

Clergymen and women take to the catwalk at the Christian Resources Exhibition in Coventry this week, showing off the latest fashions woven from bamboo fibres

## The slicker vicar wears eco-friendly bamboo outfits

◆ THEY may not be renowned for their fashion credentials. Nor does Christianity tend to lend itself to Instagram filters and glamorous catwalks.

Yet a Wonderbra designer has revealed that vicars are joining the trend for eco-friendly clothing in the wake of the popularity of bamboo shirts.

The Christian Resources Exhibition is a twice-a-year event, visited by around 2,500 people, that showcases everything from puppets to pulpits and computers to communion wine.

But for the very first time, yesterday's event in Coventry featured an ethical clothing range as fashion took front row at its Clergy on the Catwalk show, featuring 11 priests from various denominations sporting the latest in clerical clothing made of bamboo.

Charlotte Sparey-Dell, 34, founder of the Lottie's Eco brand, began making bamboo clothing two years ago and set up her company after designing women's wear for Playtex and Wonderbra. In her own words she said "business had grown organically" but in the last two years she found one sector – purchases by the clergy for her eco-friendly designs – had soared by 75 per cent.

Bamboo-related clothing is in the ascendency. The industry data company edited.com reported that between 2016 and 2018, the number of bamboo-related products across 52 global retailers had increased by 36 per cent. Ms Sparey-Dell, of Worcester, usually makes underwear but has been designing vicars' tops – at prices between £40 and £70 – for two years.

She has taken on extra staff to cope with demand, and launched an entire collection just for the clergy after a local vicar asked her to make her something sustainable, comfortable and fashionable.