



# Bristol Methodist District

Eco District Newsletter

No 3 Summer 2021

**Welcome to the Eco District Newsletter!**



## 11 times round the world!

..... that's how far the ministers in the Bristol District travel each year on official business.

Travel represents one of the biggest contributors to global warming representing about one-third of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the UK. The District Environment Team realised that one way the church could move towards lower emissions levels would be by reducing travel. But the first thing we needed to know was how far we were travelling already.

All the circuits were asked to let us know how much mileage they had paid for during the last three years. All but one let us have their figures and we discovered in the two years before the Covid outbreak the mileage paid for by the circuits averaged about 275,000 miles or 11 times round the earth. Apart from the cost of all those miles it is estimated that that was about 62 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Even more frightening is that this doesn't include all the other mileage undertaken on church business by members of congregations nor the miles driven to attend worship.

But there is hope. The last year for which we had figures included half a year of lockdown and Covid and the mileage dropped by about 100,000 miles which means that in a full year of restrictions we would expect the mileage overall to be about 73,000. The hope in this is that we may have learned to do things differently – zoom meetings, car-sharing, and other greener ways of travel.

Of course, as things get back to 'normal' we'll see mileage rise again but could we aim to keep it below 150,000 miles. That would reduce the number of times round the earth by 4 or 5 times and save 28 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. It would also save circuits a lot of money. Can we resist the temptation to get back to how things were and really think how far we need to travel in church life – and that's not just ministers – think about all those other miles we have driven for worship and everything else.

We need to challenge ourselves to do things greener.

Ian Souter

**Good News!** Since the last newsletter Hanham Methodist Church in the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit has gained a Bronze Eco Church award – congratulations to all involved in gaining that award.

Churches in the Bristol District which already have Eco Church awards include:

*Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit:* Hanham (bronze), Unity Oldland, Westbury on Trym (silver);  
*Gloucestershire Circuit:* Cheltenham Bethesda, Stonehouse, Stroud and Tewkesbury (silver) and Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham St Mark's, Cirencester, Dursley, Nailsworth, Tetbury, Tibberton (all bronze);  
*North East Somerset and Bath Circuit:* Stratton House MHA, Southdown Horizon and Nexus (all bronze);  
*Gordano Circuit:* Nailsea (silver);  
*Wiltshire United Area:* St Andrew's Devizes (silver) and Whitley (bronze);  
*North Wilts Circuit:* Sheldon Road Chippenham (bronze);  
*Upper Thames Circuit:* Royal Wotton Bassett (bronze).

Many churches have registered in 2021. There is a lot to celebrate in the achievements throughout the district. Please let us know through Rev Noel Sharp [noel.sharp@btinternet.com](mailto:noel.sharp@btinternet.com) or Mike and Pauline

Culshaw [culshaw@strawberryvision.co.uk](mailto:culshaw@strawberryvision.co.uk) if you are aware of any further awards not included here and pass on any good news stories you would like to share.



**COP26 – what is it and what does it stand for?** COP stands for Conference of the Parties, and will be attended by over 200 leaders of countries that signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - a treaty agreed in 1994. The last conference, **COP25**, was held in Madrid, Spain, in November 2019 with Greta Thunberg giving a big speech at the event. The COP meeting in Madrid finished with lots of big issues unresolved, but an agreement was made about cutting carbon dioxide - a gas that causes global warming. Each nation agreed to devise a plan to cut their carbon emissions by the next conference in Glasgow in November this year which will be chaired by Boris Johnson. Please pray for just and equitable outcomes from that conference which will help to turn the tide of the climate crisis.

**District Environmental Policy** A draft Environmental Policy for the Bristol District (one of the criteria for an Eco District) will be considered at the District Synod in September. One element of that policy is that the District will manage its investments ethically, where possible using investment vehicles which avoid fossil fuels. This aim is now considerably assisted by the fact that The Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church, and its subsidiary Epworth Investment Management Limited, have sold their remaining company holdings in the oil and gas sector, including Royal Dutch Shell. This follows advice received from the Methodist Church's Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment ("JACEI") in April 2021, that no companies in the sector are currently aligned with the climate change targets set out by the 2015 Paris Accord. For over three years, JACEI has been assessing companies in the oil and gas sector against the targets set by the Paris Accord using a number of metrics. The Methodist Church recognised the climate emergency at its 2019 Conference and is in the process of determining how it might bring forward to 2030 its commitment to achieve net zero emissions.



**Climate Sunday** Local churches across Britain and Ireland are encouraged to hold a climate-focused service on any Sunday before 5 September 2021. Free resources are available to suit every tradition and style of worship. During their local Climate Sunday, churches are invited to do one or more of three things:

1. **Worship:** Hold a climate-focused service, to explore the theological and scientific basis of creation care and action on climate, to pray, and to commit to action.
2. **Commit:** Make a commitment as a local church community to taking long term action to reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions.
3. **Speak up:** Join with other churches and wider society by adding its name to a common call for the UK government to take much bolder action on climate change in this country in advance of COP26, and to strengthen its credibility to lead the international community to adopt a step change in action at COP26.

The culmination of the campaign will be a national Climate Sunday event on Sunday 5th September this year, to share church commitments and pray for bold action and courageous leadership at COP26.

Climate Sunday has been organised by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) with support from charities including CAFOD, Christian Aid, Tearfund, A Rocha UK, and Operation Noah. To register visit the Climate Sunday website - <https://www.climatesunday.org/>



**Slack**, our online forum, is available for discussion and queries, to share good ideas and to celebrate achievements. Everybody who responded to the email which followed the November workshop was sent an invitation to join Slack, but we are aware that quite a number have not yet joined. If you have lost or deleted your invitation and wish to join please get in touch.

If you have questions about Eco Church or about the completion of the survey you can seek advice using Slack. The Eco Church website has a page of Frequently Asked Questions, the first of which is a video demonstrating the sign-up process. This link gets you there: <https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/frequently-asked-questions/> .

**Snapshot: Stonehouse Methodist Church have gained a Silver Eco Church award**, and this is their story:

When we registered as an Eco Church in March 2019 we formed a small team of 6 people which meets every 2 months or so to review the survey questions and plan ideas/activities/events for the coming months. We aim to complete one project each month and report back to the church through our regular Newsletter, on our Facebook page (Methodist Church of Stonehouse) and Church Council.

We do not have our own website but details of our church are on the Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit website at [www.gloucestershiremethodist.org.uk/churches/circuit-churches/stonehouse.html](http://www.gloucestershiremethodist.org.uk/churches/circuit-churches/stonehouse.html)

*Worship and Teaching* – We held an Environment Sunday service in June 2019 where the junior church were invited to make a collage out of items of litter placed around the church. In February 2021 we held a Climate Sunday service on Zoom led by a Circuit Minister with responsibility for promoting Eco Church in the Bristol District. We now include an ‘Eco Tip’ in our weekly Newsletter. We plan to hold an outdoor service when we are able.

*Buildings* – In 2019 we completed the installation of a new commercial kitchen with A\* rated appliances and LED lighting. We have a policy of replacing all light bulbs with LED ones as the need arises throughout the premises. Our energy supplier provides green electricity.

*Land* – We have a grass lawn around our buildings with a beech hedge boundary which is good habitat for nesting birds. In Autumn 2019 we planted some spring bulbs and in 2020 we asked our gardener to leave a 1 metre strip unmowed around the edge of the lawn. We noticed many bees, butterflies, caterpillars and other insects in the tall grass and flowers which grew. In December 2020 we planted a tree in the garden, donated by the Town Council as part of the Stonehouse Community Arboretum. In January 2021 we installed a water butt to collect rainwater to use on the garden in future.

*Community and Global Engagement* – Since November 2019 the church has supported the Fairtrade Foundation’s ‘Live Fair’ project with a monthly donation. We have been a Fairtrade Church for many years and have twinned many toilets before this. We have written an article on our Eco Church endeavours in the Stonehouse Town magazine circulated to all households. During 2020 we joined the Stonehouse Community Climate Action Forum (SCCAF) to share ideas and campaigns. In February 2020 we took part in a Climate Action webinar giving a summary of Eco Church, people from 8 countries took part.

*Lifestyle* - Throughout lockdown continued to support Traidcraft with members of the congregation placing orders. We also provide a refill service of washing up liquid, hand wash and other Bio-D products.

*Ginny Young*

## **The Churches Count on Nature**

Christ Church Tetbury in Gloucestershire took part in this national week of biodiversity recording at our Chipping Steps graveyard. Several of us met on a gloriously sunny day, had a friendly chat and surveyed the progress of our work there. We did a count of the trees, flowers and creatures. Ben Jackson of Greening Tetbury identified the species and I wrote the names down. It astonished me that in quite a small patch of land we counted 40 species of plants and trees, and over a dozen species of insects and birds. We will do our best to celebrate the goodness of God’s creation and to preserve and encourage this biodiversity and to develop the area as a quiet sacred space, a sanctuary for creatures and people.



We would welcome snapshots from other churches working towards an Eco Church award – please contact us if you would like to contribute your experiences!

## Future Events

**Wednesday 28 July, 7pm: Bible Discussion: How should we balance trusting in God's sovereignty versus personally taking action on the climate? With Deborah Tomkins** A common response of many Christians to the Climate Crisis is to say that they will trust in God. The Bible says: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8v28). In that case, they say, why should Christians worry? Surely having faith in God is enough? Deborah will discuss some aspects of this belief, and how Christians share the work of Christ in bringing renewal and life to all aspects of our broken world. Register in advance for this meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0vduiqgj8sGtKYF-9olrQbGU5mHGy\\_Pots](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0vduiqgj8sGtKYF-9olrQbGU5mHGy_Pots)



**Wednesday 11 August, 7pm: Labyrinths: spirituality, place and the environment with Annabel Barber** In our age of internet connectivity, we risk becoming disconnected from our environment, and many do not recognise the value to our health of being 'rooted'. Annabel Barber passionately believes that labyrinth spirituality has a role to play in repairing damaged connections between people and their environment, and enabling us to change how we live.

Labyrinths are a spiritual tool used in many religions since prehistory, with a particular flowering in Christianity during the age of building the great Cathedrals of Europe. There has been a recent resurgence of interest in labyrinths as an accessible and valuable spiritual tool for everyone. The workshop will give some basic introductory information about labyrinths, outline what labyrinth spirituality is, explore its practice, and provide resources, connections and suggestions of ways to deepen our engagement with this valuable tool. Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMsdO2opjluGNynSHLENaZIsPGHuhP1pKP6>

**Wednesday 25 August, 7pm: Exploring the Way of Life: Public Witness with George Dow** Many spiritual communities have Rules or Ways of Life involving a set of disciplines to assist believers in living out their faith in a deeper and more structured way. The Green Christian Way of Life offers a framework for living more lightly on the earth and for deeper engagement and shared encouragement. It comprises a set of four disciplines: Prayer and Devotions; Living Gently on the Earth; Public Witness; and Encouragement. George Dow is Green Christian Co-Chair and the Way of Life Co-ordinator. Register in advance for this meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlud-2opjouHdXwhn7aXhgP4SOJx-OmwwqY>

You are receiving this newsletter because you signed up following the Eco Church Workshop in November 2020. Please feel free to copy this newsletter or any parts you feel relevant to your situation, and use it in church notices or magazines.