

Throughout January & February: Work parties at SS Mary & John Churchyard Project.

Contact Ruth Conway on 01865 723085 or m.r.conway@virgin.net.

Thursday 13 January: Sage prayer meeting, 10.30am - 12.00pm, 14A Osler Road, Headington. Contact Jennifer on 01865 768436.

Thursday 20 January: *Walk with the Creator* 10.00am - 12.30pm. Meet at St Clement's Church, Marston Road (next to the Plasterer's Arms). There is parking at the church. For more information or to book, contact Caroline Steel on 01865 432600 or davesteel@ntlworld.com.

Saturday 22 January: Revd Glyn Evans will be installed as honorary canon of Christ Church Cathedral at evensong, 6.00pm, Christ Church, Oxford. For more details see www.oxford.anglican.org/detail.php?id=1282.

Saturday 29 January: *Towards Creation's Recovery. Losing Species, Gaining Waste: The environmental challenge and Christian responsibility.* A one-day workshop at Redcliffe College, Gloucester in partnership with the John Ray Initiative. Sage member Margot Hodson is one of the speakers. Cost £28 per person including lunch. Discounts available for groups. Contact admin@redcliffe.org.

Saturday 5 February: Sage work party, 1.00 - 4.00pm, Boundary Brook Nature Park (provisional date). Beat the February blues with some conservation and fresh air. Contact Clare Newgass on 01865 242588 or can@freenet.co.uk.

Saturday 12 February: Martin and Margot Hodson invite all Sage contacts to a grand flat-warming party in their new abode in North Oxford, 7.00pm. Bring and share. For directions and further details contact them on 01865 516507 or info@sageoxford.org.uk.

Thursday 17 February: Sage prayer meeting, 10.30am - 12.00pm, 150 Leiden Road. Contact Caroline on 01865 432600 or davesteel@ntlworld.com.

Saturday 26 February: *Climate Change: How Christians Respond*, 9.30am - 4.00pm, St Andrew's Church, Hatters Lane, High Wycombe. See article on front page. More information and booking form at www.sageoxford.org.uk/climatechange.htm or contact Ian James at dr.i.n.james@btinternet.com.

Tuesday 15 March: *The Science and Theology of Green Issues*, 7.30pm, Methodist Church Hall, New High Street, Headington. Speakers: Sage members Martin and Margot Hodson. This is part of a series of Lent talks organised for Churches Together in Headington entitled *Praying for the World: A Christian Response to Global Issues*. For further details contact info@sageoxford.org.uk.

Thursday 17 March: Sage prayer meeting, 10.30am - 12.00pm, 42 Morrell Avenue. Contact Clare on 01865 242588 or can@freenet.co.uk.

Thursday 24 March - Saturday 9 April: Sage visit to A Rocha Portugal. See article inside. Contact Karl on 01865 727924 or karl@wallendszus.co.uk.

Thursday 14 April: Sage prayer meeting, 10.30am - 12.00pm, 81 Green Road. Contact Edith on 01865 763242.

The newsletter of Sage, a Christian environmental group in Oxford

January 2005

www.sageoxford.org.uk

Sage promotes major climate conference

Back in 1990, when Sage first formed in Oxford, climate change was the domain of a few scientists. There was considerable scepticism, and there was a lot of debate in scientific circles about the extent and seriousness of the problem. Much has happened in fourteen years. The emphasis of the debate has changed, and very few internationally respected climatologists are now saying that there is no problem. Many are saying that the planet is in dire danger. Almost every day on the news, climate change is mentioned, and it has risen to near the top of the political agenda (at least in the UK). The worldwide church is now slowly waking up to the problem. As it is a global phenomenon, the church is uniquely placed to help deal with climate change. We have members in the richest and in the poorest nations, and are the largest NGO. I believe we have to tackle climate change at all levels, and that we should start with ourselves, living in the Oxford area.

Therefore, Sage is very pleased to support the conference **Climate Change: How Christians Respond**, which has been organised by the Oxford Diocese with support from the Conservation Foundation, to be held from 9.00am to 4.00pm on Saturday 26 February at St Andrew's Church, Hatters Lane, High Wycombe. Speakers include the Bishop of Oxford and eminent climatologist Sir John Houghton. Sage has

“What is happening to our environment matters to all of us and should be seen as of crucial importance by all Christians. I very much hope you will be able to join me at what will be a well-informed and serious consideration of these issues.”

Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford

been active on the steering group for the conference, and has provided the conference web page (www.sageoxford.org.uk/climatechange.htm) and other publicity.

This is the biggest, and potentially the most important Christian environmental meeting in the Oxford area since Sage was founded. I would urge all Sage supporters to make every effort to attend. It would help the steering group immensely if you could send in your booking forms *as soon as possible*, so that we can organise the best possible conference. Please remember to state which workshops each person would like to attend. I look forward to seeing you there!

Martin Hodson

Sage group to visit A Rocha Portugal

A Sage trip to the A Rocha field centre in southern Portugal is being planned for this spring. The centre, known as Cruzinha, was the first A Rocha project to be established and lies on an unspoilt headland amidst the holiday resorts of the Algarve. A few of us spent a very enjoyable week there in 1993.

This year's trip takes place from 24 March to 9 April - some of us are going for just the first week (including Easter), others for just the second week and still others for the whole period. We hope to take part in both the

scientific work and the spiritual life of the centre, as well as have a good holiday. Accommodation costs, including all meals, range from €26.20 per day for a dormitory place to €61.00 per day for a twin bedroom. Travel costs are additional.

Places are limited and will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis, so if you are interested in joining us, please e-mail me at karl@wallendszus.co.uk or telephone 01865 727924. It should be a great time.

Karl Wallendszus

Animal issues in Abingdon spotlight



Dave Bookless, UK Director of A Rocha, came to Christ Church, Abingdon on 31 October to speak on *Animal Rights or Wrongs?* Although not a core issue for A Rocha, Dave gave a very clearly thought out and well presented sermon on it. Looking at

attitudes to animals in church history, he traced both a "utilitarian" and a "stewardship" tradition. He then examined a number of biblical principles concerning animals, concluding that they lend much more support to the latter. A fuller summary of Dave's talk can be found at www.sageoxford.org.uk.

In a short discussion after the service, Dave applied these principles to some current animal-related controversies, including fox hunting, which he found difficult to justify, and animal experimentation.

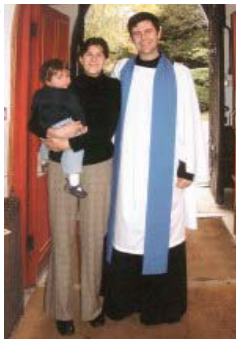
Before and after the service, three Sage members manned a stall and display, chatting to members of the congregation, several of whom signed up to the Sage mailing list.

Congratulations to Sage supporters

Congratulations to Sage member, Mike Morecroft (pictured right with his wife Charlie and son Matthew) who has been admitted as a Reader in the Church of England and lay minister in the diocese of Oxford in a service led by the Bishop of Buckingham, the Rt Revd Alan Wilson.

Congratulations also to Revd Glyn Evans, a leading figure in rural and environmental ministry in the Oxford Diocese, and a good friend of Sage, who has been appointed

honorary canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. He will be installed in Christ Church at evensong (6pm) on Saturday 22 January. Further details can be found at www.oxford.anglican.org/detail.php?id=1282.



Walkers enjoy conkers & cormorant

Nine people gathered at St Clement's Church in October on for the latest *Walk with the Creator*. As we entered Headington Hill Park our task was to observe the trees in their autumn colours and to ponder upon the horse chestnut tree and its well known fruit, the conker. Clare provided some fascinating information, such as when the game of conkers started and how to cheat by soaking them in vinegar. Caroline explained that in the Bible, a fruit bearing tree is a symbol of blessing and wholeness, and then showed us two neighbouring horse chestnut trees, one healthy and one almost dead, which reminded her of the two paths of obedience and disobedience that God set before the Israelites. We then explored the rest of the Park, marvelled at the trees' beauty and took some fallen leaves back to the church to make into collages.



New Year's Day saw an intrepid band of Sage folk walking on the RSPB's Otmoor reserve. Fortified by brunch at the Steels' we visited the two hides and saw wildfowl in profusion. Mallard, tufted duck and shoveler were particularly in evidence, as was a solitary cormorant which flew to and fro as if on display. It was fascinating to see how creative conservationists had seen the potential in the low lying cereal fields of a decade ago to become areas of wild wetland. Bitterns and bearded tits are particular foci of the conservation efforts.

Caroline & David Steel

Green Fair stall most successful yet

The Sage stand at the Green Fair in Oxford Town Hall on 11 December was again run jointly with A Christian Response to the Environment and the SS Mary & John Churchyard Project. Our 10-strong team made many contacts, sold over £250 of fair trade goods, and handed out a lot of leaflets for the climate conference.



The following morning, Sage member Martin Hodson was a guest on *Sunday Breakfast* on BBC Radio Oxford. He spoke about the Green Fair, the climate conference, and the Christian environmental movement.

Seasonal confusion at Boundary Brook

The October Sage work party prepared for the Boundary Brook Nature Park open day by clearing reeds in the garden pond and brambles from paths. We were entertained by frogs, including a mating pair seemingly confused about the season.

Another attraction, also possibly muddled, was a dragonfly (probably a Southern Hawker) that appeared to be trying to lay eggs on the edge of the large pond, photographed by Alex (aged 11). Is there upset in the internal seasonal clocks of some creatures?

