

An all age community ... on a shared journey of faith ... making the edge the centre



Registered Charity 1132925



A happy & blessed Christmas to all our readers!

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Items for *>imprint<* no. **100**: **Mon. 24th January 2022**, please, by email to editor@ccstalbans.org.uk. *Peter Young (Ed.)*

PCC meeting, 8th November 2021

The October PCC meeting had taken the form of a Saturday morning discussion on 23rd October on development of a new Christ Church Mission Action Plan (MAP). No formal Minutes were taken of this discussion, although notes from that meeting were received at the November PCC meeting and will be used to assist further discussions relating to MAP development.

The Standing Committee notes were also received by the PCC at this meeting and the Minutes of the 20th September PCC meeting were approved subject to a minor amendment.

Having given a ‘heads-up’ about the proposed Declaration/Recognition of the Climate Emergency document at our COP26 Service on 7th November, Jeremy intended to have the wording published in both *>imprint<* (see pp.3-4) and the weekly e-newsletter and will invite views/comments from Christ Church members, prior to PCC discussion as part of the agenda for the 10th January meeting.

There were further MAP-related discussions specifically around Christ Church’s Mission Statement and Vision Statements (see our website under the main “About Us” heading and selecting “Vision & Values”, or directly at <https://www.ccstalbans.org.uk/our-vision-values>) and whether they (the Mission Statement in isolation, and/or in combination with the Vision statements) continue to represent what we are and do. Various comments were made and this topic will be revisited at subsequent PCC meetings.

As has been standard practice at November PCC meetings, the proposed General Fund budget for the coming year (2022) was presented for PCC approval. Mindful of the need to avoid a deficit budget having to be approved once again for next year if at all possible, it

was decided to reallocate anticipated costs of demolition and removal of the Cabin (which will be necessary when 2:67 move to other premises) to another appropriate Christ Church fund. This will make the proposed budget (barely) 'break-even' and as such the PCC approved the budget for 2022. However further engagement with the church membership concerning Giving (particularly on regular giving) will be necessary from the New Year on.

Jeremy provided an update on proposed Christmas 2021 arrangements and confirmed that the Nativity Farm is scheduled to come to Christ Church again on Saturday 18th December and the Nativity Service will be held as usual on Christmas Eve. The Carol Service which was due to be held last year, but which had to be cancelled due to Covid restrictions, will happen in the same proposed format (outside around the tree) this year on 19th December. The Christmas Day and (Sunday) Boxing Day services will also go ahead at Christ Church, but they won't be live-streamed due to difficulties resourcing the complex technological aspects.

LET THE SON COME IN – ADVENT SAYS SO TO US – *Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi*

It was Fred Buechner (an American writer and theologian) who wrote, "We are, God knows, a people who walk in darkness . . . if darkness is meant to convey a sense of uncertainty, of being lost, of being afraid . . . if darkness suggests conflict between races, nations or individuals . . . if darkness depicts a world where we can't see very well (because of sin), then we know enough about the darkness."

But, God in Christ does not run away from the darkness. God sets up residence right smack in the middle of the darkness. If you have light, then you are not scared or worried about darkness. In the naked vulnerability of the baby Jesus, God entered the world in the flesh. God came to be with us.

For centuries, God had tried different ways to reach humanity and build a lasting covenant of love. God had tried the Law, various prophets, priests, and kings. Nothing worked to God's satisfaction. People continued to wander aimlessly, living lives filled with activity but little purpose. Finally, in Christ Jesus, we have God with us. "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven". (Hebrews 1:1-3)

When THE SON OF GOD, GOD in human flesh was about to be born, the innkeeper (*from whom accommodation was sought to shelter the heavily pregnant and expectant Mary and her husband Joseph*) claimed that he had no room. The inn was full.

Isn't the crowded inn a rather appropriate symbol of our lives? So cluttered (not with important things but with things that don't amount to a hill of beans) that there is just no time, no energy, no money, no room left over. There is just no room in our lives for the Messiah. Luke seems to carry this refrain throughout the ministry of Jesus Christ.

There was no room for Jesus in the economic world: When Jesus commanded the demons to come out of a man in Gadara and into a nearby herd of swine. The pigs immediately stampeded and ran off a cliff and were killed. The man was healed. What could have evoked jubilation turned into something different.

Did the community sing 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow?' No! What they did was to send a committee to Jesus and kindly ask him to get out of town. What really got to

them was the fact that Jesus destroyed a herd of swine in order to heal an outcast in their society. It was quite clear to them that if Jesus lingered a little longer, the local economy would be disrupted. What they wanted was business as usual and not some itinerant miracle worker to disrupt the *status quo ante*.

In economic, legal, religious, and political realms – wherever Jesus turned, there was no room for him. What first began in Bethlehem when the innkeeper turned him away, was to become a recurrent theme. Let's look at ourselves. Do we have room for Christ in our lives? When the innkeeper was presented with this unexpected situation that night, he faced what I call our universal dilemma. At that point he became every man. Every man is asked: Do you have room for the Messiah?

The question we are asking in [this advent message](#) is: How is your heart prepared to receive Christ? What must happen to our heart so that we will receive Christ for who he really is? It is very harmful to people to create an atmosphere and impression in which people think that they are saved by "receiving Jesus as Saviour" when they reject Him in many other ways. "Receiving Jesus" means receiving Jesus for who He really is—Saviour, Lord, Marriage Counsellor, Relationship expert, Vocational Counsellor, Therapist, Financial Planner, Wardrobe Consultant, etc. To try to pick and choose the things about Jesus which you find convenient to receive, thereby rejecting the rest, is not to receive Jesus as He really is. And without this covenant relationship of love, mercy and grace with Jesus, we will have no part in God's eternal life.

So, where do you stand in this conundrum of life? Jesus Christ once came quietly in a manger as a baby, but the next time, He is coming as a triumphant King of kings and Judge of all.

Will our lives be so cluttered with incidentals that there will be no room for Christ? Or will we open the door and gladly welcome him in? To the innkeeper, the knock that came that night was just another of a long series of bothersome interruptions. That is how some respond to God in their life. "Yes. Take the stable! Do anything; just leave me alone." God knocks at the door of every heart. The question is – will there be room in your life to let him in?

God made Christmas for us. But there is a sense in which all of us have to make our Christmas. All that God needs to do in order to save us from sin and hell is finished and complete through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But that is half the story! It is not mine/yours until I/you receive the free gift. Let the SON in.

2022 Sermon Series at Christ Church

The current series of ten sermons on the Marks of Mission will complete just before Christmas. In January 2022 a new series will start on the subject of Giving. This will be followed by a series on Elijah in February and March. It's hoped that further details of the Elijah series will appear in the next edition of *>imprint<*.

Climate and Environmental Emergency Recognition – *Revd Dr Jeremy Follett*

To introduce the declaration:

Tearfund and others are encouraging all churches to make a public statement about their plans concerning the climate crisis. In our case this needs to be agreed by the PCC and here is the draft document that I introduced to church on November 7th in our COP 26 Worship Service. Please consider it and pray about it and either send your comments to

enquiries@ccstalbens.org.uk or speak to anyone on the PCC. We will then be discussing it at our Jan 10th 2022 meeting.

Christ Church St Albans: Climate and Environmental Emergency Recognition.

On the basis that:

1. The world is facing a severe crisis of environmental degradation and climate change that affects our ability to sustain human civilisation in its present form,
2. The main cause of the crisis is human activity,
3. The crisis is inextricably linked to global injustices and inequality,
4. The crisis indicates a failure of human beings to follow God's mandate to care for the world and to seek justice among its peoples,

We, the leaders of Christ Church St Albans, want to publicly recognise a Climate and Environmental Emergency, and commit ourselves to:

1. Examining our lives individually and corporately in relation to this crisis and seeking to live faithfully to God.
2. Bringing forward by July 2022 an action plan to minimise our negative corporate impact on the environment and climate and to help restoration where possible.
3. Encouraging our members to make relevant lifestyle changes appropriate to their circumstances.
4. Encouraging action on this emergency in our neighbourhoods, workplaces, and other spheres of activity.
5. Using whatever influence we may have to bring about positive actions by local and national government and by corporations.

More on Creation Care

News

Dr Hilary Marlow was instituted as the first **Honorary Canon Environmentalist** at a service in St. Albans Abbey on 23rd November, when she gave an inaugural lecture on 'Reading the Bible in an Environmental Age'. She is a distinguished Biblical scholar, specialising in Environmental Ethics and has served as one of the A Rocha International (and formerly also A Rocha UK) Trustees.

Dr Laura Yoder of Wheaton College, USA gave the **2021 John Stott London Lecture** on 11th November: 'Loving our future neighbour: Earth-keeping as Christian witness'. The lecture is now available online at: <https://www.johnstottlondonlecture.org.uk/lectures>.

A Rocha Field Notes Podcast and Blog

Two more **Field Notes podcasts** have been posted since the last issue of *>imprint<*:

Episode 13, was posted on 12^h November and features **Ruth Padilla DeBorst**, a Latin American theologian and former trustee of A Rocha International, who lives in a community committed to living as good neighbours in a right relationship with people and

creation in general. She is interviewed by Peter Harris and Bryony Loveless on the topic of '[A story of living hopefully in Costa Rica](#)' and talks about how personal tragedy brought her to a new understanding of God's compassion for those who are suffering, and the importance of honest lament.

Episode 14, posted on 24th November, has Peter and Bryony talking with **Jyoti Banerjee** on the topic of '[Changing systems to we can change the world](#)', asking why, despite the work currently being done to address the environmental crisis, we are not seeing more impact and what can be done about this. Formerly an entrepreneur in the tech field, he is co-founder of [North Star Transition](#) which aims to accelerate systemic change with the goal of increasing the impact of global efforts to halt climate change and biodiversity loss.

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

In the latest **A Rocha International** blog, **Jo Swinney**, author, speaker and editor, Director of Communications at A Rocha International since June 2020, and one of Peter Harris's daughters, blogs on the topic '[The Whole Christmas Story](#)'. This explores the wider aspects of why Christmas was needed and the hope it brings us. It's also a useful introduction to her book with the same title, which is subtitled 'An Advent Adventure through Genesis, Revelation and Points in Between'. It's a daily devotional for the period 1st December to 8th January and available from [Eden.co.uk](#), or Amazon.co.uk (at £7.37), or the [Church Times bookshop](#) (at £8.09).

Find Jo's blog at <https://blog.arocha.org/en/the-whole-christmas-story/>

A Greener Christmas?

There are several good ideas on the A Rocha UK website that you can use to make Christmas a much 'greener' event for yourselves and your family this year. We are (hopefully!) increasingly finding uncomfortable the amount of waste we generate (a lot of which is non-recyclable) at this time of year. Go to <https://arocha.org.uk/ideas-for-a-greener-christmas/>. The ideas have actually come from **All Saints Church, Harpenden**, via Eco Church.

Root & Branch

This is A Rocha UK's twice-yearly magazine, free to regular donors to ARUK (of £3/month or more), or costing £4.50 per hard copy issue, including post & packing; or you can download key articles from [back-copies](#) for free from <https://arocha.org.uk/our-magazine/>. The latest **Autumn/Winter 2021** issue, entitled '[God's good earth](#)' includes, in addition to regular items, extensive features on our relationship with land, including looking after land owned by the Christian community, bats (see *>imprint<* no.98!), rewilding, and what we can do in our own gardens. *I've put my own hard copy of this issue in the magazine rack in the link corridor at church, for anyone to look at. - Ed.*

Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4)

The Root & Branch publication chimes well with **C4's** recent (15th November) discussions with Gillian, representing BAGAG, on the use and management of our land at Christ Church, as part of our Eco Church award survey investigation.

C4 are next due to meet on **Tuesday 14th December**, when it's planned to look at the [Lifestyle](#) section of the Eco Church survey and also discuss the proposed Climate Emergency Recognition/Declaration document (see above). All will be welcome to attend. It's likely to be via Zoom this time - details to be advised via the e-newsletter.

Environmental Quiz – contributed by Meriel Dixon



How long do items take to break down in the environment?



Listed below are items which are discarded regularly.

Draw a line from each item - to the box which you think is the time in which it takes for the item to break down.

			5 days - 1 month	2-5 months
Vegetables	Tree leaves	Aluminium Cans	6 months	1 year
			1 - 5 years	5 years
Paper	Styrofoam cups	Orange peel	25 - 40 years	50 - 80 years
			80 - 200 years	450 years
Leather shoes	Disposable nappy	Cotton T shirt	500 years - forever	1 million years
Plastic bags	Glass bottles	Plastic coated paper milk cartons		
Rubber boot sole	Paper towels	Wool Socks		

Interesting fact:

Even food waste and paper will not biodegrade when put into landfill sites because the artificial landfill environment lacks the light, water and bacterial activity required for the decay process to begin.

Answers:

500yr-forever: Styrofoam cups, Plastic bags, Plastic coated paper milk cartons.
 1yr: Tree leaves. 1-5yr: Wool socks. 5yr: Plastic coated paper milk cartons. 25-40yr: Leather shoes. 50-80yr: Rubber boot sole. 80-200yr: Aluminium cans. 450yr: Disposable nappy.