

Laudato Si' Invitations, Commitments and Actions

For every parishioner, young person, priest, deacon, religious sister and brother, parent, grandparent and school pupil in Brentwood Diocese.

Invitations, commitments and actions to inspire, refresh and rejuvenate our care for our common home, God's creation.

**“God saw all that He
had made, and indeed
it was very good.”**

(Genesis 1:31)

**From the first book in the Bible,
right through to Pope Francis’ words and teachings,
care for creation and
justice for the world’s poorest people
are key parts of our faith.**

**The world is a “common home” for all of creation,
a gift from God for which we all share responsibility.**

**As we offer invitations, make commitments and
suggest actions to live simply and sustainably, we
are delighted to provide parishes, schools and
parishioners with many resources to help discover
afresh our amazing Catholic Social Teaching,
inspirations for prayer, and fresh ways to live in God’s
beautiful and precious world, for the good of all.**

Front cover photo from the inside of the Sagrada Familia Church, Barcelona,
a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Gaudi, who designed this church, envisaged
the light flowing through the stained glass as giving the impression of walking
through a forest, as if light were streaming through a canopy of trees.

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Foreword from Bishop Alan

Cherishing God's creation comes very naturally to me. For many years I have enjoyed climbing mountains, most often in Scotland. Looking out over remote islands from a mountain peak I am always in awe of the beauty, intricacy, scale and range of God's creation. Much closer to home, in Laindon, Essex, I delight in walking through the local country park. Like many places in the Diocese, this has special status for the diversity of its plants and wildlife.

St Thomas Aquinas wrote that there is "a trace of the Trinity" in every living creature. In very different contexts, St Francis of Assisi and St Katherine Drexel witnessed to the powerful inter-connectedness between care for creation and justice for the poorest people in the world; this insight is amplified in Pope Francis' letter to the world from 2015, *Laudato Si'*.

Our Diocesan *Laudato Si'* Invitations, Commitments and Actions take these themes – developed over centuries of Catholic Tradition and Magisterium, and deeply rooted in Scripture – and bring them alive for each one of us, today, in our Diocese of Brentwood.

An especially vital message of our document is this: when we, as Catholics, talk about – and act on – the immense challenges in sustaining the very fragile ecology on which we all depend, we do so with the distinctive voice and understanding of our faith. We are not speaking just as another pressure group, or campaign group – though both pressure and campaigning are needed.



A

Bluebells in Langdon Hills Country Park, Laindon, as seen by Bishop Alan on a springtime walk

We enter this conversation because it is integral to our faith that we cherish God's creation and strive for justice for the world's poorest people – each one made in God's image and likeness.

You will see that the Diocesan Trustees have already taken a lead, with serious commitments that will do a very great deal of good; at our Trustees' meeting I was pleased to give these commitments my firm support.

All of this resonates deeply with our Diocesan Vision, "To share the good news of Jesus Christ with the people of Essex and East London." The invitations, commitments and actions in these pages offer wonderful opportunities for evangelisation. They build on excellent work that is already happening; a feature of such work, very often, is that it inspires dialogue with people from across our community, of all faiths and none. Action to preserve God's creation, and to achieve justice for the poor, are especially powerful places in which to begin conversations with young people.

I thank all those who have been involved in producing this document. It is now my sincere hope and prayer that the ideas here swiftly move from being printed words, or words on a screen, to becoming an ever more deeply lived reality in every parish, school and home in the Diocese. To achieve this takes a firm commitment from every person in the Diocese. I invite you all to take up the "pledge cards" that will be given as this document is launched, just before the Feast of St Francis of Assisi. In making your personal pledges – in working to heal the planet, and in striving for justice for the poorest people in the world – you are a living witness to Jesus Christ: do not be afraid to tell people why you are doing whatever you choose to do.

As I travel around the Diocese in the months ahead, I look forward to discovering the many, varied and creative ways in which each of you respond to the invitations here, as we work together, from all parts of the Diocese, to "care for our common home."

**Rt Rev Alan Williams, SM,
Bishop of Brentwood**

“
**It is integral to
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Introduction

“God saw all that he had made, and indeed it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31). From the first page of the Bible, the Spirit of God infuses creation. We are told that the Spirit “hovers over” the waters at the beginnings of creation, and God fashions into being the land and seas, the fish and the birds, the trees, plants and flowers.

When Jesus walks the earth he uses image after image drawn from nature to tell parables to people who are themselves immersed in nature; fish, fig trees, vines, sheep and mustard seeds bring the Gospel message alive, and the landscape of Scripture is one of lakes, mountains, and tranquil streams.

All of this leads St Thomas Aquinas to the beautiful insight that there is “a trace of the Trinity” in every aspect of creation, in every created being. It leads St Francis of Assisi to name the earth as “sister” and the sun as “brother.” This prayer begins “Praise be the Lord” and this is translated as “Laudato Si’.”

In 2015 Pope Francis drew these threads of faith, woven over centuries, into an Encyclical – a letter to the world. In honour of St Francis of Assisi, Patron Saint of the Poor and the Environment, the Encyclical is called *Laudato Si’*. It includes these sombre words: **“The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish.”** (LS21). The whole Encyclical is a call to look with fresh eyes of faith at how we are caring for the beautiful creation gifted to us, and the directly related question of how we can work with renewed spirit to alleviate the desperate conditions suffered by the poorest in the world.

In the Book of Genesis we were given dominion over creation; human beings, uniquely, are “made in the image and likeness of God” and we have a privileged place. When Adam and Eve are placed in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2) it is with the instruction to “till” and to “keep” the earth. To use it for food and nourishment, and for the things we need to live, most certainly – but to do so in a way which also sustains the rest of creation. We will consider the Theology that underpins *Laudato Si’* later in these pages, with an extended essay on this as the first Appendix to our document.

Our Diocesan *Laudato Si’* Invitations, Commitments and Actions – the document you are reading – is a response to Pope Francis plea for us to listen to the cry of the earth, and the cry of the world’s poorest people. Rooted in faith, it also expands our horizon and understanding of where and how we should direct charitable actions and service, to include the whole of Divine creation. This planet is God’s gift to us, to sustain us all.

This document is intended as a living document. Launched in October 2021, in the Season of Creation, just prior to the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, you will see that we intend to review our progress after one year, and three years, with the expectation that large parts of the document will need to be re-evaluated and rewritten in 2024, as our understanding deepens

“care for our
common home.”

significantly in the years ahead, and our responses evolve with fresh technology, and fresh insights. To “Live Simply” will, we hope, become as natural as breathing.

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis offers the vital insight that care for creation and care for the world's poorest are inseparable and indispensable parts of living our faith. He names this as “integral ecology” and wraps it together in the phrase: “care for our common home.” We will take a deeper look at this idea later in these pages. For now, we can readily notice that in our Catholic lives charity and service to the poorest in our community has long been an active part of the mission of our parishes and our schools, as well as generously and powerfully lived by individuals and families.

But when it comes to care for the environment, this appears less obvious. **Start a conversation about the environment with a group of Catholics and amongst many possible reactions there are three that surface most often. One might say – “That’s all politics, isn’t it? What has it got to do with my faith?” Another will ask, “What can I do about it? I’m just one person.” A third looks at it from a very different angle: “You are only just talking about this now?! Why weren’t you doing this ten years ago?”**



Pause for Reflection

Just before reading on you might ask yourself – is one of these my reaction?

Take just a moment to pray about what you have read so far. Consider, in prayer, what your reaction is when you reflect on the environment and climate change in the light of your faith.

Each of these reactions matters. It matters that we know “the environment” is Divine creation, and this is absolutely part of our faith: it is not a new fad, it is not something that began with Pope Francis, and it is not just politics. By the end of this introduction we hope that you are inspired to pray, and to act. It is certainly true that there are decisions, systems and structures that will need to be changed nationally, and internationally, for the sake of the environment, and for the poorest in the world. But that is not at all the same as saying that there is nothing we can do individually – indeed part of what we can do is to campaign for such changes. So it also matters that every person knows that small changes in our own lives and lifestyles have the potential to make a very big difference. You’ll find lots of examples in the pages ahead.

Are we coming to this conversation late? In some ways, yes, in terms of having a specific environmental policy. But there is a whole section in the Diocesan Vision Document devoted to Caritas, and ever since the mid-1990s this Diocese pledged not to invest in arms companies, or those that damaged human ecology. Bishop Thomas McMahon was a champion of Justice and Peace, protesting sales of weapons, twinning our Diocese with the Diocese of Dundee, in South Africa, and advocating the work of Cafod.



Rubbish on the beach at Southend-on-Sea, Essex

Over decades, parishes have raised millions of pounds to build schools, hospitals, and water pumps all over the world, making a radical and vital difference to many communities.

In East London, Citizens UK began as TELCO over twenty years ago, inspired by work in Canning Town; since then it has become a national inter-faith organisation, and thousands of lives have been transformed through ensuring companies pay the Real Living Wage, lifting families from poverty. The Diocese has been a Real Living Wage employer since 2018. In summer and autumn 2021 five parish partnerships are piloting "Together for the Common Good" – training for parishioners in Catholic Social Teaching, leading to initiatives, prayer and action within the partnerships. Many parishes have a long-standing and very active St Vincent de Paul Society, reaching out to the isolated and those in need locally.

All of this helps the words of the Magnificat to leap off the page: "He has filled the hungry with good things." Parishes, schools, individuals and families live the Catholic faith through charitable help for the poor – given in ways which are not just a "quick fix" but which change infrastructure for good. This is a direct response to Jesus' exhortation to us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give drink to those who are thirsty, and visit those who are

ill or in prison with the very clear statement that "whatever you do to the least of my sisters and brothers you do to me." (Mt 25:40). Practical action is both inspired by and infused with prayer: every day and every week prayers are offered in churches and in homes for places in the world desperate for peace, affected by climate disaster, and ruined by human exploitation.

"The least" of our sisters and brothers are now so obviously also those living in danger of the effects of climate change – displaced by flood waters and hurricanes, forced to flee forest fires of greater magnitude than ever before, and with no protection from rising sea levels – that the Diocese of Brentwood, in this document, explicitly proposes Laudato Si' Commitments and Actions rooted in Pope Francis "integral ecology" approach; we care for the world's poorest when we care for the planet; we care for the planet, God's gift to us, when we care for the world's poorest.

This understanding also informs our approach to including, involving and listening to the poorest within our own communities, especially when we advocate lifestyle "choices" that are not, in fact, a choice for the poorest in our community. There is more on this later in the document.

The touchstone for everything we do as a Diocese is this: are we spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ in Essex and East London?

This is the headline in the Diocesan Vision Document, and it is absolutely the heart of the set of commitments and call to action in this document.

In proposing everything in these pages, we invite you to become part of a journey in your home, your parish, your school, the Diocese of Brentwood, the Catholic Church in England and Wales, and with many people, of all faiths and none, across the whole world.

We hope that it is an exciting journey – discovering afresh the beauty of nature, discovering new ways to live our faith, and being part of something that brings change, hope and Gospel joy where such things are urgently and powerfully needed, in our own communities and in other countries.

Inspired by our faith in Jesus Christ, by Saints of our Church, and by Papal teaching across many centuries, we will discover fresh and vibrant ways to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ – and in caring for our common home we will be living that very same Good News.

The Diocesan Working Group

You may be asking, at this point, who has put this document together?

At the request of Bishop Alan, a Diocesan Working Group was formed in January 2021, representing clergy and parishioners with specialist knowledge, drawn from different parts of the Diocese, and bringing different types of expertise and experience to the group. We worked together on this document for six months, along with those from the Diocesan Education, Development, Property and Finance teams, and it was approved by the Board of Trustees on July 15th 2021.

On behalf of the Bishop, and the Diocesan Trustees, the group are pleased to commend these Laudato Si' Invitations, Commitments and Actions to every parish, school, parish partnership, member of the clergy, parishioner and staff member in the Diocese. We hope that the way we have phrased and offered the wide variety of suggestions and possibilities mean that it is a document that will come alive everywhere. Naturally, this will be different in different ways in different parts of the Diocese – rural homes, schools and parishes have different

challenges and opportunities from those in new towns, coastal towns, or London Boroughs. We trust that these reflections and ideas take account of the amazing diversity of the Diocese, and the difference in individual circumstances, while illuminating Diocesan ministry in fresh ways, all complementary to the wider Diocesan Vision. As it is intended to be a document with regular updates and revisions, including a substantial revision in 2024, we welcome your comments and ideas, edits and corrections. Please email LaudatoSi@dioceseofbrentwood.org



**Louise
Abraham**

Member of Brentwood Cathedral “Green Guardians” group – an extension of the Cathedral’s designation as a *LiveSimply* parish. Foodbank donations, encouragement to parishioners with green issues, provision of bike racks, hosting of a forum on faith and environment. Louise has recently been appointed as CAFODs Government Relations Advisor.

**Joe
Beattie**

Manager of Walsingham House at Abbotswick, the Diocesan Youth Retreat House; Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si’* is explored on retreats; environmental initiatives within the extensive grounds.

**Leila
Bousbaa**

Experience with several Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the environmental field, including Cafod and the Coalition for Global Prosperity. Young leader within the BCYS.

**Fr Gary
Dench**

Assistant Priest at Brentwood Cathedral; insight into what it means to be a priest in a parish with a *LiveSimply* group; insight into the Theology inspiring and underpinning *Laudato Si’*.

**Fr Liam
Hayes**

Priest of Brentwood Diocese, extensive work and research with Cafod and the Centre for Ecclesial Ethics at the Margaret Beaufort Institute, Cambridge.

**Debra
Oakaby**

Parish Administrator at Christ the King Parish, Chingford, with a strong interest in *Laudato Si’*, and deepening this aspect of living our faith.

**Mike
Parsons**

From St Margaret’s Canning Town, applying to become accredited as a *LiveSimply* parish. Mike is trained as a “*Laudato Si’* Animator” with links to local and national networks.

**Siân
Thomas**

Diocesan Caritas Development Co-ordinator; experience in the Lasallian network; access to a wide range of social and digital media to promote this document.

**Bernadette
Tsocos**

From St Joseph’s parish, Upminster, where she led the process of accreditation as a *LiveSimply* parish in November 2020. The parish also has active foodbank donations, and has diversified an area of parish land through bulb and other planting attractive to wildlife.

**Fr Dominic
Howarth**

Serving as Environmental Lead for the Diocese, as Episcopal Vicar for Youth Ministry and Pastoral Care. Committed to this work, both in terms of ecology and alleviating poverty.



Pause for Prayer

Before heading further into these pages, we invite you to pause for prayer. Rest deeply in these words, drawn from Scripture.

Loving God,

As Father,
You breathed life into creation,
Made human beings – every single person – in your image and likeness,
And gifted us a common home, to cherish.
You colour in the flowers,
Are attentive to the details in every feather and every leaf,
And know us so intimately that you count each hair on our head.

As Son,
You climbed mountains, so as to open hearts to you.
You shared parables about mustard seeds, figs, vines and fish.
You taught on lakes, and cooked for the disciples on a beach.
You ate a final and eternal meal of bread and wine,
And when you rose from the dead, you were mistaken for the gardener.
Now, you travel in the same boat as us, in the midst of the storm.

As Spirit
You hovered over the waters at the beginning of time.
You are the Divine breath within us.
You swooped like a dove as the River Jordan rippled and splashed with the grace of Baptism
You infuse us with gifts of awe and wonder, courage and understanding.
You sustain us with the fruits of love, joy and peace.

Teach us afresh Lord
To care for our common home in the way that you care for us.

Teach us afresh Lord
To see “a trace of the Trinity” in every part of creation.

Teach us afresh Lord
The precious truth that each person we meet is a sister or brother of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen



Part 1

Background to our Invitations,
Commitments and Actions

Setting the scene: our effects on the environment as the Catholic population within the Diocese of Brentwood.

i. “Many drops make a different ocean” : Energy, Travel and Shopping

Let’s go back to the question –
“What can I do about it? I am
just one person.”

Mother Teresa was once asked
“Why do you bother to help the
poor, when there is so much
suffering in Calcutta, so much
suffering in the world? You can’t
possibly help them all.” “Yes”
Mother Teresa said. “I agree.
What I do is just a drop in the
ocean. But many drops make a
different ocean.”

Consider this: in the Diocese of
Brentwood there are 87 parishes and
82 schools. There are big questions
about heat, light, water, insulation
and much else where we need an
approach which is both Diocesan
and local. But one thing that is in
the control of many Mass-goers is
travel. There are about 45,000 people
travelling to Mass each week. This
is a guess, but let’s imagine half of
people drive (more in Essex, fewer
in London; some alone, some with

families), and it’s an average of
two miles each way (more in the
countryside, less in the towns).
If there are 17,000 cars bringing
people to Mass each week that is
3,500,000 miles being driven to Mass
each year. Three and a half million
miles. Imagine the difference if
everyone except those with medical
needs made a commitment to
walk, cycle or use public transport.
Or if those who had to drive shared
transport, so each car was full.

The carbon cost of driving to Mass



87
Parishes



45,000
people travelling to Mass
each week



17,000
cars bringing people to
Mass each week

3,500,000
miles being driven to Mass



798
tonnes of carbon every year



The way we spend our money



£60–£80

Spent on food each week per family



£1,400,000

Total supermarket spending of all Catholics in Essex and East London each week



FAIRTRADE

£???

Imagine the transformation if we spent more on Fair Trade items each time we shop

If each of us made some small changes, the difference would be astonishing: every mile driven adds carbon to the atmosphere. 3.5 million miles, in average sized cars (using Government estimate of 228g/mile, though newer and/or smaller cars do emit much lower emissions), adds 798 tonnes of carbon every year. To try to picture that, it is the equivalent of 160 hot air balloons full of CO₂. Each of our drops, right now, is sadly making a very polluted sky.

If we walk, cycle or take a bus, we might encourage someone else to travel with us. We would be fitter. As a parish we could have a “walk to church Sunday” and see how long it took to become a habit. It takes a few people to begin, and the effects can transform a community. And then it becomes a witness to our town – all these people walking to and from church each weekend. We discover more about our neighbourhood, we find

ourselves walking with people who live just a street or two away, though we never knew it before. And it is all kinder to the planet, God’s creation. Remember those days in the first lockdown when there were no cars on the road? How wildlife flourished? Every action, by every one of us, makes a difference.

The most significant contribution to energy usage and resultant carbon emissions in the Diocese are our buildings. Heating and lighting consume a great deal of energy. We have already moved to sourcing and using energy from renewable sources – electricity from wind and solar; gas as a by-product from a gin distillery! But if our buildings are inefficient in their use of energy, much is wasted, and even when energy comes from renewable sources, we must still cherish it. The only way to properly decarbonise our buildings is for professional advice

to be given about energy use in all the buildings owned by the Diocese, and we are pleased to be beginning this detailed work in late 2021, continuing throughout 2022. To take a very different example, and to look again at the personal decisions we can take that make a difference, consider that there are roughly 20,000 families at Mass each weekend. Each will spend perhaps £60 – £80 a week on food. We might think it makes little difference if we buy FairTrade tea, coffee, chocolate or juice, or choose products with no plastic packaging. But Catholics in Essex and East London are together spending £1.4 million a week in supermarkets across the Diocese.

There is much we can influence by how and where we shop. Just take that large figure and apply it to your parish, where there are perhaps fifty, a hundred, or five hundred families. Even in a rural parish with fifty families you are together spending £3,500 on food shopping a week, which means nearly £200,000 each year, probably in just a few shops. If your parish has a hundred families, you can double the figures. In even larger parishes, you can see how significant your buying power is. If we peacefully but firmly raise our voices together, we will make a difference. From each parish, parish partnership or school, locally writing letters to your nearest large supermarkets could well mean they stock more FairTrade, or products with less packaging – and they certainly will if they see people buying them. This is how things change.



ii. What about those who have no choice?

The Diocese of Brentwood contains some of the poorest areas in the country. St Margaret's, Canning Town, runs a food bank that feeds 500 people, three times a week (read more about this in Appendix 4). Virtually every one of the parish partnerships includes areas – for there are many in our Diocese – which are in the bottom three percent of anywhere in England when measuring life expectancy, family income, living conditions and levels of education. In these areas there are inspirational church, school and community leaders doing heroic work to change lives; this is work in which we can all share. It could be a vital part of what it means to be a parish partnership. Specific work is already going on within the many projects that form our Diocesan Caritas, as well as the immense blessings that are Brentwood Catholic Children's Society, and Caritas Anchor House.

As we frame our environmental invitations, commitments and actions, we need to be very attentive to those whose choices are limited or non-existent, based on income. For example, to be told to leave your car in the garage, to get a bus or to walk, is one thing when you have a car. And a garage. But it is quite a different thing to be told to get public transport when you are already walking because you can't afford a bus fare.



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Hadleigh Castle, near Southend

There are many within our communities who have no choice about walking to church, to work, or to school, and we need to name that, pray about it, and see where and how we can act.

In terms of food shopping, those with low incomes may well already be contributing least to the degradation of the environment. Not only will they walk, not drive, to a shop, they may well seek out loose fruit and veg (cheaper than anything packaged) and cook from scratch. But this is not always possible. Others on low incomes and working very irregular hours will rely on a dash to the local shop – where the choice will be less, and the food packaging and processing greater. It is really hard to avoid plastic packaging at your local corner shop! There is so much to consider here that challenges us, from different directions. The truth of our faith is that we are all sisters and brothers – as the title of Pope Francis latest Encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, makes clear. That title, of course, brings us back again to those words of Jesus: “Whatever you did to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did to me.” (Mt 25:40). To live that means to understand, deeply, how “the least” of our brothers and sisters are living, and then to act in all possible ways to make a difference.

Later in this document you will read more about buying FairTrade products, reducing plastic packaging, eating less meat, driving less, growing fruit and vegetables, or letting areas of your garden go wild, for biodiversity. All of these are good and true things to do. But since many of those choices require an income that some simply do not have, let’s take further inspiration from Mother Teresa, now a Saint of our Church. She once received a letter from America, full of anguish. The letter writer wanted to come and help her, in Calcutta, but said, with sadness, that he could not afford the air fare. Her reply was

simple: “Find your own Calcutta.” In other words, find the poorest within your own community, and help them. Many of our parishes are very mixed in terms of income, living standards, and housing. How can we reach out within our parishes, and parish partnerships? And across the Diocese? In the environmental projects we design, how can we make sure everyone in the community is included? The Gospel tells us to “go to the ends of the earth” to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ; we may find we only need to go a couple of miles down the road to find communities where our support will change lives.

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”

iii. A Diocese full of natural beauty

“The Lord was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder” (LS 97). As we reflect on our own context, it is good to take a moment to notice the amazing beauty that is all around us.

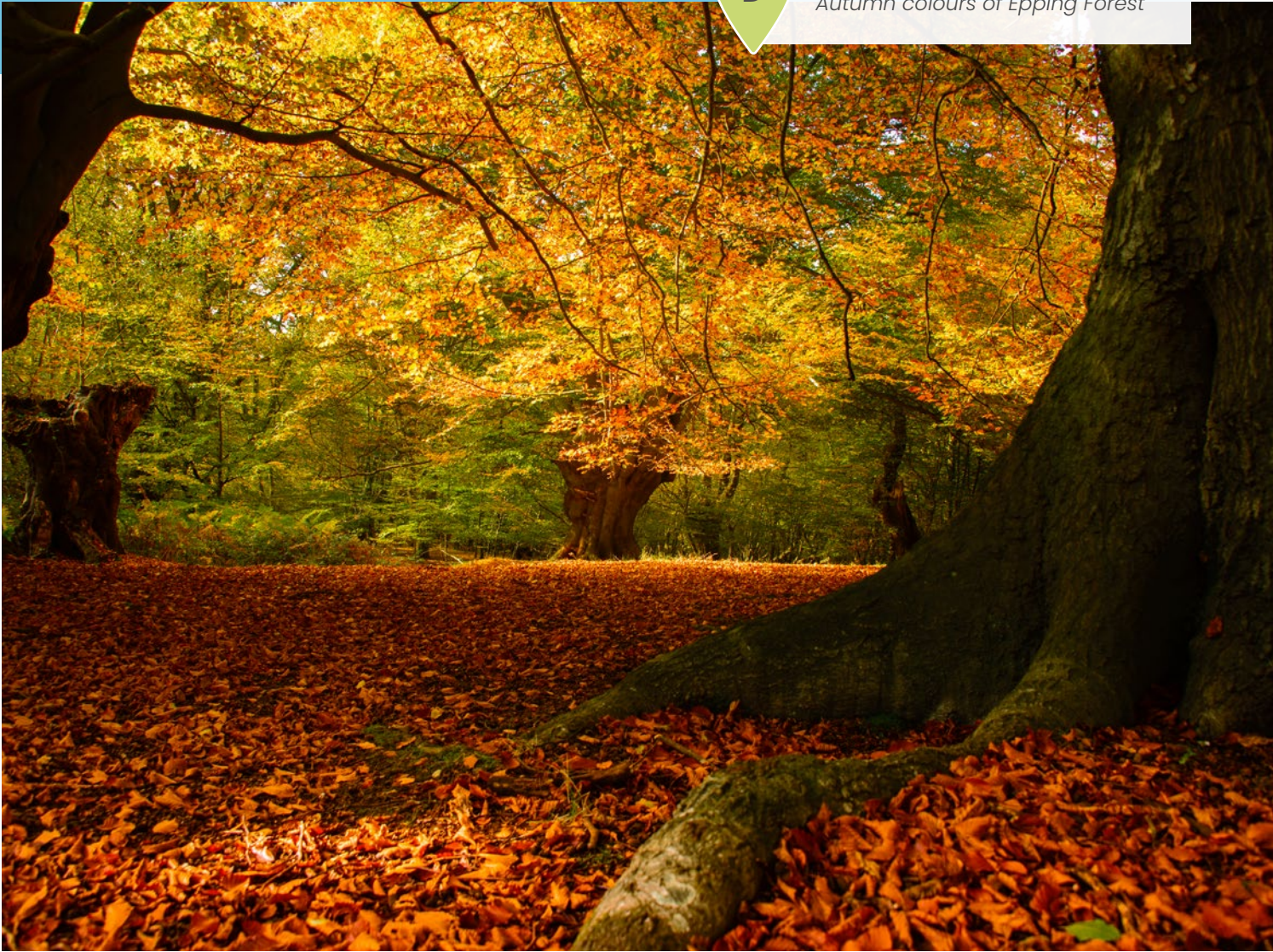
The great artist John Constable once painted in the area around Dedham, where Essex borders Suffolk; the landscapes on his canvases are, in some places, still as they were when he put brush to canvas. Verdant and tranquil, these places along the River Stour are home to kingfishers and voles; they are radiant with the awe and wonder of Divine creation. At the other end of the Diocese, the Olympic Park and Lea Valley offer acres and acres in which to stroll. Rainham Marshes is within a few hundred metres of the A13, yet it is alive with birds as a haven created by the RSPB. One of the ten national community forests covers a whole swathe of the Diocese – many millions of trees planted over the last thirty years in Thames Chase, stretching across Thurrock, Barking and Dagenham, and Havering. The coastline of the Diocese includes many treasures such as Shoeburyness, Old Leigh, Mersea Island and Burnham on Crouch, and we are also home to RHS Hyde Hall, Epping Forest, and several parks that include wonderful herds of deer.

The Diocesan Retreat House for young people, Walsingham House at Abbotswick, is set in 14 acres of grounds, with both tranquillity and biodiversity, including an area where 100 trees were recently planted.

The Essex Wildlife Trust, and Friends of every park in a London Borough, as well as the RSPB, the Thames Chase Project, and much else besides, are all desperate for volunteers. They also have skills and local knowledge to offer us, as we consider how our parish and school land could be a haven for bees and butterflies, hedgehogs and birds.

How many of us found ourselves reconnecting with nature – God’s creation – in the pandemic? What could we do to take the next step, to be part of nurturing that creation? In Genesis we are asked to “till” and “keep” the earth. Most certainly God gives us the gift of using the earth for food, and to sustain our lives. But in a way which looks after it and preserves the beauty and wonder of what has been gifted to us.

**“
How many of us found ourselves
reconnecting with nature – God’s
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To do this is to live our faith – and along the way we will find our mental well-being improving. We may also find we read Scripture with different eyes – to recognise the “attention full of fondness and wonder” that Jesus has for nature is to look afresh at the lakes and the fish, the mountains, fig trees, streams and sheep that form the very landscape of Scripture.

All of this, then – the huge number of our school and parish properties, and the miles driven to reach them; the charitable work that has been undertaken for decades; the very different levels of income in the Diocese; and the amazing natural beauty that is on our doorstep – all of it gives the immediate context for our environmental commitments and actions. But our Diocese is not an island, disconnected from the rest of the world.

The next section roots us in a different way, considering our inter-connectedness – both with human beings across the world, and in the relationship between caring for the poorest in the world, and caring for the planet, God’s gift to us.

An inter-connected world; an inter-connected faith. Pope Francis vision of “Integral Ecology” : the links between environmental action, and action to alleviate poverty

In the previous section we focused purely on the Diocese of Brentwood. However, when we think about our town, our parish and our Diocese, we can immediately recognise that we are connected much more widely. Almost any product we buy will have parts or ingredients from somewhere else in the world. These ingredients will have been picked, harvested or mined – and often engineered, sewn, produced and packaged – by our sisters and brothers in another country. Many people have relatives that live abroad. When fish swim in the seas and birds migrate across continents, they take no account of national boundaries.

That is one sort of inter-connectedness, moving us from a local view to something that encompasses the whole world. Another sort of inter-connectedness is also that central and vital theme of Laudato Si’: “integral ecology.” In other words, that “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (LS 49) are inseparably linked. Pope Francis describes it in these words:

“We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental ... strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”(LS 139).

This essential understanding means that we cannot campaign and act against poverty and ignore the impact of our actions on the environment, and we cannot campaign on green issues and ignore the conditions in which the poorest in the world live and work. In Pope Francis’ words:

“Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes ... Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.” (LS, 90)

Laudato Si’ recognises explicitly that it is the poorest in the world who are already suffering the most from the effects of climate change; they are least able to flee disaster, and often live in areas where no-one else wants to live precisely because they are most prone to flooding or fire. In addition the poorest suffer from a lack of protection as workers. To implement health and safety measures costs money; without these protections workers are more easily injured, and even die.

What has this got to do with the environment? An obvious example would be the use of chemicals and dyes which in the UK may be banned. They are cheap, but dangerous both to the workers using them, and to the planet. Such tragedies as child labour and modern slavery also come into this picture. It is all rooted, as Laudato Si’ reminds us time and again, in the desire to have more, to consume more. Our desire for the latest clothing and gadgets, and the ease with which we throw things away after just a few uses, means that we might turn a blind eye to how and where something is produced, just because it is cheap for us to buy.





Indeed, in recent years, our interconnectedness has felt more and more devastating: the floods, wildfires, hurricanes and ravaged rainforests are profoundly connected to the ways that we buy and consume goods, and the energy we use. Cheap clothes and electrical products, along with mass produced food, in vast quantities, ruin both the environment and the lives of those at the sharp end of producing them. As Jesus taught, and Saints and Popes over centuries have emphasised, every person in the world is our brother and sister. Many are suffering extreme hardship, poverty and even death, both from the effects of climate change and from appalling conditions where they work.

Sadly, there are countless examples to draw from. Here is just one story, focused on environmental devastation. It was first shared when young people gathered with Pope Francis and Bishops from across the world, to consider what it meant to live as young Catholics. Fr Dominic was at a meeting with some of the young people who had spoken directly with Pope Francis at the Synod in October 2018, and at the time he wrote:

“Joe described to me his own situation, which formed the intervention that he gave in the Synod hall. Samoa is a Pacific Island which is already massively affected by global warming. Heavy rainfall floods villages and literally washes away communities; every millimetre the ocean rises is a matter of life and death.

Very graphically Joe spoke of how, at the first sight of clouds, the mothers in the villages take wash tubs and tie their babies into them, and tie the wash tubs to themselves. That way, if a flood comes, the babies have a small extra chance of survival, as the wash tubs will float.

It is a desperate and incisive insight into the true cost of climate change, and this – combined with Joe’s faith – has inspired him to be an environmental campaigner.”

As a mother, or grandmother, reading these pages – indeed, as any parent – can you imagine

what those mothers are going through? The desperation of tying your baby into a wash tub hoping beyond hope that if you were lost in a flood your baby would somehow float across the Pacific Ocean. There are deep resonances, of course, with the story of Moses, and a mother from many centuries ago so scared for the life of her son that she put him in a basket to be discovered by another, so as to preserve his life.

Joe’s is just one story, amongst millions of lives already ruined by climate change; one story which shows us why we need to act swiftly, and which directly illustrates the Pope’s point about interconnectedness. The seas around Samoa are rising because the atmosphere is warming. Those living there cannot move house, or relocate, as they are so poor. If they leave the islands they become refugees, with all the fragility, poverty and trauma that entails. If the axis of the earth was tilted just a little differently, it would be Essex and East London that suffered from such effects of climate change.

Joe is our brother. In the final part of this section we focus directly on the teachings of our Church, rooted in the words and actions of Jesus in the Bible. Our faith is the touchstone and inspiration for us to “listen to the cry of the earth, and the cry of the world’s poorest people” (LS 49).

From Genesis to Laudato Si': deeply rooting our Diocesan Invitations, Commitments and Actions in the truths of our Catholic faith.

Remember the beginning of this introduction, where we imagined someone saying, "It's all just politics, isn't it? What's this got to do with my faith?" Certainly to consider questions of the environment can feel like that, sometimes: people who campaign for action in relation to climate change may use methods we disagree with, such as damaging property, or they may hold different views about other elements of Church teaching. It is important for us to find a true and authentic understanding of why this is not at all

"just politics" or an invention of Pope Francis, but that it draws from very deep roots within our faith.

At the end of this document you will find a short essay from Fr Gary Dench, where he illuminates this topic drawing from a very wide range of Theologians, Popes and Saints, rooted in both Old and New Testament Scripture. A striking insight comes from St Thomas Aquinas, who says that every part of creation bears "a trace of the Trinity."

How does Aquinas reach this insight? God enters the world incarnate. This comes from two Latin words in/carne, meaning in the flesh. "The word became flesh and dwelt amongst us." (John 1:14). Reflecting on this Pope St John Paul II said, "The Incarnation demonstrates that God, in taking on flesh without compromising His own divinity and without compromising the integrity of the creature He became, is not in competition with His Creation. Rather, His entry into the world He created, and the existence of which He continues to sustain, elevates and enhances the creation which already has an objective goodness and worth" (Dominum et Vivificantem 50).

This inherent worth of every part of creation has been a truth of our faith over centuries. It is evocatively put by St Francis, who speaks of the earth as our sister, the sun as our brother. The beginning of the beautiful Canticle of Creation in which he writes those words is "Praise Be to you, O Lord" and it is from the original language of the Canticle that we



E

Wild bird in Rainham Marshes

get “*Laudato Si’*” – Praise Be the Lord. In naming his 2015 Encyclical in this way Pope Francis is drawing from all of the intervening centuries, and – as was his namesake, St Francis of Assisi – drawing from Old and New Testament Scripture.

One of the most contentious elements can be what it means for God to make human beings “in his image and likeness” and to give us “dominion” over creation, as we read in the Book of Genesis. From this we may be drawn down a line of thinking that “dominion” means “domination” and that nature is there to use and abuse as we see fit, as long as we are doing fine. In fact, the original Hebrew of the Book of Genesis tells us that the earth is given to us to “till” and to “keep.” We are to be stewards of creation, not masters of it – God alone is the Creator.

Words of Pope Benedict XVI are helpful here: “The earth is not simply our property, which we can exploit according to our interests and desires. Rather, it is a gift of the Creator, who designed its innate order and has thus given us guidelines which we, as stewards of his creation, need to respect. . . Since faith in the Creator is an essential part of the Christian creed, the Church cannot and must not limit herself to passing on to the faithful the message of salvation alone. She has a responsibility towards creation, and must also publicly assert this responsibility. In so doing, she must not only defend earth, water and air as gifts of creation belonging to all.

“The earth is not simply our property”

She must also protect man from self-destruction. What is needed is something like a human ecology, correctly understood.” (Address to the Roman Curia, 2008).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that humanity “must ... respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment” (CCC339)

In considering this, it is interesting to reflect that one of the oldest habits in our Church is grace before meals. It is there at the Last Supper – which originates in the Jewish Passover – present at every Mass. Jesus takes the bread and wine, gives thanks, and blesses it. Before we eat, even the simplest meal, to give thanks for any food and drink that is in front of us is to notice that it is a gift, from God. In that sense, it is sacred, to be treated with respect and reverence. If we say grace before every meal

– not a prayer dashed off, but a grace full of gratitude – then our relationship with the food we eat is transformed. We notice more about where it has come from, the ingredients and processes used to make it. Above all, we notice it as Divine gift.

This is the beginnings of a journey where we notice, from the heart, how connected we are to each part of creation. It is the insight of St Paul when he tells us that “creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Romans 8:21) at the moment when humanity receives the full revelation of God’s glory.

Fr Gary cites two seminal works from Pope St John Paul II to conclude his essay, *Fides et Ratio*, and *Evangelium Vitae*: “Stewardship of creation, and a recognition of the responsibility that goes with humanity’s dominion over the earth is integral to understanding the duties which human beings owe to their Creator.”



As the Diocese of Brentwood we propose this set of invitations, commitments and actions with the firm conviction that to look after the planet, and to recognise it as God's gift, is an indispensable part of our faith. This is complemented by the "integral ecology" approach which means that listening and responding to the cry of the poor is inseparable from listening and responding to the cry of the earth.

It is fitting, then, to conclude this introduction with the two prayers that Pope Francis writes as the conclusion to *Laudato Si'*. After the commitments and actions pages which follow next, you will find a very comprehensive list of resources to aid you with further prayers, liturgies and Masses, in order to bring all of this to prayer in your home, your school, and your parish partnership.

A prayer for our earth – Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

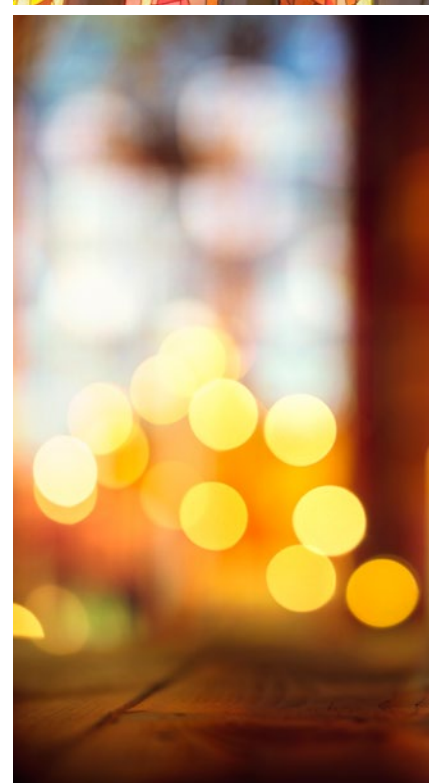
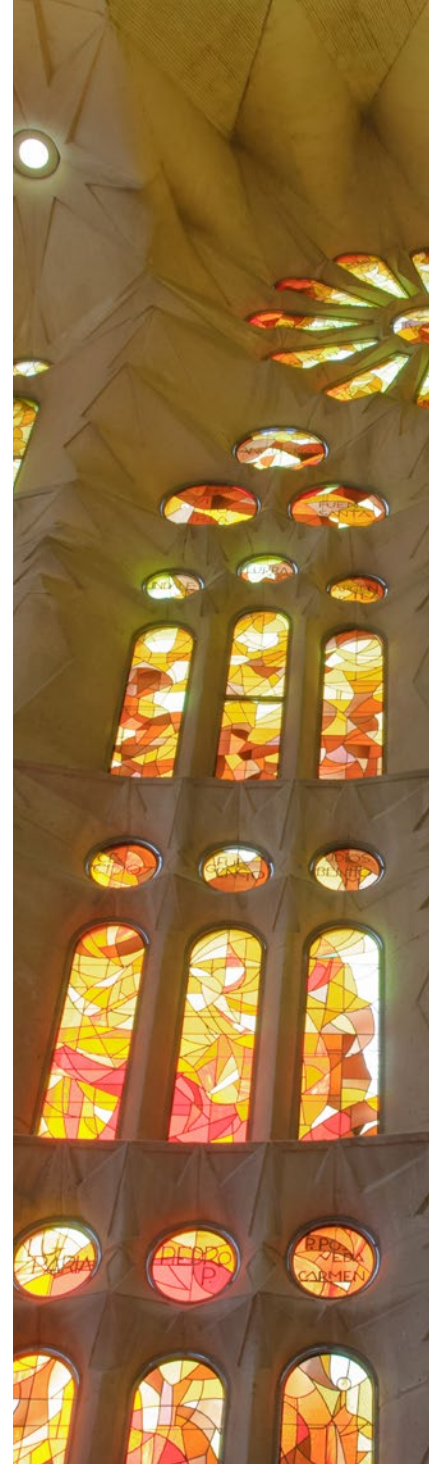
This is a prayer which can be prayed in Catholic Churches, and in any Ecumenical or Inter-Faith setting

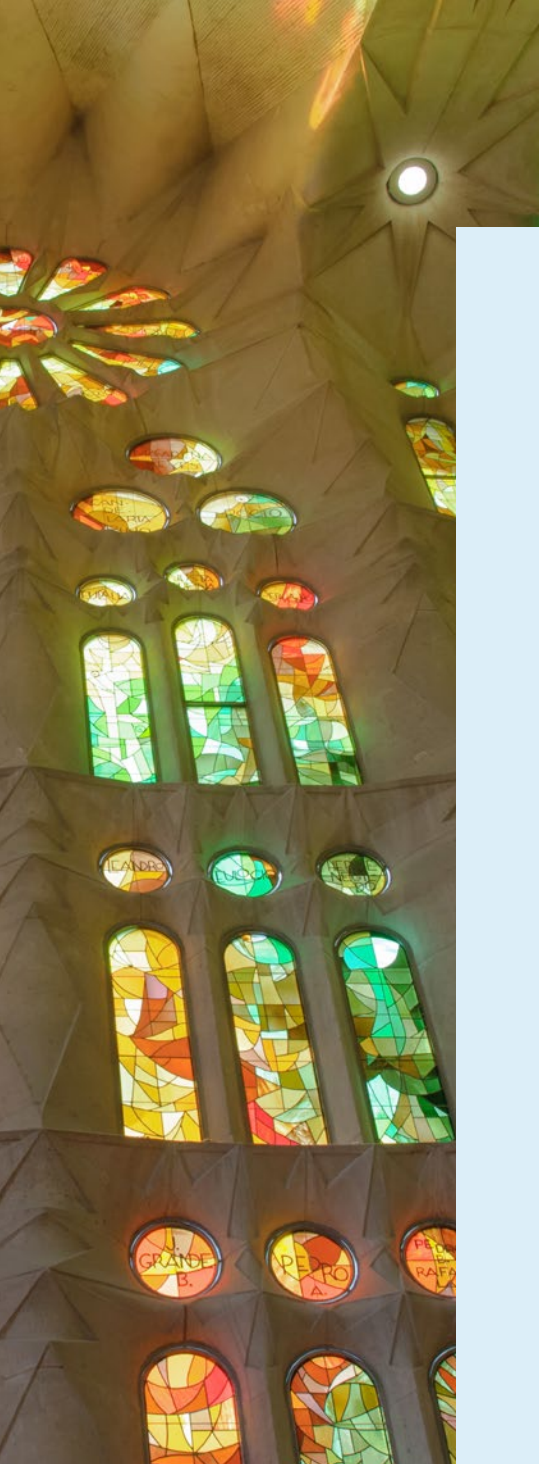
**All-powerful God,
you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.**

**You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace,
that we may live as brothers and sisters,
harming no one.**

**O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.**

**Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.**





A Christian prayer in union with creation – Pope Francis, Laudato Si'

This is a prayer which can be prayed in Catholic Churches, and in any Ecumenical setting

**Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.**

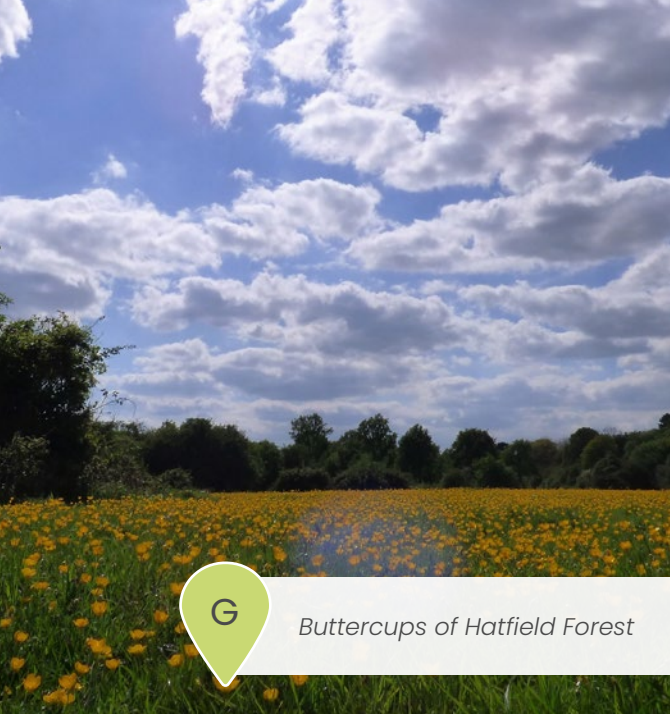
**Praise be to you! Son of God, Jesus, through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature in your risen glory.**

**Praise be to you! Holy Spirit,
by your light you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.**

**Praise be to you! Triune Lord,
wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is.**

**God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good,
advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.**

**O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you! Amen.**



G

Buttercups of Hatfield Forest



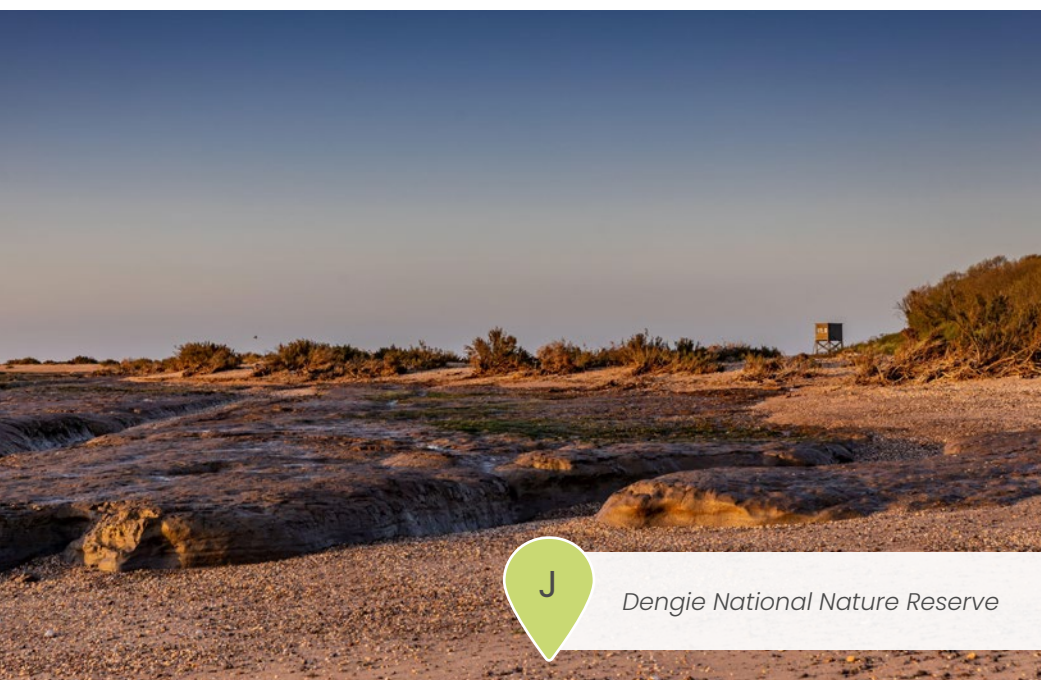
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The gardens at Easton Lodge



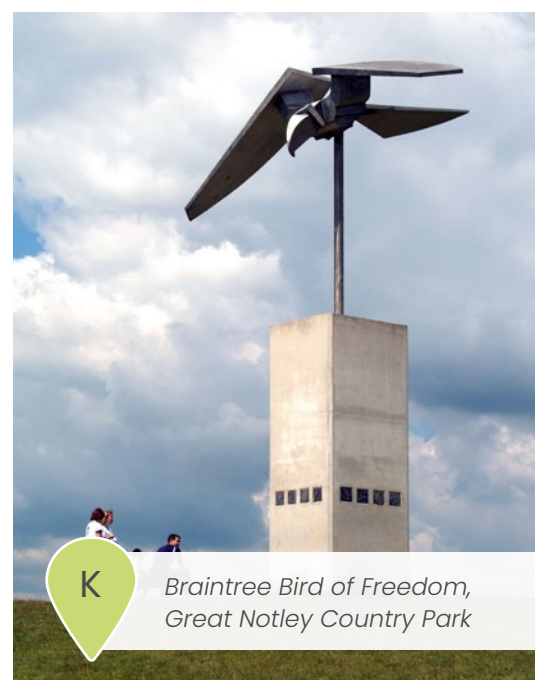
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Chappel and Wakes Colne viaduct



J

Dengie National Nature Reserve



K

Braintree Bird of Freedom, Great Notley Country Park



Part 2

Our Invitations,
Commitments and Actions

i Commitments and Actions as a Diocese

What the Diocese of Brentwood is already doing

- We have a Diocesan scheme to supply electricity and gas from renewable sources, and this scheme is used by the vast majority of parishes.
- Since 2018 we have had a Diocesan commitment to the Real Living Wage, ensuring that everyone is paid a wage which can support them and their family.
- We are paying close attention to the Catholic resources that are being developed by the national “Guardians of Creation” project during 2021/22. These resources will guide us towards improving our energy efficiency, and reducing the impact on the environment of everything we do. This will also enable us to develop a strong decarbonisation strategy.
- Through our work with agencies such as Cafod and Aid to the Church in Need, we campaign for changes to unjust and repressive systems, and work for structural change to help alleviate poverty once and for all.
- We are building on a long heritage of ethical investment in the Diocese (see Appendix 2 for our commitment to this, since 1992), and (June 2021) have fully phased out what was a very small amount of investment in companies where the production or trading of fossil fuels makes up more than 10% of their business. We will remain fully divested from such investment.

- There are many excellent and practical initiatives already happening in our schools and parishes, linked through our Diocesan Caritas (established in 2018).
- As we continue to find fresh ways to link school and parish work, we will ensure every parishioner and every young person in our Catholic schools are given the chance to see how wonderful and vital it is to live our Catholic Social Teaching in terms of care for the environment, and for the poorest people in the world. This will be delivered through the “Together for the Common Good” initiative, being piloted in five parish partnerships in Autumn 2021.

Alongside the Parish Partnership work, and beginning in early 2022, the Diocesan Trustees commit to:

- Recognising that the most serious and significant way in which the Diocese uses energy and generates carbon dioxide is through our buildings, we will appoint the necessary specialists to be able to gain a thorough understanding of the energy usage of the property owned by the Diocese, and the environmental impact of Diocesan and parish activities. This will enable us to understand what it means to develop a decarbonisation strategy, and to implement such a strategy.

L

Wild flowers in front of the London Olympic Stadium, Stratford



- Planning for the future employment of a part time parish-focused environmental sustainability co-ordinator, working as part of Caritas Diocese of Brentwood, to help in developing the parish Commitments and Actions named in this document, supporting parish partnerships.

Our Diocesan commitments have been inspired by, and will continue to be guided by, the ongoing work of the "Guardians of Creation" research project run by the Diocese of Salford, St Mary's University and the Laudato Si' Research Institute.

Alongside this, the Trustees commit to:

- Ever-deeper integration of environmental sustainability and fair working conditions into purchasing decisions made by the Diocese (such as purchase of paper and other consumables at Diocesan level); sharing information about suppliers with parishes; ensuring Vicariate reports include reference to where items have been purchased.
- Encouragement of parishes to work towards the Cafod "LiveSimply" Award, with the aim of 50% of the parishes in the Diocese working towards the award by the end of 2022.
- Encouraging every Diocesan staff member, and every member of the clergy, to personally commit to three lifestyle changes, which they choose, in order to reduce their environmental impact, and alleviate poverty.

From October 2023 onwards the Diocesan Trustees will ensure:

- An honest evaluation of what has been achieved since October 2021; this is set as an agenda item for the Board meeting in September 2023.
- An unambiguous focus on decarbonisation.
- Ongoing work with schools and parishes, such that care for the poor, and care for God's creation, is an integral part of the mission and vision of every school and parish partnership in the Diocese.

In 2024 this document will be thoroughly revisited, and new proposals for action offered, in the light of all that is known then.

As Brentwood Diocese, we are already...



Praying for creation



Investing with a strict Ethical Investment Policy



Sourcing and using energy from Renewables



Campaigning for change to alleviate poverty



Paying the Real Living Wage

We are committing to...



Divestment from fossil fuels



Significant decarbonisation of buildings and activities



Planning for the employment of an environmental sustainability co-ordinator



Cafod LiveSimply Award



Regular review of these commitments

ii Invitations, Commitments and Actions for parishes and parish partnerships



What parishes are already doing:

- 7 parishes have achieved or are working towards the Cafod *LiveSimply* Award.
- Many parishes include prayers on environmental issues, and for the poor, in their weekly intercessions; a number of parishes also mark the World Day of the Poor and the “Season of Creation.”
- Many parishes receive donations for local foodbanks; at least three parishes manage and run foodbanks for their local community.
- Parishes have engaged in a range of environmental initiatives, including the “rewilding” of land, tree and bulb planting, and the provision of cycle racks.
- Many parishes have reduced paper consumption through sending newsletters by email, and displaying them online.

For more examples, and how to approach starting this type of action from scratch, have a look at the parish case studies in Appendix 4.

Could we commit to?

Working towards the *LiveSimply* Award, which offers a very wide choice of possible actions for parishes to take, in order to increase biodiversity, reduce climate footprint, and alleviate poverty

From October 2021 to October 2023 parishes and parish partnerships are invited to commit to as much of the following as possible:

- Regularly including prayer for creation, and for the poor, at parish Masses and liturgies, and marking moments in the liturgical year such as the World Day of the Poor, and the “Season of Creation”, following the initiatives of Pope Francis.
- Appointing a parishioner, working with a small group, as “environmental lead” (for the parish or partnership), to be a point of contact for resources and ideas, and to be part of a network to share best practice across the Diocese.
- Working towards the LiveSimply Award, which offers a very wide choice of possible actions for parishes to take, in order to increase biodiversity, reduce climate footprint, and alleviate poverty. (In many cases, parishes will already be taking some actions in these areas – the LiveSimply Award is a celebration of what you are already doing, and an encouragement to go further).
- Gaining recognition as a Fair Trade parish.
- Arrange a screening of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales “Global Healing” films; powerful short films to increase knowledge and start conversations.

- Asking suppliers about the environmental impacts and labour used in the production of goods bought by the parish (paper and votive candles, for example, along with other consumables used in large quantities).
- Considering the use of parish land:
 - Are there areas which could be “rewilded”? Even if parish land is mainly tarmac, for car parking, could large pots of wildlife-attracting flowers and shrubs be added?
 - Are there areas which could become an orchard, or an allotment, perhaps in partnership with the local community?

In October 2023 parishes will be invited to commit to:

- An honest evaluation of what has been achieved since October 2021, and work to fill in the gaps.
- Continuing to share best practice, so that each parish learns from every other parish.
- Ensuring care for creation and care for the poor is integral to the mission of the parish, as part of the mandate to “Spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in Essex and East London”. This will include decisions relating to parish activities, parish property, and goods and resources purchased by the parish.

In October 2024 this document will be thoroughly revisited, and new proposals for action offered, in the light of all that is known then.



Regular prayer for Creation, and for the world’s poorest



Cafod LiveSimply Award



Food bank donations



Become a FairTrade parish



Go paperless



Walk, cycle or take public transport to church



Rewild some parish land



Screen “Global Healing” films

iii Invitations, Commitments and Actions by school staff, school pupils, and Catholic Multi Academy Trusts (CMATs)

What schools and CMATs are already doing:

- Pupils and staff routinely engage with CAFOD in terms of curriculum and fundraising.
- Staff and pupils lead prayers on environmental issues, and for the poor, in assemblies and liturgies; a number of schools also run projects and initiatives raising awareness of the need for care of our common home.
- Many schools support local foodbanks and charities concerned with the welfare of the poorer and marginalised members of our community.
- Pupils, staff, and school site managers engage in initiatives to reduce the impact of our lives on the environment, including extensive recycling, the provision of cycle racks, and the encouragement to walk to school where possible.

From October 2021 to October 2023 schools will be asked to commit to:

- Regularly including prayer for creation, and for the poor, at school Masses and liturgies, and marking moments in the liturgical year such as the World Day of the Poor, and the “Season of Creation”, following the initiatives of Pope Francis.
- Appointing a member of staff to be a point of contact for resources and ideas, and to be part of a network to share best practice across the Diocese.
- Developing a group of pupils from across the age range to work as “Laudato Si’ Leaders” sharing and developing ideas within the school community. Such a group could also readily link to groups active within local parishes.
- Working towards the *LiveSimply* Award, which offers a very wide choice of possible actions and projects for schools to consider, and for pupils to engage with, in order to increase biodiversity, reduce climate footprint, campaign for justice for the world’s poorest, and directly help to alleviate poverty. (Schools may well already be developing or pursuing projects or actions in this respect, in which case the *LiveSimply* Award will celebrate and affirm what is already being done, with encouragement and inspiration to go further.



Could we commit to?
Developing a group of pupils from across the age range to work as “Laudato Si Leaders” sharing and developing ideas within the school community.



- Gaining recognition as a Fair Trade school (for further details, see: schools.fairtrade.org.uk/fairtrade-schools-awards).
- Asking suppliers about the environmental and social impacts and labour used in the production of goods bought by the school (for example stationery, school uniform and sports kit).
- Undertaking an “energy audit”; considering and implementing its recommendations.
- Ensuring that there is an “environmental impact assessment”, in a way which involves stakeholders, and leads to tangible changes within school life.
- Considering the use of school sites. Are there areas, however small, which could be “rewilded”? Could appropriate areas of welcome or recreation be enhanced by the addition of large pots of wildlife-attracting flowers and shrubs? Are there areas where vegetables could be grown, enhancing the knowledge of children and young people about where food is sourced, and what it means to grow things in a sustainable way, as well as showing them some of the challenges of farming, especially when the climate is unpredictable.

- Working collaboratively with local parishes and, if in a CMAT, with partner schools in order to share good practice and ideas and encourage wider participation, for example in adopting pledges for three meaningful lifestyle changes by individuals and communities.

In October 2023 schools and CMATs will be asked to commit to

- An honest evaluation of what has been achieved since October 2021, and work to fill in the gaps.
- Sharing best practice, so that each school learns from every other school.
- Ensuring care for creation and care for the poor is integral to the mission of the school, as part of the mandate to “Spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in Essex and East London”. This will include decisions relating to school curriculum, school activities and initiatives, use of the school site, and resources and supplies purchased by the school.

In October 2024 this document will be thoroughly revisited, and new proposals for action offered, in the light of all that is known then.



Regular prayers for creation, in form time and assemblies



Cafod LiveSimply Schools Award



Food bank donations



Rewilding part of school grounds



School Recycling



Checking the suppliers of school uniform and other kit



Creating allotments



Walking, cycling or taking public transport to school



Laudato Si' pupil led leadership team

iv Invitations, Commitments and Actions for individuals



N
Swan with cygnets on the River Colne, near Colchester

What is already happening:

Many parishioners have already taken action to reduce their environmental footprint, to purchase Fair Trade products, to look at their energy usage, and to be very actively involved in rewilding projects and/or growing their own fruit and vegetables.

In addition, many parishioners demonstrate active and significant care for the poor, both within the Diocese and across the world.

What parishioners can commit to from October 2021:

Every Catholic parishioner in the Diocese will be invited to commit to three personal lifestyle changes with the specific aim of reducing their environmental impact and alleviating poverty. As part of parish work, it will be for each parish (and parish partnership) to offer suggestions to parishioners, depending on the local context. It will be important to do this in language of “invitation not instruction” and to take account of the very varying economic and personal circumstances of parishioners; offering a wide range of possibilities using the sheets given at the launch of the Laudato Si’ Invitations, Commitments and Actions document, and available on the

Laudato Si’ section of the Diocesan website. Ways to begin discussion about this, and a selection of possible ideas, are given here, with further suggestions in the case studies offered in Appendix 4.

Ways to start the conversation:

- Dialogue about how parishioners travel to Mass, and how parish buildings are used.
- Encouragement to include issues of poverty and environmental concern in personal prayer.
- Encouragement to families and individuals to pray grace before consuming any food or drink, as a reminder that it is all Divine gift.
- Encouragement of individual commitment to Fair Trade products.
- Noticing that our Catholic teaching already includes a “meat free” element, as this has been a sign of sacrifice on Fridays, and other days of Fasting and Abstinence, for many decades. Looking at the root of that – Jesus’ sacrifice for us – is a pathway to considering why such sacrifice, to help every person on the planet, can naturally be an integral part of the way we live our faith.
- Researching some initiatives within the local community, and helping parishioners to join in. For example, local conservation

groups, and local parks that need volunteers. Or working with neighbours and using parts of gardens to plant trees. Or “rewilding” areas of land to help bees and butterflies. For those in more densely populated parts of the Diocese, parishioners could help to investigate solar panels for a tower block, or electric charging points for their road.

- Parishioners could be invited to conduct a “home energy audit” of their flat or house, inspired by the energy audit of parish property.
- The *LiveSimply* Award offers a very wide range of suggestions for individuals, including:
 - Committing to using public transport, cycling or walking, rather than driving.
 - Reducing the amount we buy and use; recycling wherever is possible; reusing anything we can.
 - Bringing to personal prayer the questions of our care for creation.
 - Considering personal energy consumption, and the use of green energy in our homes.

- Actions in solidarity with the poor
 - for example, sleeping outside for a night in solidarity with the homeless (and to raise money for charities working with people who are homeless).
- Campaigning for those who do not have a voice.
- Campaigning against the use of pesticides which can destroy vital habitats for many insects, affecting bees, butterflies and birds – and eventually the whole food chain.
- Switching lights in the home to LED, which are vastly more energy efficient.
- Buying food sourced from local farms, where that is possible, and being conscious about the miles our food travels.
- Eating a more plant based diet
- Using eco-friendly natural cleaning products rather than chemical detergents.

Each year parishioners will be asked to evaluate what they have achieved in the last 12 months, and what could be achieved in the next 12, renewing and revisiting their personal pledges.

Laudato Si'
Pledge Cards



**Personal prayer
and saying Grace
before meals**



**Campaigning
for change**



**Volunteering
at local wildlife
charity or park**



**Buying Fair
Trade products**



**Rewilding part
of a garden**



**Switching to LED
lights at home**



**Walking, cycling
or using public
transport**



**Planting bee
friendly window
boxes**



**Growing fruit
and vegetables,
even on a
window sill**



**Reading
Laudato Si'**

Appendix 1

Further insight into the Scripture, Magisterium and Tradition that underpin Laudato Si'

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us

The mystery of the Incarnation is one of the central truths of our Catholic faith. Pope Benedict reminded us that it is 'the greatest event in our history'.² It is also a truth which can all too easily be taken for granted, even to the extent that its greatness, and its revolutionary character, becomes lost on us.³ The Incarnation demonstrates that God, in taking on flesh without compromising His own divinity and without compromising the integrity of the creature He became, is not in competition with His Creation. Rather, His entry into the world He created, and the existence of which He continues to sustain, elevates and enhances the creation which already has an objective goodness and worth.⁴ Any attempt to deny this value is incompatible with a truly Christian understanding of the world in light of the Incarnation.

This should not, however, be taken to mean that humanity is not an integral part of creation. The Church asserts the intrinsic goodness and value of all human life. Currents of thought which, even when seeking to protect the planet, deny the inherent

goodness in human life are also incompatible with a Christian understanding of creation.

A belief in the inherent goodness of the material world, including humanity, has been intrinsic to the Catholic faith since the time of Christ. It has often been vigorously taught despite sometimes considerable opposition.

The special care with which the Church seeks to avoid such misunderstandings about the objective value of the material creation is a natural consequence of the Incarnation. Through the Incarnation, matter becomes integral to our salvation in Christ.

This goodness is a 'trace of the Trinity'⁵ which every creature bears. The goodness of the entirety of the created order is both a work and the reflection of divine wisdom. St Gregory of Nyssa writes that creation 'looks eternally upon the First Cause of the things that are and is preserved in every respect in the good by its participation in what transcends it'.⁶ This is also beautifully expressed in the Vespers antiphon for 17th December which speaks of Wisdom coming forth 'from the mouth of the Most High . . . and ordering all things powerfully and gently'.⁷ This creation

² Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Our Lady of Loreto Square, 4th October 2012

³ Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, Paul VI Audience Hall, 9th January 2013

⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 1986, 50.

⁵ St Thomas Aquinas, ST I Q45 Art 7 Resp; See also St Augustine *De Trinitate* iii, 8.

⁶ St Gregory of Nyssa, Homily 6 on the Song of Songs

⁷ *O Sapientia, quae ex ore Altissimi prodisti, attingens a fine usque ad finem, fortiter suaviterque disponens omnia: veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiae*; O Wisdom, who proceeded from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other and ordering all things powerfully and gently: come to teach us the way of prudence.

is a manifestation of God's own goodness and its beauty gives him greater glory.⁸

Men and women, we know, are created in the image and likeness of God and bear more than simply a trace. This is, in a particular way, on account of our capacity for rational thought and our ability to know God, the world, and ourselves, because of this reason. Like our Creator we too, in an analogical sense, are able to create, to build, and to bring order out of chaos through rightful exercise of this reason.

It is, therefore, to humanity that God gives 'dominion' over the rest of creation. Just as humanity is subject to God, so also is creation to be subject to mankind. While this brings power and authority, it also carries with it a heavy responsibility that mankind exercises this dominion with the same care that God watches over us. As co-operators with God in the world He has created, we are able to take what God has created and fashion things which are new, things which creation, on its own, would not be able to produce.

This is reflected in God's command to mankind in Genesis. Humanity's

task is to till (abad) and keep (shamar) the garden. It can be seen here that man's task is to cultivate the earth so that it brings forth fruit for his continued existence, but these Hebrew words may also be translated as 'guard' and 'serve.' These two words are found together in only two places in the Scripture. The first is in Genesis and the other is in the Book of Numbers, describing the duties of the Levites. God's own presence in both Eden and the sanctuary

illustrate beautifully the notion of Eden as the first 'temple' with Adam as its 'priest', whose care for what he has been given is an integral part of his duty to his own Creator.

“
the greatest event
in our history”



⁸ Vatican I, Dei Filius

“ Environment is God’s gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole”

This vision, of course, describes humanity before the fall. Humanity’s disobedience disrupts this harmony and brings sin and discord into what had once been a garden paradise. Relationships between human beings become all too easily marked injustice and immorality. Both natural and moral evil become a part of humanity’s life within the created order. Yet out of love for the world He created, God enters the world of sin which He continues to love, taking on the fullness of humanity, in the person of Jesus Christ, to begin the process of restoring that broken harmony. This restoration is both for mankind and for the creation which, in some mystical sense, also awaits its own freedom from corruption.⁹

It is important to be clear about what ‘dominion’ over the created order entails. Human beings, as the stewards to whom God has entrusted dominion over His creation, have a duty of care and responsibility.

Such governance must serve both humanity’s needs and those of the created order within which humanity is set. ‘The dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to “use and misuse,” or to dispose of things as one pleases. The limitation imposed from the beginning by the Creator himself and expressed symbolically by the prohibition not to “eat of the fruit of the tree” (cf. Gen 2:16–17) shows clearly enough that, when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also

to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity. A true concept of development cannot ignore the use of the elements of nature, the renewability of resources and the consequences of haphazard industrialization – three considerations which alert our consciences to the moral dimension of development.’¹⁰ Abuse of the authority given to humanity constitutes an offence against the Creator and His plan. Humanity ‘must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment.’¹¹

Pope Benedict has written clearly that the ‘environment is God’s gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole.’¹² Indeed, our faith is the basis for this care. ‘The earth is not simply our property, which we can exploit according to our interests and desires. Rather, it is a gift of the Creator, who designed its innate order and has thus given us guidelines which we, as stewards of his creation, need to respect. . . Since faith in the Creator is an essential part of the Christian creed, the Church cannot and must not limit herself to passing on to the faithful the message of salvation alone. She has a responsibility towards creation, and must also publicly assert this responsibility. In so doing, she must not only defend earth, water and air as gifts of creation

9 Rom 8

10 Pope St John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, 34.

11 Catechism of the Catholic Church

12 Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*

belonging to all. She must also protect man from self-destruction. What is needed is something like a human ecology, correctly understood.¹³

In this we find a balance between creation's objective goodness (and the glory it gives to God) and its utility to humanity's own betterment. This balance is all too easily lost because of humanity's own concupiscence. It can be too easy for man 'who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his own work, forgets that this is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are. Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him.'¹⁴

Humanity's responsibility in this regard, in view of its immense creative and potentially destructive power, 'cannot base itself on the rejection of the modern world or wish for a return to a "lost paradise"'.¹⁵ Our governance over creation is a gift from God, a gift which cannot be seen as evil. Our freedom, in this regard comes with a responsibility and the recognition that we are subject to both moral and biological



laws¹⁶ in our treatment of the creation placed under our care, and that our responsible use be consistent with love of God and love of neighbour.

Our temptation to reject this responsibility consists not in the fear it undermines Catholic doctrine, but because of undue attachment to comfortable and consumerist lifestyles.

This temptation is, in other ways, reflected in discussions outside the Church in relation to this common concern. Questions of overpopulation and birth control through means which are gravely inconsistent with the dignity of human life are merely staving off a serious reflection on how we live. 'The Church has a responsibility toward creation, in particular because of its expertise in humanity. Above all, what John Paul II and Benedict XVI call human ecology must be preserved and respected in order to establish peace with the earth. Thus man will be able to reconcile with the environment only when he rediscovers the dignity and

greatness of his vocation of being a son or daughter of God. There is no true ecology without a conversion of man's heart toward his Creator and Lord'¹⁷

Much of what Pope Francis has drawn the world's attention to in *Laudato Si'* is heavily inspired by previous Magisterial teaching, the theological reflection of the early Church fathers, and what is contained within the Scriptures. In highlighting the 'ill-considered exploitation of nature'¹⁸ and reminding humanity of the responsibility that is inherent in its dominion, the Pope is fulfilling his duty to call the world to conversion. Stewardship of creation, and a recognition of the responsibility that goes with humanity's dominion over the earth is integral to understanding the duties which human beings owe to their Creator.

Fr Gary Dench, May 2021

¹³ Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia, 2008.

¹⁴ Pope St John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 37

¹⁵ Pope St John Paul II, 'The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility,' 1990 World Day of Peace Message, 13.

¹⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Bundestag, 2011

¹⁷ Bishop Dominique Rey, Catholicism, Ecology and the Environment: A Bishop's Reflection, 2013

¹⁸ Pope Paul VI, Octogesima Adveniens

¹⁹ Pope John Paul II, Fides et Ratio, 1998 & Evangelium Vitae, 1995.

Appendix 2

Diocesan Ethical Policy for Investments – first adopted approx. 1992. (from the Diocesan annual accounts)

The portfolio avoids investment in tobacco, arms, alcohol, gambling and pornography. Investment is also to be avoided in companies which support oppressive regimes, or trade in products which are produced by child labour or in forced labour camps, or companies which have been involved in the exploitation or unjust treatment of employees.

We have also asked our investment managers, Sarasin and Partners LLP, to bring to our attention any investments made by their Alpha CIF in companies which generate any revenue from the direct or indirect manufacture of pharmaceutical products, the use of which would contravene the Catholic Church's teaching on the sanctity of life.

Since 2020, in conversation with our investment managers, the Diocese is already committed to a portfolio based on the Sarasins Climate Active Endowment Fund, designed to "drive positive change by pressing boards of directors to take steps towards strategic and operational alignment with the goals of the Paris Accord." (Sarasins website statement) Where companies do not take such steps, Sarasins divests from them within 3 years.

Further to this, we have established (July 2021) that we are no longer part of any investment funds which hold any shares in in companies where 10% or more of their business is trading or producing fossil fuels. We do not seek to be part of any such investment in the future.



Appendix 3

Resources for Parishes and Individuals

There are many organisations that have already created and collated resources. To them we owe great thanks. The websites mentioned below will signpost you to many excellent resources, which are usually free to share. They include prayers, liturgies, and reading which gives great insight into the issues which have inspired our Diocesan Laudato Si' Commitments and Actions. If you are reading the paper version of this document, the easiest way to access these resources will be to go to www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/LaudatoSi/resources, where you will find all the links.

Pope Francis 2015 Encyclical Laudato Si' is available in paper form via publishers such as CTS, and could be ordered from your local bookshop too. It is in a PDF / downloadable version at: https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf

The Ecological Conversion Group have done a tremendous job in collecting all sorts of resources to support parishes, including a very accessible guide to Laudato Si' from a parish perspective. Take time on the website www.journeyto2030.org

Cafod have a section of their website devoted to this work, including excellent resources for parishes wishing to work towards the *LiveSimply* award. Some starting points would be:

<https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Livesimply-award>
and <https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Prayer-resources/Climate-Sunday-Mass>

In 2008 Cafod also re-issued the **Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales** (CBCEW) Document "Call of Creation", originally published in 2002, which contains many early threads of the ideas in Laudato Si' – <https://cbcew.org.uk/plain/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/11/call-of-creation-cafod-2008.pdf>

The most recent CBCEW letter on **Care for our common home** was issued at Pentecost 2021, and the link is: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/pastoral-letter-environment-pentecost/>

Training for individuals wishing to deepen their knowledge, and gain skills for use in their parish and community, is provided through the Laudato Si' Animators Course run through the Laudato Si' Movement. The course is free, and is designed for busy people, with "bite-sized" online input, of excellent quality: <https://LaudatoSi/animators.org/>

Academic Research is centred at the Laudato Si' Research Institute, at Campion Hall, Oxford, and all the details are on their website: <https://lsri.campion.ox.ac.uk/>

Local projects that are always seeking volunteers can be found with a quick search of your area, and include the Thames Chase Forest <https://www.thameschase.org.uk/> and Essex Wildlife Trust <https://www.essexwt.org.uk/>.

For **young people and teachers** there are a set of resources from the Climate Coalition featured on the BCYS website: <https://bcys.net/resource-category/climate-change/>

The **RSPB website** also has local links, as well as many, many ideas about how to make your window ledge or garden more attractive to nature: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/>

The **Diocesan Caritas** website has many local projects, helping and supporting the poorest and most marginalised within the Diocese. www.caritasbrentwood.org

We will continue to update the Laudato Si' pages on the Diocesan website with many more links as the months go by; please do feel very welcome to email with suggestions and ideas:
LaudatoSi@dioceseofbrentwood.org

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).

**“
We feed 500
people, three
times a week”**



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.



“ We invite you to become part of a journey in your home, your parish, your school, the Diocese of Brentwood, the Catholic Church in England and Wales, and with many people, of all faiths and none, across the whole world. We hope that it is an exciting journey – discovering afresh the beauty of nature, discovering new ways to live our faith, and being part of something that brings change, hope and Gospel joy where such things are urgently and powerfully needed, in our own communities and in other countries. ”

Places of natural beauty in the Diocese of Brentwood



A Langdon Hills Country Park

B RHS Hyde Hall

C Hadleigh Castle

D Epping Forest

E Rainham Marshes

F Flatford Mill, Dedham

G Hatfield Forest

H Easton Lodge

I Chappel Viaduct

J Dengie National Nature Reserve

K Great Notley Country Park

L Olympic Park, Stratford

M Navestock, Essex

N River Colne, Colchester

O River Stour