

## **Safeguarding the integrity of creation, and sustaining and renewing the earth.**

### **II**

For more than ten years, I have been making a theological contribution to the doctrine of creation, the theology of nature and theological anthropology. The nub of my contribution has been to stress the close relations between creatures, human and non-human, grounded in the renewed sociality that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In an urban setting, I have argued that we need a spirituality that enables an inhabiting, rather than an occupation, of a city.

### **III**

Over the last few months at St Chad's, Ladybarn, a project called the "Community Wildlife Garden" has been started. An initiative of several members of the congregation, and resourced by a successful grant application, it has involved fencing off a substantial section of the large Rectory garden. This Garden is adjacent to the church and is easily accessed via the church grounds. In its final state, it will include raised beds, various features attractive to wildlife, and a quiet area. It thereby provides important opportunities for mission and teaching to the wider community: that is, to raise matters of Christian spirituality and environmental awareness in an urban setting.

Interestingly, what is beginning to emerge in the process is the relationship between the Garden and the congregation's understanding of mission. In other words, what is the relationship between the Church as sacred space, as the place of encounter with the hospitality of God *and* the garden as a place of God's creative generosity? If the garden is to be used to maximum effect as part of a strategy for mission, this will also require the congregation to think about the relationship between these two spaces.

### **IV**

- (1) Apart from the already declared intention to site an "altar" in one section, the present design of the Garden needs theological elaboration. In its design, it needs to remind city dwellers that we are part of a wider creation: dependent creatures. In effect, that creation is the diverse gift of a good God, and we are part of that gift. The Garden needs to surprise visitors, make them look up and down, think about the past and the future, and the use of resources.
- (2) To develop opportunities for such an urban church to offer practical ways to host the local community in developing an urban spirituality and so to use the garden as a bridge into the sacred space of the church. Establishing and advertising opening times and staging a

permanent exhibition in the church that interprets the Garden would be helpful first steps.

- (3) To integrate the spirituality captured in the design of the Garden regularly into ordinary worship.