

Sharing our story: Holy Trinity Church, Richmond – starting a Creation Care Team



Penny, the church warden at Holy Trinity Church, Richmond, spoke to us about setting up their creation care group.

An A Rocha speaker visited Holy Trinity in 2019 to speak at two services. You can request a speaker here: <https://arocha.org.uk/our-activities/churches/advice-and-support/speakers/speakerrequestform/>

At the subsequent annual meeting, a member of the congregation asked about the church's sustainability practices. Penny thought it was a great question and spoke to the vicar (Dan) about what they could do. Dan was keen for the church to explore how to become more environmentally aware, but felt he needed someone else to lead. Penny agreed to take on the coordination role and spoke to the church council to ensure they were also on board.

A key first step was to publicise the idea of caring for creation in the church newsletter, asking anyone interested to get in touch. She was careful not to put together a committee, rather a group of willing people who could give as much or as little as they were able.

About 15 people responded including a science teacher, professional horticulturalists and an avid birdwatcher. The group began during lockdown 2020 via Zoom, so it was a wonderful focus, with many connecting who previously didn't know each other. They enjoyed discovering the range of skills, talents, and passions to use together on 'Creation Care'.

The Creation Care group started by identifying different areas in the church grounds to work on. Money was allocated from the budget to do some planting and to create an area outside for reflection. Bible verses were included with explanations of why they, as Christians, were passionate about caring for nature. The local community were encouraged to use the space.

CASE STUDY

Some of the work needed permission from the overseeing Diocese (Southwark), who were delighted about the initiative, supporting their commitment to become an Eco Diocese:

<https://southwark.anglican.org/mission-ministry/faith-in-action/justice-peace-and-integrity-of-creation/environment/>

To include everyone in the congregation, the church undertook these initiatives:

- An A Rocha UK representative spoke with the youth group via Zoom. The group agreed to make a bug hotel when they met back in church after the 2021 lockdown.
- The youth were asked to design a logo for the creation care group, to be displayed outside the church and on the website.
- An all-age Climate Sunday service was held in June 2021 and registered: <https://www.climatesunday.org/register>
- They requested (and received) bird feeders, pallets and materials to make a bug hotel and insect homes. It was a great way of recycling resources.
- A prayer walk around the churchyard was organised.
- A webpage about the creation care journey was created https://www.htrichmond.org.uk/Groups/364565/Holy_Trinity_Richmond/What_We_Do/Creation_Care/Creation_Care.aspx

Future plans include working with the local primary school which has an eco-group, perhaps by planting a butterfly garden.

As of 2021, Holy Trinity Richmond are early in their journey; working towards a Bronze Award. It took a year from the A Rocha speaker to create the Eco Church team. It takes time from sowing the seeds to bearing fruit, so don't be discouraged if it does take a while to put together a group. Remember patience, and that starting well is better than rushing.