

**Fairtrade Fortnight**

This year’s Fairtrade Fortnight is already underway, but here are two local events taking place next week:

**Fairtrade Fortnight 2014**

Milton Keynes Palestine Solidarity Campaign  
is hosting a

**Fairtrade Extravaganza**

Tuesday 4th March 2014

At Centrecom\*, Central Milton Keynes  
Doors open at 7.15 pm for a 7.30 pm start

Free admission

Members, supporters, friends of MKPSC and all supporters of Fairtrade welcome

Short films and slides featuring Zaytoun and olive harvesting in the West Bank  
Photographic and Hadeel embroidery displays  
Fairtrade Quiz and Raffle  
Refreshments and Fairtrade nibbles to sample  
Music

Stalls: Zaytoun, Hadeel, general Fairtrade goods, Amnesty and Shared Interest

Read more about the work of Zaytoun here  
<http://www.zaytoun.org/>

\*North Row, Central Milton Keynes. North Row runs behind the Library and Civic Offices and the Centrecom building is between North 9 and North 10 Streets. The post code is MK9 3B1.

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY EVENT**

March 8th 2014 at 7pm  
**York House in Stony Stratford**

*Presentation and chocolate tasting event  
by Divine Chocolate*

*Entertainment from Junction 14  
Fairtrade and campaigning stalls*

Cost: £10 (and £8 concessions)

*Tickets must be reserved but can be paid for on the night  
contact [d.greaves@virgin.net](mailto:d.greaves@virgin.net) or send a text to Debbie on 07818484221*

The evening will include a meal  
with fair trade wines and drinks

and will have a focus on chocolate and bananas  
(the theme for Fairtrade Fortnight 2014)

We hope that by raising issues of inequality in the commodity markets this will impact on consumer choices and each of the women attendees will be invited to think about ways in which they can spread the word and become more active in promoting fair trade in their own school, family and the wider community.



 International Women’s Day 2014 

As mentioned on the second of these posters, bananas are a key focus of this year’s Fairtrade Fortnight. One depressing statistic is that in the last decade the price of the bananas sold in the UK has halved, whilst the costs of production for farmers have almost doubled. Fortunately, even though many consumers have found their incomes squeezed in recent years, support for Fairtrade principles in the UK has resulted in the share of banana sales that are Fairtrade to have grown to 1 in 3. Let’s play our part in increasing that still further.

**Fairly traded Mobile Phones**

Mobile phones haven’t the best reputation either for being environmentally-friendly or for the exploitation of cheap labour in their manufacture.

**Fairphone** is a social enterprise that has recently started to address both of these issues.



To date they have made and shipped 25,000 phones and are now planning the production of a further batch of 25,000 for delivery this summer. Fairphone is resisting the temptation to expand too quickly preferring to grow organically and maintain their commitment to the values they believe in. See <http://www.fairphone.com/> for more details.

**Just Food — the CEL workshop  
January 18th, Bloomsbury**

A very inspiring talk in the morning by Professor Tim Lang was followed by discussion groups in the afternoon. Tim is Professor of Food Policy at City University in London. He described himself as a member of the “angry professors group” - angry because these professors ask the question: how much more evidence do we have to produce before we act on the food system?

Ten challenges face us:

1. **Health** — not just malnutrition or obesity, but the spread of non-communicable diseases as we eat more food from further afield, and antibiotic resistance in food production.
2. The growth of **Energy Use** in food production.
3. **Land Use** — the proportion of the earth’s land used for food production is too high to allow for the growth necessary for the predicted population increase.
4. **Ecosystems** - Water availability is going to limit our future dietary choices.
5. **Culture** — We need to spend more on health education and less on marketing.

6. **Urbanisation** — city dwellers need to connect with food growing and urban food production needs to be encouraged.
7. **Demography** — plants are more efficient providers of nutrients than animals, so the increasing population requires us to eat less meat and more plants.
8. **Labour** — picking vegetables is labour intensive and badly paid so the British won't do it.
9. **Governance** - we let the market rule everything which means that governments end up with less power than big business, so we can't rely on governments alone for change to take place.
10. **Money flows** — the proportion of the money spent on food that finds its way to the producer, ie the farmer, is extremely small.

For much more detail on Professor Lang's presentation see the link below:

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=24099>

The topic of food security has also featured in the Climate Change course about which I have written on the next page. The maths of the population problem (and land availability) is hard to deny — the much higher proportion of the current world population that is aged under 30 means that we are already locked in to a population growth of 2-3 billion by 2050 even if those under 30 reproduce on a replacement-only basis.

The course leaders concluded that we will probably only be able to feed the increased population, and at the same time look after our soils and ecosystems properly, if we deploy technologies such as the controversial and mistrusted GM to increase productivity, whilst at the same time cutting down on fertiliser and pesticide use... Permaculture and GM may become unlikely partners!

## The weather

The weather has been headline news on many occasions recently. It has been an interesting year!

The highlights of the last 12 months for those of us living in the UK would start with the exceptionally cold spring, March being colder than any of the three winter months and the coldest March since 1962.

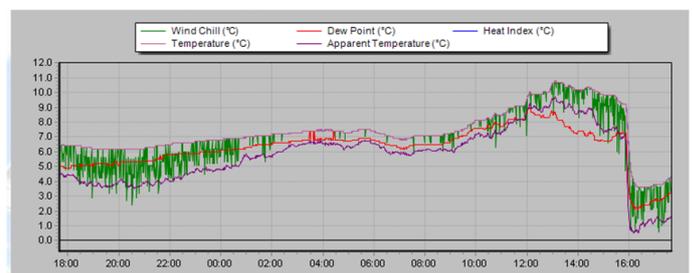
The summer, which many will remember very positively, really didn't get started until the first week of July. More remarkable than July, the warmth of which was much appreciated but not record breaking, has been the exceptionally mild winter months and the shortness of the season with no plant growth.

After the damaging storm in the south of the UK on October 28th, the weather was dry (yes it was!) and virtually frost free in November, which meant that I needed to, and was able to, cut the grass on November 30th. The last autumn colours were still in evidence right up to the second week of December—perhaps caused as by the late spring as well as by the mild autumn.

Some of last summer's annual flowers in my garden are still in bloom! On the day of the CEL conference in London (January 18th), daffodils were in full bloom in Russell Square. Last week on a visit to Edinburgh we saw a rose in full bloom in Portobello.

But we have had some freak weather too, quite apart from the floods about which much has been reported.

Who can remember the extraordinary squall on the afternoon of January 25th? After a bright and breezy afternoon, a dark bank of clouds suddenly advanced from the west and within a short space of time we had strong gusts of winds bringing down lots of tree branches, severe thunder and lightening, torrential rain then hail, as the temperature plummeted. Thanks to the internet and a local weather station only 100 yards away from where I live, the temperature drop was visible on the trace shown below: 6° C in half an hour.



I'm not sure how unusual this sudden drop in temperature was, but the event was certainly dramatic.

Elsewhere in the world there has been exceptional cold in North America, exceptional heat in Australia. Northern Europe (but not the UK!) experienced very high temperatures in May and June. November saw Haiyan, the most powerful typhoon ever to make landfall, wreak havoc in the Philippines.

None of this proves man-made climate change, but it is consistent with it and certainly unhelpful to the cause of the climate change deniers!

## Blue & Green Tomorrow

*Blue and Green Tomorrow*, the magazine for Ethical Investment, Socially Responsible Investors, and Green Investment, has recently published two guides, one about sustainable tourism and the other about sustainable transport.

These can be downloaded free of charge from their website at the following links:

<http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/reports/the-guide-to-sustainable-tourism-2014/>

<http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/reports/the-guide-to-sustainable-transport-2014/>

The Transport guide contains two articles presenting different views on the question of aviation's contribution to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and what to do about it.

You can also subscribe to their weekly newsletter.

## Future Learn course: Climate Change — Challenges and Solutions

The course has covered considerable ground during the first 7 weeks of this 8-week free course delivered by the University of Exeter. I now have an A4 ring binder completely full of articles downloaded from the internet!

We've learned about the causes of climate change, how we can measure it over thousands of years, and forecast what may happen in the future, the effects of it on the oceans, on our weather and on our future food security. We've learned about the role of ice, clouds and aerosols.

Has it changed my opinions with regards to climate change at all? The course has certainly reinforced the view that climate change is of crucial importance and that much of it in the last 50 years has been as a result of human activity. But It has also made me realise that there are lots of uncertainties about what may happen next. Scientists have learned a great deal in the last 20 years or so; weather and climate monitoring is now more sophisticated and the amount of measurements taken has grown enormously.

The growth in our knowledge has also shown just how complex the climate system is and how much more that there is to learn about it. One example of the future uncertainties is whether the proportion of carbon dioxide that is absorbed by the oceans, trees and the soil will change. The equations haven't been worked out yet.

However, does the uncertainty mean we should carry on with business as usual in the hope that the climate sceptics may be right? Is that a credible response?

One of the comments from the blog of another student on the course connected with me — we react to low probability but high impact events in life by, for example, paying out quite significant sums for insurance, or making people undergo CRB checks before they can work with children or vulnerable adults. Climate change is likely to have high impact but unlike these other examples it has high probability as well, so deciding to do nothing about it seems a totally inconsistent and unreasonable response.

Perhaps our response as Christians should be based rather less on "not worrying about tomorrow" and rather more on the principle exemplified by the preparation for the famine recorded in the old testament.

What happened in the seven years of plenty was that, rather than reacting to generous provision by greedy overconsumption, self-discipline was exercised and stocks were laid aside for the lean times that lay ahead. Fossil fuels could be regarded as the generous provision of the last 100,000 years, so the "dash for gas" is questionable.

For more information or to sign up to a free course visit <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses>

The programme for the next few months does include a 6-week course called *Introduction to Ecosystems* in May.

Other courses can be found on the MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) website: <http://www.mooc-list.com/>

## From CEL's email discussion group...



I can't feed these people, It will destroy their incentive to better themselves.

## MK Leipzig Link visit October 2014

The Leipzig Link is a small group of Christians from different churches in MK linked to the congregations of the Paulus (Protestant) and Martins (Roman Catholic) churches in Leipzig-Grünau. On exchange visits we explore contemporary themes of relevance to us all as Christians in Europe, we worship together, visit amazing places, share great food and build warm and lasting relationships.

The link has been in existence since before German re-unification; we celebrated the 25 year anniversary in 2012.

The Leipzig-Grünau churches have invited Milton Keynes to send a group in early October 2014 (provisionally 1st-6th); the theme chosen for the visit is the integrity of creation and our response.

If you are interested in joining this visit and would like further details please contact [david@millersofmk.co.uk](mailto:david@millersofmk.co.uk)

## MKCEG Website

Some of you may have wondered what has happened to our website....so did I when I went to update it after Christmas! After a few phone calls I discovered that the company that hosted it had gone out of business and sadly there doesn't appear to be a way of retrieving it. A different company, the one that hosts the Christian Ecology Link site, has agreed to host ours free of charge and I hope soon to be able to start work recreating it.

## CEL Conference—March 29th

The conference is now fully booked. Our next newsletter will include a report of the conference as well as a review of the book *Enough is Enough* one of the authors of which, Dan O'Neill is the guest speaker.

David Miller  
27th February 2014