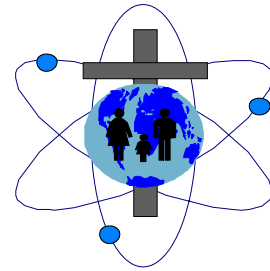


SRT BULLETIN

Society, Religion and Technology
Project

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Church of Scotland

Eco-Congregation Awards

We are delighted to announce that two Scottish congregations have won Eco-Congregation awards for their innovative work in caring for God's creation in their local situations. Callander Kirk has two special services a year on creation care, put in a cycle rack to encourage people to cycle to church, and redesigned their church garden to benefit wildlife and people. Dalbeattie insulated their church roof, involved local brownies in making bird boxes for the grounds, and worked with their local ranger service. These represent the tip of a growing movement as more and more Scottish churches express an interest in the programme and get going with practical projects. Victoria Beale, SRT's new Assistant Director, and Margaret Warnock of Forth Environment Link have held Inverurie, Perth & Hamilton to introduce the programme to churches and help them make links with local authorities and other organisations who can give practical assistance and advice. More are planned. If you'd like a workshop in your area contact Victoria. We're also encouraging churches who have inquired to take the plunge and register for the programme and begin to make a difference for the better in God's world!



Callander Kirk with its Eco-Congregation award

SRT ADVISES TIME

50 Years of DNA

50 years ago Crick & Watson unravelled the structure of the DNA molecule, laying the foundation of modern genetics. From this have stemmed the map of the human genome (and many other species too), the identification of genes linked to particular diseases, the ability to modify the genetic make up of other organisms, perhaps even ourselves. Time magazine holds a special conference this month in Monterey, California entitled "The Future of Life", to celebrate the occasion and to ask what the next 50 years of genetics may bring.

SRT Advises on 'Future of Life'

In October SRT Director Donald Bruce was invited to Time's New York offices as one of a special board of advisors to plan the conference, together with Nobel prize winners James Watson & E.O.Wilson and other top geneticists. Donald was asked to recommend topics and speakers on ethical and religious aspects of genetics. It was a rare privilege to provide advice in such distinguished company. It also provided an unexpected opportunity to present a Christian witness before some of the world's top scientists. At the conference he will speak on genetically modified food issues, drawing on the experience of SRT's Engineering Genesis study.

SRT's Work of Mission

The work of the SRT Project is primarily one of mission. The Time meeting is one of a series of recent openings where SRT has been asked to bring a Christian voice at the highest levels in biotechnology and sustainability. It was invited to the World Summit in Johannesburg, the bioethics committees of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, to EC meetings and elsewhere. In today's sceptical mood towards Christian belief, SRT's mission field is proving a crucial area of opportunity to present a reasoned Christian voice to contemporary life. The challenges of technology are providing some of the best openings for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Cloned Baby Hoax?

Premature Baby Talk in the UN, but it has been stalled by the Just after Christmas, the world's media US. President Bush wants to extend the buzzed with story that a New Age sect ban to cover therapeutic or research use called the Raelians had produced the of cloned embryos, over which nations first cloned baby by their organisation are deeply divided. Instead of going for Clonaid. A second and third baby were an easily agreed simple ban on cloned then claimed. Seven weeks on no babies babies the USA has frustrated the whole have been displayed, nor has medical or process, while leaving open a loophole genetic evidence been provided. It looks allowing US private sector to do cloning like an elaborate hoax. The claimed 50% **Cloned Embryos in the UK?** 'success rate' is viewed with incredulity The UK banned reproductive cloning by most scientists in the field. This is far but allows therapeutic uses. The Roslin higher than the best animal cloning Institute is proposing to do research on results. All attempts to clone primates human stem cells taken from spare IVF have failed. It took 277 attempts and 29 embryos, but may also try to use cloned embryos to produce Dolly the sheep. embryos as a way of obtaining the right **SRT addresses UN Delegates** sorts of cells for part of the research. It adds urgency to an initiative of the This is legal under the revised Human French and German governments for a Fertilisation and Embryology Act, but is UN ban on reproductive human cloning. controversial. A House of Lords report In September Dr Bruce was invited to concluded it would require exceptional New York to address UN delegates in reasons to justify doing this. It is not support of the ban. He told them that the clear what these would be. In the present Kirk's General Assembly had foreseen climate, trying to make cloned embryos, the need for such a global ban already in even for medical research, may be too 1997. It now carries widespread support much a slippery slope to cloned babies.

SRT at 2003 Edinburgh Science Festival

What Should our Genes be Used For?

Monday 14 April, 8:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh

Now we have mapped the Human Genome, how will it be used and for whose benefit? One of the world's top geneticists believes our genetic information should be freely available and equitably used.

Sir John Sulston, Nobel laureate, former Director of the Sanger Centre

The Search for Human Perfection: the Next 50 Years of DNA?

Tuesday April 22, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Royal Society of Edinburgh, George Street, Edinburgh

50 years after finding the structure of DNA, what are the limits of human potential? What are we aiming for if we enhance our bodies or our genes?

Prof. David Porteous, Gene therapy expert, Edinburgh University, Dr Arthur Stewart, Sports scientist Aberdeen University, Dr Donald Bruce, SRT Project.

Tickets £6/£4, by phone 0131-473 2070; by post: Science Festival Box Office, The Hub, Castle Hill, Edinburgh EH1 2ME; or call at The Hub in person; or on the door

SRT Director meets the Queen

In recognition of its long standing work on environmental issues, SRT was invited in November to attend a special international celebration of creation to mark the Queen's Jubilee by the world's faith communities. Organised by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, eleven faith traditions danced, sang and acted out stories of creation, human despoliation, and redemption, in the presence of the Queen and Prince Philip in the splendid setting of the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall. Dr Bruce was introduced to Her Majesty at a reception afterwards and spoke briefly of SRT's work in the Church of Scotland.

SRT Associates

The SRT Trust exists to raise funds to help support SRT's core work and to expand into major new projects. The SRT Associates scheme enables people to be kept more closely in touch with SRT's ongoing work via regular mailings of our reports, papers, talks, etc. We also want to widen the base of our work, drawing on advice and relevant skills of Associates. We will shortly send a new mailing and are planning an event for Associates. To find out more contact SRT.

SRT and Your Needs

SRT is the Kirk's mission to the world of science, technology and environment. It's also an ecumenical resource for all the churches in Scotland, and further afield, to help you know and address the issues raised by today's developments. The SRT Bulletin aims to inform and to provide thought provoking articles for use in parish magazines or elsewhere. We just ask you to acknowledge SRT as the source. Tell us what you find useful!

For More Information ...

Look at our extensive **Worldwide Web pages**. We have **Information Sheets** on issues like cloning, stem cells, GM crops and their ecological impact, GM animals, patenting, Eco-Congregation, SRT's environmental work and energy saving. More are in preparation. Write fax, e-mail or phone for our publications list. Our office in John Knox House has books on a range of subjects to browse. And if you know someone who'd like a copy of this newsletter, let us know!

Government to consult over GM Crops

As the 3-year farm scale trials of GM crops come to an end this summer, so ends the *de facto* moratorium begun in 1999. The Government is now seeking to consult the public on whether certain GM crops should be grown commercially in the UK as a whole, and in Scotland in particular. SRT has been involved in discussions on the scientific evidence & on how to engage with the real Scottish public. While campaigners grab the head-lines with their special viewpoints, it is far from clear whether they reflect the views of the person on the Falkirk bus.

Need to Consult the Regions

Feelings run high in the Black Isle. Dr Bruce met both a protest group and the farmer at the centre of the Munloch GM crop trials. Highland sensitivities are an important local factor, but lowland trial sites have not attracted such opposition. The lesson is clear. To be valid, the public consultation must go far and wide across Scotland, to hear the perspectives of different regions, not just a couple of meetings in the Central Belt.

Churches' Role

After our 'Engineering Genesis' study, SRT has been asked to help the Food Standards Agency find out attitudes to GM food among low income families and young people and in several Scottish locations. SRT also plans to help the public consultation by holding events in the churches. Would your church like to host a GM discussion? Contact SRT.

Stewarding Creation

Environment matters in your ministry! That has been the message given by SRT's Assistant Director Victoria Beale in talks to recently ordained ministers and the 8 years in Ministry conference, at the invitation of the Board of Ministry. This often neglected part of Christian ministry offers imaginative ways for the church to reach out to its community while deepening the life and worship of the congregation. The Board of Stewardship has introduced a new module on stewarding creation as part of its "Stewardship 4" programme. We are also discussing how 121 George Street could reduce its ecological impact!

Celtic Lessons on Creation

Materials for Conservation Sunday

Each year, A Rocha prepares a resource pack to help UK churches hold a Conservation Sunday. This year's theme is especially apt, 'The Bible and Creation - Lessons from Celtic Christianity'. It contains service outlines, sermon ideas, group study material, childrens' activities and suggestions for practical action. Packs will be available in April from the A Rocha UK office at 13 Avenue Road, Southall, Middx., UB1 3BL. Website: www.arocha.org. Lessons from the Johannesburg World Summit feature in Christian Ecology Link's magazine Green Christians and the European Christian Environment Network. See websites: www.ecen.org and www.christian-ecology.org.uk

SRT is a Church of Scotland project of the Board of National Mission, a member of Action of Churches Together in Scotland, supported by the Scottish Episcopal, United Reformed & United Free Churches. Director: Donald Bruce; Assistant Director: Victoria Beale; Admin: Sheila Mutch

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