

## Stratford Eco-news

Stratford Green Group invited John Cooper from the Birmingham Christian Aid Office to come to Stratford Church on 19 September to talk about Christian Aid's latest campaign, the Big Shift. Christian Aid is campaigning for banks to make the Big Shift away from fossil fuels and into support for renewable energy. Following this meeting on Sunday 22 October the Green Group introduced the topic to the congregation in the morning service and then organised a petition to be signed showing support for the campaign and this was sent to the Christian Aid Office in London.

Individuals were also encouraged to write to the Chief Executive of their bank and Lim and Evelyn Ho sent a letter to Stuart Gulliver, Chief Executive of HSBC, on 31 October concerning Christian Aid's Big Shift campaign. The following is an extract from the reply of 20 November 2017 sent on his behalf.

*'HSBC welcomed Christian Aid's 2016 report 'Our future in their plans' as a helpful contribution to the debate about how to shift away from fossil fuels. We were pleased to meet Christian Aid in London as part of the development of that report and have followed the Big Shift campaign with interest. We welcome our continuing dialogue with Christian Aid and have a further meeting scheduled later this month.'*

The Green Group is working with other churches in Stratford to make sure the other High Street banks will take action to reduce their investment in fossil fuel industries.

### Do you use solar energy?

The EcoTeam is still collecting information about how much energy is being generated by churches and individuals in the circuit. To date 10 people have responded and are generating about 40,000 kWh annually but only 3 have said they have changed to 100% green energy. Please let the EcoTeam know if you have solar panels and, if possible, how much energy you generated in last year and if you have changed to a renewable energy supplier.

### Mickleton wildlife garden

Mickleton Methodist Church is making encouraging progress with its project to develop part of the lawned garden behind the church into a Community Wildlife-friendly Garden. £2000 has been generously donated by Greggs Foundation and Cotswold Seeds in Moreton have offered to provide advice and donate wildflower seed. Moves are now being made to involve the wider community.

### Does the EcoTeam need you?

Are you concerned about the environment - whether it is conserving wildlife, planting trees, recycling waste or reducing your carbon footprint? If so, why not consider joining the Circuit EcoTeam?

Email Mark: markandsonia@gmail.com or call 01386 438572 for more information.

Caring for God's Earth



ECO CHURCH

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Caring for  
God's Earth

Stratford & Evesham Circuit of the Methodist Church

*The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.' Psalm 24 v1*

### First Eco-Church Award in the Circuit



Mickleton has responded well to the challenges of the Eco-Church Scheme by encouraging Fairtrade, recycling batteries, spectacles, stamps, and computer cartridges and buying its electricity from 'Good Energy'. The church submitted its online application in June and A Rocha's Eco-Church Coordinator responded: *"I am delighted to confirm your Award; very well done to everyone involved in reaching this important milestone! I wish you every blessing as you continue your efforts to care for God's earth by working towards a Silver Award."*

Hopefully this will now encourage other churches to review their 'green' commitments, and consider what they need to do to achieve the required standards.

### COP23 on Climate Change - Was it just hot air?

Climate Change discussions (COP23) in Bonn, Germany were hosted by Fiji, the first nation to sign the Paris agreement. Fiji is already experiencing the effects of climate change, as we reported in EcoNews 8, and a notable speech from a 12-year old Fijian schoolboy called Timoci Naulusala, reminded delegates at the recent United Nations climate change talks that *"it's not about how, or who, but it's about what you can do as an individual."*

Heated discussions on what needs to be done to keep global temperature rise below 2 °C included scrapping the \$500 billion global fossil subsi-

dies, clearly ignored by the UK Chancellor who has just given tax breaks in the recent budget encouraging oil and gas companies to maximise exploitation of remaining reserves.

As a result of decommissioning tax relief, some North Sea oil businesses are now net recipients of taxes. For example, in 2015 taxpayers handed Shell £85m as repayment of previously paid taxes. Pope Francis encourages us to live humbly, simply, and with true reverence for the Creator and Creation. Divesting from fossil fuels and making new investments in clean energy sources is one way of following St Francis's example.

## Catholics divest in oil

Also following his example more than 40 Catholic institutions announced the largest ever faith-based divestment from fossil fuels on October 4th, the anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi. The sum involved has not been disclosed but the volume of divesting groups is four times higher than a previous church record, and adds to a global divestment movement, led by investors worth \$5.5tn.

Christiana Figueres, the former UN climate chief who helped negotiate the Paris climate agreement, hailed the move as "a further sign we are on the way to achieving our collective mission". She continued: "I hope we will see more leaders like these 40 Catholic institutions commit, because while this decision makes smart financial sense, acting collectively to deliver a better future for everybody is also our moral imperative."

Catholic institutions' decision to remove their support for fossil fuels is based on both their shared value of environmental protection and the financial wisdom of preparing for a carbon-neutral economy.

## So do UK Universities

Over a quarter of UK Universities (59) have already divested from fossil fuels and on 22 November this year students in UCL, Oxford, Cambridge, Leeds, Bristol, Loughborough, Manchester and Plymouth took action to encourage their authorities to reject fossil fuels and to support climate justice.

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## Methodists one step closer

In June Methodist Conference voted in principle (127 to 118) to withdraw investments from fossil fuel companies whose plans are at odds with the Paris Agreement on climate change. The Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church has investments of £1.2bn for the Church including £38.2m invested in BP and Shell alone. If these companies do not align their business plans in accordance with the Paris target of keeping global temperatures below 2°C by 2020, there will be a Conference recommendation to disinvest.

## Get drastic with plastic

Recent studies estimate 300 millions tonnes of plastic waste now litters our coastlines, and choking our oceans, trapping marine creatures, especially sea birds, and releasing toxic chemicals as it decomposes into tiny microbeads which are ingested by shellfish, and eaten by fish and birds. Around one third of UK caught fish sampled recently which end up on our table, were found to contain plastic particles. In June this year four kilos of plastic bags were recovered from the stomach of a Cuvier beaked whale which was found stranded on Skye.

We are all contributing to this problem, even if unconsciously, and we can all help by taking deliberate decisions to try to avoid unnecessary packing and ensuring we recycle as much as we can.

Evesham Methodist Church has just endorsed Transition Evesham Vale's launch of its 2018 Plastic Campaign with support from the Mayor, Wychavon Council, representatives of political parties and hopefully Israel and other local ministers.

Pressure is increasing on companies like Coca-Cola which produced a billion more throwaway plastic bottles last year compared to the previous 12 months. Whilst they claim to be addressing the issue by using more recycled material, the real answer is to reintroduce a return and reward deposit scheme, for plastic bottles and aluminium cans - something currently being considered by the UK Government.

Every day 16 million plastic bottles go un-recycled in the UK. So TEV Evesham will also be writing to all the local supermarkets on that day urging them to address this issue.

## Are you using LEDs bulbs?

How many Methodists does it take to change a light bulb? Suggestions from the UMC in the USA include:

**Change?** *"You can't change that light bulb! Fred Smith's family gave that as a memorial during the big merger."*

**Twenty two:** *one to hold the ladder, one to climb the ladder, ten to form a committee to evaluate the effectiveness of the old light bulbs, and ten to check its been done correctly.*

**Mickleton - three:** *one to talk to the*

*Treasurer, one to source the ladder and hold it; and one to fit the bulbs.* Mickleton replaced 18 'candle' bulbs and around 10 others for just over £40 *halving its lighting costs* and ending up with much improved lighting. These 3rd generation LED lamps are now cheap, bright and many are guaranteed for 5 years.

**Evesham** reports that they are currently replacing their conventional lighting with motion sensing units in toilets where there is no natural light; this is to eliminate the problem of lights being left on after everybody has vacated the building. *If your church or your home is still using old style bulbs you are spending much more on lighting than you need.* You can buy 5 LED lamps at Screwfix for less than £10 or we can source bulbs for you.

As they say "It's a no brainer."

## Concerned Scientists

A new, dire "warning to humanity" about the dangers to all of us has been written by 15,000 scientists from around the world. The message sent from the Union of Concerned Scientists that was backed by 1,700 signatures 25 years ago. But the experts say the picture is far, far worse than it was in 1992. *"We must recognize,"* the letter warns, *"in our day-to-day lives and in our governing institutions, that Earth, with all its life is our only home."*

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