

RECTOR'S PINT

This is the time of year when, if I can clear the morning fog from my brain, I really appreciate the explosion of nature on my morning dog walks, the abundant grasses, wildflowers and poppies. Entering the spirit of 'no mow' May, I left a significant part of our lawn unmown this year, and I'm holding my nerve (as I write, it's the second week of June). I'm waiting to see if anything other than a straggly mess will result, and the creeping buttercup, usually the scourge of the flower bed, together with the daisies, are already a pretty sight at the bottom of the garden!

It is so easy to be pessimistic about the state of the environment, from what we have done to our rivers to the serious challenge of the destruction of the rain forests for commercial gain, mineral extraction, and intensive farming. This is a catastrophe, and unless checked will have dire consequences. But nature has a way of filling a gap and regenerating itself, when left to do so, and in a small way we have a resource available to us that is evidence of that. I'm talking about churchyards.

Our churchyards have parts which are well-tended but also parts which have been left largely uncut, and I have delighted in the grasses and wildflowers that have resulted. In Great Milton there is a whole area filled with Oxeye daisies. I don't know if there has been a helping hand in this, or whether they have naturally seeded themselves, but they are wonderful.

I had this in mind when I opened the weekly email from the Diocese and read that, in March, the Diocesan Synod voted to begin embracing floral sustainability in all its 800+ churches. I am glad that we seem to be beginning to do that. When the Bishop of Dorchester, Gavin Collins, came to consecrate the new part of the Churchyard in Great Haseley in April, I was asked to provide some prayers. I provided three. The first was a prayer of hope we have in Christ, the second a prayer for those who mourn their loved ones in the Churchyard and the third, is a prayer from TEAR Fund which I slightly adapted and called a prayer for the wildlife of the Churchyard.

Creator God, we acknowledge that as your handiwork, we stand alongside all that you have made. Trees and rivers, mountains and valleys, soaring birds and scuttling creatures, all are held within your care. May we grow in our love and appreciation for the fabulous variety around us; and in this place may our awe and wonder draw us closer to the natural world, and through it to you, the God of all things. Amen.

I am so grateful for all those who tend our churchyards, and also for the vision they have to leave some parts untouched.

Simon