

The environmental focus has also seeped into other acts of worship, with a regular Eco-Communion at St Helens each month, an Eco-Baptism on the beach last year, and a Mothering Sunday service with pupils which involved planting seeds. Worshippers have also travelled to London to join Christian Aid campaigns to lobby for action on the climate emergency.

Meanwhile, other churches are also responding to climate change. Worshippers in **St Andrew's and Church of the Resurrection in Farlington** have pledged to take action towards a greener lifestyle.

Those who attended Advent and Christmas services were given cards on which to make their pledges. And on Epiphany Sunday, 25 cards were returned and offered at the altar as part of the congregation's giving.

To help with their pledges, a bin for materials being collected by local schools for recycling is sited at the rear of the Church of the Resurrection, with details of the items which can be handed in at that location.

It is these kind of actions that the national Church of England is encouraging churches to embrace during Lent. Its annual **Live Lent campaign** will this year focus on the environment, with 40-day booklets of reflections for adults and children entitled *Care for God's Creation*.

It was launched at Lambeth Palace, where environmentalists, activists and climate change experts added personal climate commitments to a 'pledge-tree'.

The campaign is based on the Archbishop's recommended book for Lent, which is *Saying Yes to Life* by environmentalist

Green improvements slashed our church's energy bills

CHURCHGOERS at St Peter's Church in Petersfield are enjoying the benefits of going greener - they are seeing reduced energy bills alongside having cleaner consciences.

Worshippers there decided to make environmental improvements to the church building in 2016. They put 27 solar panels on their south-facing roof, helping to generate the energy they need to keep the church heated and lit.

They also replaced all their church light bulbs with dimmable LED lights. Alongside their new, highly-efficient boilers, that meant the church's heating and electricity bills have gone from £8,500 in 2016 down to £1,750.

That's despite the fact that they keep the church open, lit and heated at a steady temperature every day from 9am until 5.30pm.

And it's before they get around £600 a year back for the electricity they generate via their solar panels - which can't be seen from the ground.

The church has tried to make the churchyard an eco-space by putting up owl boxes and looking after trees. Their owl box is actually a recycled car tyre.

They've insulated the parish office, which has helped to keep the administration team more comfortable, and are putting in double-glazing. Our diocese also double-glazed the vicarage recently, all of which will save on energy bills too.

The church makes sure that it uses starch cups that biodegrade at church fetes and events - rather than plastic ones. And

they are a Fairtrade church as well, meaning that they buy products that help suppliers in developing countries.

The church has been given a bronze Eco-Church Award by the Christian environmental charity A Rocha.

It operates the awards scheme to encourage churches to care for creation as an integral part



Top right: the owl box in the churchyard made from a car tyre; above: Canon Will Hughes on the roof of St Peter's Church with the 27 solar panels that are helping to reduce energy bills

of loving their neighbours and following God faithfully.

The vicar, Canon Will Hughes, said: "Going green in St Peter's has not cost us a great deal in terms of changing what we do, day by day, nor in terms of money apart from the initial investment in solar

panels and bulbs. It has just meant thinking about what we do and finding the most environmentally responsible way of doing it.

"Now the environment wins, the church wins and our finances win. I can't think why everyone doesn't do it!"

and theologian Ruth Valerio. She spoke on this topic at our Diocesan Conference in 2018.

Anyone can sign up to receive daily reflections based on the book, via an app, email or social media. They'll challenge us to do or pray something related to climate change each day. The details are on www.churchofengland.org/livelent.

Our diocese is also encouraging a focus on the environment during Lent, through prayer, action and giving. The **Bishop's Lent Appeal** this year will raise money for global and local charities that aim to combat climate change.

One is the charity A Rocha, which runs the Eco-Church scheme and



runs a special project in Ghana, where we have strong links.

Among the local charities helped will be the Sustainability Centre near East Meon, which shares practical solutions to inspire people to preserve our planet. If you know of other local charities that could be helped, please email rachel.houlberg@portsmouth.anglican.org.

The bishop's senior team are also encouraging churches to take individual actions during Lent to help us think about

reducing our impact on the environment. Those daily actions are available on our website at www.portsmouth.anglican.org/environment.

Bishop Christopher, the Dean, our Archdeacons and Diocesan Secretary want to set an example to the diocese by taking some of those actions themselves during Lent. They include taking part in meat-free Monday, picking up litter in their community, recycling items at church more effectively, and buying nothing for a day.

To follow their progress, check the diocesan website or follow @CofEPortsouth on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram during Lent.

● See page 26 for our top 10 top tips to go greener.



Author and theologian Dr Ruth Valerio from Tearfund adds her environmental pledge to the tree with the Archbishop of Canterbury at the national C of E's launch of #LiveLent 2020