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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ✝ September 2026

People of hope, called to care

“As Christians, we have a duty not just to speak out but also to act and lead by example, in witnessing how we care about God’s creation.”

Bishop Graham Usher’s words to General Synod in July feel especially urgent as record temperatures, low rainfall and news that Europe is becoming the fastest-warming continent brought the climate crisis closer to home this summer.

In Bath and Wells we are continuing our environmental journey. St Michael and All Angels, Flax Bourton, has received our first Gold Eco Church award, and Flourish House, the diocesan offices in Wells, has become the first diocesan office in the country to receive the same award from A Rocha. These awards, along with many others, reflect the commitment across our diocese, in our churches, schools and communities, to caring for God’s creation in practical and faithful ways, but there is more to do.

To help and support churches, General Synod approved a series of new Creationtide resources together with a landmark teaching document ‘Hope for All Creation: A Theological Response to the Environmental Crises’, which sets out a Christian

understanding of the environmental crises. Bishop Graham said the document offers a Christian response to environmental challenges, rooted in hope, creation and spiritual transformation.

Synod also strengthened the Church’s commitment to creation care by approving a new annual Festival of Creation in Christ, to be celebrated on the first Sunday in September. The festival will provide an opportunity to give thanks for God’s creation, reflect on humanity’s responsibility to care for the natural world, and pray for its renewal.

Reflecting on these announcements, Bishop Graham told Synod that as Christians we are “people of hope, not despair.”

It is that hope which is lived out through our faithful stewardship of God’s creation. Every act of care we undertake reflects God’s love for the world.

News in brief

Gold Award!

The Diocese of Bath and Wells has become the first in the country to receive a Gold Eco Church award for diocesan offices. Eco Church is a programme run by A Rocha UK to equip churches to care for creation. Commenting on the award, Bishop Michael said, “I was delighted to learn that we have been awarded a Gold Eco Church award for our diocesan offices. I hope it is an encouragement for us all as we do what we can to care for creation.”

BBC award nomination

Tony O’Mara, a volunteer at St Mary’s Church, Bridgwater, has been nominated for a BBC award. Tony is a finalist in the BBC Radio Somerset Make a Difference Awards for the support he gives people experiencing homelessness, addiction and hardship. His nomination comes after a remarkable personal journey. Tony struggled with addiction for more than 40 years before entering rehabilitation and finding recovery with the support and friendship of St Mary’s Church in Bridgwater.

40 years of friendship

On a hot summer’s day, a group of pilgrims set out to walk between the Holy Wells in the Quantock Deanery. Joined by Bishop Fiona, church members set off across the deanery taking in coast and country along the route. Together they sang, prayed, chatted and admired the beauty of their surroundings. Speaking afterwards, Bishop Fiona said, "I really enjoyed experiencing the varied coast and countryside as well as meeting and talking to those who walked with me on the journey and to those who met us along the way.”

Find out more on these and other stories at bathandwells.org.uk/news

Caring for God's earth

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' (Genesis 1:26).

These words come from the account of creation found in Genesis Chapter 1. I'm often asked about this text. Is it true? How do I square its words with my understanding of science? Do I believe this is how the world was made?

I don't think Genesis 1 is a literal account, a description offered in the style of a David Attenborough documentary. Rather I suggest that this account is so stuffed with truth that it's hard for us to deal with. Truth that's not about factual deception but that's about meaning, purpose and value. Genesis 1 asks 'How do we understand the world?' and 'How should we live in it?'

Take for example the words 'have dominion' to be found in Genesis 1:26 given above. These words, an interpretation of the Hebrew word radah, have been understood very differently.

Some would say that 'have dominion', radah, has been understood as harsh domination, treading down, and using raw force; a justification for treating the non-human world as an expendable resource for human consumption that has led to our destruction of so much of the natural world around us.

Others suggest that the true meaning of radah is service and care. This sees 'have dominion' as a call not to crush, but to protect, nurture, and provide justice. This view sees humankind invited to act as deputies for God, called to cultivate the earth responsibly while preserving its health and flourishing.

Arguments about the interpretation of a Hebrew word may seem specialist. But how we read one of the most important passages of the Bible can shape our whole world view. Service and care or domination and destruction? These differing ideas lie at the very heart of the arguments we have about how our kind should treat our earthly home that God has gifted us. What steps will we take, however small, to protect it?

Interview

Growing closer to God

Sara Harbron, Climate Justice & Environment Adviser for Bath and Wells, explains why caring for creation is central to our Christian faith.

Why does caring for creation matter?

Because creation is God's world, and we are called to look after it. We are part of nature, not separate from it, and depend on a healthy climate and ecosystems for food, clean water, clean air and wellbeing.

Why is it important that care for creation is our Fifth Mark of Mission?

We cannot share God's love without caring for the world and the people who live in it. It is central to mission and connects with all the others. People need safety and stability to respond to God's kingdom.

What would you say to someone overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenge?

Start with something that already matters to you: your garden, local wildlife, food, water quality, or church building. You don't have to do everything at once.

The aim is for progress, not perfection.

What are the new national resources agreed by General Synod?

Hope for All Creation is a wonderfully clear resource for understanding our Christian and human imperative to care for creation. It shows how everyone can get involved, that it does not have to be overwhelming, and that every small action can make a difference.

How important is the new annual Festival of Creation in Christ?

Having one specific day to look at the challenges we face and how we can approach them positively, with clear direction, is important. It will support ongoing creation care in our diocese and around the world.

What does Flourish House's Gold Eco Church award show?

It shows change is possible when people work together. Flourish House has advantages as a modern building, but the award reflects the commitment and dedication of our diocese and, I hope, inspires us all to keep going.