

grapevine

September 2021
Issue Number 39



Love God - Love God's World

East Anglia District of the Methodist Church

God's Love in Creation

The Love of God

fills the whole of His Earth:

It flares out from Heaven in the rising sun dispelling the night

It radiates and powers through the covering cloud

and bathes the whole world in His Light.

It flows in streams that rush down the mountain's face

It refreshes and soaks even the arid deserts

and fills all the land with His Beauty and Grace.

It covers the World in a vast shining sea bright

ceaseless in wave upon wave without pause or end

from Eternity to eternity – Glory, Grace, Love and Might!

And it surrounds me

and makes even my dark night bright

It leads me

in paths of Love, Grace and Might

until in Eternity face to face His Glory I see

not this reflection

but the full radiancy

of His glorious Glory and breath-taking Beauty.

© Helen M Seeley, July 2021

Welcome to the September 2021 edition of *grapevine 'Love God - Love God's World'*.

It ties in with the theme for the September Synod, at an important time for God's world before the UK hosts the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties in November this year.

Our contributors encourage us to get outside and experience the natural world, appreciating our own gardens, a community garden or any outside space. We can encounter God through the wonders of the natural world around us. In fact wherever we are is Holy ground and any local place can become a personal spiritual place.

In different ways our contributors express their concerns about the future of God's world, but what do they suggest we do? They propose that we could change ourselves and our habits, invest in the development of innovative technologies, keep the pressure up on governments to act urgently on climate change and that we should not leave this to younger generations but should work alongside them.

Several contributors have shown examples of what has already been achieved in the District including Emmanuel Church Bungay which has had an amazing journey to achieve their ECO Church Gold Award; the creation of Stowmarket Eco Future Group where members are having a huge impact on their local environment and the setting up of a climate emergency group in the Felixstowe Mission Area.

Whatever we decide, Prof David Welbourn asks us to "Simply accept our calling, empowered by His Spirit, to tend creation and secure a future bound by God's love."

Please remember this is your magazine. If there is something you would like included, we would love to hear from you.

The next issue is due in April 2022. You will find contact details on the back page.

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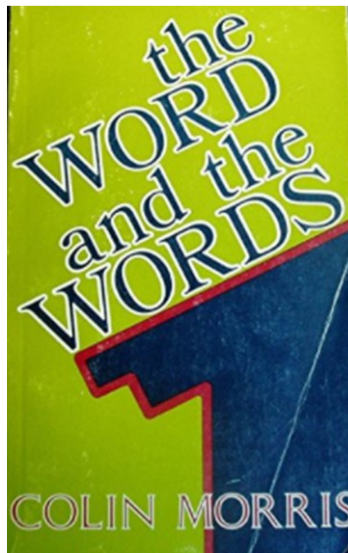
Introduction

Revd Andrew King



Dear Friends,

I am delighted, as one of the Deputy Chairs of the East Anglia District, to commend this latest edition of Grapevine that focuses upon the theme of Love God – Love God’s World. I commend every article to you which I believe will remind us of the severity of the situation the planet is in, yet it will challenge us and renew our faith encouraging us that faith turned into action can and will make a difference.



I recall from my childhood when people had difficult things to tell me and often it was sugar-coated by balancing it with something positive, so they would ask me if I wanted to hear the good news or bad news first! I chose the bad news to get it out of the way, and then finish with something to make me feel a bit better. As Christians we are gospel people, people of Good News; however to truly hear the good news we must hear and then respond to the reality of how things actually are. It was many

years ago I was a candidate for the Presbyteral ministry and at this time I first read Rev Colin Morris’ book, “Word and the Words”. One chapter was entitled “Priestly and Prophetic” where

Morris encourages a preacher to be both priestly, in upholding the people of God, but also prophetic by not being afraid to challenge and speak truth to power.

We must be aware that our world is changing without doubt through climate change. This summer we have seen record

temperatures in southern Europe, uncontrolled forest fires in Greece, with extreme flooding in Belgium and Germany. For me the most worrying has been rain falling on the summit of Greenland’s ice sheet instead of snow for the first time on record, releasing so much extra water into our oceans and warming the planet.

With the COP26 summit in November various community groups are responding. In one of my villages we

have an active Great Big Green Week team planning amazing stuff. They wanted both local churches, Methodist and Anglican, to play a key part. If we are priestly and prophetic we have something important to say regarding God's love for the world to our local communities in East Anglia. We can speak of good stewardship, justice, the healing presence of God's earth (think how often the natural world appears in the parables of Jesus as examples of what the Kingdom / Reign of God is like!) and balancing our need to consume by

an understanding of contentment: Philippians 4:12 "I know what it is to be in need and to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation"

Happy reading and wishing everybody a joyous new Connexional year.



Revd Andrew King
Deputy Chair of the District

Gardens in Central Norfolk

Deacon Jen Woodfin



During the lockdowns much has been said about people finding a new or increased interest in gardens and gardening.

In the first lockdown (June 2020) our Circuit organised a Virtual Open Gardens which enabled us to share in



the beauty of each other's gardens during the early Summer. This attracted a good amount of interest with 31 people sending in a total of well over 100 photographs. As this had been so well received, we repeated the event this year, during July. It clearly appealed to many people as we have been delighted with the response – about 55 people sent in over 250 photographs of their gardens. These included large gardens with manicured lawns, wild areas of garden, small back gardens, vegetable plots, plants in pots and window boxes. A selection of them



can be seen at
www.centralnorfolkmethodistcircuit.org.uk/photos

We were able to use the open gardens as the basis for our first Circuit 'Big Sunday' – an occasion in July when all our churches worshipped using the same material albeit through different



online platforms as well as creative in-presence services in buildings.

The initiative has enabled many people to appreciate the beauty that exists in a whole variety of ordinary gardens as well as the skill and hard work of ordinary gardeners! An unlooked for result has been that the 24 churches in the Circuit have been connected together in a surprising way.



Next year, we are planning a Virtual Open Gardens in Spring so that we can enjoy the colours and delights of God's creation in a different season.

Deacon Jen Woodfin
Central Norfolk Circuit



The Wave of Hope Initiative

Jean Parton



Prior to the G7 summit in Cornwall in June, various organisations, including Fairtrade Foundation, initiated the Wave of Hope project to remind politicians of their responsibilities to communities most affected by climate change.

In support of the Wave of Hope initiative, St Andrew's Methodist Church, Sheringham created a display in their porch window depicting the effects of climate change. Some members and friends had written their hopes on the paper 'hands' provided. The photograph of the window was posted in the national electronic newsletter of the Fairtrade Foundation in addition to local publications.

In that newsletter, Fairtrade Foundation wrote "although there was a renewed pledge to back a \$100

billion per year fund to support communities most affected by climate change, not enough G7 members are putting their hands in their pocket to make that fund a reality. And there was little at the G7 to suggest that the communities most affected by climate change will have a fair say over how any money is spent. In short, this is a disappointing moment. But it's critical we don't give up now. That hundreds of thousands joined in with the Wave of Hope shows people all over the country, and beyond, care really deeply about the injustice at the heart of the climate crisis."

The UK hosts the 26th UN Climate Change conference in November. We must all keep up the pressure on Governments to act urgently on this matter.

Jean Parton
Member of St Andrew's Methodist Church
Sheringham



East Anglia Methodist District Environmental Policy and a little bit of my why!

Lorna Burroughes



We, as a District Policy Committee, have been talking about this for some time and I believe that now it is time to stop talking and pondering and time to give in to some real actions. At our October 2019 meeting of the District Policy Committee meeting, our Chair of District said that he “was aware of the very high profile of climate concerns which need thinking about and action”. He asked me, as the Service Group Co-ordinator, to look into this, so at the February 2020 DPC meeting I gave my report. Looking back now at my written report, I said that ‘the climate has been changing for a long time and there were lots of new normals coming, such as heat stress and sea-levels rising, hurricanes, floods and pandemics’. So, it was agreed that I would convene a working group to produce an action plan on making the District Eco friendly. We agreed that this would be launched at the September Synod 2020, little did we know back then that almost a month later we would all be in ‘lockdown’. As I write this, the Met Office has issued one of its new-style extreme heat weather warnings for the first

time for parts of the UK, to highlight potential widespread disruption and adverse health effects. About 10 days ago, while out on my daily exercise walking in woods close to my home near Norwich, I was caught in a flash flood. It rained so hard for about an hour that paths within the wood became flooded and water came over the tops of my walking boots, but walking home was a totally different picture. Water gushed from the fields onto the roads, and I waded home through ‘thigh high’ dirty water. I arrived home about 2 miles away, only to find washing and everything completely dry with no hint of rain. I’ve asked myself, was this the beginning of the floods that a couple of days later caused widespread flooding across Western Europe killing over 160 in Germany, with many still missing as I type? So, looking back on that February when I first wrote my report to DPC I feel I was wrong. We know that the earth’s climate is changing from the observations, facts and data and we can see with our eyes, but I am so aware that our beautiful world, God’s creation, is in crisis much more than I thought back in February 2020 and that being concerned about

climate change is a genuine expression of our faith.

We know that wealth and waste are distributed unequally and countries that are least responsible for causing climate change are the ones suffering most from its effects, especially regarding food insecurity and nutrient deficiencies. Environmentalists and scientists have been warning that poorer countries with very low carbon footprints are bearing the brunt of carbon dioxide emissions in the wealthy world. Becoming an environmentally aware District is so much more than looking after our buildings in an efficient way. It's a journey that affects every aspect of our lives as Christians, it's about our holistic mission.

Predictive warnings need to be heard, but so also do those voices that are weaving – hope for renewal, hope for life and creation. We should not just leave this to our younger folks to be outraged and prepared to do something. Now is an ideal time to engage with younger people within our churches and beyond, allowing them to show us the way and the path ahead. I've asked the DPC if we can revisit and evaluate our policy and action plan in 2 years, as it is deliberately not as hard hitting as I would have liked, giving our churches and people time to recover from the pandemic. So, if we truly believe that

God created our amazing universe, bringing matter and energy to life out of a formless empty void of nothing, we must be prepared to act swiftly as we experience pollution, biodiversity loss, habitat fragmentation and species extinction. Global warming will strike hardest against the very people we're told to love, the poorest and the most vulnerable.

For more information on our East Anglia Methodist District Environmental Policy and Action plans please visit

<https://eangliamethodist.org.uk/we-care/environment>

Lorna Burroughes
Service Group Co-ordinator



God and the Climate

Prof David Welbourn



The environmental crisis is a Gordian knot of complexities, merging political power, human behaviour and evolving scientific insight. Our faith demands we protect and preserve creation's beauty and richness. Where can we find biblical discernment?

The book of Job illustrates God's relationship with the environment in a sublime choreography of creation's forces.

"In all your life, have you ever called up the dawn? Have you visited storehouse of snow? Which way is the home of light? Where does darkness dwell? Can you bring out the signs of the zodiac in their season?"

A sample of God in total command of creation's tapestry, spanning Job chapters 38 - 41. God responds to the arguments about Job's suffering. The wealthy, powerful and righteous man succumbs to calamity after calamity. His friends, convinced this is punishment for Job's wrongdoing, seek to persuade Job to admit his failings and seek forgiveness. Then God's punishment will end. Job denies misfortune is God's penalty for human failing, or that God is vengeful. Job

attributed his early success to God's support, but now suffers because God abandoned him. Job counters his friends' discourse in anger and frustration with God, demanding God justify himself.

A younger friend declares angrily that their age has not brought wisdom, accusing them of closed-mindedly denying God's true nature. Finally, God responds, exposing their gulf in understanding, whilst proving himself as sole master of creation's intricacy.

The polarised perspectives of the supposedly wiser, older generation is exposed as they constrain God to their limited image of him. They need the youngster's challenge to awaken from complacency and re-evaluate their understanding. Finally, Job admits,

"I spoke of things I have not understood. I knew of you only by report, but now I see you with my own eyes".

God resolved the lengthy discourse, tearing their arguments apart by wonderful illustrations of His power in action. Job is finally brought to peace with God.

Contrast his anguish with Peter, who once declared

“we know and believe you are God’s Holy One”,

condemning himself for his threefold denial. Could he ever be comfortable in Jesus’ presence? Despite his shame, he still left his friends struggling with the heaving nets. Confronting Peter’s foreboding and overwhelming sense of guilt, Jesus took him aside.

*“Do you love me more than these?”
“Feed my lambs, tend and feed my sheep.”*

No matter how big His mistake, Jesus forgave everything, giving Peter a new responsibility – be the good shepherd – nurture and feed my creation: both infant and mature. Jesus warns Peter of its costly nature. He should neither worry nor consider what part others will play. This commission is for him, filled with the Spirit and motivated by his love for God.

Confronted by climate emergency, we could dwell on the world’s guilt, as Peter bore the enormity of denial. Overwhelmed by the enormity of the

crisis, we could follow Job’s comforters, arguing fault and seeking reasons. We could suppose God wreaks vengeance out of retribution. We might freeze in inaction through denial. Just as the risen Jesus told Peter to put everything behind him, He commands us, if we truly love God, to be today’s good shepherd. Caring for His creation. Protecting it, nurturing it, tending it, allowing it to grow and flourish.

Facing climate crisis, Jesus demands. No recriminations, no denial, no counting future cost. Simply accept our calling, empowered by His Spirit, to tend creation and secure a future bound by God’s love.

Readings: Job chapters 38-42, John chapter 21, and (not referenced here) Ezekiel 34, especially verses 17-22, contrasting the shepherds full of self-interest, with the good shepherd.

Prof David Welbourn
Local Preacher
Ipswich Circuit



Dead as a Dinosaur?

Frances Middleton



Norwich was over-run with dinosaurs in the summer holidays. This was huge fun for children - the accompaniment to the visit of Dippy the Dinosaur based, of all places, in the Cathedral, that being the only Norwich building, big enough to house the enormous skeleton! I hope visiting dinosaur – lovers also took the chance to look in the Hostry and read the display of meditative thoughts by Cathedral staff. They are all worth reading, but Canon Peter Doll’s piece struck home. He reflects on Galatians 6, verse 7. This is what he said -

“This text speaks powerfully to me in this Covid season. For a long time, people in the developed world have become accustomed to thinking that we can do whatever we like to the world in which we live - we can pollute it, drive our fellow creatures to extinction, ravage its natural resources

to their limits for the convenience of the rich - and there won’t be any consequences for us. Technology will come to our rescue or we can distract ourselves with entertainment, gossip, or the latest toys. Covid is a sharp reminder that our actions have consequences and that we are not masters of the universe. If we want a future, we need to learn to live better.” These are powerful words.

Dinosaurs are extinct, of course, but soon too will be other miracles of God’s Creation - polar bears, butterflies and golden eagles - unless the climate crisis is taken much more seriously by everyone, especially our government. It is a huge ask - a turn-around in our lives, determination to do things differently. Is our church taking this on board? Because we need to, for the sake of animals whose habitat has already disappeared, and more so for people like Shanu. His community had

no harvests because the climate in their part of Malawi has changed drastically, and the rains are not predictable or sufficient. “All We Can” helped the villagers to build a solar-powered pump, which enabled them to use water from far under the ground. Lives were saved. But there are of course,



those who are beyond the reach of NGOs and are helpless in the face of climate change. Many become climate refugees....



focus on COP26 in November? Watch for details of the pilgrimages that are planned as part of the journey to Glasgow. God has given the UK

So, back to Galatians - what can we do to up the ante? To be responsible stewards to God's Creation? Because we ARE responsible.

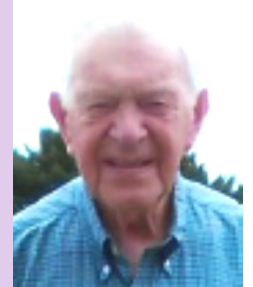
How about having a Climate Sunday? (see website for resources) Can your church focus on our Earth home during harvest celebrations or Creationtide? Is there a way for us all to join the

government the chance to take the lead in global actions to halt the global desecration. But this will only happen if WE grasp the nettle, change ourselves and our habits, and make our leaders do likewise.

Frances Middleton
Local Preacher
Norwich Circuit

God's World – a personal study of nature

George Ginn



"The earth belongeth to the Lord and all that it contains, except the highlands locks and piers, for they are all Mac Blains." This was a little rhyme placed in the first page of a study booklet which came from Loughborough several years ago, to help Christians find their place in the industrial world. I suppose it was to point out that some people assumed ownership of land was their sovereign right over the sovereignty of God.

In the letter of John, it says that they that love God must love their brothers and sisters also. I would like to add we should love God's creation also, especially at this very critical time of increasing Climate Change. Reports tell us that since 1970, 60% of the animal kingdom has been lost and some species are now extinct.

Before lockdown I kept busy, spending hours in the central library in

Cambridge, recording local history from old newspapers. Lockdown put paid to that, but what I was able to do was to start doing those repair jobs around house and garden that I was acutely aware of but never found time for. One job was to replace the wooden frame round our garden pool and clean and paint the slabs around the edge.

The weather at that time was very hot and shortly after I had finished this task, I discovered that frogs in the pool were trying to escape, but they were not able to because they could not climb up the 12 inches of pool liner to the top. I did not realise there were so many frogs in the pool. It is only in early spring when we see any activity, followed by frog spawn and tadpoles, that we know they are there. I decided to help them by placing two boards down into the pool for them to climb up, as well as draping netting and sections of wire mesh into the pool. It worked to some extent, they got onto the boards, and others climbed up the netting and wire mesh. But there they stayed; they seemed to be happy to be out of the water and bask in the sun but did not want to go farther and into



the garden and away. The one or two who did venture away came back and dived in again. I came to realise that it was lack of oxygen in the water that caused their activity and after the first rainfall it was back to normal!

The boards I had placed into the pool served another purpose for birds needing a drink. There were now able to drink from the pool alighting on the boards, walking down to the water and sipping; not only small birds but pigeons and doves. Lockdown has made me take a greater interest in life in our garden with butterflies coming to feed on the buddleia bushes and birds visiting the bird table.

I am very concerned beyond the garden to the wider world, that our human collective activity is destroying the world God has created for our home. May God help us all to live in a way that reduces our carbon footprint and that world leaders acknowledge the Climate emergency and respond to it and not carry on funding it.

George Ginn
Local Preacher
Ely and Newmarket Circuit

Like George, many of us have come to appreciate our gardens more over the last 18 months and focus on the amazing cycle of nature as the seasons change. Some areas in, or near, our District have seen the damage caused by freak weather (like large hailstones or torrential rain in July) which may be associated with climate change.

The Grapevine Editorial Team

District Agricultural Chaplain's Report

George Frost



'Come ye thankful people come, raise the song of harvest' - not quite yet as I write this. It's another start, stop, start stop harvest. Winter and barley safely gathered in and some oil seed rape is in the barn. But the wheat seems to be slow ripening. All will be revealed in good time, as has been the case for generations.

After months of lockdown, there are a lot of things to be grateful for. Those of us who have computers have been able through 'Zoom' to keep in touch, whether it is for worship or for meetings. We appreciate that it has made extra work for the Ministers and Lay Preachers. They have prepared service sheets, which have been delivered and also take services online.

There are many changes in farming with the reduction in grant support, which has kept many farmers in business. I am very concerned for some who will not be able to adjust to the changes, so we will lose some of the small farms, which I think are the backbone of agriculture. The Environment Agency are introducing changes which bear little relationship to farming. It makes me wonder who their advisers are.

The livestock sector is going through a difficult time, especially the pigs with

feed prices so high, there is little margin after all the investment. Farrowing crates being abolished has put extra strain on rearing the piglets. Scotland looks like all pig producers will close as the Brechin Processing Plant is likely to close. There is a need to reinstate the licence to export to China. The farmers are also giving up because of a shortage of straw, as farms are growing rye grass which is used in anaerobic digesters. Obviously a better return on capital.

Poultry seems to be expanding as the public appear to be turning away from red meat. Milk producers are now about the same after numbers of producers were giving up due to the price. Sheep and lambs are holding their own and let us hope that the government does not let us down with the agreement with New Zealand, which is being discussed at present by the Minister for Trade.

Stay safe and enjoy the British countryside if you have the opportunity. God has been good through all the troubles of lock-down and we must not be complacent. Sadly we have lost friends and not been able to attend the funerals but we keep the families in our prayers.

God bless.

George Frost
District Agricultural Chaplain

Stowmarket Eco Future Group

Stella Davis



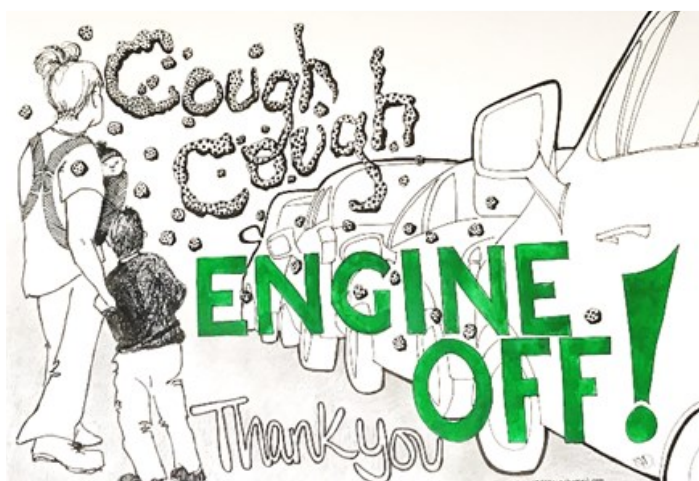
I made a new friend during lockdown. Sharri and I met through social media, discovered that we lived in the same town and shared frustration at our MP's vastly inadequate response to climate concerns. When allowed, we met up for a walk and "Stowmarket Eco Future Group" was born. If politicians with power to act would not recognise their responsibilities, then we would start from the ground up! We launched a facebook page to share information. 10 months on, 475 people have signed up to it. A group of more active individuals meets regularly on Zoom and we have organised

- Crisp packet collection/recycling
- Sharing information on plant-based diets and 5R's – Refuse, Reduce, Re-use, Repair, Recycle.
- Tree wardens
- Art posters and colouring sheets

- Re-wilding schemes
- Comments on planning applications
- Participating in Stowmarket Environmental Forum – a town council initiative
- Challenging ecocide e.g. unauthorised tree felling, hedge cutting at illegal times, pollution incidents.
- "No Mow May" and council grass cutting regimes.
- Writing regular articles for local free magazines and parish newsletters
- Speaking to local press/radio who have covered stories.
- Regular Litter Picking
- Raising questions at Town, District and County Council meetings
- Engine Idling campaign at level crossings/outside schools.
- Supporting Green Councillors

SEFG is not a Christian Group but to me it most certainly feels "of God", I value being able to live out my faith in a secular group. I asked some members what the group meant:

"For me, it's about not feeling alone in my worries about the future of the



planet. I know that there are nearly 500 people locally who understand and are all doing their bit to live sustainably and trying to raise awareness amongst a wider community.”

“There’s only so much one can do as an individual to influence people in positions of power. As a group your voice is amplified in this respect. It also allows ideas and projects to flourish as there is access to a wider range of thoughts, ideas and individual’s skills, knowledge and experiences.”

SEFG is now being asked to participate. Initial defensiveness from the Town Council has given way to inclusion and requests for help and advice. The Museum of East Anglian Life has invited us to stage a year-long exhibition: “Saving the planet, one garden at a time”.

This has become a calling. Working with our local A Rocha Nature Reserve strengthened the link between my faith, politics and climate issues.

Stowmarket Methodist and Bury St Edmunds Circuit have recently agreed

LoveWhereYouLive



to register for Eco Church/Circuit and I am leading those projects. I am finding ways to use my art practice for eco good. It feels like an enormous responsibility but one evening I stood on a riverbank in the still of early summer, surrounded by cow parsley, looking at a huge meadow of buttercups and I felt complete peace. Life experience has prepared me for this, and God is in the task.

Stella Davis
Artist, printmaker, mentor, and Local Preacher
Bury St Edmunds Circuit



[Climate Justice For All – World Methodist Council](https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/cj4a)

Climate Justice for all is a climate focused, youth-led, global campaign which seeks to mobilise the Methodist family on issues of climate justice. It recognises that the climate issue raises many wider injustices.

The world Methodist Council has employed 6 young people in Italy, Fiji, Uruguay, Zambia and the UK to provide resources so that the world Methodist family can speak up for others.

Visit the website for more information: worldmethodistcouncil.org/cj4a

Faith Without Walls

Revd Briant Smith



The gospels record that virtually all of Jesus' ministry occurred in the open air. Most of his parables use illustrations from the natural world, several starting with the words "The Kingdom of heaven is like....." His experiences in temples and synagogues were not fruitful and he complained bitterly about the misuse and abuse occurring within the temple precincts, and he was chased out. St John's gospel introduces Jesus, not as a helpless baby, but as the Cosmic Christ; a fundamental part of the creation and perfusing the whole universe.

John Scotus Eriugena taught that God speaks to us through two books; the physically little book of scripture and the big book of creation. As well as the words of scripture we are invited to

listen to the life of creation as an ongoing, living utterance of God. Martin Luther said. "God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars."

The ministry of John Wesley was mainly conducted, very successfully, in market places, churchyards and other 'en plein air' venues. Recently we too, have been kept out of the church buildings and have had to look for new ways to worship, but there now seems to be a dash to get back to the familiar and 'comfortable' old ways.

Is it possible that we are really missing something if we limit our ideas, concepts and worship of God to an hour of gathered, largely passive meetings and do not search for, and





find God, through the wonders of the natural world around us?

When people think of spiritual places their thoughts tend to go to ancient religious settlements like Iona or Lindisfarne or the ruins of old monasteries or churches. All of these are well worth visiting as part of our spiritual pilgrimages, and we may travel to the many other 'shrines' overseas like Lourdes or Santiago de Compostela. However God can surely be found much nearer to home.



Our faith development without walls can include wondering with amazement at the night sky, the spectacular vision and promise of the rainbow, or the dazzling light of a sunrise or sunset. It may be in the anticipation of the opening of a flower bud, the unfurling of a new leaf or the emerging shoots of

a freshly germinated seed; or listening with 'fresh ears' to the sounds of the dawn chorus, the wind rustling the branches of a tree, or the chuckling of a baby. We can be enchanted by the flowing of water, ripples on the surface of a pond and the reflections of the sun's rays.

God wishes to speak to us in every situation and at all times of the night



and day. We only need to expect the encounter, be 'switched on' and 'tuned in', to receive Him. We also need to remember that wherever we are is Holy Ground! Our own homes, gardens or any local space can become our personal spiritual places enabling us to encounter God, to share time, meditate and grow in our faith.

Revd Briant Smith
Supernumerary Presbyterian
Norwich Circuit



The Lay Employees' and Lay Volunteers' Network

Revd Betty Trinder, the Lay Employees' and Lay Volunteers' Chaplain arranged a visit on Tuesday 22nd June to visit the Church of St Julian in Norwich. A group of 14 which included Lay Employees and Lay Volunteers from across the

District gathered at the church and visited the Julian Cell. Sally-Anne Lomas, a Trustee, gave them a detailed talk on Mother Julian and they had lunch in the meadow garden of the church.



District News

An introduction to our new Assistant Synod Secretary, Chris Finbow ...

Greetings from your new Assistant Synod Secretary . “That’s a role I had never thought of doing” was my response to Julian, our Chair of District, when he approached me about taking on the role.

I have lived my whole life in Ipswich and have attended Museum Street Methodist Church since being taken there to be christened some !!!!! years ago .

I was made a member in my early teens which led to taking on various roles but it was involvement in MAYC as a youth leader in my early twenties that focused my commitment.

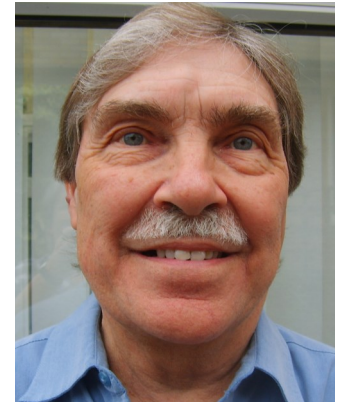
I met and subsequently married Maggie through MAYC (Marriages Arranged for Young Christians!!) in 1979.

Over the years I have held many roles at Local Church, Circuit, District and Connexional level & recently completing a term as a Circuit Steward.

Workwise I joined a local Building Society in the early 1970’s as a Junior Clerk and worked my way to Branch Manager, a role I held for over 10 years until being made redundant in the mid 1990’s. This was another very significant point for me in which the church played a

vital part.

The decision to offer for Local Preaching came at this time, as did working for Concern Housing, a



charity assisting the homeless gain accommodation which led me in doing voluntary work which is still the situation today.

In between church activities I enjoy caravanning , the Peak District being one of our favourite destinations and I also love disappearing into my workshop to do DIY of any sort.

So from never having considering this role to taking on the role; I have always tried to “Live on a Large Map” (an MAYC Guiding Principle) and a verse of a hymn by Joy Dine comes to mind:

When we set up camp and settle to avoid love’s risk and pain,

You disturb complacent comfort, pull the tent pegs up again;

Keep us travelling in the knowledge you are always at our side;

Give us courage for the journey, Christ our goal and Christ our guide.

As we go forward post lock down as I meet both those I know and those I don’t, may we all journey together.

Chris Finbow

Love God, Love God's World

Graham Gibbs



I have personally loved God and his world, (creation or nature), for as long as I can remember but there is a difference between loving something and taking action when you see the thing you love being harmed. Our collective action at Emmanuel Church in Bungay began in 2007 when Revd Roy Robinson organised a Climate Change Conference in the Church. A conference which directly led to the formation of Sustainable Bungay and a personal commitment from me to put my love of God's Creation into action.

Three years later and we had installed 220 solar panels on two of our hall roofs and we had begun to look at ways of improving the carbon footprint of our buildings. We ended up transforming our old Victorian school rooms into the greenest community building for miles around. We had created a logo and a motto:-



From a little acorn a mighty oak will grow, If everyone does something, Climate Change will slow.

I could write a book on that part of our journey alone but to suffice for now, to say that was our first two phases of our Going Green Project.

Our main aim was to take practical steps to help slow down the destruction of God's creation but we soon realised that this encompassed other aims. We took every opportunity to share the things that we were doing by talking to individuals and groups and by entering for different awards. Not to pat ourselves on the back, but to clearly show others that Church, indeed God, is still relevant in today's world by leading on a major current issue. We were using our Going Green Project as a way of bringing God into the conversation.

Our first years were mostly about our buildings and how we could use environmentally friendly ideas to encourage others to follow our lead but it was becoming very evident that it should be more about our Service, lifestyle and our Global Community, both at Church but also in our own homes. We had looked at a scheme a few years previously called Eco-

Congregation which appeared to us to be very complicated but this was being replaced by Eco-Church, a much simpler system divided into 5 categories, each with a checklist. Why not look up Eco-Church on the Internet?



So, in 2016 we signed up and went through all the statements, a tick list, and soon realised that we had already passed the Bronze Level and had reached the Silver. Little did we know that we would be the first Church in the whole of England and Wales to do so, although other Churches were ahead of us as they had already achieved the Eco-Congregation award.

Since then we have been using the same tick list to encourage ourselves to do more, for example choosing to buy our electricity and gas via a green tariff and supporting toilet twinning. In a way it has become our Quality Assurance document, there is always something new to try or to improve upon.

In November 2018,

Church Meeting agreed to go ahead with Phase Three of our Going Green Environmental Project which has three main principles:-

1. To continue to reduce our carbon footprint across our Church buildings.
2. To support a third world project which is affected by Climate Change each year by donating £250.00.
3. To continue to work towards our Eco – Church Gold Award.

Our over-riding aims of encouraging and supporting others to follow our lead, goes without saying.

In March 2021 we completed a questionnaire on a website called 360° carbon and by a little offsetting, (we donated £114.36 to Climate Stewards), we were Carbon Neutral for 2020. At



Emmanuel Church in Bungay

the same time we submitted our application to Eco-Church for our Gold Award. At the time of writing, we had our official visitation last week and are awaiting their decision – We are going for Gold.



Getting our Gold Award will be recognition of all our hard work, but more importantly, it gives us another door to open, another way of sharing our love for God and his earth with others and hopefully, prayerfully, they will respond by getting to know God for themselves so God can become their own personal Saviour.

Graham Gibbs
Going Green Co-ordinator
Emmanuel Church, Bungay

Since this article was written, Emmanuel Church has received the Eco-Church Gold Award, the 21st Church in the whole of England and Wales to do so.

A Sabbatical Reflection

Revd Rita Carr

As a Presbyter in the Bury St Edmunds Circuit, living in Stowmarket, I have just finished the wonderful gift and experience of a Sabbatical. With my Sabbatical group I planned the things I hoped to do, most of which I managed. It has been a tricky time with the government Covid restrictions on our lives and so perhaps I didn't accomplish all I had set out to do, but I feel truly blessed for all that I have been able to do and thank God for his faithfulness in our lives.

My main aim for my Sabbatical was to do some theological reflection through

photography, Theological Photography. You will see from the photos I have added what that reflection was like. I also began pottery lessons and some of the items I have made are pictured.



Vase: made using the ancient coiling technique. A pot 'thrown' on the wheel and a 'slab' box.

I wanted my time on Sabbatical to be spent, as much as possible, away from the computer to enable me to connect with my creative self. I felt a strong need to connect once again with the world outside my study. With my wonderful camera I spent hours taking photos of all manner of things that I felt 'spoke' to me. I have collated some of the photos into a book with text. The photos each have either a verse from scripture or a word that I felt gave expression to the photo. You will see below that the 'pawn shop' inspired the Matthew verse and the photo of the Covid 19 vaccine centre was indeed progress. These are a just a few of the many pictures I have taken.

My other main aim was to have some pottery lessons. I had a taster lesson about two years ago and I wanted to be able to continue. I managed to find a Covid secure pottery workshop where weekly lessons were offered. After being placed on a waiting list I started my lessons in April. My tutor is very knowledgeable and has kindly given me the benefit of his experience.

I have learnt many new skills. I tried



'throwing' on the wheel but this wasn't my finest hour. However, I made a wonderful vase using the ancient tradition of coiling. I have learned how to make a slab box and the different techniques associated with glazing. I am now moving on to mould and model making, where I will produce several identical items cast from a mould. I am going to continue with the pottery lessons and of course with the photography.

I now feel that I have been able to be creative, reconnected with my family, spent time away from my study and my computer and I am refreshed and ready to take up where I left off but with a much more creative feel to my ministry.

Revd Rita Carr
Bury St Edmunds Circuit





Know Your Impact

Prof David and Dr Elizabeth Welbourn



In his book “How to Avoid a Climate Disaster”, Bill Gates admits to being an imperfect messenger on climate change, because of his absurdly high personal carbon footprint. He uses the remainder of his book to argue life-style change alone will not achieve zero carbon. We need rapid uptake of new technologies ranging from smaller carbon footprints for a given output to means of capturing and sequestering greenhouse gases.

Without access to the insight available to Bill Gates, it is difficult and daunting to know what action to take. The scale of the agenda, constantly changing messages, a language often couched in fearful generalities and protectionist lobbying from powerful groups of deniers deepen the confusion.

As Christian disciples we are challenged to discern God’s will and become ambassadors of hopefulness, sharing His assurance despite this confusion.

Everyone’s journey of discovery will differ, but hopefully we can help others to act with greater confidence and urgency by sharing our family’s 16-year experience: growing our understanding through incremental steps.

Our first step was to replace inefficient incandescent home-lighting with promising technology of LEDs. Initially too dim for living areas, we replaced bedroom and hall lighting where low brightness was acceptable. The next generation LEDs were now bright enough for living areas, albeit rare and costly.

We took advantage of government grants to install a first-generation solar array generating around 70% of our electricity needs from completely renewable energy. Further savings arose from better loft installation which lowered our gas consumption. Daughters leaving home probably helped further reductions, but it would be churlish to quantify those!

Our next early technology adoption was for an all-electric car, exchanging petrol for more electricity (hopefully renewable). Facing “range-fear” of being stranded miles from any charging station, we knew that adoption would be slow without good charging infrastructure, whereupon conscience kicked in. Will we be mere followers, waiting for “*Somebody*” to do something!”, or are we called to be

true pioneers and lead the way?

Along came serendipity bringing an opportunity to invest at risk in a start-up company committed to building a charging-point network, and we took that as a demand on our stewardship of God's world. Other changes have continued reducing our footprint, but undoubtedly that decision not to stand idly by, became fundamental to our climate action. Encouraging pioneers to develop desperately needed innovative technologies by investing responsibly has honed our climate conscience.

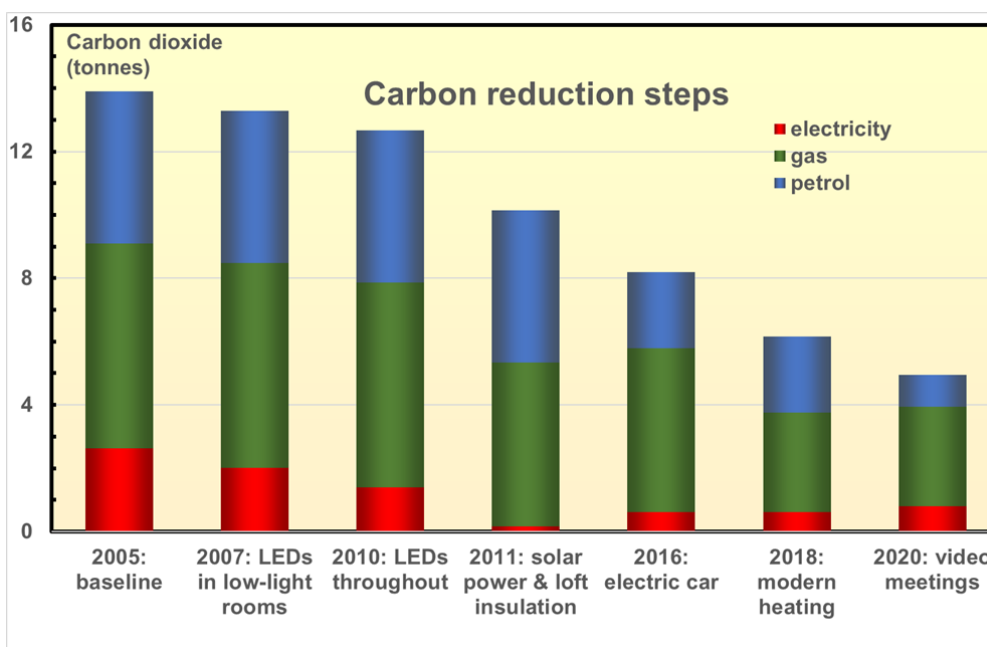
This is no longer the sole domain of the rich. As little as £10 can buy a small stake in support of small companies dedicated to accelerating essential technologies. Not all will succeed, but none will succeed without backing. Many are so passionate about their contribution to alleviating the climate crisis, that they are often a rich source

of education and information, opening up new understanding and enabling genuinely informed prayer.

Hopefulness can be grounded in both fact and faith.

We now have small stakes in a dozen different pioneers of innovative energy solutions, including wind, wave, tide, solar and hydrogen cell technologies, alongside four methods of storing renewable energy to be released even when the air is calm or skies cloudy. Our climate awareness continues expanding through a toehold in agriculture, farming, water management, and resource recycling. Surprisingly, it doesn't have to cost the earth to have a little bit of influence.

From each of those companies, we discover more about the urgency and promise of successfully taking responsibility for the spoor we leave across God's delightful creation.



David and Elizabeth Welbourn
Ipswich Circuit

(Information on crowd-funded investing is available from seedrs.com, crowdcube.com or similar companies).

The Community Garden at the Pilgrim Methodist Church, Blakeney

Sam Parfitt



I have spent many hours sitting in the courtyard of the Methodist Chapel in Blakeney and often thought that it had the potential to be something more than an area of plain gravel. As the Covid pandemic rolled on, it became clear that the courtyard had become a place of rest and refuge for people, who had taken to sitting on the benches during their daily walk. At the same time, I found a personal connectedness to God through walking and engaging with nature, often finding the Creator revealed in the patterns of a leaf, or the roots of a tree. Bringing the two together was perhaps inevitable and the idea to create a Community Garden in the courtyard of Blakeney Methodist Church was seeded.

Sharing this vision with others who were keen to help develop something new in the space, work began modestly with improving the area's appeal. The existing plants and pots were given tender care and we made our first small planter from pallets left at the Chapel. This very modest planter yielded our first harvest of peas which were picked and enjoyed by visitors. After fundraising, we now have four large raised planters, filled with 1.5 tons of soil, all planted with a mix of

plants from courgettes to scented geraniums.

Our aim in the Community Garden is to respond to the need for spaces in communities where folk can reconnect with nature in ways which are grounded, earthing and helpful. Much has been in the media recently about the importance of such places for



supporting good wellbeing, with GP's advocating social prescribing as a therapeutic tool for a range of conditions.

In living out the love of Christ in ways which are rooted in the narrative of scripture and treading gently on the planet, we hope to continue providing a space for weary souls and soles. We recently held our first Garden Church, under the shade of a tarpaulin sail and reflected on the 23rd Psalm through poetry, meditation and natural craft. As the



Community Garden continues to grow we hope to offer events through which people can engage with the Creator through creation, from guided meditation to labyrinths to storytelling around a fire pit.

Sam Parfitt
Pioneer Rural Church Re-Planter



grapevine

is available in large print and on CD (audio)

**If you would like to request a copy,
please contact the District Office:**

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eadistrict14.office@btinternet.com

Felixstowe Mission Area - Climate Emergency Group

Michael Peck

Our minister Revd Diane Smith and I attended an excellent 'Climate Emergency' day conference, hosted by the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) in Derby, just before the first coronavirus lockdown last year.

We used the JPIT report, 'Hope in God's Future': 'Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change', as the basis of a Bible study earlier this year. The weekly 'Zoom' meetings were well attended and led to many interesting discussions, and raised the question "What next?"

As a result of expressions of interest shown by a number of folk from Methodist churches across the Felixstowe Mission area, we decided to form an action group. The group met three times (via Zoom) during March and have now settled on a pattern of monthly 'Zoom' meetings. The formation of the action group coincided with our involvement in a 'Churches Together in Felixstowe' Ecumenical Lent course entitled 'Caring for Creation' (a 'York Course' publication).

As a group we resolved to raise awareness of climate emergency issues and to identify ways that we,

individually and collectively, can live more 'sustainably' and in harmony with nature.

We started off by examining a number of online resources provided by Christian churches and agencies. We adopted a 'toolkit' produced by a broad coalition of organisations including Tearfund and Christian Aid. (www.climateemergencytoolkit.com).

At a recent open air service, we publicly declared a climate emergency and pledged to work together as a Mission Area community to do what we can to reduce the damage we are causing to our home.

We have a 'Climate Emergency' page on our website, (www.felixstowema.org.uk) and use dedicated 'Caring for Creation' notice boards in our churches to inform people of ways in which they can make a positive contribution to the campaign.

We used the 'Climate Stewards 360 Carbon' website tool and information gleaned from church treasurers to calculate a '2019 base-line' carbon footprint for each of our churches. Our aim is to encourage our church councils to adopt ways of reducing the size of their footprint year on year.

We have also encouraged individuals to use the easy to navigate, carbonfootprint.com website calculator to assess their own household 'carbon foot-print'. For those unable to access the internet, we have produced a paper questionnaire, which, once complete, a volunteer from the group will input the data and relay the result to the person concerned.

In a separate development, local preacher, Professor David Welbourn has issued an open letter challenging

Methodists in the Ipswich Circuit to respond to the Climate crisis. A working group of members from across the circuit has been convened to explore the next steps. As David says, we need to identify small steps that we can take to meet the biggest challenge of our generation.

We are convinced that the time to act is now.

Michael Peck
Member of Trinity Methodist Church Felixstowe
and Secretary of Felixstowe Mission
Area Climate Emergency Group

Felixstowe Methodist Churches - Climate Emergency Declaration

We, the Methodist Churches within the Felixstowe peninsula, want to publicly recognise a **CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY**. We accept that:

The world is facing a severe crisis which requires immediate action.

The main cause of this crisis is human activity or inactivity.

There is a direct link between this crisis and global injustices and inequalities.

The crisis indicates a failure to follow God's mandate to care for his world and to seek justice among its peoples.

We commit to encouraging ourselves and others, in our churches and our neighbourhoods, to make relevant lifestyle changes, appropriate to circumstances, to minimise our own impact on the environment and climate. We also commit to use whatever influence we might have to bring about positive actions by local and national government, by intergovernmental organisations and by commercial corporations.

Contributions

We hope you have been inspired by the articles
in this edition of *grapevine*.

If you would like to make a contribution to
the next edition, we would love to hear from you.

Please send any news items, letters and photographs,
which you would like to share with others in the district
to:

eagrapevine@gmail.com

or post to 'grapevine'

District Office,
Chapel Field Road Methodist Church
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For further information, please contact
the District Office on 01603 625765

*Unfortunately we cannot guarantee
inclusion of all contributions.*