

Rev Gillaine Holland

3 cheers for Methodist Central Hall! What for? Well, I'll get back to that in a moment.

First, let me ask you a question: what would you be prepared to go to prison for?

As someone who has been both a prison chaplain and taken part in restorative justice work as a victim of crime with Sycamore Tree (www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/our-work/sycamore-tree/) I would say, not much! Plus, I'm basically law-abiding.

However, I'm more than happy to join a protest in aid of something I feel deeply about and that is how on Earth Day, a few weeks back, I found myself lying down amongst thousands of people, in the middle of a London road, in a 5 minute die-in, which looped around Westminster: the beginning of the Biodiversity march completing the loop before most of us had even set off! It was a strangely moving moment. An estimated



crowd of 60k people (over a 4 day period) had gathered for the Extinction Rebellion protest; the Big One



(www.extinctionrebellion.uk/the-big-one) and within that crowd were around 1400 Christians from various organisations who set off together. I didn't know about the die-in. I knew XR had promised a peaceful and law-abiding protest and I had been invited by one of my oldest friends who is (in no particular order) an artist, Baptist and Climate protestor (www.ruthwhiter.co.uk). We spent the day sketching together.

The family-friendly march had the feel of a festival. Flags and costumes as far as the eye could see. Face-painted children sat on shoulders and the police presence looked on smiling. Then without warning, we were told that we were (legally) able to lie down and die for just 5 minutes – and so we did. One minute there was life and colour and movement and then there was a strange slurring of time as the crowd, caught out by its own death, began to fall to the ground. And there we lay, staring at the blue sky, considering the reality of the climate crisis. Did you know that the UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries? The last amongst the G7 and in the bottom 10% globally with only about half its biodiversity left? How have we failed to steward that which God gave us to care for SO badly?

That night, we channel-hopped to watch the news. BBC – nothing. ITV – nothing. London news – nothing. Eventually, we found a report on Al Jazeera and later a piece on Sky, but our national news channels had not considered 60k peaceful people at Westminster worth noting. However, just days before, the use of the new Public Order Act 2023 in dealing with 2 'Just Stop Oil' protesters, Marcus Decker and Morgan Trowland, was everywhere. They'd been sentenced to nearly 6 years between them for their disruptive protest on the Dartford Crossing.

Somewhat shocked by the lack of coverage, we fell to discussing whether disruptive protest was necessary when the stakes are so high and the interest so low. Mark Coleman, a retired

vicar from Rochdale clearly thought so and was sentenced to 5 weeks in prison for sitting down as part of an Insulate Britain protest in this same week.

“I want to state that I acted to protect human life, to draw attention to the death and destruction caused by rising emissions, and the impacts of cold damp homes on the health of the citizens of our country,” he said. You can read his letter from prison here:

www.christianclimateaction.org/2023/05/03/rev-mark-coleman-writes-from-prison/?fbclid=IwAR2Ph67yEHO4eXK2DvH1RnU2HEuGdN4fX5HRw9CoCaunTgQUnc-JJFq97CY



Whatever your views on disruptive protest, surely there is no excuse for doing nothing. As individuals and as churches, as God’s people we need to act positively to this crisis, whether through addressing our car use or flying plans, seeking out green tariffs for our fuel or upcycling and recycling as much as is possible.

And as for Methodist Central Hall? Well, we arrived in London to discover every public loo had been shut down during the protest. You cannot imagine our relief (literally), to discover that MCH had opened its loos and was gently managing a snaking queue of protestors. As I say, 3 cheers for Methodist Central Hall!

Rev Gillaine Holland, St Michael’s, Sheerwater

Resources/Good News

Reflect, Quiet Mornings

Two Reflect Quiet Mornings will be held via Zoom on Saturday 3rd June 2023 and Monday 12 June 2023, led by Rev Sam Funnell.

If you would like to attend, please email Lynne Tonge (2tonges317@gmail.com) and also include the date you would like to attend. There is no charge for this event, but donations (suggestion £5) may be made by bank transfer. Please see the attached flyer below.

Volunteers Week, celebrated in June each year.

Come and celebrate Volunteers Week - Guildford Walk 5th June @ 2pm & Godalming Walk 8th June @ 2pm. More details can be found below.

Mental Health Awareness Week (15 to 21 May 2023)

Anxiety is the theme of Mental Health Awareness Week 2023. Mental Health Awareness Week is an ideal time for us all to think about mental health, tackle stigma, and find out how we can create a society that prevents mental health problems from developing and protects our mental well-being. Find out more at [Mental Health Awareness Week 2023 | Mental Health Foundation](#)

REFLECT QUIET MORNING (via Zoom)

Saturday 3rd June or Monday 12th June 2023



JOURNEYING WITH GOD: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Using scripture, music, reflection and prayer:
we'll trace God's presence with us in the past,
enable ourselves to meet God more fully in the 'now'
and seek God's wisdom and guidance for all that's to come.

A rough guide to our time together:

9.30am - Welcome, Opening Prayer & Introduction

10.00am – Session 1: Journeying with God in the Past

11.00am – Session 2: From Here to Eternity?

12 noon – Conclusion & Closing Prayer

To end by 12.15pm



This online Quiet morning will be led by Rev Sam Funnell – a Methodist minister in Woking

If you would like to attend please email Lynne Tonge 2tonges317@gmail.com
stating which date you would like to book

There is no charge for this event but donations (suggestion £5)
may be made by bank transfer to support the work of REFLECT
(**Reflect** Bank Details: Lloyds Bank, Sort Code **30 96 18**, Account no. **02833113**
please quote '**Quiet Day**' as a reference for your payment – Thank you!)

Celebrate Volunteers Week with us!



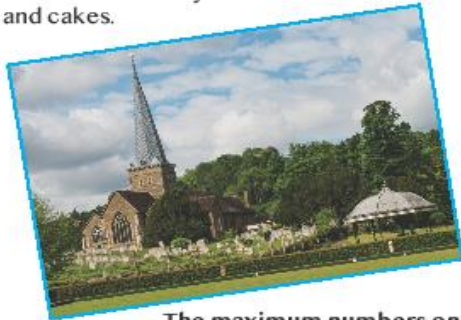
**Voluntary Action
South West Surrey**

Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector in
Guildford and Waverley

To thank you for all you do, you and your volunteers are welcome to join us for tea and cakes and come on a stroll led by our own staff member David Rose, who is also a local historian.

Monday, June 5, 2pm to 4pm

Meet at our Volunteer Centre, 39 Castle Street, Guildford, for a walk through the Castle Grounds and along the High Street and hear about some of the town's rich history. We will return for tea and cakes.



Thursday, June 8, 2pm to 4pm

Meet outside Godalming Baptist Church in Queen Street, for a walk along the High Street and beside the River Wey in Phillips Memorial Park, to hear about the town and its people, followed by tea and cakes at the church.

The maximum numbers on each walk will be 25 people.

To book your places on a first come, first served basis, please send an email to info@vasws.org.uk and please head it 'Volunteer Week Walk' and say which walk you would like to attend and how many people.

Volunteers Week is celebrated in June every year.

It is a week in which the UK celebrates volunteers and says thank you to them for the contribution they make. The week also raises awareness about the benefits becoming a volunteer and the diverse volunteering roles that are available.

**The theme this year is
Celebrate and Inspire**

