

Birmingham EcoDistrict Webpage

Thanks to Adam, our District Mission Advisor we now have a new web page covering our EcoDistrict activities.



To access this, go to: birminghammethodist.org.uk/, click 'About' and then click 'Eco District' towards the bottom of the list. If your church achieves an EcoAward or arranges any special eco-related events, please let us know.

News from **ECO CHURCH**

Helen Stephens, Church Relations Manager at A Rocha UK writes:

A new look: The Eco Church team has been working hard to refresh and update the Eco Church platform to support a significant increase in churches as many more become part of the Eco Church community and the refreshed Eco Church platform has now gone live. Things may look a little different, but users will be able to do everything as before.

For a detailed user guide and video tutorial go to our website and visit: <https://app.ecochurch.org/user-guide>.

Prayer forum: The first Eco Church prayer forum of the year is Feb 23rd at 12.00pm. This is an opportunity for anyone involved in the scheme to connect with the wider Eco Church community, and to reflect, share, and pray together. See: arocha.org.uk/event/eco-church-prayer-forum-online-2/.

Preparing for Lent: We have a new resource on Lent available to encourage people to become better at caring for creation and improving our lives and the lives of others through healthy, eco-friendly and sustainable living. Our Lent blog is available at: <https://arocha.org.uk/go-green-for-lent/>.

COP15: historic deal struck to halt biodiversity loss by 2030



The agreement finally reached at the December COP15 Biodiversity Conference is a landmark deal to protect nature, restore ecosystems and keep our planet liveable. This is about our very survival: humanity has no future on a dead planet. We need nature and biodiversity for food security, our economy, our wellbeing, and our health.

Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal

If you have yet to register as an EcoChurch visit: ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/

For more information contact:

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ECO CHURCH
AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT

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The **Methodist Church**
Birmingham District

Is 'Eco' all bad news?

Is 'Eco' all bad news or is there such a thing as good Eco news? There certainly is! On the global stage COP26 made significant progress (COP27 less so). New technologies to remove CO2 are in development. Here in the UK our electricity is becoming greener. Plastic bags have been cut by 95% since a charge was introduced. And in the Birmingham District in the past few months more churches have received EcoChurch awards, including Quinton, Ledbury, Warwick and Wellesbourne.

Dare we allow ourselves to celebrate? Would that risk the impression that Climate Change has been solved? During his ministry Jesus praised various people from time to time, such as the centurion in Capernaum, or the Canaanite mother. He did this knowing they are not perfect. So we should not be afraid to celebrate even though we know there is much more to be done. Give ourselves a pat on the back, then continue the work of caring for God's creation. Please keep telling us about your good news stories.

Trevor Pethick

Some good EcoNews

Plastic bottle deposit return scheme will start in England in 2024 - 5yrs after being announced; unlike Scotland glass has not been included.

Divesting from fossil fuels: Royal College of Art has become the 101st UK university to do so; Methodist Church fully divested in 2021

Tokyo makes solar panels mandatory for nearly all new homes; why have we still not done this in the UK?

UK announces £6 billion to insulate homes (but not until 2025); this is almost certainly the result of direct action by Climate activists

Ozone layer is on track to recover says UN within 4 decades: UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation found meat and dairy accounts for 14.5 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions — the same as all cars, HGVs, aircraft, and ships combined.

Developers obliged to create mini-wetlands on new developments thanks to action by Wildflie and Wetlands Trust

For regular good news see: <https://happyeconews.com/category/top5/>

What can we do to make a difference?

'A spiritual voice is urgently needed to underline the fact that global warming is already causing human anguish and mortality in our nation and abroad, and much more will occur in the future without rapid action'. Bill McKibben, Christian (Methodist) environmentalist, author, educator and founder 350.org

Last year an unusual letter was written to fellow citizens of Planet Earth by a group of natural scientists, engineers, social scientists and scholars from many disciplines and countries. It began: 'Our home, planet Earth, is in jeopardy. Earth provides us with sustenance and shelter, inspires reverence, and nurtures our dreams. But we are pushing the planet's systems to the edge, threatening our own well-being and that of future generations'. In essence it underlines the need for everyone - national & religious leaders, communities, and individuals to collectively strive for dignity, justice, peace and sustainability for all humans and all species, for today and for the future. You can read the full version here: council.science/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/A-letter-to-fellow-citizens-of-Earth-2022.pdf

To quote Bill Gates: 'Climate change is such an overwhelming and systemic problem, it's easy to feel there's nothing one individual can do to fight it'; He then goes on to show that by working together, we can actually help to bring about systematic change. There are a host of simple things we can all do like: not filling the kettle, eliminating draughts, turning the heating down a degree, putting on warmer clothes etc. But for real impact we need to look at some of things we might do which will help to change the system..

- 1. Check your bank's credentials:** since the landmark Paris Climate Agreement was struck, the Big Five UK high street banks have collectively funnelled a massive £311.3 billion) towards the fossil fuel sector, and £120 billion towards companies at the forefront of oil and gas expansion. Consider joining Triodos, Nationwide or Coop Bank if you want to be sure you are not supporting the fossil fuel industry.
- 2. How 'green' is your electricity supplier:** companies like Good Energy, Ecotricity, GEUK, and Octopus (there may be more) focus on sourcing 100% renewable energy and promoting the installation of more renewables; some also plant trees. Others (perhaps yours?) are still supporting fossil fuels.
- 3. Consider installing solar panels, battery storage or a heat pump:** solar panel prices have dropped by around 80% in the last decade and with the huge hike in the cost of energy, payback could be as little as 6 years. No VAT is payable if you install PV & storage; grants of up to £5000 are available for heat pump installation.
- 4. Consider reducing your meat & dairy product consumption:** The UN's FAO found that meat and dairy products account for 14.5 % of all the world's greenhouse gas emissions — equal to all cars, HGVs, aircraft, and ships combined.

Connect with God's creation over Lent



'As we begin the season of lent Lord open our eyes each day to see something new and wonderful in your world. So may we choose to be more considerate towards your creation during this time of reflection and beyond.'

Week One – Bring nature into your home or garden. What could you grow inside your home, in the garden or even at church? Plant a herb or flower as a reminder of our responsibility to steward God's earth. As you tend to this plant, prayerfully ask God how you might nurture nature better at home over the Lent period and beyond.



Week Two – Connect with creation in a new way. Time spent enjoying God's creation will help set your mind and seek the things that are above. Bring your sketch or note book, your Bible, or whatever helps you connect with our heavenly Father. Or perhaps God is inviting you to just bring yourself (with some extra layers!). Note all the signs of the season. Use this time to reflect on the changing season and what we can be thankful for.



Week Three – Discover the great outdoors with company. Meet up with a friend or several for an extended or brisk wintery walk together. You could visit an outstanding area of beauty in the UK or keep it local and soak up the seasonal sights on your doorstep in your nearest green space. Bring along a notepad and pens to write about or draw something that inspires you in nature and share your ideas and reflections.



Week Four – Plan a Wild Time! Plan something **completely** wild in nature for later this year. Experience kayaking, wild camping, forest school, forest church.. Make sure to take the opportunity to **really** enjoy what nature has to offer beyond Lent. Break out of your normal routine and join a volunteer work party or take to the water for wild swimming. Whatever you do – do something different and have fun!



Week Five – Join us to protect and restore nature together. How can we make small changes in our everyday lives that can make a big difference to others and for your world? Contribute to positive change as part of an A Rocha UK community, as a church (Eco Church) and as an individual or family (Wild Christian).



Week Six – Be still in nature. During Holy Week, find a quiet spot outdoors and reflect on what Holy Week means to you. Surrounded by the beauty and creativity of nature, the shortcomings of humanity and our need for repentance are often clearer, but so also is the power and timelessness of God. Bring before him your own concerns and the needs of the natural world. Continue to pray with us via our weekly prayer diary at: arocha.org.uk/get-involved/pray



Easter Sunday – The Easter hope of reconciliation is good news for all. May we celebrate anew Christ's commitment in relating to his creation; that the God-man Jesus would enter into the deepest pains and realities of the flesh in order to restore the relationship between Creator and creature. By this restorative work all creation is reconciled to its intended delight, finding peace and mutual flourishing.



Other ways to get involved with A Rocha UK

Keep in touch:
bit.ly/aruksignup

Plan a quiz:
arocha.org.uk/greenquiz

Include an easy eco tip in your church newsletter each month: arocha.org.uk/get-involved/engage-your-church/

Book a retreat or holiday at one of our Partners in Action: arocha.org.uk/what-we-do/partners-in-action-directory/

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