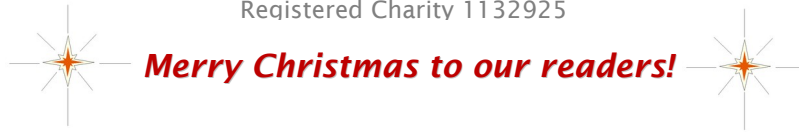


*An all age community ... on a shared journey of faith ... making the edge the centre
so that Jesus can be known*

Registered Charity 1132925



In this issue:

PCC meeting 9 th September 2024.....	1
THE INCARNATION - GOD'S INDESCRIBABLE LOVE - Dele Agbelusi.....	2
Connect Groups "... to be a Pilgrim!" - Andrea Howlett.....	3
Update from Rachael Howson.....	4
Experience of switching to an ethical current account - Jane Sellars.....	5
Sermon topics at Christ Church, December 2024.....	6
Caring for Creation.....	7

Items for the next **>imprint<** no. 131: **Mon. 27th January 2025**, please, by email at editor@ccstalbens.org.uk for publication as the *February* issue [Peter Young \(Ed.\)](#)

Inspired by our brilliant Communications Co-ordinator's tweaks to our weekly e-newsletter format, I'm including some QR Codes alongside hyperlinks to websites in this issue, as a trial, so that even if you prefer reading a paper copy version of >imprint< you can use the QR codes to open those sites using your smart phone (providing you have one, of course, unfortunately no use to you if you don't. 😞 Feedback welcomed!) - Ed.

PCC meeting 9th September 2024

Following approval of the minutes of the July PCC meeting, receipt of the most recent Standing Committee minutes and review of matters arising from the minutes and action points, the PCC considered two items of correspondence received.

One concerned an invitation from the Diocesan Elections Review Group to complete a questionnaire regarding elections to PCC and PCC conduct. It was left to individual members to respond to this as they wished.

The other concerned safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in the context of the live-streaming and recording of our services, for example in instances where personal information might be shared, given that currently they are completely open to public viewing with no restriction on who can access them. However children are identified by first name only, members of the congregation could opt to be out of sight of cameras, but active management/editing of the live-stream, or removal of content from the recording is impractical other than in very exceptional cases.

The PCC received a report on the Holiday Club held in the summer, which yielded positive feedback from children and parents attending, building of relationships, and some helpful learning points for any future events. The PCC formally thanked the

Holiday Club Team.

The Community Outreach Group (COG), one of the Mission Action Plan (MAP) sub-groups, reported on its recent activities and possible future direction for PCC consideration, including how best to work together with the Vicar and the Communications Co-ordinator. The Unity in Fellowship MAP subgroup had been unable to meet in time to report to this PCC meeting, but would do so before the next PCC meeting. The Resources MAP subgroup, specifically looking at the new roof fundraising strategy, had met, but had not yet reported.

The Treasurer spoke to two reports which between them provided a line by line breakdown of income versus expenditure (comparing actual versus forecast values), and a financial update with commentary, in each case for the first eight months of 2024. From these, the most significant issue she highlighted is that we are facing an estimated deficit of nearly £10,000 by the end of this year, which is largely due to increased energy costs. She also responded to questions for clarification from the PCC.

The next time the PCC was due to meet would be for the Saturday morning of 19th October which was intended mainly for prayer and seeking direction. The next formal business meeting of the PCC would be on Monday 11th November.

THE INCARNATION - GOD'S INDESCRIBABLE LOVE - *Dele Agbelusi*

The lights are already adorning our streets and our homes in readiness for Christmas. In a sense, we need the lights to punctuate the darkness and gloom that winter months usually bring. But we need more than the artificial lights. We need The Light that came down from Heaven to penetrate and banish the darkness (the darkness of sin) which has been our habitation. And God has pulled out all the stops to make this event a reality. It is the fulfilment of the promise God made to sinful humanity to bridge the gap between His creation and Himself.

The idea of God loving us is very common amongst those who believe in the existence of God, but where do they get this belief from? It would be hard to get it from looking at the world around you. Some would even say that the state of the world suggests God doesn't love us. Yes, they could argue that God is a faithful creator, but loving, hmm...

The God of the Bible does more than just say He loves us. He proves it. Love is seen in what it is **prepared to give** and what it is **prepared to take**. When you look at the child in the manger, remember this is Immanuel - God with us.

Think of what He was prepared to give.

Jesus was found guilty of our crimes. He received the ultimate punishment for what we did. He was brutally beaten, spat on, cursed, mocked, and nailed to a cross on our behalf. Can you think of a greater love than that? He didn't have to do it. He wasn't persuaded to do it. In fact, He could have stopped it if He so chose to. But He did it out of love, pure love. Jesus loved us so much that He literally DIED for us. He said "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13).

The love that Jesus has for us is beyond our comprehension. It is indescribable. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that he hoped that they "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (chapter 3:18-19). We will never be able to understand this kind of love

I love my wife, my children, my family and friends. But there is no way that I can ever love them the way Jesus loves me, the way He loves all of us. There is no love that will ever compare to His love. It is truly the Greatest Love Story of All Time- that God became an embryo in the womb of a young virgin and was born as a human being and after some time, He was killed like a common criminal!

Jesus didn't just give up His home, **He gave up Himself**. We die because we have to. He died because He chose to. The Bible speaks of "the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). There was nothing more that could be given.

Think of what He was prepared to take (endure).

He took on a human body. The one who upholds the universe was held in the arms of Mary. He took *on* that body in order that He would be able to suffer for us. The baby in the manger was destined to be the man on the cross, and while on the cross He wasn't just taking the physical pains of crucifixion. The Bible says He took upon Him "the sin of the world" (John 1:29) and bore the judgment for it. There was nothing more that could be taken (sacrificed).

Being the source of all things, Jesus alone carries the authority to restore everything, including us. Through his incarnation, death and resurrection, the fracture line that separated humanity from its Creator is healed. Now we may know the fullness of God within and live no longer subject to our appetites alone. Rather, we can rise above sin that so easily entangles, dragging us towards certain destruction. Christmas is a time when we receive undeserved gifts as a reflection of the greatest unearned gift—God's grace in Christ. Yet it is also a reminder that the gospel both saves us and propels us into a life of uprooting sin, confronting injustice, and seeking God's kingdom. The church, as the body of Christ finds its place within the story of God's grand re-creation project.

Just as God is renewing creation through his Son, the Christian life is one of renewal into the image of Christ, by the Spirit, and to the glory of the Father: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor. 5:17). We are given a new heart, a new spirit (Ezek. 36:26), a new mind (Rom. 12:2), a new identity, a new family (Mark 3:31-35), and the hope of living in a new world (Matt. 19:28). How do you start to describe this? God's love is indescribable...

However, there are many who know about this GIFT, but are yet to accept and appropriate it. Time is not on our side and let us make today our DAY of salvation? For God says, In the time of favour (of an assured welcome) I have listened to and heeded your call, and I have helped you on the **day** of deliverance (**the day of salvation**). Behold, **now is** truly the **time** for a gracious welcome and **acceptance** [of you from God]; behold, **now is the day of salvation!** Open your heart and welcome Jesus in. (2 Cor.6:2)

Connect Groups "... to be a Pilgrim!"

*This month Andrea Howlett tells how a piece of paper on her chair at Christ Church earlier this year (cause) led to her becoming a Pilgrim (effect)!**

"It all started with a little piece of paper on the chairs in church, so I asked about this which led me to the wonderful **Pilgrim Group**.

"We are an eclectic mix of wise women who meet up every other Wednesday to discuss the world, the Bible and God's word.

“As most Bible study groups do, we start with a tea and a general chat. Then we sing a song, have an ‘icebreaker’, go deeper into a Bible reading and end up with prayers.

“We look at what was said in the sermon the Sunday before, reflect on this and talk about our thoughts. The discussions can go deep and wide, and sometimes I think, “Wow, how did we get to this discussion from that Bible reading and sermon?”

“But in a roundabout way, they reflect the given message and often how it applies to us. It is great to be able to share this with others and all good stuff!

“We also do fun things that are not necessarily related to the Bible – meals out, going to the theatre, etc. – which helps to bond us together in a special way.

“I know if I need moral support, I can count on these good people for a prayer or a thought to lift me up and carry me over life’s hurdles. I have also found very useful (and honest) feedback with my new sideline which is great. So this group isn’t only about God’s word but also about the practicalities of life.

“I am truly grateful that I picked up that yellow piece of paper in the summer and have found PILGRIM, which has led me to PROGRESS (*ouch! – get it?*) in my Christian understanding. I can share my highs and lows with others who understand and give me a Christian perspective on aspects that might otherwise be burdensome.

“I have found my tribe! Thank you to everyone who is involved.”

**You need to remember Jeremy’s sermon on 17th November to get the cause-effect reference!*

We now have seven Connect Groups meeting fortnightly or, in one case, monthly. Ask John Truscott which one might be right for you if you are not already a member of one.

Update from Rachael Howson

Have you ever looked into the revival history of this land? I recently heard that we have had more revivals than any other nation in the world. This year I have taken on a prayer assignment with The SEND to visit and pray at over 50 historic sites of revival across the British Isles. We go to learn and pray that God would again do what He has done before and even more; unblocking ancient wells in our land. So far, we’ve visited over 30 places in London, Wales and Scotland. I’d like to share with you some of what has inspired me, and invite you to join me in prayer.

Do you know the story of Mary Jones? In 1800, this teenage girl walked 26 miles across the countryside of Wales to Bala to be able to buy a Bible, after saving her earnings for 6 years. The local minister, Thomas Charles, was so inspired, he later became a founding member of the Bible Society. *Lord, stir in us that kind of hunger to love Your Word. Bless the Bible Society today and may the Bible get out to every nation and tribe who do not yet have the Bible in their mother tongue.*

In 1904, Florrie Evans, also a teenager, from New Quay, was so convicted of the darkness in her heart that she was stirred to stand up in her youth group and proclaim, ‘I want to give my whole heart to Jesus’. Just then the whole group were filled with the Holy Spirit. This is one of the first fruits of the Great Welsh Revival in 1904, a time in which society in Wales was completely transformed. Evan Roberts, known for leading the way in this revival, was only in his 20s too. *Lord, may the teenagers and young adults of the UK be sold out for you. May they be filled with knowing how much they*

are loved by You and love You back zealously.

In Scotland, we visited the Isle of Iona, where St Columba first brought Christianity to Scotland and Isle of Lewis, where St Moluag took the gospel soon after. Both these men set sail with 12 disciples, not knowing where they were going, trusting Holy Spirit and taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. *Lord, will You raise up missionaries to go to the ends of the earth, discipling people well as they go.*

Lewis is also where the Hebridean Revival [1949-53] started. This most recent revival in the British Isles started by two ladies in their 80s committed to praying for God to touch the young people of their island, and He did. Often without being preached to, people would fall to the ground in repentance and Fear of the Lord. *Lord, we need the older generation. May they know their value and importance, for their wisdom and intercession, in this next awakening that's coming.*

We also found the natural amphitheatre in Cambuslang, near Glasgow, where George Whitfield preached to over 30,000 people. We were compelled to declare the Word of God aloud. *Lord, raise up evangelists and street preachers, who will preach the gospel in truth and love – how will they hear if we don't tell them? Amen.*

My faith has been stirred so much to learn about these moves of God, to go and see where it happened and pray that God will draw so many to Himself now. I will also travel through England and Ireland in 2025. I hope you are inspired to pray too.

Experience of switching to an ethical current account – *Jane Sellars*

“An ethical bank, also known as a social, alternative, civic, or sustainable bank, is a bank concerned with the social and environmental impacts of its investments and loans.”

Source - Wikipedia

I have recently realised the importance of paying attention to where our money is invested. An organisation called Make My Money Matter is working to put pressure on the major banks to divest from fossil fuels, for example. A wide range of Christian organisations, including Churches Together Britain and Ireland, the World Council of Churches, the Laudato Si Movement and Christian Climate Action, have signed an open letter to the five biggest investors, Barclays, HSBC, Santander, NatWest and Lloyds, calling for an end to new oil and gas investment. The letter can be found here: www.makemymoneymatter.co.uk/churches-open-letter.



Having opened a current bank account with HSBC when I started university 26 years ago, I finally got round to switching to a more ethical bank account in April and the process was so easy, I wish I had switched sooner. There is a service in place that organises the switch for you, including closing your existing account and transferring all payments over. For more information, see www.currentaccountswitch.co.uk [blue QR].



In order to decide which bank to switch to, I did some research online and was pleased to see that there are several good options. I ended up deciding to move to the most ethical bank I could find, which came out top in various internet searches – Triodos Bank. Triodos Bank was founded in 1980, is based in the Netherlands and has less than 750,000 customers across five European countries including the UK, and is protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. Being a much smaller bank, it is quite different to HSBC in

terms of its customer service operation. For example:

Similar to a big bank

Banking app (albeit more basic)

Call centre available

Able to use cash machines (sometimes a notification comes up to say I might be charged but I haven't been so far)

Different to a big bank

No branches to visit in person, cheques need to be posted to Bristol office

Monthly charge of £3. Most banks fund free accounts with hidden costs and high overdraft charges, often with financially vulnerable customers footing the bill

Payment transfers take longer, approximately 6 hours

After my current account transfer went smoothly, Nigel and I decided to transfer our joint account to a more ethical bank as well. We chose Nationwide Building Society and, using the Current Account Switch service, it has been easy once again. With Nationwide being a much larger bank than Triodos, we haven't noticed any difference from our previous provider apart from the need to use a separate card reader as an extra security step. Our new account is more advantageous in terms of interest paid and there was a financial reward for switching.



It is well worth considering ethical banking options if you haven't already. As the volume of information online can be overwhelming, I found that this website contains a lot of useful information should you wish to find out more: <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/money-finance>. [/green QR]

I now intend to spend some time scrutinising my pension funds!

Sermon topics at Christ Church, December 2024

December 1 Advent	Luke 1:5-25	John the Baptist part 1	Families return
December 8 Advent 2	Luke 3:1-6	John the Baptist part 2	Intergenerational
December 15 Advent 3	Matthew 1:18-25	Joseph accepts Jesus as his son	Families remain out
December 15 <i>evening</i>	Carols		Intergenerational
December 22 Advent 4	Luke 2:1-21	Shepherds visit	Families return
Tues December 24 Christmas Eve	Nativity	The whole story	n/a
Wed December 25 Christmas Day	Luke 2:22-40	Presentation in Temple	Intergenerational
December 29 Christmas 1	Luke 2:41-end		Intergenerational

Caring for Creation



Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4) group

C4's most recent meeting was on Monday 18th November.

C4 has now started using '[Making a World of Difference](#)' by *Dave Bookless and Renew or World*, the first session using the discussion and questions arising from the introduction to the publication and leading to a time of prayer at the meeting: see

<https://www.renewourworld.net/making>, which is available as a pdf download. Future C4 meetings will go through each of the following chapters in the booklet in turn.



In the remainder of the meeting, C4 considered some of the outstanding questions in the Eco Church questionnaire's Lifestyle section that had been held over to await updated information.

Remember, any church member would be welcome to join C4 meetings (details will be in our weekly e-newsletter). The next C4 meeting is scheduled for 20th January 2025.

A Rocha Blog and Field Notes Podcasts

Since the last edition of *>imprint<*, was published there have been **two** further blog posts. Published on 4th November, [Cindy Verbeek](#), A Rocha's Northern British Columbia Representative & Community Mobilizer writes on the topic '[Salmon: God's provision for beautiful British Columbia](#)'. The blog describes the lifecycle and highlights the importance of salmon in the environment of this part of Canada, for provision for wildlife, first nation and incomer populations and the need for active conservation efforts. And on 3rd December [Barbara Mearns](#), who ran the A Rocha International office in Scotland before retiring, had a blog posted entitled '[Advent Awe](#)' challenging us to pause, reflect and experience awe in our surroundings and also the significance of Christmas.

There have been two further episodes in the Field Notes Podcasts series since the last *>imprint<* was published.

Episode 46 was published on 4th November. This also features [Cindy Verbeek](#) talking with Jo Swinney and Rick Faw on '[The costly calling of a conservationist](#)'. She mentions she loves ladybirds, but talks too about the amazing diverse wildlife in her area including the salmon and the hatchery for which A Rocha is responsible. She also talks about her mental health struggles and how God has sustained her in her calling in various ways.

Episode 47 was published on 3rd December. In it [Dr Tim Stojanovic](#), an Environmental Geographer in the School of Geography and Sustainable Development at St Andrew's University, discusses the state of the world's oceans with Jo and Rick. The podcast is entitled '[Whose oceans to gain from and govern?](#)' and asks whether sustainable development is an oxymoron, whether humans ever have a net positive impact on the world around them, and why we need to pay attention to a wider range of benefits to a healthy ocean than economic growth.



Click the links above to read the latest blogs or go to <https://blog.arocha.org/> [/blue QR] to read these and previous **A Rocha blogs** and <https://arocha.org/en/field-notes-podcast/> [/green QR] (or from wherever you get your podcasts), to listen to any of the archive of **Field Notes Podcasts**.



The latest edition of A Rocha International’s **Field Notes e-news** features, among other items, The Big Give Christmas Challenge which is now live

(<https://donate.biggive.org/campaign/a056900002TPV4vAAH> [/grey QR] as well as the new 40-day Lent devotional book, ‘[The Whole Easter Story](#)’ by Jo Swinney

which has just been published and which you can buy (£9.99) via <https://arocha.org/en/a-new-a-rocha-book-launches/> [/lime green QR].



Plastics treaty negotiations

The following information relating to the recent discussions on the hoped for Plastics Treaty held in Korea, has been sent to us by Rachel Johnson, our Diocesan Environment Officer.

“The 5th round of talks [were] held in Busan, Korea from 25th November - 1st December, and [focused] on the plastic problem from manufacture to eventual disposal and impacts of the vast quantities of waste. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres spoke forcefully about the problem recently, urging the delegates to agree on a global treaty to end the continuing world-wide disaster. ‘Plastic pollution is all around us and even inside us – from our seas to our blood and our brains,’ he said, calling for ‘an ambitious, credible and just agreement’.*

“Hopefully all churches are now aware of the ban on single-use plastic items which came into force in 2023. The sale of plastic straws, stirrers, cutlery, plates or polystyrene food containers is banned - details of recent legislation can be found here: [New bans and restrictions on polluting single-use plastics come into force - GOV.UK.](#)

[/orange QR] [which came into force in Oct 2023] We are encouraged to promote alternatives to plastics wherever possible, reuse and recycling, and to join in with events such as plastic-free Lent - a real challenge, as some of you may know! The A Rocha *Go Green for Lent* challenges are a good source of inspiration:



[Go Green \(er\) for Lent - A Rocha UK](#) [/purple QR]



*[*Sadly it seems the UN talks broke down without significant agreements being made]*

