

Wesley Memorial *news*

The magazine from Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford | Summer 2019



Kew Gardens 2018

For the beauty of the earth

The Manse, June 2019

Dear Friends,

A serendipitous discovery of Peter Parker's insightful and beautifully-written study *Housman Country: Into the Heart of England* (2016) took me back to a little book of poetry which I read, carefully marked, tried to learn, and certainly inwardly digested for A Level English a very long time ago. Our set text was a selection of A.E. Housman's poetry and prose; his first book of verse, *A Shropshire Lad*, was published in 1896, and it has been in print ever since. Housman was an undergraduate at St John's College, Oxford, and then a classicist teaching in London and Cambridge, and he drew on memories of a Worcestershire (not Shropshire!) childhood and on rambles over Hampstead Heath to inspire quotable visions of "blue remembered hills" which resonated powerfully with a reading public increasingly living and working in large cities. Housman was able to combine the pastoral traditions of English poetry with wistful longing for a "land of lost content". But Housman's countryside was far from idyllic. His "lads", more often than not, are unsettled, footloose, unhappy in love, and brooding darkly on the injustices of life: "moping melancholy mad" and looking forward to a quiet eternity in the "free land of the grave". As a teenager I found this quite a gloomy read, and I still do!

So why bring up Housman in a letter introducing the theme "For the beauty of the earth"? Well, to make the point that Christian reflection on the earth and on the created order is both subtle and multi-vocal. In Scripture the earth is God's good creation, filled with abundant life, and entrusted to human beings to be tended and nurtured (Genesis 2:15). It is a source of unending delight and wonder (Psalm 19:1), and an encouragement, for those with eyes to see, to worship and acknowledge God (Psalm 95:3-5). Yet the earth is also a place of fallenness, frustration and toil (Genesis 3:17-19). In a powerful image, Paul pictures creation trapped in bondage to decay and waiting eagerly for redemption (Romans 8:19-22), as the whole of the cosmos both shares in the dire consequences of the human turn away from God and also participates in God's gift of liberation in Jesus Christ. In Christ, the first-born of all creation, "all things" hold together, and everything is ultimately reconciled to God: not just human beings, but "all things, whether on earth or in heaven" (Colossians 1:20).

I hope that this issue of *Wesley Memorial News* will encourage us to celebrate and delight in the beauty of the earth, and to enjoy and be inspired and refreshed by all that God has made. It's so easy to lose sight of God's wonderful creation, and it does us untold good to lift our eyes from the tasks and routines of life and to take in the sheer gift of the world around us. I hope that we can do this without deifying or sentimentalising the world, although I recognise that sentimentality may well be in the eye (and heart) of the beholder!

I hope too that reading the articles that follow will give us some more ideas as to how we can tread lightly on God's good earth and take our share of responsibility for living justly in a world of finite resources. As we do that, and as we continue to grapple with the challenges of the climate crisis, I hope that we will also keep in sight the full breadth and length and depth and height of the salvation that God has accomplished in Christ for the whole creation, and that this will give us encouragement and hope.

Yours in Christ,

Martin Wellings

Editorial

Swallows and swifts are wheeling overhead, butterflies are lazily flitting from flower to flower, strawberries are everywhere and there’s a festival every weekend. It’s summer, it’s hot and there’s time to enjoy our place within this beautiful blue-green earth.

We’ve come a long way, fast. We’ve seen rapid advances in health and life expectancy worldwide, huge increases in the number of children in free education, and economic growth that has transformed millions of lives in countries across the globe.

But the planet is experiencing change that is also our doing. Time is running out to avoid dangerous climate change and the rate of loss seen in the natural world, with a million species under threat, means we are risking the green and pleasant lands on which we rely for our food, clean water and wellbeing.

You’ll find plenty of reflections in these pages on how our faith can inspire us in sustaining and restoring our beautiful, prosperous world – for ourselves and for the full glory of God’s creation. Best wishes for the summer from the *Wesley Memorial News team!*

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The time is now

On Wednesday 26 June, a group of our enthusiastic climate change protesters left Oxford early, and joined thousands of others in Westminster, London, in response to a call for action by the Climate Coalition. Thousands of supporters from every corner of Britain took our message straight to Parliament in the biggest lobby the UK has ever seen.

The Climate Coalition, made up of of 130 varied organisations including Christian Aid, is demanding urgent action, and had organised the lobby calling on MPs to:

- commit to investment of a minimum of 2% of GDP per year on climate action, to make net zero emissions a reality by 2045;
- ensure all emissions cuts are domestic, and not achieved via dubious international carbon-trading with low-emitting developing countries;
- rapidly put in place ambitious policies to get us on track to net zero emissions by 2045 at the latest.

Oxford MPs Layla Moran and Annaliese Dodds met constituents, were duly lobbied and heard these points.



Our responsibility within creation

Since I was asked to contribute a piece on the stewardship of creation I must explain why I cannot. Namely that I think that idea is part of the problem, rather than the solution, to the increasingly perilous condition of earth. It is now common knowledge that human behaviour is irreversibly changing the climate, shifting the seasons, destroying unique habitats, polluting the oceans with non-degradable plastics, squandering irreplaceable resources, and accelerating mass extinctions, to name but a few.

Whilst Christians are indeed stewards of the gifts God has given us (1 Peter 4:10), the natural world is never portrayed by scripture as gifted to us; rather God creates it along with us. Stewards, as several parables of Jesus portray, manage affairs during an owner's absence, but God is not the absent landlord of planet earth. The psalms and other passages declaring how fulsomely nature praises its Creator would be as meaningless as would our praises, if God were absent.

Our mistake in part arises from the fact that we read the Bible only as far as Genesis chapter 1, and suppose that we then have a full doctrine of creation! God mercifully did not lie down for an endless rest on the seventh day, leaving nature to run itself, or humans to do so on God's behalf. The responsibility towards nature entrusted to us in Genesis 1:26-28 is one we can exercise only insofar as we resemble God, or truly express God's image (v.26). It is only necessary to read one more chapter to be clear that God gave us no licence to exploit the natural world for selfish greed. "Cultivate and guard" was the directive given in Genesis 2:14, and immediately after that God set moral boundaries in using the fruits of nature. As is well-known, it was subsequently the misuse of nature, eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17, 3:6), that brought sin into the world. It comes then as no surprise that the prophets frequently see human sin as the root cause of crop failures and all kinds of so-called natural disasters. The earth shares the consequences of sin (Genesis 3:17-19) every bit as much as it shares the original goodness declared by God (1:31). Therefore it is no surprise either to find that God's remedy for sin heals the non-human creation as well as humanity.

The outcome is described in evocative picture-language in Isaiah 11:6-9, where the wolf and the lamb live together, the



child plays with the poisonous snake, and none hurts or destroys. It is expressed more cerebrally at the conclusion of Paul's robust theology of salvation in Romans 8:18-24. Here the whole creation, consigned by God to futility, suffering and decay, "will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God", but only when we humans also acquire our resurrection bodies.

A common destiny, as well as a common origin, is what binds us inseparably in a shared hope to the whole earth. It would be impossible to argue on biblical grounds that trashing the earth might be consistent with believing in our own salvation. On the contrary, our use or abuse of natural resources today – animals, plants, oceans, minerals, soil and atmosphere – demonstrates as clearly as in the garden of Eden whether we are partners in God's creative purpose for the whole of it, or self-centred usurpers.

In an era when we are at last coming to understand that people once considered disabled, and before that, as inferior, have special gifts and a special place in society, we need likewise to lose our superiority complex with regard to the non-human creation, and embrace its gifts and priceless contribution alongside ourselves to God's purposes.

So I've entitled this piece, "Our responsibility within creation" rather than for it. Firstly you might want to stop talking about this beautiful world as "the environment" as though we are at the centre. That mistake, propagated only during recent generations, threatens the whole creation's future, so that what Paul saw in Romans as labour pains of a new created order could become death throes instead.

Stephen Mosedale, supernumerary minister, formerly Superintendent of the Milton Keynes Circuit.

JPIT's Lent Challenge



Creating a climate of change.

The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) is an ecumenical endeavour between the Methodist, URC, Baptist Churches and the Church of Scotland. The *Living Lent* challenge campaign invited people to respond to the call to climate action by making significant personal commitments to changing lifestyle.

Meat-Free Lent

We gave up meat for Lent as part of JPIT's Living Lent campaign, because meat production (and especially beef) is now recognised to be a big contributor to climate change. It was a good experience overall, although not that popular with the children! It encouraged us to cook new dishes at home. I got much more used to cooking fish, coped reasonably well with a range of beans and pulses, but retained a distinct distrust of tofu. It also forced us to avoid old favourites and make different choices when eating out, which was refreshing. My biggest challenge was remembering to avoid meat when out, especially at the start. The lovely Mel McCulloch saved me from early failure

with a well-timed question at a buffet, as I blithely picked up and nearly scoffed a cocktail sausage. Thank you Mel!

After Lent finished, I enjoyed eating meat again but we will definitely eat less of it now than we used to, and we plan to eat very little beef apart from as a very occasional treat.

Overall we found it reasonably easy and felt we maybe hadn't challenged ourselves enough. I feel great respect for those who manage to go vegan, or give up single-use plastic. Maybe next year (but don't tell the children).

Jenny Ayres

Becoming a (mostly) vegetarian

I was a vegetarian between the ages of 16 and 26 until we had our children. When they were born they enjoyed eating meat and I didn't feel I should force my vegetarianism upon them so went back to being a meat-eater. Nearly 30 years later the tables were turned when Jack and Billy became vegetarian and I felt I should reconsider my choices. I listened to a BBC Radio 4 podcast called *New Year Solutions* which was about the impact our choices can make on climate change. It was said that becoming a vegetarian is the best thing that you can do for the environment.

Here are some reasons why:

- 50% of the world's surface is farmed and this involves cutting down forests. Farming animal products takes up 80% of this available space.
- Cows' digestive systems convert the carbon in food to methane which is a greenhouse gas. Animal production is responsible for about 15% of the world's greenhouse gases.

– To get the same amount of protein from plant based foods (nuts, pulses etc...) as from a burger would use one fiftieth of the carbon footprint (the climate change impact of what we do in our lives).

– 26,000 species are threatened with extinction and half of these are threatened by the amount of farmland we use for animal production (3.1 billion hectares).

Personally, it has not been too much of a struggle for me to become mostly vegetarian again. I was never a big meat-eater and I do confess to occasionally eating fish.

Mike Berners-Lee, the author of *How Bad are Bananas?*, says, "It's not about wearing hair-shirts or being extremist. It's about picking your battles and moderation in all things."

Jo Godfrey

Beauty creativity and reflection

In June last year I went to the first retreat to be held at *Les Jardins des Arts*, a centre for reflection set up by Bob and Sue Whorton in Hanc, southwestern France. It was called 'Patientez – the Grace of Waiting' and was led by oncologist and hospital Chaplain Margaret Whipp. I enjoyed it so much that I went back this year for an art workshop led by Adam Boulter, an artist and Anglican priest serving as Chaplain for the parish, but soon to move to Madagascar to head up a theological college there.

Les Jardins des Arts is a beautiful and peaceful property in a quiet village with wonderful walks all around the countryside, as well as its own extensive garden, swimming pool, and orchard. It was in the orchard that I wrote this poem last year:

Presents and presence
My soles and my soul
drink the dew
from the strimmed grass
as I moisten
the lips of my spirit
for a new prayer.
And so I am blessed
by the moisture of my skin,
of feet and fruitfulness,
as green apples gently wave
in the breeze.
Can it be that the trees
have granted my desire
for timelessness,
that I can sit here
shaded and surrounded,
settled and installed
in the moment?
And how can it not be
that God is here?

The orchard now has a labyrinth built by Bob, Sue, and a community of local people on 30 March this year, and they plan a September retreat devoted to walking the labyrinth .



In among the stones of the labyrinth there are all sorts of wonders of creation including bee orchids, pink clover, ceps, and a wide variety of insect life. The verges of the roads are left uncut, so you can find other varieties of orchid and wild flowers and creatures there also. In the garden this year we saw a hoopoe, much to Molly the dog's indignation.



Bob, Sue, and Molly have a great gift of hospitality: immaculate accommodation, wonderful food, and lots of licks from Molly, with healing stroking sessions aplenty. Adam provided a number of seeing and drawing exercises, deep silences, stimulating discussion, and an original Communion service with rose petals and minimum words. Apart from drawing, we made, painted, and tried to fly kites, accompanied by Adam's delightful seven-year-old daughter Hannah.

Truly, as one of the other participants wrote in the visitors' book, *Les Jardins des Arts* is a 'slice of heaven'!

Joanna Tulloch

Going single-use plastic free for Lent

Tom and I chose to take up one of the six *Living Lent* challenges posed by JPIT, going single-use plastic free for the six and a half weeks of Lent. “This shouldn’t be too tricky,” we thought, “after all, we get a weekly delivery from Abel & Cole (A&C) with fruit, veg and more in cardboard boxes, so we’ll be flying with this challenge!”

Well, yes, we did have lots of it covered, but it turned out to be more difficult to cover the rest. Even our veg boxes used plastics for milk, yogurt, bags of spinach, meat etc. I emailed them and they told me about their work to reduce plastics: however, collecting, cleaning and reusing the plastic milk bottles, or delivering large quantities of glass bottles would involve extra costs and energy use, so we swapped to *Milk & More* delivering our milk and yogurt in glass bottles to our doorstep.

We quickly spotted all sorts of plastic usage we’d not considered before. We made swaps where we could such as going to the butcher, baker and markets with our own tubs. Tom made homemade crisps once (yum!), we took our bamboo reusable mugs to the cinema for coffees, and we expanded the fruit and veg planting in our garden. And it’s not just about food. Many household items come in single-use plastic. We swapped to soap bars, shampoo bars, toothpaste in a glass jar (only Tom has stuck with this one, as I personally found it to be revolting!), deodorant as a stone and also as paste in a jar, and fortunately our A&C loo rolls already came packaged in 100% recyclable plastic.

Some of these items came from on-line shops, but many were local – Kidlington market; Summertown farmers’ market (great for a chance to ‘try before you buy’: I’m sure we could actually have eaten a decent lunch by trying a few more tastes of things at the stalls!); East Oxford Community Market (gorgeous wood-fired pizza and SESI refill for dry food and household detergents); Oxford Hub pop-up shop for refills in central Oxford; the Covered Market (especially for the cheese shop). With these within walking/cycling distance, we managed not to purchase any extra petrol but some are only open on certain days so planning our

shopping, and having cash in hand became important. The supermarket ‘deli’ counters ought to be single-use plastic free if you take your own tubs, but I found they used plastic sheets instead of gloves to handle the food.

So, what did we learn by doing this? I was surprised to find it liberating to walk through a supermarket and only buy a few items, not being tempted by all the multi-buy offers of plastic-wrapped items. The initial costs were higher, and our organic delivery box is more expensive, but after that, we bought less in general, cooked more from raw ingredients and grew lots of veg in the garden! Clearly the best way to avoid plastic use and reduce our carbon footprint is to buy less. Interestingly, with less packaging comes less consumer information; the SESI refill items have some information on the website but not at the point of purchase. There are no ‘Best Before’ dates here, nor on produce from markets, butchers etc, so we need to think for ourselves a little more. Our children have tried a wider range of products and didn’t complain about the lack of the usual multipacks of crisps etc. They are both joining in with cooking occasionally and have helped dig in the veg patch. Yes, I did agree to pay them for that!

So, what next? We are sticking with most of our swaps, buying less and also working harder to reuse and recycle the plastic we can’t avoid. Sainsburys have a plastic film recycling bin for bags, etc, Walkers have a recycling scheme for washed empty packets, and we reuse plastics around the house and garden (pots and punnets become seed pots, film bags store small craft items, compost bags become ‘grobags’ for potatoes, and all sorts of containers are reused for junk modelling in my work with children).

I feel we can’t go back to the way we previously used and threw away plastics. Of course, these changes only have a tiny impact on the climate change crisis, but I believe that individuals can make a difference. So the JPIT challenges are for life, not just for Lent!

Esther Ibbotson

What is Wesley Memorial made of?

Put simply, Wesley Memorial could be said to be made of stone, wood, metals and polymers. There is something rather unsatisfactory about this, however. It doesn't seem to capture the fullness of the experience of being in, or even in front of the church. We want to add location, light, design and engineering, not to mention preaching, music and prayer, then fellowship, laughter, memories and, above all, God's presence. These are all necessary for a full expression of what Wesley Memorial as a building may mean to us; but it might be worth pausing for a while to look again at the building as a material thing, made from "the beauty of the earth". After all, nothing is man-made that hasn't been made in bits by God first!

In this article we are looking at one ingredient: stone. From this amazingly versatile substance we gain the structure, roof, principal decorative features and, in the form of ground stone or sand, the glorious stained glass windows.

One Sunday, take some time to admire the external doorways from a vantage point at the end of St Michael's Street. Notice that the grandest of these is not in the centre but under the tower – designed with the spire as an eye-catcher for those approaching from Cornmarket. In the morning sunlight, the stone radiates light and welcome.

When did you last walk around the balcony and admire the crisp detailing in the carved capitals close up? Here are British fruits and flowers, leaves and trees captured in stone and executed beautifully by Henry Frith of Gloucester. Can we also 'see' the strength of God's purpose and His brilliant creativity? Before your eyes move to the windows, contemplate the wonderfully textured "basket weave" infill between the tops of the arches.

Then to the windows: first admire the designs of the stone tracery that hold the stained glass panels; note the variety and ingenuity of designs. Finally, let's look again at the glass: 'liquid sand' melted, stained, poured and bound in lead. It transmits light in a way that lifts the spirit for so many, whether visitors during the week or worshippers on

Sundays. Let's not take them for granted, nor ignore the stories they tell.

Your favourite might be the rose window with its rich red tones and pure white blooms. Or maybe you are particularly fond of the large windows at the back of the balcony with their jewel-like colours and flowers and plants from the Bible. Here the beauty of the earth is clear to see. Here too is an expression of a congregation freed from the discrimination of the earlier 19th century, rejoicing in its newfound confidence and willing to adopt the change to a decorated Gothic style from the earlier much plainer chapel. The 'Word' is still paramount but the walls and windows, as well as the preaching, now have a role to play in conveying the loving purposes of God.

Youth and age are honoured here too. On the south side of the balcony we have the *Zachariah and Elizabeth* window, given by Alice Boffin in memory of her elderly parents; and the window depicting Faith, Hope and Charity, given by Josiah and Elizabeth Symm in memory of their daughter and son-in-law, both of whom died young.

The contributions of more recent members are celebrated in glass too, this time beneath the balcony. The window near the war memorial, featuring the church in front of a beautiful blue sky, organ pipes and tools, was given in memory of George and Alice Cox who did so much to look after the church premises. Next is a boat in full sail, given by her sisters in loving memory of Gladys Wickens, a long time member of this church, and great supporter of the Seaman's Mission of the Methodist Church. Then comes the Coulson window, featuring the dove. Dedicated to both Charles and Eileen, it recalls their commitment to peace and justice and to the church in the widest sense. To find out more about them see the panel outside the Coulson meeting room or ask their daughter, Wendy Spray!

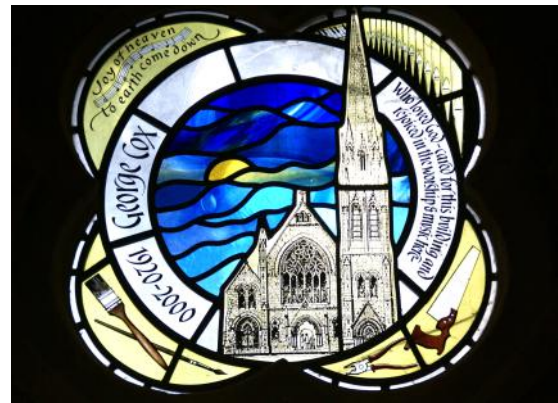
Let's not forget the other windows that filter the light and provide so much of the atmosphere of the building and especially David Pilkington's engraved circular window.

Featuring the text from Charles Wesley’s hymn “O, that the world might taste and see the riches of his grace”, this is a window into the church for the curious and nervous visitor, but it is also a window looking out on the world we are called to serve.

In the church building we have a monumental expression of the beauty of God’s earth. What does this say to us, who are called to be living stones? We need to give substance and shape to God’s love to all through our words and actions. We are called to celebrate and care for the gift of his creation and to use our creative talents to express his glory. We share God’s message of love in Jesus through worship, hospitality, stories and service, both in the building and beyond these walls.

Gracious God, to thee we raise this our sacrifice of praise!

Alison Butler



The George and Alice Cox window



The Gladys Wickens memorial

Reflecting on the current crisis and a book with a stark warning

“For the beauty of the earth” was a popular hymn in my Devon primary school assemblies, sung to the familiar tune. Each verse is a celebration of God’s good gifts, ending with the chorus “Lord of all to thee we raise This our sacrifice of praise”. John Rutter has given this hymn a choir version of course, but it is the old version that I cherish from the days when I grew up in one of our most beautiful counties, where the air was considerably less polluted than it is in modern Oxford. But what can one say about Oxfordshire as it seeks to extend the built-up environment in a rather unbeautiful way in all directions? The current situation has driven me to join the Council for the Preservation of Rural England.

Beauty turning to ugliness would of course be bad enough, but recently we have been reminded of a fact that we should have woken up to decades ago – that we are not only destroying the beauty of the earth, but the earth itself. Some scientists now describe us as being into the Anthropocene Era, the time when human activity is the

dominant force behind the behaviour of our planet. Until now, we have sought to control the planet, but now the planet is beginning to control us in terrible new ways. Our actions have already caused millions of additional deaths, and our future seems to be one of huge fires, extreme floods, unbreathable air, desertification, inadequate food and water for a growing global population.

For further (uncomfortable) reading, get hold of *The Uninhabitable Earth*, a new “story of the future” by David Wallace-Wells, a deputy editor of *New York Magazine*. To put things right, or at least to minimise the damage, we will need an unprecedented level of international co-operation. The author offers some pointers as to how this might happen, but in the meantime let’s try to campaign against the ugliness that leads to destruction and cherish the beauty of “the hill and vale, tree and flower” we still have.

Don Manley

A ‘virtual’ interview with Professor Helen Roy of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology

How did you become an ecologist?

I have always been fascinated by the natural world. As a young child I enjoyed making discoveries in my back garden on the Isle of Wight, always encouraged by my inspirational mum. During my teenage years I attended natural history camps led by the biology teacher at my secondary school and delighted at every activity from bat-watching and small mammal surveys to sampling plants in quadrats. I also became a member of the local Natural History Society and was particularly excited by seeing the reports of our annual school camps reported in the magazine. So began my passion for science writing and communication. I studied biology at Southampton University and immersed myself in the fantastic ecology teaching that was offered, including an amazing field course in southern Spain. I then completed a Masters in Environmental Science at Nottingham University – a great opportunity to improve my analytical skills. This led into my PhD – a joint venture with Nottingham University and Rothamsted Research – which enabled me the great privilege of three years studying the intricate interactions between natural enemies (ladybirds, lacewings, hoverflies and even pathogenic fungi) of aphids. I loved it! I have since enjoyed 22 years within ecological research involving large collaborations with the most incredible scientists around the world. I could never have imagined that I would have found such a perfect way to spend my working life. I have been able to follow my dreams in the wonderful company of many creatures great and small!



Tell us about the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

The Centre for Ecology & Hydrology is a research institute with four sites (Wallingford, Bangor, Edinburgh and Lancaster) employing scientists with expertise spanning the

molecular to the landscape, and focussed on research at varying scales from local to global. For more details, see www.ceh.ac.uk/

You work on “invasive” species: how do they get here? And are they a real threat?

Invasive non-native species are species that have been moved from one region to another region by humans and cause some kind of problem to biodiversity, ecosystems, economies and society. It is important to remember that the vast majority of species transported by humans do not pose any threat – these are simply termed “non-native species”. The 15% which have adverse effects are termed “invasive non-native species”. These species span plants and animals and all environments – terrestrial, freshwater and marine. They arrive in many different ways, for example through horticulture, on packaging, attached to the hulls of ships and many more. In the recent Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) global assessment, invasive non-native species were designated as one of the five big drivers of biodiversity loss. In some regions of the world, particularly islands, they constitute the most major threat. In other regions it is the interaction with other drivers of change, such as climate change, that is incredibly concerning.

What can we as individuals do about this?

There are many ways that people can help. Ensuring effective biosecurity, for example. That is following simple approaches. For example, the ‘Be Plant Wise’ campaign gives guidance on ensuring responsible planting and so reducing the likelihood that garden plants escape and cause problems. Or *Check, Clean, Dry* which provides information for anglers and other recreational users of water bodies – again to prevent the introduction and spread of species. Additionally, people can get involved with monitoring and surveillance by reporting sightings of concern on-line at : www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/index.cfm?id=4

How do you get your message out to ordinary people?

Engagement is critical. Ensuring that people have the best available evidence on which to base decisions that have consequences for our natural world is essential. There is lots of information available through the Non-Native Species Secretariat: www.nonnativespecies.org/ It is important to talk about issues and share ideas and thoughts to protect our natural world. Biological invasions are driven by humans and so involving people (beyond invasion biologists) in research is critical for informing horizon scanning and surveillance, and underpinning prevention, control and even the elimination of invasive non-native species. Citizen science, involvement of volunteers in science, can raise awareness of biological invasions while also enabling people to contribute to research for the benefit of society, science, and nature.

Are you optimistic about the future of the planet for our children and grandchildren?

I am optimistic. There are so many amazing people around the world who are determined to achieve the very best outcomes for our natural world. It is incredible to see

people of all ages engaged and active in raising awareness of the threats to biodiversity and ecosystems while promoting sustainable approaches. Climate Action is one such example. Plastic challenges, such as seen here, www.mcsuk.org/plastic-challenge/ are another. My daughter is a young leader within a local Brownie unit and they worked together to devise a badge called “No more plastic” Challenge - it really was inspiring to see the energy and enthusiasm of these young people working together. There is so much we can do as individuals and communities to nurture our planet and encourage others to do the same.

Additionally, nature is incredibly resilient. It is amazing to see restored habitats flourishing and species recovering following mitigating approaches. Our ecological understanding is increasing at a rapid pace and providing robust evidence to underpin action. There are so many Stories of Hope:

www.earthoptimism.cambridgeconservation.org/

Thank you, Helen, for your commitment and enthusiasm, and for sparing time to share your thoughts with us.

Kate Dobson

Eco-Church at Wesley Memorial

On Sunday 9th June, about 30 members of the congregation shared lunch together and then engaged in lively discussion to consider where Wesley Memorial currently stands in ‘eco’ terms, measured against criteria provided by A Rocha, the Christian charity promoting the Eco-Church scheme.

In order to improve our Eco-Church status, and maybe gain an award, we need to look at four main areas of Church life: Lifestyle, Community and Global Engagement, Building and Lands and, finally, Worship and Teaching. Each of these areas was addressed in small groups and ideas for next steps were identified. These were many and varied, with overlaps across the groups. Detailed information can be found in Jo Godfrey’s report to the June Church Council.

These discussions are, indeed, pressing and thought-provoking as we, the Church community, seek to change our habits and lifestyle and declare what we are doing, both individually and as a Church, to play our part in the pressing matter of reducing our carbon footprint and the effects of Climate Change for our world.

Janet Forsaith



<https://arocha.org.uk/>

Listen!

Sore eyes close -

not quite blind to Nature's wry smile:
ironic abundance of field left fallow;
proud spires of human science artfully
brushed from this landscape composition -

better to listen.

The larks ascend; less soaring strings,
more radio transmitters
repeating, competing, interfering.
Scroll the dial and hear...cacophony;
neither harmony nor meaning.

Record, rewind, reduce the tempo.
New notes scurry to take the place
of quavers become minims;
silent syllables encrypted still but audible.

Is it a state of high alert so slows the beat of time
that small voices can be heard,
and small minds perceive?

Will there be time to tune in to frequencies
outwith my narrow spectrum;
to hear the wake-up calls,
songs of praise, of fear and longing,
reminders of life's wonderful fragility;
to receive and be made whole?

A momentary miracle:
a migraine dissolves,
dissonance resolves.

Chris Butler

Beauty from the West Coast

A chance came earlier this year for Freda and myself to visit friends in Southern Oregon. I had to look up to see exactly where their home in 'Hawk Gulch', complete with deer and brown bears in the garden, was situated. I found it was just above California on the left-hand side of the USA!

The natural beauty was overwhelming. In particular the forests of giant redwood trees on their own made the visit worthwhile, which hold the record for some of the tallest trees in the world.

Trees that are so tall that you cannot see the top do rather put humans into perspective, as the photo shows. Some are hundreds of years old.



We were greeted by warm welcoming friendly people wherever we went in Oregon. We also travelled north to Portland – Oregon's largest city – which has the largest bookshop in the world based on shelf space, beauty of a different kind to those of us who love books!

What was noticeable though, was the way in which the West Coast welcome was spelt out in notices on public transport, in shops and restaurants as well as in many churches. There was a real beauty in this too, celebrating human diversity.

John Cammack



Carbon reduction – why?

Climate change emergency declarations, along with so-called climate strikes, have been inspired by the personal protest of Greta Thunberg (pictured). While the UK sees increasing periods of coal-free electricity generation, the intermittency of renewables is being balanced by natural gas-fired power stations. Far better in my view to store excesses in renewable energy and release them when necessary. The government can take some credit for creating the conditions for a move away from coal, but it needs to take more steps to ensure that cuts in carbon emissions continue well into the future.

More locally, “for the beauty of the earth” is one reason to reduce your carbon emissions. Certainly that’s the angle taken by A Rocha, the Christian charity behind the Eco-Church scheme. My own church in Rugby (Hillmorton Paddock) has just gained a Bronze award, and a group of us will soon meet to discuss where to go from there. Though I came to know of the scheme – and to take on my voluntary District role – through a property committee contact, Eco-church actually covers much more than just the building.

Worship and teaching is the first area where A Rocha hope that churches will consider creation, going by the sequence of questions in their online survey, accessed via <https://arocha.org.uk/>. This may be through special Sundays, the use of particular hymns and prayers, preaching and teaching. Where churches have responsibility for land, the scheme encourages it to be managed in such a way as to benefit wildlife. Even a car park can be improved by adding planters. If herbs, salads or other edibles are grown for community use, that also contributes to the area of Community and Global Engagement.

As well as locally grown food used in church meals, A Rocha criteria include organic, animal-friendly, and Fair Trade ingredients, and the provision of vegetarian and/or vegan options. Lifestyle is the final and perhaps most awkward aspect of Eco-Church. As with evangelism, the message is meant to get out beyond the church walls, shape how we

live, and get noticed by, and ideally influence, those with whom we come into contact. The inclusion of eco-tips in a church publication can score several points here in the hope that they’re not just empty words, but have a real effect on the reader.



Back to the church building(s): another motivation for cutting carbon may be financial, although often it’s necessary to invest before operating costs can be cut. One of the simplest ways is by changing to LED lighting, now available in a variety of shapes, styles and colours, and paying for itself in a matter of months if used heavily. Heating is likely to be a bigger part of the energy bill. Modern boilers, insulation and effective glazing have the biggest effect but don’t come cheap. Draughtproofing can be an easy win.

Thanks be to God that I’m not solely responsible for reducing carbon emissions in our Methodist District. Those organising Synod have responded to our host’s provision of bottled water in 2018 with a successful request for fresh water in jugs this year. Circuits and churches are cutting carbon by their own decisions, too: a few have asked me for advice; I see others when they’re reported in the annual returns. Improvements in building regulations take effect on large scale projects, old boilers can be replaced with more efficient models, while general maintenance and good housekeeping play their part too. I believe every little helps, but if it’s more than just a little, even better.

Howard Warrener, Northampton Methodist District Advocate for Carbon Reduction

See page 11 for a report on Wesley Memorial’s eco-church activity and work on 9 June.

Before it's too late... new nature writing

When did you last hear a cuckoo?

Do you ever have to wash dead insects off your windscreen in the summer nowadays?

In our garden we see a lot of sparrows because our neighbours have an aviary and a bird-feeding station, but their British population has shrunk by 20 million since I left college; that's 50 fewer birds every hour for 50 years and there are now only one tenth of the moths that were here in 1970 and a quarter of the beetles and butterflies.

Things are changing in our lifetimes, but though the situation for plants and animals is dire, it is not hopeless yet. As public awareness and scientific understanding grow, new ideas are developing and already there are small pockets of success.

Returning birds and insects are exciting because we can see and appreciate them, but this renaissance can only happen when things we can't see – because they're underground or microscopic – have begun to flourish again. Food chains have to build from the bottom up. All this is explained in two amazing books I've just read. The first is *Wilding* by Isabella Tree. This describes the Knepp estate in Sussex, not far from Gatwick, which, even with state-of-the-art dairy techniques, was not a viable business venture, so she and her husband decided to let nature take over. They got rid of all their agribusiness equipment and used what grants they could get to fence the nine-mile perimeter of the estate.

The aim was to restore the landscape to what it was before we started farming. Back then there were large grazing and browsing animals that kept trees trimmed back or knocked down, manured the ground and maintained a varied tree and open wood-pasture landscape, looking similar to African savannah today. But we killed off those large herbivores, so once the farm's internal fences were removed, the land-drains broken up and water-meadows revived, the owners began a careful introduction of cattle, horses and pigs as near as possible to their wild ancestors. These animals were

then left to sort themselves out, which they did successfully. While this was going on, birds, amphibians, insects and wildflowers all began to arrive and to flourish. Lists of what has arrived so far would fill this magazine, so I suggest you read the book!

My second find is a very recent and challenging book. Its author, Benedict Macdonald, a young writer, is realistic about the threats facing wildlife but also very positive. The first few chapters of *Rebirding* analyse the ways we have decimated or destroyed every category of living thing – and have been doing for centuries. He then lays out the possibilities for reversing the decline by adopting quite revolutionary schemes to restore matters beginning with the Knepp project and its Dutch predecessor, and moving on to highlands, wetlands, forests and moors before considering reintroducing long-lost species to these islands.

As we are looking to achieve Eco-Church status, it will help if we all try to make our lifestyles more eco-friendly and if we learn more about how things are at the moment. If my first two books don't sound like your cup of tea, there are fortunately as many ways of looking at the human-wildlife balance as there are "new nature writing" authors.

If you want some specifically theological views, then a thick book is Richard Bauckham's *Bible and Ecology*, and a thin one is *Go to the Ant* by Ghilleen Prance (of the Eden Project) which is a snappy book of "reflections on biodiversity in the Bible."

David Bull

David's other recommended books:

Robert Macfarlane: *The Wild Places* & *The Old Ways*

Neil Ansell: *The Last Wilderness*

Mark Cocker: *Our Place*

John Lewis-Stempel: *Meadowland* & *The Running Hare*

Richard Powers: a novel *The Overstory*

Stephen Moss: *Wild Kingdom*, *Bringing Back Britain's Wildlife*

“It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones”

Proverbs 3:8

Back in May, my husband Paul and I travelled to Tokyo, Japan where he had committed to lecture at several universities. Following a long flight we arrived and were startled by the energetic bustle of the city. Our hotel was close to the Shinjuku Station and I read that every weekday, three million people came through this combined railroad/underground station. Three million! Although people were polite in the streets and queued respectfully for the trains, I felt overwhelmed by the crowds.

On the third day of our visit, Paul was free for the afternoon so I suggested that we walk to a nearby shrine that I had read about in my guidebook. This is the Meiji Jingu or shrine dedicated to the Meiji emperor who was crowned in the mid-19th century. When he and his empress died, respect for them was such that many subjects donated money to build this shrine to honour them.

We walked through busy city streets to arrive at the entrance to the shrine. As is traditional for a Shinto shrine, this entrance was marked by a 40 foot high torii. When one passes under this wooden arch to enter the shrine precincts, one is symbolically leaving behind the everyday and entering a sacred place. What surprised us was how quickly the noise and the crowds of the city fell away. We had

entered a forest of towering Japanese cedars, with sunlight falling in thin shafts on the dense understory. Instead of traffic noise, we heard birdsong.

Later we read that over 100,000 trees, comprising some 300 species, were planted on the grounds of the shrine when it was built in the first decades of the 20th century. In a state of pleasant bemusement, we walked along quiet paths, admiring the straight trunks of the tall cedars and enjoying the birdsong. We eventually found ourselves in a vast courtyard, framed by the graceful wooden buildings of the shrine. Yet what has stayed with me is the quiet and beauty of that forest surrounding the shrine. What a respite for the people of the city who pass under that wooden arch into that sacred space. The words from the third chapter of Proverbs came to me: “It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.” I have always loved this verse because it seems such a lovely reassurance in the midst of stressful circumstances. I fervently hope that we can work together to preserve these natural spaces, whether in cities or in the countryside, so that people might find healing and great refreshment.

Mary Yee (Mary and Paul were members of our church family for a year and we have kept in touch ever since)

Saying goodbye (for now) to Hank and Joy

Hank and Joy had been with us for two years, during which time they had become active members of the church family, and contributed a great deal in worship, children’s work, pastoral care, and work with our Phab club.

We all shared lunch with them on 23rd June – with amazing puddings – and presented them with a signed edition of the Wesley Mem Recipe Book!

They both expressed their thanks for and appreciation of the welcome they had enjoyed, and their joy in being part of our fellowship.

They are telling all their friends about us!

We are greatly looking forward to seeing them again next year, when they come back so that Hank can lead our weekend break, 24-26 April. (see page 20 for bookings!)



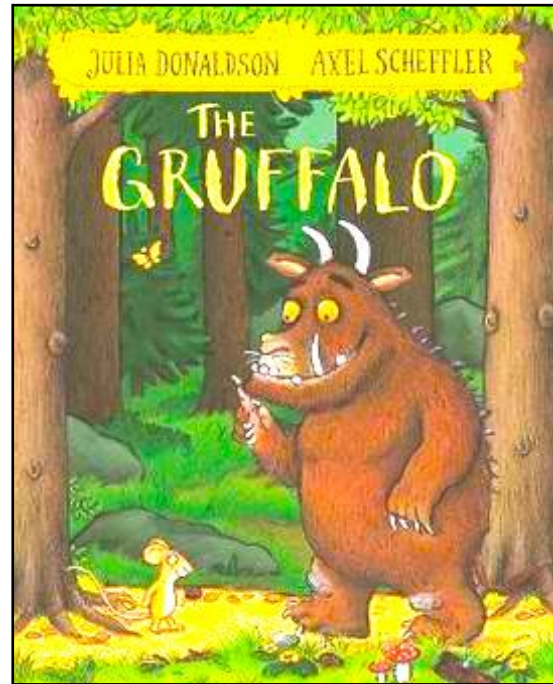
The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson

This short book by Julia Donaldson aimed at young children represents the radical reversal of the world order in the woods. The primary protagonist is, in fact, not the Gruffalo, but a little brown mouse who takes a stroll in the deep dark woods. The mouse is at the bottom of the social hierarchy of the deep dark woods by virtue of his position in the food chain.

However, this is an intelligent mouse who shows that brains beat brawn, and he tricks a fox, an owl and a snake into not eating him, by suggesting that he is friends with a fearsome Gruffalo. When he is surprised by meeting the actual Gruffalo, he bluffs his way to safety by pretending to the Gruffalo that he, the mouse, is the most feared creature in the woods. This is demonstrated when he walks through the woods with the Gruffalo and the fox, owl and snake flee before him. The Gruffalo, unaware that it is actually his own fearsomeness that they are fleeing from, is astounded and accepts the mouse's assertion that he is to be feared. The story continues in the sequel, *The Gruffalo's Child* in which it becomes apparent that this new world order is here to stay. The mouse – now renamed the Big Bad Mouse – has gained a reputation which protects him from the appetites of his fellow wood-dwellers and which keeps the Gruffalo and his family at bay.

The moral, theological and philosophical themes in this book are abundant: there is a clear message to children that big is not always best, and that intellect and initiative are as, if not more, important.

Theologically, it is possible to see here an analogy for the 'valley of the shadow of death'. Although the mouse walks, quite literally, through a wood in which dwell many creatures who would like to eat him, he walks in the power of the Gruffalo, and thus can 'fear no evil' for he is with him. Whether this analogy can be extrapolated further to suggest that the Gruffalo – feared, respected, and, as we find out in *The Gruffalo's Child*, protective of his children – could be a representation of God is dubious. To do so would suggest that God is also all brawn and no brains, which is,



of course, at odds with the Biblical portrayal of God.

Philosophically, the book reflects some Hegelian ideas. It could be argued that some even verge on Marxist. The world order of the woods is subject to radical reversal, with the smallest, most vulnerable creature in the woods taking on the most feared creature (the Gruffalo) in a dialectic struggle to upend the social hierarchy. As we move from *The Gruffalo* to *The Gruffalo's Child*, we pass through a stage of historical materialism to the new social hierarchy in which, it appears, the fox, owl and snake no longer see the mouse as a victim, but as an equal. It could further be considered that *The Gruffalo's Child* represents synthesis, as it solves the conflict between the animals in the wood brought about by the pre-existing social hierarchy and reconciles them to live together under the new world order.

Thus, although a short book followed by an only marginally longer sequel, this work by Julia Donaldson is a true masterpiece of our age: providing a well-thought through and entertaining introduction not only to literature, but also to theology, philosophy and politics.

Hannah Stammers

John Wesley, Roman Catholicism and “No Popery!”

The annual John Wesley lecture was delivered on May 21st at Lincoln College by Dr Colin Haydon, a former student of Dr John Walsh’s at Jesus College.

John Wesley’s long life spanned much of the eighteenth century, and from the outset Dr Haydon stressed that his views and arguments varied in their complexity during this time. Dr Haydon began with Wesley’s 22-page pamphlet *Popery Calmly Considered* (1779) in which he denounced fundamental Catholic doctrines.

However, Dr Haydon went on to consider Wesley’s interest in Catholic devotional works, many of which he had read as a student in Oxford, and his admiration for the lives of Catholics like Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More. In 1735 he wrote a treatise on one of the most popular of medieval devotional works, Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ*; and another in 1741 on the life of Gaston de Renty, a Frenchman whom he admired for his good works.

For all his many anti-Catholic pronouncements, there were times when Wesley’s position seemed paradoxical. In his *Concise History of England* (1776), he devoted more space

to Mary, Queen of Scots, whom he praised for her beauty and needlework, than to Protestant Queen Elizabeth I, whom he described as “merciful as Nero and as good a Christian as Mahomet”!!

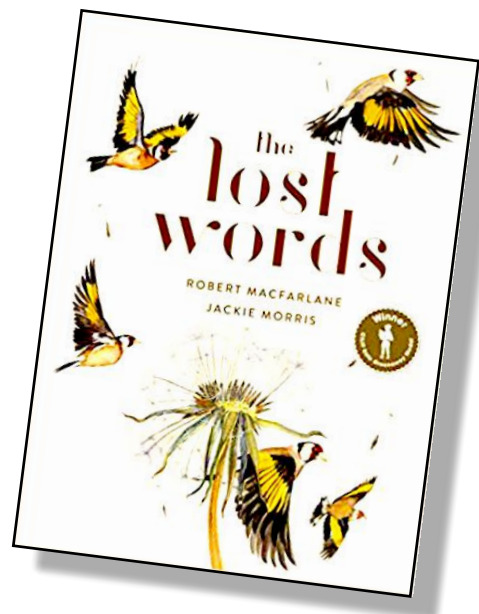
“No Popery” was the slogan associated with the Protestant Association formed after the passing of the Catholic Relief Act. Its leader Lord George Gordon gave his name to the Riots which took place in 1780 in London and which caused mayhem by inciting anti-Catholic sentiment. Wesley had earlier written a letter to the press apparently endorsing the Association which, Dr Haydon said, might at the very least be judged imprudent of Wesley. And Wesley later visited Gordon in prison!

At the conclusion of his lecture, Dr Haydon quoted a heart-warming extract from a letter Wesley wrote to his nephew Samuel, son of Charles, the great hymn writer. Samuel had converted to Catholicism, causing much pain to his parents. His uncle was concerned with his spiritual standing but had a more measured response. He wrote “...whether of this church or that, I care not, you may be saved in either...”
Glenda Lane

The Lost Words Robert Macfarlane

In *The Lost Words* Macfarlane made explicit his mission to reinstate the natural world in our contemporary estimation. The words he selected for poetry and illustration were those omitted from the Oxford Junior Dictionary due to under-use: words like “otter”, “acorn”, “bluebell”, “lark”. The book asks simply what is lost with these words, and it reflects an increasing disconnection from nature in our daily business of living. Macfarlane begs us to notice the separation, restore the relationship and so live more fully. I’m struck again by the spiritual resonances of this ecological imperative. Macfarlane suggests some felt impoverishment in our humanity, some kind of spiritual diminishment, if the link with nature is broken. As such he is an important contributor to the environmental debate.

Fiona Macdonald



Robert Protherough 1926 - 2019

Robert Protherough was born in Maidstone on 23 January 1926. An only child, he was educated locally and then at Wycliffe College, Stonehouse, before undertaking National Service as a 'Bevin Boy' in the Kent coalfields. He came up to Lincoln College, Oxford, in 1947, joined JWS, and met Margaret (Maggie) Feeney in autumn 1948; they married in 1951, and raised two sons, Hugh and Mark. Robert taught English in secondary schools in Retford, Nottingham and Birmingham, was active in amateur dramatics and also taught for the Workers' Educational Association, before moving to the Department of Education at the University of Hull. His influence on generations of PGCE students was immense, and he also became one of the leading researchers in the UK on the theory and practice of reader response. After some years of retirement in Hull, in 2010 Robert and Margaret returned to Oxford, sharing a home with their friend Judith Atkinson. Robert, a Local Preacher since 1961, took his place on the Plan, and was welcomed across the circuit for his carefully-crafted and thoughtful services. At Wesley Memorial Robert contributed to Sunday

worship as a reader and leader of intercessions, and he brought a critical eye and a vast store of literary expertise to the editorial team of Wesley Memorial News. Robert was an active member of U3A, and he



continued to enjoy music and reading, persuading the Oxfordshire Library Service to buy the new novels he was keen to explore. After distressing periods of ill-health Margaret and Judith both died in the first half of 2017, and Robert's own declining strength led to a move from Headington Quarry into a nursing home in Adderbury. He died there, very peacefully, on 21 March 2019.

Martin Wellings

Alternative Flowerbeds in Abingdon

On the morning of Spring Bank Holiday Monday I spent a very enjoyable and informative hour walking around Abingdon with a small group looking at the alternative flowerbeds set up and maintained by one of Oxfordshire's community action groups: Abingdon Carbon Cutters. In the flowerbeds are grown fruit, vegetables and pollinator-friendly flowers without chemicals.

Outside the Old Station House, old recycling boxes are filled with edibles which the public are encouraged to pick when ripe, e.g. herbs, mange-tout, alpine strawberries, tomatoes and spinach. In the Abbey Gardens Bed, entrusted to the group's care by the Vale of White Horse District Council, old shrubs have been replaced with seed-grown and donated plants, including both globe and Jerusalem artichokes, planted in manure-enriched soil. A large water butt stands nearby. The pollinator-friendly perennials from the flood-prone Kiosk Beds located near the river have been moved to a new location, and vegetables are now flourishing by the Kiosk. The wildflower meadow project on the old golf

course is finally making progress, planted in a maze shape to mirror the Abbey Gardens. It is a favourite spot for children to run around and for picnics.

In April the first Abingdon Repair Café event took place and was a great success – over 100 items were brought, half of which were repaired on the spot or taken away to be repaired by a team of volunteers. This worldwide venture with over 1500 cafés, was first held in Amsterdam in 2009.

Abingdon Carbon Cutters, established in 2008, continues to work tirelessly to raise awareness of how climate change is impacting on our lives today and how crucial it is for us to take action to save the planet for future generations. They focus on 4 main areas: taking action on climate change, pollution, biodiversity and raising awareness of how our food is produced. Take a look at their website!
www.abingdoncarboncutters.org.uk

Janet Forsaith

Heard it on the grapevine...

Birth:

Humphrey Peter Blainey 14 June 2019



Baptism:

Gabriel Jevons 21 April 2019

Wedding:

Tze To Toby Lo to Wing Yan Ng (Karis) 15 June 2019

Transfer of membership:

Zanna Quarterman to Long Hanborough

Death:

Robert Protherough 21 March 2019



Humphrey Peter Blainey aged 2 weeks

Working together to lead worship



When the Connexion launched the new training course for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders, *Worship: Leading & Preaching*, in 2015, this postcard was issued depicting an empty lectern and bearing the slogan “Should you be here?” Although awareness of need and even a sense of duty can be a powerful stimulus to vocation, we want to emphasise opportunity, exploration and openness to God as drivers encouraging people to use their gifts in leading worship. Our regular Kaleidoscope services and our ‘Local Arrangement’ services each quarter give groups of people who might not see themselves as Worship Leaders or Local Preachers a chance to work together in preparing an act of worship. If that’s something you’d like to explore, please speak to the minister or to one of the Church Stewards.

Martin Wellings

Our work with young adults

At a recent meeting to discuss how Wesley Memorial takes forward our work with students and young adults, it was decided that the current structure of the John Wesley Society, Oxford’s traditional Methodist student group, is now inappropriate, and unsustainable, and will cease to meet in a formal society structure as in the past.

Therefore, from the Autumn, we are looking forward to developing this important work, as we continue to welcome, engage with, encourage and nurture students and young adults within the Church family.

Please join us in this venture, as you are able, by welcoming all students and young people who are new, and offering them the rich experiences of our family life together.





Wesley Memorial Church

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Children's, families' & outreach worker: Mel McCulloch
Mission & Heritage Officer: Alison Butler
Church manager: Nikos Paplomatas

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Wednesday prayers 12.30 pm

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Cartoon: *Jim Godfrey*
Cover photo: *Carole Parsons*

Our email: newsletter@wesleymem.org.uk

Contributions, letters, questions, pictures, book reviews and any other suitable items for publication are always welcome. Please email them to the editorial team, stating if you are willing for them to appear on the church website. Items may be edited. Articles express the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Wesley Memorial Church or of the Methodist Church.

Dates for the diary

Thursday 11 July 7.00 for 7.30 pm	Wesley Memorial Lecture: Lord Beith. 'Faith and Politics'.
Sunday 21 July 2.30 pm	PHAB Garden Party hosted by Liz and Terry Stock
Sunday 18 August 10.30 am	Revd Dr Sheryl Anderson leading worship at Wesley Memorial.
Tuesday 27 - Thursday 29 August from 10.30 am	Holiday Club: Messy Church goes GREEN!
Saturday 14 September & Sunday 15 September	Ride & Stride for Oxfordshire & Historic Churches Trust; Oxford Open Doors weekend
Friday 15 November	Oxford Light Night Celebrations

Advance Notice: 2020 Church Weekend Break

We are going to High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts, EN11 8SG, from Friday 24 April to Sunday 26 April. Leader Deacon Hank Jenkins. Save the date and book now with Mel McCulloch.

*Deadline for the next issue:
25 October 2019*

WESLEY MEMBRAIN

