

Faith compels us to act on climate

We should be leading the campaign to combat climate change, argues Hayling’s **Jenny Owens**



ONE of the five marks of mission adopted by the Anglican Church is “to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the face of the earth”. I would argue that it’s the priority on which some of the other marks depend.

Professor Penny Endersby, chief executive of the Met office, said we’re already at 1.1 degrees C above pre-industrial temperature levels. We’re told we must stay below 1.5C to avoid calamitous changes to all life on this planet. Yet we are still pumping huge quantities of CO2 into the atmosphere, as we continue to maintain unchanged lifestyles.

We know we’re already in the middle of changes to our climate, even here in the UK. We have more frequent and severe flooding, unpredictable weather patterns, serious fires in heathlands and more heatwaves.

We see similar problems in Europe, but these pale into insignificance compared with the recent excessive heat in Canada and the USA, as well as huge forest fires in Australia that have caused loss of life and destruction of property.

Further north, we know the sea ice is melting, causing sea levels to rise. This has led to the total loss of some inhabited islands, as well as

creating the possibility that polar bears and other Arctic animals may become extinct.

In places such as the Philippines, Caribbean, Central America, Bangladesh, India, and parts of Africa, hotter temperatures, droughts, hurricanes and unpredictable heavy rains have caused loss of life and livelihoods.

In most of these places, people depend on farming, producing many of the foods that we buy, from rice and sugar, to tea, coffee, cocoa, fruit and some vegetables.

‘What can we do to safeguard creation? It’s a time of crisis’

In Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala, winds of 140mph destroyed houses, roads, trees, and crops that were almost ready for harvesting last November. It is no surprise that many in these countries give up hope, and seek to emigrate to more prosperous nations, despite risking their lives on the journey and risking a hostile reception.

What can we do to safeguard creation and respond to the needs of so much of humanity?

This really is a time of crisis, and we cannot just shrug our shoulders, wait for the government, or think that big United Nations conferences such as COP 26 can provide the solutions.

In our diocese, we have an environmental advisory group that seeks to ensure we achieve the target set by Diocesan Synod to achieve net zero carbon by 2030.

The group encourages our churches to use renewable energy for heating and lighting, and to register for the EcoChurch scheme run by A Rocha, which allows us to gain awards by reducing our carbon footprint.

As individuals, we can play our part by walking, cycling, and using public transport or car-sharing. We should be transferring to renewable energy companies and turning our thermostats down.

We can make our gardens more wildlife-friendly, join organisations that campaign to protect the environment, and support Fairtrade products that improve conditions for suppliers in developing countries.

There is still a small window of opportunity to ensure that life on earth can remain possible for most of humanity. We must each play our part, however small, in enabling this to happen. For more information, see: www.portsmouth.anglican.org/environment

Our parishes have focussed on the environment this autumn:



Eco-musical on tour

A FAMILY-FRIENDLY musical focussing on plastic pollution toured churches in our diocese in the autumn. *Florence and the Mermaid’s Tears* focussed on a teenage girl’s quest to find the world’s oldest albatross on a Pacific island.

Directed, composed and produced by local creatives, the musical was performed at churches in Bedhampton, Lee-on-Solent, Brighstone, Crookhorn, Southsea and more. It was part of the Portsmouth Climate Festival.



Festival inspires church

HAMBLEDON Parish Church hosted its inaugural Greening Festival this autumn, which was a chance to examine ways to move towards carbon net zero.

It was opened by Caroline Dinenage MP and speakers included David Johnson, Janet Hammerton from the Clanfield sustainability centre and Liz Quinn. Electric cars, retro refitting, bike servicing and a refill shop were all on display.

The church has also been awarded an Eco Church bronze award to celebrate its commitment.



West Wight goes green

WORSHIPPERS in West Wight organised a series of events to put the environment top of their agenda. West Wight Forest Church visited Compton Beach to examine rock strata; and worshippers drew a labyrinth in Shalfleet meadow and heritage orchard.

And pupils from Brighstone C of E Primary School were taken on a mini-pilgrimage to the famous Brighstone dragon by team rector the Rev Jackie Maw and the Rev Hilary Bond from Dorset, who told stories to bring the plants and creatures alive.



Cowplain eco-fair

CHURCHGOERS at St Wilfrid’s, Cowplain, marked their Harvest weekend with a Green Fair in their church and gardens.

They invited local groups to create displays on conservation and sustainability, and created stalls on bird-box making, recycled Harvest decorations, Fairtrade and plastic pollution. There was also a chance to cut down on waste with ‘Give and Take’ and Clothes Swishing stalls, with the focus on repair, re-use, recycle and up-cycle.