

Eco District Newsletter

No 19 Autumn 2026



Welcome to the 19th edition of the newsletter produced by the Bristol District Environment Team. The creation normally has a volume problem. In the middle of a world where wars and conflicts fill the news-feed, the noise drowns out the emergencies that are working themselves out in the eco-systems of the earth. Pre-Covid it seemed that the climate and biodiversity emergencies were finally making the planet's voice heard (remember the school strikes!) but then along came pandemic and environmental issues got pushed into the background and priority has been given to so many other things. But occasionally the earth lets us know it's

suffering. Heatwaves, wild-fires, floods and the recent disaster in Nepal are shouting to us but are we hearing or will we simply revert to normal now that we have had some showers or the news round has moved on.

There is a call for the people of God, the creator's servants to hear and see what is happening to everything which God has made good and to challenge the forces that are at work against it – the forces that are burning up more and more resources, the forces that are polluting with waste, the ways of living that mean species are under threat. We keep needing to remind ourselves that this is our Father's world and humanity has no right to exploit and damage it.

But the creation's voice is also a voice of song and celebration – a voice that calls us to look and to enjoy. The season of creation and harvest celebrations will give us a good opportunity to step back and look at the world with joy and then to ask how can we care for what is so beautiful. (The stories in this EcoNewsletter may give you some ideas of what you can do where you are.) Let's give creation a loud voice.

PLANTERS IN YATE

Yate Methodist Church - successfully applied for a small grant from Yate Town Council to create some planters outside the church. The only land the church has is a small car park, so this is the best effort to provide plants attractive to pollinators.

WORKING FOR YOU



At Synod, a year ago it was agreed that we would appoint a Carbon Reduction Champion for the District who will work over the next three years to help churches reduce their carbon footprint, to reduce energy use and find ways to offset some of those carbon outputs that just can't be avoided.

In May Freya Ballard joined the District Team and has been working with many churches and circuits over the last four months and many of you may have met her already.

Freya comes from Ireland and has a Quaker background. She studied environmental humanities and brings a wealth of knowledge about the issues facing creation at the moment. But above all she brings a real passion to make a difference to our climate and ecological emergency.

Freya's task is to work alongside churches and circuits as we seek to make a difference. She may be able to offer advice but she will also be able to point you to sources of help both within the church and outside it. Her contact details are carbon.reduction.champion@bristolmethodist.org.uk

MEASURE WHERE YOU ARE AT

The District is trying to calculate our carbon footprint because without knowing where we are at we can't measure how we are doing. Freya has asked all churches to let her know their energy use – please ensure your church has sent in its figures. Even better use the Carbon 360° tool available from the charity Climate Stewards.

A HELP FOR PREACHERS

Some years ago Keynsham in the Bath and North East Somerset Circuit produced creation notes on every week of the lectionary picking up environmental themes in the readings. This has been reissued with illustrative photos by Rev John Hayes. An electronic copy has been sent to all the circuit offices who should be able to make it available to you.

ANOTHER HELP FOR PREACHERS

The Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust have a series of podcasts called The Word Shared and one of these is by Chris Doran who explored the growing impact of climate change and challenges church leaders to think biblically about hospitality, justice and caring for those displaced from their homes.

You can access this on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hshi6vm4efe&t=16s>



Stonehouse – 70 years on and planting for the future

Stonehouse Methodist in the Gloucestershire circuit is a Gold Award EcoChurch. It has just celebrated its 70th Anniversary. Part of its celebration has been to make the surroundings of the church even more environmentally friendly.

A little while ago the congregation planted trees and this year they were given another tree to plant to mark the occasion, it is a lovely rowan 'Olympic Flame'. We had a dedicated team of waterers to keep it going through the very dry summer.

In October the garden volunteers put up a bat box (Target 25 project), prepped and sowed our wildflower meadow, installed 2 more water butts, made a hedgehog home and leaf basket and built a dead hedge.

We have also updated our Recycling station with some new bins so everyone who uses our premises can take part. We now collect wearable bras and a

bagful has been taken to a community group in Stroud who pass them on to the charity 'Against Breast Cancer'. <https://share.google/5Jk4v6RcOo9VAcQGD>

We also had successful meetings with Eco church reps from St Mark's Methodist Church in Cheltenham, Holy Trinity, Minchinhampton and St Mary's in Wotton under Edge who are at different stages of Eco Church and who contacted us to learn from our endeavours to reach Gold. Some lovely feedback:

"Dear Ginny,

What a wonderful afternoon yesterday! A huge thank you to you, and your enthusiastic and committed team members for making us Minch folks so welcome. We really appreciated your generous sharing of so much of Stonehouse Methodists' journey to achieving a Gold Eco

Church Award. We could see all those values expressed so clearly and naturally as soon as we walked in to the church!

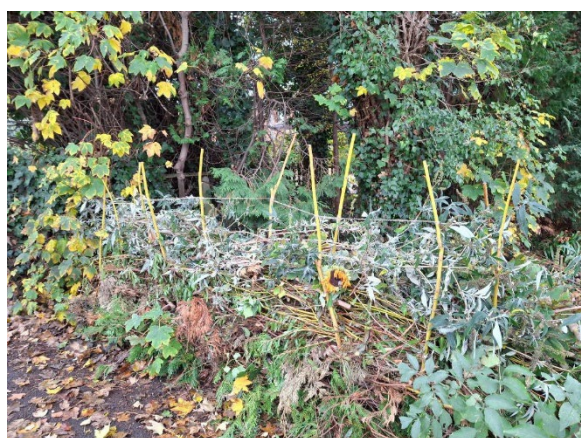
Thank you too for having copies of various documents ready for us to take away as excellent examples to help. Jennie



From Revd Rachel Leather, St Mark's :

'Just to say a quick thank you to you all for your wisdom and conversation on Monday. You've given us lots to think about and how St Mark's can continue on our journey, and we all found your story inspirational.'

We have also done our 3rd annual Carbon Footprint and been in touch with Adrian Frost at Climate Stewards who has confirmed we can offset some of it as we have planted another tree as well as the two apple trees put in during the spring.



We have recently attended a demonstration and workshop at Dursley Methodist Church on Sustainable Flower

Arranging. We have ditched our Oasis and have quite a few new ideas to put into practice. Sustainable Church Flowers website <https://share.google/euuOj7s7AhyD1bR0z>

With best wishes

Ginny Young and the Team

The Eco Newsletter Interviews

Freya Ballard has had some conversations with members of two of our churches about their work for creation care. Here's part of these interviews.

Elaine Bailey and Peter Boait from Bethesda Cheltenham (Gloucestershire)

Q: What are the best ways you have found to get your church involved/ enthused about Eco Church? A: Give something to people that makes them think about the environment. We have given [flower] bulbs to people walking down the street. You want the community to know you're doing something. Make people feel empowered!"



Q: Why is ministry about creation care important? A: It integrates the message into the ethos of the church. It is vital that it is integrated into the message as a whole. God created this world for us to live in- it is our responsibility to look after it.”

Q: How does taking action make you feel more hopeful? A: We must counter the argument that it is too late to do anything. Keep up the activity, it is worthwhile. Every step is worth making. People start to take notice of things, such as palm oil and cleaning products.

Q: Tell me about the Bethesda Backpackers. A: We have been walking for nearly 30 years, every week. We pick up litter as we go, showing how we should respect the environment. People have also joined from outside the church!

Q: What happens at your ‘Open Gardens’? A: I produced a map showing where open gardens, belonging to members of the church, were, and what to expect there, For example, in one you can cuddle a chicken. It enabled people to invite the community to them and show their concern for the environment. We did not need anyone to have a perfect garden.”

Q: What impact have your solar panels had? A: If you can get it done the return is very good- you will save money and make a valuable impact . The main challenge is if you have a listed building or are in a conservation area. You want the community to know you’re doing something and why. Make people feel empowered.”

Q: Tips for beginning / continuing your church’s ‘eco journey’ A: “It is very easy to do the first steps. It can be done without much paperwork. Do things that bring people together on church premises to share! “Our harvest lunch will be on LOAF [local, organic and animal-friendly food] principles, with an explanation saying how we must all try our best.”

Make sure you have a green energy contract. This is the dominant source of your emissions.”

Record what you are doing – it is useful for EcoChurch and can be shared with others.

Takeaway comments:

I hope this hot summer has caused the penny to drop. We must take it seriously. It is a race against time!” We must counter the despair and stay hopeful for the young people.”

Victoria Methodist Church Eco Group, Bristol and South Glos Circuit

Q: How have you made the different part of Eco-Church manageable?

We have 14 in our eco group, with different sub-groups within this. We have a diverse range of people from the church that can get involved in a way that suits them. [Editor’s comment – you don’t have to have that many to make an impact, my church only has 3 in our eco group!!]

Q: How do you get the whole church involved? A: We had an away day focused on environmental matters. It had high energy! We have an ‘**Eco Action of the Month**’, every month and put it in the notices and on the eco board. For example: We collected vegetarian recipes

from the congregation and shared them. This action is to help people take small, regular steps to transform their lifestyle and be hopeful.”

Q: Can you still make a difference being a listed building? A: “Yes! The first thing we did was organise an energy audit. It was brilliant. There were a lot of easy fixes to begin with. From there we started looking solar panels.”

Q: Have you got any advice for other churches? A: Start with an event that people enjoy! At our eco fair we had a lot of people from church, it was a very sociable day.”

“Find some ‘Eco Champions’ within your church”.

“Organise an event that people will enjoy- with lots of cake! Something to feel positive about.”

“Hosting a People’s Emergency Briefing is great because you can hear from people who weren’t ‘on the climate change bandwagon’. Climate change will affect everything!”

Book Recommendation – Not the End of the World, by Hannah Ritchie

DISTRICT NEWS

The district is working towards the Silver Award under the EcoDistrict scheme but we probably won’t achieve this until Spring/Summer of 2027.

The District Environment Team has been added to and has changed its name to the District Creation Care Group. We do want to hear of any ways we can help you, your church or your circuit to care for creation better. Any suggestions for topics for our webinar programme?

Don’t forget the grants

If you have some exciting ideas to enable your church to help creation then the District may be able to help you. There are three grant schemes. The first is the District Advance Fund which can help with property schemes and employment. Then we have a small grant scheme up to £1000. And finally there is the Environment Small Grants scheme which can help with projects up to £5000 – you can get the first £1000 as a grant and then it goes £ for £ up to the maximum. So the biggest grant under this scheme is £3000. There are all sorts of schemes being helped – new LED lighting, transforming barren courtyards into gardens and much else.

We have also received money from the Methodist Church centrally for carbon reduction projects and we will let you know how to access this money in the next EcoNewsletter.

HORFIELD IS BUZZING



The Buzz Zone – A service to celebrate the completion of the project

In July Horfield Methodist blessed their Buzz Zone taking a run down area of their land and creating a garden environment for use by the church and the community. They wrote: “It was so nice to open up the Buzz Zone and gather for a worship service this Sunday. It was great to see the area full of people, and have the opportunity to bless the space, pray and worship God. We sang “All things bright and beautiful” and followed the service with a picnic tea – we especially enjoyed eating the tomatoes that we had grown ourselves in one of the new planters. Being together in the space, allowed us some time to talk about how we will use the space going forward, and make sure that we don’t take it for granted.

We’ve come a long way in 18 months!”



BEFORE



AFTER



A new course from A Rocha to mobilise the Church.

Do you long to see more people taking action to care for God's creation? Are you ready to use your passion for the environment to mobilise others? Then our new course is for you! A brand new initiative from A Rocha UK: The Christian Environmental Mobilisers Course (CEMs).

"Launching in October 2026 and designed to fit around your life, this interactive online programme will equip you with the biblical foundation, knowledge and influencing skills to become a powerful catalyst for environmental change in your church, workplace or community. The course will be delivered over six evening sessions, monthly." Details at <https://arocha.org.uk/christian-environmental-mobilisers/>

Looking Ahead....

Apologies that this is the first EcoNewsletter for 9 months; we will try to do better next time. Looking ahead, if you have news to share please send it to me at souterfam@aol.com by November 15th then hopefully we can have a Christmas present full of hope.