brimstone' people are theologians who advocate a vision of eschatology which is fully incorporated into life on earth. C.J.H. Wright claims that "heaven is not a place in the sky, but rather God's dimension of what we think of as ordinary reality. God's people must be 'new-creation' people here and now – God's agents participating in God's mission in the renewal of the present."[71] Nicola Hoggard-Creegan emphasises the embeddedness of humanity in the natural world: "To find hope for and in and with nature we need more than stories that have an ending, more than a messiah who comes from afar. The stories we tell must resonate with life and matter."[72]

Barbara Rossing's work on eschatalogy explores diverse biblical pictures of the future of Creation and argues that these do not need to be harmonised. She advocates for the importance of imagination for Christian hope for "a new creation that is both transcendently new and yet in continuity with this creation, since it is the renewal of this world."[73] Some reclaim the socio-political richness of Christ returning to 'turn the tables' on the injustice of this world. Ernst Kasemann calls for a "radical and urgent hope" of "the apocalyptic gospel of revolutionary judgment and the call to solidarity and service in the world." This is "nothing

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[70] Bernard Daley Zaleha and Andrew Szasz, "Why Conservative Christians Don't Believe in Climate Change," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 71, no.5 (2015): 19–30. DOI: 10.1177/0096340215599789

[71] Niemandt, "Ecodomy in Mission", 6, quoting C.J.H. Wright, 2014.

[72] Nicola Hoggard-Creegan, "The Phenomenology of Hope", in Hoggard-Creegan and Shepherd, *Creation and Hope : Reflections on Ecological Anticipation and Action from Aotearoa New Zealand* (Pickwick Publications, Kindle edition, 2018).

[73] Barbara R. Rossing, "Reimagining Eschatology: Toward Healing and Hope for a World at the Eschatos", in Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Hilda P. Koster (eds.) *Planetary Solidarity: Global Women's Voices on Christian Doctrine and Climate Justice* (Augsburg Fortress, 2017): 325-348, 328. muse.jhu.edu/book/55637.

short of the liberation of the cosmos from the powers of Sin and Death."[74] Mark Keown claims that "The Bible is emphatic – there will be an end to this age,"[75] initiated by the return of Jesus. He understandings the Bible as prophesying a merging together of heaven and earth with God dwelling with his people; an ultimate vision of "this world restored after it has been purified."[76] These nuanced theologies of eschatology all include Creation in Christian hope.

What we hope for shapes what we work for. "If our vision of the future is a rather vague disembodied state that has no place for trees, flowers, mountains, lakes, and fascinating animals and insects, then it is likely that we will not attach much value to them in the present."[77] Christian faith points beyond the destruction and suffering of present experience to a future of hope in which God's good Creation is restored, redeemed and renewed. Eco-theology calls for a robust hope in the rich diversity of God's purposes for Creation and for the inclusion of all living things in God's intentions for the Age to come.

6. The Ethical Imperative to Live Sustainably

Increasingly Christians see an ethical imperative to live in sustainable ways as part of living out faith in daily life. Mary Betz, writing for *Tui Motu,* encourages: "Acting to restore God's *oikos* invites us to look at our own behaviours and choices. One step at a time — whether a few more plant-based meals per week, discernment between need and want in purchases, or starting/improving a garden — will position us firmly on this journey of restoration, both of Earth and of ourselves."[78]

The church used to represent moral and ethical 'good' in our society. Today the word 'good' increasingly refers to what is good for our planet.[79] In Western societies there is an emerging ethic of sustainability and a moral imperative which is not primarily driven by Christian morality. There is a whole genre of literature, social media and marketing of 'how-to' life-style changes for sustainability, including some from a Christian perspective such as Ruth Valero's 'A-Z' of practical steps for "Christian living that doesn't cost the earth."[80] A Rocha Aotearoa NZ has published the 'Rich Living' study series, designed particularly for small

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[74] Ry O. Siggelkow, "Ernst Kasemann and the Specter of Apocalyptic," *Theology Today*, vol. 75, issue 1 (2018): 37–50, 39.
[75] Mark Keown, *What's God Up To on Planet Earth?* (Castle Publishing, 2010), 74.
[76] Ibid., 85.
[77] Tripp, *The Biblical Mandate for Caring for Creation*, 127.
[78] Mary Betz, "Repair Our Home," *Tui Motu* Magazine, issue 241 (September 2019): 10-11.
[79] Companies claiming to be environmentally friendly include 'All Good' soap products and 'For The Better Good' renewable plastic bottles. "For The Better Good: A refreshing alternative to the water bottling industry," *Idealog,* 3 May 2018. <https://idealog.co.nz/design/2018/05/better-good-refreshing-alternative-water-bottling-industry> (accessed 20 April 2020).
[80] Ruth Valero, *L is for Lifestyle: Christian Living That Doesn't Cost the Earth* (Inter-Varsity Press, 2004).

groups, to promote reflection on lifestyle and theology, covering topics such as water and climate change.[81]

Some churches are seeking to reduce their waste and use of plastics. The General Assembly of the PCANZ in 2018 agreed to ask all parishes to "a) Eliminate the use of disposable single use items such as styrofoam cups, plastic straws and cutlery, b) Adopt the use of environmentally friendly cleaning products, c) Make recycling bins readily available."[82] Practical lifestyle steps such as these in churches and homes have an impact in the shifting the moral norms of a society, writes Celia Deane-Drummond; "Building a collective conscience that is self-consciously more environmentally aware is essential if complex problems such as climate change are going to be addressed."[83]

An important question is whether Christians in affluent societies are willing to confront the consumerism on which many would lay the blame for environmental degradation. Francisco Benzoni argues:

> The challenge of consumerist culture, with its idolatrous destruction of people and the earth, is among the vital challenges faced by the church today. Too often, the church markets itself as another commodity (the one in which "spiritual fulfillment" can be attained), so that any thoroughgoing critique of consumerist values becomes impossible. But without such a powerful, penetrating critique (as well as the offer of an alternative vision that actually affects the way Christians think about and live in the world), I believe that all the attempts to reform the church ecologically can finally have only minimal impact.[84]

7. Caring for Ecosystems (Practical Action)

Christians are not afraid to 'get their hands dirty' in practical action. The eco-mission literature researches and discusses a range of 'hands-on' church involvement with the environment, such as wild-space restoration and community gardens. Neil Darragh's edited work draws together stories from around New Zealand of faith communities engaging in ecology with other community groups; Patrick Doherty researched Christian meditation groups, for instance: "Our faith community has restored native plant habitats … we keep the waterfront clear of rubbish, making it safer for birds and less pollution in the water."[85] He

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[81] "Rich Living Series," A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand. <https://www.arocha.org.nz/resources/rich-living-series> (accessed 25 April 2020).
[82] "Responsible Stewardship of God's Creation", PCANZ GA reports, Oct 2018. <https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/speaking_out/Responsible%20stewardship%20of%20God.pdf> (accessed 20 April 2020).
[83] Deane-Drummond, "What are the Resources for Building a Christian Ethos in a Time of Ecological Devastation?", 176.
[84] Francisco Benzoni, "Earth Habitat," *Journal of Religion* vol. 82, iss. 4 (Oct 2002): 665. DOI: 10.1086/491208.
[85] Patrick Doherty, "How communities' environmental involvement is supported through prayer and gardening," in Neil Darragh, *Living in the Planet Earth*, 189-196, 193.

described them as motivated by "leading by example and practising what one preaches." Several contributors emphasise collaboration in projects that nurture local environments.[86]

The work of A Rocha supports 14 natural ecosystems in NZ. The largest project is at Mt Karioi in Raglan, which protects nesting sites of the Grey Faced Petrel (known as 'Oi' in Māori) from predators. This has led to partnerships with local iwi, Department of Conservation, private land owners and the Raglan community, with a large volunteer base. A Rocha groups around the country work alongside organisations such as the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust, local Councils, and Forest and Bird to assist with planting, weeding and trapping. The A Rocha Dunedin ecology project is the Tirohanga campsite (owned by the Presbyterian Church) where reforestation has enhanced the camp environment and provided opportunities for all groups using the camp to connect both physically and spiritually with Creation. Co-ordinator Selwyn Yeoman suggests that "such initiatives could transform every church campsite and new building project and many plots of vacant land and the lives of dislocated people."[87]

Andrew Shepherd asks where God is present in conservation activity, and argues for an understanding of the Holy Spirit as being deeply involved in the redeeming of creation. He describes the Spirit in avian terms, drawing on the life cycle of the Grey Faced Petrel, as "life-giving" and "wounded", both burrowing into the earth and taking flight in resurrection power.[88] Practical involvement in gardening and conservation projects has a spiritual component

Community gardens are smaller-scale urban ecosystems, some on church land. Bridget Crisp is part of a Sisters of Mercy project in Ellerslie, Auckland. She understands community as more than human: "Awareness of other animal, insect and plant species that now begin to flourish creates an understanding of neighbourhood that is bigger than the people living in it. Life is now observed in the fullest sense."[89] Enriching the soil and growing food enables people to "become deeply entwined in the integral and intangible processes" of a dynamic living community.[90] Her description of small children being "completely absorbed" by earthworms is evocative of Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom of God requiring us to become like little children (Mark 10:15). The intergenerational benefits of community gardens are an important motivation.

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[86] Darragh, *Living in Planet Earth.*
[87] Selwyn Yeoman, "Witnessing Christ in the Care of Creation," *Candour: Ecological Christianity*, iss. 8 (July 2013): 5-8, 8.
[88] Andrew Shepherd, "Spirit, Seabirds, and Sacramentality: Ponderings on Petrels and Pneumatology," in Nicola Hoggard Creegan and Andrew Shepherd, *Creation and Hope : Reflections on Ecological Anticipation and Action From Aotearoa New Zealand* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, e-book, 2018).
[89] Bridget Crisp, "Growing Community Around a Garden: a Reflection on the Mercy Work of Papatuanuku ki Tuarangi Earth Promise," in Neil Darragh, ed., *Living In the Planet Earth: Faith Communities and Ecology* (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2016): 155-162, 158.
[90] Ibid.

Urban gardening connects with other aspects of church mission, such as sharing food together and caring for the hungry. Fellowship often revolves around food, and when that food is grown together locally this forms a powerful synergy of mission and spirituality. Mallory McDuff's research into church gardens promotes "the spiritual act of feeding, the importance of equal access to healthful food, the use of gardening to gain life skills, the centrality of food to relationships in faith, and the power of teaching about simple living through food" as central learnings.[91]

8. Justice for "The Least of These" (Concern for the Poor)

Christian mission is motivated by Jesus' command to care for those in need (Matthew 25:40). In the 21st century this is inextricably linked to environmental protection. The world's poor are bearing the brunt of climate disaster and ecological collapse.[92]

Environmental justice is "the nexus of ecological wellbeing and social justice … not only sustainable Earth-human relations, but also justice along various axes of privilege and power within and between human societies."[93] Willis Jenkins argues for "the ethics of sustainability" to be integrated with "the practices of reconciliation, and thus to the mission of God to restore unity to creation" in order to be both "good news for the poor and the land."[94]

Deane-Drummond highlights the ways in which ecological degradation impacts unfairly on women: "environmental justice is globally gendered."[95] She highlights the role of women around the world working together to protect their local environment, often in the face of severe opposition and violence, yet tapping into shared joy and faith. She describes a group of women in Kenya who had achieved access to water for their community, who impressed her with "their belief in the direct results of God's actions in their midst and through their witness to the very real presence of the risen Jesus."[96] For them there was complete continuity between environmental justice and Christian faith.

When churches get involved with justice issues this grows partnerships with other organisations and networks. This is vividly described by Mallory McDuff as she documents the collective efforts of churches in Immokalee, Florida, to support immigrant tomato pickers towards fair pay, which she described as churches being "partners in justice rather

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[91] McDuff, *Natural Saints*.
[92] Peter Harris narrates various situations from his own international experience of the interconnection of poverty and environmental degradation in *Kingfisher's Fire: A Story of Hope for God's Earth* (Oxford, UK: Monarch Books, 2008).
[93] Robert Saler, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda and Whitney Bauman, "Time for an Eco-Justice Reformation?" Editorial, Dialogue: *A Journal of Theology*, vol. 55, issue 2 (June 2016): 106-108, 108.
[94] Willis Jenkins, "Missiology in Environmental Context: Tasks for an Ecology of Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 32, no. 4 (Oct 2008), 176-184, 180.
[95] Celia Deane-Drummond, "Foreword," in Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Hilda P. Koster (eds.) *Planetary Solidarity: Global Women's Voices on Christian Doctrine and Climate Justice* (Augsburg Fortress, 2017): xxi-xxvi, xxiii. DOI:10.2307/j.ctt1pwt42b.5.
[96] Ibid., xxii.

than givers of charity."[97] For McDuff this project was a living example of the commitment of the Presbyterian Church of USA: "Recognizing that the well-being of the earth, its resources, and humanity are interdependent, the PC (U.S.A.) believes we are called to ways of living that foster the wholeness God intends for our world."[98]

9. Respect for the Place of Indigenous People

Upholding the rights of indigenous peoples has long been at the forefront of mission as understood by the World Council of Churches, which aims to "support grassroots movements for justice, development, land, identity and self-determination, and enable the participation and contribution of the Indigenous Peoples in the life and ministries of the ecumenical movement."[99] This is particularly relevant for conservation and environmental mission because of the interconnection between indigenous people and the land. The United Nations defines *indigenous* as "the descendants - according to a common definition - of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived." It is primarily a self-identification involving a "strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources" and a resolve to maintain ancestral environments as a distinctive community.[100]

In Aotearoa New Zealand there is recognition that care for the land must respect the role of Māori and their unique relationship with the local environment as tangata whenua. "Tangata whenua theory is about the land and people in relationship. It includes the interaction between land and people where the land is allowed to speak and the people respond in various ways that expresses their identity in relation to the land."[101] Te Tiriti o Waitangi guaranteed Māori *tino rangatiratanga* (or 'full chieftainship') of their land and resources but granted governance (*kawanatanga*) to the Crown. "Given the importance of land, a vital aspect of tino rangatiratanga is the responsibility of Māori for the environment."[102] Wayne Te Kaawa defines 'land' as "a physical entity with a historical element, layered in human customs and is underpinned with a spiritual dimension." He relates this closely to whakapapa: "The root word in whakapapa is 'papa' taken from the word Papatūānuku which is the word for earth."[103]

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[97] McDuff, *Natural Saints*.
[98] Statement of the General Assembly of the PCUSA, quoted by McDuff, *Natural Saints.*
[99] World Council of Churches, "Solidarity With Indigenous Peoples", <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples> (accessed 8 September 2020).
[100] United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, "Who are indigenous peoples?" Fact Sheet. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf> (accessed 8 September 2020).
[101] Wayne M. R. Te Kaawa, "Re-visioning Christology Through a Māori Lens." PhD thesis, University of Otago (2020), 15. <http://hdl.handle.net/10523/10210> (accessed 10 September 2020).
[102] Christopher Lockhart, Carla A Houkamau, Chris Sibley, Danny Osborne, "To be at One with the Land: Māori Spirituality Predicts Greater Environmental Regard." *Religions*, vol. 10, no. 7 (Jul 2019). DOI:10.3390/rel10070427.
[103] Te Kaawa, "Re-visioning Christology through a Māori lens," 85.

A Māori understanding of, and care for, the natural world begins from a place of belonging through genealogy. *Whakapapa* evokes 'layering' and expresses the layers of relatedness which connect a Māori person to *whanau*, home, land and to other living things.[104] Roberts et al. suggest that the closest we can get to defining a Māori conservation ethic in western terms is to describe it as "one which is based on a kin-centric world view, i.e., in which humans and nature are not separate entities but related parts of a unified whole."[105] The stewardship principle of *kaitiakitanga* means "guardianship, preservation, conservation, fostering, protecting [and] sheltering" according to Chanel Philips.[106]

Internationally, indigenous cultures are seen as role models for ecology, with much to teach Western culture about sustainability: "The fact that many such societies endured for centuries and even millennia proves that they were sustainable ecologically, economically, and socially."[107] However, in New Zealand conservation projects and legislation have often cut across Māori custom and decision-making. Lyver et al. claim that "conservation law remains inimical to the locally-placed role and authority of Iwi, hapū and whānau" and "has criminalised tangata whenua for practicing traditions that should have been protected as a treaty right."[108]

Sue Burns suggests that attending to Māori perspectives can "bring us much closer to the biblical framework of land and divinity."[109] However, the church does not often encourage this. Christopher Lockhart and team researched factors influencing attitudes to the natural world among Māori and found a strong link between traditional Māori spirituality and care for the environment, especially when combined with political awareness. They also found that church attendance had the opposite effect: "religiousness correlated negatively with valuing environmental protection and uniting with nature."[110]

There is growing global recognition of the benefits that indigenous peoples can bring to ecology and conservation, according to Priscilla Wehi et al.: "The contribution of indigenous

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[104] Byron William Rangiwai, "A Kaupapa Māori Study of the Positive Impacts of Syncretism on the Development of Christian Faith Among Māori from my Faith-World Perspective," PhD thesis, University of Otago (June 2019).
[105] Mere Roberts, Waerete Norman, Nganeko Minhinnick, Del Wihongi and Carmen Kirkwood, "Kaitiakitanga: Māori perspectives on conservation," *Pacific Conservation Biology,* vol. 2, no. 1 (1995): 7–20, 16. DOI:10.1071/PC95000716.
[106] Chanel Phillips, "Mahinga Kai - He Tāngata. Mahinga Kaitiaki - He Mauri," Thesis, Master of Physical Education, University of Otago (2015), 73. <http://hdl.handle.net/10523/5852> (accessed 20 April 2020).
[107] Sponsel, "Spiritual Ecology", 181.
[108] Phil Lyver, Jacinta Ruru, Nigel Scott, Jason Tylianakis, et al., "Building Biocultural Approaches Into Aotearoa–New Zealand's Conservation Future," *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* (2018), 11. DOI:10.1080/03036758.2018.1539405.
[109] Sue Burns, "Listening in the Landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand," in Nicola Hoggard Creegan and Andrew Shepherd, eds., *Creation and Hope: Reflections on Ecological Anticipation and Action From Aotearoa New Zealand* (Pickwick Publications, 2018).
[110] Lockhart, et al., "To Be at One with the Land."

peoples and their knowledges is now widely acknowledged as critical to successful efforts to mitigate anthropogenic impacts."[111] They highlight the mutual benefits of collaborative partnerships between indigenous peoples, governments and conservation practitioners. Mary Hale et al. emphasise the importance of relationships based on "genuine, respectful engagement",[112] but warn that the church runs the risk of repeating colonial habits if it tries to set the environmental agenda. They point out that "ecological issues do not stand alone but are woven into the complexity of challenges facing first peoples, which include self-governance, housing, education, language preservation, incarceration issues, and mental and physical health."[113]

10. Desire for Church to be a Community of Creation Care

Christianity is a collective faith that values community. Ecology in a Christian perspective includes the ecology of faith community, that is, the church. Both traditional church institutions and emerging informal eco communities are vital and motivational. Local churches can make a difference on global problems through innovative mission practices; Willis Jenkins writes of "Christian engagement with climate change that starts from individual encounters with the redeeming Christ and leads to community-based resource management and a global network of carbon sequestration."[114] Mallory McDuff understands eco-mission to happen as Christians redefine "traditional ministries through the lens of the environment, creating more relevant and meaningful churches."[115] Exploring ecclesiastical aspects of eco-mission includes a range of elements, including attending to worship, relational belonging, ministry with children and youth, and practical questions of how church buildings and land can be developed for ecology and sustainability.

Liturgy is an important aspect to the 'greening' of local churches. Celia Deane-Drummond claims that "a Christian approach to environmental ethics can shine forth even stronger" by incorporating in worship both new and ancient liturgies that express "creaturely participation in the praise and joy in God", as well as confession both individual and for "the failure of human societies."[116]

A sense of community is seen as essential to ecological mission by authors such as Bridget Crisp who describes Papatūānuku ke Taurangi Earth Promise, the work of the Mercy Sisters. "To be a part of creation is to be more engaged in the processes of community and

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[111] Priscilla Wehi, Jacqueline Beggs, and Tara McAllister, "Ka Mua, Ka Muri: The Inclusion of Mātauranga Māori in New Zealand Ecology," *New Zealand Journal of Ecology,* vol. 43, no. 3 (2019): 1-8, 2. DOI:http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.otago.ac.nz/10.20417/nzjecol.43.40.
[112] Mary Hale, Anne Marie Dalton and Nancie Erhard, "Crossing Borders: Eco-Theology in the Shadowlands," *Scriptura,* vol. 111 (2013): 362-375, 369. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7833/111-0-24.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Jenkins, "Missiology in Environmental Context", 181.
[115] McDuff, *Natural Saints.*
[116] Deane-Drummond, "What are the Resources for Building a Christian Ethos in a Time of Ecological Devastation?", 175.

community life."[117] Relationships weave individuals into community, finding strength in diversity and inspiration from patterns of prayer, gratitude and cups of tea.

The importance of connecting with young people is stressed by Mallory McDuff who researched how churches in the US are using camping and other 'immersive experiences' in both natural and church-based environments to teach ecology and faith. "Our churches can create venues for youth to have a collective experience with the environment that pulls them outside their everyday existence and empowers them in a positive way."[118] The A Rocha campsite project out of Dunedin hopes to "bear witness to every school, church and community group which passes through, inviting them to share in conservation planting, riparian repair, lessons in sustainable gardening and encounter with the contemplative life."[119]

Churches around the world are valuing the unique ecology of church land and cemeteries. David Manning describes how "the churchyard boundary protected the species within, creating small oases for wildlife across the country,"[120] and calls for valuing and active conservation of these spaces. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church are sites of small forest remnants, "nestled in patches of vibrant, shady forest. Forests, the church's religious belief goes, were like the clothes surrounding the church at the center—as much a part of the religious space as the church building itself."[121]

Re-designing church buildings is another avenue for churches committed to reducing energy consumption and promoting sustainability. A short article about a new Catholic building in Toronto quoted the priest, Paul Cusack: "While reducing energy costs was one of the reasons for building a 'green' church, our primary motivation was to establish a link between the sacredness of the gathered community of faith and the sacredness of Earth."[122]

11. Wellbeing: Physical and Mental Health

Christians care for Creation because it is vital for human wellbeing. As Pope Francis puts it, "We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature."[123] The negative effects of environmental degradation and the positive effects of engaging in environmental restoration include physical health and mental health impacts.

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[117] Crisp, 158.
[118] McDuff, *Natural Saints.*
[119] Yeoman, "Witnessing Christ in the Care of Creation", 8.
[120] David Manning, "The Living Churchyard." *Building Conservation*, <https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/living/living.htm> (accessed 26 April 2020).
[121] Alejandra Borunda, "Ethiopia's 'Church Forests' are Incredible Oases of Green." *National Geographic,* Jan 2019. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/01/ethiopian-church-forest-conservation-biodiversity> (accessed 23 April 2020).
[122] "Eco-Friendly Churches [St. Gabriel's]" *The Presbyterian Record*, vol. 130, iss. 3 (Mar 2006): 15.
[123] Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 44.

Panu Pihkala's fascinating article on environmental anxiety and pastoral care highlights the devastating mental health effects of climate change and other forms of ecological damage. He details the problems now being diagnosed as "climate anxiety", especially among young people for whom this has become a major cause of anxiety.[124] Piklaha describes the cognitive effect of how "a vast amount of very troubling information about environmental conditions and changes in the world, while at the same time offering very few options (in people's minds, at least) for significantly changing the state of affairs, causes a strange and troubling atmosphere."[125] Without faith and hope a profound pessimism about the future paralyses people. Motivation to act for change requires a belief that something can be done and that individuals and local communities can make a positive difference. As Jesus healed the paralysed man, perhaps in our time we can be freed to 'get up and walk' in hope (Mark 2:1-12).

For Māori, the wellbeing of the land has a direct impact on human health. Ruth Panelli and Gail Tipa describe as "cultural trauma" the effects on Māori of being cut off from ancestral lands, rivers and food resources.[126] Individual and community well-being is dependent on healthy connections with the environment. They quote an interviewee who reflected on how the "warmth, energy, everything" of her iwi "comes from the land … [the land] is part of their spirit."[127]

Being out in a natural environment has benefits for immunity and social interaction. It also promotes physical exercise, which is well proven to benefit both physical and mental health.[128] Beyond these tangible effects are less tangible spiritual, emotional, and cognitive aspects, which researches have explored. Results from a major review of studies into the effects on human health of contact with nature consistently found "nature contact reduces stress."[129] A key reason for this is that the mental stimulation of being in a natural environment captures attention effortlessly, which "engages a less taxing, indirect form of attention, thereby facilitating recovery of directed attention capacity". [130] Frumkin et al. also

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[124] Panu Pihkala, "The Pastoral Challenge of the Environmental Crisis: Environmental Anxiety and Lutheran Eco-Reformation," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, vol. 55, iss 2 (June 2016): 131-140. DOI: https://doi-org.ezproxy.otago.ac.nz/10.1111/dial.12239.
[125] Ibid., 139.
[126] "To divorce Iwi Māori from their lands and waterways was to damage not only the culture-environment bonds that were interwoven between different *iwi* and their *atua, tūpuna, mahinga kai*, cultural sites, and resources, but also to affect their social order and, more importantly, their *mana* and obligations as *kaitiaki*." Ruth Panelli and Gail Tipa, "Placing Well-Being: A Māori Case Study of Cultural and Environmental Specificity," *EcoHealth*, New York, vol. 4, iss. 4 (Dec 2007): 445-460, 452. DOI:10.1007/s10393-007-0133-1.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ambra Burls explores the multiple level of benefits from green spaces. "People and Green Spaces: Promoting Public Health and Mental Well-being Through Ecotherapy," *Journal of Public Mental Health,* vol. 6, no. 3 (Sept 2007): 24-39.
[129] Howard Frumkin, Gregory N. Bratman, Sara Jo Breslow, et al., "Nature Contact and Human Health: A Research Agenda," *Environmental Health Perspectives (Online)* vol. 125, no. 7 (2017).
[130] Ibid.

draw attention to the importance of awe and mystery: "awe—the sense of wonder, amazement, and smallness that may occur in response to perceptually vast stimuli"; "mystery—the allure of seeing and knowing more by entering more deeply into a setting."[131] Michelle Walsh researched survivors of trauma who described experiencing God as "a sustaining power in the beauty of creation."[132] Christian faith has a deep spirituality of respect for the natural world, with many people reporting that they feel 'close to God in nature'.

12. Delight in the Beauty of Creation

A Christian sense of vocation to care for Creation is energised by spiritual motivations with strong emotional aspects, in particular delight in the beauty of nature and a sense of connectedness with God in the natural world. In worship churches often use beautiful images of water flowing, mountains and sunsets as backdrops to our song PowerPoints; can our love of the beauty of Creation flow into action to protect and preserve this beauty? The work of artists, poets, photographers, and musicians to notice and express the glory of God in the natural world is part of Creation care.

Six decades ago, theologian Joseph Sittler invited a deeper vision of creation. He sought to express the "inner nature of things", language to evoke "a sense of the grace of creation."[133] This demands a very different stance than triumphalist or rationalist theologies; it involves "kneeling down on the earth before the lilies of the field in gentle contemplation, beholding them, withdrawing any claims driven by will-to-power, waiting and watching and wondering in abject spiritual poverty, to catch some sight of "the dearest freshness deep down things"."[134] NZ poet Joy Cowley writes evocatively of 'parables' of moments of natural wonder, in the hope that "these word images might enhance awareness of the way a closer relationship with creation brings us to a closer relationship with ourselves, and our Creator."[135]

Environmental theology in the 21st century is very aware of threats to biodiversity and the increasing rate of species extinctions. Each creature, every river, has its own unique 'song to sing'. People naturally find it easier to treasure the big and the beautiful, but ecological theology also values little creatures and unregarded swamps. Work to protect species is motivated by grief for those being lost, with the theological conviction that all of creation is

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[131] Ibid.
[132] Michelle Walsh, "Prophetic Pastoral Care in the Aftermath of Trauma: Forging a Constructive Practical Theology of Lived Religion from Organized Trauma Response Ministries," PhD thesis, Boston University (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2014), 238. 3610856.
[133] Quoted by Paul H. Santmire, "A Reformation Theology of Nature Transfigured: Joseph Sittler's Invitation to See as Well as to Hear," *Theology Today*, vol. 61, no. 4 (Jan 2005): 509–527, 523.
[134] Santmire, "A Reformation Theology of Nature Transfigured," 523, quoting Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem, "God's Grandeur."
[135] Joy Cowley, "Parables From Nature," in Neil Darragh, ed., *Living In the Planet Earth: Faith Communities and Ecology* (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2016): 95-100, 96.

precious because God has made it, and so every living thing, rock, and cloud proclaims in its own way the beauty and grace of God.

The twelve aspects of eco-mission draw attention to a spectrum of approaches to mission. Each includes questions of theology and praxis. My research seeks to hold the breadth of elements of Christian environmental concern rather than assume, as many authors in the field seem to, that other people are or should be motivated by the same things that the authors are themselves. In my qualitative research I literally 'laid out' these twelve aspects of eco-mission with people who were motivated to engage in care for Creation, and invited them to identify which, if any, of these aspects connected with them at a personal level. I aimed to describe the sense of purpose of local church 'Creation Care' groups. I was not able to find any other research on such groups and their role within the life of local churches.

Research Methodology

This project explores motivation for eco-mission, which is essentially a 'why' question: 'why do Christians care for creation?' To open up answers to this question, I investigated the more specific question of 'why are Christians involved in local church Creation Care groups?' To do so, I identified three such New Zealand groups, and conducted a focus group interview with each group.

Exploring a 'why' question is a collaborative process. Motivation is forged by experiences to which people give meaning, and these meanings are formed both individually and collectively. The goal of my research is a deeper understanding of "the way a situation is being interpreted by those performing within it and the reasons behind individuals and communities acting in the particular ways that they do."[136] Qualitative research (according to John Swinton and Harriet Mowat) is interested in how "people constantly create complex networks of narratives to explain the world and their place within it."[137] A focus group interview method was deemed most appropriate for this project, because it made room for both individual and collective narratives, and enabled an open dialogue between researcher and participants.

Three groups were selected which had been functioning at least a year and were currently active in the life of their church. The three churches represented in this study are each multi-site churches which identify as evangelical, from three different denominations. I gained agreement from the group leader, who then contacted group members to invite them to participate. Information about the interview was provided to participants, as approved by the University of Otago ethics process. Recruitment occurred during the Covid-19 lockdown. Holding the focus groups online was an option, but thankfully the lockdown was lifted and we were able to meet in person. All participants signed consent forms, including agreement for recording and anonymous use of their contributions. I identify the focus groups here as Groups 1, 2 and 3.

The focus groups each had between three and six participants and lasted approximately an hour. They had a semi-structured format, beginning with questions about the formation and purpose of the group. The central section invited responses to twelve motivation cards. Closing questions explored understandings of calling, theology and motivating others. The interview plan can be found in Appendix One.

The interviews were transcribed and I coded the conversations according to research themes. Hughie Barnes describes this process as a 'data pyramid' which moves upward from the base of raw data (the recorded interviews), through transcribed notes, to assigning

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[136] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research,* 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2016), 38.
[137] Ibid., 37.

codes and then categories, identifying themes from which one is able to develop theory.[138] I discuss the research results in terms of:

a) group formation and purpose, exploring the groups' self-understanding of how and why they exist and their place within the mission of their church;
b) interviewees' responses to the '12 Motivations' proposed;
c) strategies of the focus groups to motivate others not yet involved; and
d) how they articulated their own motivation and sense of divine calling.

My discussion is in two parts; first, a reflection on the nature of motivation based on the experience of calling and motivation as articulated by research participants. Secondly, I suggest possible implications of my findings for the eco-mission movement in NZ.

[138] Hughie Jackson Barnes, "Called to lead—an examination into the phenomenon of calling," PhD thesis, Pepperdine University (2013), 69. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.otago.ac.nz/docview/1427353427?accountid=14700> (accessed May 13, 2020).

Findings: Group Formation and Purpose

Creation Care is still a new project for the churches in my research. Group 3's church has had some commitment to environmental concerns for some time but a group had only formed last year. Group 1 is a large team which formed four years ago, and Group 2 is a small team that formed three years ago.

There was a common process for the formation of the groups. Several church members had separately been feeling that environmental issues were important. At least one of these people discussed this with senior leadership in the church and had been affirmed in taking it further. A meeting was called and publicised in the church and those who attended this initial meeting became the Creation Care group. Group 1 "got talking about how we would like to see creation care initiatives be woven more into the life of the church and how that might work." Group 2 began when "I gathered a few other people who were interested and then we decided to form a group. And so we had an evening to talk about what does this group want to be and 'what do you want to achieve?'"

Forming and sustaining a functioning team was seen as vital for the viability and potential impact of eco-mission in a local church. Participants in each focus group expressed the value to them of being part of a Creation Care group. They felt they were able to achieve much more together than as individuals and enjoyed the support they were able to provide for one another. The focus groups emphasised the importance to them of good relationships and a commitment to one another. Each group described a sense of cohesion – "we are probably all on the same page" – as well as respect for different interests – "but we have delegated different aspects". They valued the diversity in the group, for instance a member bringing international mission experience, or another leading outdoor education. The Group 1 leader summed this up:

> I think there's just different things that different people are naturally drawn to, like whether that's something really practical or whether it's more theologically based. So people are in different places.

There was also much in common in the operating style of the groups. One person is understood to be the leader, but not in a formal elected capacity. The groups function in a fairly informal way, meeting as needed, planning events as they have the energy. A weakness of such an approach (or "the flipside" as Group 1 called it) could potentially be a lower level of activity: "maybe we haven't been as productive as perhaps a formal group might be." However, that was not necessarily seen as a disadvantage: "When we look back over the years there's actually been some really neat things that have occurred and it has slowly raised the consciousness [of the wider church]." Each group was happy to 'start small' and were cautious about not expecting too much of anyone.

This formation process highlights the importance of a 'permission giving' church culture, where leadership is likely to say 'give it a go' to people who suggest a new initiative. This does not require a consensus in the church that this is a priority. In none of the churches did the initiative come from a 'top down' mission planning process by church leadership. This

‘bottom up’ process expects that God to be at work in the lives of ‘ordinary’ Christians, through individual motivation. This affirms the topic of my research, as personal motivation is a key component of effective mission, in this case, eco-mission.

I was particularly struck by the clarity with which each group stated that they did not exist just to be a group, but for the mission of their church. Each group passionately advocated that care for creation was a vital part of local church mission: “It's actually a missional thing”, that needs to “permeate the life of the church.” The aim is for this to become integrated into the whole life of the church: “environmental concern and a more responsible attitude to looking after the earth has got to be one of our new modern tools in the church for engaging with our society.” (Group 3).

Each church had an understanding of how Creation Care projects fitted within the overall culture and mission of their church. The Group 3 leader described realising that for many years his church had an “unwritten, unspoken value” about caring for creation, “something that the church had talked about but never done anything about.” This was a key part of his motivation, to strengthen an existing commitment of his church that had been neglected. A member of the same Group felt that an occasional event, such as a speaker from A Rocha, was “just an add on”, and called for more integration: “mainstreaming takes a collective effort, intentional and regular, instead of this one off occasion thing.” For her, “being part of conserving God's creation and managing the resources that we have, it's not an additional thing, it's part of how we express our faith.”

Group 2 felt strongly connected into the life and mission of their church because they saw Creation Care as expressing core values of their church, in particular its bicultural commitment and their church’s intention to be a ‘place focused church’ with a vision to invest in local communities. As one member said:

> That really helps in terms of us trying to win over the church as well I think. Because it does tie in so strongly, you know. We want to look after our back yard, so to speak, the waterways as well as the people in it.

Community outreach is a mission focus of Group 2’s church. They described how “the local community around our churches has certainly benefited” from this but “that the local environment is usually negatively impacted by us being there.” This gave the group a framework for working with church leaders to build sustainability goals into community mission planning. The church now has strategies to reduce their waste across all venues and activities, such as requiring food providers to serve food and drinks in compostable containers and volunteers standing by the bins ensuring that people use the correct bins.

Each group stated that the church should be leading in care for the environment, not just reacting: “the church should be some of the best at this!” Group 2 was inspired by a church in their denomination in the USA which had become a leader in their city in recycling, and where the City Council had come to the church for advice.

> That was quite critical around the starting of the group. Because you were passionate about waste management, you wanted to see things happen. And then, hearing about another church that got to the point where they were at the forefront of it, and you were, like, ‘The

> church should be at the forefront of all social issues, so how great would it be if we were at the forefront of environmental stuff!'

Evangelism is a priority for all three churches, and the groups identified Creation Care "as an evangelism tool. There are a lot of people who are passionate about environmental issues - and environmental anxiety is a real thing - looking for answers and hope in this whole crisis. So what if the church could be an example and a hope to guide that?" (Group 2). Conversely, they were concerned that if the environment is not valued then this will increasingly become a barrier to evangelism, "because it's such a prevalent issue now that becomes an actual roadblock to people integrating into church life" (Group 2). "If the church isn't doing this well we are not going to appeal to those who aren't in the church, because we'll be seen as irrelevant." (Group 1).

Each group had goals for educating and influencing their church to become more 'environmentally friendly'. A Group 3 member's goals were to educate people, "helping people to grapple with the real problem, grieve about the problem because we've already missed the boat mostly, and then get on and do little bits of it that we can ourselves." Seeing people inspired to live more sustainable was very motivating. Group 2 described one church family who were "massively impacted" by a speaker on Creation Care;

> [The father] went vegan, they all started to cycle and walk to church. And as they go along all the kids want to pick up rubbish, like it's quite amazing. … Something like that, yeah, it's incredible. It was so cool hearing him say that it actually had such a big impact on him.

A sustainability goal for all three groups is reducing church waste. Group 2 especially was motivated by "the realization of how much rubbish we produce and the lack of thought that goes into the products that we're buying; maybe through ignorance, or busyness or just not having time or not putting any effort into looking for another alternative." A member described this as motivating his personal commitment: "So I thought, 'Yeah, I'll try to educate and shift culture with that stuff'."

Findings: The '12 Motivations'

In each interview I presented the twelve aspects of motivation for eco-mission that I had identified through review of the literature. I used the visual and tactile tool of cards, which I laid out on the table in the centre of the focus group while explaining them. Participants seemed to quickly understand the concepts of each card and immediately reached for the ones that spoke to them. Other motivation cards were discussed through the interview. I coded and analysed the interview transcripts to highlight and count mentions of the '12 motivations' and rank them from most mentioned to least mentioned as personal motivations. For each participant I identified four 'top' motivations, and 'other' mentions. There were thirteen participants, so a total of 52 'top' mentions. Where there is the same number of 'top' motivations the ranking indicates the number of 'other' mentions.

12 Motivations for Eco-Mission			**Number of 'top' mentions**	
1.	Responsibility	to Care for Creation: Stewardship	9	
2.	Ethical Living	= Sustainable Choices	7	
3.	Concern	for the Poor: Justice	7	
4.	Faith	God Is Creator & Universe Is Creation		6
5.	Church	as Eco Community		6
6.	Love	the Beauty of Creation		5
7.	Practical	Conservation		4
8.	Hope	for Creation Renewed	3	
9.	Health	Wellbeing & Mental Health		2
10.	Confronted	by Damage to Creation		2
11.	Respect	for Māori as Tangata Whenua		1
12.	Fear	of Disasters		0

In this section I discuss what participants said about each motivation.

1. Responsibility to Care for Creation: Stewardship

> We can't live without the land and we are given a mandate to care for it. (Group 1)

A word that sums up this aspect of motivation is 'mandate'. A mandate is an order or commission, with a sense of delegated authority. The focus groups spoke of caring for creation in these terms: "This call for active involvement in conservation is actually not an option. It's a command that God gave us." (Group 3).

Each group discussed the idea of 'stewardship' as a biblical mandate, including the debate around the meaning of the word 'dominion' (Genesis 1:28). "God made us to be stewards [but] we didn't see it as stewards, we saw it to dominate and pillage, basically, and that's what we've done." (Group 3). They wanted to counter the interpretation of 'dominion' as 'domination', which translates, as Group 1 put into, into an attitude of, 'You're the boss. You just do whatever you want because you're in charge.' They argued that "actually, the true word is 'let's care for', we can look after, we can be part of as a partner." A Group 2 member summed it up as:

> We are called to reign over the earth, and look after it, so that's the stewardship thing. That was one of the first things biblically that we are told to do. I feel like to some degree we have negated that and forgotten about it.

Group 3 identified a lack of understanding as a key part of this: “We haven't understood the impact that we were having.” However, the negative impacts on Creation are increasingly becoming obvious.

People described ‘responsibility’ as a personal and collective motivation and a central aspect of the Christian faith, to “think about something outside of ourselves” (Group 3) and to have goals which are bigger than the immediate personal self-interest of what is good for me at the moment.

2. Ethical Living = Sustainable Choices

> The motivation to get involved is because I do believe that it's the right thing to do and a natural expression of faith in God. (Group 2)

“Doing the right thing” was stated by several participants as a core motivation. For them this ‘right thing’ is an ethical principle that connects doing what is ‘right’ for the planet as well as ‘right’ in a Christian biblical understanding of morality. To ‘do the right thing’ is an alignment of personal choices and actions with collective belonging, and a sense that individual actions have large impact.

> I just want to do what is right and it just seems wrong screwing up the planet for future generations. It comes down to your caring for this gift that God has given us in creation. All the burning of fossil fuels and the greed and materialism that we have just seems very very wrong. Consumerism and greed are very very contrary to the gospel and the biggest threat to Christianity today is materialism. (Group 1)

Those who chose this in their ‘top three’ were motivated “toward the diet and choices, [preventing] destruction by how we go about living.” (Group 2). “I think there's hope in the small. It seems like if lots of people do lots of small things, that's the thing that's going to make the difference.” (Group 1). Participants talked about encouraging others to live more sustainably. They hoped that modelling ‘reduce/recycle’ at church events would “encourage [others] to do it at home as well.” (Group 2). They described this as being “on a journey” and taking “small steps”, with an attitude of encouragement rather than judgement. Several participants connected this with living out their faith: “This is actually part of the gospel, not just a popular thing.” (Group 1).

3. Concern for the Poor: Justice

> It's not just our little country here, it's the whole world. We talk about the poor but don't necessarily address the things that we do that directly contribute to making that situation worse. (Group 2)

Each focus group talked in depth about the importance of seeing eco-mission as part of wider mission, including concern for the poor in other parts of the world; “Who are we to deny other people the right to have a better chance and a better quality of life?” (Group 2). Participants had an awareness of how the way we choose to live in New Zealand has a direct

impact on the way vulnerable communities are forced to live; “There's lots of people that are coming up against the results of the way we in the West have developed our lifestyles.”

> I have a got concern for the poor. A lot of the choices that we make in the West is a direct correlation [with] how it affects the poor of the world, whether it's our clothing, things like that. There's a bunch of stuff that we do that affects the poor and they don't have a choice. They are on the bottom. And it seems really unfair that they get a crap life, depending on where they've been born, no other reason. (Group 1)

The groups reflected on their church’s commitment to mission internationally, and they wanted to challenge their church to be proactive in preventing poverty caused by climate change rather than simply responding to it. Group 2 highlighted the environmental aspects of mission, and want to call their church to address climate change, to “take action now which would prevent it rather than saying we'll send the money later when we've messed it up.”

Participants described ways in which they are personally working at the connection of environmental action and social justice, such as changing church purchasing to Fair Trade, and “connecting social and business and ecology in development.” (Group 3).

4. Faith: God Is Creator & Universe Is Creation

> Faith would be a one of my big motivators I think, yeah, in the faith in God and who he is. (Group 3)

Participants talked about their commitment to care for creation as “a natural expression of faith in God” (Group 2). Stewardship, ethics, and justice are outward expressions and faith is the inward expression of essentially the same thing, an integration of Christian faith and life. People spoke of a spiritual sense of connection, “a growing understanding of not just ‘there is nature’ and ‘there is humans’ but actually that we are part of creation as humans” (Group 1). “I see the creation as an extension of God's being and creativity. We are learning more and more. Our current inklings and reading highlights even more amazing linkages between the being of God and creation.” (Group 3).

5. Church as Eco Community

> We've wanted to see that environmental stuff, Creation Care stuff, gets worked into the life of the church. (Group 1)

There were two strands to the ‘church’ motivation discussed in the interviews. One is the place of care for creation within the mission of the church, as a vital part of mission and evangelism in the 21st Century: “It's actually missional. Underlining it all is a missional aspect to it.” (Group 1). For Group 3, this flows from an conviction that “the gospel is not just about individual salvation but also about looking after the world that supports life and biodiversity in human endeavour”. This led to the groups each seeking to ‘mainstream’, ‘integrate’, and ‘permeate’ sustainability and stewardship into the life of the church. It is important to Group 1 that they are not seen as a sector group which absolves the rest of the church of responsibility. Their motivation is to “normalise environmental things over the life of the

church." To help with this they choose to talk about their work as "the enviro conversation, rather than the enviro group".

The other strand is the relational aspect of church, as an experience of connectedness and community: "There is something quite powerful about participating in something. Participating gives you a sense of buy-in, of being part of something bigger than yourself." (Group 3). The groups include social time and food in their events to build relationships, as well as modelling healthy sustainable eating and waste reduction.

In an event such as a tree planting, these two strands of mission and relationship come together. The Group 3 leader described a motivating moment for him personally when he realised the mission potential in care for creation. He described how his grandson had forged a friendship with a new church member while planting trees, so

> the next time we did it we advertised it as an opportunity for families to come along as well. And then it became a really positive intergenerational thing. Doing this kind of thing allows people to just talk and connect in ways that you don't do necessarily on a Sunday morning in a bigger church like ours, or to connect with new people. So yeah, I saw the value in multiple ways, multiple levels.

6. Love for the Beauty of Creation

> The beauty of creation is something I just adore and I just can't get over how absolutely incredible it all this. (Group 3)

For many focus group participants, an emotive sense of love for the beauty of the natural world underlies their faith and their activism.

A Group 1 member leads in both outdoor education and ecology projects. He described how, when he works with people in the outdoors,

> there is this space, that liminal thin space that people come into, and they see God in that space. So that beauty part helps for them to connect with a God space. So that's both in recreating in nature but I actually think it happens in that care for the environment. In planting events those two worlds collide beautifully and people want to be involved in that.

What he is describing is the effect on people of being in a natural environment, whether the focus is on physical activity or conservation.

The experience of beauty becomes the bridge between the "two worlds", a "thin space" where people connect with God in a way that seems almost effortless. Others talked about love, awe, joy, and energy that they find in connection with Creation. Some spoke with passion of particular places; "for a start, love. I've always loved getting out in the bush. the mountains have become almost a mystical thing for me." (Group 3). Another in Group 3 described looking intently at smaller things: "first of all is this sense of awe, looking at creation. I can look at a grasshopper, and I see God in there, like, 'How does the legs go in that form?'" She quoted John Stott as saying "You learn to get to know God through His Word and through his world", and stated that for her God "came through the world first – creation – then the scripture." Beauty is not just an aesthetic ideal of a 'pretty' backdrop, but is invitational and revelatory.

Beauty also functions to sustain motivation for practical ecology. Group 1 has been involved in a planting project for several years and they are seeing the impact of their efforts as the forest grows and becomes more beautiful, more diverse and supports more life; “the hope is that the birds will pick up the seeds and disperse them and actually will multiply the work that you start. It's understanding the whole ecosystem and what you're doing. That is really beautiful.”

7. Practical Conservation

> Start some practical stuff. Go and do some tree planting. (Group 1)

Groups 1 and 3 are involved, both collectively and individually, in ecology projects. Part of the formation of Group 3 was getting involved in replanting after a local bush fire. They had planned a ‘Carbon Picnic’ to a wetland in partnership with the City Council, but this was cancelled by the Covid-19 lockdown. One member owns a rural property which he is reforesting and doing “everything I possibly can up there to look after birds”, including trapping. Some members of the Group 2 wider team do beach clean-ups. Group 1 has regular planting and weeding and has found “the practical as a good way to get people involved and focus our thinking.” They celebrate what they have achieved and look forward to the long-term effects.

> In 10 years time you will go into that forest and be like, 'We planted those trees!' It's gonna be massive! It's gonna be an awesome track through there. That's the difference. Those few trees that we planted actually made a huge impact.

I was surprised that none of the focus group participants mentioned gardening, church land, or urban space projects.

8. Hope for Creation Renewed

> The hope of Christ is for the restoration and so we live in that. (Group 3)

Eschatology is very much a ‘live’ topic in the church today, with divergent competing theologies and world views. Some expect immanent God’s destruction of the universe and a spiritual eternity for God’s people (‘end times’ theology). Others hold a hope for the future which involves a continuity with the world as we know it, a restoration and the integration of heaven and earth. I was struck by the high level of consensus on this topic across the three focus groups. All articulated an eschatology which held together both an expectation that God will restore the earth in an amazing way and the conviction that this will incorporate the earth and its creatures. This reinforced for them their sense of responsibility to play our part in this restoration. Group 1’s discussion affirmed that the Biblical basis for restoration of the earth: “there is a very strong scripture base to add a Christian concern for the environment, because “it's not just going to burn or turn into a new place. That is something that is in the Bible, and we are part of that.” Group 2 also talked about their searching of scriptures and understanding of the nature of God, and coming to the conclusion that God “doesn’t wipe out and redo”, that this idea “does not really line up with a lot of the other characteristics of God in terms of rejuvenation and regeneration.”

Each group talked about the conversations they have with Christians who hold an 'end times' belief. Group 2 identified as a 'theological block' the attitude that "God's going to destroy the Earth, so why should we care? We don't need to save anything." They encountered many people in their church for whom

> it's almost an offence to them that you would care about the environment, because they go, 'Well, that's on the verge of unbiblical'. But they don't even realize that's what they thinking, it's just this deep-seated thing of, 'Why does it matter? It's just all gonna get wiped out, and a new one will come in. And it's inconvenient, so stop telling me to be better at something that I don't care about.

Group 3 faced a similar attitude, of "So why bother with creation when God's gonna get it sorted?" One member described this as "just a cop out attitude, basically. That's the way I would put it." Another member described his own personal change from one position to the other. He had an "evangelical upbringing" but has "discarded most of that now and realized that the earth is actually, physically, here and now, an integral part of where things are heading in the future. And therefore it's part of our job to look after it now as well as in future." Another in the group emphasised the central role of people of faith in eschatology. Her hope is "based on what God says, that he will recreate, renew and create a new Earth." For her, God's stated truth is "he will renew through the life of people who are being renewed by His Spirit."

All groups stated the importance of hope in the face of the hopelessness they see in society. A Group 1 participant stated that the difference for Christians in looking after the environment is that it comes neither from it being "hip and mainstream" nor from a place of hopelessness, but "we do actually have hope in what we're doing because we have an all-powerful God. Jesus is going to redeem everything." (Group 1).

9. Health: Wellbeing & Mental Health

The physical health benefits from being involved in care for creation were mentioned by some participants, especially those who enjoy outdoor recreation: "I know the value of that myself in a new way" (Group 3).

There was more discussion around mental health. Participants were keenly aware of the negative effects of climate anxiety and grief for environmental damage; one Group 3 participant mentioned his own "low level chronic anxiety about the whole thing."[139] There was particular concern expressed for young people's mental health, and the impact of global fears for the future. Each group affirmed that part of their motivation for Creation Care is to make a positive difference, with positive benefits for wellbeing. Group 2 expressed this in terms of integrity, of aligning behaviour and values, which eco-mission can enable.

> It's a really good feeling when you know that we're not destroying people's lives and the environment. It's really satisfying. People say that if you continue to live your life in a way that doesn't align with your values that it's really bad for you, like, a kind of internal trauma.

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[139] This is an interesting example of the way the twelve aspects of eco-mission at times blurred or crossed over with each other. Fear for the future of the planet can be experienced as anxiety which becomes a mental health issue.

> This [Creation Care work] really aligns what we're doing and what we're believing and it makes you feel good, knowing that we're doing the right thing.

10. Confronted by Damage to Creation

Some participants spoke about feeling confronted by damage to the environment. The Group 2 leader talked about the moment when she realised "that all the plastic exists in the world, and, you know, how much the Amazon has been destroyed." She felt a strong concern for rivers and oceans: "Yeah that would actually be the big one. Waterways is a big one for me." A Group 3 member had spent significant time and energy researching the science of climate change, "that is just so alarming and so worrying; and of course that leads on to being really confronted and grieving." Each group wanted to keep a positive focus on good things happening and sustaining hope. However, some participants wanted to also hold the difficult realities in view: "I see the bad and I think some people need to hear the bad or see the bad, but I hope that will lead to action, or to a hope that things are going to be different, or can be different." (Group 1).

For the Group 3 leader, "I've always had a primary aspect in - God is interested in us in saving us from sin." Central to his motivation for eco-mission is his theology of the goodness of God's creation and his understanding that "when sin came into the world we started breaking things up and messing them up." His hope for redemption includes the earth, and his passion for evangelism includes care for creation.

11. Respect for Māori as Tangata Whenua

I was curious as to how the focus groups would respond to the suggestion that respect for Māori might be a motivation for care for creation, and was impressed that for Group 1 this had been an important factor in the development of environmental awareness for their church. "Part of that over time was learning from the bicultural journey and how they did things and got that starting" in their church.

> Yeah. We had a neat chat with D, the Kaumatua, who brought a Māori perspective on the environment and it was really helpful actually just to see how, again, you know, the biculturalism and environmentalism aren't actually separate. They are actually very very connected. It is all part of this conviction that the life of the church would reflect biculturalism and environmentalism as a natural way of living out the Gospel as a modern church.

One participant read a Māori 'whakataukī' (proverb) which she had prepared for the interview:

> E kore au e ngaro he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea.
> I will never be lost for I am a seed sown in the heavens.[140]

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[140] She read from Peter Alsop and Te Rau Kupenga, *Mauri Ora: Wisdom from the Māori World* (Potton and Burton, 2016), 153.

This for her spoke deeply to a sense of interconnectedness, of people with the environment, which she felt resonated with a Māori spirituality of connection, of 'never being lost', finding her identity as a 'seed' sown both in heaven and on earth.

A Group 3 participant acknowledged her own limited knowledge of Māori spirituality but spoke about the relationship of indigenous people with the environment from her understanding of an Asian context.

12. Fear of Disasters

> I don't have a fear. (Group 2)

Fear of disaster was the only one of the '12 motivations' that people stated was not a motivation for them. Each group was aware of negative human impact on the planet and the increasing likelihood of disasters, but they said that fear is a not helpful motivation. They stated this as part of their faith, that they are drawn towards hope and away from fear. I was interested in this comment from Group 2: "I don't know if it's actually just because maybe it hasn't really sunk in for me how bad it is, maybe I need to be told a few more times." I wonder whether as Christians we feel that fear is an unacceptable emotion, a lack of faith. One Group 3 participant shared his anxiety and fear that politically and ecologically the world is "all falling down around our ears." He described having

> enough appreciation and love of creation around me to not depress me unduly and make me miserable to live with. Because I just adore everything around me and enjoy the world we live in so much. We are so blessed. But I guess it's more an intellectual low-grade anxiety that carries on.

Findings: Motivating Others

Personal motivation sparks a desire to inspire others. Each group expressed a wish to see others in their church, and other churches, become more aware of environmental issues and more committed to sustainable lifestyles. As they discussed this, three practical strategies were suggested for connecting effectively with others.

1. Good News vs Bad News

Each group discussed the role of fear and 'bad news', acknowledging that there is a lot of fear, anxiety, and pressure in our society. "For many people fear is a predominant motivation, and certainly with the government or anything about climate change, there's a lot of, 'We've got to do something now, or it will be irreversible'" (Group 2). They were concerned that this can have a de-motivating effect on people: "Fear is not the most ideal motivation" (Group 1). They pointed out the risk of despair and overload of negative messages: "If we can't see any results from what we're doing, so - 'What's the point?'" (Group 1). There was a strong commitment from all three groups to find positive messages and to work from strong relationships.

> There is a lot of messages of 'Don't fly. Don't do this, don't do that. Don't eat meat, don't blah blah blah.' I think it is nice to actually to be able to say 'you can do this', rather than all these negative impacts. There is a positive message. (Group 1)
>
> I always want to bring a good news message because I feel that people are more motivated by it. I reckon, if you bring bad news message then you quickly follow up with a good news message! When I did my sermon, I tried to talk about some of the negative stuff, but really bring home, you know, 'Just do what you can. It's gonna be great! You can get into the garden!' I tried to make it easy, in a practical sense, and positive at the end. Because I think that God wants us to not be condemned but convicted. (Group 2)

This idea from a Christian perspective of motivation from feeling 'convicted not condemned' is part of a wider understanding of guilt and forgiveness. Group 2 advocated the importance of grace so that we "not do this from a place of, 'well I'm a terrible person then'."

They also emphasised the importance of positive relationships with others. They warned against 'smacking people in the face', i.e. confronting them with the realities of the situation the planet is in and calling people to personal change.

> If you're trying to shift lots of people that you don't have relationship with, you have to do it through hope. You can only smack them in the face with it when that relationship is here, and in that more 'one on one' sort of thing. Like, if you do a big sermon and that if you do it positively that will get a whole lot of people to stop using as many plastic bags, and that's a good outcome. And then when they come up and talk to you, that's when you can do that more in-depth stuff, when you've got that comeback. Because if you hit hard from start then everyone gets slightly offended, because it is their fault and they feel that, and then they don't want to listen to you anymore.

There was discussion in the groups about the tension between 'good news' and 'bad news'. Some pointed out that focusing on the positive is a luxury we have in New Zealand that many in the world do not, suggesting that it is vital for the sake of the global poor that we do

grapple with the negative effects of climate change and environmental degradation. Many in NZ feel protected by these effects and complacent; we will be impacted by climate change, but others are far more vulnerable.

> The fear thing is - for a large portion of earth, they are massively affected by stuff like this. So, it's easy for us to sit here, and be like – but it's happening for large portions of the world that they had this thing and now it's gone. So, I see the bad and I think some people need to hear the bad or see the bad, but hopefully that will lead to action, or to a hope that things are going to be different. (Group 1)

2. Social Justice and Environmental Justice

Each group named concern for the poor as an area of common ground with other Christians: "if you can go for a concern for the poor line of thinking that can be a really good motivator for a church that's really starting on that journey, convincing people that it is important." (Group 2). Group 1 described 'loving your neighbour as yourself' as a widely accepted and central Christian principle, and applied this to environmental justice: "if we regard people in Bangladesh as not our neighbour, then what? We don't care about them because they are over there? Hmm." All three groups were involved in some action to connect in with global mission, e.g. buying Fair Trade products.

3. Outdoors Church Events

Group 1 had developed strong element of practical ecology as a group through planting days, and they found this motivating for others because of the synergy of meeting diverse needs in the one event; good for both physical and mental health as well as relationships and community.

> I guess the other thing too is, you know, we're so time-poor. In our week we have got to try and find time for exercise and socialising and doing your work and all that sort of stuff, whereas if you create an event like a planting event, you can tick off a lot of things at once. You're exercising, you're talking with people, you're doing something really good for the environment.

They also pointed to the benefits of holding eco events as being easy to promote and attract people to attend:

> So I can go to my friends and say, 'Come on, you're coming to this planting day, you're not going to go mountain biking, you are going to come', and people will relent and come. It's only one Saturday of the year but it's moving them on that journey.

They described how these outdoors events also connected for people spiritually:

> When I work with people in the outdoors, there is this space, that liminal thin space that people come into, and they see God in that space. In planting events those two worlds collide beautifully and people want to be involved in that.

These three strategies, of focusing on positive messages, connecting Creation Care with mission to the poor, and holding outdoor church events, are research findings with practical application for those seeking to motivate other Christians in the area of environmental action.

Discussion: Motivation and Calling

Motivation is the intersection of understanding and action. It is also the dynamic interplay between 'head' knowledge and 'heart' passion. Christians understand the source of energy and action as inspired by God, led by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. In analysing and reflecting on the interview data I have several reflections to offer about the nature of motivation and calling in relation to eco-mission.

Different elements of motivation are linked. One fascinating aspect of these conversations was the way participants naturally made connections between the different aspects that I had separated out through the twelve cards. Faith in God links to what God has called me to do: "The core of it is a faith motivation, that this is the right type of thing to do to outwork my faith." (Group 1). Love for the beauty leads immediately to concern for its future. Love of the beauty of the world is closely tied to faith in God the Creator. The fruits of practical involvement are adding to beauty and understanding of ecology: "It's understanding the whole ecosystem and what you're doing. That is really beautiful as well." (Group 1). Eco-mission events were mentioned as linking several motivations together. A Group 1 participant talked about her son's experience of love for creation, doing something practical, and relationships: "There's lots of his world that join together in that space."

Motivation leads to action. It may be stating the obvious but there was a direct correlation between the areas of motivation and the areas of action for individuals, such as kayaking trips, tree planting, or dealing with the church rubbish bins. Some of the '12 motivations' were linked less directly to action, e.g. faith, wellbeing and beauty; these were deeply felt inner motivations, more difficult to articulate but strongly influential at a personal level.

Motivation is personal. I was most interested in the way that participants connected their motivation for eco-mission with their own story and personality, for example referring to 'responsibility' as a 'top strength' in terms of Strengths Finders. Some referred to childhood experiences, such as remembering being four years old and looking in awe at a grasshopper. Another way in which motivation is personal is through close relationships: one Group 2 participant said that his primary motivation was love for his wife, and wanting to support her in her eco-mission calling.

Motivation can be broad and multi-faceted or focused on a particular area. Some participants chose just a couple of the '12 motivations' to speak about, while others connected with several. Those who were in leadership roles tended to have a broader range of motivations than other members; it was not easy for me to identify which were their 'top 3' as they spoke passionately about many aspects.

Motivation has limits. I did not ask specifically about what might reduce or limit their motivation, however some participants touched on possible limitations, especially life events such as having a baby, and the competing demands of other commitments. In the Group 2 interview, two of the participants talked about points of conflict where their intention to live sustainably bumped into other values, such as cost effectiveness.

Key moments hold meaning for motivation. The Group 2 leader described a particular moment when her church had held a large outdoor event in a local park and her intense experience at seeing the rubbish bins afterwards:

> It made me feel so sick! At a celebration service I remember seeing all these red bins overflowing with coffee cups. I just feel like this is not really what Jesus would want and how we should be managing it.

She is describing a physical experience at a 'gut-level', which for her became immediately a spiritual experience, aware of a Jesus perspective on the event, which then became a calling experience which propelled her to take action.

Motivation can transform an activity which might be distasteful and to be avoided into one which brings genuine enjoyment and satisfaction. We were talking about the challenges of getting volunteers for sorting waste and a Group 2 person said enthusiastically:

> Unless you're like me and you're like, 'I do not want that one plastic bottle to go into the local rubbish! I will get my hands dirty! I'm gonna roll up my sleeves and I will sort the rubbish.'

Seeing results over time sustains motivation. Each group talked about wanting their work to not be 'one-off' but to bring observable outcomes, such as Group 1's pride in the results of their planting programme: *"In 10 years' time you will go into that forest and be like, 'We planted those trees!'*." An important factor for Group 2 was being a large church so seeing a large impact of changes in purchasing policies.

A consistent theme through the interviews was the conviction that God is calling all Christians to care for creation: "You just want to raise that awareness for everyone, because I think it's a collective call." (Group 1) Practically all interviewees stated this in some way, for example from Group 3, "I think that it is a calling on the church as well, actually, as much as me individually." Another in that focus group described "that call" as "our focus and our priority in sharing that concept and embodying that concept in our lives as a community." Several people stated the importance of a theological and biblical underpinning for this calling on the church:

> I really hope that we're able to help people understand a good theology of this. We've got some important things to do. Because it's not just about, 'Oh yeah we need to do this', but we've got to have that theological background and foundation in this, I think, so that we have a good solid reason that it's part of our calling as God's people at this time. (Group 1)

I asked if they felt this as a personal call. Most responded that they had not thought of it like that, and that for them it was a collective calling more than an individual one.

> I probably more feel it as just a fundamental part of the gospel. I feel like to call it a 'call' means you are putting it above, or as a separate part of following Jesus. Whereas I think that's just a fundamental. Everyone is actually called to do it. (Group 2)

In each group there were a couple of people who did feel that care for creation was a personal 'calling'. In articulating this these people referred back to their core life motivations and identity formation, and saw care for creation as integrated into these in a central way. I

observed a process of early life events shaping adult values and motivation, which the participants understood to be God's hand at work in their lives.

> When I was younger I grappled with a call to overseas mission. But in this stage of life creation care is a priority that pulls together threads of my life. Now is the right time to kind of have this as a focus for my contribution to the kingdom, as a priority. Also as a kind of call. (Group 1)
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> When I was four I didn't know it was a call. I just enjoyed being in nature. And as a student I was given the opportunity to learn as an academic subject, and through this information that formed my understanding of how things connected and what's my role. And when I came to faith it's, you know, putting this together. I have this passion, I have this training, and I have the opportunities. Those things, put together in my role as a teacher here, give me, 'This is the full package. God has a plan for me.' (Group 3)

Each person who spoke in these terms also said that they had never articulated it in this way before, but as they did so it felt true and important to them.

> I haven't – um – put it in those terms much. I just know that I have to do this because what other response can you have when you see the beauty and you see what we are doing to it? There's just no other way to deal with it. I am incredibly blessed by what God has given me and us, and to also have the curiosity and the brain power to put it together, and the motivation to learn about it. It is just the obvious thing to do. You can call that a calling if you like, yeah. That would be a reasonable way to put it. (Group 3)

Group 2 had a carefully thought-out understanding of what calling meant for them, which they articulated as a gifting of the Holy Spirit, a recognition in the church, and observable 'fruit' especially in the response of others. There was a clear connection for them between God's calling, personal passion and leadership.

> You can tell a calling by the fruit of it, and how well it goes. Because if you are in your calling you have the Lord's favour on it. The constant feedback around A's [the group leader's] involvement in this is that everyone who has a conversation with her, they come away motivated and feeling good about it. I'd say that for A, it is a calling, specifically to lead in this area. Her passion for and involvement in church has been stronger since this has been the key driving force behind it.
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> A: I definitely have more influence in this than in other areas.

Discussion: Implications for Eco-Mission

In reflecting on the themes generated by the focus groups I have identified seven topics which were raised by all three groups. Each topic was seen as a central aspect of motivation for environmental mission for those interviewed, and is worthy of further discussion and research. The issues raised have practical implications for Creation care in churches. In addition I argue that engagement with Maori is vital for eco-mission in New Zealand. I conclude my discussion with an overview of the diversity of eco-mission.

1. Missional Leadership

The formation of Creation Care groups is seen by research participants as important for developing environmental awareness and action in a church; as Group 1 put it, "it's a team thing. You're not going to get very far if you've just got one or two really passionate people." In the groups I interviewed leadership functioned as a calling and gifting, without formal appointment processes. The priorities of each group emerged in a collaborative way from those involved, rather than coming 'down' from church leadership strategic planning. This requires a 'permission-giving' church culture and an openness to local mission happening in a dynamic, dare I say 'organic' way. The groups worked with the diversity of interests of group members and saw this as a strength. They value the relationships within their group. but do not want to become a 'clique'. Rather, they see themselves as promoting conversation within the whole church. This emerging pattern reveals a way of operating which is very different from previous eras of formal committee structure. It requires both motivated individuals and functioning teams, and for the church to be willing to try new things.

> The gospel is a real good news. But the experiential part of how that news is actually good for me and good for the planet – it takes friends to work on that together. We can't just do it on our own. The multiplier effect – when people work together - it's much greater than individuals working separately. (Group 3)

2. Theology

People who lead in eco-mission place a high value on a theological and biblical foundation for their work. This is seen as a vital and distinctive contribution of the church to ecology. Group 1 stated that Creation Care

> has to start from a theological understanding. Because otherwise, if you're only based in practical, or beauty, or respect for culture, I think that the depth of that runs out pretty quick. But when you understand that there is a theological base for this to happen from, a biblical principle to work from, that sets it in its correct place and then things can build from that space.

Each of the focus groups commented on a lack of teaching on Creation in their church. One of the churches had a tradition of an annual service on a Creation theme, but the other two could only remember one worship service where the teaching was on a Christian attitude to the environment. This is a clear call to churches to explore in worship what the Bible has to say about the earth, and theology of stewardship and restoration.

My literature review revealed a large body of work being done both in New Zealand and internationally on the theological and faith implications of contemporary environmental issues. My research revealed a disconnect between this and the life of local churches. Ernst Condarie's challenge for Christians to look at the world "in the light of the Light of the world" is motivated by "knowledge of God's character".[141] This principle of environmental action being founded on a growing understanding of God came through in my research, and is applicable across the theological spectrum.

3. 'Awesome Wonder'

A perennial Kiwi favourite is the song 'How Great Thou Art'.[142] This hymn expresses "awesome wonder" at "thy power throughout the universe displayed." This emotional and spiritual experience of simultaneous awareness of natural beauty and God's holiness is close to the heart of Christian motivation to care for Creation. My observation in churches in NZ is that we value love for the created world but are fearful about slipping from worshiping God in nature into 'nature worship.' Churches use images of the beauty of nature in their worship, such as a water backdrop for a PowerPoint, but rarely explore the theological and spiritual implications of God's power displayed throughout the universe. Churches who wish to grow in eco-mission could explore ways to encourage members to get out into natural or wilderness spaces, and then reflect theologically on this. Worship is enriched with 'awesome wonder' when God's revelation through the word is complemented by God's revelation in the world.

4. Eschatology

Questions of hope and the future of the world are critical for eco-mission and theology. A Christian perspective navigates a unique path between secular ecological pessimism on one hand and 'end times' theological rejection of the world on the other hand. Christians who care for creation hope for God's restoration of the world which begins with us here and now. However, this is contested space, with conflicting views; some even suggest that caring for creation is 'unbiblical', fearing it may distract from God's supernatural eternity. I have found people in local eco-mission leadership to be unanimous in a conviction that the Bible reveals a God who is invested in this world, who brings new life in continuity with the old, and who works through people who are renewed by the Spirit to renew the earth. The Eco-mission movement needs to navigate this contested theological ground with grace and confidence. Theologians such as Mark Keown and Nicola Hoggart-Creegan are well equipped to resource this conversation.

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[141] Conradie, "Creation and Mission", 344.

[142] Popularised for Kiwis by Sir Howard Morrison it was originally written in Swedish by Carl Boberg in 1885. Margaret Leask, "2009 Hymnic Anniversaries." *The Hymn,* vol. 60, no. 1 (Winter, 2009): 12-19, 15. <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.otago.ac.nz/docview/207369491> (accessed 2 May 2020).

5. Ethics

Christian ethics is based on 'doing the right thing' as a natural outworking of Christian faith. A focus on the ethics of sustainability has emerged from my research as an important aspect of leading personal and culture change in the church toward making an impact on environmental issues. Group 2 noted that "we had to fight a lot of culture to start doing stewardship stuff which is obviously a very Christian thing, not a crazy liberal thing." (Group 2). Part of this is theological and biblical, but the interviews also identified lifestyle and ethics as an important framework in overcoming the inertia of "it's inconvenient, so stop telling me to be better at something that I don't care about." (Group 2).

A focus on ethics is attractive because it focuses on small achievable practical steps within the reach of everyone. This is a 'one step at a time' approach. We can all "look at our own behaviours and choices" as Mary Betz put it; what is important is being on a "journey of restoration."[143] The focus groups highlighted the importance of personal inspiration, to make small changes such as purchasing less plastic, or larger changes such as eating more vegan; "small repeated actions can have a big change" (Group 2). I noticed some points of disagreement in the focus group discussions around whether to focus on encouraging small changes by a large number of people or to encourage a large lifestyle change by a smaller number of people.

It is important to note that practical strategies for sustainable practices do not have to be more expensive, and churches can achieve cost savings by 'going eco'.

6. Care for the Poor

A key finding is the connection with global mission and social justice. All those interviewed articulated the importance to them both personally and collectively of environmental justice. They hoped that their church would be good news for both "the poor and the land" as Willis Jenkins put it.[144] They were aware of the far greater impacts of environmental degradation on the poor, and see this missional imperative as shared ground with the wider church. This study would encourage greater collaboration with mission agencies, and support for local churches to see the justice and mission aspects of care for creation. As the Group 2 leader put it, "probably one thing is that almost everyone in Christian community agrees that we are called to care for the poor. It would be pretty hard for someone to argue that's not what Jesus calls us to do. And it's a climate change thing that has caused their problems."

7. Calling

Those who themselves feel motivated to care for creation believe that God is calling all Christians to care for creation. My understanding is that these people are attuned in a

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[143] Betz, "Repair Our Home,", 11.
[144] Willis Jenkins, "Missiology in Environmental Context: Tasks for an Ecology of Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 32, no. 4 (Oct 2008), 176-184, 180.

distinctive way to respond to God's call on the church in this area of mission. Some Christians feel motivated in a particular way that they identify as a calling from God. This connects with personal story, inspires passion, and is evidenced by observable outcomes by others. These people are natural leaders in eco-mission.

Christians who care about ecological issues are not accustomed to describing this as a call from God. For me this relates to a general under-valuing of Creation Care in the church in New Zealand. People who express a sense of calling to teach children or play the piano are readily affirmed in this, as it meets the immediate needs of the church. People whom God is stirring to trap possums or sort rubbish bins are viewed with more suspicion. This dissertation argues that God is calling the church generally, and individual people specifically, to engage with caring for the environment as part of worship, discipleship, and mission in the name of Jesus Christ. Local churches who can value and nurture this in emerging leaders will grow in this area, while those who consider this outside their frame of reference will not.

Respect for Māori

The call to honour the place of Māori as tangata whenua was affirmed by only one of the focus groups but I wish to highlight it further. The group for whom it was a priority saw strong spiritual and missional connections between caring for creation and the bicultural journey. Both 'environmentalism' and 'biculturalism' were understood to be "a natural way of living out the Gospel as a modern church." (Group 1). This fits within a movement in the church in Aotearoa which is discerning the Holy Spirit/Wairua Tapu as calling the church to "listen to the cry of the land" and inviting Maori and Pakeha to "sit down at the table and work out where to from here."[145] This is an invitation to authentic dialogue and respectful relationship.

In my research I was confronted the points of conflict between the conservation movement and the aspirations of iwi.[146] I was disturbed by a research finding that reported that Māori people who affiliate with a church are less likely to care for the environment than non-Christian Māori.[147] I was fascinated by the writings of Māori theologians such as Wayne Te Kaawa. My literature review highlights the sense of connectedness between people and land

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[145] Mark Holloway, *Cry the Wounded Land: Conversations with God about Maori and Pakeha and the Land* (The Freedom Assignment Ltd, 2017),126.

[146] I heard the warning of Mere Roberts et al. to not assume harmony between Maori and Pakeha environmental goals. They describe an underlying conflict between Maori and western approaches to nature conservation: "a result of confusing similar (but analogous) outcomes of indigenous ecological and western conservation practices by assuming, incorrectly, that they derive from similar homologous conceptual underpinnings and motivations." Roberts et al., "Kaitiakitanga: Maori perspectives on conservation," 16.

[147] "Despite finding that Māori spirituality predicted greater pro-environmental attitudes, we also found that religiousness, when included as a covariate, correlated negatively with valuing environmental protection and uniting with nature." Christopher Lockhart, Carla A. Houkamau, Chris G. Sibley, Danny Osborne, "To Be at One with the Land: Māori Spirituality Predicts Greater Environmental Regard," *Religions,* vol. 10, no. 7 (Jul 2019). DOI:10.3390/rel10070427.

that underpins kaitiakitanga, which Roberts et al. describe as 'kin-centric', a sense of being "related parts of a unified whole."[148] I am convinced that care for Creation in Aotearoa must acknowledge the central place of tangata whenua and seek to learn from a Māori world-view. My hope is that enhancing Creation awareness in churches might reduce the spiritual disconnect that asks Māori to choose between a heart for the land and a heart for Christ. I hope for more points of connection between iwi and church-based Creation care groups, where friendships and partnerships might grow and bring benefits for our shared land.

Diversity in Eco-Mission

As I shaped the themes from my reading into twelve aspects of eco-mission and motivation it felt like twelve was a very large number. I could have simplified and combined down to a smaller number. My decision to work with twelve categories reflected my desire to do justice to the diversity that I experience in the field of eco-mission. The focus group interviews reinforced this diversity. One of the groups (Group 2) had a strong cohesion within the group around sustainability and lifestyle, reflected in their passion for reducing their church's waste. The other two groups discussed all twelve of the topics; many were mentioned even before I introduced the '12 Motivations' cards.

Emerging from my research is the encouragement for churches to be open to a wide range of expressions of care for Creation. Some people will be stirred by inner experiences of awe or worship. Others will be motivated to get out and get their hands dirty. Some people are 'big-picture' thinkers, well aware of the complex problems facing our world and keen to input into policy. Others look for something small and practical that they can do to make a small observable difference in one area. It may not be easy for people who are particularly passionate about one aspect to encourage others to invest in very different kinds of projects, but this is what is required to develop the eco-mission movement in a well-rounded and highly participatory way.

Theologically this reflects my understand of the character and action of God. All are called, but each person experiences this call in different ways and is led in a unique direction. I would affirm with Douglas John Hall that stewardship is "the vocation that God intended and intends for the human creature in the midst of God's good creation."[149] How each human creature expresses that vocation is, I believe, a unique partnership between the individual and God, worked out ideally in community.

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[148] Roberts et al., "Kaitiakitanga", 16.
[149] D.J. Hall, in Le Bruyns, "Re-placing Stewardship?", 72.

Conclusion

Eco-mission is an emerging mission movement in the global church, with immediate implications for local churches in Aotearoa New Zealand. In this dissertation an overview of the literature in the field of Christian environmental mission revealed a wide range of motivating factors. Twelve distinct aspects of eco-mission were identified, covering the ground between theology and action. Ideas about the nature and person of God shape a faith-based relationship with the natural world. Ecological concerns motivate practical projects and connect to social justice, including for tangata whenua and for the global poor. Spirituality and wellbeing aspects include experiences of awe and wonder at Creation and look to enhance mental and physical health. Church communities are incorporating care for Creation in worship, sustainability and ethics. Perceptions of the state of our planet shape hope and fear for the future and faith in God's ultimate salvation of the cosmos.

Focus group interviews were undertaken with three Creation Care groups from local churches in New Zealand. The groups described their vision and goals and reflected on the twelve aspects of eco-mission in relation to their own motivation. Their responses provided a wealth of passion and insight, and affirmed a breadth of avenues for faith-based environmental action. This material informs a discussion about the dynamics of motivation, theology of calling, and implications for eco-mission in New Zealand.

Motivation is the bridge between ideals and action. In a time of increasing concern for the health of the natural world, Christian faith can be a powerful motivation for loving care for other living things, perhaps even for the planet as a whole. Those interviewed shared a hope "that ultimately Christians would see that care for the environment is a natural outworking of their faith in Christ" (Group 1). Eco-mission claims that God is calling all people to live in ways that sustain Creation for future generations. When people of faith experience this invitation as aligning with theology, community and mission then the possibilities are endless.

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Appendix: Focus Group Interview Plan

Interview questions:

- Tell me about your group: How was it formed? Why? When?
- What did you hope to achieve?
- How did you come to be involved?
- Tell me about why the group and the motivations behind it are important to you.
- What do you enjoy about the group?
- Are there particular experiences that motivated you to become involved? (e.g. speakers, events, books or documentaries?)
- Would you describe this as a calling from God?
- Are there particular Bible passages or theological understandings that motivate your involvement?

The interviewer introduces '12 Motivations' and lays the cards on the floor (or table) in the middle of the group.

- Please choose up to three cards that connect with you as a motivation for creation care.
- Tell me about how you relate with that.

The interviewer encourages participants to move the cards around, make connections between them, and choose other motivations that they respond to.

- Looking at the cards that we have not discussed yet, do any intrigue or surprise you?
- What other motivations would you add?

12 Motivations *(printed as cards):*

- Faith God Is Creator & Universe Is Creation
- Responsibility to Care for Creation - 'Stewardship'
- Confronted by Damage to Creation – 'Confession'
- Fear of Disasters
- Hope for Creation Renewed – Now & Future
- Ethical Living = Sustainable Choices
- Practical Land, Garden, Forest - 'Get stuck in!'
- Concern for the Poor – 'Justice'
- Respect for Māori as Tangata Whenua
- Church as Eco Community
- Health Wellbeing & Mental Health
- Love the Beauty of Creation