

There is a disproportionate amount of the Church's UK Equity Fund invested in large fossil fuel companies (nearly 19 per cent in 2012), and there is an urgent moral and financial imperative to consider withdrawing from companies involved in prospecting for or extracting further reserves of gas, oil or coal.

Revd David Haslam, Revd Brian Holliday

On 5th March **Bradford Methodist Circuit** voted by 29 to 7 to support the following memorial:

*Bradford North Circuit requests the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church to disinvest in firms whose main purpose is the extraction of fossil fuels from the earth.*

18% of Methodist money is currently invested in oil and gas. In the interests of climate stability and the value of the Methodist Church investments the money should be withdrawn and reinvested in renewables. Archbishop Desmond Tutu recently called for an anti-apartheid style campaign against fossil fuel companies, which he blames for the "injustice" of climate change.

### Energy review at Evesham

EMC has been looking again at the possibilities for reducing energy use after a visit by David Jullien of Act on Energy. He made a number of suggestions about insulating walls, double-glazing windows, screening off some of the roof space and using fans to return heat (which rises!) down into the worship area. Those responsible have been re-addressing these issues, some of which came up when the church was converted some years ago now, and some very detailed calculations have been done.

These relate to the 'narrow economics' of whether the energy costs saved would justify the quite expensive outlays.

There is also the 'wider economics' of the cost to us all of over-use of fossil fuels, carbon emissions and the resulting climate change. The debate continues!

Some churches may find their energy contracts are ending soon. If so please contact Mark or one of the other members of the EcoTeam to obtain a quote for buying 'green' energy (produced from renewables).

### News from Transition Evesham Vale

Transition Evesham Vale has just published the sixth edition of their Local Food Directory which lists all the outlets for local food, and the schemes for avoiding waste. TEV also recently launched their new film 'Greening the Vale' at the Regal cinema. In 30 minutes it shows what local individuals and small businesses are doing to combat climate change and promote sustainability (you can watch it on YouTube).

The 3rd Vale Local Food Festival is on Sunday June 22 in All Saints Churchyard, Evesham from 11am - 4pm with stalls, entertainment, children's activities and Morris dancing.

TEV is also collaborating with Wychavon Council on a series of 'Intelligently Green Awards' which will be given to individuals, groups or businesses which are doing good things in energy conservation, using local produce, or working on green transport or construction issues.



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Caring for God's Earth

# EcoNews May 2014

Stratford & Evesham Circuit of the Methodist Church

**We can't become an Eco Circuit without you!**

Fourteen years ago Evesham became the first church in the country to receive the Eco-Congregation award - and in due course, a second (2005) and then a third (2009). Now Stratford too has just added a third award to the earlier ones (2006 and 2008). More details on the independent (and glowing) assessment are on page 2.

Methodist Church Environment Policy (Conference 2000) states that: *'The Biblical creation stories give human beings privilege and responsibility in relation to the earth and every living creature. We are called to be partners with the rest of creation and co-partners in the ongoing creative and renewing activity of God.'*

Two years ago our Circuit was invited to pilot the new Eco Circuit Award - the first circuit in the country to do so. With two "Third Award" churches in our portfolio, we now need to encourage our other churches to become involved. This may appear to be a real challenge to our rural chapels with relatively few members but there are simple things we can all do both as congregations and as individuals. Encouraging church councils to become an eco-congregation is the first essential

step so why not invite a member of the EcoTeam to come to a council meeting or a morning service to explain more fully what is involved? Eco-congregation aims to offer something to every church, regardless of size, location, denomination or circumstances. Hence, each church will be assessed according to its own circumstances and potential. Please phone (01386 438572) or email me ([markandsonia@gmail.com](mailto:markandsonia@gmail.com)) to talk about this further.

### Environment Sunday 2014

For more than a decade the Sunday nearest to UN World Environment Day (5 June) is recognised as Environment Sunday. World Environment Day is celebrated in different ways throughout the world including street rallies and parades, concerts, treeplanting, and clean-up campaigns. Often this annual event is used to focus political attention and action towards conserving the environment

All eight Stratford & Evesham Circuit churches will celebrate Environment Sunday - Stratford on June 1 with an all-age worship service, and most other churches on June 15th. Mark has collected together a wide range of materials which he can email to anyone wishing to review them. Both A Rocha ([arocha.org.uk/](http://arocha.org.uk/)) and CEL ([www.greenchristian.org.uk/](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/)) also have resources available.



## Stratford gets its just reward.

On Sunday 6th April, the 3rd Eco-Congregation award was granted to Stratford Methodist church. Their continuous effort in carrying out their commitment to the Eco-Congregation programme has been recognised. The award was based on the following:-

(1) The strengthening of their stewardship of God's creation by regular publication of "The Green Corner" in the monthly church magazine, regular Environment Sunday services and speakers on environmental topics in church based groups.

(2) Their implementation of energy saving measures in the redevelopment programme of church premises by replacing the inefficient heating system, and installing double glazed windows and doors. Solar PV panels on the roof and a ground heat pump in the New Room are both generating renewable energy.

(3) Their working well with other local organisations for social and climate justice by supporting Stratford Transition Town (i.e. Harvest share, Garden share, Community Energy Warwickshire), Stratford Fairtrade Town and Stratford Foodbank.

In the first 3 months since the energy generating and saving devices were installed last December, the 36 solar panels on the sanctuary roof have generated 1680 kWh green electricity, the ground heat pump has provided 4858 kWh heat energy for the New Room and the rainwater harvesting system has provided 18,000 litres rainwater for toilet flushing.

Although the redevelopment work will not be completed until late May, their effort in making the church premises energy sustainable has attracted attention locally and nationally. Rev Helen Bell was interviewed by BBC Warwickshire.

Local MP Nadhim Zawahai also visited the church and the committee of Stratford Friends of the Earth and the Stratford Town Trust have also inspected the work. Delegates from Dorridge church, Solihull church and Bingham church have visited the church as part of their redevelopment planning exercise in their own churches.

## Climate change is 'here and now'

The recent 5th assessment report from the International Panel on Climate Change adds considerable extra authority and credibility to its earlier conclusions - namely unchecked climate change is leading us towards a world which is 4°C warmer. This presents a profound risk to food and water supplies, precious species and habitats and financial stability. The message from the seven-year task undertaken by hundreds of the world's leading scientists, who examined thousands of the latest peer-reviewed studies on the causes, impacts and mitigation options of climate change, is clear and compelling:

*Climate change is real. We are to blame. It will get worse if we fail to act. The solutions are available and affordable. But time is short.*

The risks make depressing reading:

**Farming:** More droughts, more floods, less reliable rain, and more water shortages will mean worse harvests and higher food prices for most regions. The driest places, like the Sahel, and the poorest people, without land of their own, are the most vulnerable.

**Floods:** Storm surges, coastal flooding, and sea-level rise will increase. More flooding is likely inland too.

**Fishing:** It will be harder to make a living from many fisheries, especially tropical ones, as the seas get warmer and more acidic, and coastal ecosystems change.

**Heatwaves:** increasing the risks of health problems and premature deaths.

**Conflict:** Unstable food prices and more competition for resources will make conflict more likely.

**Migration:** More people will be forced to move to make a living.

**Disease:** More people will be at risk from water-borne diseases.

**Shocks:** It's harder to predict, but the risk of big irreversible changes like the Greenland ice sheet melting or the Russian permafrost thawing, is real.

In their press release dated April 13 the IPCC warned world leaders that the use of low or zero-carbon energy sources must be tripled by 2050 to prevent catastrophic damage. Responding to suggestions that 'climate change will do more harm than good', Sir Mark Walport - UK Government Chief Scientific Advisor -responded:

*"The idea that the benefits of climate change will outweigh any risks is completely wrong. Whilst there may be trivial benefits in some parts of the world for some of the time, the long-term direction for all of us is a negative direction."*

There is still some good news if we are prepared to listen. The IPCC states that 'averting catastrophe is eminently affordable if resources are used more wisely,' particularly in the reduction of fossil fuel use and a major expansion of renewables.

But the debate will continue for there are many who now confidently assert it is now 'business as usual' and we simply need to 'adapt to the changes'. Unfortunately many species cannot adapt fast enough and many poorer communities cannot just simply move elsewhere.

Undoubtedly for many, despite the latest scientific evidence, climate change is still an "inconvenient truth". Time will eventually prove who is right.

## Our Memorial to Conference 2014

### This Circuit Meeting requests the Methodist Conference to:

- 1) **ensure** its stated commitment to reduce carbon emissions includes an urgent review of policy on the investment of church funds;
- 2) **encourage** the Central Finance Board actively to explore options for investment in clean renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies, not least because these are increasingly likely to become a more secure and productive financial investment.

### Supporting Statement

This Circuit is already active in the move to reduce fossil fuels, its two largest churches are already eco-congregations, one of them has just completed a really environmentally-friendly redevelopment and it is the first Circuit to commit to becoming an 'Eco-Circuit'.

The Methodist Church nationally has already committed itself to a Christian responsibility to care for the planet and address climate change as outlined in Hope in God's Future (2009).

There is overwhelming scientific evidence of the damage to the planet from the burning of fossil fuels, and we know this affects poorer nations the most severely, not least via messages from the church leaders of some of those countries. The enormous reserves held by fossil fuel companies far exceed what can be safely burned in order to hold global warming below the internationally agreed level of 2°C degrees; many poorer countries believe even 1.5° degree is too dangerous. (continued on page 4)