

From anxiety and anger – to action!

New member, **Jacque Tricker** found help in Deep Waters, a project of Green Christian's Borrowed Time



COP26 March in Woodbridge, Suffolk

Photo credit: Charmian Berry

It was unsettling for me to feel so angry about something. Okay, I'm a cyclist so I do sometimes feel a shaking fist coming on whilst being too narrowly overtaken. But this was deep and brooding and I wasn't getting the antidote at church.

As church cleaner, I was getting nowhere trying to make small significant changes in sourcing "eco" cleaning products and even getting the congregation to clear up after themselves at events was proving controversial. The church bins said it all. I often needed to grow longer arms to pick out all the unwelcome items from the depths of the blue recycling bin: dirty wipes, teabags, broken glass and even

dirty nappies. Grrrr! Didn't we all have the same rules to follow for our own recycling at home? I glued another fresh set of the East Suffolk Recycling instructions onto the bin lid. I felt like an eco-exile in my own Church.

So it was providential that I came across the online presence of Green Christian and became aware that my "tribe" did exist. I dipped in to various webinars and prayer events before signing up for the Deep Waters course which was due to start in May 2021. I had heard of eco-anxiety, but hadn't sussed that maybe I was suffering from it.

Fortunately, Deep Waters fulfilled my

expectations and I was able to examine my anger and see a way forward where I would be able to channel that passionate rage into something more creative and worthwhile.

It was affirming to join a group where my feelings were understood and not condemned. Others felt angry too, I was not alone. And some people had found peace and had worked through some of their existential Angst. There was some theology to grapple with and I realised that there was a role for Churches in offering pastoral care for those who were feeling devastated that our careless human activity could render the world uninhabitable.

It's quite a commitment to sign up for eight weeks and to set aside time to prepare. However, I only missed one of the weekly evening sessions. As for preparation, I devoured the weekly spread of poems, articles, art, video and music links which were provided. Not a hardship – I'd love to read it all again and let it sink in anew. How right it felt to read in my Bible the previously rarely-thumbed book of Lamentations and the prophet Jeremiah, and some of the less happy-clappy psalms; how much more sense they made to me now.

I discovered the grief experienced in response to the climate emergency even had a name: solastalgia! And the poetry of Wendell Berry and Gerard Manley Hopkins seem to come into their own in this context. The music of Porter's Gate has become a real friend and my favourite is Josh Garrel's rendition of St Teresa of Avila's "Christ has no body now but yours."

Our breakout room on Zoom was a safe space for us to reflect on each week's topic in more depth. Strangely, it was a revelation to me that the best support for my "eco-anxiety" was close at hand. My

husband Dave is fully on board and many of my closest neighbours have proved to be deep green in the best possible way. Other participants were encouraged when I shared with the larger group about the mutual support practised along our terrace of 16 houses.

Our front gardens are getting more wildlife friendly (it saves the mid-terrancers carrying their lawnmowers through their houses) and a hedgehog has been spotted. We've held a simple Climate Service in our garden and our lovely neighbours (a mixed bunch spiritually) have participated wholeheartedly. During the lockdown, we often met outside for a coffee and chat, or "Local Food" meals in our access road.

Moreover, things are starting to happen in local churches, including a Climate Sunday service and a Tearfund discussion series "Christians and Climate Change." Together, our little gang from various local Churches managed to collaborate with Transition Woodbridge and East Suffolk WI to organise a well-attended COP26 march through Woodbridge. This gave me a creative and legitimate outlet for my pent up eco-rage, especially since I had insanely agreed to address the 290 marchers with an opening speech. I'd never done anything like that before but I absolutely loved it – the crowd was egging me on!

Our "tribe" is now keen not to lose the momentum gained to make a positive green impact in our community. On the morning of the march, a small group of us gave out narcissi bulbs and bookmarks to passers-by, as a sign of hope. Inspired by the Bible verse, from Revelation 22:2, "The leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations" we asked people to write down their hopes and fears about the environment on leaf-shaped paper which we pegged to a tree



Jacquie and Dave Tricker with Andrea Skevington offer leaves and bulbs to passersby

Photo credit: Charmian Berry

in the town centre. A local Woodbridge writer and poet, Andrea Skevington, later composed these leaf comments into a beautiful poem, which she presented to the Town Council and to our MP, Dr Therese Coffey.

Oh yes! And next time I run out of a cleaning product at church, I've promised myself to take direct action by walking round the corner to the local eco refill shop! ■

Link to Andrea's poem:

<https://andreaskevington.com/2021/11/24/november-leaves-community-poem-update/>



Jacqueline Tricker had a somewhat "Good Life" upbringing in Suffolk. She is a Scout leader, church cleaner and language teacher. She enjoys messing about on the River Deben, either crewing a Cornish Cormorant or rowing with the Woodbridge Coastal Rowing Club.



Bookmark of Hope (Stamp by Noolibird)

Photo credit: A. Skevington