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Items for **>imprint<** no. 106: **Mon. 1st Aug 2022**, please, by email at editor@ccstalbens.org.uk. *Peter Young (Ed.)*

PCC meeting 13th June 2022

In ongoing matters and review of actions from previous meetings, it was confirmed an open forum would follow the extraordinary church meeting on 19th June to approve the financial report which has now been signed off by the independent examiner, delayed until after the APCM [*now done – Ed*]. On this occasion there would be no picnic lunch afterwards, although this would be the usual pattern for future open forum gatherings.

The Vicar had discussed the church warden job-share with the Archdeacon, which Christ Church had endorsed at the Annual Meeting of Parishioners, where Chris Patrick is one of the two legal wardens (with Jonathan Carter) but Chris will share his duties with Sarah Patrick. He reported that the Archdeacon commended this novel arrangement.

The updating of the external notice board is underway, with revisions of text now in draft and completion anticipated shortly.

Each member of PCC (including elected members and ex-officio roles) signed safeguarding declarations and received further safeguarding documentation for information.

Financial update – the Treasurer reported on a meeting he had had with the Wardens, Administrator and the Vicar in which practicalities of administering payments and income were discussed, including means of protection of the identities of donors by limiting them to the Treasurer and Accountant (and Vicar in exceptional circumstances) – a proposal that was agreed unanimously by the PCC. PCC also agreed a shortened ‘designation name’ (i.e. an ‘alias’) for the bank account, which will be ‘Christ Church PCC St.Albens’ that donors could use when writing cheques, for example. It was also reported that Dawn Walker had agreed to take on the role of Accountant for a 3-month trial period.

Climate and Environmental Emergency Recognition and Action Plan – Jane Sellars,

convenor of the Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4) team, reported progress to date. C4 is reviewing the criteria in the Eco Church questionnaire to see how well we as a church match up and whether we might qualify for an award at some point. One of the questionnaire sections would involve us all needing to look at our own lifestyles on sustainability issues and so PCC felt church members need to know, via appropriate publicity, what we need to be thinking about. There will be a creation-related sermon series in the autumn and hopefully some opportunities for small group follow up studies. C4 were asked to consider the action plan further and come back to the July PCC to agree a final version.

Working with the Mission Action Plan (MAP) – Meriel Dixon overviewed the progress on the 3 sections of our MAP: Unity of Fellowship; Community Visibility; and Resourcing the Mission. She singled out the following elements needing particular consideration: restarting Alpha; re-invigorating our small groups (since support for them has fallen away); and enhancing community visibility through events to attract people outside our church fellowship. These all required people to research, champion and initiate, and also will need support and commitment from the church membership as a whole.

Energy Poverty and ‘Hardship’ fund – This arose out of concerns expressed at the APCM that there may be some in our church who will struggle financially due to increases in cost of living and particularly rising energy prices. Chris Patrick presented a proposal and PCC agreed that something needs to be done as a matter of urgency, which would combine three main elements: availability of support to alleviate extreme financial crises, via a ‘Hardship’ fund to which church members who could afford to, could contribute; pastoral support (Dawn Kennedy is our Pastoral Co-ordinator, but anyone aware of a situation can/should get alongside); and education/‘signposting’ support (where to find external help, making applications, etc.).

Big Lunch 2022 – PCC were in favour of a proposal from Becki Chafe to run this weekly event during August again this year, before she leaves at the beginning of September, since it supported one of the objectives of the MAP for community visibility. But there is a question of what scale of event will be realistic, since it hasn’t been possible, as yet, to obtain external funding as in previous years. However this will be investigated further.

JUST WORDS. MERE WORDS? – *Rev. Canon Dele Agbelusi*

In many of our churches, we have grown to love the cliché: “GOD IS GOOD” with the refrain, “ALL THE TIME”. Are these just words, mere words? Personally, I agree with all my heart that our God, revealed to us in Christ Jesus is good all the time, even when we erroneously think his actions towards us are anything but good.

Take the example of prophet Elijah, an ordinary bloke like you and me (James 5:17), who had learned to sing “*God is good all the time*” when God gave him the courage to confront king Ahab of Israel and announce a drought (1 Kings 17:1-7). Following closely on the heels of that announcement, God told Elijah to do an incredible thing: he was not to stay in the public eye; instead, he was to run and hide by the brook at Cherith. While there, he was to be fed by ravens twice a day, and he was to obtain water from the running brook. God was good to Elijah, for while others were starving as a result of famine, he was having square meals and drinking water to flush them down! **God is good.**

God fed him using a raven—a bird that was considered unclean by Jewish law. Each day

the water was a little lower. At first, it was probably not too noticeable, but eventually it became very discernible, that the water level was dropping. The drought was working. Hallelujah! Well maybe not. How do you think Elijah felt? **Every day he looked and wondered and waited. Finally, the brook dried up.** At Cherith, for an undisclosed period of time, Elijah simply waited on God in the solitude of obscurity and maybe, uncertainty. But God was not done with him yet and Elijah knew it and believed in the goodness of God.

Have you ever lived by a drying brook? It may be a drying brook of physical ability as we get older. The knees just don't work like they used to. Some of us are getting accustomed to that. But some are having to battle cancer, diabetes, heart problems, Alzheimer's and other debilitating conditions. Life is not as pleasant as it used to be. Some are living by a drying brook of finances as our economy suffers one disaster after another. Even those who are not directly involved will probably have some spin-off repercussions. Many, if not all of us, will have to endure this. Will it ever be good again? We cannot tell. We are there, every day, looking at the drying brook.

While going through a "drying brook" experience, can you say or sing, *GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME?* **You can only say God is good all the time when your hopes and trust are not on the brook, or the daily meal, or the goodies of life but on God himself.** When everything around you is taken away and you are left with God alone, real faith can say GOD IS GOOD.

Faith in God as Christians, demands our being able to say He is good all the time, whether in sorrow or in grief, in tears or in pain. That is faith. That is the type of faith God commends. That is the type of faith that speaks "For better for worse, I will love and worship God". That is the type of faith that Job showed in God when his finances, wealth, family, health and even God's voice were all stripped away from him. When "his wife said to him, 'Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!'" "He replied, 'You are talking like a foolish woman...'" "In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing or in what he said. But rather bowed his heart in worship" (Job 1:22; 2:9-10)

When Jesus hung on the Cross and cried out "My God why have you forsaken me..." he was facing a very cruel and unjustified death as a man but His faith in God was unshaken. As God's Son, He submitted Himself to death on the Cross and drank the cup of God's wrath because He believed in the goodness of God all the time, even while being drained of his life-blood.

It was almost unbearable for Jesus at that time while facing the reality of the Cross but now, He rejoices when He sees people all over the world, you and me alike, being reconciled to a holy God, as a result of His death. It was death for Jesus but life for me. I can say with confidence that God is good all the time.

The goodness of God is not equivalent to any earthly description. For us, good is the opposite of bad. We say many things are good: a steak, a vacation, a friendly person. These things are satisfying to our appetites, enjoyable for a time, and encouraging. But God's goodness is much more than a fleeting feeling or a comfortable moment. God's goodness exceeds any desire we could dream of.

God's goodness is His character. Goodness is one of God's many attributes. Good is who God is, and good is what God does and bestows on His children. Psalm 119:68 says it best: "You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees."

I am learning like Elijah and many other living saints of God that God is good all the time. I want to see what He wants me to see. I want to learn what He wants me to learn and to rejoice with and in Him even when I am beside a drying brook. I want to develop the mind-set of Jesus who for the glory of God was willing to give up all things. **Faith can sing in and through days of sorrow and say "All is well". OUR GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME.**

Caring for Creation



Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4)

C4 meetings, via Zoom, are open to all church members and access details are given in advance via the weekly e-news-sheet. They are normally on the 3rd Monday of each month, so the next would be scheduled for 18th July.

The last meeting was on 20th June, in which there was a debrief on the recent SustFest event that was held on 22nd May and consideration of what could be done to make any future event even better. There was also discussion about the timing and resourcing implications of the Climate and Environmental Emergency Declaration Action Plan and feedback from those who attended the Eastern Cathedrals online conference on Eco Churches on 18th June.

As usual there was an agenda item on beliefs, to put Creation Care in a specifically Christian context. It was decided to watch the first of a nine-part video series produced by Tearfund, featuring **Katharine Hayhoe**, the renowned Christian climate scientist; go to (<https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/christianity-and-climate-change-film-series>) where all 9 films and discussion questions can be viewed. The first film is entitled 'What the Bible says about the natural world'. After watching this there was discussion of the various questions posed on the website. It's hoped to use more of these films on which to base discussions in future C4 meetings.

Eco Church – our progress

As has been mentioned in *>imprint<* in previous issues, C4 has been using the Eco Church questionnaire to assess how well we are doing as a church in several areas of sustainability and whether we might qualify for one of the Eco Church awards (although that's not the primary aim). C4 is also finalising an action plan to support the goals of Christ Church's Climate and Environmental Emergency Declaration and the PCC has suggested as part of this that our church membership is made aware of the questions asked in the Eco Church survey and estimated progress noted in the responses to date.

C4 has been drafting preliminary responses to the questions in the five sections of the Eco Church survey over recent months and posting them online on the Eco Church website. The sections are: Worship and Teaching; Buildings; Land; Community and Global Engagement; and Lifestyle. The responses C4 have posted so far are 'snapshots' of what is *believed to have been* the situation at the time C4 considered them and may not be the final word, some responses may be disputed and modified, or could well change over time (hopefully for the better).

It's thought so far that we might qualify for the silver level in the Worship/Teaching and Buildings sections and the bronze level in the sections concerning (use of) Land, and Community and Global engagement. However it looks like the responses to the

Lifestyle section would currently fall short of the bronze level and we'd need to attain at least bronze level in all 5 sections to qualify for a bronze Eco Church award. So the draft answers in the Lifestyle section are being brought to your attention this month in *>imprint<*, where a score 37 out of a possible 160 has been estimated for this section. These responses were posted about four months ago and some changes may be appropriate in light of recent activities. If you have any comments or questions on the current responses, please get in touch with Jane Sellars, C4 convener, or me, your editor.

In the following table the online responses to this section have been transcribed to a 'paper' version. The responses to other sections in the survey will be shared in subsequent issues of *>imprint<*.

ECO CHURCH – LIFESTYLE SECTION

1. Our church has appointed an individual or group to champion the cause of our church community becoming more environmentally sustainable:
 Yes No Need to find out
2. Walking and cycling to church services and events is promoted in our church
 Often Occasionally Never Need to find out
3. The reduction of car use is encouraged in our church:
 Yes No Need to find out
4. The members of our church receive encouragement to undertake a personal carbon footprint audit:
 At least annually Less often Never Need to find out
5. Our church encourages members to reduce their personal energy consumption:
 Regularly Occasionally Never Need to find out
6. Our church encourages members to limit their waste by adhering to the principles of reduce, re-use, recycle:
 Regularly Occasionally Never Need to find out
7. Our church hosts activities and/or events that facilitate the recycling and/or reuse of goods (e.g. clothes swap events or 'give and take' schemes):
 Regularly Occasionally Never Need to find out
8. Our church operates a communal Christmas and/or Easter card scheme among the congregation:
 Yes No Need to find out
9. Personal use and consumption of Fairtrade and/or ethically sourced goods is promoted in our church:
 Yes No Need to find out
10. Our church encourages members to use food at home that is LOAF (Locally grown, Organic, Animal friendly, Fairtrade)
 Yes No Need to find out
11. Our church runs or partners with other organisations in running a food cooperative that enables members to bulk buy ethically sourced produce at wholesale prices:
 Yes No Need to find out
12. The ethical investment of personal savings is encouraged at our church:
 Yes No Need to find out

13. Our church funds are ethically invested (e.g. current account and/or investments):

Wholly Partially Not at all Need to find out Not applicable(no funds to invest)

14. Practical lifestyle tips and advice on caring for God's earth are included in our church newsletters/on our church website:

Regularly Occasionally Never Need to find out

15. As part of our life together, the members of our church undertake an environmental lifestyle audit:

At least annually Less often Never Need to find out

ecochurch.arocha.org.uk

A Rocha Field Notes Podcasts and Blog

There has been a further **Field Notes podcast** posted since the last issue of *>imprint<*: *Episode 23*, posted on 21st June, introduces **Stephen Ruttle** QC, a former barrister who since 2002 has been working as a Commercial Mediator, dealing with a wide variety of cases in both private and public sectors. He has supported reconciliation efforts in other areas, such as in churches and for nature conservation. In this episode, entitled 'Is peace just the absence of conflict, or is it something more?', he talks with Peter Harris and guest host Rachel Mander about peace making and the art of having difficult conversations.

Listen to the podcasts at <https://www.arocha.org/en/field-notes-podcast/>, or from wherever you get your podcasts.

A Rocha International blogs: No further blogs have been posted since the last issue of *>imprint<* which was written by **Liz Marsh**, a PhD student at Edinburgh, studying the theology of hope in the context of ecological crisis. Her blog is entitled 'Is being a despairing Christian an oxymoron? Some lessons from Elijah'.

To read the latest blogs or to catch up on ones you might have missed, go to: <https://blog.arocha.org/en/>.

Sermons at Christ Church

We are drawing to an end of the current sermon series on the **first Letter of John**, with two more sermons to go (at the time of writing this):

3rd July - Faith in Jesus 1 John 5:1-12

10th July - Repeat after me 1 John 5:13-21

From 17th July a 3-sermon mini-series on events in the **Acts of the Apostles** follows:

17th July - The Conversion of Paul

24th July - Peter escapes from Prison

31st July - Paul in prison

During August there will be the usual less formal format, before resuming in September and more information will follow on the autumn series in due course.

Don't forget you can find audio recordings of specific sermons you may have missed over the last few months, or want to listen to again, on our website:

<https://www.ccstalbens.org.uk/sermons>, or to catch up on complete services, with audio and video, go to Christ Church's YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyw1PLEnH1df2GzW3pZujyw>