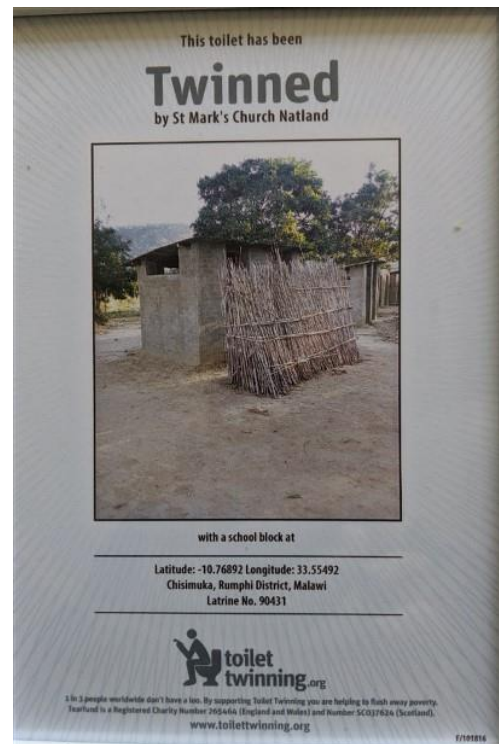


## Natland St Mark- Our Eco Church Journey

In January 2022 we calculated our annual carbon footprint and learnt we were nearly in the worst category. With the Church of England wanting churches to become carbon neutral by 2030 something needed to be done! With various [webinars](#) available from the Church of England, showing what could be done, and a presentation on what it means to Tread Gently at a Kendal Deanery Synod by Pam Martin, from Gold Eco Church Levens St John the Evangelist, the PCC agreed to start the process of being an Eco church and we formally registered with A Rocha's [Eco Church](#) project in March 2022.



We set up a subcommittee and once committed to the Eco Church project our progress towards the Bronze award was surprisingly rapid. We had already taken a big first step towards an Eco Church award and reducing our carbon footprint by having our lighting system updated to LEDs as well as our new gas boilers being A+ rated. A few other steps which got us to Bronze were [twinning our church toilet](#) (with funds raised at our monthly family services), selling surplus plants, vegetables and homemade jam in our porch and serving [Fairtrade](#) tea and coffee. We also leave the borders uncut in our churchyard to allow wildflowers to grow, started a monthly Walk & Talk and we celebrate God's creation in our children's teaching. We checked the vicarage had LED lights, insulation and double glazing, started doing churchyard surveys, built a compost heap and put articles in our magazine and website. And so, on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022 we were awarded our Bronze Eco Church award!





So how did we get from Bronze to Silver?



There were two categories that we need to raise to Silver level: Community & Global Engagement and Lifestyle. We looked at registering our church as a Fairtrade church only to discover it has been since 2010! So we reaffirmed our Fairtrade church membership and held a coffee morning to promote the work of Fairtrade with a stall and information boards, encouraging people to use products at home. All money raised was sent to the Fairtrade Foundation and the PCC have agreed to hold another one during Fairtrade week next September.

In our community, we have encouraged people to save energy with tips in our magazine from other parishioners. We started a communal Christmas card scheme which we will run again this year. In our Mission Community, we have a monthly Environmental Prayer and Action Group and are encouraging other churches to become Eco Churches too. Looking globally, we regularly pray for overseas environmental projects and we will participate in Climate Steward's [Carbon Fast for Lent](#) in 2024.

Though our work in 2023 has focussed on Lifestyle and Community & Global Engagement, we haven't forgotten about the other sections as we revisit them at our committee meetings to see if we have missed anything and if we need to update our answers.



Exactly a year after we applied for our Bronze award we applied for our Silver award, and were awarded this on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023!

If you're keen to get started, the questionnaire may look overwhelming but as they say when you are on a pilgrimage all you need to do is a step at a time. Get the PCC to agree to becoming an Eco Church, get a group together (one person doesn't know all the answers!) and share it with your congregation so they can help and, most importantly, join in the celebrations when you gain an award!

