



Green Apostle Newsletter #9

Summer 2025

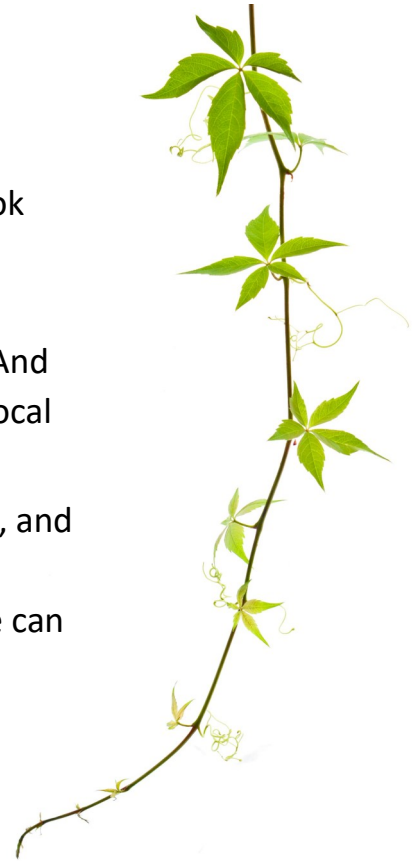
Introduction

Hello and welcome to the first Green Apostle Newsletter since I took over the role earlier this year, and the 9th in all.

My name's Ian Moore, and my role is to support and encourage everyone across Southern Synod in taking care of God's creation. And there are hundreds of you out there, doing fantastic work in your local church and the surrounding communities where you live.

Part of "encouraging everyone" involves sharing good news stories, and practical hints & tips, so please share this newsletter around your church. Hopefully it provokes comments — good or bad — and we can turn those comments into positive action.

So, please, read on.....



Contents

p.2 — Season of Creation

p.3 — Eco Church

p.4 — Net Zero

Got comments? Want to help? Or want some help getting started?

Do please do get in touch about any of the materials included in this newsletter, or with your own stories to share. You can contact me at:

green.apostle@urcsouthern.org.uk

Ian Moore

Green Apostle, Southern Synod, and member at Emmanuel URC,
West Wickham





SEASON OF CREATION

The Season of Creation, which runs from 1 September to 4 October, is an annual, ecumenical celebration of prayer and action for creation that Christians on six continents have commemorated for many years.

This year's theme is the Garden of Peace and the chosen text this year is Isaiah 32:14-18. We are asked to reflect on the connection between caring for creation and fostering peace.



Garden of Peace
Isaiah 32:14-18

Each year, the global steering committee publishes a Celebration Guide, containing details of the theme, ideas for celebrations, a full liturgy, standalone prayers and much more. You can download a copy from the website:

<https://seasonofcreation.org/resources/>.

In the Celebration Guide, one of the first invitation words from faith leaders is from the late Pope Francis, who himself did much to foster creation care during his papacy, most notably with the encyclical "*Laudato Si*". As I read the themes in the Guide developed from the Isaiah 32 text, I found a very strong echo to the messages of "*Laudato Si*".

One of the contributors to the resources is Revd David Coleman, URC Special Category Minister who also serves as Chaplain to Eco

Congregation Scotland. Separately, he has published another treasure trove of resources, including sermon videos, prayers, hymns, poems, study notes, all of which are for use in worship or study groups, and are provided copyright free. I particularly like his stilling videos (especially the one with the puffins), they work really well as a way to preface a time of prayer with peace and quiet.

You can find all this at the Eco Congregation website as follows:

<https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/creation-2025/>

I hope you are planning at least one special service to mark the Season of Creation this year. Maybe you'll be inspired by some of the materials put out there for everybody. And I'd love to hear what you've done and how it went — do get in touch.



World Day of Prayer for Creation

Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi



Congratulations!

SILVER — Oxted URC (Jan.25)

BRONZE — Southern Synod (Feb.25)

Nearly 40 churches across Southern Synod are now registered with the Eco Church programme. The number of churches, and their progress towards Bronze, Silver and Gold awards, is a fundamental part of the Synod as a whole reaching the Synod Bronze award level earlier this year.

To get some insights and ideas for my own church, I visited Oxted URC earlier this year, and chatted with their Eco Church team led by Rosemary Addison. I wanted to find out — what have they enjoyed most? How do they engage the whole church? And, what's next on their journey?

The most recent step at Oxted has been the planting of the lavender bushes on the main frontage. These were abuzz with insects when I was there (which was a bit difficult to capture properly on a photo!) and had created a buzz across the whole church as they came together for the planting project — some diggers, some tea-makers, others making a financial contribution.

Other ideas implemented in the gardens include planting of an apple tree, creating brash piles, a new bench, and a wild area that includes a mini pond. Even with the constraints of being a listed building, they've made changes inside too — the main welcome space in the entrance to save heating the whole building; LED lights throughout the sanctuary, toilet twinning, etc.

And they run events and activities that everyone can join in with. A recipe collection targeting leftovers and gluts, a vegetarian lunch, a clothes upcycling session, making of lavender posies and so on.

What's their secret? According to the Oxted URC Eco Group, it's just taking advantage of each project to do a little more, building it in at each and every turn. Over time, it's just become how they do it at Oxted.

Well done Oxted on your Silver Award!

If this inspires you to get started on Eco Church, you don't need to wait for anything. Just go to the A Rocha UK website, then click on "Eco Church", and you'll find all the details and sign up pages. And while you're there, you could consider signing up for the other A Rocha newsletters as well?

Click [here](#) to go straight to the A Rocha UK Eco Church pages



NET ZERO BY 2030

There's a huge amount of coverage in the press about net zero targets. The UK's official target is that the country reaches net zero for carbon emissions by 2050. In our case, the URC has set itself a target of 2030 to reach net zero, the same target date as the Church of England.



Reducing energy consumption across our church buildings seems daunting. It feels costly, difficult and requires expertise. However, there are guides which aim to encourage people to tackle the simple steps first. Southern Synod has published *"The Practical Route to Net Zero Checklist"* — click [here](#) for a copy. It's non-technical and will help you get started on the journey.

Date for your diary: Saturday 4th October



The CofE's Rochester & Canterbury Dioceses' Net Zero teams are holding an Eco Conference at St Luke's Church in Maidstone. The conference runs from 9.00-12.30, and it includes a presentation from St Luke's as one of the CofE Net Zero Demonstrator Churches on the practical steps they are taking. The conference is open to URCs who wish to attend. I'll be there and you're welcome too!

Manses count too!

When focusing on reducing the church's energy consumption (and bills!), it's easy to forget about making improvements at our manses. Changes to the manse at St John's Orpington show what can be achieved.

During a 6-month renovation of the manse, many eco measures were introduced: double thickness loft insulation; new double glazing; 20 solar panels with battery storage; an EV charging point; new thermostats and timer controls; and LED lighting throughout. Also, less commonly done but vital for an 1930s-build property, external wall insulation (50mm thick) was applied, effectively wrapping the whole house in a nice thick blanket! The external appearance was maintained, internal liveability massively improved, and energy bills and carbon emissions slashed. What's not to like?!

Huge credit to Andy Clare (St Johns) and Colin McCracken (Synod) for managing the project.



Can you help the Synod's net zero planning?

As part of mapping the route to net zero, we need to pull together a decent baseline of actual energy consumption data from churches across the Synod. Can you help? All we need at the moment is just two figures — your annual electricity and gas consumption — and what sort of electricity tariff you are on. Please do get in touch at green.apostle@urcsouthern.org.uk.

Photo credits:

Vine on p.1 — by [Margaret Jaszowska](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Photos on p.3 — Ian Moore

Photos on p.4 — Andy Clare, St Johns URC Orpington

Do you want to see your story featured next time? Get in touch with Ian Moore at: green.apostle@urcsouthern.org.uk