

Our next meeting

At our recent MKCEG leaders meeting we decided to cancel the proposed visit to Marston Vale Country Park on May 4th. Most of us weren't free that weekend, and we were unsure whether the trains would be running along the Marston Vale line, as there are lots of line closures this year due to engineering works.

Our next event will therefore be on **Saturday 22nd June**.

Re Enchanting Nature

Led by Rev. Liz Baker
22nd June 2013
10am - 4pm
AT THE WELL AT WILLEN

Cost £15 including lunch
 Please call or email to book

The Well at Willen
 Newport Road
 Willen
 MK15 9AA
 Tel: 01908 242190 Email: bookings@thewellatwillen.org.uk

We will be exploring creation through the Franciscan Tradition and the current understanding of the Cosmos.

Revd Liz Baker is an Anglican Priest, Director of the Well Community and a trained Labyrinth Facilitator, drama and movement teacher. Liz has lived and worked at the Well since 2001 and is an Associate of the Society of the Sacred Mission and has a particular interest in the sacramental in the everyday.

Please book direct with the Well as shown above.

Affordable Warmth

Kathryn Shepherd from the USEA visited us on March 7th to talk about ways of cutting the cost of keeping our homes warm. The focus was on affordability – the ideas proposed were ones for people of all income levels.

Most of the evening was devoted to considering ways of

cutting down on the amount of energy used by:

- ◆ Improving insulation – walls roof/loft and windows.
- ◆ Replacing light bulbs and appliances with ones using less energy.
- ◆ Choosing the right type of boiler, when it needs to be replaced.

We were able to see samples of **loft insulation** and **internal wall insulation**, the latter being an option for properties with solid rather than cavity walls. This isn't a cheap option, and can involve considerable disruption, but if you are a DIY expert you can install it yourself and could also apply it to parts of the house only. We also learned that older cavity wall insulation may have deteriorated over time and have lost its effectiveness, so internal wall insulation can be used in conjunction with it. (The SuperHomes article mentions one home in which the owner had done exactly that.)

Installing **loft insulation** is a very cost-effective method of reducing energy consumption. [If you are willing to install it yourself it is inexpensive and you can buy rolls of it at local DIY stores. For 100mm of insulation the material for an average semi-detached house will cost under £150 and could make enough savings to pay for itself in two winters. Note that the recommended depth is 250-300mm altogether, but clearly this involves a higher outlay]

Kathryn brought along an example of an **Energy Monitor**, which you can use to display the amount of electricity you are currently using (and the annual cost of continuing to use electricity at that rate). You can then go round the house switching appliances off to see what difference each one makes. By becoming more aware of each appliance's running costs many users of these monitors find that they actually achieve good reductions in their electricity usage. Energy Monitors may cost anything from £10 to £150, but we were advised that ones costing around £20-£25 are perfectly adequate. Alternatively if you are a library member you can borrow an Energy Monitor from the following libraries: Bletchley, Central Milton Keynes, Kingston, Newport Pagnell, Olney, Stony Stratford, Westcroft, Woburn Sands and Wolverton.

We also learned about **The Green Deal**. This is a mechanism for enabling homeowners without capital or savings to install energy reduction measures at no up-front cost. The cost is financed by a loan, which is paid back only at the rate at which savings are made on the householder's energy bills. The loan has to be cleared within a maximum of 25 years which means that some items like double glazing won't qualify because the savings aren't large enough to cover the high installation cost.

Tenants of rented properties can also apply for the Green Deal, with the consent of the landlord.

The link <https://www.gov.uk/green-deal-energy-saving-measures/how-the-green-deal-works> has more details.

Switching Suppliers offers the potential for saving money, (though this isn't really a green option unless you invest the cost savings in energy reduction measures). **Uswitch** was recommended as a very effective site for obtaining the best deal. See <http://www.uswitch.com/>

We were also given copies of the useful **EasySave** booklet, recently published by the Affordable Warmth Network. Copies can be obtained by contacting awn@usea.org.uk

SuperHomes

SuperHomes is a rapidly expanding network of 150 energy aware households. These pioneering homeowners are redefining green living. All have refurbished their old homes to the highest standards of energy efficiency. Eco friendly, sustainable, low energy and low carbon – the refurbished houses are least 60% less reliant on fossil fuels.

A couple of weeks ago **SuperHomes Week** provided an opportunity for people to visit some of these homes and two members of the MKCEG network, Paul Lund and myself, sampled properties in Bradwell Common and Steeple Claydon.

Paul visited the house in Bradwell Common which was one of the original 'Energy World' houses and had under floor heating, (water in plastic pipes), triple glazing, including a big west facing sliding door into the garden. That room also has a large south facing window.

The south facing roof was almost covered with solar PV and the west facing roof has a smaller solar thermal (hot water) panel. The view of some of the other visitors was that solar PV is now so cheap it is just as cost effective to heat water with the electricity and not have solar thermal with it's higher maintenance costs.

Every room has a vent in the ceiling for fresh air. When set to maximum it was just possible to hear the airflow. The extracted air and the incoming pass through a heat exchanger to recover some of the heat.

David visited the house in Steeple Claydon which was a 1970's built end-of-terrace property with a side extension. As well as double glazing, cavity wall and loft insulation, the owner had installed some internal wall insulation on sections of the north facing walls. This had been done as a DIY job, but looked so good that you wouldn't have noticed it at all had it not been pointed out.

The property seemed very airtight. Heating for the whole house was provided by a single not-too-expensive (£1200) Mitsubishi Air Source Heat Pump which output warm air in the lounge only. Heat from this was sufficient to transmit upstairs via the staircase that went up from the open-plan lounge. The temperature in the kitchen was 17° which wasn't bad for a day with snow falling and settling.

The owner was a great data enthusiast and showed me lots of graphs and charts of his electricity usage and solar PV output, for both of which he takes readings every day! His annual electricity usage was less than 7000kWh and still falling so, with no gas in the house at all, he really had

saved himself a lot of money and CO₂ emissions.

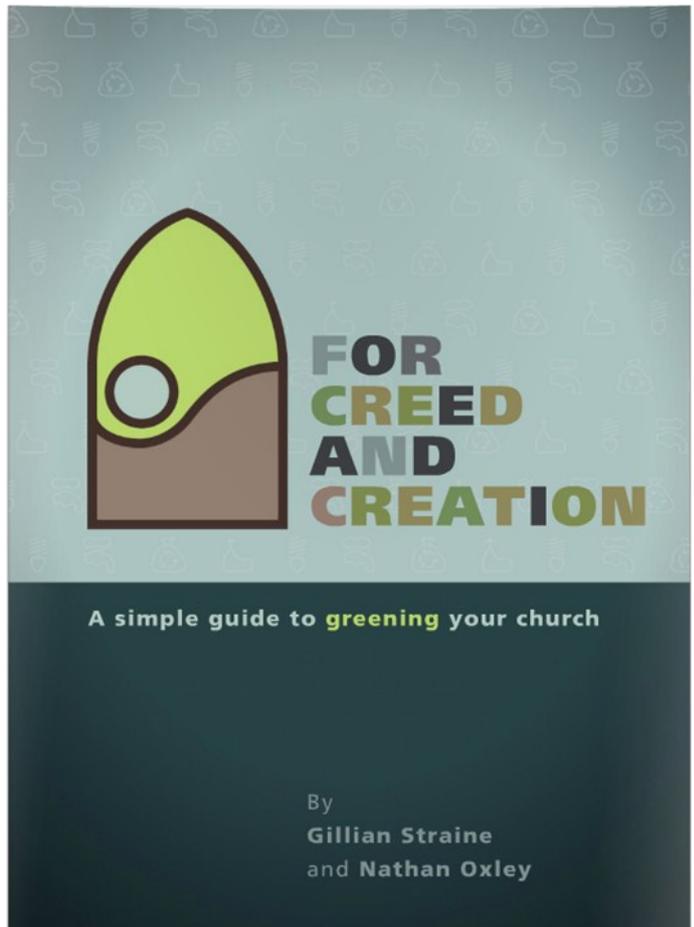
Definitely worth the visit. The open days take place twice a year, so look out for another event in the autumn.

<http://www.superhomes.org.uk/>



A new Guide to Greening Your Church

The Earthing Faith network has advertised this booklet which you can view online, and buy in hard copy format.



I've looked at this and liked what I saw. The introduction includes a paragraph saying why churches should care about greening their buildings.

The main section gives practical ideas under five headings — buildings and grounds, water, waste, lighting, and other ideas.

I particularly liked the graphic alongside each action illustrating the cost and effort involved.



Four pages are devoted to communication, then the rest of the booklet describes other useful resources and gives links to other organisations.

View the booklet at the following link:

<http://www.earthingfaith.org/creedandcreation>

If you wish to order hard copies (Price £2.50 plus P&P, but with discounts for five or more copies) it is best to look at the ordering instructions on the website.

Milton Keynes Cycling Strategy

Milton Keynes Council has revised the **Draft Cycling Strategy** in the light of comments received during the recent consultation. The revised document is available at the following link:

http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/transport/documents/Cycling_Strategy_March_2013_Draft_11.03.13_GW.pdf

It is planned for the revised (Draft) Cycling Strategy to be adopted on 23rd April 2013 as a Delegated Decision by the Cabinet Member for Transport.

It is worth noting how the Council processes the feedback arising from the public consultation. All the comments are studied, classified, and published in a comprehensive annex, which can be seen at the following link:

http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/transport/documents/Cycling_Strategy_March_2013_Annex_11.03.13.pdf

(Note that you can see my own comments if you look for paragraphs numbered 71.xx in the tables which appear in several sections of this annex.)

David Miller

Volunteering for Sustrans

I have just signed up to be a volunteer Ranger for the local Sustrans group and have had an initial meeting with other local volunteer rangers. I shall be looking after a section of route 6 from Campbell Park to Leighton Buzzard.

I had an initial look at the section between Bletchley and Woughton-on-the-Green (remember that one warm sunny day earlier in March?) and noted only one sign on this 4-mile stretch, so some investment in new signage is needed!

Once I have settled in, I shall be cycling along this stretch at least once a month, except during the winter, but will also welcome feedback from any of you if you notice any problems that need attention.

David Miller

Local Producers



Milton Mallows is based in Kent's Hill and is a member of the 'MK Artisan Food and Drink' Facebook community.

[facebook – miltonmallows]

It is a home-based confectionery business, which produces handmade gourmet marshmallows and uses only quality (local/organic where possible) ingredients, and each batch of mallows is made fresh to order. Homemade mallows are totally different in texture and flavour to shop bought, and make a lovely gift or treat for yourself.

Laura Kos

See <http://www.miltonmallows.co.uk/>

Or contact them at info@miltonmallows.co.uk

ENOUGH FOOD FOR EVERYONE

Tuesday 9th April at 7.30 pm at

Newport Pagnell United Reformed Church

Christian Aid is one of 100 charities which are promoting the **IF** campaign. There is enough food in the world to feed everyone yet 1 in 8 people go to bed hungry every night while over 2 million children die from malnutrition every year. The **IF** campaign is about influencing government to commit to the aid budget and work to prevent tax dodging internationally. Poor countries lose 3 times more to tax havens than they receive in aid each year. What can we do about it? Come to the campaign meeting — a team from Christian Aid in Oxford will give a presentation about the campaign and how we can get involved as individuals and churches. This year's Christian Aid week theme is also about world hunger, so house-to-house collectors and anyone else who supports Christian Aid or other development charities will find this interesting. No need to book, just turn up. If you want more information, contact Ruth Tompsett on MK 617798.

MKCEG is now on Facebook

Hot off the press! We have just set up a 'Milton Keynes Christian Environment Group' Facebook page. We have already uploaded some of the fabulous photos from our previous events, and plan to keep the page updated with information on our forthcoming events, links to other pages you might also be interested in, and thought-provoking articles we've spotted along the way. We're also keen to follow other local groups and environmental organisations, so if we haven't liked a page you think we'd be interested in, why not post the link on our wall?

Follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Milton-Keynes-Christian-Environment-Group/504618966250448?ref=hl>



(Note that the new Facebook presence is additional to our website which is still viewable at www.mkceg.org.uk)

And finally....

A very happy and peaceful Easter to you all.

David Miller
30th March 2013