

Jesus said, Consider the flowers of the field, they neither toil nor spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

I love to picture the Son of God, lying on a lush spring hillside surrounded by wonderful wildflowers. Consider the flowers of the field he said, and that's what we're doing!

This sustainable church flowers movement began in a tiny rural parish in Worcestershire, when local volunteers began questioning floral foam use and exploring seasonal, local alternatives. Some of them are here, many more watching online. They asked me to join them in wondering how we could make a difference, however small, in caring for God's creation, and their motion has gone from parish to deanery to here. Sustainable Church Flowers began around a kitchen table but is now a fast growing national and ecumenical movement for positive change, with florists, growers and above all wonderful volunteer flower arrangers spreading the word and giving practical help and advice. Anyone can join in!

This motion doesn't ban anything or force churches to stop doing anything. It rejoices in flowers and foliage in church, and encourages us to source them locally and seasonally wherever possible: remember Jesus on that hillside, rejoice in what's around you! Seasonal local flowers connect with their older meaning, as expressions of time, place and community. Simple, natural, beautiful. Sustainable practice is not about less beauty, but aligning beauty with the 5th mark of mission and the care of creation.

So we encourage the phasing out of harmful floral foam, invented in the 1950's? Often called Oasis, though that's just one make amongst many, The RHS banned floral foam at Chelsea and other flower shows years ago, and this motion is calling on cathedrals and churches to consider stopping using it too. ARocha and Eco-church is well known and they have some great pages on their website supporting this approach. There are lots of good alternatives. Church flower arrangers are some of the most resourceful people I know, and they are already rising to the challenge!

Many professional florists already work sustainably of course, and are really encouraged by this motion. We're working together to enable a workable transition to sustainable church flowers.

Lets see a short film now, set in the village of Harpley where this movement began:

(VIDEO plays)

I'm joined on the platform by some stars of the film: Shane Connolly, who produced the fabulous displays at the Coronation; Jill Timms Volunteer church Flower arranger and associate professor from Surrey university, and Kate Hurst Churchwarden and Commercial flower grower. They are all eager to hear your ideas, comments and questions. So..

On behalf of Worcester Diocesan Synod, I move the motion standing in my name.

Response to questions

Judith Osborne: thank you! Will support and encourage people on the ground.

Will Harwood and Carolyn Graham shared real concerns. Definitely not a diktat and dont believe everything you read. We love flower arrangers! Just look at ScF website, and contact them for help and support. Good better best is what we say, but try and avoid the bad. If there is a fully home compostable floral foam out there, good. But why do they sell so much of the bad? Dont just get your information from big business. Most biodegrade into microplastics which leach into soil and water. But even better to go simple and natural.

Thanks to Jody, Bishop Graham, Robin, Rachel, Kathryn, Jane, Abigail and others for your eloquent support: Amos, Exodus and the power of small things, beautiful stories of young and old in Bristol. All about the church living the hope it proclaims.

Nigel whose wife leads the flower team. She is doing a great job! Lets rediscover simple natural methods that everyone used before. Nick Land thank you for helpful ways to engage:

Jane Evans a flower arranger. Doesn't use foam but is worried about farmers in Kenya. Many such farms are actually owned by global north companies. Fairtrade is better but still involves such high carbon footprint.

James Menzies, Thank you for serving a LINC parish. There is no higher calling. You let your mind be changed, and said that justice is Not a zero sum game.

Finally, Thank you for giving your valuable time to consider this grassroots parish motion. We need to think global here, but also act local. That has always been the

genius of the church. Volunteer ambassadors for sustainable church flowers are now all over the country, keen to offer help and support.

We can all get anxious and stressed about many things, but when I get out in the garden, get my hands in the soil, work with nature and look around me, things begin to change. Perhaps sometimes we should take Jesus at his word, and take time to consider the flowers of the field.. Simple, natural, beautiful.

The parishes and people behind this motion thank you for being here and engaging with it. They will be hoping for your support.

Thank you.