

Embracing wilder churchyards

The diocese has teamed up with Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) on a new joint initiative, Wilder Churches, which seeks to improve biodiversity in churchyards.

SWT is running online training for church leaders and communities across the county, introducing the initiative and finding community Wilder Church Champions.

Sara Emmett, assistant environment officer said, "With the diocese embracing a new environmental policy, we are delighted to be working together with SWT to support church leaders and communities to increase the value of churchyards and other church land for wildlife."



Initially, the initiative will focus on encouraging people to find out what wildlife their local churchyard already has, as well as getting to know those already involved with its management. Through ongoing online training, communities will be able to identify ways they could help wildlife in their local

churchyard, communicate their ideas, consult others and come up with a plan that works for the church, wildlife and the community.

Pippa Rayner, Engaging with Nature Coordinator for SWT says, "By regularly getting together online to celebrate successes, share expertise and solve problems as they arise, we will collectively achieve so much more, so this is a really exciting initiative to be involved in."

People from churches across Somerset who manage our churchyards or those with an interest in biodiversity have already taken part in some training events. Find future events on www.bathandwells.org.uk ■

News in brief

Abbey's new eco heating system goes live

Bath Abbey's innovative eco-heating system powered by sustainable energy from Bath's famous hot spring waters has been switched on. As part of the Abbey's Footprint project, a new distribution of underfloor heating pipework has been laid in the Abbey and ten custom-built heat exchangers collect heat from the thermal spring water that flows through the drain from the Roman Baths and down into the river. Every day around 1.1 million litres of water flows through at a constant 40°C. There will be enough energy to heat the historic Abbey and its adjacent buildings. Find out more at www.bathabbey.org.uk/footprint/ ■



Remembering together

People across the region have taken time to remember those lost during the Coronavirus pandemic. Bishop Ruth hosted a service live on Facebook during which people were able to share names of loved ones lost. Bath RUH Hospital Chaplain organised an online service of remembrance with Bath Abbey, Dorothy House Hospice Care, SWALLOW Charity and Bath & North East Somerset Council ■

Growing young connections

During 2021, the Go Team is focused on helping parishes to connect with young people and their families; an area that is a significant struggle for many churches.

They are looking to challenge and equip households, churches and schools to: nurture and support young people (aged 11+) and help grow their faith; disciple young people effectively so they know how to live as Christians in the world.

Check out their new pack of 19 Bible Chat Mats, themed around Christian values: www.bathandwells.org.uk/bible-chat-mats ■

Hope for a better future

By Ruth Worsley, Bishop of Taunton

This month of April begins on Maundy Thursday, the day when we remember the last meal Jesus shared together with his friends before he was arrested and crucified. It was the meal that has become so significant in the life of the Church, where bread was broken and a cup of wine passed round, coming to symbolise for us the brokenness of the body of Christ. The sacrifice he made for love of us.

Many of us will hopefully celebrate something of the Easter feast this weekend although restrictions continue for a while longer. We may not yet be able to gather in larger groups of family

and friends but perhaps we can glimpse what is to come?

This has always been the story of the Church, to point to what 'is' but which may not yet be fully realised. During this pandemic there has been a need for hope amongst such bleakness and now as the vaccine is shared and the signs of life appear in the world around us, we begin to see what might again be possible. To hope for a better future.

And yet in the bleakness of this first weekend of April, which takes us into the darkness of the tomb on Holy Saturday, we remember that hope is not cheaply bought. It is not mere

optimism, but rather something, though fragile, that is stronger than death.

As some of us break our fast this Easter and share the bread and wine of the Eucharistic feast, may we know both the cost of such love and the hope that it offers.

Easter blessings

+ Ruth Worsley



Making the change

Julian Brooks is Lay Dean for Crewkerne and a Churchwarden at St Michael's and All Angels, Haselbury Plunkett. He has a background in environmental conservation.

What is your church doing to help the environment?

We are working towards becoming an Eco Church. Before Covid hit we had done some of the easy bits on land management and energy usage, but were working on what I think are the harder elements of worship and lifestyle.

Do you think the Covid pandemic has changed people's view of caring for creation?

I think people are more conscious than ever of the need to be more environmentally aware and I hope when we come to redo our Eco Church questionnaire in the autumn that will come through



St Michael's and All Angels with wildflowers

and we can achieve at least bronze award.

What are your hopes for worship?

I'd like to see the environment and climate change mentioned every week. Whether that is in the context of global issues or more local ones, there is plenty to talk

about. The Church has to play a leading role in tackling climate change and we need to step up locally and nationally.

Any advice for churches wanted to get started?

Changing your energy tariff to a green one is an easy start, as is letting go of the idea of a manicured churchyard. Even mowing the grass less and having a semi-wild area can benefit biodiversity while still being a place of peace. Many churches are being tested financially currently and going greener can also help save money. Find more tips at: www.bathandwells.org.uk/environment

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