

St Mary the Virgin, Ticehurst

ISSUE 1//MAY 2022

ECO CHURCH NEWSLETTER



How do we live out our Christian faith in a time of climate crisis?

The church has a long tradition of caring for God's world. The whole story of God's purposes in the world, from the first words in Genesis right through to the final book of Revelation, is shaped around our relationship to creation and the land we inhabit. The land is given for our enjoyment, but with that also comes the heavy responsibility to take care of it, to ensure that it flourishes. In the 21st century God calls us to think long and hard about how we can fulfil that responsibility.

The two great commands given by Christ, to love God and to love our neighbour, inherently mean protecting the environment. Loving God, and caring for God's world, go hand in hand with challenging climate injustice and helping those who are suffering the

effects of climate change. This extends also to all God's creatures.

For this reason the Church of England asks us to strive 'to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'. This is one of five essential marks of mission.

In St Mary's we take this very seriously, believing that in today's world, in the midst of climate emergency, it is one of the best ways to reach out to the wider community with the Good News of God's Kingdom.

This special newsletter has been designed to coincide with our Eco Church Gold Award Celebration. In this first edition we hope you will find a number of suggestions about how you can get more involved with caring for God's creation through the events we run and through other projects. Included also are ideas to prompt prayer and spiritual reflection.

We hope to produce more updates in the future.

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PRACTICAL IDEAS

Consider following LOAF principles when you shop. LOAF is an acronym developed by the charity *Green Christian*, to help us make sustainable and ethical choices when buying food:

LOCAL: support local farmers and businesses, while incurring less climate damaging food miles, by buying food from local and regional sources.

ORGANIC: organic food is better for the environment, and supports more insect and animal life. It also helps tackle climate change by using less fossil fuel energy and avoiding fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides.



ANIMAL FRIENDLY: do everything possible to ensure that animals are treated humanely and not intensively farmed or moved long distances by lorry. Look for 'Free Range' or 'Outdoor Reared' labels. You might consider reducing your meat consumption or giving meat up altogether.

FAIRLY TRADED: some foods cannot be produced locally (e.g. tea, coffee, bananas, chocolate). By buying products with the Fairtrade logo we can be sure that workers receive a living wage, can afford to send their children to school and are equipped to farm in regenerative and sustainable ways. Of course farmers in the UK also need a fair price—too often by going for the cheapest, the low price the farmer receives doesn't even cover the cost of production.



Reflecting on Scripture

Jesus declared the greatest commandments to be to love God and to love your neighbour as yourself. This idea is worked out through the parable of the Good Samaritan, one of the best known passages in the Bible. Jesus told the parable in response to the question 'Who is my neighbour?' If we were to ask that question today, what would the answer be?

READ:

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10: 25-37

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- How do we love God in the light of the environmental crisis?
- Who are our neighbours in today's context of climate emergency?
- Should we consider 'our neighbour' to include the creatures of this world alongside humans?
- What difference would that make to our lifestyle choices and action for the environment?

Adapted from *A Christian Guide to Environmental Issues*, Martin Hodson & Margot Hodson, 2021, p.27

'A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor'

POPE FRANCIS

LAUDATO SI

PRAYER

Oh how beautiful are your ways, O God, the works of your creation. Raise our consciousness to know and feel deeply in our hearts our connectedness to all that is.

Instil in us the gift of being co-creators and sustainers of life. Teach us new and unsuspected ways of living so that current and future generations can walk humbly in beauty, love all compassionately, and live justly in solidarity with all creation.

Loving and gracious God, give us the courage to seek this transformation of self and society and the strength to see it through. Amen

(Source: School Sisters of Notre Dame Green Team)

Get involved

LOCALLY

Our next event, called **Churches Count on Nature**, takes place in St Mary's Churchyard on Saturday 11th June starting at 10am. This is when the wild flowers are at their best.

We are inviting anyone who would like to join in to come and help record as many species of plant and animal as possible. We managed to identify 67 species in total last year and recorded our results on the National Biodiversity Register. In this way we

are helping to increase knowledge about wildlife in the UK.

You don't need to be an expert! It's great fun learning about all the species in the churchyard. We bring along plenty of field guides to help and worksheets to give children an extra helping hand.

If you would like to learn more about what we are doing to encourage wildlife in the churchyard, there will also be an opportunity to follow our nature trail around the churchyard.

Refreshments available throughout the morning.



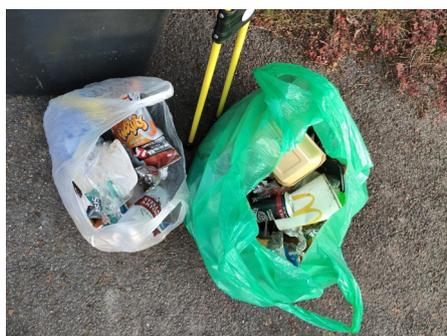
Get involved

NATIONALLY

There's still time to sign up to take part in the **Big Plastic Count 2022**, which takes place from 16th-22nd May. If you want to make a difference to government policy, then here's your chance. While we know about the huge damage plastic does to our environment, both on sea and land, it's odd that we're still so swamped with plastics. This is especially the case in the UK, which is one of the

biggest producers of plastic waste in the world, second only to the USA.

Take part in this challenge in which you'll be asked to make a list of all the plastic you throw away in this one week. As the government starts the process of deciding on legal targets for reducing plastic waste, the evidence provided by this challenge will help them understand precisely how much plastic packaging waste is leaving UK households. Simply sign up to join in: <https://thebigplasticcount.com/>



OUR GOLD AWARD

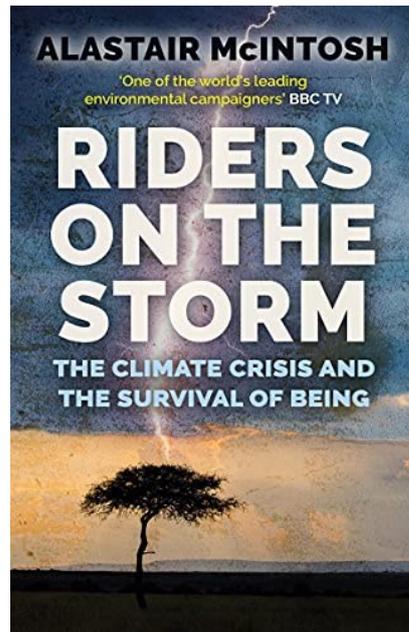


Our Gold Award was confirmed after the Eco Church assessors visited St Mary's in late January. They made some lovely comments about our diverse use of land, our collaboration with the wider community and the varied ways in which we celebrate God's creation and encourage people to make a difference in the world.

Our gold plaque is made by the Grassmarket Project in Edinburgh, a social and community enterprise which gives opportunities to vulnerable people. It is made from recycled pews.

Book Review

First published in 2020, this book weaves together science, politics and spirituality, to provide a unique perspective on the climate emergency. The author, ecologist Alastair McIntosh, summarises the science of climate change, whilst also examining in a balanced way the dangers of both climate change denial and alarmist exaggeration. He acknowledges that without action, uncontrolled global warming will result in catastrophic impacts. However, what is needed, he argues, is a transformation of the human spirit. In the words of one reviewer the book is 'Imbued with the deepest hope for a better world'.



BOOKS FOR LOAN

This and a small selection other environmentally-themed books can be found in St Mary's Church near the Eco Church display board (turn right as you enter the church). You are welcome to borrow any book, but please do return books after you have read them so that others can benefit from them.

News of a new group

WILD ABOUT TICEHURST, FLIMWELL
AND STONEGATE

If you are interested in joining in a discussion on how to make our local villages more wildlife-friendly, you would be most welcome to join the newly formed 'Wild About Ticehurst, Flimwell and Stonegate' group.

The group is already functioning on Facebook, so if you are a Facebook user simply search for the group on Facebook. Members are posting photos of local wildlife and sharing information on how to encourage it.

If you don't use Facebook, a meeting of the group is taking place this month. Anyone interested is welcome to come along to the **Greedy Goat, Church Street, Ticehurst, on Thursday 19th May at 2.30pm.**

*But ask the animals,
and they will teach
you;*

*the birds of the air,
and they will tell you.*

*Who among all these
does not know that
the hand of the Lord
has done this?*

*In his hand is the life
of every living thing
and the breath of
every human being.*

JOB 12: 7-10

(NRSV)

ST MARY'S ECO CHURCH

PLANNING GROUP

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