

Eco Church In Chalfont St Giles

Keith Wood-Smith, Eco Church Committee Chair,
Presentation to Amersham Deanery Synod, 15th September 2022



Where did Eco Church come from?

Eco Church was developed by **A Rocha**, a global Christian charity responding to: *“the biblical mandate to care for the earth and demonstrate the Christian hope for God’s world”*. Why do they do this? Because:

1. **God made the world and loves it** – A Rocha want to love what God loves;
2. **God created us to look after the world.** Psalm 48 reads: *“We are created beings, part of the whole community of creation, joining together to praise God”*;
3. **It has gone wrong because of us.** Many environmental problems are caused by humans. We have a responsibility to act;
4. **God has a purpose for the world.** God promised this world would be renewed.



But what is Eco Church?

Eco Church is a framework churches can follow in order to make an environmental difference. It contains 5 areas:

- **Our Worship and Teaching;**
- **Our Buildings;**
- **Our Land;**
- **Our Community and Global Engagement;**
- **Our Lifestyle.**



There are many activities a church can undertake against each area, for which points are awarded, the more important the action, the more points are awarded.

What about the Awards?

Once a certain number of points are achieved against an area it scores as Bronze, then Silver, then Gold. The lowest area gives the overall rating.

Chalfont St Giles created an Eco Committee in very early 2021 and quickly reached bronze. It took another year to achieve Silver this June.



Going for Gold!

We do not do this for the badges, but obtaining them is a mark of progress and commitment to God's creation.

Bronze is relatively easy. Many churches will be at this level without knowing it. Why not show it off?

Silver requires maintaining and stretching what is already being done, and also doing new things.

Gold involves consolidating on everything already being done and then also doing many of the most challenging actions... and being audited!



Gold requires we move from being a church with an Eco Committee to being a full Eco Church.

How will we do this?

We have a Vision:

“By March 2024 St Giles will be a church which demonstrably lives out our faith in God and our love for our global neighbours through a comprehensive approach to caring for the Earth in all our activities, thereby not just reflecting the Church of England's concern for the environment, but also leading amongst its churches, inspiring our community and growing - spiritually and in numbers - as we help restore creation for God, humanity and all life for whom the world is a shared home.”



We have a plan:

We invite committees and officials to:

- Keep doing what they are doing;
- Take on specific Eco Church actions;
- Volunteer for other Eco Church actions;
- Think of other things in their remits which deliver our vision, even if not necessarily earning us points;
- Consider the environment in all their decision making.



We have five high level aims

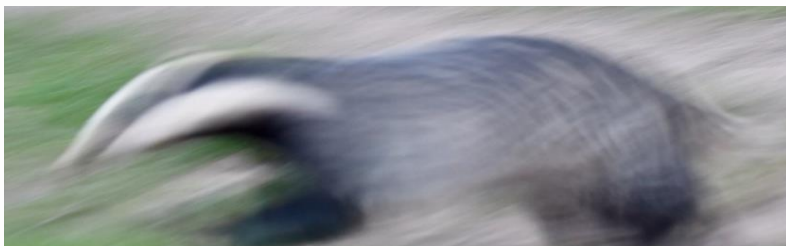
To have care for God's creation embedded in our culture as an integral and inspirational pillar of our communal and individual faith and worship.

To ensure our church is as environmentally responsible as possible, minimising those things it does that harm the environment and in maximising those things it does to restore it.

To encourage church members, as far as they feel able, to minimise those things they do that harm the environment and maximise those things they do which restore it in their lives.

To be visible in our Parish as a church which cares for the natural world, thereby both encouraging the wider public also to act and drawing those who share our values - especially the young - to try our services.

To campaign appropriately on local, national and global environmental issues.



Opportunities and challenges

Eco Church represents opportunities:

- To worship God through taking care of his creation;
- To integrate with wider church life, supporting (and supported by) other priorities:
 - **Spirituality**: to find God in his creation and in new ways to worship;
 - **Outreach**: relevance to younger people, drawing them to God and church;
 - **Mission**: helping the global poor, most impacted by a crisis least of their making;
 - **Collaboration**: joining with churches locally, nationally and internationally.
- To help slow or stop deforestation and the decline in wildlife;
- However small, to contribute to the climate solution rather than the climate crisis.



... and challenges:

- Not all our church family will view Eco Church as a priority, or perhaps even agree with it;
- Eco Church requires our time, some financial commitment, resilience, stamina and lots of organisation
 - cultural change throughout a church may be hard;
- It can feel hopeless – it takes courage, and faith!

"On our own, we cannot end wars or wipe out injustice, but the cumulative impact of thousands of acts of goodness can be bigger than we imagine."

H.M. Queen Elizabeth II

"Reducing the causes of climate change is essential to the life of faith. It is a way to love our neighbour and to steward the gift of creation."

Justin Welby

Thank you!

All wildlife was local!



"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"
Psalm 150