



JOHN·RAY·INITIATIVE

Connecting Environment, Science and Christianity

News and Ideas

No 18, August 2008

Hope for Planet Earth special edition



Audience at St Mary Redcliffe School, Bristol

Editorial David Thistlethwaite

The Christian message of the Hope for Planet Earth tour was not all delivered in words. The idea of going out to where people are, not in prestigious places but in ordinary schools, in the regions, demonstrated something of the spirit of Jesus, and was appreciated. Many young people may not have seen a group of dedicated Christian believers working together before. Travelling so far and wide also made the tour complicated to plan and an effort to execute! We greatly appreciate the sacrifice of time and energy of the staff and speakers. Martin Hodson, the science speaker for the tour, has brought together this newsletter, which we see as an opportunity to introduce ourselves and some of the organisations that took part.

Hope for Planet Earth Tour Review Martin Hodson

Hope for Planet Earth was the brainchild of the late Rev Dr Rob Frost of Share Jesus International (SJI), who wanted a Climate Change tour for Christians. He approached Sir John Houghton, and together they set about putting together a consortium of Christian organizations: Tearfund, A Rocha UK, SJI and JRI as lead partners supported by the Faraday Institute, Christians in Science, the Stapleford Centre and Monarch Publishers. Autosave, the car hire company, lent three Toyota Prius cars for four weeks. Initially, I felt my role would be to act as JRI link person for the project, but then I got involved with the script writing (aided by Sir John), and in the end we agreed that it would be easier if I gave the science part of the presentation myself. Sadly, Rob Frost was diagnosed with cancer in the summer of 2007 and died in November of that year. He had always said that the tour should go on with or without

him, and everyone rallied around to make sure it happened. Rob's son, Andy, took his place on the tour to give the theological perspective. The SJI staff put in huge amounts of work to prepare for the four week tour: all the publicity; schools liaison; local coordinators; the final touches to the presentation.... And on Monday 18th February we began the tour in Stoke. The immaculate planning by SJI paid off as the tour visited 20 venues from Penrith in the north to St Austell in the south west. In total we spoke to 5,000 mostly 14 to 16 year olds at schools during the day, and 3,000 adults in the evenings. As many of you actually attended an evening presentation I will not go into details on its content, but it ran in this order: Science of Climate Change (JRI); Effect on the Poor (Tearfund); Effect on the Planet (A Rocha UK); Theological Reflection (SJI); Questions; Practical Action; Epilogue. The numbers attending the evening presentations varied, with Chester (450) being the largest. There we were joined by Sir John Houghton who took the question session. We ended the tour in Sutton on Friday 14th March. I think it would be fair to say we were totally exhausted. But it was worth it...

Opportunities for feedback were given at the meetings, and the vast majority of comments were very positive. Possibly the biggest request was for more advice on practical actions to deal with climate change. But we also had people wanting more science, more theology..... it would never be possible to please everyone! Throughout the tour

CONSERVATION: WHAT, WHY, AND
FOR WHOM?

JRI conference at Trinity College Bristol

October 4th 2008

With John Bimson, Andrew Gosler, Keith Innes, Mike Morecroft,
John Neal and Margot Hodson

printable brochure at www.jri.org.uk

we had people asking us if we would repeat it, and I am pleased to say that the same consortium of groups has agreed to run a second tour next year. The dates will be Monday 23rd February – Friday 13th March 2009.

As I write the SJI staff are beginning to put together the itinerary- we are hoping to go mostly to areas that we did not cover this year. If you have any bright ideas for schools and venues do contact us. And keep a look out for H4PE2!



The Hope for Planet Earth tourers at Stourbridge: *Left to Right* Martin Hodson (JRI), Dave Bookless (A Rocha), Fran Moffat (SJI), Emma Morrice (SJI), Phil Bamber (Tearfund), Andy Frost (SJI), Will Lynch (SJI), Alistair McFarlane (SJI), Gail Jackson (SJI)

Hope for Planet Earth: The Scientific Organisations

Christians in Science

CiS is a network of those concerned with the relationship between science and Christian faith, open to all those with an interest in this dialogue. We aim to 'explore God's work in creation, encourage concern for the environment and apply biblical principles to science and technology'. Although CiS is primarily a professional group, aimed at those working in science, a significant proportion of our members are not scientists. We bring biblical Christian thought on scientific issues into the public arena, communicate the gospel within the scientific community, and help science students integrate their faith with their science. Members receive the journal *Science and Christian Belief*, a newsletter, and online magazine. There are several conferences annually, usually one in London and one in the north and a growing number of local branches scattered throughout the country. The next London conference is on November 1st at St Pauls Church, Robert Adam Street, with the title: *Celebrating Darwin? Creation, Evolution and Theological Challenges*.

More information at www.cis.org.uk or contact Dr Diana Briggs, 5 Northmoor Road, Oxford OX2 6UW diana.briggs@gmail.com

The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion

The Faraday Institute, based at St. Edmund's College, Cambridge, aims to bring academic rigour to science and faith interactions. Too often the debate has been hijacked

by extremists who polarise the debate for ideological reasons. The Faraday Institute aims to move beyond that kind of unhelpful polarisation in order to carry out a research and education programme that will inform people about the issues involved. The Institute has a Christian ethos, but does not engage in advocacy for particular positions.

The Institute has an active programme in the public understanding of science and faith, organising courses open to any graduate or undergraduate, of any faith or none, with lecturers on the courses mostly committed Christians. Last year 231 delegates from 31 different countries attended, and 47 different speakers lectured. The talks are filmed and posted on the Faraday web-site in both video and MP3 formats, along with our other lectures and seminars, generating more than 250 items: a major international resource on science and religion freely available on-line (www.faraday-institute.org - see Multimedia Folder).



'The Root causes of Unsustainability', June 25th, Cambridge

As part of its research programme, the Institute hosts conferences and writers' workshops. The 2008 Cambridge day conference, organised with The John Ray Initiative, was on *The Root Causes of Environmental Unsustainability*. It was oversubscribed, necessitating a video link and overflow. This was followed by an intensive writers' workshop with 14 authors across a wide range from economics to environmental issues, from politics to theology, which will result in a book to be published in 2009 on the same topic.



Fine weather at the Faraday and JRI Cambridge conference

Termly Public Lectures and receptions, held in Cambridge, also become available through the web. Recent speakers include Bishop Tom Wright who spoke to more than 500 on 'Can a Scientist Believe the Resurrection?', Dr William Hurlbut, Adviser on Bioethics to the US President, who debated with Sir Brian Heap FRS the topic 'Stem Cells – Playing God Again?', and Sir John Houghton, who spoke on the science and implications of global warming.

Faraday Papers are written by experts for non-specialists. Only four pages long, they can easily be read on a train journey or over breakfast. They are available free at the Faraday web-site, and printed versions can be ordered cheaply on-line. Translations of the Papers are also available online, in Chinese, German and Serbian.

Faraday Staff speak frequently on science and faith issues in churches, schools and at conferences: in particular the Director Dr Denis Alexander (biology, evolution, dra24@hermes.cam.ac.uk), Associate Director Prof Bob White FRS (geology, natural disasters, environment, rsw1@cam.ac.uk) and Course Director Dr Rodney Holder (cosmology, natural theology, rdh39@cam.ac.uk).

There is no membership fee for using Faraday Institute resources – all are free to download from the web and you can join the free mailing list at www.faraday-institute.org or contact: The Faraday Institute, St Edmund's College, Cambridge, CB3 0BN, UK; Tel.: +44 (0)1223 741281.

John Ray Initiative

JRI exists to promote biblically-based stewardship of the environment by putting together reliable science and sound theology. This newsletter outlines some typical JRI activities: conferences, education; and publications.

JRI Associates

Ever since its inception, JRI has gathered a network of Associates. In many respects they are our core people. There are currently 43 Associates covering a large part of the UK, from Scotland to Devon and Kent. Some get further afield, and two of our associates are currently living in Bangladesh and Canada. Associates represent JRI in all kinds of ways. Quite a number are involved in running the CRES course (see below), either on the steering group or as tutors. CRES also acts as a feeder into the Associates, and those completing the certificate course are granted Associate status if they wish. Our Associates were called on to help out with the Hope for Planet Earth tour, often manning our JRI stand. Many Associates are involved in speaking in churches and other venues, writing projects, organising meetings, and much more. Generally our Associates will have a good knowledge of environmental issues and/or theology, and an interest in putting the two together.

If you would be interested in joining our JRI Associates please tick the appropriate box on our response form.

JRI Friends

We appreciate that not everyone will want the commitment of becoming an Associate, but you may wish to remain in firm contact with JRI, and to support our work financially. If this is the case for you then please tick the box on the letter to become a JRI Friend (£15 per year).

Forthcoming events

A conference on **Conservation at Trinity College, Bristol on October 4th** brings together theologians, an ecologist, a leading ornithologist and a farmer all with a passion for conservation and a desire to establish a biblical framework.

At Redcliffe College, Gloucester on January 17th we are holding a conference examining the dilemmas of economic justice and environmental degradation, with the director of the Department for International Development. And then there is the next the Hope for Planet Earth tour in February and March. The best way of keeping up with all that is going on is to visit the JRI web site at www.jri.org.uk



CRES farm visit to Elm Farm (June 2006)

Christian Rural and Environmental Studies

Christian Rural and Environmental Studies (CRES) is a distance learning course, jointly run by JRI and Christian Rural Concern (CRuC). Ripon College Cuddesdon (RCC), near Oxford, provides quality control and facilities for many of the associated CRES meetings. CRES will be of interest to all with a personal or professional concern for the environment and countryside, rural communities and churches. Students work through six out of eight module booklets, and are assessed on study papers and a work diary, one per module. The modules are: *The Living World; Farming and Food; Christians as Salt and Light; Economics; The Physical Environment; The Biological Environment; Rural Communities; and The Church in the Countryside*. We will soon be adding a new module on *Globalisation*. In the final year of the course, students work on a project, the topic being chosen in consultation with the tutors. Although CRES is a distance learning course we always try to fix up students with local tutors, who are often JRI associates, or senior CRuC members. We also have two day conferences and a Friday/Saturday residential each year at RCC, plus a summer field trip which we move around the country.

At the end of June this year the annual CRES field trip moved to Cheshire, when a dozen of us visited Stockley Farm. One of our CRES graduates, Martyn Johnson, works there in environmental education, particularly with school parties. Stockley Farm is a working organic farm, but is heavily involved in educational projects. Martyn gave us a good introduction to the farm and led a walk. All our 2006 graduates joined us, and it was an excellent time for catching up with each other. Thanks to Martyn for organising it!



Ripon College, Cuddesdon, Oxon, base for CRES

CRES has run since 2003. It is quite small, and so far we have had eleven graduates. However, CRES is steadily building a community of people equipped to spread a green message in churches and in the wider community. All of the CRES graduates are offered a chance to become JRI associates, and many keep coming back to CRES events long after they have graduated. We will end with what one of our 2006 graduates, Tony Roper from North London, had to say: "Throughout the course I had to complete a diary. I was able to include photos, prayers, poems and reflections on the various books I was reading. I liked the spontaneity and freedom as I had to comment in an informal way on the various activities that were suggested. If asked to pick my favourite module, I would struggle. If what I wrote in my diary was used as a yardstick then *Farming and Food* would come out top. I didn't appear to know when to stop!"

More details about CRES are at www.cres.org.uk. The next group of students start in September 2008, and we already have some signed up (we have set a limit of seven new students this year). If you are interested in joining CRES contact our Admissions Officer, Mrs. Dena Burne at: 29, Shaftesbury Hall, St. George's Place, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 3PX. Email: secretary@cres.org.uk

Books, Books, Books

There was a time when there were few books available on Christianity and the environment and how they interact, at least at the more popular level. That is certainly not the case now! In just over a year no less than seven UK books have appeared, all with JRI or A Rocha connections. They are all very different.

Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living by Nick Spencer and Bob White (Bob is acting chair of the JRI Board), is the only one of the recent books to concentrate mainly on climate change and its consequences. It combines a lucid account of climate change, penetrating analysis of the relevance of Scripture, and thoroughly practical policy suggestions. Available from JRI office £8.99 incl. p & p.

Cherishing the Earth by Martin and Margot Hodson (Martin is Principal Tutor for CRES and Margot is JRI Director) covers the science of the environment (climate change, biodiversity, human population, resource depletion), and gives theological reflections on the issues.

In the second half of the book the Hodsons give examples of actions that can be taken at an individual, community, national and international level. This book is illustrated by personal stories to show how changes in lifestyle can genuinely make a difference. Order from the JRI Office, £8.50 incl. p & p.

The Search for God: Can Science Help? by Sir John Houghton, a classic published in 1994, now updated. For centuries, religion and science have been seen as rival explanations for the way the world is. Both pursue questions of life and meaning. But are these quests in opposition? Houghton presents the exciting story of the universe and argues that if God is Creator, then science, the study of creation is God's science. He draws extensive parallels between science and faith and uses scientific illustrations to explore God's action in the world, e.g. what happens when we pray? He stresses the vital importance of caring for the earth as good stewards of God's creation. Available from the JRI Office, £6 incl. p & p.

The Place of Environmental Theology: A guide for seminaries, colleges and universities. Edited by JRI directors John Weaver and Margot Hodson, A vital guide, from British and European perspective, on how to include environmental themes in theological education. Deriving from a 2006 conference in Prague, hosted by the European Christian Environment Network and the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS), the Conference explored the theology of creation care and how Christian training courses across Europe could be encouraged to integrate this into their life and teaching. A small stock is in the JRI office at £5 incl. p & p.

Saving Planet Earth by Colin Russell (a JRI Vice-President) is a short introduction to environmental issues (pollution, degradation and depletion, climate change), authoritative but lively, written with understanding for evangelicals who want convincing, but do not need overload! Available from www.eden.co.uk £7.99

Planetwise, by Dave Bookless, the Director of A Rocha UK, gives accessible biblical material on creation care. Dave believes that caring for our planet is integral to Christian faith, something that has implications for the whole of life. There is an accompanying resource pack.

Finally, *Kingfisher's Fire*, by A Rocha founder, Peter Harris, is the sequel to *Under the Bright Wings*, and tells the amazing story of the international growth of A Rocha, timed to coincide with A Rocha's 25th anniversary. Both A Rocha books can be ordered at £7.99 each, including P&P, from A Rocha UK, 13 Avenue Rd., Southall, Middlesex UB1 3BL (make cheques to A Rocha UK).

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