

THE MESSENGER

The magazine of Petts Wood Methodist Church



Harvest Festival

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The Church in Queensway

Minister: Revd. Duncan MacBean

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THE MESSENGER

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OUR MINISTER'S LETTER:

by Revd. Duncan MacBean



Disagreeing agreeably

Well, it's official! The 'God In Love Unites Us' resolution has been passed by Conference 2021. Years of hard work by many different groups within the church, both for and against this resolution, have been tested by the will of the people called Methodist.

I am very aware that this is likely to be the source of quite some ire in the church from people who think it is 'a step too far'. It is also going to be the source of great joy for others, some within our church and others not yet within our worshipping number. The appeal throughout this resolution is that we strive for unity, even as we hold together very different views on marriage.

I want to make something clear from the outset: no church is going to be press-ganged into doing something it doesn't want. Each Church Council has the right to vote on whether or not to allow same-sex marriages to take place in their church, just as each minister has the right to decide according to their conscience as to whether they will perform such weddings.

The real question for me is: 'How to do we live together?' How on earth do we hold these two distinctly and often passionately held views together in the same congregation as we jostle along, singing and praying, sharing Communion and drinking tea?

If only there was a single unifying force, a single object of worship that could unify us in praise ... and yet there will still be those who will try to say that those who are different, those who do not match their world view are not worthy to praise God, to even dare to call themselves Christian. When we struggle to see others as 'Christian', when we think they do not measure up to our standards of faith, I would simply ask you to think where Jesus would be found in our society. It would not often be in the churches, but with the sinners, the needy and the broken. It makes sense to me that, if we were to want to meet with Jesus under those circumstances, then this is precisely where we would need to be too.

I believe that it is only through and in Jesus that we are going to be able to hold together. It is a challenge for me, just as it is for each of us, to look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith to help us to get along. If we can see enough of

Jesus, be aware enough of the presence of Jesus within ourselves and one another, we will be able to disagree agreeably. Otherwise, the arguments will rankle and bitterness will take root. That would be our undoing as a people of God. Let us be as the early church was – let us be known by our love for one another.

A final comment from me – if you would like to discuss this issue further, please let's do so. It is going to be a long conversation as we work out how this impacts on the church and its people.

Shalom,

Duncan



WE GATHER TO OFFER WORSHIP TO THE GLORY & PRAISE OF GOD

September

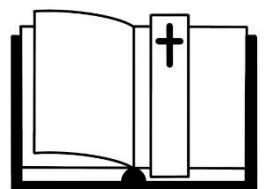
Sunday	5 th	10:30 am	Circuit Service at Orpington Methodist Church
Sunday	12 th	10:30 am	Pat Woodison
Sunday	19 th	10:30 am	Rev Duncan MacBean, Holy Communion
Sunday	26 th	10:30 am	Rev Terry Wright

October

Sunday	3 rd	10:30 am	Joan Mayes
Sunday	10 th	10:30 am	Chris Price
Sunday	17 th	10:30 am	Tony Windsor - Holy Comm.
Sunday	24 th	10:30 am	Julie Gardner
Sunday	31 st	10:30 am	Songs of Praise

November

Sunday	7 th	10:30 am	Ralph Brandhorst
Sunday	14 th	10:30 am	Fr S Niechial, Remembrance Service
Sunday	21 st	10:30 am	Rev Duncan MacBean, Holy Communion
Sunday	28 th	10:30 am	Songs of Praise





Orpington & Chislehurst

Circuit Service



Sunday 5th September 2021
10:30am

We would love to see you all at the summer circuit service
hosted by Orpington Methodist Church, 19 Sevenoaks Road,
Orpington, BR6 9JH



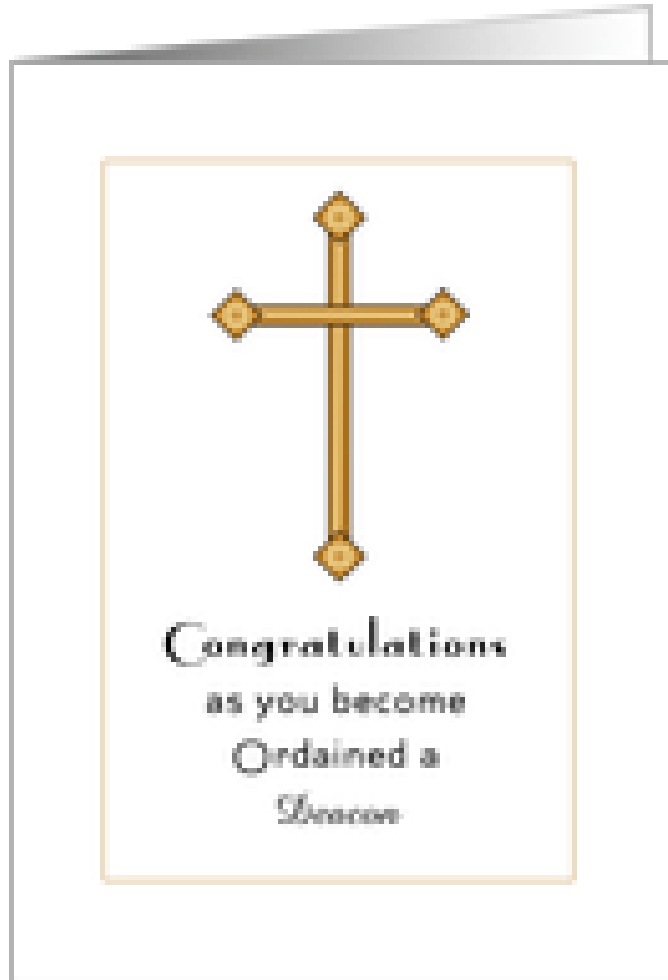
Joint worship followed by
refreshments. A chance to meet
friends, both old and new.



FAMILY NEWS:

- **Congratulations to Deborah Spinks**

Congratulations to Deborah Spinks on her ordination as Deacon. We pray God grant you strength and grace as you begin your service to the Church as a Deacon.



THANK YOU:

- **Thanks from Ann**

Dear Friends,

I would like to thank you all for your prayers, kindness, cards, flowers and help since my accident. I am so very grateful to you all. It is wonderful to know that, during these difficult times there has been so much love shown to me and despite being apart our Church is one in showing God's love.

Ann Lockwood

5th Petts Wood Scout Group

The 5th Petts Wood Scout Group has managed to start meeting face-to-face since Easter with all sections meeting on a weekly or fortnightly basis. We have limited numbers when meeting at the hall, to ensure it has been safe for the young people and leaders, so the young people were meeting on alternate weeks. We have also had outdoor meetings where they have met as their whole section. There has been a lot of movement of young people moving up in sections as this was something we didn't do in lockdown. This also means we have had many new Beavers starting. The programmes have been exciting, but kept to relearning the basics of scouting, like lighting fires and cooking, walking in the woods, orienteering in Jubilee Park, basic pioneering, either with bamboo sticks or spaghetti. The Beavers have enjoyed walking around Petts Wood, learning about the sign, and checking out the chip shop.

We have been well supported by the young people with majority of them returning to the Group. That is due to the hard work of the leaders who kept in contact with their young people during the lockdowns, and then providing them with great programmes on their return.

2021 is the Scout Group's 60th Anniversary year, and a couple of years ago, we were having great ideas on how to celebrate it. They, unfortunately, have not been able to come to fruition, but we are hoping to organise an event next year.

I would just like to thank the young people, the leaders and parents for all their support they have given the Scout Group over the last 18 months, which has enabled us to survive and continue as the great Group it is.

Liz Sewell - Group Scout Leader

PWMC refurbishment project update part 7 - Lockdown!!

The past couple of years have been a challenge for the property committee, balancing the need to continue to maintain and upgrade the church with the reduced income from lettings.

The beginning of 2020 saw a new carpet laid in the communion area in the Church. What should have been a simple task became more difficult when holes were discovered in the floor when the old carpet was lifted.

The church had received its quinquennial inspection which highlighted a few small items that needed attention. It was decided that the remainder of the funds from the

toilet would be used to sort these. So in August 2020 a number of jobs were completed:

- The church railings where painted
- the notice boards and hand rail by the back door where painted
- the mullions around the church windows where repaired
- a sunken piece of tarmac in the car park was repaired
- repairs to the pointing by the cross
- repairs to loose paving stones

During lockdown the cleaning was reduced, but each room received a thorough clean. My thanks to Teamplan for being understanding and continuing to do a good job of keeping our building clean and safe.

A couple more cameras were added to the CCTV to increase the security of the building.

A new heater, like those in the Queensway hall, has been installed in the parlour to make it more efficient.

Three screens have been added to the building which will be used to advertise groups and events at the Church. These were possible due to a donation in memory of a valued member of the property committee.

The Committee will now look to move onto the next phase of electrical works.

I would like to thank all the Property Committee for their continued hard work in maintaining the building to a high standard. I would also like to thank Angela and Edward for all their hard work over the years on the property committee and we will try and continue to keep up the high standard.

Janet Gloin – Chair of the Property Committee



Shaping our Future

Sharing our Lent Discussions

During Lent 2021 a group of friends from St Francis and Petts Wood Methodist churches enjoyed a weekly Zoom meeting. The theme of our discussions was the 2020 Reith lectures by Mark Carney, former Governor of the Bank of England and now Boris Johnson's financial adviser for the COP 26 UN climate summit, to be hosted by the UK in November. We also looked at a summary of the Dasgupta Review, a 600 page report commissioned by the Treasury to help set the agenda for the UK Government's 25 year environmental plan. All members of the group felt they had learnt a lot and broadened their understanding of the greatest challenges the World now faces. We hope we can share this as widely as possible.

Our theme was appropriate for the season of Lent. A time to look back and recognise and say sorry to God for past mistakes, but also to look forward with hope, to how we can change our behaviour and live better lives.

Carney and Dasgupta both analyse the current World situation of over- exploitation of natural resources, over-dependence on the market economy and material values and over- use of GDP as a measure of progress and a tool for decision making. Dasgupta sums up by saying that present levels of consumption require us to have the resources of 1.6 worlds, which is unsustainable as we have only 1 world. The effect of this level of over- consumption is most apparent to us in climate change, and requires urgent action now for life as we know it to continue. Dasgupta explains that the extreme pace of climate change is being driven by the frenzied activity of humans in the last two decades replacing the geological rhythms of nature. Carney looks optimistically to a future where it will be profitable to be part of the solution and costly to remain part of the problem.

Politics is the machinery needed to bring about real change. Carney sees the role of the COP26 UN conference of World leaders as being to try to put right what has gone wrong and to turn the Industrial Revolution into the Sustainable Revolution. An important part of this starts with reassessing our Values, so that things like fairness, responsibility, sustainability, resilience and humility guide future decision making, as well as financial benefit, which now dominates. None of these values is reflected in GDP and this can and must change.

Dasgupta starts from the damage being caused by loss of biodiversity. An example is the clearance of the Amazon rain forest for agriculture, where GDP measures the financial value of the agriculture but ignores the effect on biodiversity and climate change of the loss of rain forest. He tells us that sustainable economic growth and development means recognising that long term prosperity relies on rebalancing our demand on Nature's goods and services with its capacity to supply them.

We agreed with both authors on the vital role of education, in places of learning but also in society generally, in spreading awareness of the challenges facing us, of the values which need to influence decision making, and of the ways we all can help. As well as education there will be increased need for re-training and re-skilling of workers as we change to a sustainable economy.



Shaping our Future

Finance also has a pivotal role in diverting public and private funds towards those things that enhance and protect our natural assets and away from those that degrade nature. Existing and new green technologies are needed to help achieve the world target of net zero, where the amount of carbon emitted is equalled by the amount taken out of the atmosphere.

Our values are not adequately reflected in the prices we pay and our reliance on key workers, many on low wages, during the last year has made us recognise this. We have also found a new willingness to help others voluntarily. This reminds us that money is not the only motivator and while all need a reasonable standard of living, there is an important sense of vocation in all jobs, paid and unpaid, which motivates and satisfies.

Like both authors we discussed how COVID 19 has caused people to think afresh about the things which matter to us most and to ponder how life can change to reflect these values. Climate change is at least as big a challenge as COVID and the pandemic showed how resources can be re-allocated and life style changes made when absolutely necessary. Our unsustainable life style must change and society must accept that, at least in the short term, many necessary changes will be difficult and unpopular. One of the challenges facing everyone, is how best to influence public opinion and political leadership, so that these changes can be made. We agreed that Christians have a special responsibility to rise to this challenge.

The changes needed are at several levels. As individuals we need to look at what we consume, in things like food, possessions, energy and travel. Are our choices sustainable? Do we buy from and invest in companies which are seeking long term sustainability as well as short term profit? Do we recycle and do we repair rather than replace? As individuals and members of wider groups, including churches, do we ask and help those organisations to review and change their role as consumers and investors? Do churches try hard enough to reach out into the wider community and show that we care for people of all faiths and none? Can people be brought together at local level to discuss and promote action on issues like climate change? What can we do to influence public opinion so that corporate and political leaders know that there is support for changes based on long lasting values, such as concern for each other, a sustainable legacy for the next generation, integrity and mutual trust.

If governments attending COP26 take the advice of economists like Carney and Dasgupta, they will at least agree on the need for changes in our use of natural resources, so that we put in as much as we take out, and in the international financial framework which governs so much of our lives. If they feel they have real public support, this will make them more likely to turn that agreement into urgent action.

We all need to play our part.

From Petts Wood Churches Together



Look out for more to come including a joint effort to support Christian Aid Week in aid of Climate Change and a get together in September over coffee to network.

References: The Reith lectures are available at https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2020/Reith_2020_Lecture_1_transcript.pdf
"Dasgupta Review" in Google gives many useful sites and the full report is on-line.



FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART:

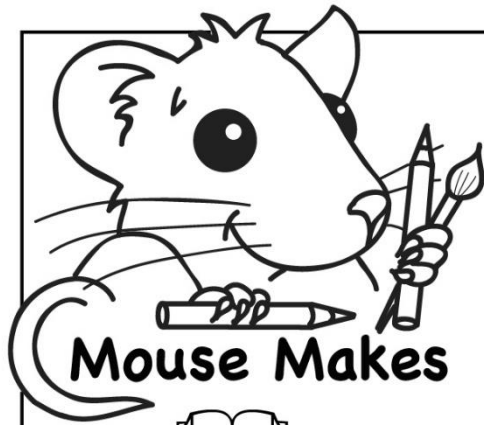
Harvest Festival Colouring Sheet

"A harvest of
righteousness
is sown in
peace."

James
3:18 ESV



www.ChristianPreschoolPrintables.com



Mouse Makes



The bowl of flour and the jar of oil

It had not rained for months and months, there was a drought in the land.

God sent His prophet **Elijah** to the town of Zarephath. At the town gate he saw a widow gathering firewood.

"Please bring me a drink of water and some bread." he asked her.

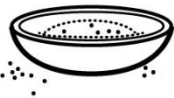


She answered "All I have is a handful of flour and a drop of oil in a jar, it is our last meal."

"Do not worry." Elijah said,

"Make the meal and make a small loaf for me."

The woman did what Elijah had asked and God blessed her ...



... The bowl never ran out of flour and the jar never ran out of oil until it rained again!



Find these words from the story in the word search:

WORD • LORD • GOD • ELIJAH • SENT • ZAREPHATH • GATE • CITY • WIDOW
STICKS • WATER • DRINK • BREAD • FEED • HANDFUL • FLOUR • LITTLE
OIL • SON • EAT • DIE • FULL • WENT • MAKE • BAKED • ATE • JAR • JUG • MANY
DAYS • LIVE • NEVER • EMPTY

IMPACT OF COVID ON PWMC's FINANCES

The Church's Financial Year, which runs from September 2020 to August 2021, has been challenging. This is due mainly to restrictions imposed on social gatherings because of the Covid pandemic, which meant that we were unable to meet for worship for part of the year and that many of the local groups that meet on our premises were also unable to meet. We recognise that the Church is not alone in experiencing these challenges, as many organizations and businesses have also suffered.

The Church's finances fall under two main funds: Property and General. Interim accounts presented to the Finance Committee in May projected a deficit of £22,000 for the Property Fund and £4,000 for the General Fund. The major factors contributing to these deficits were (i) a projected shortfall in budgeted rental income from the use of premise of £25,000 and (ii) a projected shortfall in offertory collections of £5,000. These reductions in income are offset somewhat by reduced caretaking, cleaning and utilities expenditure during lockdown, although the Property Committee has rightly placed importance on thorough cleaning of the promises to limit the spread of the virus.

While the situation is improving with the easing of restrictions in recent months, it remains the expectation that both the Property and the General Fund will show a substantial deficit for the Church's financial year at the end of August. The deficit may, however, be slightly less than the May projections suggested.

Due to careful financial management in the past, the Church has maintained healthy reserves and is able to survive this difficult year without any major anxiety. It is to be hoped that the groups using our premises will return to their usual activities in September. It is important also to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has maintained their regular giving over the last year.

John Doddrell, Treasurer

July 2021

Whither the Eucharist? by Josie Smith

When my daughter was a very little girl she was once quite frustrated at some Circuit event – probably a Garden Party – because in the crowd she couldn't for the moment locate either parent to say grace for her, so she couldn't eat her fish paste sandwich.

Thanksgiving was for her a necessary prelude to food, even just a fish paste sandwich, and great was the relief when a parent appeared and the necessary words had been said.

She was on to something, as children often are.

We grown-ups have had similar frustration since Covid-19 struck, when we have been unable to receive Holy Communion in a church building. If we can't physically attend church because of the necessary restrictions, what are the implications for the Eucharist – Holy Communion? How has our practice (and more profoundly our understanding) been modified by these external events?

I was in Canada in the late 1980s as part of a British Council of Churches exchange visit, and at that time there was great deal of work being done there on understandings of the Eucharist, particularly by more far-sighted Roman Catholics. One question being asked in that country of vast distances, was (and I probably paraphrase – it was a long time ago!) 'If it is considered theologically O.K. for trained lay people to take the consecrated wafer, as is the practice, to housebound people, would it be *in principle* any different if we were to send the wafer by post or dog sled, once it has been consecrated?'

My own interest arose partly from my involvement in religious broadcasting. Frank Pagden, who was in 'other appointments' as a radio producer for the BBC in Leeds, introduced a Radio Eucharist many years ago in which listeners were invited to take a piece of their own (ordinary) bread and some (ordinary) wine – or more probably a proprietary blackcurrant drink as he was a Methodist minister – and share in the Communion service. This was revolutionary and controversial, and caused much heated argument in church circles.

Many questions here – Can radio or televised Eucharist be real? Do people need to be physically together in order to constitute a congregation? Then, once you allow that people can be genuinely sharing in an activity though not physically in the same room as the rest of the people or the celebrant, does a broadcast Eucharist lose its efficacy if it is pre-recorded?

Does the Holy Spirit have problems with time and space?

And what constitutes consecration? What are the implications for the 'Ministry of the Word and Sacraments' if anyone at home can take their own bread and wine which haven't had the words properly spoken over them?

During lockdown there have been many responses to the questions. At my own church we have enjoyed a streamed service every Sunday morning, pre-recorded during the week in an otherwise empty and thoroughly sanitised building. We are more than usually blessed in having a musical director who is also a sound engineer, cameraman and still photographer, and who has produced a seamless whole each Sunday morning. The preacher, together with those responsible for Bible reading and intercessory prayer, recorded their parts wearing masks except when actually speaking, and the music was recorded so that we could join in at home without breathing on anyone outside our household.

When Holy Communion is part of the service we are invited to take bread and wine wherever we happen to be watching. The Communion table is in full screen, the bread and wine are there, the candles are lit, and the minister is presiding, with a modified form of words. When we began online services it was made clear that the bread and wine or juice which people consumed in their own homes were not technically consecrated.

We can access the service at 10.30 on Sunday. But it is possible now by the marvels of modern technology to tune in at any time thereafter. Is it still an act of worship, is it still Eucharist, are we still a congregation, if we happen to watch it, prayerfully, at noon or in the evening?

That's the real question – Does the Holy Spirit have problems with time and space? Or even with Words?

Source: <https://theologyeverywhere.org>

THE BEREAVEMENT HELP POINT



THE PETTS WOOD BEREAVEMENT HELP POINT HAS RE-STARTED!

Our Bereavement Help Point is a place where you can come and meet with others who have had similar experiences. You can also find out more about bereavement services in your area.

We also offer advice, guidance and a listening ear to those who are finding life difficult at this time.

**WE MEET AT PETTS WOOD METHODIST CHURCH,
QUEENSWAY, ON TUESDAY AFTERNOONS 2.00 -
4.00PM**

EVERYONE IS VERY WELCOME

Harvest Poem: I Give You Thanks

I Give You Thanks

By: Marie Williams

*For harvest moon
And leaves of gold
For autumn beauty
I behold
I give You thanks*

*For dreams fulfilled
For peace and hope
Abundant grace
You've bestowed
I give You thanks*

*For gentle rains
For sunny days
For misty mornings
For fields of hay
I give You thanks*

*For answered prayer
And tears You wiped
For restful sleep
All through the night
I give You thanks*

*For seeds to sow
And open doors
For all of these
And so much more
I give You thanks*

A decorative border surrounds the central text. It features wheat stalks with leaves and grain, interspersed with various types of bread: round loaves with a star on top, oval loaves, and small round rolls. The entire design is in a simple, line-art style suitable for coloring.

Jesus said:

**I AM
THE
BREAD
OF LIFE**

Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty...

Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.

John 6:35,40

Methods of Birdwatching, by George Bailey

During the lockdowns I have increasingly appreciated the birds. Paying closer attention to my local environment has led to extended reflection on what the birds might teach us about the ways of God and our life together. I have written about some of these ideas and images for churches I minister with, and recently for the *Methodist Recorder*.

That piece discusses herons and swans, and the shape of those two arguments are examined below, but there have been many similar reflections about woodpeckers, pigeons, blackcaps, goosanders, geese, grebes and so on – all spotted as I gazed at the garden or walked in the park. How do these reflections work theologically? What methodology is in action here, and how does it function?

Since writing in the *Methodist Recorder* I have found John Stott's book, *The Birds Our Teachers* (1999), in which he coins the wonderful term, 'orni-theology' to describe this spiritual practice. Reading his explorations has added examples alongside my own upon which to reflect methodologically.

The practice of learning from the birds begins from Jesus' invitation to compare their simple relationship with God against our own struggles. Matthew 6:26 invites those who worry about food to consider how the birds are fed without practicing agriculture and storage. Stott points out that the birds are though not passive recipients of creation's bounty, but active in finding food – for many this is their primary daily activity – and from this he draws the wisdom of balance between faith and works in our discipleship and practical living (though not in our salvation which is by faith alone).[\[1\]](#) A similar negative comparison is to be seen in Jeremiah 8:7 in which the migratory instinct of storks, turtle-doves, swallows, and cranes, who know their way back home and do not fail to follow it, is contrasted to the stubborn ignorance of the people who do not repent and turn to God. The pattern of these scriptural arguments is that the natural world, here specifically the life of birds, is in tune with God's ways, but humanity is behaving outside of its own potentially divinely orientated shape and rhythms.

From this scriptural pattern comes the more general view that in the ecological relationships and behaviours of wild birds we can discern ways to understand God's relationship with humanity. This is not 'natural theology' in the sense of seeing the natural world as a locus of revelation apart from scripture, but is a method by which a scriptural form of argument is deployed but now based on different observations about bird life. Are there then limits to this method? One methodological limit might be to insist that the conclusions of such an argument are in line with scriptural principles. Reflections on the relationship between individual herons and groups of herons (click the link to the article above!) would need to illustrate an authentically scriptural view of the church. However, we can be more optimistic about learning

from the birds by employing Karl Barth's later distinction between natural theology and natural revelation as described here by Keith Johnson:

'...because Christ is the active agent of any revelation that occurs in and through the created order, the church must be willing to pay attention to this revelation and incorporate the insights it receives from it into the church's own faith and practice. These insights may even serve to "illuminate, accentuate or explain the biblical witness" more clearly for the church within its own particular context, leading it "to preach the one Word of God in its own tongue and manner" better than it could otherwise (*Church Dogmatics* IV/3.1, p. 115).' [\[iii\]](#)

This relationship between the creation and revelation means that the birds might not just illustrate scripture but can assist the church to proclaim the gospel in context. I think this is particularly apparent when we escape a romantic image of the birds as purely 'wild' and instead see them in ecological relationship with humanity – a relationship that is, in our context, often harmful for the birds.

Growing understanding of the impact of human activity on birds offers insights which do not just prompt ecological action but also a rethink of the church's self-understanding. My reflections on swans nesting in an urban park led me to ask how human response might be influenced by the 'rewilding' movement – a re-interpretation of ecosystems that lets natural processes lead rather than any desire to preserve a human-centred environment. Seeing ourselves not as agents of preservation, management or control but as assistants facilitating the work of nature, rather than our own agenda, might be an insight which enables the church to communicate the gospel in fresh ways. This way of thinking can be found in Steve Aisthorpe's extended development of a metaphor calling for the 'rewilding of the church' [\[iii\]](#), in which the Spirit is allowed to lead more freely. A similar example of environmental themes developing our theology, rather than the other way round, is Howard Snyder's intertwining of ecology into the theologies of salvation, ecclesiology and mission:

'...solidarity with the whole human family and all creation can be seen as a dimension of Christian community. Through communion with Jesus Christ in the Spirit and with the body of Christ, we enter into a relationship of mutual interdependence and responsibility with the creation that God has made.' [\[iv\]](#)

I recommend watching the birds, reflecting, and learning as a fruitful spiritual practice – one which I am realising can be based on careful and radical theological method.

[\[i\]](#) John Stott, *The Birds Our Teachers: Essays in Orni-Theology* (1999: Candle Books, Carlisle), p.16.

[ii] Keith L. Johnson, 'Barth on Natural Theology' in George Hunsinger, and Keith L. Johnson (eds), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Karl Barth: Barth and Dogmatics Volume I* (2020: Wiley Blackwell, Chichester), p.106.

[iii] Steve Aisthorpe, *Rewilding the Church*, (2020: Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh).

[iv] Howard A Snyder and Joel Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace: Overcoming the Divorce Between Earth and Heaven*. (2011: Cascade Books, Eugene, OR.), p. 214.

Source: <https://theologyeverywhere.org>

MISCELLANEOUS:

• **Christians and the Environment**, Contributed by David Gloin

Christian response to our environment finds its beginning in Genesis – “At the Beginning”. Its editors give us 3 clues there is one for Vegetarians (Gen. 1:30) one for carnivores (Gen. 9:3) but the one I most relate to in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 15 – “The Lord God put the human in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to look after it”.

That translation suggests stewardship and stewardship brings with it responsibility and accountability. Remember the Christian Stewardship campaign. Yet trees are felled for no reason than they are in the way, block a view or drop leaves (despite the fact that removal may alter water levels and cause the house to heave). And natural grass is replaced with plastic which kills the soil and everything in it. Recall the person who unlawfully felled one of the iconic fir trees on Sandbanks because it blocked the view from the hot tub!

Well, a few facts about trees from the Woodland Trust leaflet for children:

- It is 10% cooler in a wood
- An oak tree can sustain 2,300 species of animals, plants, lichens and fungi
- A mature tree can absorb 450 litres of water every day – a key weapon against the flooding of homes and businesses
- A tree can absorb 900 kilograms of CO₂ over its life – a significant help in combating climate change
- Every year a large oak produces enough oxygen to sustain one human for one year (useful to avoid human extinction).

This is one element in explaining why Christians are concerned about the environment.

- **Sharing is caring-earning**

Sharing is caring earning - advert seen on the side of London buses. What does it say of modern society or at least of the advert writers and their clients? Are we just a transactional society what my late Mum called “bun for bun”? (Some of her friends invited you round to coffee/tea (solely) in the expectation that you would invite them back).

- **A pastoral letter from the President and Vice-President following the Conference vote on Marriage and Relationships**

We wished to take this opportunity to write to you after the Conference voted on the resolutions contained in the marriage and relationships report.

We very much appreciate that these decisions will stir up many different emotions for our siblings across the Connexion. There will be some who will be deeply hurt and others who will rejoice by what has been decided.

Our Presidential theme this year is God’s Table: An Invitation for All, and God’s invitation is for every single one of us. The Methodist Church has held tension for many years and as a Church and a family, we must do all we can to live with contradictory convictions.

This work was first reflected on back in 1992 and we have been on this journey together since that point. During the past years we have continued to listen to and to pray for each other and remaining true to what God is saying to us. We must remember in all this, to continue to hold each other in prayer, and to support each other as we find a way forward, respecting our differences.

It is perhaps helpful to remember that there are other issues, some of them discussed at the Conference, on which we hold differing and sometimes strong opinions. We live with them and we do not allow them to impair our communion with each other. We respect each other’s consciences, we exercise judgment in when to speak and when to be silent, and we hold one another in prayer. We do all this not for our own sake but for the sake of Christ and the sake of the world which urgently needs to know the power of Christ’s reconciling love.

Our prayer for you, beloved siblings, is that in joy or sorrow, in pain or excitement, we might continue to live within that reconciling love.

The Revd Sonia Hicks
President of the Conference

Mrs Barbara Easton
Vice-President of the Conference

DIARY DATES SELECTION:

September

Sunday 12th 2.30pm Shaping our future (Venue: URC Petts Wood)

November

Thursday 4th Deadline for contributions for Dec-Mar Messenger

TAILPIECE

We can see hope during hopelessness. We can see peace in the midst of chaos. We have a hope that the world does not have. We can see clearly that all things work together for the good of them that love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Priscilla Shirer

