



Environment Advent Calendar

**20
25**

1ST D E C E M B E R

Aware that there was no existing refill shop in Witham, the St Nic's eco group decided that running a stall as part of the town centre market might encourage local people to live more eco-friendly lifestyles and help us connect with the wider community.

Funding from 'Love Essex' helped with start-up costs. We began in June and are at the Newland Centre in Witham every Saturday and after church at St Nic's on the first Sunday of the month.

We stock household cleaning and laundry products, as well as shampoo, conditioner and bodywash.

We really love getting to know our customers and love our products - the washing-up liquid smells just like a fresh apple straight from the tree! There has been good customer feedback.

Customers are encouraged to bring their own containers, but we also offer pre-used bottles donated by the congregation if necessary. All dispensing containers are returned to the supplier for re-use.



'Refill for Creation!' by Anna Pritchard and Liz Tymms, St Nicholas, Witham

2ND DECEMBER



I have always been aware of our impact on the environment and have tried to make changes when possible, recycling and reusing, for example, both personally and in church. In church we were already organising jumble sales, litter picks and a food bank, and encouraging young people to consider how we care for the environment.

However, when I heard about the Carbon Literacy Course I was excited to learn more about how to lower my own carbon footprint. I was blown away by the information shared, shocked about how much carbon is emitted from things that I would never have even considered. It ignited a fire in me from the little flame that was there already.

I was energised to do more myself and to encourage others. I recently became a Deanery Environmental Advocate to walk alongside churches on their Eco Church journeys, to help individuals and churches become more enthusiastic about loving God's creation.

I'm excited about the change we can make and hope you are too.

'Energised to do More!' by Rev. Faye Bailey, Barking Deanery Environmental Advocate

3RD DECEMBER

Check out the Curriculum Vitae of these creatures essential to the healthy functioning of ecosystems and human survival!

Invertebrates, including bees, butterflies, and beetles are the primary pollinators for over 85% of the world's flowering plants and more than two-thirds of the world's crop species. Organisms like dung beetles, earthworms, and millipedes break down dead organic matter, returning essential nutrients to the soil. Invertebrates form the base, or an integral part, of food webs for a vast number of other animals.



Many invertebrates, such as ladybirds, wasps, lacewings, and spiders help regulate populations of other insects we regard as pests, reducing the need for chemical pesticides. Burrowing invertebrates like earthworms and ants aerate the soil, improving its structure, water infiltration, and nutrient retention, promoting healthy plant growth. Invertebrates are also useful indicators for monitoring environmental health because of their sensitivity to environmental changes. To find out more visit: www.buglife.org.uk or contact me on: jacquihogger@gmail.com

'Why Invertebrates?' by Jacqui Hogger, Environmental Advocate, Braintree Deanery

4TH DECEMBER



St John's has recently done work on its churchyard to ensure it is welcoming for the community, and a place where the biodiversity of nature can flourish. As part of the work, we have installed a number of benches made of recycled plastic.

Each has a small plaque asking people to pray for certain groups in our society - people with mental health problems, babies who died in infancy, refugees, homeless people and others.

Each bench has saved the equivalent of 31,000 plastic bags going to landfill or entering our oceans. Developing sustainable solutions is so important when we remember that over 90% of all the plastic ever produced does not get recycled but is burnt, buried or in our oceans.

If you'd like to know more about the benches, do contact me on: lindapercival7@gmail.com

'Plastic Benches?' by Linda Percival, St John's, Moulsham

5TH DECEMBER

St Francis of Assisi loved God deeply and his Canticle of Creation uses elements of creation (sun, moon, water, fire, wind) to praise God. With other climate action enthusiasts, I marked Francistide by walking a short pilgrimage along the Chelmer on 4th October, reflecting on the canticle and dressed accordingly, including a peapod, a potted flower and a butterfly!

Pilgrimage helps us get closer to God, reflecting on the Word and our faith journey. Many regard nature as God's first bible: its diversity, humility and birth/death cycle reveal something of the Creator.



Walking under trees bowing before the gale and by water sparkling in the sunlight, I felt God's power and saw divine beauty. How privileged we are to be chosen as partners in caring for the created order. Our voiceless family needs us to speak up, to act and protest on its behalf, even if we look a bit odd doing it! Look out for our pilgrimage next year.

'St Francis Day Pilgrimage' by Rev. Judith Gibbons, All Saints' with St James' Brightlingsea

6TH DECEMBER



Photos: Toby Thomson



In June over 100 people came to Chelmsford Cathedral to explore the link between theology and action for God's Creation. We had two speakers from A Rocha, the organisation that oversees the Eco Church scheme.

Rev. Dr. Dave Bookless described how the major interventions of God in our world - creation, covenant, Christ's coming, the birth of the Church, the return of Christ, are not just about us but also about all Creation. One attendee commented "... despite all our studies for ordination, the theme of creation throughout everything, had never hit me quite as hard."

Jo-Herbert James gave us lots of useful information and tips, explaining that Eco Church was formed nine years ago as a response to Christians increasingly recognising our Christian calling to care for Creation and asking "So what do we do next?"

You can find recordings of the talks here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZZDn1dAdts>

'Theology and Action for God's Creation'

7TH DECEMBER

Becoming the fourth church in the Diocese to receive a gold Eco Church award has been an exhilarating experience! We've been saving energy, making the churchyard more wildlife-friendly, changing lifestyles, getting the community involved, keeping creation care at the heart of our worship and prayers, and making plans for a greener future.

It's been great to see the whole church getting behind our eco work. The climax was an outdoor service in the churchyard led by Archdeacon Jonathan, celebrating the award and renewing our commitment to do our best for God's earth. But reaching gold is a milestone, not a destination. In the woodland area of our churchyard stands a plastic bottles cross sculpture made four years ago by a church member from the congregations' waste: a symbol of everything we need to do, and keep on doing, to protect the amazing world which God has given us.

Keep going on your eco journey - it is worth it!



'Reaching Gold - and Beyond' by Roger McFarland, All Saints, Springfield

8TH DECEMBER



The Church of England has chosen the theme of Joy for this Advent season. For many of us there is great joy as we journey to a stronger connection with God's amazing Creation, spending more time in nature, finding ways of walking more lightly on the earth, and recovering skills and activities from the past that strengthen that connection.

These beautiful Easter Eggs were dyed with onion skin and red cabbage. There are plenty of websites that explain how to do this. Perhaps something to inspire you and others in your church next Easter!



'Easter Eggs with a Difference' made by Anna Pritchard

9TH DECEMBER



We cherish our beautiful school site at Becket Keys, especially our outside spaces, our peacocks and the Coronation Garden; they remind us of the beauty of God's creation.

Like many others, however, we've faced challenges when caring for the environment. Our older buildings used to use lots of energy due to little insulation; sorting out waste is difficult and costly; and working with third party companies means we cannot stop selling plastic water bottles.

Nevertheless, we're committed to making positive change where we can, by planting trees, installing energy-efficient lighting, and encouraging students to sort their rubbish and bring in re-useable water bottles.

As a school, we remain committed to caring for God's intricate creation and encourage everyone to do their part in acting as stewards of the world we have been given to care for.

'Peacocks and Plastic Bottles' by Ruth Pennant, Deputy Head Girl, Becket Keys School

10TH DECEMBER

Eco Church is all about caring for Creation in our worship, teaching, our land and buildings, our engagement with local and global communities, and the way we live.

In early 2025, the survey A Rocha UK uses to assess bronze, silver and gold Eco Church awards was updated. Sue says "All three of our churches now have silver awards. For St Catherine's, I must admit we were daunted by the new survey to begin with.

Money made from sales of my 'Vicarage Cat' books helped. This money goes toward our various eco-projects. For example, this enabled us to buy an RSPB artisan bird nester, bamboo bee tubes, two RSPB bird boxes, and a Cox's Orange Pippin apple tree (see photo) for St Catherine's Churchyard.

We were delighted to find that even though the new survey is certainly more comprehensive and demanding, we nevertheless managed to achieve silver!"



'Getting to Silver with the new Eco Church Survey' by Rev. Sue Wise, St Catherine's, Wickford

11TH DECEMBER



At our Eco Church event in the Cathedral in June, some of our Eco Churches put together amazing stalls show-casing how they had achieved bronze, silver, and gold Eco Church awards. The stalls generated an enormous amount of discussion. People really wanted to talk and learn from each other. As a result, we have followed up that event in the Cathedral with several Eco Church Road shows across the Diocese to enable more discussion and learning.

So far 49 people from 39 churches have taken part. Attendees have said: "Loved the meeting and found it very beneficial", "Very helpful and informative", and "The road show was very well put together and helpful." Watch out for a road show near you or one on-line in 2026!

'Eco Church Roadshows' by Linda Percival, Diocesan Eco Church Advocate

12TH DECEMBER



St Andrew's is a Grade I-listed church, founded around 1100 AD. Until recently it relied on a gas boiler installed in 1979, which had begun to leak and was no longer fit for use.

The boiler was recently replaced with an electric boiler thanks to a £50,000 grant from Enover Community Trust through the Landfill Communities Fund.

Rev. Mark Payne says "We are doing all that we can to help meet the Church of England's carbon neutral target of 2030, so when we realised that we needed to replace our very old gas boiler we opted for the greener option of an electric boiler ... it would have been a real struggle to fundraise the amount needed for the new boiler and its installation without the generous support of Enover Community Trust."

'Funding for a New Boiler' at St Andrew's, Colne Engaine

13TH DECEMBER



In September, I joined this demonstration in central London, as part of the Faith Block with fellow Essex & East London Christian Climate Action group members. The aim was to create pressure on the Government, ahead of the Autumn Budget, to tax the vast wealth of polluting corporations and the

super-rich to help fund climate action and a just transition to a future where all can flourish. The Faith Block gathered before the start of the march - it was very moving to stand in solidarity with people of all faiths, joined by our common goal to protect the planet and speak up for climate justice. The demonstration was legal and family-friendly and had a good atmosphere as we moved through central London to the uplifting sound of the Extinction Rebellion Samba Band. I really enjoy being part of these types of demonstrations.

Coming together with others encourages me to keep going in the fight against climate change!

'Taking Part in the "Make Them Pay" March' by Liz Dixon

14TH DECEMBER

In Lent this year we explored Scripture and what others have said about hope in two reflective days entitled "Climate Crisis in Troubled Times: A Day of Reflection on Finding Hope."

One of the quotes we looked at was from Steven Charleston, member of the Choctaw Nation, retired American Episcopal Bishop, and writer on American theological, indigenous, and cultural issues.

He writes: "The signs are all around us. We can see them springing up like wild flowers after the prairie rain. People who had fallen asleep are waking up. People who had been content to watch are wanting to join. People who had never said a word are wanting to join in ... sometimes in this troubled world of ours, we forget that love is all around us."

Worth reflecting on!



'Hope in a Time of Climate Crisis' by Rev. Sandra Eldridge, Diocesan Environmental Officer

15TH DECEMBER



Once a familiar sight in our summer skies, the swift - delightful, dazzling, and unmistakable with its high-pitched 'screaming' and breathtaking aerial acrobatics - has become increasingly rare. These remarkable birds grace our skies for just four months each year, from May to August.

Yet their numbers plummeted by 68% between 1995 and 2023, and they are now officially on the endangered species red list. Churches can play a vital role here.

In Debden, for example, we've installed two swift boxes on the church tower, complete with a calling system. The recorded calls, played at set times each day, help attract swifts to the boxes - they are highly sociable and prefer to nest in colonies. But patience is essential - it can take time for swifts to discover and settle into new homes!

Look out for our upcoming diocesan guide and project pack on swifts. Your church could offer 'homes' to this beautiful and endangered bird.

Photo: Matt Turner (Essex Birdwatching Society – www.ebws.org.uk/)

'Act Swiftly for Swifts!' by Rev. Lynda Sebbage, Debden

16TH DECEMBER

Tropical rainforests absorb carbon, are home to over 80% of land-based species of animals, plants and insects, and 300 million people, many of whom carry a deep and vital wisdom about how to live in peace with Creation. In an interview with Bishop Saulo and Ruth Barros from St Martin's, Plaistow, Marinez Basotto, Bishop of the Amazon, explained how the important roles the Amazon Rainforest plays are being jeopardised: "Deforestation in Brazil has reduced in the last

two years but devastation has increased by 600% in the last year. How is this possible? The soil in the Amazon is poor, but a dense forest offers a rich substrate which enables the biodiversity we have here. But when gaps open in the forest, its density reduces and it becomes more exposed."

She emphasised the effect on other parts of the world as well as the Amazon, and the role the Church of England can have as a prophetic voice, advocating for others. Read the full interview here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MzKGM2D6oJA>



Photo: Ivars Utinns on Unsplash

'What's Happening in the Amazon?' from an interview with Bishop Marinez Basotto

17TH DECEMBER



Rosebank is a possible new oil field in the North Atlantic. In January, the Scottish courts ruled the previous government's approval to develop the field unlawful, as it did not fully account for all resulting carbon emissions. A further consultation period for Rosebank was planned to end in November: a decision as to whether its development goes ahead may have been made by the time you read this.

If it goes ahead, it will worsen the climate crisis, locking us into decades of more fossil fuels. Norwegian oil company, Equinor, would get billions in tax breaks

while UK taxpayers would cover 84% of the costs and get very little back. Throughout the year Christian Climate Action (CCA) members have been contacting MPs to ask them to vote against Rosebank. Keir Starmer's constituency is Camden. On 6th September members of East London and Essex CCA gathered with others outside Camden Council offices to make their views known. <https://christianclimateaction.org>

Trying to Stop Rosebank' by Cynthia and Keith Wenden

18TH DECEMBER

This entry is based on ideas from Bea Johnson, author of "Zero Waste Home: The Ultimate Guide to Simplifying Your Life by Reducing Your Waste." Bea is a US-based environmental activist, author and speaker, best known for arguing that there are many different ways of reducing waste and for reducing her family's annual rubbish going to landfill to

almost nothing! This is some of what she says about dealing with waste: "Recycling currently depends on too many variables to make it a dependable solution to our waste problems" and "refuse what you do not need; reduce what you do need; reuse what you consume; recycle what you cannot refuse, reduce, or reuse; and rot (compost) the rest."

It's not easy to do what Bea and her family did but it can be surprising what changes just by remembering "refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, rot."!



'Rethinking Waste' by Rev. Sandra Eldridge

19TH DECEMBER



We're always delighted to have young people enjoy visiting Foxearth Meadows nature reserve. Enjoyment is key, because that joy seeds a love of nature, giving birth to the motivation to protect and nurture it.

A Rocha UK, the charity which owns and manages Foxearth, is committed to helping more people enjoy and benefit from nature. We have a part to play in boosting the abundance of nature and helping people experience through the natural world the abundance of life that Jesus said he came to bring us.

Work experience weeks for school students are a great opportunity to inspire young people through their hands-on experience of conservation work. The photo is of another opportunity for young people to enjoy the Meadows: Sudbury-based Eden's Youth Project bringing their 'Christian Youth Café' to explore the reserve, worship in the open air and think about our Creator God - not to mention enjoying toasted marshmallows round the firebowl! Contact details: sarah.leadham@arocha.org - Sarah Leadham (Reserve Manager), andy.jowitt@arocha.org - Andy Jowitt (Volunteer Community Engagement Officer).

'Young People at Foxearth Meadows' by Andy Jowitt

20TH DECEMBER

During the Season of Creation this year, three speakers Rev. Vanessa Elston, Gideon Commey and Paul Powlesland joined us for an event entitled 'Peace, justice and hope for Creation'.

They highlighted the loss of our understanding about and relationship with Creation and what they thought had caused that. They talked about how justice is about right relationships including between us, God, and the rest of Creation, and how critiquing industrialised societies' world view is essential to restoring some of what we have lost. Vanessa said she thought "we have deeply underestimated how much the church is soaked



in the mindset of our society, making it hard for us to have the confidence in God and Creation that Jesus had." They concluded that we needed to build community, take practical action together, and above all, learn how to fall in love with the rest of Creation for this restoration to take place. Could you fall in love with part of Creation? Recording of talks here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PG5uuHLpU2Q>

'Peace, Justice and Hope for Creation' - Season of Creation 2025

21ST DECEMBER



As featured in last year's Advent Calendar, following a Creationtide service at Christ Church, Colchester, in 2024, David Beale was inspired to think how he could adapt Eco Church to his cricket club setting! One year later, the club is starting to embrace sustainability and plan for some big changes! At this year's Creationtide service, David explained how he has worked with other club members to form an Eco Team, including an expert on sustainability and someone with a proven track record of raising grant-funding.

The team has had its first meeting and David's club is now focused on saving energy by a range of means including installing solar panels as soon as possible. The spin-offs as we take our churches through Eco Church are hard to predict! Let's keep encouraging each other and listening to God's spirit even in difficult times for the climate movement.

**'Eco Church Spin Off!' at Colchester and East Essex Cricket Club,
by Kate Clifton, Colchester Deanery Environmental Advocate**

22ND DECEMBER

Growing and harvesting food can be both satisfying and joyful. Edward Gildea, Deanery Environmental Advocate for Saffron Walden, says "Here I am harvesting grapes at Saffron Grange, Saffron Walden. I was amazed at the weight and profusion of grapes on each spindly stem. Often well over twenty clusters! Enough to make you believe in miracles!"

However, while climate change has meant an increase in grape growing in parts of the UK, for many climate change means depleted harvests. In Kenya, for example, coffee farmers have been suffering the effects of climate change for over a decade.

Maureen, a coffee farmer in Kenya says "Formerly, the coffee production in this area would be enough to feed my family for a year. Now production has gone from 10,000 kilos to 2000 kilos and the prices are not very good." Read more about Maureen's story here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6R4a0RYpAIw&t=251s>



'Climate Change and Harvesting' from Saffron Walden and Kenya

23RD DECEMBER



Across the world, millions of people are being forced from their homes each year by the growing impacts of climate change - floods, droughts, storms, and rising seas. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that weather-related disasters now cause over 30 million displacements annually.

At Christmas we remember Mary and Joseph, who themselves were displaced - first travelling far from home for the census, then fleeing with the baby Jesus

to Egypt. Their story reminds us that God's heart is with all who are forced to move in search of safety. As climate pressures grow, the message of Christmas calls us to welcome the stranger, care for creation, and bring hope to those uprooted by a changing world.

'No Room at the Inn' by Bishop Roger, Chelmsford Lead Bishop for the Environment

24TH DECEMBER

Laudate Deum, O God we praise you,
for the world sings of your infinite love.

Forgive us our failure to agree a way forward
to protect this earth and our children's future.

For the way the powerful shelter behind their wealth,
while the poorest people are disregarded,
and the earth is at breaking point.

Guide our leaders to set aside their own interests
in the interest of us all and grant us all the courage
to turn our concern into change.

Strengthen our faith, and let us never lose hope
so together we may rise up responding to the
urgent call of your people and all creation.

Amen.



'A Prayer from Laudato Deum' by Pope Francis



The Church of England
in Essex and East London

Diocese of Chelmsford

Chelmsford Diocese Environment Advent Calendar 2025

Acknowledgements:

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Deanery Environmental Advocates: www.chelmsford.anglican.org/about-us/our-faith-in-action/caring-for-the-environment/environment-policies-plans-and-contacts#EAs