

How Green is your Theology

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

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'If the Earth were only a few feet in diameter ...' is a child's book, a growing poem that describes the marvel of our planet. It builds page by page to be a message to all humankind, described as joyful as a song and as thoughtful as a prayer.

These thoughts resonate and they mattered to Sir Crispin Tickell. He lived for over 90 years, best known to the public for encouraging Margaret Thatcher's early interest in the science of climate change.

His memorial service this week in St Martin in the Fields including a poem by James Fenton with the lines: 'I'll stay as near, as true to you as heart could pray. Heart never hoped that one might be half of the things you are to me – the dawn, the fire, the rainbow and the day.'

Our respect to our planet should be as great. World Earth Day comes around in the fourth week of April, illustrated by The Blue Marble photograph taken by astronauts.

'How green is your theology?' was a line I was challenged to get into an answer on BBC's Any Questions one Friday on the Isle of Wight. The panel included the environmentalist Jonathan Porritt. At times over decades he has been more prominent as a campaigner than any MP. We first came together when getting lead out of petrol.

The advice session at Goring-by-Sea's library was one of the ways I meet constituents. Others introduced themselves when the Health minister Gillian Keegan, MP for Chichester, came to be briefed by construction staff and Worthing Borough Council at the welcomed Integrated Care Centre, by the Worthing Library and the Town Hall.

The wider civic centre will bring advantage to 25,000 people who gain modern family doctor services and much associated help in the one central area. I am glad our local leaders came together in this positive coordinated approach.

The quiet undramatic provision of local services should not be taken for granted, It does not happen by chance. I hold the title 'Father of the House'; I refer to Dame Margaret Beckett as the Senior Member of the House of Commons because she was first elected earlier than I was, before having an unwelcome break in her parliamentary service

In her interesting Woman's Hour interview this week, she declared that people who care about issues and who want to improve systems should become involved in community activity and in political service.

Locally, I congratulate the organisers of the fundraiser for Ukraine held on Friday at the East Preston Royal British Legion Club. Sadly, a meeting in Durrington Community Centre prevented my attendance. Cheerfully, a friend sent a happy photograph of a family from Ukraine and a local family walking down a street in the village.

Members of parliament hold a variety of views on issues. At a discussion on the future ownership of Channel 4, I was pleased to have agreement by a colleague who I anticipated would support the government's unnecessary intention to fatten and to flog off the successful public broadcaster established by Margaret Thatcher as a commissioning channel for independent producers.

Together, we may be able to keep things as they are. Changes are necessary when things are going wrong or when groups are being excluded from the opportunity to share in the good things of life.

Preserving life and nature on our planet is one of the greatest challenges; it affects each of us and we are recognising that all of us can make changes to reduce harm and to improve well-being. Let us build on concern and understanding with the applied use of science and technology.