

Join us on the pathway to Net Zero

In the run up to COP26, the UN Environment Conference that takes place in Glasgow in November 2021, churches are being encouraged to consider how they can take steps to care for our planet.

David Maggs, the Environment Champion for the Church of England in Somerset says, "In 2020 our new environmental strategy was approved. The Covid pandemic forestalled a major launch of the strategy, but as things start to return to normal we hope we can start to help people consider how they and their church can help care for creation. While we recognise many churches are still not open and not everyone is able to meet in



person, there are still many ways to get involved.

"Already this year over 300 people from across Somerset have taken part in Wilder Churches, a joint initiative with the Somerset Wildlife Trust as well as Churches Count on Nature Week and we really hope we can continue to build momentum and ensure that church communities across

Somerset are doing all they can to care for this wonderful planet God has provided us with."

From the first of July you can simply commit to pray on the first of each month. Or register with Eco Church to see how sustainable your church is and commit to improve. The Church of England has a Practical Pathway to Net Zero tool which is a good starting point for churches trying to move towards 'net zero', a position where there is a balance between the carbon emitted into the atmosphere, and the carbon removed from it.

For more ideas and inspiration keep an eye on www.bathwells.org.uk/environment or [get in touch](#) ■

News in brief

Relay to COP26

In the run up to the COP26 climate change talks in Glasgow in November, COP26, the Young Christian Climate Network (YCCN) are walking from the G7 venue, Carbis Bay in Cornwall, to Glasgow to raise awareness of the urgent need for action not words in caring for God's creation.

The relay will see them pass through our area in July, stopping at Wellington (8th), Taunton (9th), Bridgwater (10th), Axbridge (11th), Wrington (12th), Keynsham (17th) and Bath (18th). Find out how you can support them or get involved at www.yccn.uk ■



Churches Count for Nature

In June St Edward's, Chiltern Polden was one of our churches which took part in the Churches Count for Nature. Co-organiser, Anita Hayne said, "We heard about it at the Wilder Churches event with the Somerset Wildlife Trust and as we have just got our Bronze Eco Church award, we wanted to get involved. We found 120 different species of plants and animals and made some great community connections. We started small but will do it again next year" ■

School lightbulbs

10 church schools in Bath and Wells are undertaking major works to upgrade their lighting system as part of a commitment to reducing their carbon footprint. In the first year alone it's estimated the move will save the schools a combined 45.93 kilowatts and around £18,963. Stephen Bamford, Headteacher of Kilmersdon School, one of the schools involved, said: "It demonstrates that as a school and as a diocese, we are determined to reduce our carbon footprint and help the environment and community in every way we can." ■



God's gift to humankind

By Trevor Willmott, Assistant Bishop

The leaves of the trees will be for the healing of the nations. Rev. 22.2

A few days spent recently in the Lakes gave us a much anticipated opportunity to visit the new RHS garden, Bridgewater, near Manchester. Created in the ruins of the much overgrown walled garden of a long gone great house, the garden is the result of a co-operation between the RHS and the City Council.

While the Paradise Garden with its pools and flowing water reminded me of the river of life in the Revelation, it was the therapeutic garden which captured my imagination. A number of charities working in inner Manchester with people

whose lives are deeply affected by issues of mental health and social deprivation had approached the RHS to explore the possibility of creating a working garden to be grown and maintained by the various communities involved. The result is stunning both visually and mentally.

To aid the development the partners decided to allocate some of their limited financial resources towards the appointment of a full time occupational therapeutic gardener. Talking with her and reading the display boards around the garden we discovered that for many not only was this their first experience of gardening but more importantly the physical work and



interaction is giving them a hope and purpose in life in ways that nothing else had been able to achieve.

The Revelation speaks of a world transformed and made new by God; the very stuff of the earth, trees and water, bringing new life to what was tired and old. The Scriptures remind us that the earth is God's gift to humankind to be tended and cherished; to be used for the good of all.

But let the last word be that of the therapeutic gardener "we can care for others; we can care for the earth. All we need is a vision and the will."

With my blessing, +Trevor,

Time to step up

Dr Peter Brotherton is Lead Director for Climate Change at Natural England, the government's agency for the natural environment.

What has climate change got to do with the Church?

Climate change will be felt most by the countries who have done the least to cause it. That's a Christian issue. We are failing as stewards of God's creation and must step up and play our part to support biodiversity and challenge climate change.

How are climate change and biodiversity linked?

Climate change is making the ecosystems we rely on to become less able to deliver what we need from them, making climate change worse. 15% of climate change emissions are from land use change driven by human consumption.



Dr Peter Brotherton

Is biodiversity loss affecting us now?

Nature isn't providing us with what we need in the UK already. Our air isn't as clean as it should be. Our homes flood more than they should. In some areas our soil is being depleted and blowing away.

What can we do?

We can make a difference by

protecting and nurturing our biodiversity and by speaking up. If the church doesn't speak about the environment, at a time when children are more conscious than ever that their future options are disappearing as a result of environmental change, we will become irrelevant.

Can individuals make a difference?

It can seem an overwhelming problem, but lots of little bits of action will matter. What we do as congregations and as individuals collectively adds up to a lot. Anything we can do to reduce how bad climate change gets has to be a good thing. Read the full interview at bathandwells.org.uk ■

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