

# Appendix 4

Examples of how the ideas in this document have already been put into practice in four parishes within the Diocese

## St Joseph's, Upminster Rewilding, Care for Creation, and involving people across the generations.

At St Peter's, Cranham there is a piece of land which for years was simply mowed grass. Inspired by the idea of creating an area for wildlife, and moved by the statistics that show just how much wildlife habitat has been lost, either to concrete or to mowed lawns, parishioners at St Joseph's Upminster went through some careful stages of planning to turn the planting of areas of the land into a project for the whole parish, involving children, families, and those who were housebound. Starting back in 2018, the picture gives a glimpse of what it looks like today.

This is how they did it:

### First Steps

After a Parish Council discussion, a notice in newsletter about Care For Our Common Home in September 2018. Encouraged parishioners to plant wildlife friendly areas in their gardens or window boxes. Investigated how we could enhance the large garden and field at St. Peter's, Cranham as a community space and wildlife haven. Included bidding prayers on the environment at all Masses.

### Second steps

Invited parishioners to an evening prayer service on Creation to raise awareness of problems, and give hope for the future. Text for

the service included statistics on environmental issues including success stories where habitats and species have been saved from extinction or numbers increased.

### Third steps

Involved our younger parishioners and increased their awareness of our responsibility to protect Nature. Set up a Junior Green Team comprising 7 children aged 4 to 7 to discuss ideas. Met in Costa Coffee with them at a formal meeting to discuss environmentally friendly initiatives. We pledged to plant bulbs and flowers at St. Peter's. Junior Green Team talked to parishioners after Mass encouraging them to donate.

### Fourth Steps

We applied for a grant from the Fanns Development Foundation but were turned down as we had already begun digging the site. Parishioners donated 800 bulbs and also shrubs. Local shops gave a discount. Advertised for young parishioners to spend a day in November at St. Peter's planting. Prior to planting adults prepared the beds and sowed wild flowers in the field.

### Fifth Steps

November- the children planted all 800 bulbs. The day was a huge success with the 7 year olds helping

the younger ones. A slight hiccup was that the little ones thought the bulbs would flower that afternoon and waited for them to appear! The children also made bug houses and filled donated bird feeders.

### Sixth Step

We asked for a volunteer to carve out miniature Stations of the Cross. A disabled parishioner offered to pay for all materials and made the crosses

### Seventh Steps

The Confirmation Group spent a winter's day preparing a site for the Stations of the Cross with flower beds and placing the crosses. Despite torrential rain/wind it was a wonderful day. Not a mobile phone in sight.

### Review

Parishioners really embraced this initiative at home and at St. Peter's. The garden was beautiful and in 2019/20 before lockdown we held a Spring event on site, a summer social and a vintage tea afternoon. The miniature Stations of the Cross will now be fixed to the building as passers-by think we have created a pet cemetery! Work will resume once lockdown is over.

### The future

To continue our pledge to protect our common home we are resuming work on the garden at St. Peter's, Cranham, and plan to create a place for prayer and reflection around an olive tree planted in

2018. Our 'Junior Green Team' is flourishing again in summer 2021, and we are developing a close bond with our local secondary school which has a well-developed eco programme. With their help we hope to plant more trees and establish a small fruit orchard and vegetable garden at St. Peter's.

Prayers for the environment continue to be said at Mass and there is a section in our newsletter encouraging parishioners to pray for, and read about, initiatives concerning climate change. The environment is always an agenda item at PPC meetings and in the near future we will form a group in the parish to inspire us both spiritually and practically to ensure that our environment is a place which enhances nature and helps all to thrive.



## St Margaret's, Canning Town

St Margaret's has a long heritage of serving the poorest within the community, from the times when Caritas Anchor House (next door to the church) provided essential support for seafarers, right through to the present day. Caritas Anchor House now supports over 140 people who have been homeless, assisting them into long term accommodation. St Margaret's Church has found its work providing food to families in need radically transformed and challenged by the demands of the pandemic.

"We feed 500 people, three times a week," says Mgr John Armitage, Parish Priest. "It started very small, years ago, when parishioners would bring extra food to Mass on a Sunday, and other parishioners, who needed it, would collect it after Mass. The pandemic changed everything." Canning Town is in the London Borough of Newham (LBN), an area with great poverty, including child poverty, and at the start of the pandemic LBN reached out to St



Margaret's, and other local churches, and asked for help. Food is provided by the charity "Fareshare" (<https://fareshare.org.uk/>) which collects surplus food from supermarkets, so that it can be given to those who need it most. It is often food that is close to an end date, or where there is surplus stock. In addition the parish of St Joseph's, Upminster, help with supplies, and Mgr John hopes that other parishes might consider this, if they are not already supplying a local food bank. In turn, St Margaret's assists people from right across Newham.

For a while there were "parcels" prepared by volunteers – and even delivered to people's homes, in the height of the pandemic. But Mgr John worried about the dignity of that, and the practicality. "It is already demeaning to need to ask for food," he says; "so we at least try to restore some dignity by letting people choose for themselves. In any case, there is no point giving people a parcel of stuff they cannot cook." So the St Margaret's food bank is set up more like a shop, with shelves, and people browse and choose. Another key aspect is that no-one needs to be referred to the food bank, as they do in some other places. At St Margaret's the understanding is that anyone who comes is deemed to be in need. As Mgr John says, "No-one who is not desperate is going to queue for food with 500 other people, in all weathers."

The immense benefit has been the reach to the poorest people in the community, of all faiths and none. There are some who would never have been near a church before, or who had left the church. Undoubtedly the whole project is



a work of evangelisation. As Mgr John and parish volunteers walk up and down the queue, chatting with people, they understand their lives, and it informs their prayer. People often ask for prayers, and above all "They see the church as a place of welcome, kindness and support." This brings other challenges – the people who come do not only need food, but often need a whole range of help, which the parish cannot yet provide. But in dialogue with Newham, and as the pandemic eases, this is the next challenge. Any parish interested in starting a similar project, or supporting St Margaret's, should contact Mgr John Armitage ([canningtown@dioceseofbrentwood.org](mailto:canningtown@dioceseofbrentwood.org)).

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## Brentwood Cathedral

At Brentwood Cathedral the formation of a “Green Guardians” group in 2019 has led to increased awareness of environmental issues and their place in Catholic Social Teaching; there has also been an increase in social justice actions.

There have been some simple, practical ideas:

- Installation of recycling bins
- Installation of bike racks
- Preparing a Lenten Programme which suggested individual and collective actions a parishioner could take each week during Lent
- Support for the local food bank, with monthly collections
- Partnership with the charity “The Bike Project” (<https://thebikeproject.co.uk/>) which collects old bikes, refurbishes them, and donates them to refugees who have settled in the UK, as a vital mode of transport in tough times.

A particular success was a panel discussion which brought together a local politician, the Leader of Brentwood Borough Council, a representative from CAFOD and the environmental advisor to the Bishops’ Conference. Around 100 people attended from the parish and the wider community, and the event was significant in raising awareness. The group also met with their local MP to discuss their concerns around climate change.



The group have an active presence on social media. In 2020/21, during periods of lockdown, the group’s Twitter and Instagram posts have been an important way to keep parishioners informed and engaged. It is also a way for people to engage with the group without having to attend lots of meetings – this has been very significant in gaining the participation of younger people. For example, throughout Lent 2021, the group encouraged parishioners to take a “Plastic Pledge” by publishing tips and tricks on how to reduce plastic waste in their daily lives.

The group now aim for one significant action each month, often

linked to national initiatives, as this is a way to evangelise within the local community. Recent examples include:

- Engaging with the national early spring “litter pick” by joining the Brentwood Council initiative in local parks
- Preparing over 500 “Bee bombs” in May, to coincide with World Bee Day. These are wildflower seeds mixed with compost, flour and water; they are really easy to plant and have a quick, high impact effect in gardens.

The group are now an integral, visible and creative part of parish life, and a bridge into the local community.

**The formation of a “Green Guardians” group has led to increased awareness of environmental issues**

## St Edward the Confessor, Romford

During January 2021, as a way to encourage and support key workers, with prayers for all those who were giving us hope in difficult times, the parish had large “hearts of hope” prominently displayed outside the church. These turned into Valentine’s Day hearts, and then into hearts with a Lenten message of “Giving, not giving up”! They were Resurrection hearts after Easter, and in the same period the parish had been developing a “Laudato Si Group.” Looking into what it could mean to rewild and brighten the parish grounds, the idea developed of a heart shaped flower bed, to attract bees and butterflies, and to be a permanent reminder of the hearts that had given and endured so much in 2020/21.

The key steps were:

- Forming a Laudato Si’ group. This was a simple newsletter announcement, and encouragement at the end of Mass, and nine parishioners signed up.
- Using the expertise within the parish. The parish has quite large grounds, and Jayne works for the parish as a gardener for 4 hours/week to keep it all looked after. Jayne took responsibility for the selection of the plants, researching to intentionally choose plants that were known to attract bees and butterflies, and would generate colour for as much of the summer as possible, as well as being hardy in our clay soil!
- Enlisting the help of the cubs and scouts. One wet and muddy evening they cleared away the grass; fresh topsoil was put in,

and then the following week the plants were planted. It was great learning for the young people, and great fun.

At the same time, half the presbytery garden, and a section of another part of parish land, was left to go wild; in the presbytery garden poppies seeded abundantly, which was a feast for the birds.

The Laudato Si group gathered many ideas from parishioners; they have already acted to install cycle racks, and offer a weekly idea in the newsletter, to help every parishioner to reflect on care for God’s creation. There are pages on the parish website with links to more resources, and this is gradually becoming a more embedded strand of parish life. The parish has FairTrade accreditation, supports a local food bank, and is working towards the Cafod *LiveSimply* award.

One of the greatest fruits is the reach into the local community; many people walk past the church, and they love the flowerbed. There is a local park nearby and members of the Laudato Si group have discovered that there is a plan to plant a large number of trees there in the autumn; the parish has offered to provide volunteers to help with this planting, and we hope this will be the start of many fresh links with the local community.

