

## Some of the Eco items that have appeared in St John's church magazine between 2019-2023

### Our responsibilities to look after God's creation (Oct 2019)

If we are given something wonderful and precious by a generous person who truly loves us dearly, what do we do with it? Of course, we keep it safe and look after it; we enjoy it and want others to appreciate it too, and if it's something living, we want it to flourish too. As Christians, we have a special responsibility to care for the earth and the creatures in it.

Whilst we may plant bee and butterfly-loving plants in the garden, and recycle paper and plastic, whilst good, these are just drops in the ocean, and as a church we want to do more, collectively and individually.

Plastic is an amazing material. It's cheap, hygienic, long-lasting and convenient. However, it's become one of the biggest environmental challenges we face today. Unlike natural materials, plastic doesn't decompose. After many years it breaks down into tiny micro-plastics – small fragments of plastic less than 5mm in size. When animals and fish eat them, they can enter our food chain.

Plastic waste doesn't just spoil the beauty of our surroundings, when not disposed of properly it clogs drains and rivers, bringing floods and disease, is eaten by animals causing illness or death, and if burnt it releases poisonous chemicals into the air and soil. Most plastic waste is eventually washed into the seas. According to one estimate, by 2050 there'll be more plastic in the oceans than fish (by weight).

A recent Tear Fund report estimated that between 400,000-1 million people are dying as a result of mismanaged waste.

Recycling is a step in the right direction, but won't completely solve the problem of plastic. When recycled, plastic's quality decreases so it can only be recycled a few times. So it is best to use as little plastic as possible, and to reuse the plastic products we already have.

The scale of the challenge to us individually to really minimise the amount of plastic we buy is huge, as when we start looking we realise that we use so much. So we can only do a little bit at a time – a change at a time, but keep an eye in our magazine for suggestions.

#### Tips for October:

- **Try to buy fruit and vegetables loose**, and resist the temptation to pick up a small plastic bag to put them in. They will sit happily loose in your basket or trolley and eventually your bag. But if you prefer them bagged, use a small cloth bag to pop them in. It could have started life as a tee-shirt, sheet or pillow case, and the fruit/veg can stay in it in your fridge to keep it fresh
- **Liquid soap** is something we've come to love, but it comes in a plastic bottle. So before you get to the end of your current bottle, is this plastic something you could live without? Old

fashioned bars of soap come in a huge range from cheap & cheerful to soft & scented, and the transport costs (and so carbon footprint) of bottles is higher than the smaller bars.

## **Reducing our use of plastic – what we can do! (Nov 2019)**

Last month we began to look at the plastic problem, with the Tear Fund's awful estimates that between 400,000 and 1m people die every year globally as a result of mismanaged waste.

Stopping using plastic is far from easy, but there are a surprising number of things we can change to reduce the amount of plastic that even needs to be recycled!

We looked at moving from liquid soap to bars. You may not have reached the bottom of your last bottles of liquid soap, but you might want to buy a bar for the cupboard so that when the container is empty, you don't automatically go and buy a like-for-like replacement!

Our oral hygiene is important to us, but the way we do it is damaging the world. How many toothbrushes do you think you've used in your life? And if you use an electric toothbrush, how many heads have you used, even just in this century! Apparently each plastic toothbrush that we've ever used is still in the earth somewhere, as they last for about 400 years! Then there's the toothpaste and those nice shiny plastic tubes it now comes in. And are you someone who uses mouthwash that comes in nice plastic bottles?

### **Tips:**

- **Try a bamboo toothbrush**, or a recyclable electric toothbrush head – they work just as well! The bamboo ones can be found in most chemists and supermarkets. The heads, which are compatible with the major brands of electric toothbrushes, are available in the local health food shop, and of course online
- **Plastic-free toothpaste** comes in a small jar and in a variety of flavours. Some are stiffer and some about the same consistency, but seem to last much longer. In truth it takes a bit of getting used to toothpaste that you don't squeeze from a tube, but it certainly does the job just as well, and is completely plastic-free
- **Plastic-free mouthwash tablets** offer an easy and very acceptable alternative to buying another plastic bottle for the bathroom, and are also available online. Be sure to check the ingredients as not all contain fluoride

## **All things green (Dec 2019)**

We were delighted to welcome the Archdeacon Elizabeth to join us in celebrating our first Green Communion. All the readings, hymns and prayers were chosen to celebrate the great gift of God's creation, our precious earth and all the creatures with whom we share land and sea.

As we celebrated our Bronze Eco Church award, the Archdeacon's sermon was a timely encouragement. She spoke of her own 'plastic challenge' undertaken in Lent, where she found out just how difficult it is to live a plastic-free life. Yet with plastic now clogging up in areas of our oceans, endangering so many creatures, and with micro plastics finding their way into the food chain

and the air we breathe, we all need to action for the sake of generations to come. Thank you Archdeacon Elizabeth for reminding us all of our responsibilities as stewards of God's earth. And a special thanks to Junior Church for reminding us to 'reduce, reuse and recycle'.

How are your plastic challenges coming along? I was really heartened recently when one of our congregation told me about her first purchases of a bar of shampoo and a bamboo toothbrush! It took me ages to work my through the last of my plastic shampoo bottles, and I got so impatient to start using my shampoo bar, I gave my last bottles of shampoo to the Foodbank!

As Christmas approaches, watch out for our Eco Church noticeboard turning into a giant advent calendar, with each day holding a tip about things we can do during advent to continue our eco journey. If you're in the church during advent, please open the calendar windows!

### **Washing up and reducing our use of plastic! (Feb 2020)**

Having washed a lot of crockery, cutlery, pots and pans this Christmas set me thinking about how our dish washing can be more eco-friendly. As always, there are more things to consider than you might at first think! Questions include whether dishwasher tablets are covered in plastic or vegetable based film that is 100% water soluble, whether the ingredients are derived naturally or from crude oil (ultimately harmful to the ground water supply), whether development included testing on animals, whether the plastic is made from recycled materials and/or is recyclable, and whether refills are available (avoiding the need to recycle). Trying to go a bit more green just isn't simple!

And all of the above applies to what we wash out clothes with too!

#### **Tips:**

- **Try environmentally-friendly washing up liquid** – there's a lot to choose from. Better still you can refill the bottle (at the Refill shop in Bond Street and elsewhere). And if you don't fancy shampoo bars, you can refill those
- **Choose dishwasher tablets** that aren't wrapped in plastic and are environmentally friendly. You can buy them on line, and in some supermarkets

### **Heard of Earth Hour? (March 2020)**

It's a symbol of our commitment to our planet, and takes place on Sat 28<sup>th</sup> March. We are all encouraged to turn off non-essential electrical items and lights for one hour from 8.30pm, to raise awareness of the effects of our energy consumption on our environment.

Earth hour is observed worldwide, and lights go out at famous landmarks (from the Sydney Opera House and Empire State Building to Edinburgh Castle and Buckingham Palace) , and across many towns and cities.

As climate change has risen in public consciousness, there'll probably be more publicity about Earth Hour this year. Why not join millions of others around the world, observe it, and enjoy the calm of living by candlelight for an hour! And satisfy the curiosity of your friends and neighbours and just explain Earth Hour to them. Don't forget – 28<sup>th</sup> March from 8.340pm for one hour.

### **Is Fairtrade a habit yet?**

We are just finishing Fairtrade Fortnight. Did you try any Fairtrade products you'd not had before? If not, it's not too late! Whether it's bananas, chocolate, tea, coffee, or something else you spot with a Fairtrade logo, pick it up and give it a try. You'll be helping to make sure that the farmers who grew the products get a fair wage, improved working conditions, and protection from the price-slashing habits of those grocery stores with huge buying powers and little thought for those at the very bottom of their supply chain. Look for the logo!

### **Getting to Gold (Spring 2022)**

Our Eco journey began 2½ years ago, and what a lot of changes we've all made to get this far. We always knew that getting to be a gold Eco Church was going to take time, and we are getting close. At the point we believe we have reached gold, Arocha will visit and assess St John's before deciding whether we have really reached their gold standard, so that's a day we are looking forward to.

You may remember that Arocha has 5 Eco Church categories, and we are pleased to say that we think we have now reached the gold standard on 3 of them – Worship, Lifestyle and Land. On Community Engagement, we can reach gold by beginning to have speakers on local environmental issues, and an annual green fayre. So when we do invite speakers to St John's, please come along and bring friends and neighbours to hear more. That just leaves the Buildings category which is more of a challenge. To reach gold we would need to decide never to use disposables, and to install cycle racks (already planned in the churchyard redevelopment), and to move to a green gas tariff (and rises in gas prices means now is far from the ideal time for that). We moved to using compostable paper cups pre-pandemic, but we now need to think through not using disposables at all!

We are proud of being a Silver Eco Church, and it has been privilege to see quite how far we have travelled the eco road, both as individuals and as a church family. Reducing our impact on the environment is now simply part of who we are, what we do, and what we say. We can see this in Jubilate, which will be run as close to possible as an eco café, and in when we speak about what St John's does in our community, being green is something we now assume as normal.

So there do remain just a few things left to achieve before we can apply to be registered as a Gold Eco Church, but we have risen to other challenges in the past, and once we get there it will be good simply to enjoy living the Eco Church life without having to tick any more boxes!

### **Eco church update (Spring 2022)**

What an eco journey we've all been on over the last 2½ years. We started by changing to recycled toilet rolls and eco-friendly cleaning products for church, and increasing our recycling, then thought

about the changes we could all make at home. I remember lots of chat after services as we all shared our learning, and the arrival of a large jar to recycle toothbrushes (thanks to Iris). And now environmental awareness and caring for God's creation is really in our blood at St John's – in how we run the building, in how we approach church life, in how we worship and in how we all live our lives.

By the time you read this, we will have submitted our application to become a Gold Eco Church, and we now await a visit to assess us and hopefully confirm the achievement. So watch this space!

### Tips

- **Re-using!** Have you discovered how easy it is in Chelmsford to buy almost all dry ingredients, and lots of detergents, by simply taking a container and buying a refill? We've got a thriving Refill Shop with a huge range, as well as Lathcotes, and various other shops in town that offer products as refills. If you're new to refills, ask someone else over coffee in the cafe or after church, or a member of the Eco Team. It's such a brilliant way of reducing the amount of plastic that we use, and of course re-using is always better than recycling.
- **Have you measured your household carbon footprint for 2021?** In the autumn we completed our Environmental Lifestyle Survey, and while some had done their own carbon footprint, that's a step lots of us hadn't got round to. So maybe the time is now!! (*dear reader – please see below for a later and more up to date item on how*)

### Fairtrade

Fairtrade fortnight begins on 21<sup>st</sup> February. Lots of us are now familiar with Fairtrade, and the Environmental Lifestyle Audit showed that quite a lot of us already buy Fairtrade products, be it chocolate, tea, coffee, sugar or biscuits to name a few. In doing this, the trading that brings us our chocolate etc is fair to the people who produce the crops, and they have secure and sustainable livelihoods. The difference for those farmers, and farm workers, is huge, and here's an example:

Labourers in banana plantations are provided with clothing and footwear to protect their skin and eyes from daily exposure to pesticides. Juan, from Equador, said *'You should see what these chemicals do to your eyes and skin! Some of us get red, burning eyes. Others get sores and spots on their skin. But when we tell those in charge, they don't care. They only care about us achieving production goals, nothing else.'* Luis adds *'In 2013 I was working in the packing area when I started to feel nauseous and to vomit blood. After one month in the hospital they told me I had early-stage liver cirrhosis, because of a constant contamination process. The doctors did not want to put it on paper though. They feared for their jobs. And now I'm a chronic cirrhosis patient.'*

We rely on others to grow our food, so when food comes from other countries, perhaps we owe it to those who grow it for us, to ensure that we're not complicit in exploiting them.

### 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' (Spring 2022)

That's how be as green as possible is. What we don't reuse or recycle ends up in landfill for a very long time – but how long?

Straws make drinks more fun, but only if the straws are recyclable – plastic straws may be small but each one can still take 200 years to decompose!

Silver foil can be recycled in the green box, but you'll have to collect a few foil wrappers and trays and scrunch them together so that they are about the size of a tennis ball (circumference of about 20cm). If it ends up in landfill it takes 400 years to degrade!

Nappies can be either disposable or reusable. Millions of disposable nappies are thrown into landfill every day, and take about 450 years to degrade. So if you can, think about reusable alternatives.

Aluminium cans break down relatively quickly – 80-200 years – and can easily be made into new cans, or even parts of aeroplanes!

Batteries have a short lifetime but a very long lasting legacy in landfill. They can be recycled easily but the chemical elements of any we slip into the black bin will last between 100-1,000 years

If we reduce, reuse and recycle, not only will the amount in our black bins go down, but so will the amount of recyclable material we put out each week. So that's the challenge!

## **We did it! Gold Eco Church award for St John's! (summer 2022)**

St John the Evangelist Church, Moulsham has been granted a Gold Eco Church award. We are the 25<sup>th</sup> church in England and Wales (17<sup>th</sup> Anglican church) to receive a Gold award and the first parish church in Essex and the Diocese of Chelmsford. Thank you so much to everyone at St John's for playing your part in this achievement, which is a real credit to you all.

We were so pleased to get the award before Gemma left us – she has been pivotal in our attempts to be better stewards of the environment. This is what she had to say about the award: "I am so proud of our community and the progress we have made together. The Eco Church journey has been transformational for St John's; it's enabled us to reconnect with our vision to love God and His world. When you work in harmony with God, blessings flow, and St John's has grown and flourished, despite the challenges of the last two years.

We started so simply with recycling, using eco-friendly and the removal of single use products. Now creation care permeates every aspect of our life together; regular services with teaching on environmental and ethical issues, care of the building and financial decisions, our children's work, community outreach, management of the churchyard and plans for the future. An integrated approach has been key to our success."

Helen Stephens from ARocha UK, the Christian conservation charity which gives the awards, writes: "Our huge congratulations to St John's Moulsham on their well-deserved Gold Eco Church award. Everything about their approach sets them out as an exemplar of what it means to be a gold awarded church, from starting simply with smaller actions to working with their whole community including the City Council. It's so encouraging to hear that they have been blessed as a church community through developing a deeper understanding of what it means to love God's creation and for this to become truly integrated into who they are as a church."

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## **The World Land Trust (Autumn 2022)**

This is our charity this year for Harvest time, with gifts of food and toiletries going to Chelmsford Foodbank.

What do we know about the World Land Trust? It is an international conservation charity that protects the world's most biologically significant and threatened habitats. They work through a network of local organisations around the world, funding the creation of reserves and providing permanent protection for habitats and wildlife. David Attenborough has supported the work of this organisation since its foundation on 1989, and he became patron in 2003. In his words, "The money that is given to the World Land Trust, in my estimation, has more effect on the wild world than almost anything I can think of. The support goes directly to the place where it is needed."

In 2019, global destruction of trees in our forests meant that 64 million acres a year were being lost. That is an unimaginable amount of deforestation isn't it? The World Land Trust is helping to restore these lost forests. So far they have planted nearly 2.5 million trees.

If you would like to know more, please do have a look at the World Land Trust website ([www.worldlandtrust.org](http://www.worldlandtrust.org)) and thank you for giving generously this Harvest time. You will make a real difference.

## **My Eco Journey by a parishioner**

For a number of years now I have been conscious of the need to recycle as much as possible and reduce the amount of plastic I use. I would always choose loose fruit and veg if it was available and glass containers instead of plastic for things like sauce and mayo. I started having milk delivered in glass bottles which admittedly is more expensive but much more eco friendly as the bottles are reused and over time I have ordered much more from the milkman eg washing up liquid in returnable glass bottles and ecoleaf dishwasher tablets in a water soluble film and not plastic. I can now get all sorts of things from the milkman in returnable containers – eg oats, pasta, rice – or I can take my own containers to be refilled at many places.

As far back as 2014 I had solar panels installed, partly to save money on my energy bills but also to be able to return surplus electricity back to the national grid.

I was taking my own bags to the supermarket long before they started charging for plastic bags, and now there is always a foldup bag in the bottom of my handbag “just in case”.

I was pleased when St John’s started recycling packaging, although it upset me to see items in the rubbish bin that could be recycled. The recycling containers are now much more obvious and well labelled and I was responsible for setting up a rota of people to take the recycling home as we have no kerbside collection at church.

St John’s eco journey taught me that there are so many more things that I can do. Deodorants can be bought in cardboard tubes, shampoo bought like soap bars, bars of soap are better than liquid, cleaning products that are not harmful to the environment are now easy to buy. There are lots of alternatives to things like clingfilm. I have bought containers that have lids and use beeswax wraps.

I think about everything now before I put it in the rubbish bin for landfill. Can it go to the charity shop, can it be taken to the recycling centre, or do I know anyone who would like it?

I think we are still learning that there is a lot more to be done. Is my energy company a green energy supplier, is my bank ethical? Am I using my car too much? Can I use public transport more?

I still have far too much plastic for my liking, but I am working on it!

### **Eco Tips: (Jan 2023)**

Isn’t it hard to achieve zero-plastic – just a walk around the local chemist, or the fresh items in a supermarket shows how far the UK is from being plastic free. Inevitably plastic will end up in our shopping bags or in the online deliveries we receive, and it will require changes in regulations for manufacturers to go further. But things like plastic bottles can take 1,000s of years to decompose, and most plastics can’t be recycled again once they’ve been converted into clothing or some other commodities! So, is there one change that you and your family can make to cut down on the amount of plastic you recycle this week? It might be buying loose vegetables, finding alternatives to what’s in plastic in your bathroom, using non-plastic containers to freeze left overs in, or growing your own! St John’s folk have been on this road and making small changes at home for 2-3 years now – why not talk to someone else about some of the changes they’ve made and let’s learn from each other to care for God’s planet as He would want us to.

### **Fairtrade Fortnight begins on Monday 27th Feb (Spring 2023)**

I’m sure everyone knows that Fairtrade goods ensure that the farmers who grow what we eat get a fair price for their products which isn’t affected by any market fluctuations or indeed the buying power of supermarkets. Few of us grow all our own food, so we rely on farmers often in under-developed or developing countries.

In the next few weeks we will be surrounded by chocolate and Easter eggs. The Co-op and Aldi seem to have the best selection of eggs (large and small), although you may find the Fairtrade mark on



eggs elsewhere, and certainly in the Oxfam shop where The Real Easter Egg contains a leaflet with the Easter story.

Here's the blue and yellow Fairtrade label to look out for. ....

So when you're shopping, look out for this logo on bananas, tea, coffee, sugar, cocoa and drinking chocolate, flowers, wine, nuts, cotton wool pads, honey, jams and ice creams. And if you buy a hot drink, look for the logo before you buy!

### **Doing your own carbon footprint (Autumn 2023)**

With all the publicity about climate change and the ways in which we are now experiencing it, there's no better time to think about our own carbon footprints. Once we know what it is, we can think about how we can reduce it next year, and those in a position to can offset our own household carbon. Here's how.

**The World Wildlife Fund offer the easiest online tool:** <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/> . It asks questions about food, travel, your home and what it refers to as 'stuff', all of which you can answer without having to refer to bills. At the end it will tell you how many tonnes of carbon your household emits. It's not perfect as you are asked to estimate things, but it's good enough, and quite quick to complete. It gives you tips on what you could do to reduce your carbon footprint, and then you can redo it next year.

The more accurate and more time-consuming tool that takes details of your energy consumption, is produced in conjunction with Climate Stewards: <https://www.climatestewards.org/offset/> . It looks at your home, travel, food and what you buy, and although some things you'll still estimate, you'd need to have access to your energy consumption details.

Both are thought-provoking. The WWF tool slightly over-estimated our overall carbon emissions as the tool has to make some assumptions rather than base its calculations on your actual figures. But you can choose which you'd prefer to do. Then, If you are then in a position to offset your year's carbon emissions, you will fall into the 'net zero' category.

Now is a good time to do your own carbon footprint, and in so doing, make yourself more aware of your own contribution to climate change, and see if there are ways you can try to reduce your own carbon emissions in the coming year.

### **Christian action for change – the Big One. (April 2023)**

What an amazing witness was given by some 1,400 Christians over a long weekend in April when many organisations came together to protest against the continued extraction of fossil fuels. It is hard to look at the floods in Pakistan and the searing temperatures in the global south destroying crops, causing famine and many deaths and not to cry out for action to tackle climate change.

Friday started with a gathering at St John's Church in Waterloo where we heard from Baroness Kate Parminter and Bishop Steven Croft about the work of the Lords' Select Committee on the Environment and Climate Change. It was good to hear of the meticulous analysis of the evidence and the pressure being brought on the government to address climate change.

This was followed by a really moving service led by Ruth Valerio from Tear Fund. She is really inspirational – do read any of her books if you get chance. She is passionate about our responsibility to look after the earth and its resources. The service focused on our need to give praise to God for the great gift of creation, to pray, to prophesy the future (what happens if we take no action?) and to protest. Amongst the speakers was former Archbishop John Sentamu, who is now working for Christian Aid.

After the service we marched from Waterloo to Parliament to join thousands of other protestors. Along the way, Archbishop Sentamu tried to deliver a letter to Shell, asking them to stop any new extractions of fossil fuels. Shell locked the doors and called the police! We were causing such trouble – 1,400 voices singing Amazing Grace! Don't believe all you read in the papers about troublesome protestors!

The site of all those Christians stretched across Westminster Bridge was an unforgettable and moving sight, and I pray that our voices and prayers might make a difference. One of the hymns we sang had the following verse:

*Too many suffer now  
from fire and wind and rain,  
as livelihoods and homes are lost  
and hope seems vain.  
Will we ignore  
all those who strive  
just to survive,  
and close our door?*

As a Gold Eco Church, let's not close our door! Let us heed Ruth Valerio's encouragement to praise, to pray, to prophesy and to protest.

## **Getting to Carbon Net Zero – how is the Church doing? (Autumn 2023)**

Elsewhere in this magazine you can see information about how you can measure your household carbon footprint, but what is the Church doing, both here at St John's and more widely across the Church of England?

The General Synod voted in February 2020 for the whole of the Church of England to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. It was a vote that recognised that the global climate emergency is a crisis for

God's creation. The Global South is suffering the brunt of the climate crisis. Climate justice is also racial justice.

General Synod agreed in 2022 a route map to net zero, setting out some key milestones for churches, including the following :

**By the end of 2023** - 10% of local churches in every diocese are to be registered with Eco Church and at least 5% should be awarded a Bronze award or higher and every diocese to have a 90% completion rate for the Energy Footprint Tool (EFT)

**By the end of 2024** - At the point of contract renewal, switch to 100% renewable electricity or a green tariff and review options to replace fossil fuels and switch to a green gas tariff at the point of contract renewal

**By the end of 2025** - All churches to have energy-efficient lighting installed throughout, with timers and motion sensors where appropriate; no new oil boilers to be installed in churches; and for churches that are tourist attractions, review opportunities to install electric charging for coaches

**By the end of 2026** - 40% of local churches in every diocese to be registered with Eco Church, 30% of these to have an award and at least a third of these awards to be at Silver Eco Church level or higher

**By the end of 2027** - from 2022, the top 20% of energy consuming churches to begin to develop a Net Zero Action Plan to be finalised no later than 2027. To include as a minimum low-carbon heating options to replace fossil fuel heating and a Heating Resilience Plan which should consider how to manage heating should the system fail, avoiding the need for a quick like-for-like fossil fuel replacement.

**By the end of 2030** - Complete all actions on the Net Zero Carbon Action Plan

### **How is St John's doing on the road to Net Zero?**

2019 was a turning point for St John's which gave us a head start on the Net Zero journey. 2019 was the year our footfall in the church started to increase and we had a big hike in our energy use as the church was open more often. We will never know if this was the beginning of an upward trend in our energy use or just a blip. We won't know that because two things happened – we started our Eco Church journey and became much more aware of our impact on the environment and the following year, 2020, we experienced the Covid pandemic when our church was closed for many months, as it was in 2021.

As part of our Eco Church journey, we spent a great deal of time looking at alternative sources of heating. We already use 100% renewable electricity in the church and church hall, and we started to offset the gas used in the church hall by donating to Climate Stewards who invest in projects to reduce the world's carbon emissions. We explored several options for church heating:

- Ground source heat pumps (transfers heat from the ground to radiators) – this proved impossible because we would need to lay extensive pipes beneath the ground in the churchyard. As you know, our churchyard contains the remains of some 2,000 local people, so this was not an option;

- Air heat pumps proved equally impossible because they have to be placed outside in the churchyard and (a) the noise would disturb our neighbours and (b) we were concerned about the vandalism risk;
- Biomass fuel also proved impossible because of the technical problems with fuel delivery and the emerging scientific evidence of harmful particulates being released into the environment;
- Solar panels would have been ideal to generate our own electricity but because we are a grade II listed church in a conservation area, we were advised we would not get planning permission for solar panels. Interestingly there is growing concern about the impending recycling of solar panels;
- Radiant heating which heats the people rather than the space. The PCC has agreed to install this form of heating as part of the Major Development Programme.

The PCC also agreed an Energy Management Plan to ensure that our energy is used as effectively as possible, and we have continued to complete the Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) every year, submitting information about our fuel bills and the numbers of people using the church each year. Looking at the 2019 and 2022 figures for energy use, the church has experienced 2 things – a 42% reduction in energy used in 2022 compared to 2019, whilst at the same time increasing the numbers of people using the building during the week. **The EFT for 2022 shows the Church and Church Hall in the top 10% of churches across the Church of England for energy efficiency when looking at the amount of fuel used for the numbers using the buildings.** That’s quite an achievement, so it’s in bold type!

In 2022 we also became the first parish church in the Diocese to achieve a Gold Eco Church award. With that success comes a greater sense of social responsibility to do all we can for God’s creation and for climate justice. We meet frequently with other churches on their Eco Church journey, and I have recently taken up the role of environmental advocate for our Deanery, hoping to encourage others on the journey. I have also volunteered to be a Gold Eco Church Assessor for ARocha – it’s a great opportunity to see and learn from the work of others!

Huge thanks to everyone for the part you have played in our journey towards Net Zero (we’re not there yet!). I am especially grateful to the PCC who have done so much on the practicalities and guiding us along the road. I hope this gives you a picture of some of the behind-the-scenes work that goes on.

## **Environmental Lifestyle Survey 2023**

Huge thanks to the 25 households who completed a lifestyle survey this year. I thought you would be interested to see how we’re doing as an Eco Church (really well!). I also hope if you answered “no” to any of the questions that they made you pause for thought about your plans for 2024. I always find Lent a very good time to reflect on what more I could do.

### **Results**

1. 100% of us answered “yes” or “sometimes” to considering our lifestyle part of living out our Christian faith.
2. 80% of us regularly or sometimes walk or cycle to church services and events. Given that a good number of our congregation (about 20% maybe!) come from out of the area, that’s a great result.

3. 92% of us try to reduce our car use wherever possible.
4. Only 36% of us have completed our personal carbon footprint this year.  
Do you need help with doing this? Nanette had an article in a recent magazine suggesting tools to help with this. Do chat to her or me if you need a reminder or some help in doing it.
5. 96% of us limit our waste by adhering to the principles of reduce, re-use or recycle.
6. 96% said “yes” or “sometimes” to purchasing Fairtrade goods where possible.
7. 64% of us have renewable electricity at home.  
This is an important aspect of reducing our reliance on carbon emitting sources of energy such as coal, oil and natural gas. A key driver of this change will be increased adoption of renewable energy by businesses and households in the coming years. Is it time to think about it?
8. 68% of us have reviewed and made changes to our diet to be healthier and more sustainable (eg less meat).  
Animal-based foods generally have a higher carbon content than plant-based foods. Some animal-based foods have higher carbon than others. Did you know that chicken and pork have a relatively small impact? Dairy and lamb sit in the middle, while beef is nearly always the least sustainable choice.
9. 68% of us purchase ethically where possible (eg check source of products, buy for less packaging).  
Ethical purchasing encourages innovative companies and discourages those who ignore the social and environmental consequences of their actions.
10. 100% of us answered “yes” or “sometimes” to using the LOAF principles (Locally grown, Organic, Animal-friendly, Fairtrade) when buying food.
11. 64% answered “yes” or “sometimes” to considering where we put our money by using ethical banking, savings accounts and/or investments.  
Why does this make a difference? Christian Aid this year stopped banking with Barclays Bank, which is the biggest financier of fossil fuels in Europe, and the 7<sup>th</sup> largest in the world (as evidenced in the influential *Banking on Climate Chaos* report).
12. 44% of us participate in other community activity with an eco agenda (eg litter picking).

We then asked which **church activities** helped and supported you in living a more environmentally friendly lifestyle.

The top answers to this were the recycling area (14); items from the newsletter (13);

Adapting good practice from church and sharing ideas with others (12 each); and Green Communion services (10).

The **other resources** people found helpful are:

TV/radio/newspaper articles and positive news on the web and in emails; the local Refill Shop in Chelmsford; gardening ideas; Jen Chillingworth blog posts and books; Jen Gale books and Facebook group; growing as much as possible to eat; Council leaflets; Personal carbon offsetting websites/calculators; friends and family; Neighbourhood Watch; Milk & More delivers milk in reusable bottles; Greening the Church on Facebook; Christian Climate Action group.

The **things learnt in the last year** by the church family include: joining Christian Climate Action; discussions at church about purchasing options; Wild Worship; pride in being an Eco Church and caring for the environment; recycling clothing to make small items; we can recycle glasses and empty pill packets; increased recycling to include all plastic wrapping; picking up rubbish in churchyard and speaking to people about not dropping rubbish; remembering to turn off lights etc; started using detergent sheets; using Milk & More for returnable containers so no waste; make stock in slow cooker from veg peelings or chicken carcase; have actively sought out ethical toiletries and washing products; learnt about poor unsanitary water in rivers and seas; growing house plants; insect friendly gardening; reducing water use in garden; less mowing of grass; created extended wildlife area and pond; sew seeds in churchyard; provide food for wild creatures; use coffee grounds in garden.

The **future plans** mentioned by people include: take part more actively in campaigns; renew subs to Christian Surfers and Surfers Against Sewage; stay informed to take up opportunities as they arise; continue reducing plastic use; encourage hedgehogs in garden; be mindful to do more; change to hybrid car; evaluate heat pump options; be open to new suggestions; plant a more eco friendly garden and use more natural materials; teach my family the importance of caring for the environment and recycling; purchase what I need not what I want to reduce waste and carbon footprint; switch to plastic-free domestic products where possible.

**Other comments** offered were: Can we have outside Green Communion next year as they are very powerful; it would be good if there was more public information about recycling processes; it's very encouraging to see the commitment and knowledge of the eco team and their efforts to raise awareness.

### **Conclusion**

My heart warms when I see these results and I feel so glad to be a member of a church family that continues to grow on its Eco journey. You may know that I have recently become a Deanery Environmental Advocate, with a remit to encourage other churches in Chelmsford Deanery to progress on their eco journey and the journey to net zero carbon emissions. I couldn't do that without the blessing I find in all of you and our Gold Eco Church. Thank you again for reinforcing my sense that St John's is doing its bit for God's great gift of Creation.