

## Where being green goes beyond pieties

Ben Cubby, Environment Reporter  
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GOD is green, and always has been, according to a parish in southern Sydney.

The day after Earth Hour last year, parishioners at St Mark's Anglican Church in South Hurstville began drawing up plans to transform their congregation into an "eco-church", and the more traditional sermon topics have had to make room for messages about global warming.

A year on, the parish is preparing to take part in its second Earth Hour, from 8pm tomorrow.

The leader of the flock, the Reverend Chris Albany, said several Christian denominations had reinterpreted the Bible in recent years, including re-examining translations from Hebrew, which rendered humankind's "dominion" over the world to "stewardship".

It is a radical revision, and it means Christians who subscribe to that reading of the Book of Genesis now see caring for the planet as central to their faith.

"The change has taken place over the last three to five years," Mr Albany said.

"The thinking really is now that human beings are responsible for nature and need to care for the Earth. The world doesn't belong to us, it belongs to God, and we are in a caretaking role."

St Mark's has the support of the national Anglican hierarchy, which has recently revised some of its doctrine to make room for environmentalism.

The church's national structure now offers "green guides" to believers, and encourages the various diocese and bishops to share environmental ideas.

Last year, the national Anglican synod adopted a new canon, the preamble of which "recognises that climate change is a most serious threat to the lives of the present and future generations".

The practical green actions at the South Hurstville church include its own recycling centre, which takes in some non-traditional items such as parishioners' spectacles, printer cartridges and all the candles lit at St Mark's. A water tank has been fitted in the preschool next door.

There is a strong social justice angle, too. Parishioners have begun collecting magazines and have been sending them to inmates in NSW prisons.

Members of the congregation have been given environmental score cards so they can record, and it is hoped improve, their own green performance.

"As usual with these sort of things, we have the climate change sceptics in our midst, but on the whole they have accepted it and taken part," Mr Albany said.

"One of the more sceptical people, interestingly enough, has ended up installing a water tank on his own property. I think people like the idea that there is something useful they can do to help care for the planet."

*This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/03/27/1206207300940.html>*