

## Report of Training Day 'Caring for God's Earth', at Michaelhouse, 10 October 2018

This day was organised by Ely Diocese Buildings Team, to give congregation members interested in the environment some more ideas for the task in hand.

Nigel introduced the day, and spoke of his dispiritedness at the poor attendance, and the lack of urgency shown by people generally in the face of such a vital issue, but also said he managed, in spite of all this, to hold on to hope, because it was God, not us, who saves the world.

Victoria Johnson from the Cathedral spoke next, on the subject of Worship and Teaching. She mentioned the many resources contained in Common Worship on the theme of the environment, and made the important point that it needs to be mainstream in our worship, so it becomes part of who we are – not just on special Environment Sundays!

Mark Rudhall introduced The Green Journey, an organisation that will come and do an audit of a church wishing to lessen its environmental footprint, and help churches implement their plans. This is a free service. Bridget has given his leaflet to Rob Savage.

David Chandler from A Rocha introduced Eco Church, the programme we are hoping to implement at Isleham. He also mentioned an initiative of theirs called 'Wild Christian', which is mostly digital, and designed for individuals and families. This encourages people to take some kind of action once a month.

He happened to mention rural transport, which caused me to leap to my feet, as I had recently spent a few weeks without a car. I spoke of my sense of powerlessness, as this, like much else to do with the environmental crisis, is beyond the ability of individuals to solve and requires Government action, and it is hard to envisage how change might come, particularly with the speed required. He made two interesting points in answer, first, that one distinctive thing the church can offer is genuine hope, and that we need to model what a just community would look like, to give us the authority to engage at a political level.

Nigel and I both agreed that the star of the day was Rebecca Evans from the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. They had taken an interest in churchyards, as, being often ancient untouched grassland, they can be havens for plants and animals that are under threat elsewhere. She mentioned six species of flowers (cowslip, meadow saxifrage, pignut, ox-eye daisy, lady's bedstraw and burnet saxifrage) which depend on churchyards for their survival, with at least 50% of their populations growing there. There is a wealth of advice and fact sheets on their website, along with details of churchyards with particularly beautiful wildflowers, and the seasons they are at their best.

Nigel then spoke about the care of trees in churchyards, and gave us a copy of the new guidance.

Bridget News-Cooper