

Tuesday 6 June: Sage prayer meeting, 14A Osler Road, 2.00 - 3.30pm. Contact Jennifer on 01865 768436 or richardgunraj@onetel.com.

Sunday 11 June: Environment Sunday service at St Frideswide's, Botley Road, 10.30am, followed by a walk and picnic lunch. See article on front page.

Saturday 17 June: Certificate in Christian Rural and Environmental Studies (CRES) Open Day, Elm Farm, near Keynsham. All are welcome but you must pre-book by contacting Martin Hodson on 01865 516507 or info@sageoxford.org.uk. See www.sageoxford.org.uk/elmfarm2006.

Tuesday 20 June: Seminar: *God, the World and Us*, Carey Room, The Old Deanery, Wells, 7.30pm. Speaker: Sage member Margot Hodson. This is the second in a series of five seminars to engage theology with the environmental crisis. All welcome, free entry. For more information contact David Osborne on 01749 890423 or Cathy Horder on 01934 833152.

Tuesday 4 July: Sage prayer meeting, 42 Morrell Avenue, 2.00 - 3.30pm. Contact Clare on 01865 242588 or can@freenet.co.uk.

Saturday 29 July: Sage barbeque, 17 Cameron Avenue (off Radley Road), Abingdon, 6.00pm. All welcome. Contact Richard & Judy on 01235 521931 or richard.riggs@physics.org.

Saturday 5 August: Sage walk, Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, 2.00pm. An area of chalk grassland, especially noted for its rich chalk flora and butterflies, including the chalkhill blue and silver-spotted skipper. Meet at the Bald Hill car park at SU 727958. The car park is signposted off the unclassified road to Christmas Common from the A40 west of Stokenchurch. For more details contact Caroline Steel on 01865 432600 for more details or caroline.steel@ntlworld.com.

Tuesday 8 August: Sage prayer meeting, 81 Green Road, 2.00 - 3.30pm. Contact Edith on 01865 763242.

Saturday 2 September: Summer celebration, 7.00pm. Martin and Margot Hodson invite all of Sage to a special celebration meal at their flat in North Oxford. Contact Martin & Margot on 01865 516507 or info@sageoxford.org.uk.

Tuesday 5 September: Sage prayer meeting, 150 Leiden Road, 2.00 - 3.30pm. Ring Caroline on 01865 432600 or caroline.steel@ntlworld.com.

Sage relies on donations from supporters to fund its work.

If you would like to contribute, please send a cheque payable to **Sage** to: Karl Wallendszus, Sage Treasurer, 34 Binsey Lane, Oxford OX2 0EX

The newsletter of Sage, a Christian environmental group in Oxford

June 2006

www.sageoxford.org.uk

West Oxford to celebrate Environment Sunday

Sage will be helping St Frideswide's church on Botley Road, West Oxford, to celebrate Environment Sunday on 11 June this year, continuing our tradition of visiting a different church every year for this event.

Several Sage members will help lead the Parish Eucharist service at 10.30am, including Martin Hodson, who will preach. Following the service, Sage will lead a walk to South Hinksey, highlighting the rural nature of this part of West Oxford, which may be surprising to some, being so close to the city centre. The walk will include a picnic lunch, so don't forget to bring your sandwiches and something to drink. We will aim to return to St Frideswide's by about 2.30pm. In the event of wet weather, we will eat our picnic in the vicarage. All are very

welcome to join us for the service or the walk or both.

In 2002 the Anglican Consultative Council encouraged Anglican Churches worldwide to celebrate the Sunday nearest to World Environment Day on 5 June as "Environment Sunday", something A Rocha has been promoting for a number of years, although this means we are celebrating it a week late this year!

A Rocha have produced a pack of materials for use on Environment Sunday, some of which we will be using at St Frideswide's. Much of this, including a DVD, could be used equally well at other times, so if you would like to borrow it, please contact Karl on 01865 727924 or karl@wallendszus.co.uk.



St Frideswide's church, Botley Road, Oxford

Ecohouse shortlisted for national award

Congratulations to Averil Stedeford, whose ecohouse in Headington, Oxford, has reached a shortlist of three projects for the Observer Ethical Awards in the Do-It-Yourself Award category. The winners of each category will be announced on 15 June. Good luck Averil! Here Averil describes the progress so far. You can see the latest updates at www.sageoxford.org.uk/ecohouse.

The seed that was to grow into my ecohouse was sown on Iona where I first took seriously the assertion that 'The world belongs to God.' I realised it included our house and thought that if it belonged to God I should at least be more hospitable. After my husband Brian died, I knew I was meant to move to a smaller house, more suitable for growing old. I felt almost commanded to make it as environmentally friendly as possible. This seemed so much harder than choosing a home that was ready to move into. Other words from Iona turned up: 'We will not offer gifts that cost us nothing'. So I agreed and wondered how to begin. In the Yellow Pages I found a group of architects with a special interest in the environment. We 'clicked' and time is proving that the choice was absolutely right.

The press coverage in November started off enquiries from people wanting to know more, and they keep coming. With one of the architects I presented a workshop on it to thirty-five people the Operation Noah day conference.

The various tradesmen who have seen the plans are all amazed and impressed. The lad driving the tip-up truck says it is an 'eye-opener'. It seems no one has done anything quite like this to an ordinary suburban house before. The architects presented the project to a Thames Valley

professional meeting. Now they have been invited to present it to the Building Research Establishment's annual conference on sustainable building.

The project is on a short list of three for an Observer Ethical Award of £1000 for building materials. A film crew has now been, together with an Observer columnist. The newspaper feature will be published on



Preparations are made to bury a tank to collect rainwater, which will be used for flushing the toilet, washing clothes and watering the garden.

June 18, just after the prize-winners are announced, and the documentary will go out on Community Television. Whew! I'd like many others to know how much is growing from a small beginning, and to share my joy at the way God can use one elderly lady's bright idea!

Averil Stedeford

Eco-Congregation Award celebrated

SS Mary & John, Cowley, Oxford, held a Sunday Eucharist with a green theme in April, and celebrated their Eco-Congregation award, which they gained last December. The preacher was Dr Paula Clifford of Christian Aid, who spoke on the link between environmental issues and world development. Towards the end of the service the congregation processed out into the churchyard. There the vicar, Adam Romanis, thanked all those who had made the award possible, particularly those involved in the SS Mary & John churchyard project (they need more volunteers!). Local councillor Craig Simmons gave a short address to thank the church for its efforts on behalf of the local community. A special LOAF lunch followed. For more details go to the special page www.sageoxford.org.uk/celebration.

The project received national attention when Ruth Conway of SS Mary & John was featured on *Songs of Praise* on BBC1 on 28 May, talking about the transformation of the churchyard. The program, which was part of the BBC's season on climate change, also included Jo Rathbone of the Eco-Congregation scheme.



Reflections on connections with nature at climate conference

After the successful conference last year in High Wycombe, *Climate Change: How Christians Respond*, this year Sage and others brought *Climate change: What can Christians do?* to Oxford on 11 February, with about 150 people attending. The main venue was the Wesley Memorial Church, with some workshops at St Michael-at-the-Northgate.

The Revd Professor Ian James and Paula Clifford of Christian Aid gave the keynote speeches in the morning. They reminded me that Bishop Richard once said that the phrase Jesus used to refer to himself, 'son of man', can also be read with an ecological meaning: son of (he who came from) the earth.

I went to a workshop led by Sister Nora Coughlan SMG, 'Lessons from the Book of Creation', where she led us through some Ignatian exercises. We were asked to identify a place in our childhood where we connected

with nature. Well, the best I could muster was my 'black mountain', the levee near my childhood home. I was quite scared of it at night as a little boy; later, I quite enjoyed being there by myself staring at people working at the informal allotments beyond the levee. The exercise got me wondering that with my childhood experience as a city boy, it was nothing short of the grace of God that made me such a greenie today....

For me, the theme of (inter)connectedness resonated today, and I was also reminded of Acts 17:28: 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being.' Perhaps a shared possible defect of both the Protestant Reformation and 'rational' liberalism is that they go so far in the individualistic direction that people disconnect themselves from their history and their communities?

Kaihsu Tai