

From the Editor.....

It's the first week in June, I'm beginning to work on the July edition of The Mag and making preparations for my hospital stay next week. There's a lot to get sorted so that all is in place for my return and recuperation. It's a cloudy day and I've already done some tidying in the garden. The grass will be cut just before I go in, I'm pulling up weeds every day and the wild flowers that have decided it's a good place to be are looking comfortable. I take a break and sit with a coffee. How blessed we are to live in Hemel. This rural town is surrounded by beautiful countryside and filled with trees, flowers, birds, butterflies, bees..... I could go on.

The roundabouts in the town are a wonderful testimony to the town planning that tries to provide as many diverse natural and decorative little patches of joy. I particularly love the one at the end of my road which is planted with a colourful variety of wild flowers.

I have been struck, yet again, as I drive around just how much nature is within touching distance of each one of us and I am reminded how appreciative we all were of it during the covid lockdowns. How precious our local nature is. I try to provide as much support for birds and insects as I can in my garden and when we were planning the church garden, we were aware that we needed to be as diverse and nature friendly as we could be in those circumstances.

I'm hoping in this edition of The Mag we may be able to read about your love of nature, what you do and where you go to appreciate it, how you support it, what tips you can share with the rest of us to preserve it and how we can show our appreciation to the Lord for providing it.



Sewing Bee Star



Our Moderator and fellow AFC member, George, wearing the stole that Pat G made for him to wear recently as reported in Synod news below.....

The Moderator joined with over 400 members of the European Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana to celebrate their 10th Anniversary. A memorable vibrant service that lasted 4 1/2 hours!

Apparently he also asked if she could make a table cloth which she obliged.

You'll be getting orders Pat!!!!

Pete Teakle

It was with shock and great sadness that we heard of the sudden and unexpected death of Pete Teakle. A quiet, kind and loving husband to Eileen and father and grandfather to his family, Pete supported Eileen's ministry here at AFC and in her wider sphere and joined us at special services and socials that Eileens' small group organised. He is sorely and greatly missed and we send our deepest condolences to his family.

Violet McCabe

After a long and debilitating illness, we recently heard of the very sad death of Violet McCabe. Before she became ill Violet worshipped at AFC and was a vital part of the music team organising rotas but was also known to love to sing praise to God. A much-loved wife to Mike and mother and grandmother her passing will leave a hole in the centre of her family. We send our deepest condolences to them all.

Thank You

I wish to acknowledge and thank Pat Gosling for the support she has given me after returning home from a hip replacement operation. Pat picked me up from hospital and stayed with me for four nights until I was able to do things for myself. Thanks so much to those who provided meals for me. Thanks to everyone in our congregation who gives selflessly for the benefit of others. You are a blessing. *Pam*

Greedy Pigeon

I do my best to support local wildlife in my little garden. I have a couple of bug hotels. I use empty half coconut shells upside down around the edge of the lawn for any creepy crawlies that like the damp and the dark and I have areas of broken stones for bugs and beetles to live under. I also feed the birds. I learned a lot about how they feed since I started providing regular bird food. So, I have feeding stations and hooks for feeders for the ones who like to perch and I put several little piles of seed on the ground for the ground feeders. I have one pile at the top of the garden on a paving slab, another half way down the path by the middle step and one on the raised paving near the kitchen door.

One morning I was sitting near the house, camouflaged by bushes, drinking coffee when I saw a fat pigeon fly down to the top pile. He was having a wonderful feed when another pigeon arrived on the middle pile. Pigeon One looked up and to his horror saw Pigeon Two on what he seemed to have earmarked for his second course.



Leaving his place, he flew down and chased off Two then started to try to gobble up the middle pile. But Two had him on the run because he transferred to the top pile. So, One panicked and flew up to chase him off. Two flew back to the middle pile while One, horrified, noticed Pigeon Three on the bottom pile. One did not know which of his enemies to attack next and his hesitance was his downfall. As he left his pile to fly down to attack Three, pigeon Four grabbed the opportunity to start eating the top pile.

Fat and greedy Pigeon One lost out completely because he wouldn't share. It was a classic and comic lesson to watch while drinking my coffee.

Our Commission to Wildlife

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden to work it and take care of it. Genesis 2:15

The first commission we received from God right at the beginning was that we should work the environment and look after it. It still stands today and we know that it is even more relevant now than ever. Sometimes it seems overwhelming to little me. What good can I do. It should be left to the big players to make sweeping changes across the world to save the planet. But that's not entirely true. While we need those in power to step up and do it NOW we also have a responsibility to do our bit in our little corner and there are lots of things we can do, even in a very small space.

A quick and easy bird feeder

I saw this on a recent TV wildlife programme.

You will need..... A toilet roll centre

Peanut butter [not salted]

Bird seed

String

Cover the outside of the roll with peanut butter

Roll it in the birdseed

Thread a piece of string through the middle of the roll and tie it to create a hanger.

Hang it in your garden.

Wildlife in the church garden

We have been thrilled, as we weed, continue to add to and tidy the church garden to see bees, bugs, worms and ladybirds. We have chosen plants

that we hope will encourage the wildlife and now there are flowers continuing to bloom and follow one another for space. It is so important that we do not pick the flowers so that the flying insects and bees can get the full benefit of what we are trying to provide. But it's also good for us to be able to walk among flowering and leafy plants and sit in the middle of the beauty of God's creation. So, we hope you will be able to enjoy time in the garden to rest and pray and just be.

Thanks to all those who have donated to and who work in the garden.



Wild Flowers and Grasses

A couple of years ago, while visiting my cousin in Sussex, we spent a day at Herstmonceux Castle. The building is a college but you can visit the grounds which are beautiful and we have been there several times.



On this occasion we noticed that one area had been drastically changed. Where once there had been regimented borders and beds now, in those beds, was a riot of wild flowers. It was breathtaking and buzzing with bees and flying insects. It was inspirational. When I got home, I decided that I could do my bit next year and so I planted a little patch of poppies and cornflowers in my front garden... just a couple of feet at the back of the garden. It was a joy to see them that summer.

Since then I have also seen pots and planters planted up with wildflowers and grasses where someone has not even a couple of feet of earth but the effect to the local wildlife was just as positive.

Water

I love watching wildlife and gardening programmes and across the board they always emphasise the importance of water for wildlife. If you are fortunate enough to have a space to put a pond in your garden they say the wildlife soon take advantage of it. But if not even a bowl of water will help insects and birds so long as it is regularly replenished.



I even found little cups on posts that can be stuck into the earth and filled with water or that can catch rainwater in my garden and you see little insects hovering over the water and some larger ones drinking.

Roadsides and Parks

How blessed are we in Hemel with our Parks department. I love the way our roadsides are left for wild flowers and grasses and the changing seasons are evident with the variety of progression we see there. Our open spaces, roundabouts and park areas are so beautifully looked after. Do you remember when the first lockdown was eased and we were allowed to meet with five other people outside? I went down to Gadebridge Park for a picnic with my daughter and her two girls. All around the park we could see people enjoying the freedom. On one October morning, just after I retired, I went down to Gadebridge Park and just sat among the trees. It was a very healing experience and one I will never forget. What a blessing we have to be so close to nature in Hemel.

My Little Mouse Neighbour

Several years ago I returned from holiday and embarked on some rigorous cleaning. I had spent nine days at Faith Camp and then ten days away at the coast so I'd been away for some time.

Around 10.30 I stopped for coffee and took my garden chair outside the Kitchen door for a break. Suddenly I heard a rustling in the bush nearby and saw a ripple of lower leaves. Then a little field mouse emerged onto the paving. I held my breath and sat absolutely still. He pulled himself up short and looked at me with obvious surprise as if to say 'What are you doing there, I haven't seen you before' and then summoned up all his courage, shot under my legs and disappeared into the lavender bush by the wall. He obviously had been doing that regularly while I had been away. We never really know who we are sharing our garden with. I felt privileged that he had thought it was a good place to be.



Where Have The Owls Gone?

Some years ago, late at night I could lie in bed and hear two owls having a conversation. One was in the lane at the back of the house. The other was in the spinney at the bottom of the road. Lane Owl would sing out 'Toowit' and Spinney Owl would reply 'Toowoo' It was magical.

I feel very sad when I realise that I have not heard this for at least seven years. I wonder why they have gone away. These precious creatures that live so close to us are very vulnerable. We must make sure we don't crowd them out.

Mag Wordsearch

V	I	O	S	G	E	L	G	N	O	L	Y	D	D	A	D	L	E	N	W
D	A	H	B	L	I	A	H	S	D	A	I	M	I	S	E	L	E	M	Y
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S	T	N	A	L	P	G	N	I	D	D	E	B	U	R	T	I	L	K	S

ALLOTMENTS-ANTS-BEDDING PLANTS-BIRDS-BUGS-
 BUTTERFLIES-DADDY LONGLEGS-DEER-FISH-FORESTS-
 FROGS-GARDENS-HERBS-LAWNS-MARTENS-NESTS-NEWT-
 RIVERS-SLUGS-SQUIRRELS-TOADSTOOLS-WILD VIOLETS-

For the beauty of the earth
 For the beauty of the skies
 For the love which from our birth
 Over and around us lies
 Lord Our God to You we raise
 This our sacrifice of praise.

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Our Summer BBQ will be held on 14th July

**Our Summer Services begin in July.
The theme will be The Lord's Prayer.**

**July..... 21st Our Father
28th Your Holy Name**

**August..... 4th Your kingdom come, your will be done
11th Daily bread
18th Forgiven sin
24th Temptation**

September....1st Celebration of Our Father

Autumn Services resume on 8th September