



Towards a 'Green and Pleasant Church'

Nigel Hopper of A Rocha UK challenges Norfolk and Waveney churches to become centres of creation care in the community with an invitation to join the Eco Church Scheme.

It's about more than the building; it's also about encouraging church members to think much *greener*". This was the verdict of Graham Gibbs of Emmanuel Church, Bungay on receiving a Silver Eco Church Award. This was the very first Silver Award granted since the new Eco Church scheme was launched in January.

Eco Church is run by A Rocha UK in partnership with Christian Aid, the Church of England, the Methodist Church and Tearfund. A Rocha UK's vision is for the new scheme to create a vast network of churches as shining beacons of hope for a brighter environmental future. This vision was endorsed at the launch by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, who welcomed the new scheme as part of a 'tectonic shift' in Christian thinking through which environmental concerns will 'embed more deeply' in church culture.

To participate, churches register (see below) and begin completing the online survey to indicate how they are caring for God's earth. As a church completes the survey, they collect points towards an Eco Church Award, with different actions earning points according to their level of ease or difficulty.

The survey covers all areas of church life: Worship and Teaching; Management of Church Buildings and Land; Community and Global Engagement; and Lifestyle. Accompanying the survey is a suite of online resources to help churches undertake the actions. These include: sermon outlines; youth materials; guides to food co-operatives; looking after church land in wildlife-friendly ways; and a lifestyle audit, to name but a few.

Once a church has gained sufficient points across the five survey areas, they will qualify for an Eco Church Award at Bronze, Silver or Gold level and can receive a certificate and plaque (at cost) from A Rocha UK.

In addition to Emmanuel Church, Bungay, six other churches within the Diocese of Norwich have already registered with Eco Church and are actively working towards an Award. These include Aylsham Parish Church, St Agnes Church, Cawston and Wymondham Abbey.

"Registering with Eco Church and working towards our Bronze Award is helping us to put care for creation at the heart of our mission" said Simon Court from St Agnes Church in Cawston. "Some aspects of Eco Church are more of a challenge when you have an incredible mediaeval building but the survey has helped us identify plenty of actions we can take to live more sustainably."

It would be great to see many more added! After all, the cosmic scope of the gospel demands that it ought to be as commonplace for churches to be engaged in acts of creation care as it is for them to be engaged in acts of community involvement; and caring for God's earth is the fifth 'Mark of Mission' of the Anglican Communion.

Visit www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk today to register your church and join those in the Diocese already participating in this exciting initiative, which will challenge and equip you to care for God's world in all aspects of your life together.



St Paul's Eco Church Award



Eco Church Launch Rowan Williams



Eco Church Plaques

Norfolk EcoChurches is a public Facebook Group with information, ideas and encouragement for local churches who are working toward an Award or want to find out more. www.facebook.com/groups/NorfolkEcoChurch