

## Faith in Troubled Times

**T**hree thousand years ago, a person of deep faith wrote – and the people of God first sang – some of the most beautiful words in history:

*“The Lord is my Shepherd, I **will not want**. He feeds me in green pasture.” (Psalm 23: 1,2)*

They voice a confident trust that with God as their shepherd, **they will not wander**:

*“He leads me besides still waters. He restores my soul.” (vs 2 and 3)*

With remarkable faith, they declare that whatever life may bring, with the Lord as their shepherd, **they will not worry**. They sing of God’s ever-presence besides them at the darkest times:

*“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff comfort me.” (v 4)*

We are living through extraordinary and disturbing times. The coronavirus is causing death and deep disruption to our normal patterns of living. Tragedy has included members of the diocesan family. The total lockdown, self-isolation, suspension of public worship and closure of church buildings means that we have had no option but (in the phrase of the Archbishops) “to become a different sort of church”.

People have found new ways of caring for each other. Good neighbour schemes have emerged. Our telephones have been busy. Many have shopped for the housebound, clapped in the street, lit candles, and put teddy

bears and NHS rainbow signs in their windows. Many churches have produced deeply moving acts of worship online. I’ve discovered social media I didn’t know

existed! We have found new ways of being “together apart” and “holding hands in the Spirit”.

I believe as a Church we have rediscovered that our spiritual lives must be rooted in daily prayer and Bible reading at home, not just Sunday worship in church. Jesus is with us wherever we are – we hold on to his promise that he will be with us whatever happens.

I have recently become chair of a small national charity called ReSource whose aim is to help “little, local and ordinary churches” draw on the Holy Spirit for discipleship and mission. The Director has written these helpful words: “Whatever these coming days hold, let’s be mindful of one another, alert to the cry of a hurting world, and confident in the love of God, from which nothing can separate us.” May God bless us all.

With my love,  
prayers and best wishes,



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Rt Revd John Holbrook  
Bishop of Brixworth

## Environmental Escapades

**B**etween February and March (before the coronavirus lockdown), churches, chaplaincies and schools within the diocese were encouraged to share the environmental work they have been involved in – and it had a fantastic response. We caught up with Beverley Hollins, Chair of the Diocesan House of Clergy, to find out more.

### **Do you know when this campaign started or has it been a competition?**

Andrew Presland and I (we chair the Diocesan Synod alongside Bishop Donald) came up with the idea at General Synod in February. The environmental theme was important at General Synod, where we were thinking about how to make the Church of England more environmentally-friendly and achieve carbon neutral emissions by 2030. When Andrew and I thought about the environment conversation at Diocesan Synod, we decided that we wanted our discussion to go beyond just the synod members. We wanted to collect stories from all around the diocese. So we sent out a message across the diocese, asking what our churches, chaplaincies and schools were already doing, and what challenges there were.

At the time, the plan was to put the posters up at the synod meeting and then to share them through the diocesan website. Sadly, the meeting didn't happen because of coronavirus, but we hope to eventually think about how we care



for the environment as a diocese. The head teacher of my local church school and I hope that children from our schools will be able to come and explain to the grown-ups what we need to do.

### **How many schools have been involved?**

Every church, school and chaplaincy in the diocese were invited to join in. What came in was really inspiring, and I think it's great to be reminded that there are other priorities in the world, even during such hard times.

### **What has been your own involvement in this project? Do you have certain environmental responsibilities for the diocese?**

I'm involved as Chair of the House of Clergy and Andrew is Chair of the House of Laity. We get to gather up the concerns and interests of people throughout the diocese, and try to make sure that they are properly listened to. We believe that the environment is very high on the list.

We also believe that children and young people are very high on the list, so involving them in our thinking is important. I suppose that the roles we have mean we can get involved in all sorts of aspects of life in the diocese, if that means we can encourage people and make connections between them.

**What specifically have children been doing in our schools to protect the environment?**

The posters we have received have shown us a wide variety of ideas. Repurposing litter to become something useful, creating gardens and wild areas, seeking alternatives to plastic and discouraging use of cars with projects like 'walking buses' are among the fab creative ideas we've seen.

**What prompted diocesan schools to get involved in this?**

Children in our schools know how essential it is to care for our planet, and every school has been active in its own way. Bringing together stories through the posters was their response to our request. We hope that when schools go back after the lockdown, sharing their posters through the diocesan website will inspire even more ideas and help us all to do more for the environment than ever.

**How important has the 'Greta Thunberg effect' been in engaging children in this matter?**

I think that Greta is an important figurehead for all of us, and her passion and commitment is a challenge to us all. But children in our schools were speaking out and taking action before Greta became famous. Perhaps it's the grown-ups who most need to pay attention to her, because she is like a

megaphone for the things that young people were saying all along.

**Obviously, schools are now shut due to the coronavirus outbreak. What things can children (and adults) still do to remain environmentally-friendly?**

One of the benefits of the way we are living now is that we are using our cars much less. Perhaps we can think about what we might do when this is over. Do we need to drive so much? Could we have more meetings using Zoom or Skype? And have less meetings? Let's see what is good about the way we are working now and how we can hold on to it!

This time gives us a great opportunity to do more gardening and planting. Planting seeds, especially to grow your own vegetables, is a great contribution to the environment – even growing cress on kitchen paper will be good for your sandwiches and one less trip in a car to buy things.



*A small orchard of fruit trees has been planted in Ridlington's churchyard*

We still need to think about what we buy and how we can reduce our use of plastic. Now is a good time to explore alternatives, and to have fun experimenting with how to make good use of the plastic that we have bought. For example, could the tray that had mince or chicken pieces in be washed and reused as a seed tray? Or perhaps as a mould to make a seed cake for your garden birds?

Perhaps with a bit more time at home, people can think about their compost heaps! If you don't have one, how about starting now? It's a great way to keep a lot of your waste out of landfill and turn it into something great for your garden. Children can research the sort of things to add – it might surprise you!

While we are at home, how about using some time to make presents and cards for people instead of buying things? A homemade card is not only a great sign of love - it also won't be coated with shiny plastic, or contain glitter or other things that are bad for the environment. You



*Wing parishioners have started a project to manage their churchyard*

can make your own wrapping paper, perhaps by getting some plain brown paper or sandwich bags and decorating with potato printing. Lego bricks can also make a fun design. Perhaps you can grow a gift or try knitting, crochet, macramé or origami – there are plenty of lessons on YouTube to help you make something yourself.

I hope that staying home and staying safe can be a great opportunity for everyone to have fun at home helping the environment too.