



**Eco
Church**

**St. Michael the Archangel,
Rushall**

“For God so loved the world....”

Our aim is to be good stewards of
God’s creation.

Background

The present Parish Church of Rushall is the third church in the history of Rushall. The first church was built by the Lords of the Manor of Rushall close to Rushall Hall. Together with Walsall Parish Church it was appropriated in the year 1220 to the newly founded Praemonstratensian Abbey at Halesowen, 12 miles away in Worcestershire. The exact site of the first church of Rushall is not known but was probably nearer to the Hall itself. Neither do we know the exact date of its foundation, although it was already in existence by 1220.

The second church was built by John Harpur and his wife Eleanor and consecrated by William Heyworth, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, on 19th January 1440. This building stood on the site of the present and larger church. The tower remained standing after the first half of the present church was built. From these two earlier churches very little remains. There is the base of an old preaching cross in the churchyard on the south side. The Baptismal Font with its dogtooth ornament dates from around 1200. There are also two 18th century memorial tablets in the south transept and a bench seat now in the chancel, carved on the front 'RA 1661 CF', possibly made from timbers from the repairs carried out after the Civil War.

The present (third) church was begun in 1854. Built of limestone it is in Early English Style and was completed in 1868. This church is 'cruciform' and there are several features worth noting. The murals over the chancel arch and along the east walls of the transepts are by E. Reginald Frampton, a painter of the late pre-Raphaelite school, and completed in 1905. The murals show on the one side the Garden of Eden and the results of humanity’s sinfulness with the ground barren and stony and angels above holding the instruments of the passion. The other side shows the Garden of the Heavenly Paradise with flowers and butterflies and angels holding the crowns of the righteous. The four Archangels within the mural show Gabriel bringing the message of hope, Michael fighting for God’s people and weighing our actions in the scales, Raphael bringing healing and Uriel who brings knowledge and wisdom. The environment, our part within it and duty to preserve it are therefore before us in every act of worship in which we partake.

The church itself lies within the Old Rushall Conservation area and is one of the few remaining examples in the local area of a church, hall (manor) and farm grouped together. It is an example therefore not just of the heritage of nature in the area but also of our history.

Our aim is to protect and promote these two rich heritages. In doing so we will cover the following areas:

- | | | |
|-----------|--|---|
| 01 | Oversight of our attempts to become and stay more eco-friendly. | The Eco committee study and learn together and then suggest and implement change to and through the PCC. |
| 02 | In the church. | To take actions to further reduce energy use, waste of resources, and continue to increase awareness and to celebrate creation. |
| 03 | In the hall. | The Eco committee to report to the hall committee on issues to reduce energy use and minimise waste. |
| 04 | In the churchyard. | The Eco committee to update and advise on the churchyard plan and liaise with the churchyard working party and council to improve the diversity of wildlife in the churchyard and community interest. |
| 05 | At the vicarage. | The Eco committee to receive any concerns of the vicar as to environmental issues concerning the vicarage and its grounds. |

01 Eco Committee

The committee to meet twice a year to consider environmental issues affecting the church and its activities. It shall report to the PCC and make recommendations as appropriate.

The meetings begin with a short act of worship celebrating creation. The committee will discuss matters connected to the environment and our part within it. Members may be asked to have undertaken some reading for discussion beforehand, for example a chapter of “Yes to life” to inform our discussions and challenge us to action.

The committee will look at all areas of our life, Church, hall, churchyard, and vicarage together with any issues involving the wider parish and community and will report to the PCC accordingly.

We suggest the committee is chaired by Jan Firth (churchwarden), and will consist of both of churchwardens, 2 PCC members, 2 congregation members, and 2 people from the local community.

02 The Church

The committee will continue to look at opportunities to bring creation into our worship, for example by celebrating the agricultural feasts such as Rogation, Lammas Day, Harvest, and others together with prayer walks and other opportunities to worship outside.

The committee will monitor our use of energy and resources and how we can continue to limit waste. Already much work has been done as follows:

Lights are only put on as worship starts (save for limited lighting required for safety)

Notice sheets and magazines are published online and are also accessible by qr code with only a few printed copies thereby saving paper and energy used when printing.

Morning and Evening Prayer are said on Zoom limiting travel to the church and reducing heating requirements.

Energy saving bulbs have been introduced into church.

03 The Hall

The committee will look at the use of the hall and its use of energy. It will seek to make available information on environmental issues to the hall users. The hall is well insulated and is fitted throughout with energy saving lights.

The committee will look at how we can limit energy use even more, for example by adapting the outside lights to timers or movement sensors rather than permanent lighting through the night. It will consider twinning the toilets, use of fairtrade products and recyclable materials.

04 The Churchyard

The committee will liaise with Walsall Council over the upkeep and maintenance of the churchyard. It will update the churchyard plan and review it annually (see separate report).

05 The Vicarage

The committee will receive information from the vicar regarding any environmental issues relating to the vicarage and its grounds and will seek to support him in his attempts to make it more eco-friendly.

Actions taken so far:

The Church:

Sermons have been given on the environment.

Light bulbs changed.

Lights not put on until worship starts.

Heating is timed and regulated to keep heating at a minimum.

Daily Prayer said on Zoom to stop car journeys.

Notice sheets and magazines published online with only a few printed copies.

QR codes are used on notices and posters.

The monthly magazine always includes environmental issues and projects which have included the annual bird and butterfly counts, hedgehog needs, gardening notes, conservation of water tips and many more.

As well as sermons based solely on the environment/creation many sermons include references to reducing use of plastic, waste, energy and climate change.

The Hall:

Recycled paper towels are used in the toilets.

Heating is carefully regulated.

Energy saving lightbulbs installed.

Posters on environmental issues displayed when appropriate.

The Churchyard:

2000 heritage daffodils planted.

Strimming is limited until after spring flowers have finished.

Bird boxes introduced.

Compost heap introduced.

Water Butt introduced.

Weedkiller banned.