

St Paul's Methodist Church, Crawley
Extraordinary Times
a magazine to help us through COVID-19
Issue 61 **June 6th 2021**

Climate Justice: a common treasury

In the fourth in this series of articles, the Revd Simon Topping, a presbyter working in the Gloucestershire Circuit, warns the actions of some are threatening the benefit of our last remaining commons for all.

"The whole earth shall be a common treasury for all, for the earth is the Lord's". These words of Gerrard Winstanley provided the inspiration for Winstanley and a few of his supporters to dig up the common ground on St George's Hill in Surrey on April 1st 1649 in order to plant grain and vegetables for common use by those who needed food locally. It launched the Diggers movement and led to several Digger colonies appearing in other parts of the country in the first few years of Cromwell's "Commonwealth".

Winstanley argued that when God created the heavens and the earth they were given for the flourishing of all humanity. The earth was a "common treasury" and no-one had the right to seize part of that common treasury for their own benefit alone. "Was the earth made to preserve a few covetous, proud men to live at ease; or was it made to preserve all her children?" asks Winstanley.

Winstanley identified a profound injustice in the way a few wealthy people usurped the common, God-given natural resources of the physical world and used them for their own benefits while leaving the rest with barely enough on which to survive.

Despite the efforts of Winstanley and others the transformation of the commons into private possession has continued apace since 1649. But, even so, some commons do remain; most notably, the seas, the air, and "our" climate. No-one claims ownership of the air we breathe, the weather, or the climate which shapes the patterns of our weather – yet!

These last commons do survive but are exposed to an injustice similar to the one that Winstanley identified – the actions of some are threatening the benefit of these commons for all. Even worse, it seems that those doing least damage to the commons, the poorest citizens of the world who produce the least pollution (and have the lowest carbon footprint) are those most badly affected by damage done to the commons by others, through the carbon emissions that generate the global warming which, in turn, leads to droughts, heatwaves and devastating storms.

The Bible tells us that "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" (Psalm 24:1). God declares that "the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants" (Lev 25:23). We respond to climate injustice by challenging those who degrade the commons for their own benefit and at the expense of all other living things – and this means reflecting upon our own relationship with the commons too. For God has given the earth as a common treasury for all.

What's On

Sunday 6th 9:30am in the church spoken service with Jill Brooks

10:30am online worship with Jill Brooks

Sunday 13th 9:30am in the church spoken service with Rob Burridge

10:30am online worship with Rob Burridge

Sunday 20th 9:30am in the church spoken service with Rev Clive McKie

10:30am online worship with Rev Clive McKie

IMPORTANT

Sunday 20th 10am A short General Church Meeting, dealing only with essential business, will be held in the Sanctuary following the 9:30am service. Everyone is very welcome to attend, but only members of the Methodist Church are able to vote.

Find all online services on [St Paul's Facebook page](#) and [website home page](#)

For Kids and young people

Fridays 6-7pm Kids and Young People back to church

Fridays 7pm Young Peoples' Singing Group

In your prayers

Continue to pray for all you know who need prayers at this time.

Send your prayer requests to ask.stpauls@gmail.com

Permission must be received from a person before their name is put on the Church prayer list

Ralph's farewell

As you are aware, Rev Ralph will be moving on to pastures new in August. Ralph will be having an 'open' afternoon/evening between 5 - 9pm on Saturday 24th July at Trinity Church, East Grinstead to which everyone from the Trinity and St Paul's congregations is warmly invited. Save the date!

As is customary, we are inviting people to contribute to Ralph's leaving gift. This can be done in the following ways:-

- Make a payment directly into Trinity's bank account - referenced as 'Ralph leaving gift'. Please email ask.stpauls@gmail.com for the bank details.
- Put your contribution into the collection plate, labelled 'Ralph leaving gift', after the 9:30am service at St Paul's on a Sunday
- Post your contribution, labelled as 'Ralph leaving gift', to:
Trinity Methodist Church,
Lingfield Road,
East Grinstead,
West Sussex RH19 2HA

If you are paying by cheque, make it payable to Trinity Methodist Church and please make your contribution by Sunday 20 June 2021.

Life on the Breadline Project

Deacon Eunice Attwood, Church at the Margins Officer in the Evangelism & Growth Team, looks at a project exploring how austerity has affected Christian engagement with poverty in the UK and the theological motivations which underpin it.

In early summer, a friend of mine who is a teacher told me about ten-year-old Sarah (not her real name), who had been caught stealing bread and cakes from the

local supermarket. The shop had rung the school and Sarah was asked to explain why she had stolen the bread and cakes to my friend, her teacher. The answer sadly, was, as my friend suspected, Sarah was starving. Her parents, both of whom worked, did not have enough money to pay for their utility bills as well as food that week. My friend went on to say, this was becoming an increasingly common occurrence amongst the children at her school. The school had developed a strategy in partnership with other agencies to support struggling families, whilst recognising that many of their families, due to the stigma of poverty, found ways of surviving which understandably avoided others knowing of their desperate circumstances.

Can you begin to imagine the trauma of her parents living in such an uncertain environment? Sadly, this experience is prevalent in the UK, where, even before the pandemic, poverty affected 14.4 million people including 4.5 million young people.

The pandemic has highlighted pre-existing inequalities. We have been confronted with the truth of the devastating impact of poverty on people's lives. In facing the truth, we also have an opportunity, to ask, what justice would look like for Sarah and her family? If we took the words of Jesus about poverty, seriously and literally, how might Christians respond?

Understanding Christian engagement with poverty is at the heart of the ground-breaking research done by the Life on the Breadline project. The three-year project has been exploring how austerity has affected Christian engagement with poverty in the UK and the theological motivations which underpin it.

The Life on the Breadline website offers a great range of conversations, podcasts, and resources on the impact of poverty, race, austerity. Dr Chris Shannahan asks an important question 'how can people of faith best respond to poverty, caring is invaluable, but more needs to be done.'

Methodist Justice Lecture "Justice and Hope"

The former Prime Minister Gordon Brown is to give the first Methodist Justice Lecture on Justice and Hope on Sunday June 13 at 7pm. In the face of Covid 19, the climate emergency and global inequality, our world faces many questions around where justice and hope are to be found. The former Prime Minister will argue that real change is possible, and that people of faith have a role to play.

The Methodist Justice Lecture will mark the launch of the two-year project, *Walking with Micah: Methodist Principles for Social Justice* which aims to help the Methodist Church explore what it means to be a justice-seeking church.

Former Vice-President of the Conference, Rachel Lampard, who is leading the *Walking with Micah* project, said: "I am delighted that Gordon Brown has agreed to give the first Methodist Justice lecture to launch this project and has chosen to speak on justice and hope. His political record shows his commitment to tackling child poverty, cancelling international debt and reducing global inequality and many in the churches share these passions.

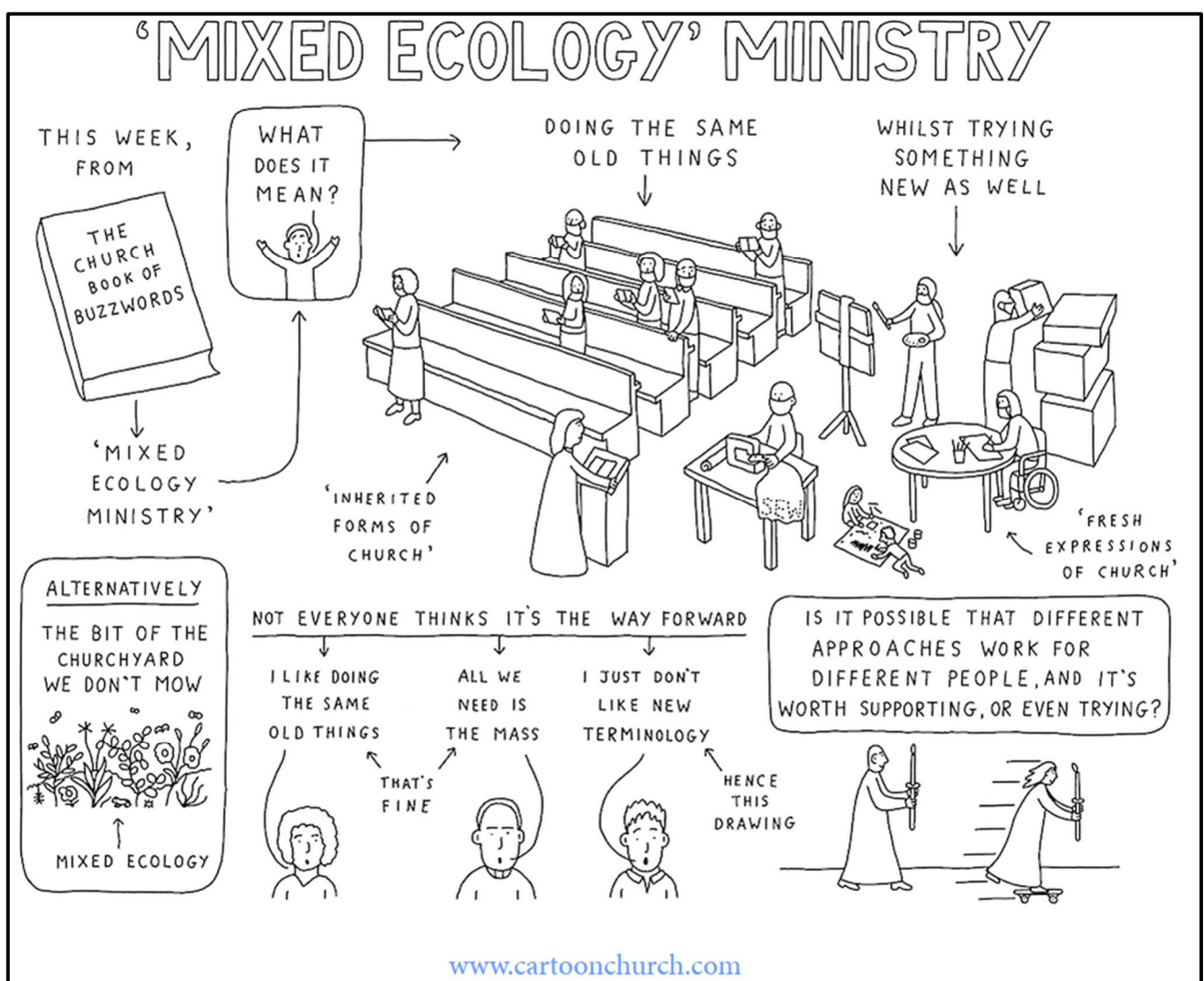
"Methodists often say that working for a fairer world is embedded deep within their faith. The prophet Micah reminded people that the worship God wants is for us to act justly, to love as God loves, and to walk humbly with God. *Walking with Micah* aims to hear stories about how Methodists are working for justice, by

responding to needs locally and campaigning for change, and how we are shaped in our walk with God.

“I hope that people from around the Connexion and beyond will come to reflect together on ideas of justice and hope through this lecture and find out how they can take part in this project.”

Old ways and new – getting it right

Over the past weeks as we’ve been welcoming local preachers from around the circuit to St Paul’s for the 9:30am spoken services and in the recording sessions for the 10:30 online service, we’ve had several discussions with them about hopes and visions for the future ministry of our churches. There is a common recognition that, terrible as the Covid experience has been in many ways, what we have learned through having to quickly develop new skills and techniques mustn’t be wasted. Below, cartoonist Dave Walker looks at the balance between keeping the best of familiar tradition and adopting new ways of thought and practice in our ministry.



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Prayer requests & newsletter items ask.stpauls@gmail.com

St Paul’s website www.crawleymethodistchurch.org.uk

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