

## March 2023: Ecochurch

Last year, the churches in Bradwell, Castleton and Hope all joined thousands of other churches across the UK that have signed up for the A Rocha Ecochurch program. Ecochurch helps churches embody their calling to care for all God's creation, through their worship, how they care for their buildings and their land, how they engage with their communities, and through the individual lifestyles of worshippers.

Last November, a church in the Wirral became the 30<sup>th</sup> church in England and Wales to achieve their Ecochurch Gold Award. A quote from the Ecochurch website news says that:  
'To achieve the award, Christ Church developed a woodland walk and a memorial orchard, created two ponds, planted hundreds of trees, and transformed its churchyard into a space where wildlife can thrive. The planting scheme encourages bees, butterflies and birds, there are bird and bat boxes and bug and hedgehog hotels, and the hedges aren't cut when birds might be nesting. The land is used for outdoor services and learning about creation, and events such as Bonfire night, the Queen's jubilee, the scarecrow festival, and a recent autumn fayre selling locally grown produce. There is regular community litter picking and people are encouraged to walk, cycle or car share to attend church.' \*

One thing I love about the Ecochurch journey is that it embodies the values of God's Kingdom, of flourishing for all. By working to protect God's Creation, we are also enriching life for ourselves and others. Hope church have been working to enhance the wildlife value of Hope Churchyard, with things like bird boxes and wildflowers, and changing the mowing regime slightly. One of the delights of doing so has been the strengthening of links with other individuals and groups across the community who also value the churchyard as a special place, including the Hope Wildlife Group, Hope Historical Society, and Hope Valley College.

Our three churches have a long way to go, before they embody the care for people and creation shown by Christ Church, although two of them have recently received their Bronze Award. But we are working together to try to make positive changes. I am reminded of a comment I heard many, many years ago, that we all change the world simply by being in it; by eating, using energy, by interacting with people and creation. We can also all choose whether our impact on the world is positive or negative. I have chosen to try to tread lightly through this life, harming as little as I can. Because I believe God loves all that he has made, and longs to see his whole creation flourishing.

Yours in Christ,  
Louise Petheram  
[rev.louise.p@gmail.com](mailto:rev.louise.p@gmail.com) 01433 621918

*\*<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/a-beacon-of-hope-30th-gold-eco-church-award/>*

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or email me and I can sign you up.