

Have you seen the labyrinth at Cudham yet? It's on the left as you go through the churchyard gate from Church approach. Thanks to Steffan and Mike for their help in preparing it. It's well worth a quiet reflective walk around it on a good May day. As Spring continues I am so glad to live in such a beautiful part of God's creation – although the effects of climate change are an ever present reality.

Mayday is, of course, the international distress signal, probably derived from French m'aidez – Help me! Here in church we continue to pray for the desperate situation in Ukraine and other places of conflict around the world. Someone once said that the situation in Ukraine is acute, but climate change is a chronic condition which we can leave for now. I'm not so sure. While the UK climate change conference outcomes from Cop26 have been eclipsed by world events since, the issues remain. Is this really a matter for Christians? Theologian Ruth Valerio comments 'The Bible tells us that creation was made through Jesus and for Jesus (Colossians 1:16). That's a stunning declaration of our planet's worth. The Son of God loves this beautiful world that exists in him, and we are called to care for it. But the climate crisis is wreaking havoc, intensifying threats such as extreme weather events, sea-level rise, melting glaciers and biodiversity loss. Scientists are clear that this is a human-made problem, driven by the burning of fossil fuels. As God's image-bearers, we can't stand by while our common home is being destroyed.' What can we do? We're delighted to say that former environment minister, Lord Deben, chair of the UK's Climate change committee and a keynote speaker at Cop26 has agreed to speak at an open meeting for the Orpington Deanery, and you are welcome to come along too – it's on Wednesday 25th May 7.45pm for an 8pm start at St Barnabas Cray, Rushet Road, Orpington BR5 2PU. Lord Deben recently said "We know that we face total destruction and we know how to prevent it, isn't that a wonderful challenge?"

It is indeed, and I hope here at Cudham and Downe we can begin to explore practical and workable responses, especially as the Church of England has set us a challenge to be carbon neutral by 2030.

My prayer, as we often say in our services 'by the help of God, we will'!

Rev John Musson