



On Earth Day, Tuesday 22nd April, I was fortunate to attend a Liverpool Diocese event at Liverpool Cathedral celebrating churches on their journeys towards Net Zero Carbon by 2030. I was very surprised to find that within the Diocese of 258 churches only 2 churches have received a Gold Eco Church award, 25 a Silver award and 35 a Bronze award. So, here at St, Mary's, we are progressing in the right direction and in the last Eco magazine article, I talked about setting a target of applying for an Eco Church Gold award in two to three years' time and what a challenge this will be. Since we were granted a Silver award, the five categories of the survey we need to complete remain more or less the same, but the topics have expanded significantly (at all levels of the award). This will make the challenge even more demanding than previously anticipated and we will need more people to be involved if we are going to be successful.

Some examples of what we need to do are given below for each category of the survey.

Worship and Teaching

We will need to make a visible commitment that our church recognises and teaches that creation care and action to address the climate and nature crises are integral to Christian faith, life and worship.

Our worship, statements of belief and music must acknowledge and celebrate God's relationship with, and work in, creation. Specific callings to take action on environmental issues must be affirmed equally alongside other ministries/vocations (e.g. social care/action) in our church and creation care should be part of our church's work with children and young people, including schools if appropriate.

Buildings and Energy

The survey now requires us to measure our carbon footprint. We have been doing this for some time but we will need to commit to reducing our carbon footprint year-on-year. The environmental credentials of the fabric of our building (such as insulation, low energy lights and using electricity from renewable sources) remain very much as before but now we also need to consider, for example, [plans for future climate resilience](#), [policies for waste and recycling as well as having a lettings policy which prioritises the sustainable use of our site](#).

Land and Nature

There is now an emphasis on bio-diversity and we are expected to manage our land to improve diversity. To protect wildlife, we need to learn more about it and what we can do to support the wildlife we have already as well as encourage more wildlife. We also need to provide opportunities for members of our congregation to get outside and spend time enjoying events and activities in nature, for example through outdoor worship church or local walks.

Community and Local Engagement

This section focuses on our engagement with the wider community and is centred around awareness raising and "getting people on board" as well as campaigning, perhaps in respect of local issues or supporting more generic campaigns for overseas justice issues with national or international organisations. Advocacy, including working with elected representatives, such as writing letters to those with influence such as MPs, is also important and we need to ensure that we communicate what we are doing, both internally and externally.

Lifestyle

This section focuses on our behaviour, both as a Church and individually as members of the congregation, with the Church expected to play a role in educating and influencing individual church members about the actions they can take. The Church is expected to share information and encourage

engagement in campaigning, as well as encouraging the congregation to assess their personal carbon footprint and reduce energy. Consideration of our consumption of goods and services and our appreciation of nature and its care and protection are also relevant.

Margaret Emsley

On behalf of the ECO Church Team