

GUEST SPEAKER:

Jemima Parker, Leeds Diocesan Environment Officer

Eco Church – Lifestyle

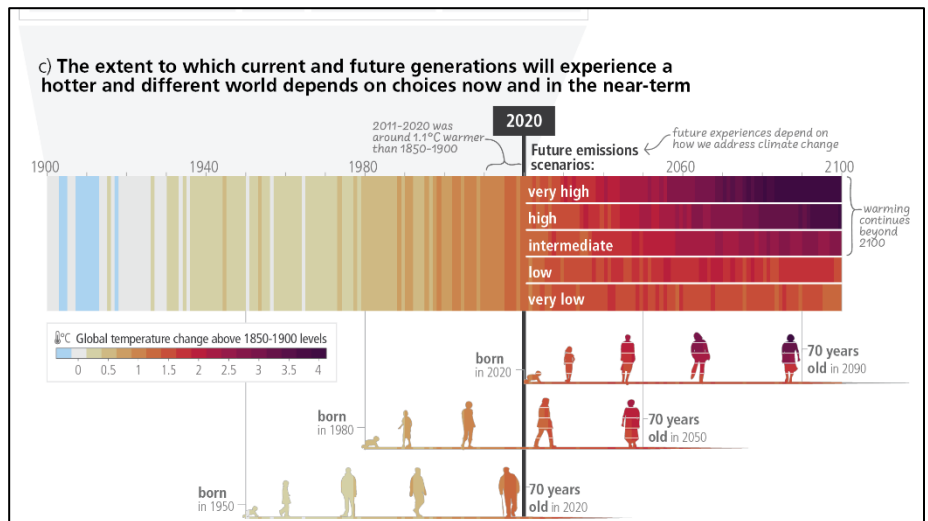
The Area Dean warmly welcomed Jemima to the Synod and confirmed that she has been working in this role for 12 years. Jemima then informed members that she will be finishing the role at Christmas to spend more time making her own home more carbon neutral, as well as working in a voluntary role as Chair of a local Climate Action charity in Harrogate.

Jemima then commended Harrogate Deanery for spending this year focusing on the environment.

29th UN Climate Conference of Parties (COP29). Jemima drew our attention to Keir Starmer's new 'ambitious' climate target for UK. He told the COP29 climate conference that he is committed to 81% emissions cut by 2035. This means that the UK is a nation that is committing to moving further and faster in reducing our carbon emissions than previously, and this can only be achieved by changes in our lifestyles.

Why do we need to act?

Jemima talked through a slide which showed the widespread impact and damage which climate change has already caused in the last 100 years and stressed that the extent to which current and future generations will experience a hotter and different world depends on our choices now and in the near term. [Figure AR6 WG2](#)



Jamima supported her argument with the two examples:

- The temperature recorded in Barnsley on 19th July 2022, was 40°C; this was so hot that it caused wildfires in the area.
- A map showing the potential rise in sea levels and the extent to which Yorkshire beaches and coastal towns, surrounding the Humber estuary, could be underwater by 2050.

Jemima pointed out that we nationally we cannot afford to put coastal defences around all these areas, so land and homes will be lost. She stated that farmers are already struggling, and this is affecting the increase of food prices and insurance costs due to flooding. So, what can we do as churches?

The Eco Church Award Scheme. This scheme allows churches to celebrate what they are doing and can do to embed creation care within the life of the church. Jemima referred to the 5 areas of the award. [Eco Church - An A Rocha UK Project](#)

- Worship and Teaching
- Buildings and Energy
- Land and Nature
- Community and Global Engagement
- **Lifestyle – the focus of this evening.**



Jemima reiterated how impressed she was with the number of churches in Harrogate Deanery who have signed up to the Eco Church Award Scheme. She said that she had not been to another Deanery who has so many churches on the list.

- Bilton St John's – Silver
- Goldsborough St Mary – Bronze
- Harrogate Kairos - Bronze
- Harrogate St Mark's –Silver
- Harrogate St Wilfrid's – Silver
- Harrogate Christ Church – Silver
- Harrogate St Peter – Bronze
- Killinghall St Thomas –Registered
- Knaresborough St John the Baptist – Silver
- Pannal St Robert's – Bronze
- Starbeck St Andrew – Bronze
- Wetherby St James - Bronze
- 14 Parish Environment Officers

Why as Christians should we do this? Jemima stated that as Christians this is the most important thing we should be doing. Her next slides provided underpinning Biblical references which make a compelling theological case for why need to fully commit to creation care:

- The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn **over all creation**. *Colossians 1:15*
- For in him **all things** were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rules or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. *Colossians 1:16*
- The God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. *Genesis 1:26*
- For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself **all things**, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. *Colossians 1: 19 – 20*

- This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which, I, Paul, have become a servant. *Colossians 1:23b*
- He (Jesus) said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation”. *Mark 16:15*

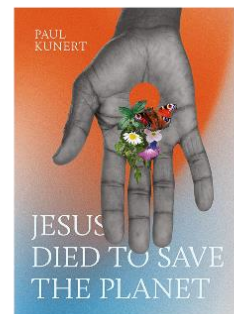
Jemima strongly urged members to read Colossians Chapter 1. She emphasised that Jesus was at the start of creation. He is the creator of the world because of the Trinity; therefore the world is Jesus’s creation; created for Him to bring him glory.

Jemima asked, ‘so where do people come into this?’ She affirmed that right at the beginning of creation, God told us what our purpose was; this was the first great commission (Genesis 1:26). Our purpose is to rule over, to look after creation. The word ‘rule’ has been misinterpreted over time to mean ‘dominate’, but Jemima emphasised that we are rulers like our servant king, Jesus, who was prepared to sacrifice everything to save his creation. That is how we should ‘rule’. Jemima referred to Colossians 1:19-20, making the point that Jesus’s death and resurrection were for the whole of creation. This is now our purpose and our model.

Jemima posed the question: ‘Are we servants of this gospel or of something else?’ (Colossians 1:23b). She challenged us to think about, ‘What gospel are we proclaiming?’ She referred to this as the second great commission (Mark 16:15).

Jesus Died to Save the Planet¹ [Jesus Died to Save the Planet | LICC](#)

Jemima recommended this book which was published in 2024. The introduction states, “Our planet is at breaking point. There is no planet B, but there is hope for God’s world. Because Jesus died to save the planet.” Later it says, “Read on to discover how you can make kingdom-like decisions in your everyday life that will help the earth flourish. Then share your new perspective with your church family...”



What are the Church of England’s Five Marks of Mission?

[Microsoft Word - The Five Marks of Mission FINAL](#)

Treasure/Tell/Teach/Tend/Transform

- *To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.*
- To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom.
- To teach, baptise, nurture, new believers.
- To respond to human need by loving service.
- To transform unjust structures in society, to challenge violence of any kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation.

Jemima made the point that if we are damaging creation we are damaging the world that was made to glorify God. Here are some questions to challenge our thinking about our attitude towards creation care.

¹ Paul Kunert, *Jesus Died to Save the Planet* (London: The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, 2024)

Eco Church – Lifestyles (Discipleship) [Our Church Building - Diocese of Leeds](#)

- What are you already doing?
- How can you build this into your thinking about what you are encouraging others to do?
- What one step could you take next?

Here is a list of practical things you can do to demonstrate the Five Marks of Mission in action.

Jemima pointed out that you can't do everything but urged members to identify 1 thing you can do at home and 1 thing you can do at church. These activities will additionally provide evidence to gain points for your Eco Church awards.

1) Preaching [Preaching for God's World](#)

Jemima strongly recommended the 'Preaching for God's World' website. It states, "We seek to help clergy, lay preacher and all Christians to explore the set lectionary readings for each week from the perspective of creation care and ecological justice. By providing weekly reflections from activists, theologians and church leaders across the work church, we hope that this blog will resource and encourage Christians to grow in our care for God's creation." Jemima emphasised that we need to include scripture when preaching about caring for creation.

2) Prayer

Jemima stressed the importance of praying for the multitude of different environmental issues around the world. She encouraged us to start with something small and to pray daily or weekly e.g. birds in your garden getting through a harsh winter; a local planning application which has environmental implications; a person who is involved in implementing environmental issues at work. Refer to these websites for further information:

[Our Worship - Diocese of Leeds](#)

[Resources – Pray and Fast for the Climate](#)

3) Lifestyle – Commitment

Jemima drew our attention to the questions asked in the Eco Church survey section. She informed that the first thing which is asked is for your church to make a commitment:

- Our church has a strategy or plan to promote ethical and environmentally aware consumption patterns by individuals and households. Yes/No

Jemima urged members to take this question back to the PCC and to devise a plan for how your church is going to upskill and encourage members of the congregation to commit to becoming more environmentally conscious.

4) Lifestyle – Influence

Jemima also urged members to think about the ways they can influence the congregation in their church e.g. using weekly newsletters. Jemima mentioned that she has written two useful lists of Eco Top Tips for weekly parish newsletters – she suggested that members include one tip in each weekly newsletter. Please use them!

- **52 Eco Top Tips for your weekly parish newsletter** [1ceb4b18-e1f3-4d3b-8582-bc69c2498b26.docx](#)
- **52 Eco Top Tips for weekly parish newsletter** [3429ff8e-4846-4016-a790-119bf131c67d.docx](#)

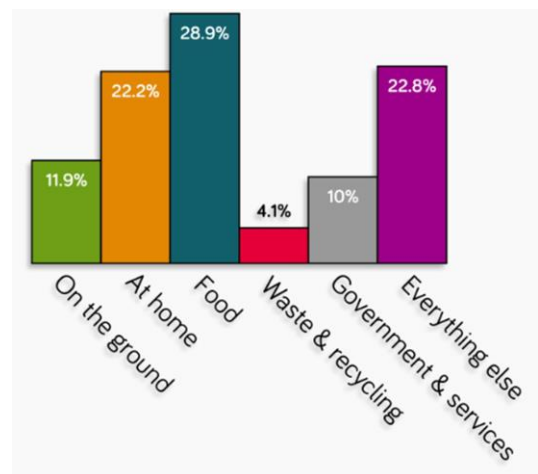
Engaging in civic society activities is another good way of moving forward on creation matters as reflected in the Eco Church questionnaire:

- Our church actively encourages the whole congregation to take part in social or environmental campaigns the church supports (whatever form this takes e.g. signing petitions, hosting MP at a church service, attending marches or large demonstrations). Routinely/Occasionally/Never.

5) Lifestyle – Carbon Footprint

The Eco Church questionnaire also asks the following question:

- Our church promotes auditing of individual and household carbon footprints (eg by using Climate Stewards, Giki, Take the Jump, the WWF Footprint Calculator or other calculators). Routinely/Occasionally/Never.



Jemima argued that it is important to encourage the congregation to measure their own carbon footprint. However, it is important to understand which create big carbon footprints, and which do not. The chart shows that the average UK carbon footprint is 9.4 tonnes of CO₂ per annum www.climatestewards.org Jemima urged everyone to keep recycling.

Carbon Quiz

Towards the end of her presentation, Jemima showed a number of images and asked members to say which they thought produced the most Carbon emissions; it was an informative exercise.

Help is at Hand Advice

Jemima reminded churches that they are not on their own, there is help at hand. E.g.

- **Training** [Events and Training Opportunities - Diocese of Leeds](#)
 - a. Saving Creation Ministry Training Pathway
 - i. Bronze
 - ii. Silver
 - iii. Gold
 - b. CofE Net Zero and Nature webinars and guidance
- **Advice** www.leeds.anglican.org/our-faith/environment/need-support/
 - a. Eco Mission Enablers
 - b. Area Environment Champion – Deborah Booth
 - c. Net Zero Carbon Church Building Consultant
 - d. Fran Taylor – Net Zero Carbon Funding Officer

- **Funding** [Funding - Diocese of Leeds](#)
 - a. Grants lists
 - b. Diocese Church Building Fund
 - c. Give to Go Green
 - d. Fran Taylor – Net Zero Carbon Funding Office

- **Newsletter** [God's Green Fingers Newsletter - Diocese of Leeds](#)
 - a. Inspiring good news stories
 - b. Events and training
 - c. Magazine article
 - d. Eco tips
 - e. Eco joke

One Final Question:

Jemima concluded her presentation by asking this thought-provoking question:

- What one thing are you going to talk about with your PCC, congregation and community?

Open Forum

Revd Ben Askew, Pioneer Minister, Kairos Network Church, informed members that there are several excellent local conservation and land use projects in the Harrogate area. These include -

- Pinewoods Conservation Group - <https://www.pinewoodsconservationgroup.org.uk/>
- Long Lands Common - <https://www.longlandscommon.org/>
- Save Rotary Wood - <https://www.pinewoodsconservationgroup.org.uk/>
- Nidd Action Group - <https://www.niddactiongroup.org/>

Ben said he contacted some of these organisations over the last year and asked about engagement with faith groups. He was told they had had very little contact but are keen to build relationships.