



## Harrogate Deanery Synod 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024

St Robert's Church, 37 Main Street, Pannal, HG3 1JZ

### GUEST SPEAKER:

The Rt. Revd Anna Eltringham, Bishop of Ripon

#### Purpose of the presentation:

To consider what we can do, and how we can engage and encourage others to take care of and protect our environment. Bishop Anna set the scene by stating that 2023 was the hottest year yet on record, with significant evidence of climate change, i.e. floods, drought, heatwaves, and fires, etc.

#### Background:

Bishop Anna explained that she first became involved in the environment journey via the Fair Trade movement when she was in her twenties. She attended an open meeting which formed a wonderful movement to promote Fair Trade. She explained that this meeting 'lit a fire' for her as it was all about injustice. She became challenged by the unfairness and inequality in the world i.e. people in the UK having so much more in comparison to others who have so little, by chance of where they were born.

Bishop Anna explained that she felt inspired by the Holy Spirit to join in with God's kingdom and take action. She felt a responsibility to do what she could to redress the balance of inequality in small ways, e.g. consider choices made in the supermarket and lobby for change. She said she was inspired to join this movement to help change hearts and minds.

#### Where are you on this environment journey?

Bishop Anna acknowledged that the environment journey includes nature, and said she is saddened to see how habitats are being destroyed, and how climate change is killing the natural world, but what really engages her is people.

She asked each of us to consider where we are in relation to doing what we can for God's creation and the environment, individually and as a church. Where are we on this scale? Are we...

- Eco warriors – fired up to do everything we possibly can?
- In the middle – feeling a bit jaded but still trying to do something?
- Can't be bothered – feeling nothing is ever going to change?

#### Root cause of the climate change challenge:

Bishop Anna asked what is the root cause of climate change? The answer is **greed** and a deep seated desire to accumulate wealth no matter what the cost. She stated the following statistics... The richest 1 per cent of the world's population are responsible for more than twice as much carbon pollution as the people who make up the poorest half of humanity.

Bishop Anna then read from Greta Thunberg's book, 'The Climate Book' (2022).

‘As we distance ourselves further from nature, the harder it becomes to remind ourselves that we are part of it. We are after all, an animal species among other animal species. We do not stand above the elements that make up the Earth. We are dependent upon them. We do not own this planet, no more than the frogs or the beetles, the deer or the rhinoceros own it. This is not our world.

The rapidly escalating climate and ecological crisis is a global crisis; it affects all living plants and beings. But to say that all of humankind is responsible for it is very, very far from the truth. Most people today are living well within the planetary boundaries. It is only a minority of us who have caused this crisis and who keep driving it forward. This is why the popular argument that ‘there are too many people’ is a very misleading one. Population does matter, but it is not people who are causing emissions and depleting the Earth, it is what some people do – it is some people’s habits and behaviour, in combination with our economic structures, that are causing the catastrophe.

The Industrial Revolution, which was fuelled by slavery and colonisation, brought unimaginable wealth to the Global North, and in particular to a small minority of people living there. The extreme injustice is the foundation that our modern societies are built upon. This is the very heart of the problem. It is the sufferings of the many that have paid for the benefits of the few. Their fortune came at a price – namely oppression, genocide, ecological destruction, and climatological instability. There is a bill for all this destruction that has not yet been paid. In fact, it hasn’t even been added up; it is still waiting to be invoiced.’

Bishop Anna linked Thunberg’s extract to a quotation by Mahatma Gandhi:

“The world has enough for everyone’s needs, but not enough for everyone’s greed.”

### **Greed**

Bishop Anna referred to a series of Radio 4 programmes called, ‘**Seven Deadly Psychologies**’, which take a cold hard look at the psychology behind each of the seven deadly sins. The Bishop urged members to listen to these programmes, specifically the one on Greed.

In this programme the presenters examine, ‘the greed for money, for land, for material things – and ultimately for control, status, dominance, power. The kind of greed that separates the "haves" from the "have nots". They explore how greed is a great motivator, driving us all forward in our pursuit to get more of whatever it is we want, whilst on the other hand, greed can come at a huge cost to other people, and to the planet.’ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001sv5c>

Bishop Anna then cited a Monopoly Experiment which examined the effect on people’s behaviour and attitude when they have the advantage of being temporarily rich. The experiment posed the question: Does having more money make a person more inclined to share their wealth with others and acknowledge their good fortune? Answer: No! Research suggests precisely the opposite.

<https://reasonandmeaning.com/2021/10/24/the-monopoly-experiment-wealthy-people-are-more-selfish/>

Bishop Anna made the point that as we get richer we become more self-sufficient, so our need for other people reduces, and our need for community lessens, and as a result, and this is the key thing, *our ability to empathise reduces.*

She recollected reading a book by Jim Wallis, an American theologian and activist, call 'God's Politics' (2005) in which he recalls being at theological college when he and a group of peers decided to look through the Bible and find all the verses that referred to poverty and wealth. They then cut them out of the Bible – thousands of verses went. 1 in every 16 verses in the New Testament were removed and 1 in 7 verses in St Luke's Gospel. At the end he held up the Bible and said this is now a Bible full of holes. The point they were making is that we *do* need to talk about poverty and wealth; it is 'the elephant in the room'. [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/19127.God s Politics](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/19127.God_s_Politics)

### **The greatest commandments**

Bishop Anna urged us to think about the two greatest commandments on which Jesus bases all his teaching.

- 1) Love the Lord your God with all you heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.  
(Matthew 22 v 37)

Bishop Anna shared that over Christmas she had reflected on St John's Gospel.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.' (John 1 v 1-3)

Bishop Anna stressed that when God spoke creation into life, he believed that Jesus was there. So, when we hurt creation, we hurt the creator, and we hurt Christ. We, therefore, need to repent, mend our ways, and to do all that we can to stop hurting creation.

- 2) Love your neighbour as yourself. (Matthew 22 v 39)

This is the big one. We need to care for all humanity as much as we do for ourselves, and as everyone on this planet is affected by climate change, we need to act now. This commandment needs to stir up our empathy, encourage us to reduce our emissions and act in a way that shows our care and responsibility for all humanity. She made the point that our neighbours are not just those on the other side of the world, but those who live next door and of course, our children and our children's children.

### **People of Hope**

Bishop Anna emphasised that we are people of hope, and we need to believe that this world will be redeemed, and all things will be made new. She urged us to witness to that hope and not to lose hope.

## **A net zero Deanery**

Bishop Anna said how much she welcomes what Harrogate Deanery is doing to become net zero and encouraged us to do this together; to enjoy helping and encouraging one another. She recommended that we use this missional opportunity get others involved in what the church is doing to protect the environment. Bishop Anna concluded this part of her talk with some words from Sir David Attenborough,

‘We need to live more economically than we have done, and the excesses of the Capitalist system need to be curbed somehow. I believe ordinary people of the world are realising that greed does not actually lead to joy. Can we redirect greed to other things? Can we enjoy the richness of nature, and our experiences of other things.... The most important thing we need to do is to remove our reliance on fossil fuels. If we do nothing else; this is the main thing.’

Following on from this, Bishop Anna asked, if we are naturally greedy people, can we be greedy in a different kind of way? E.g can we be ‘greedy’ to see the gap between the rich and poor reduce? Can we be ‘greedy’ to see the planet thrive and replenish? Can we be ‘greedy’ to reduce our carbon footprint? Can we be ‘greedy’ to help others?

## **Practical actions:**

Following a question and answer session, Bishop Anna started to explore how Harrogate Deanery can become a Net Zero Deanery by 2030. She pointed out that this requires diocesan properties, schools, and church buildings to be run as efficiently as possible.

## **Becoming an Eco Deanery**

Bishop Anna said that there are 11 Churches in the Harrogate Deanery who have signed up to become an Eco Church, of which 8 Churches have already received awards; this represents approximately a third of the churches in Harrogate Deanery.

The Area Dean clarified the vision for Harrogate Deanery. He said that we have a year’s work ahead of us to think about the various aspects of the Eco programme. The hope is that those churches who are ahead, will help and encourage those churches who are a bit further behind.

Bishop Anna encouraged churches to go onto the Eco Church system website, complete the survey and see where they are at the present time. There are five categories:

- 1) Worship and teaching
- 2) Management of church buildings
- 3) Management of church land
- 4) Community and global engagement
- 5) Lifestyle

She explained that in her previous church, different people took responsibility for the different areas. They then reported back on progress that had been made. She urged people not to feel daunted by it and to have a go. <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/eco-church>

## **The Environment Group**

Bishop Anna finished by recommending three relevant schemes.

- 1) **The Green Journey** – this is a package of energy saving services for churches provided by Green Energy Consulting. The Diocese of Leeds has worked in partnership with Green Energy Consulting since 2015 to identify ways of supplying renewable energy. This programme provides a quick and easy way for churches to change over to an energy supplier which has hardly any carbon emissions. <https://www.leeds.anglican.org/our-faith/environment/resources-for-my-church/green-journey-church-energy-bills/>
- 2) **Give to go Green** – This is a match-funding pilot project from the Church of England working with churches in the Dioceses of Leeds and Exeter to double locally raised donations, to allow for more work on reducing carbon emissions. The Give To Go Green pilot gave project grants of up to £2,500, £5,000 and £10,000 to 42 churches in the Diocese to match the funds they had raised. The pilot scheme has finished but more money will soon be released. Churches are urged to identify small to medium sized projects that will reduce your church's carbon footprint and cost between £5,000 and £20,000. <https://www.leeds.anglican.org/who-we-are/news/give-to-go-green-helps-churches-in-our-diocese-fund-carbon-cutting-projects.php>
- 3) **Saving Creation Training** – Bishop Anna reinforced the value of the Saving Creation training. This link <https://www.leeds.anglican.org/our-faith/environment/saving-creation-carbon-net-zero-church/> takes you to the website where you can find the Saving Creation Toolkit. The introductory webinar starts with a scriptural reflection on the gospel's response to climate change before looking at practical steps churches can take towards becoming carbon net zero.

Bishop Anna concluded her presentation by stating that, getting involved in this journey shows our love for God and his creation. So, get excited and get involved!