

Your Church caring for God's Earth

Notes on a talk by Andy Lester ARocha 4th February 2019 St Andrews Hertford

A Guardian poll asked: What matters really concern you? Climate change, Brexit, Internet disconnection, Health crisis, continued loss of species, for us - Ageing church.

Climate change – Andy asked how many of us had seen egrets, hares, hedgehogs recently: they are declining. Recent Australian climate problems, with intense heat and flooding. Less money is given to charity groups re ecology International intransigence ; fourteen countries have recently elected far right parties who are climate-change deniers.

Brexit No clarity about funding for our farming systems. "No deal" is likely to lead to suburbanisation of our rural area. Brexit is an opportunity that could be squandered through a lack of expertise. Global insecurity could push our trade deals to the back of the queue.

Internet Disconnection. 99% of household will be on the internet soon. 5-15 yr olds spend 15 hrs per week on line (up by 1hr 18mins between 2015-16). 55% of 3-5 yr olds have access to a tablet. 8 in 10 12 yr olds have a smart phone. Internet use is the biggest cause of disconnect from nature. And Virtual Reality means you can exit reality and live in your own semi-virtual world. Just 1 in 10 children under 15 engage with nature (1 hour or more per week) In 1980 40% of children regularly engaged with nature. The most common use of nature is for dog-walking (walkers don't use the time to understand or relate to nature). Children can generate virtual animals on phones – so why bother with real ones? Andy said it is hard to know how to answer...

Health Crisis 4 million in UK live with diabetes, and 2 in 3 are overweight. 40,000 children on anti-depressants. Link with disconnect from nature. Nature Deficit Disorder leads to problems and illnesses....

Andy stated that we are losing a species every 3 seconds across the world. The UK lost half its bird population in last ten years. Action is needed, or it will halve again in another ten years.

There is some real progress: Rewilding, Conservation groups are growing, a push towards a "good" Brexit, some species are doing well: and there are some great Church initiatives.....

Christian rewilding initiatives on large country estates. Wild Christian programme/ newsletter. Abernethy provides a link for young people to go on outdoor adventure, reconnecting with nature, Yes, the link to nature can be dangerous, and people may feel put off, but we need to overcome fears to reconnect. Don't hide behind the laptop.

Linking faith, worship, nature and meditation. Andy cited a Tree church, built of trees, where attenders share Sunday morning organic breakfast and spiritual music: large attendance, half are not Christians, but they love it. Reconnected to church. Compare with worship behind unnatural closed doors.

Each church can join and take Award Points as they progress in ecological change.

Questions and Answers. *Why does a no-deal B mean suburbanisation?* If we leave with no deal, farmers will sell more and more land to prevent bankruptcy.

Badgers? Issue re TB on farms more about cattle being moved around the country. There is an inoculation scheme for badgers but very costly. So they shoot.

Vegans/Vegetarian? Different. Vegetarian is very good, though avoid soy oil – very destructive. Vegan needs more transport etc making it uncertain whether it helps the ecological situation. Ask where am I being sourced from? We eat a lot of items which are not from this country. However, meat is even more so. Eg New Zealand lamb comes here, then the same amount of our lambs are sent to Europe for dog food....

What about our churches? Place helpful boxes for animals and birds. Bats can be dealt with (ask).

Act Bees. In desperate trouble, due to lack of wild flowers. Also confusing climate change and awake too soon from hibernation. Native wild flowers in churchyards help a lot.

Pesticides cause problems on farmland, running into watercourses. Big issue.

Avoid use of single-use plastics. Write to Customer Services if they don't offer without plastic, they do listen. No disposable cups which are not bio-degradable.

All Saints will be looking at what we can do, for example in providing homes for Swifts. More next month.