



Our first Eco-Church Award



Lockdown for many people has prompted a wider exploration and appreciation of their local environment. In response, the diocese is encouraging churches to become more eco-friendly and sign up for an Eco-Church award with A Rocha UK, a Christian charity with a remit to mobilise Christians and churches to care for the environment. The first church in St Asaph to receive a bronze award is St Peter's in Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd in the Dyffryn Clwyd Mission Area. Its **Vicar and the Mission Area Leader, Father Huw Bryant explains how their journey to becoming an Eco-Church began by accident and grew out of their response to Covid-19.**

We noticed during lockdown that many in the village were using the churchyard for their daily exercise and whilst we could not invite people inside the church we thought, how can we make our churchyard a more pleasant place to attract people to encounter God. We began pruning overgrown trees and were surprised that the more we did, the more people came and appreciated the space. So a plan was born; we would manage parts of the churchyard for wildflowers and where we had lifted branches from the trees we would build an outdoor altar and meditation space. Not only are we caring for God's creation in nature, but we are providing a needed community space which is bringing people together, combating loneliness and boosting mental health.

During the Autumn, our local school came to plant hundreds of spring bulbs and a local saw mill planked some of the timber we cut to make benches and the altar. More ways in which we are able to reach out and

share our faith with those whom we couldn't due to the current restrictions.

Eco-church awards

Given the work we were doing someone suggested we look at the Eco-Church awards. So we logged onto the website thinking we would have to do all sorts of things, but as we filled in the questionnaire we discovered we were already a bronze award and with a few minor bits of work we should soon have a silver award.

Climate change is the biggest issue of our age and as Christians we have a duty of care to God's creation, not just to care for it ourselves but to teach and preach to others the simple things they can do in their own lives and in community. And what's more, through caring for God's creation in deed as well as word and worship, we are reaching new people, who are now engaging with the gospel, learning that Christ's message of love is about real and tangible action in the world.

Becoming an Eco-Church is relatively simple, saves money, helps creation and spreads the Gospel message. You will be surprised at what you already do, what a few simple changes to your church will achieve, how this is part of the mission of the church and will help you grow spiritually, financially and numerically.

The diocese is encouraging all churches to register as an Eco-Church. You can find out more at <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/faith-in-action/eco-church/> or register directly at <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>

