

Coming together to care for creation

It's been three years since Bath and Wells declared a climate emergency and committed to Net Zero by 2030. During that time church communities have been making changes in a host of ways, all doing their bit to care for creation and help us achieve our goals, and in November we achieved A Rocha's Bronze Eco Diocese status.

One initiative that has proved very popular with churches and their communities is the Wilder Churches initiative run in partnership with the Somerset Wildlife Trust. Over 200 people attended the online launch of Wilder Churches and since then they have attended regular sessions to share progress and ideas. There



Churches in Bath and Wells go wild are also regular sessions for those new to Wilder Churches and keen to learn how they can make their churchyard more biodiverse.

Pippa Rayner from the Somerset Wildlife Trust says, "Local people are best placed to really get to know and understand their local churchyard or burial ground. The Wilder Churches training has been designed to support communities in this and empower them to take

positive, evidence-based, effective action for wildlife in a way that also works for their community."

Sara Emmett, Environment Adviser for Bath and Wells says, "We have been so delighted by the positive response from so many people across the diocese to Wilder Churches, but also that so many churches are engaging with the Eco Church initiative. It's a lot easier to become an Eco Church than many people think and together we can make small changes that combine to make a real difference.

[Visit bathandwells.org.uk/environment](https://bathandwells.org.uk/environment) to find out more about Wilder Churches and the Eco Church award or [email sara.emmett@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:emmett@bathwells.anglican.org) ■

News in brief

Warm welcome for Zambia visitors

We recently welcomed Fr Bernard Phiri and Fr Emmanuel Ngoma, from the Diocese of Eastern Zambia. After attending a conference in Canterbury, they visited their respective link parishes, enjoying a full programme of parish events and school visits, as well as a visit to meet Bishop Michael and Bishop Ruth.

Commenting on his visit and the contrast between church in Zambia and Bath and Wells, Father Bernard says, "It has reinforced my view that people may like different worship styles, but we are all part of the same family pursuing the same purposes." ■

Find more on this story and others at bathandwells.org.uk/news



Celebrating the Coronation

The Coronation ceremony for His Majesty King Charles III will take place on 6 May at Westminster Abbey. Plans for a special weekend of events, celebrations and activities that will include shared community lunches and activities to help inspire community spirit have been announced. Find out how you can join in and find Church of England resources for the celebration. bathandwells.org.uk/coronation ■

Growing Toddler Church

In Minehead, an idea that began four years ago as a way of supporting parents with toddlers, has grown into a regular Toddler Church; a place where families with small children can come together to play, learn and care for one another. Some weeks up to 32 families attend the gatherings which take place outdoors, whatever the weather. Children & Families Worker, Jules Perry says, "We have succeeded in planting a kind, welcoming, non-judgemental mini church for all to experience." ■



The joy of Easter

By Ruth Worsley, Bishop of Taunton

As April begins, we mark it with the Palm Sunday procession, the welcoming of Jesus into Jerusalem amongst much jubilation and a sense of impending revolution. There were those who expected Jesus to be the next rebel leader who would rouse the local people to turn against their Roman overlords. In their enthusiasm, limbs of trees were broken to pave the way for this new hero.

However, it didn't take much for the crowd to turn around and change its tune. Those palm leaves torn from branches to throw in his path have become the palm crosses we hold today. Symbolising for us the way in which the week ends. Fronds of living trees now dried and woven to form the cruel

instrument of death on which Christ suffered.

Many of our churches are now engaged with rewilding their church grounds, many are seeking to gain awards with Eco Church and are looking for new ways of reducing or capturing carbon. There would be horror at the thought of denuding our trees! In fact, parishes are discovering opportunities to partner with others to plant new trees on spare glebe land.

Sometimes though it can feel to us that the environmental crisis is too great a one to solve. Yet the message of Easter shows us that when things seem nigh on impossible it is then that we glimpse the grace of God at work. God's way of overcoming evil was

not to fight a small act of resistance against a Roman invasion but rather to combat sin itself. The death of Jesus was the ultimate battle to overcome that which has separated humanity from knowing the extent of God's love for each and every one of us.

The natural world around us is a wonderful illustration of how death is not the end. The environment can be devastated by flood, fire and human carelessness and yet new life can begin again. The joy of Easter is that the story doesn't end in death but opens a new beginning for us all through the resurrection of Christ.

May you know the life and love of Christ this Easter!

Bishop Ruth ■

Going greener

Sue Carpenter explains how St James' Taunton is caring for creation in its church grounds for the benefit of wildlife, as well as the church and local community.

What made you look to have 'greener' church grounds?

Back in 2018 our PCC resolved to engage with the Eco Church initiative and improving the management of the churchyard came out of that. We hope to apply for a Bronze Award very soon and continue to work to get the Silver Award or better.

What changes have you made?

We've created a meadow area, worked with the council to introduce a more eco-friendly mowing regime and our children have created a bug hotel. We've also installed a compost bin in the churchyard and have wood piles which support wildlife.

Has it reaped rewards?

The church community has become



St James' bug hotel.

more aware of the value of our church grounds and what lives and grows within it. We had an Easter trail in 2021, a Jubilee event last year and this year are planning a 'Spring of Hope' using resources from Muddy Church. A survey has found over 120 species of wildflowers, trees and ferns – including the rare Bee Orchid.

How has the local community

reacted?

It's been positive thanks to regular articles in the church website, magazine and our Facebook page. We have labelled the areas where we've made changes too, so that those visiting or passers-by can understand what we are trying to do.

Any advice for other churches?

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Get more advice from Sue at:

bathandwells.org.uk/going-greener

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