

October FCN Reflection - Are we a meniscus on the landscape?  
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I recently read an article, in the Farmers Weekly, written by Guy Smith who comes from a mixed farming background on the North Essex Coast.

He describes the word meniscus as *'the curve effect caused by the surface tension of water that you can see if you stare hard enough at the amount of rain in a rain gauge.'*

He continues by saying, *'although recent rain may be helping loosen the grip of the drought, there's nothing like a fierce spring drought to remind us of the fundamentals.'*

*Just as we think we have enough to worry about, such as an election and Brexit, the weather duly pokes us in the back as if to say: "Never mind the sideshows, remember I'm the main act." Suddenly, we are far more interested in the weather forecast than we are in the rest of the news.'*

Guy Smith's pragmatic approach to farming and the weather is a helpful reminder that we are perhaps the 'meniscus', a blot on the surface of the landscape and we are there as co-creators to work with nature and God and not the other way round.

It is interesting to note that farmers are conscious of their part to pay. I am frequently asked, at my weekly visits to Frome Livestock market, 'Vicar say one to Him for the weather'. My response is always 'yes' quickly followed by 'you can say one too'!

So what is our role as 'menisci' on the landscape? Archbishop John Habgood in his book, *The Concept of Nature*, develops this theme that human being needs to hold together the given-ness of the natural world and its other-ness from us. He encourages humanity to develop a vision of respecting both nature and ourselves rather than focusing on self-interest.

The reality of fulfilling this vision in the context of the rural community and its struggle for viability is a critical issue facing the British countryside today and its future post Brexit. We have choices as users and consumers which can influence changes in the countryside. For example, do we want the countryside as a huge monoculture for the production of subsidised wheat sold into the world markets or do we want to be self-sufficient in food and perhaps energy created by bio-fuels? The choice is the consumer and the farmer can respond to that demand.

In October, we celebrate British Food Fortnight and I am sure we will all continue to support British farming both through our food on the table and through supporting farmers as they work and plan ahead for a very uncertain future. Our role is to be there as a listening ear when things do not go so well for them.

### A Prayer about Nature and God's Creation

Loving Father and Creator of all we come to you today deeply grateful for your creation. As we look around us we are amazed at the greatness and majesty of all that you have made. Nature around us speaks of your greatness - the vast expanse of the sky, the mountains, trees, lakes and streams speak of your great design. You have given us such beauty in the colors of the rainbow, the beauty of flowers and fields. Words cannot adequately express the magnificence of all you have created. We join in praise with the writer of the psalms when he says, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth." May we show our love and reverence to you, our Lord, by caring for all that you have created. We humbly give you praise and thanks. Amen