

Dear SJP Eco group

- **Eco-tips:** lots from the Center for Earth Leadership at <http://earthleaders.org/center/lifestyle-eco-tips/>. A USA site, mostly relevant to UK.
- **Event: Saturday 8 September** 12:30 – 14:30 Rise for climate at Tate Modern. Details at <https://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/tate-modern-climate-tickets-49642188121/amp>
- **Event: Sunday 16 September 1.30-3.30 in the Church Hall: Nicola Peel:** Finding solutions to key ecological issues, including plastic waste. See Nicola's websites <http://eyesofgaia.com/> and <http://www.nicolapeel.com/>
- **Event: Saturday 22 September,** central London: The People's Walk for Wildlife. SJP Animal Welfare Group also notified. Details at <http://www.chrispackham.co.uk/the-peoples-walk-for-wildlife>
- **Event: Sunday 23 September** 9:45 to 10:15am. Eco-contemplative liturgy in the church garden, followed by refreshments

The three items from the 17th, seven from 24th & five from 31st August '**Church Times**' are below. Headlines (adapted as necessary) and comments are:

- 1) Instant woodland of 1918 trees installed outside Lichfield Cathedral
- 2) How to loosen the grip of consumerism by Eve Poole. (A recording of her talk at St Paul's Cathedral is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNeCDn1keeE>)
- 3) Book review: 'Earth to Earth: A natural history of churchyards' by Stefan Buczacki

24th August

- 4) Keralan monsoon flooding 'unprecedented' – See item 11) below
- 5) Letter to the Editor: Blow to public commitment to recycling plastics
- 6) Book review: 'The Gardens of Westminster Abbey' by Jan Pancheri
- 7) Book review: 'Science and Spiritual Practices' by Rupert Sheldrake
- 8) Action is needed to halt fly-tipping and other rural crime
- 9) TV review: extract 'Saving Planet Earth: Fixing a hole'
- 10) Arts review: the Edinburgh Fringe Festival: mime sketch about polar ice

31st August

- 11) World news in brief: More than 200,000 left homeless Indian floods

- 12) Book review: 'Religion vs Science: What religious people really think' by Ecklund & Scheitle
- 13) Book review: 'Blue Planet, Blue God: The Bible and the sea' by Srokosz and Watson
- 14) TV review: extract 'The Secret Life of Landfill' (Good but 1hr 30 mins: available for 17 days at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bgpc2f>)
- 15) Letter to the Editor: 'Religious-studies A level deserves its decline' – relevant to religion and science debates.

Best wishes

David Carter

1) Instant woodland of 1918 trees installed outside Lichfield Cathedral
'Church Times' 17 August 2018



Volunteers arrange 1918 trees in front of Lichfield Cathedral, part of an installation by Peter Walker to mark the centenary of World War One: *Great Exhibition: Imagine peace*, which runs till 27 August. Entry is by timed ticket: www.lichfield-cathedral.org/peace/the-great-exhibition-2018. **The trees were saved from landfill, and will become a permanent peace woodland early next year.**

2) How to loosen the grip of consumerism

17 August 2018

The marketers need not dominate our lives, says *Eve Poole*

FISHING nets at the ready, we holidayed in Whitby this year, in the hot July sunshine. I promised my six-year-old twin girls an Enid Blyton idyll of rock-pooling, donkey-rides, and endless fish and chips. They had been given some holiday money by their grandparents, which we took to the local Toymaster store. What to buy? A crabbing bucket? A badminton set? A kite? No. Their heart's desire was a Poonicorn. Yes, that's right. A soft toy shaped like a poo emoji, with a unicorn horn. To complete the picture, you need to know that they are keyrings that "hatch" from an egg, and that they come in rainbow colours. You can collect them all, at £5 a pop, and display them on your schoolbag.



I hope, like me, that you are reeling with awe for this triumph of peak consumerism. Kids love toys. They love poo. They love emojis. They love unicorns. They love stuff in eggs, and they LOVE collecting things. Retail gold. And if you are sitting there thinking this is just kids' stuff, let's talk about the crazy market for gin (mine's a lavender and rhubarb/passionfruit one), or the \$50 billion global market for male grooming products, when soap used to be fine.

IT IS easy to feel utterly overwhelmed by the gleeful global triumph of the marketeers, at the sight of the queues for yet another Apple launch, or when the latest Disney film character completely possesses your child's every waking moment, or when you simply must upgrade your phone immediately, while still the loan sharks circle to keep the purchasing cycle in perpetual motion.

Enough. We've all had enough of it. But isn't that an interesting word? What is enough? You do have enough, probably. But you may not feel that way. Neither should you, theologically speaking. As St Augustine put it, our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God. We are creatures who yearn. We yearn for meaning and purpose, and we yearn to belong. These are not bad things.

But those who could make a margin on this yearning have turned this well and truly to their advantage.

Advertising has moved away from just showing us products. Now adverts show us who we could become, if only we invested in THIS particular brand. Oh, how popular and perfect we would be. Then, like the ticking of a time-bomb, smartphones ping regular alerts about whether those choices are getting you more "liked" or not.

We know this is costly, not least in terms of societal indebtedness and environmental collapse. And teenage mental ill-health and anxiety are sky-rocketing in parallel with ubiquitous smartphone use, so much so that France is banning phones in all its schools from the beginning of next term. But what can we do?

CHRISTIANITY is actually one of the best antidotes to consumer poisoning. If we can come to terms with the essence of consumerism, we can loosen its power over us. And all the sound and fury is fundamentally about the same thing: our search for self-identity. Consumerism can only ever fail, because it cannot satisfy. It lies, because the latest "thing" soon becomes old news, dooming us to spiralling dissatisfaction in our relentless quest to stay on top.

But, if we accept that we cannot win, and that we are already immeasurably loved, we can start to ask ourselves searching questions about our Pavlovian response to consumer signals. Do we really need that thing? What do we really think it will do for us, deep down, and could it ever?

As Rowan Williams says, we need to grow up. We have to stop imagining that we just have a few neat gaps left that the market can fill. Crucially, we need to stop kidding ourselves that there is any end to our desire, and come to terms with yearning. Nothing on earth should satisfy us, but he argues that it is in desiring grace that we are most likely to find peace.

Easier said than done. But easier, perhaps, than we had thought. You do not need to fight consumerism, or hide from it. You just need to see it aright, as a false promise, which is not good enough for you. As a child of God, you are worth far more than that.

Of course you will yearn, and you will consume, but that is God's destiny for you, not Mammon's. Yours is the gift of free will, to guide your choices heavenwards, to school your desire towards God.

Dr Eve Poole's latest book, *Buying God: Consumerism and theology*, is published by SCM Press, and available from the Church Times Bookshop on a *special-offer price* of £14.99.

Dr Poole is interviewed about the book on The Church Times Podcast.

3) *Earth to Earth: A natural history of churchyards*, by Stefan Buczacki

17 August 2018

The botanist Stefan Buczacki, known to a wide public from *Gardeners' Question Time*, has loved churchyards since as a child he visited family graves with his mother. His *Earth to Earth: A natural history of churchyards* looks at how churchyards have become wildlife oases, advises on enabling them to remain so, and suggests further reading. With many quotations, a foreword by Lord Harries, and more than 100 illustrations, including both colour photos and Felicity Price-Smith's watercolours, this hardback is attractively presented (Unicorn, £15; 978-1-910787-74-8). Chapters' themes include churchyards in the landscape; lichen; mammals, reptiles, and amphibians; and birds and small creatures

4) *Keralan monsoon flooding 'unprecedented'*

24 August 2018

by Adam Becket



A family in need of shelter and care in Kerala

MONSOON floods in the south of India have forced more than one million people to flee to relief camps. Heavy rains in the south-western state of Kerala, which began in June, have left **at least 410 people dead**, it was reported this week. **About 50,000 houses have been destroyed by floods**, as the water drains and reveals the level of destruction. The floods are believed to be the worst for a century.

Thousands of military personnel were deployed by the Indian government to help the areas that had been badly affected by the monsoons; helicopters dropped supplies before the waters began to recede.

The Church of South India is active in relief work, and has urged all Christian charities and organisations to help. [World Vision](#), [Christian Aid](#), [USPG](#), and CAFOD have all launched appeals and emergency efforts.

Christian Aid is seeking to assist those who have been left without safe drinking water and hygiene essentials, as well as providing shelter materials.

The charity's emergency programme manager, Shivani Rana, who is in Kerala, said: "Many people are currently sheltering in camps, and one major worry is how they're going to recover their lives when they try to go home. For some families, everything they had has been washed away or ruined."

She continued: “The rains have caused flooding and also landslides — and we still don’t know how bad the damage is because many areas remain impossible to reach.”

World Vision India’s national director, Cherian Thomas, said on Monday: “Over 32 million people — approximately half of them children — have been affected overall, and, with the threat of further rains looming, we’re concerned for children and their families still at risk of disaster.

“Disease outbreak could become a huge problem, and children are most likely to bear the brunt of the crisis. Lives are hanging in the balance — these children can’t wait. They need life-saving help, now.”

The General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, offered prayers for those affected. He said: “Our hearts go out to people living in terrible fear in what has become a precarious situation.

“Local churches have become especially important in bringing hope to remote villages cut off by flooding that has destroyed roads and bridges.

“We also hear reports of damage to churches and relief centres, and we pray for those trying to respond even while coping with their own losses.”

CAFOD’s head of Humanitarian Programmes for Asia, Giovanna Reda, said on Monday: “Unprecedented monsoon rains in Kerala have washed away whole villages and left communities homeless. Crops and livestock have been destroyed. Many families arrive at relief camps with only the clothes they are wearing. They have lost everything.

“Even for those humanitarian aid agencies on the frontline, like Caritas India, providing emergency aid is challenging — many are cut off not just by flood waters but lack of power and limited availability of mobile networks.”

5) Letter to the Editor

24 August 2018

Blow to public commitment to recycling plastics

From the Revd David Tyler

Sir, — I have been struck by the lack of outcry, given recent media reports that many of the plastics that we have sorted have gone to landfill or been incinerated (BBC News, 4 August). I find myself more surprised by the lack of outcry than the lack of recycling.

For years, many of us have been sorting plastics in the belief that they would be recycled, whereas it appears that current technology and the mix of polymers in many plastics is letting us down, and that much of what could be recycled is, in practice, not.

I wonder what will happen in the future now that this news has been publicised. Will people take less care to sort plastics, knowing that much of their sorting is in vain? My hope and prayer is that Christians especially will continue to recycle and encourage our local councils and Government to look for better ways to recycle more.

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6) Book review: *The Gardens of Westminster Abbey* by Jan Pancheri

24 August 2018



The thornless *Rosa* “Madame Sancy de Parabère” was chosen on the recommendation of David Austin Roses by Westminster Abbey’s head gardener, Jan Pancheri, to be the centrepiece of the Abbey’s rose garden, and is one of her favourite summer flowers. Her book *The Gardens of Westminster Abbey*, lavishly illustrated with photos and her own artwork, is an account of horticulture at a place where it has been practised since the tenth century: the College Garden is reputed to be the oldest in England. Gardeners and garden-lovers will find a wealth of detail about the spaces, seasons, and species of this colourful oasis (Scala, £7; 978-1-78551-130-1)

7) Book review: *Science and Spiritual Practices* by Rupert Sheldrake

24 August 2018

Adam Ford considers the life of the spirit scientifically

AN UNQUESTIONED assumption lies at the heart of much modern thinking: it is that all spiritual experience lies within the head, private, subjective, and ultimately not an aspect of the real world, but merely a transient product of brain activity. The word *spiritual* itself has had something of a renaissance recently, perhaps owing to the decline of traditional religion and the influence of New Age beliefs. But its meaning is vague and unfocused, and sometimes even irritating in its usage.

Rupert Sheldrake puts paid to all that. *Science and Spiritual Practices* has an autobiographical thread that runs through a forceful apology for the deep reality of the spiritual dimension of our world. He takes issue with the new atheism of many scientists, which arises out of a mechanical and materialist view of the universe. The mind, according to this view, is merely an epiphenomenon of matter with no more significance than a shadow.

Sheldrake argues the contrary: that consciousness and the Spirit are the true fundamental realities of everything from the Big Bang, through planet-building and evolution, to the emergence of the human mind. Consciousness is even latent (or awake?) in the elector-magnetic fields of the sun; it is active in the flower-seeking senses of the insect (are they aware of beauty?). Through the practice of meditation and the regular expression of gratitude, we can begin to open ourselves to this transcendent reality that lies around and beyond us.

For readers wishing to follow his path, Sheldrake offers advice on seven ways in which we can begin to appreciate the transcendent world of the Spirit. A useful and very clear introduction to the practice of meditation, based on his own experience, comes first. This is followed by paying attention to the healing and happiness-creating power of gratitude. We learn how to connect with the more-than-human world of nature; to respect plants and explore the benefits of small orchards; to value rituals and experience pilgrimages; to enjoy the power of music through chanting. All these practices can deepen the meaning of our lives and open our minds to a universe flooded with consciousness.

The Revd Adam Ford is a former Chaplain of St Paul’s School for Girls.

***Science and Spiritual Practices*, Rupert Sheldrake, Hodder £9.99 (978-1-473-63009-3)**

8) Action is needed to halt rural crime

24 August 2018

by Adam Becket

THE Bishop of St Albans, Dr Alan Smith, who is the lead bishop on rural affairs, has issued a warning over news that rural crime is rising.

Dr Smith said that it was “no surprise” that the NFU Mutual’s rural crime [report](#) suggested that rural crime cost the UK £44.5 million in 2017, and had risen by 13.4 per cent from 2016.

He highlighted the “**huge issue**” of **fly-tipping in the countryside** — something, he said, on which action needed to be taken.

As well as fly-tipping, rural crimes that are affecting communities in the countryside include theft of livestock, machinery, and vehicles, and the use of farmland for “hare coursing”, the report says.

[...]

On fly-tipping, it says: “According to the NFU’s figures, **fly-tipping affects two-thirds of farmers in the UK**. As incidents increase, more and more tonnes of rubbish are being dumped in the countryside each year.”

It was a “huge issue” for farmers especially, Dr Smith said, and was something that he had been pushing the Government on in the House of Lords.

He said earlier this month: “The Government claims that it has given councils sufficient powers to deal with the problem. Yet DEFRA’s own figures reveal that 51 per cent of local authorities have yet to have a single prosecution, and there have been no fines imposed by 44 per cent of local authorities.

“If local authorities are not prepared to act, then surely central government needs to take more drastic action to tackle this crime.”

He said that it was a farmer from Bedfordshire, in his diocese, who was struggling with the issue, that made him campaign on fly-tipping.

A separate report and survey, [Living on the Edge](#), published by the National Rural Crime Network (NRCN) last month, says that rural communities are being “left behind” their urban counterparts when it comes to crime.

Julia Mulligan, who chairs the NRCN, writes in the foreword: “Crime is up. Anger is up. Frustration is up. Trust is down. Those rating the police as good is down. And with 10.3 million people living in rural areas — these are trends we can no longer ignore.”

The report goes on to say: “It is time to give those who live and work in our countryside the support they need. It is time for those in positions of authority to sit up and take notice. It is time for rural communities to be listened to.”

9) TV review: (extract) *Saving Planet Earth*

24 August 2018

by Gillean Craig

Saving Planet Earth: Fixing a hole (Channel 4, Saturday).

In the 1970s, a couple of US scientists concluded that CFC, the miracle gas that made both refrigerators safe and countless aerosols, was thinning the ozone layer and making lethal solar rays reach the earth’s surface. Their colleagues ignored them, and, radically, they stepped outside scientists’ traditionally neutral stance to become popularisers and lobbyists for their findings.

They came up against the clout wielded by an \$8-billion industry. But, for once, the David-and-Goliath myth played out in real life: CFCs were eventually outlawed, and the hole appears to be repairing itself.

10) Performing arts review: the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (extract)

24 August 2018

Peter Graystone makes his selection from the 2018 Edinburgh Fringe



... mime skills ... were used by the Brussels-based Focus/Chaliwaté Company to heart-rending effect in **Backup**. Three reporters arrive in a beaten-up van at the North Pole, beautifully realised in the flickering lights and smoking chimneys of tiny model houses on a snowy landscape. They are met with challenges far beyond their experience, and narrowly escape as the ice begins to crack.

The cleverly changing scale of the piece, manipulating props of differing sizes, reaches its climax when the three come face to face with a life-size polar bear. Wriggling beneath its power is a bear cub, both rendered with tenderness and strength through exceptional puppet skills. The ice cracks, and the cub begins to float away in an ending that serves as a **timely environmental warning**.

[...]

11) World news in brief: More than 200,000 left homeless Indian floods

31 August 2018

MORE than 200,000 people will be unable to return home for at least six months after the south Indian floods, Christian Aid has estimated. Monsoon floods in Kerala have killed hundreds of people (News, 24 August). The charity has also estimated that a further 75,000 people would never be able to return to their homes. Official figures estimate that 750,000 people remain in emergency camps. The Indian government has turned down foreign aid for redevelopment in the region, sparking anger among local authorities, [The Times reported](#).

12) Religion vs Science by Elaine Howard Ecklund and Christopher P. Scheitle 31 August 2018

Adam Ford chews on statistics concerning the God debate

IT HAS long been the perception of many in the UK that there is a paradox embedded in American religious thinking. The world's supreme industrial power, while advanced in technology and science, harbours deep doubts about the truth of evolution and the real age of the earth. How can such cognitive dissonance continue to haunt the minds of many educated religious people? It is a perplexing question, and touches on adjustments that all people of religious faith have to make when facing up to a universe described by science.

Ecklund and Scheitle approach this problem by conducting in-depth research over a period of five years in the United States, using the disciplines of science to explore the beliefs of a broad cross-section of interviewees. They cast their net widely to cover Protestants, Roman Catholics, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus, and discover that, while there is certainly tension between religion and science (which they see as resolvable), actual conflict is true only for a minority of scientists and religious believers — despite the conflict narrative dominating the media. One aim of the book is to explore various myths and stereotypes about religious people, and to expose them for what they are: that religious people do not like science — or scientists, and are not scientists themselves; that they

are all young-earth creationists; that they are climate-change deniers; or that they are against scientific technology, such as in work with human embryos.

Such a research project inevitably involves an overwhelming number of questionnaires of the “strongly agree . . . strongly disagree” sort. So, we discover, for example, that when asked whether they are interested in new scientific discoveries, only 28 per cent of mainline Protestants answered in the affirmative, whereas 52 per cent of Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims say that they are very interested (Catholics 31 per cent, Jews 43 per cent, religiously unaffiliated 47 per cent). What are we to make of this odd nugget of information?

Some readers may find themselves quickly succumbing to statistics fatigue, but the authors dig deep into the numbers to interpret them, and enliven the text by many brief and revealing quotations from the people whom they interview — opinions that could form the basis for many a congregational discussion.

At the heart of the tension between science and religion lie two fundamental issues. Does science limit God’s role as active Creator in charge of his world, author of miracles, and designer of nature? And what does science mean for the sacredness of humanity; are we diminished by the discovery of our evolutionary origins?

The mission of the authors is to encourage congregations to debate these issues without fear; they would like to see religious leaders celebrating the scientists within their congregations by creating opportunities for them to speak about their work and how they see their scientific knowledge as presenting no threat to their faith. Many have found that a theology of “co-creation” allows them to share responsibly and joyfully in God’s work.

The Revd Adam Ford is a former Chaplain at St Paul’s School for Girls.

***Religion vs Science: What religious people really think*, Elaine Howard Ecklund and Christopher P. Scheitle**
OUP £21.99 (978-0-19-065062-9) [Church Times Bookshop £19.80](#)

13) *Blue Planet, Blue God: The Bible and the sea* by Meric Srokosz and Rebecca Watson

31 August 2018

James Currall savours oceanography and biblical scholarship

MANY of the books exploring aspects of the relationship between Christianity and the environment have been based on collaborations between specialists from the two fields. Often, there is at least a slight disconnect between the writing of the two authors, sometimes to the extent that they confine their writing to different chapters. The authors of this volume are to be congratulated on what has proved to be a most successful collaboration; a wonderful exploration of the sea, spirituality, the Bible, and God, all woven together in a seamless whole. This is a collaboration between an oceanographer and a biblical scholar who clearly have a strong affinity for each other’s worlds. As a result, they have produced a well-researched, informative, and reflective work that is also a most enjoyable read. I took a little longer than I should have to review *Blue Planet, Blue God* partly because I enjoyed it so much that I savoured it instead of devouring it.

The sea plays a significant part in the lives of the people of God as seen in the Bible, but it also plays a significant part, either directly or indirectly, in all our lives. Its importance can be seen in relation to our health, our climate, our trade, what we eat, and almost every aspect of our lives. Against this background, *Blue Planet, Blue God* resulted from the authors’ conviction that “the biblical material on the sea provides a ‘lens’ through which we may be challenged about . . . how we are to live in God’s world”.

In this book, the rich interplay between the sea as a physical reality and the sea as metaphor is brought alive through the people’s experience of the sea in the Bible and the experience of poets and other writers through the ages, in a series of nine delightful explorations. The part played by the sea in salvation, spirituality, and the sacred; the sea in relation to humanity and the life it contains; and the sea’s uncertainty and vulnerability, and its part in economics and trade. A final chapter ties all these themes together in an exploration of what Isaiah 11.9 means by the phrase “as the waters cover the sea”.

This book is designed to be read and savoured (as I did) or as a resource for discussion groups or individual study and reflection; both uses benefit from the extensive Further Reading section under 18 headings. There are also good indexes of biblical references, and names, and subjects. Those who wish to use this book for study groups, or individual study or reflection, will find the four sections Key Message, Challenge, Reflection and Discussion,

and Action invaluable as a focus for their deeper exploration of this fascinating subject.

The Revd James Currall is a scientist and Priest-in-Charge of St Andrew's, Tain, and St Finnbarr's, Dornoch.

Blue Planet, Blue God: The Bible and the sea, Meric Srokosz and Rebecca S. Watson

SCM Press £19.99 (978-0-334-05633-1) [Church Times Bookshop £18](#)

14) TV review (extract) *The Secret Life of Landfill*

31 August 2018

by Gillean Craig

The week's most fascinating documentary was **The Secret Life of Landfill: A rubbish history** (BBC4, Thursday of last week). Dr George McGavin and Dr Zoe Laughlin showed us how the volume of rubbish that we generate has exploded; and, worse, how much its toxicity and danger has grown.

Nowadays, landfill sites are managed with a level of sophistication: you have to work it over and over to ensure against future collapse; you have to make the base impervious, so that the poisons do not enter the water supply; and you have to build in vents to draw off the explosive gases.

It concluded on a surprisingly upbeat note: developing technologies should be able to reduce the amount of waste, and the rubbish that remains can be harvested to recycle increasingly scarce minerals and metals. Perhaps the proverbial relationship between muck and brass will be realised.

15) Letters to the Editor (extract)

31 August 2018

Religious-studies A level deserves its decline

From Mr Robert Leach

Sir, — You report “deep concern” that there has been a 20-per-cent decline in exams for religious studies (News, 24 August). My concern is that 80 per cent consider this worthless exam worth sitting.

It is based on the erroneous assumption that all religious belief is merely opinion. Christian truth is considered no better than the teachings of other religions. It is the only subject where we do not teach what we believe to be the truth.

If the same principle were applied to other subjects, geography students would be allowed to say that the earth was flat, and the chemistry syllabus would include alchemy spells to turn lead into gold.

ROBERT LEACH

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