ST. MARY'S ECO GROUP

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

At the end of the Lent course in 2019 Ben Niblett from Tearfund came to share some ideas about how we might make a difference for the better as individuals and as a church. He encouraged us not to feel guilty about what we can't do but to focus on what we can do - out of love for God and for our neighbour and for the earth. He shared with us his top four tips which would be steps in the right direction and we thought it would be good to share these again.

- Switch electricity to renewable sources in our homes and churches;
- Drive less. If you are able to use public transport, walk, cycle or share a car. Some people are switching to an electric car but this isn't for everyone;
- Fly less. Not taking one flight makes a difference. Can you take a train or ZOOM/WhatsApp/Skype/Facetime?
- Eat less meat. (Cows and sheep breathe out methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.)

PERSONAL LIFESTYLE ECO AUDITS

In his letter this month Fr Mark suggests that people might like to make a personal lifestyle Eco audit and gives a link for doing this. If you click on the link it will take you to a website operated by *Climate Stewards* where you can calculate your carbon footprint under the headings home, private transport, public transport, air transport, food and other expenditure. For example we have a small hybrid car and I learnt that for an annual mileage of 3000 miles the carbon footprint is 621 $kgCO_2$. If I spend £100 on a meal for two the carbon footprint is 29 $kgCO_2$.

Climate Stewards is part of the A Rocha family of organisations, caring for God's creation around the world. They work with many hundreds of individuals, charities and churches to provide advice and support in their carbon reduction journey. Once you have used their site to calculate your carbon footprint they offer advice on how to reduce this footprint. You can also make a donation to offset your carbon emissions. The money you pay is used to fund Climate Stewards' partners in Ghana, Kenya, Nepal, Peru, Tanzania and Uganda. They work with local partners on community-based projects that either reduce carbon emissions or remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere - creating carbon offsets.

If you have an ECO tip or would like to join our ECO Group, we would love to hear from you. Please get in touch with Fr. Mark on 020 8393 1297 or *vicar@stmarysewell.com*.

ST. MARY'S ECO GROUP

HOW CAN WE REDUCE OUR FOOD WASTE?

During the Covid pandemic, UK households took measures to conserve food and reduce waste. Probably this was because of a shortage in shops and a reluctance to venture out. Unfortunately, food waste has risen to pre pandemic levels as we have returned to our previous behaviours. This means that 70% of food waste (post farm gate) comes from households in the UK, has a value of over £14 billion a year and uses 200 million tonnes of greenhouse gasses (source: Food Wrap survey 2022). This is not just wasted food. To get the food we have had to use valuable resources. Animals have been transported and slaughtered, dairy producers have used electricity. Almost everything we buy uses plastic to keep it fresh and petrol to transport it. We may feel pride about recycling our food, by making sure the council bin is filled. However this in turn uses energy to transport and turn into fuel which just adds to the cost to our environment.

So how can we reduce our food waste? There are several things we can do:

- be mindful of food dates as we were during the pandemic
- grow your own food where possible
- eat seasonal foods to cut down on transport waste age
- plan a weekly menu and buy only what you need for the week (this will save you money as well)
- shop from a list and ignore "must have" bargains - they are not a bargain if you don't eat them
- download the Olio food app which advertises fresh food collected by volunteers for free from retailers instead of them throwing it out
- use the Too Good To Go app which sells Magic Bags from retailers at much reduced prices instead of wasting it
- use vegetable peelings and bones to make broths, these can be canned or frozen for future use.

These are just a few ideas we can use. We are keen to find out your own ways of reducing food waste in your household. Please email us your own ideas or habits on food waste reduction to be included in a future article.

ST. MARY'S ECO GROUP

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT WHERE OUR ENERGY COMES FROM AND WHO USES THE MOST?

Take the quiz below to find out
Answers at the bottom of the column

1. *What is the most efficient type of light bulb?*
   a. Iridescent b. Fluorescent
   c. LED d. Halogen
2. *Which of these uses about half the Country's energy production?*
   a. Cars and Lorries
   b. Commercial Buildings
   c. Personal Electronic Devices
   d. Smartphones
3. *What percentage of energy is saved by simple actions such as switching off lights and equipment when not in use?*
   a. 0.5% b. 5% c. 10% d. 20%
4. *Global Warming is primarily concerned with the increase of which gas in the atmosphere?*
   a. Sulphur Oxide b. Carbon Dioxide
   c. Nitrogen d. Helium
5. *What is the primary source of energy on this planet?*
   a. Oil b. Food c. Electricity
   d. The Sun e. Nuclear Power

Altering our impact on Climate Change can seem overwhelming – but we can all play our part in bringing our relationship with God's creation back into balance. If we all apply the same approach to saving energy and reducing waste, those little things will add up across a village the size of Ewell, "Great acts are made of small deeds" *Lao Tzu.*

ECO TIP

That box of unused cables we all have tucked away in case they come in handy can be used to help conserve precious elements we all need to survive in the modern world. It is estimated that cables contain 20% of copper and the unused cables in households across the UK is worth £266m and could provide 30% of copper for our greener needs going forward. These can easily be recycled at the Blenheim Road recycling centre.

Quiz answers
1. LED, 2. Commercial Buildings, 3. 10%, 4. Carbon Dioxide, 5. The Sun

ST. MARY'S ECO GROUP

CLOTHES WASHING

Did you know that 90% of our clothes end up in landfill much sooner than they should? This is sometimes because we don't care for them well enough, or they no longer fit. More usually it is because of our laundry habits. We wash our clothes far too frequently, use too much detergent and too high temperatures. According to Levi-Strauss & co, jeans are usually washed after 2 wears. The jeans manufacturer recommends washing clothes after 10 wears, they estimate that this will reduce your energy use, climate impact and electricity by 80%. Like me, you might find washing after 10 wears unpalatable. But every time we wash our clothes, small microfibres come off them, washing machines are unable to capture them without fitting a special filter, so they end up polluting our rivers and seas. I have started to look critically at my clothes before absentmindedly tossing them on to the washing pile, and asking myself if I can wear them again. Another way to cut microfibres and electricity is to always wash with fuller loads. Researchers at Northumbria University found that the higher clothes to water ratio, the less microplastics are produced. The recommended capacity of most machines is a ¾ full drum.

Another area we can improve is our choice of washing medium. I ditched fabric softener a couple of years ago and haven't noticed the difference. Every other week I use a DIY eco friendly washing method. This is because I can't quite lose the feeling that soap is best. My DIY method is a cup of white vinegar in the soap dispenser, topped up with baking soda. The vinegar cleans, whitens and softens clothes. I have also started to go nuts …….about nuts! I mean soap nuts. These are dried shells of berries from trees native in the Himalayas. They are anti bacterial, anti fungal and completely biodegradable, a bag of them will cost you less than £10. You just toss the bag in with your wash and dry it ready for the next one. A bag of soap nuts should last for 100 washes, so it is a cheaper alternative to chemical soap as well as kinder to our rivers. The downside with soap nuts is their carbon footprint, but that's a debate for another day. In addition to this there is a range of environmentally kinder products in supermarkets that do not use harmful chemicals and are not tested on animals. Market leaders are Smol and Ecover, but there are others. A friend swears by Smol and will not use any other product. They also deliver through the post at agreed times.

Finally we should be washing our clothes at lower temperatures. This not only uses less electricity, but also helps our clothes to last longer. According to scientists at Harvard University, "washing clothes in cold water can remove many stains, some (such as blood and sweat) even better than warm water".

So green energy tips for washdays are: wash in cooler temperatures, use kinder detergents, use fuller loads and be kinder to your clothes by washing them

ST. MARY'S ECO GROUP

PEN RECYCLING

Billions of pens are purchased and disposed of each year. Each year BIC alone sells over 8.76 billion items.

If you don't recycle pens they end up in landfill. It can take up to 10,000 years for plastic items to fully decompose depending on the type of plastic used. That's a long time to wait for the earth to clean up after us!

What can we do to help?

We often mention **TerraCycle** in our ECO tips and **TerraCycle** have combined forces with **BIC ® Community Champion**s to provide pen recycling. The *Writing Instruments Recycling Programme* accepts any writing instrument with the exception of wooden pencils, glue sticks, erasers, rulers and chalk. **Recyclable products include biros, ink pens, felt tips, highlighters, markers, correction fluid pots, correction tape, mechanical pencils and eraser pens.** At St Mary's we now have a box at the back of the church for you to deposit these items and we will take them to the appropriate TerraCycle collection point. **Rather than throwing out your old pens and other writing products, bring them to St. Mary's It couldn't be easier.**

What Happens to Your Old Pens?

Pen recycling works like many other recycling schemes. Once the pens are collected, TerraCycle clean everything, separate the materials and melt them down into plastic. These plastics then re-enter the supply chain to be made into other products, preventing millions of tons of waste from entering landfill.

ST. MARY'S ECO GROUP

FAIRTRADE EASTER EGGS

In February the PCC agreed to apply to be a Fairtrade church. In our article below we explain what Fairtrade is. When you have read it, can you support Fairtrade this Easter by buying Fairtrade Easter eggs?

What is Fairtrade?

Fairtrade is an international movement. It has a vision of a world in which all producers enjoy secure and sustainable livelihoods, fulfil their potential, and decide on their future.

Fairtrade works with farmers and workers in more than 1,900 producer organisations, across 68 countries, so they can improve their living standards, invest in their communities and businesses, and protect our shared environment.

This is achieved through a global community of millions – farmers and workers, supply chain partners, brands, retailers, shoppers, schools and governments – to pay fair prices and uphold fair production standards and practices.

Fair prices provide an immediate lifeline for farmers and workers struggling with low incomes and disadvantaged by global trade.

Chocolate Easter Eggs

In recent years, the price of cocoa beans has slumped. Disease and age are damaging cocoa trees, while climate change is making crops harder to grow.

Most farmers who grow the cocoa used in chocolate Easter eggs earn an average of **$1 per day**. It's just not enough to meet their basic needs.

What difference does choosing Fairtrade make?

When you choose Fairtrade chocolate, you know that farmers in places like Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana are getting a fairer price for their cocoa.

Farmers and workers receive the **Fairtrade Minimum Price** for their crop. It means they are more likely to be able to cover household costs like education, food and healthcare.

They also receive an additional **Fairtrade Premium** which they can choose to invest in their communities and to fight the effects of climate change.

Choosing Fairtrade means backing farmers with fair pay, enabling them to create better lives for their families and communities.

Where can you buy Fairtrade Easter eggs locally?

These days many manufacturers make Fairtrade products and many local shops sell them. You can find where to buy Fairtrade Easter eggs here:

https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/media-centre/blog/fairtrade-easter-eggs/

ST. MARY'S ECO GROUP

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

During our Harvest Festival Season in October we were thinking about the many parts that make up our food production. This made me think that I should take it further and give more thought to the way in which the food I eat is affecting our planet.

Always in a rush, I tend to buy the same food from the same source without thought of the ethics behind it. We are all very aware at the moment of the increasing household bills and that, understandably, must take priority. But could I/we do more?

I have, for some time, been interested in following the LOAF principles:

Locally grown - so fewer food miles;

Organic – fewer chemicals which helps to conserve biodiversity;

Animal friendly – if you choose to eat meat, buy meat with a higher welfare standard and

Fair-trade – better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world.

It was whilst I was looking up information on the Fairtrade website *www.fairtrade.org* that I stumbled over something I had not realised – it is possible to buy Fairtrade flowers. I love fresh flowers at home and I just buy them when I see them, maybe as a gift.

According to the Fairtrade website, Fairtrade works with flower workers in countries including Kenya, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka Ecuador and Uganda. Fairtrade flowers can be traced back to the original farm. Fairtrade-certified farms must ensure safety and working conditions for their employees. These farms receive a Fairtrade premium of 10% for every stem sold, which allows workers to invest in Healthcare, education and other social benefits.

So where can you buy Fairtrade flowers? The Fairtrade website gives a list – Aldi, Lidl, Asda, and Co-op as well as Arena flowers and Zing flowers online.

Will you swap one item in your shopping basket for local, organic or Fairtrade food? (or flowers!)

ST. MARY'S ECO GROUP

This month's ECO tips focus on the bathroom and are taken from ' 52 ECO Top Tips' which can be downloaded from the website of the Leeds Diocese at *https://learning.leeds.anglican.org/resource/eco-tips-for-your-weekly-parish-newsletter/.*

We also highlight 'No Mow May' an annual campaign from Plantlife in which St.Mary's is particapting.

April – In the bathroom

Spend less time in the shower. Spending one minute less in the shower each day will save up to £7 off your energy bills each year, per person. Heating water uses a lot of energy (*www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/home-energy-efficiency/energy-saving-quick-wins*).

Turn off the tap while cleaning your teeth. The clean water that flows out of your tap needs energy in many stages of processing and transport before it gets to the tap. Don't waste it!

If your toilet cistern holds more than 6 litres of water (likely if it was installed before 2001) put a Hippo Water Saving device (or a brick) in it to save water each time you flush (eg *http://www.hippo-the-watersaver.co.uk/*)

Fit a water efficient shower head (if you've got a shower that takes hot water straight from your boiler or hot water tank). This will reduce your hot water usage while retaining the sensation of a powerful shower.

Switch to eco cleaning products which biodegrade in the sewerage system and don't damage aquatic life in our rivers and seas. They also contain less harmful chemical for us too.

'No Mow May'

No Mow May is Plantlife's annual campaign calling on all garden owners and green space managers not to mow during May. The PCC have decided that the grass at the top of Churchyard 4 should be left unmown during May. [The area with memorial stones will be mown to respect the feelings of anyone who comes to remember a loved one.] Your lawn can help too! A healthy lawn with some long grass and wildflowers benefits wildlife, tackles pollution and can even lock away carbon below ground. Will you be one of the 20 million gardens in the UK which benefit the environment through 'No Mow May' this year? You can find out more at *https://www.plantlife.org.uk/campaigns/nomowmay/* .

ST. MARY'S ECO GROUP

PLASTIC-FREE JULY

Plastic Free July ® is a key initiative of the Plastic Free Foundation that works towards their vision of a world free of plastic waste.

Here are some of their suggestions of **THINGS FOR US TO AVOID** for a Plastic-free July

Fill your bin with plastics for 'recycling' Avoid as much plastic packaging as you can

Takeaway coffee cups Bring your reusable cup or sit and enjoy a real cup

Takeaway utensils and containers Support vendors offering compostable alternatives (bamboo or card), BYO reusables or sit and enjoy 'dine-in'

Bottled water Fill a reusable bottle from the tap

Bottled soft drinks Reduce the amount (helps your health) or make your own with a soda maker/carbonator or choose glass bottles (and recycle)

Bin liners Reuse plastic shopping bags. Have a sealed container for 'wet' scraps and compost or freeze until bin day. Line the kitchen bin with paper

Plastic food wrap for leftovers and sandwiches Use a reusable lunch box to store food, Store food in containers or use beeswax wraps

Pre-packed fruit and veg Choose loose products (skip the little plastic bag or put in a reusable bag)

Lightweight plastic bags Remember your reusable shopping bags or use a cardboard box

Pre-packed meat or fish Shop at the deli counter or butcher or fishmonger for paper wrapped cuts or BYO reusable container

Takeaway drink straws Refuse plastic straws (or opt for a paper straw if they have them). BYO reusable straw

Littering: cigarette butts, balloons Dispose of cigarette butts in the bin (they are plastic and wash into the ocean environment). Avoid releasing balloons (what goes up, must come down)

ST. MARY'S ECO GROUP

INVITATION TO TAKE ACTION FOR NATURE

You may have been in church over the Coronation weekend and heard the talk from the Surrey Wildlife Trust inviting the congregation to take action for nature. What better way to celebrate our new King, who has dedicated so much of his life to conservation?

Current figures relating to the biodiversity crisis make for gloomy reading – with 1 in 7 species at risk of extinction in Surrey alone. Particularly affected are our wildflower meadows, with 98% lost since the 1950s. To help combat this decline, we would like to see actions go beyond the church boundary and into our streets, gardens and community spaces. Here are some ways that you can get involved.

- Leave part of your grass uncut for at least 4 weeks and enjoy seeing daisies, speedwells, dandelions, birdsfoot trefoil and yarrow start to bloom.
- A lawn that has been fed and tended to for years may need a little help diversifying. To encourage native plants you may wish to remove patches of turf and plant wildflowers amongst the grass as 'plug plants'.
- This September you could consider removing turf along with the nutrient rich top layer of soil (where commercial grasses thrive) and reseed the area with a mix of native wild flowers – there are a number of good seed sources available online.
- If you have a flower bed or pots, plant them up with pollinator friendly plants and create a 'pollinator pit stop' – most herbs such as lavenders, mints, chives, rosemary, thyme and oregano are fantastic for bees, cope with drier conditions of pots and are great additions to your cooking.
- Commit to going chemical free in your garden, let natural predators such as birds, hedgehogs and toads do the slug and aphid control while welcoming the weeds.
- Always use peat free compost.

We understand that long grass can look untidy or make the garden look abandoned. This can be avoided by mowing neat paths through the lawn, or just allowing a strip of your lawn to grow wild with the rest mown a little less frequently than usual. If it's a community garden or a verge in public view, why not place a blue heart with a sign letting passers-by know it is being left for the bees. Don't abandon cutting all together – all meadows need to be cut in late summer/ early autumn to prevent brambles taking hold. But always check for hedgehogs and other small creatures first! When you do cut, allow a few days for any seeds to fall before removing the clippings. The following Spring, an early cut with the blades set high, knocks back the grasses and allows the wildflowers a chance to get going.

https://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/actions/how-grow-wild-patch-or-mini-meadow