

Clergy letter

'The world is charged with the grandeur of God' writes the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, but he goes on to lament that:

*'.... all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the
soil is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.'*



Hopkins was bewailing the impact of the industrial revolution on the world of his day and humanity's alienation from the earth. I wonder what he would make of today's world with our overflowing landfill sites, our oceans polluted with plastic, our rainforests lost to the production of palm oil.

Perhaps in our day we are more likely to listen to TV presenters rather than poets and we're all indebted to David Attenborough's recent series 'Blue Planet' for drawing our attention to the parlous state of the world's oceans and the effect of plastic pollution on marine life. Scientists recently discovered that almost 75% of North West Atlantic deep sea fish are eating plastic. As a keen snorkeller I've sadly had the unpleasant experience of swimming amidst plastic bags and bottles. More locally, we need only to walk along the towpath after high tide has receded to see some of the refuse polluting the Thames.

As Christians who believe in a God who created our world and who entrusts it to our care as his stewards, we need to do more than wring our hands and the PCC has recently adopted an Environmental Strategy drawn up by our Mission, Peace and Justice Group which has been passed to our three churches for implementation. And perhaps serendipitously, our Lent Lectures this year take the theme 'This fragile earth: faith and our care for the planet'.

As Lent approaches, (Ash Wednesday is on 6th March this year), instead of, or as well as giving up chocolate or alcohol, perhaps as individuals and as churches we could give up or take up something which will make a difference to the environment. Maybe we could stop using single use plastics, or products containing palm oil, or perhaps we could take up walking or cycling rather than using the car for short journeys. The great thing about Lent is that six weeks is long enough to break a bad habit or to form a new good habit and so this Lent we could actually take some small steps which have lasting impact.

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