

## Church Times Green Awards 2017

The home of the Archbishop of Canterbury is Lambeth Palace, on the south side of the River Thames, just behind St Thomas' Hospital and within sight of the Houses of Parliament. This may seem a bit strange -why London and not Canterbury? The reason is historical – Edward the Confessor built Westminster Abbey and William Rufus, an hundred years later a palace, which became the Exchequer and thus the seat of government. The Archbishop of Canterbury was a powerful figure and as one of the King's chief counsellors (and frequently the Chancellor), it was important he lived close to the seat of government.

Lambeth Palace, with its lovely Tudor gateway and impressive buildings and grounds was the venue for this year's Church Times Green Awards ceremony, which covers five categories. After I left Leeds, St Chad's Green Team nominated me for the Green Champion Award and the first I knew anything about it was an email to say I had been short-listed and to keep 16 October free! This was an enormous surprise and I am truly humbled.

Mike Willison joined me for the event, held in the magnificent Guard Room (in medieval times the Great Chamber, where honoured guests would be received). From the wooden roof, three huge candelabras are suspended and around the walls hang portraits of former Archbishops. After an initial welcome by Paul Handley, Editor of The Church Times who said there had been 117 entries in the five categories, the Bishop of Salisbury, Nick Holtam, who is the C of E's lead bishop on the environment, chaired the proceedings.

For each category, the achievements of those on the short list were read out with appropriate photographs popping up on the screen. The short list did not only come from the UK, but also from Spain and Malta. The Biodiversity Award went to St James, Finchampstead for converting scrubland into a churchyard extension and Garden of Remembrance with bat boxes, bee hotels, wild flowers and (most importantly!) community involvement. The tiny church of St Wenn (Bodmin) won the Green Building Award for working with the next door school to install and share a biomass heating system. Most of the work was carried out by volunteers. Shildon Alive! Guerrilla Gardening Team from County Durham won the Green Congregation Award for working to counteract

the decline in community engagement and vandalism. They garden at over seventy sites, have two community gardens, are part of a food waste scheme and gave out 300 bags of fresh fruit in 2016. The Green Futures Award went to Holy Trinity Tulse Hill, for a new church hall built with straw bales and other recycled materials. The whole community is involved and it will be the first straw bale church building in Europe and the largest straw bale building in London!

When it came to the Green Champion Award, it is amazing what people do – demonstrating with placards, running courses and publicising environmental events, living with an almost zero carbon footprint – what was I doing with such dedicated people? Then the announcement of the winner – well, the judges couldn't decide, so we were all declared winners and presented with magnificent framed certificates and £200 each, which I hope St Chad's can use for a specific "green" project.

Bishop Nick then gave an excellent address, emphasising the importance of care for the environment, which is one of the Five Marks of Mission. It was most encouraging that so many people within the wider church community are working for what was described as "inter-generational justice".

After an official photographic session, a delicious vegetarian lunch and an opportunity to chat with others, we were able to explore the lovely palace gardens before heading home. It was a great day - thank you St Chad's for my nomination and all the support you gave me while running the Green Team. Keep it up!

Suzanne Dalton