



LINK

October 2019

The Magazine of the United Reformed Church,
Stratford-upon-Avon



Worship, Witness and love for others, through Jesus Christ

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Thoughts for October

Postscript to The Season of Creation



As you may know we have just come to the end of the 'Season of Creation'. If you haven't attended any of our Season of Creation services, it runs from September 1st to October 4th (the feast day of St Francis, who is the patron saint of ecology in many traditions), Christians around the world have united to pray and care for Creation. The theme for 2019 has been 'The Web of Life: biodiversity as God's blessing'

My thoughts for October have been prompted by the 'Season of Creation'. The following text is an amalgamation of articles from two different websites: seasonofcreation.org and greenchristian.org.uk.

The Season of Creation is our special time for the Creator and each other. We all protect Creation. It's powerfully good work that's urgently needed. The momentum continues long after the season ends, through ongoing prayer, changes in lifestyle, and advocacy. During the Season of Creation, we live out our faith to care for creation. If you're new to this movement, welcome! If you've participated for years, welcome home.

A little bit of the history of the movement:

- In 1989 the Ecumenical Patriarch proclaimed September 1st as a day of prayer for the environment.
- In 2007 the World Council of Churches invited churches to observe a "Time for Creation" through prayers and action for five weeks.
- In 2015 Pope Francis designated September 1st as a World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation for the worldwide Roman Catholic Church.

- In 2016 Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew released special messages for what has become a month-long “Season of Creation” celebrations, supported by the major Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Anglican churches and organisations around the world, to pray and act on ecological issues. October 4th has long been the day to commemorate Francis of Assisi and many animal blessing services are held that day. This is a time when many churches traditionally celebrate Harvest and give thanks for the food that we have, and to take action for those in need.
- In 2018 the Church of England produced a calendar of daily prayer and action on food. They pointed out that our food is one of the largest sources of carbon emissions from UK households. At the same time, it is an area of our lives where we can all make a difference. Globally, even without climate change, the world food system faces a challenge: experts estimate that global food production will need to increase to feed a growing population and satisfy shifting diets.

According to Pope Francis, “This Season offers to individual believers and to the community a precious opportunity to renew our personal participation on this vocation as custodians of creation, raising to God our thanks for the marvellous works that he has entrusted to our care, invoking his help for the protection of creation and his mercy for the sins committed against the world in which we live.”

Today, the Season of Creation is sponsored by The Roman Catholic Church, The Worldwide Anglican Church, The Lutheran Movement and the World Council of Churches It is also endorsed by Christian Aid.

World Day of Creation prayer:

“Eternal God, You crown the year with goodness, and you give us the fruits of the earth in their season. Grant that we may use them to your glory, for the relief of those in need, and for our own wellbeing. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

The Web of Life - the 2019 Theme

We are part of a complex, delicate and interdependent web of life which is valuable, because it is created, sustained and redeemed by God. Humanity is called to reflect God’s image through godly leadership within the community of fellow creatures (Genesis 1:26-28). In the New Testament we learn that all things were created by and for Christ, giving particular value to each creature

(Colossians 1:15-20). God's ultimate purposes from creation to re-creation encompass all that we today call biodiversity.

Biodiversity matters because human well-being depends on stable and thriving ecosystems and the services they give to us, from clean water and food, to oxygen, clothing and climate regulation, as well as all the 'resources' we use from nature. As the Papal Encyclical Laudato Si' states, "It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential "resources" to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. ... Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us."

Today, human behaviour is destroying the fabric of God's creation at an unprecedented rate. According to the Living Planet Report 2018, there has been a 60% decline in global wildlife populations between 1970 and 2014. There are multiple causes, from deforestation, habitat destruction, climate change, and pollution of soil, water and air, including the tide of plastic pollution filling the oceans.

Biodiversity loss matters both because all God's creatures have value in themselves and also as an issue of justice. It is the poor and marginalised who depend most immediately on the health of ecosystems and are affected most severely by the collapse of the natural systems that sustain all life. Billions of people today face the loss of productive soils, clean water, forests, fish and coral reefs, and biodiversity loss is a major driver of human migration. As Kenyan botanist and Christian Dr Stella Simiyu states: "The rural poor depend directly on the natural resource base. This is where their pharmacy is, this is where their

supermarket is, this is in fact their fuel station, their power company, their water company.

What would happen to you if these things were removed from your local neighbourhood?

Therefore, we really cannot afford not to invest in environmental conservation."



Under the theme of 'The Web of Life: Biodiversity as God's blessing', Season of Creation 2019 encourages participation of churches and Christians worldwide through:

- Celebrating the goodness of God's gift of creation in worship, drawing on the Psalms and other scriptures to rejoice in the Creator's glory
- Reflecting on our mistreatment of creation, repent of the decisions we've made, and commit to new practices and habits.
- Learning more about the wildlife and ecology of our communities
- Teaching our communities about God's web of life, and convey the truth that we can protect both people and our planet
- Practicing nature conservation in our homes, schools, churchyards and community spaces
- Giving voice to the voiceless by advocating for nature in our home communities and beyond
- Preparing for global events that protect nature, such as the World Conservation Congress in June, the UN climate summit in September, the Catholic synod on the Amazon in October, and the UN climate change conference in November

Apologies that this month's 'thoughts' are a little long, but this is an important topic for the whole of mankind. As Christians we are duty-bound to pray for the issues, to campaign for change and to make changes in our corporate and individual lifestyles

Peter

Family News

Phil has recovered from his recent fall and we wish him very best wishes for a very happy 95th birthday on 25th October.

Diane is going through various test and treatments but is coping well.

Irene and Jim are also coping well with their various medical problems. Irene is happy with the outcome of her amputation and has been fitted for an artificial limb. The amputation has helped her general health.

Betty is well and looks forward to visitors.

Freida is pretty housebound and would welcome visitors.

Beth Forbes was in Church recently as she is in the UK for a few weeks. They are both well.

Graham has had the result of a recent scan which shows that his condition has remained stable which is good news. He manages to get out and about to his various days of interest.

Ileen Fisher

Living with Myopia



Or in my case, high myopia, which means being very short sighted.

This was discovered when I started school and could not see the blackboard; but not a big surprise as my nan and mum wore glasses and both were quite short sighted.

My nan did not wear them until she was about 30, having to take a friend with her when she went shopping in order to be told the prices of goods behind the counter. The big surprise was at 5 everyone thought it too early to be short sighted and not an ideal situation in the early 1950's as the only glasses available for children were pink or brown owl-type frames.

As the years went by my sight worsened, the lenses were thicker, but luckily frames improved. These better frames had to be bought privately and so it cost my parents a lot of money.

By the time I was in the 6th form at Grammar School, much of my life had been spent sitting in the front desks, being teased for having to wear thick specs and getting totally fed up with silly children referring to me as '4 eyes'.

My mother sympathised with me and between us we decided 17 was a good time to get contact lenses. Dad was against it as they were very expensive, very new and he didn't think I would manage to wear them. But it was our secret; my mum worked and so she bought me these 'life saving' little gems and with so much determination I mastered them before telling dad.

Life went on, I married Rob, but towards the end of our first year of marriage I was rushed to hospital with my first detached retina. I spent a month in the then very grotty Birmingham Eye Hospital. The retina was put back by a 'high and mighty' eye consultant with dry ice, but it was too late as the tear had gone across the central vision, leaving me with no sight at the top of my left eye and a cracked version of the world in the centre.

Two years later the right eye was operated on. This time the field of vision had gone on the left side of my eye. Thankfully the central vision had been saved enough to allow me to drive for many years.

On arriving in Stratford 17 years ago I began having more trouble. Cataracts needed doing and another tear in my right retina needed laser treatment. I had all the surgery required and enjoyed a couple of years with reasonable sight, thanks to lens implants. Very slowly over the years my sight deteriorated and more surgery was needed to remove the thick jelly from inside my eyes. The field of vision got worse and so I had to stop driving about 10 years ago.

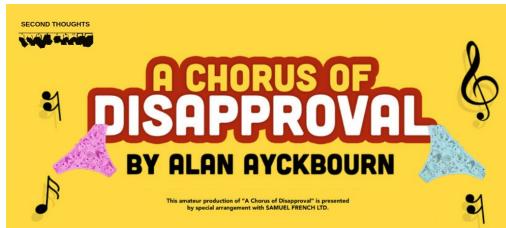
Double vision has started to cause an extra problem but the worse thing is the 'creep' which often happens after laser treatment on the retina. The scars from the burning of the retina continue to creep across and unfortunately are now making their way towards the central vision causing me to have very poor sight .

Luckily I don't need a white stick yet , but please forgive me if I don't see you until you are right in front of me!

Jill Fradley

What's on at the Bear Pit

**A Chorus of Disapproval: 2nd to 5th October at 7.30pm
Matinee on 5th October at 2.30pm**



Second Thoughts Drama Group brings Alan Ayckbourn's riotous and brilliantly intricate comedy to life this October at The Bear Pit Theatre. A shy and

awkward widower, Guy Jones, finds himself joining his local amateur operatic society in a bid to beat his loneliness. By accident (and partly because he can't say no), Guy quickly moves from his small role in The Beggar's Opera to playing the lead, and soon enjoys various advances from his fellow cast members. But the drama onstage is nothing compared to that behind the scenes – can Guy negotiate dodgy business deals, love interests, and his madcap director, and survive to opening night?

Tickets £13 (Concessions £11)

Tickets for all productions in the Bear Pit Theatre can be obtained:

By telephone: 01789 403416

In person at the RSC from 10am Mon to Sun

Online at the Bear Pit website: www.thebearpit.org.uk

Health & Safety

Lone Working Policy

The F&F committee are strongly recommending that all church members, visitors and contractors are provided with the following recommendations regarding lone working, to ensure their personal safety whilst conducting activities for the Church which includes working on their own.

- It is the responsibility of all church members and volunteers to take care of themselves
- They should never knowingly put themselves at risk.
- Always carry a mobile phone and inform a third party when and where you are.
- Record any incidents in the accident book which is to be found in the kitchenette
- Do not open external doors to any unknown person and / or if no-one is expected.
- Ensure all doors are closed when inside the building
- Arrange to meet unknown individuals in a public place and preferably with another person present.
- If when you are making home visits you have the slightest concern about a visit make sure that someone knows where you are going and that you have a mobile phone with you and turned on.
- In the case of a serious incident, follow the police guidelines of "Run, Hide and Tell"

Iain Kelso

Who am I?

August 12th. 1961, a new beginning for on that day I married Roger, promising to love honour and obey, with all that entails. We had met at choir practice and gone on to Fam Church, a weekly social event for the whole church at Emanuel Congregational Church. Here we had impressed everyone, ourselves included, with the agility with which we danced the polka!

Our relationship blossomed rapidly, Roger asking me to marry him in February 1959, before we had even met one another's parents. Roger completed his Maths. Degree and did a further one year MSc. course while I completed my one year course in teaching mathematics and returned home to live with my parents in Oxford while teaching in Oxfordshire. We were married at Temple Cowley Congregational church and came to live in Stratford, Roger to work as a statistician at the national Vegetable Research Station in Wellesbourne and I to teach Maths. at the Hugh Clopton boys school.

Those were heady days, work was rewarding, we sang with the Stratford Choral Society in Britten's War Requiem and 'The Noble Heart' in the Royal Shakespeare theatre, while establishing our first Madrigal group which met in our home in Limes Avenue.

We were received into membership at Rother Street in 1962 where we made many friends, Ashley and Heather amongst them, and where I soon launched a Pilot Company.

Simon was born in 1963 and Andrew in 1964 and we moved to Reading in 1967 where Rachel was born within days of our move. The children were nurtured at Park Congregational Church where I led the senior department of Junior Church and Roger served as an elder.

In 1987 Roger was one of the four elders sent to establish a new church in the huge new housing development of Lower Earley, while I abandoned my teaching post in Newbury and responded to a call to train for the ministry. I trained on an ecumenical course in Salisbury and was ordained, in September 1988 at Trinity, Lower Earley, the new LEP. Here I served for three years before we spent a sabbatical year in Dunedin New Zealand where Roger visited various Research Institutes and I supported the minister of the Presbyterian church



who had recently experienced a traumatic bereavement. We moved to Canberra for Roger's remaining three months where I enjoyed leisurely time joining in some of the activities of the Uniting Church there.

We returned home to welcome our first grandchild and I was invited to take on the role of youth and childrens' worker, including Provincial Pilot Officer for the Wessex Province. I spent four years in pastoral charge of the church in Thatcham, serving also as chair of the District pastoral committee and after formal retirement enjoyed leading worship in many of the small churches in the District.

Along the way I launched Pilot companies at Thatcham, Lower Earley and Grange sadly now all closed although the churches remain open. Along the way I launched Pilot companies at Thatcham, Lower Earley and Grange sadly now all closed although the churches remain open

Roger died four years ago and I decided to return to Stratford in order to be closer to my two sons, one in Leamington and the other in Hook Norton. My daughter lives in a village just outside Usk on the Welsh border.

Nina Mead.

Christmas Shoeboxes

Christmas already?! Yes, it seems ridiculous, but we need to plan ahead if the parcels are to arrive in time for Christmas.

We have received the following letter from Anne and Malcolm McCulloch at the Baptist Church, about this year's shoebox appeal:

Hello everyone

This is the 6th year we have been involved with this work and it's been great to see the support received in the Stratford area grow over this period. Last year we collected almost 400 family shoeboxes and over the years we have received lovingly prepared shoebox gifts from many individuals, workplaces, schools, WI's, Rotary, slimming world groups and churches. We hope you will support us again this year and invite others to join in with filling a shoebox or two.

As you will see in the photos a shoebox gift means a lot. To us in the UK these are our everyday items but to these Romanian families living in very basic conditions they are a reminder that someone cares enough to give them the only gift they will receive this Christmas.

If it would help you to have some pre-wrapped shoeboxes and pre-printed leaflets we can pass these on to you and clear some space in our house! On a practical point if you are filling more than one shoebox please just complete one Gift Aid declaration. If you are seeing us in person with your completed shoeboxes then you can pass us your monetary donation rather than sellotaping it to your leaflet.

We are aiming to receive back filled shoeboxes by Sunday 3rd November to put them in large boxes for lorry collection later in November for transportation out to Romania.

Please let us know if you have any comments/queries and we hope that you will support us again in 2019. Attached is the leaflet to print off and it reminds you what to put in a family shoebox. Also have a look at <https://www.amentrust.co.uk/relieving-poverty/romanian-shoebox-appeal/> for some photos and a You Tube video clip.

Many thanks

Malcolm & Anne

You will see from Anne & Malcolm's letter that the parcels are really appreciated, so I am hoping that we can make even more this year. I will be happy to receive your donations of gifts / money / completed boxes on most Sundays in October.

Linda

New Ministry

There are now two new members of the Clergy in Stratford-upon-Avon:

Craig Grocock was inducted in July by the Bishop of Coventry at St Andrews Shottery. He comes from Harbury and Ladbrooke and has a Church Army background.

Amanda (Mandy) Rhodes was appointed and inducted as Pastor at Stratford Baptist Church, on the 21st September. She has come from Dorchester Baptist Church where she was an assistant Pastor.

Smile line

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonalds makes you a hamburger!

One lightbulb at a time?



If we are told that we can bring climate change to a halt by changing the lightbulbs in our house, it sounds out of all proportion to the massive and complex problem of global warming.

But our small action is part of the solution

When we turn on the ignition in our car we don't intend to harm the Earth – let alone cause the Sixth Mass Extinction Event in the history of life on this planet. But harm to Earth is precisely what is happening.

Our individual carbon emissions may be statistically and morally insignificant, but when you multiply them millions and billions of times they are a collective act of ecological destruction. Coral bleaching isn't just happening over yonder, on the Central Barrier Reef; it's happening whenever you switch on the air conditioning. In short, everything is interconnected.

Our one small action to cut emissions has serious consequences when it is multiplied many times over.

The “old” 40 watt light bulbs used 40 watts of electricity when they were switched on. “New” LED bulbs use 4 watts to give the same light. That's 90% less electricity being used. Try counting the lightbulbs in your house. Multiply that by the roughly 30 million households in the UK, and maybe 2 billion households worldwide. If all switched to LED light bulbs that would make a really significant impact on the electricity used, and greenhouse gases emitted.

In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis asks us to “encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as...

- reducing water consumption,
- separating refuse,
- cooking only what can reasonably be consumed,
- showing care for other living beings,
- using public transport or car-pooling,
- planting trees,
- turning off unnecessary lights ... “

“We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread.”

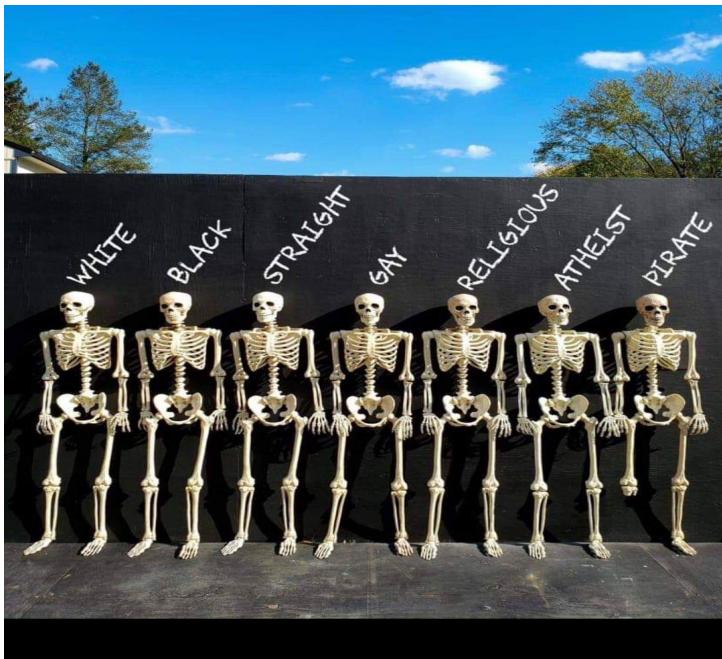
Taken from GreenChristian.org.uk

The Link Project

As many of you will know, the Link project, run by Stratford District Council on Waterside, closed earlier in the year due to safety issues. Originally, it was set up to help the homeless, but it expanded to provide support to other needy groups in the town, such as those with alcohol and drug problems. It is these groups of people that we support at the weekend meals

With the closure of the Link, these vulnerable people had nowhere to go for food, showers, laundry facilities, and most importantly, advice on managing their problems, so we were pleased to give some help in providing the URC as a base on two lunchtimes per week. The sessions are run by P3 - a charity which has experience of dealing with the sorts of problems encountered by the users of the Link. The sessions are expected to continue until the (wonderful!) new Community Hub is opened in the old Fred Winter store (apart from when the Christmas Card shop is open). The new Hub is an exciting project, supported by the Winter family. It will provide rooms for the homeless, house the Foodbank, provide a Community Cafe and have space for support for the needy.

We are all the same underneath.....



Diary

Services in October at 9.30am:

6th October	Holy Communion	Peter Horrocks
13th October	Morning Service	Revd Audrey Simpson
20th October	Morning Service	Elders
27th October	Morning Service	Simon Burne
	Church Meeting	

Services in November at 9.30am:

3rd November	Holy Communion	Revd Nick Stanyon
10th November	Morning Service	Elders
17th November	Morning Service	Tom Meldrum
24th November	Morning Service	Margaret Marshall

Flower Rota

Oct:	6th	Margaret R
	13th	Ann Jones
	20th	Di Chapman
	27th	Ivy Dyall
Nov:	3rd	Julie Sprake
	10th	Remembrance
	17th	Barbara Lister
	24th	Sue Cragoe-Jones

Regular Events

16th October: 1.00pm - TAMOW

The next edition of Link will be published on 27th October:

The deadline for submission to the next edition is Monday 21st. We have NO material in reserve, please submit whatever you can: articles, pictures, poems, prayers, jokes

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Midlands Charities Association Charity Christmas Card Shop

Opens October 23rd 2019



Get your supplies of Christmas Cards and Christmas decorations at the United Reformed Church