

QMC Environmental Check-up Report

Caring for the environment at church

Guided by Eco-congregation: An environmental toolkit for churches
Designed and supported by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, through the
Arthur Rank Centre

We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors;
we borrow it from our children.

Sally Taylor
Social Responsibility Secretary
September 2007

*Enjoy the earth greatly, for if it is spoiled
It cannot be repaired
Enjoy the earth gently. Every part of this earth is sacred.
**Whatever happens to the earth
happens to the children of the earth.**
The air is precious;
for we all share the same breath.
For we did not weave the web of life:
we are merely a strand in it
Whatever we do to the web of life
we do to ourselves.
This we know, all things are connected;
like the blood which unites one family.
Our God is the same God,
whose compassion is equal for all.
This we know,
We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors;
we borrow it from our children.*

- A call and response prayer from the QMC Worship Book
Opening Liturgy G

Contents

	page
1. Background to the Environmental Check-Up	3
Quinton Methodist Church and Social Responsibility	3
The Eco-congregation concept explained	3
2. The process so far at QMC	3
3. Two Case Studies	5
4. The action plan	6
Section one: Worship	7
Section two: Theology	8
Section three: Children and Young People	9
Section four: All Age and Adult Education	10
Section five: Church Property	11
Section six: Church Management	13
Section seven: Church Land	15
Section eight: Personal Lifestyle	16
Section nine: Community Outreach	17
Section ten: Overseas Concerns	18
5. Next steps and recommendations	19

1 Background to the Environmental Check-Up

1.1 Quinton Methodist Church and Social Responsibility

The Neighbourhood Committee at QMC agreed to support me as Social Responsibility Secretary to undertake two projects as part of my role: supporting the development of the church's commitment to Fair Trade and considering the possibilities for increased environmental responsibility within the church. This report forms the culmination of consultation and environmental audits at church and is the suggested starting point for improving what is already a firm commitment to environmental issues at QMC.

1.2 The Eco-Congregation concept explained

We are all asked, much of the time, to make changes in our personal lives to reduce the damage we do to the environment. But could we also be doing more as a church and community resource?

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland have developed guidance for churches to undertake an audit of the work they currently do to reduce their impact on the environment. There are a number of modules within the 'toolkit' that can help churches in various aspects (worship, property, community outreach etc.). The first stage – or module – is to do an environmental 'check-up'. Much like going for a general check up at your GP, this is about checking to see what is healthy, what is not, and what could be done to be healthier.

The eco-congregation environmental check-up is designed to help churches:

- a. Identify and affirm their existing environmental ministry
- b. Prioritise what they would like to do next and identify supportive resources

The eco-congregation toolkit can lead to an award to recognise the church's efforts (much like the award we have just received acknowledging us as a Fair Trade church). There are three steps:
Step 1: Getting going – forming a small group to work through the checklist, produce (and get approved) an action plan for the church, and order resources to support our chosen priorities
Step 2: Get cracking – distribution of resources within the church to encourage the development and implementation of plans.
Step 3: Go for an award – apply to be recognised as an eco-congregation.

2. The process so far at QMC

Two consultations in 2006 confirmed that there is support for some sort of environmental policy or action at QMC. Girls' Brigade (all ages) came up with lots of ideas about a) why we should act to look after God's world and b) what we could do at QMC to reduce our impact on the world. On 5 November 2006, many members of the congregation (about 50 in total) took part in a consultation after our church service, providing ideas for

being more environmentally friendly, as well as acknowledging some barriers. Without exception, comments were positive about the need for improvements, whilst acknowledging all the good things we do already.

A short report to Neighbourhood Committee suggesting that following the consultation, the Eco-Congregation Environmental check up should be carried out. This was supported at the March 2007 Church Council, and a group was set up to do this.

In September 2007 the following group met to assess what we already do and suggest concrete ideas for further action, which form the basis of this plan. The group was led by Sally Taylor and included:

- Betty Rose
- Joe Hayden
- Laurance Parkes
- Brenda McQuillan

John Smart was invited to join the group and has subsequently been asked for advice, but was unable to attend the meeting.

Some comments by Girls' Brigade about *why* we should look after the environment:

"because if we don't do something now it will get out of hand"

"for future generations and to stop destroying the earth"

"if we don't do anything now we won't be able to later"

"because God asked us to"

"to protect our children and our children's children"

Some suggestions by the wider church congregation:

"solar panels - £3,000"

"we should use energy efficient light bulbs"

"we should recycle more"

"project hymn words on the projector screen, rather than printing out pieces of paper"

"use environmentally friendly cleaning products"

"why don't we use green electricity?"

3. Two Case Studies

All Saint's, Brailsford, Derbyshire

The creation care ministry of All Saint's, Brailsford in Derbyshire started when Louise Doble, a church member and environmentalist, led a Lent series exploring Christian ethics and the environment. Having explored creation care from a Christian perspective the church decided to actively practice what they felt called to preach. After two years of action Louise Doble reflected:

"The path of Eco-Congregation has been an immensely rewarding journey for All Saint's. Many people thought that 'green issues' had no place in church. Through our ministry we have discovered that the environmental agenda is inexorably interconnected with issues of poverty and development and deepened our concern for the Earth and all its inhabitants. It has connected many diverse groups within our church and local community in a unique and refreshing way. Young and old alike have been touched by the need to care for God's creation and come together to work on a variety of rewarding and fun projects.

Eco-Congregation has a great deal to offer, it provides a framework to explore in practical terms Christ's abiding call to love our neighbour. As Psalm 139 tells us, 'He (God) is in every place giving it existence and the power to be a place, just as He is in all things giving them existence, power and activity' "

Eco-Forum – a Church and Community Environment Day

Motivated to raise awareness of environmental issues in their community and local churches, St John the Evangelist, Hurst Green organised an "Eco-Forum" Day to explore "Christian responsibilities and response to God's creation". With support from a Green Partnership Award, and participation from the local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre and Lancashire Wildlife Trust, the church organised a programme with speakers on:

- ◆ Energy efficiency
- ◆ Green funerals
- ◆ Greening your church
- ◆ Spiritual responsibility in today's world
- ◆ Wildlife conservation in churchyards

Feedback included:

'helped me to think about saving the world God created'

'this initiative has provided inspiration for the church and community –it has helped me to gather information to take back to my work at school'

4. The action plan

The action plan consists of:

- Numbered sections which focus on different areas of church life

In each section there is:

- † An example of what other churches have done
 - † A list of what we at QMC already do well (to be celebrated!)
 - † Ideas about how we could make our commitment to caring for the earth even stronger
 - † A reference to the eco-congregation resources that we could apply for to help us in this work
 - † **For each idea**, there is consideration about a) why this activity would be a good idea, b) the cost and practical implications, c) who might be involved and d) what kind of priority this activity might be for QMC
 - † **The priority list** goes from 1 to 4, meaning:
 1. Achievable in the short term, commitment already shown, let's get cracking with research and action!
 2. Achievable in the short to medium term – volunteers needed to take this forward
 3. Perhaps more difficult, but further research on costs and with relevant people could be worthwhile
 4. An action to consider for the future
- On page 19 are recommendations for what activities could be taken forward now, the relevant resources we should apply for to support this, as well as how members of our congregation could get involved.

SECTION ONE: WORSHIP

Worship is the prime focus of Christian life from which the Church's life and mission flows. All Saint's, West Bromwich have an annual Creation Sunday and a separate 'eau de Nil' or light green service! This section is designed to help you identify how thankfulness and concern for God's creation are expressed in your worship.

What we do already

- † In prayers and hymns we praise God the creator, we give thanks to God for the gift of creation, we pray for the healing of creation.
- † Opening Liturgy G has an environmental focus
- † Occasional services like Harvest, and the Clent Easter service or Good Friday prayer walk make reference to our local environment and care for the earth.
- † We use natural materials in worship – the Lenten Cross, flower displays

New ideas

Idea	Why?	Costs/savings/practice implications	People	Priority
Use organic bread and wine at communion	Commitment to organic production methods	May be slightly more expensive. Depends on preference of individual preachers.	Circuit Ministers, Communion Stewards	3
Organise a dedicated family service on the Environment	Explore issues, celebrate what we do already. Explain eco-congregation.	Would need to plan service into church diary.	Minister, Worship Group, Junior Church.	2
Use projector screen for song words rather than print papers, especially at family services when projector often used already	Use less paper	Takes time to organise Still need to provide sheets for people with visual impairments.	Worship group, Music Group, our I.T. expert Barry Horne!	2

Useful eco-congregation resources: Module 2 'Celebrating Creation!' contains ideas and resources for worship

SECTION TWO: THEOLOGY

Theology is concerned with giving and exploring a rational and orderly account of Christian belief, drawing on Biblical studies, Church tradition and history, ethics and the context in which the Church is present. St Mary the Virgin, Monkseaton, explored aspects of creation/green- theology over a five week period

What we do already

† Provide access to Christian books and resources which may include reference to environmental issues

New ideas

Idea	Why?	Costs/savings/practice implications	People	Priority
Provide access to Christian books/resources which explore environmental themes, by providing directly or signposting (through bulletin or church magazine).	Enable easier access to exploration of issues, if desired.	Cost implications for buying in books. Bulletin/magazine no cost, but commitment from someone to provide signposting.	Stewards Social responsibility Sec Church magazine Editor.	2
Participate in or organise study events that include environmental issues – e.g. practical idea: a church trip to CAT, the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales, a great day out!	Encourage thinking and exploring some of these issues together, more deeply, and as a congregation.	Organisation! Individual cost for those interested.	Anyone interested.	3
Ask our Minister to include environmental issues/prayers/readings regularly in services	To make sure that our care for God's world is part of our everyday church life	Support from Minister	Minister Stewards	2
Special PAWS service on the church's role in caring for the environment	Further opportunity to explore what we do, how and why	Support from the PAWS team.	PAWS	2
Environment-focused bible study course	Opportunity to understand where the environment fits in to Christian theology	Support from Minister Interest required from church members	Minister Congregation	3

Useful eco-congregation resources: Module 3 'Creation and Christianity' contains some eco- or green theological ideas together with suggestions for further reading.

SECTION THREE: Children and Young People

Christian children's work (infant and primary age) can inform, inspire and encourage youngsters as they grow in faith. St Mary the Virgin, Easington, arranged an educational visit to the sea for their children, and their children helped plan and participated in an environmental service. Churches undertake a range of youth work (secondary age) including Sunday focussed groups, church and open youth groups and mid-week uniformed organisations. St Mary Magdalene, Hucknall, designated a corner of their churchyard for a wildlife garden and worked with school children and their youth group to plan, plant and maintain it.

What we do already

- † GB have had a discussion on environmental issues and personal responsibility held at GB, and environment-focussed devotions.
- † Junior church Senior Department sponsored walk over Clent
- † Youth Club BBQ at Clent
- † GB ramble
- † GB and BB summer camp: always recycle as much as possible, care for the local environment in which they are staying.

New ideas

Idea	Why?	Costs/savings/practice implications	People	Priority
GB/BB groups could focus on the environment as part of a Community Badge.	Incorporate environmental issues and awareness into everyday GB/BB programme.	Existing community badge may not already have environment included.	GB/BB leaders and members	2
Environmental/conservation project at GB/BB/ Youth Club – one idea is to have bird feeders hanging from church garden/car park trees – looked after by children or young people at church.	Encourage wildlife in church grounds, improve the eco-system.	Cost of bird feed (low) Interest from young people – GB leaders already interested! Some concerns raised about public health, also danger to birds from electricity cables overhead.	GB/BB/ Youth Club	1

Useful eco-congregation resources: Module 4 'Acorns to Oaks' includes inspiration and ideas for incorporating indoor and outside environmental activities in children's work. Module 5 'Tread gently – go green' has ideas and activities for youth work.

SECTION FOUR: All-age and Adult Education

Church is a place where people can grow in faith from cradle to grave. Relating key topics, like environmental issues, with Christian thinking can be inspirational and faith-affirming. St John the Evangelist, C of E/Methodist LEP explored a creation- focused Bible study and their minister led some environmentally-themed assemblies at their local school.

What we do already

† Quinton Ladies 2007-2008 programme includes a speaker from the RSPB

† Consultation at church about this environmental health check

New ideas

Idea	Why?	Costs/savings/practice implications	People	Priority
See section 2 (Theology) for Bible Study ideas.				
Invite a speaker on environmental issues – for the church in general	To get perspective from outside the church on what we could be doing/what others do	Organisation	Congregation Stewards Social Responsibility Sec	2
Raise awareness with church groups about what environment speakers are available for 2008-09 programmes	To get perspective from outside the church on what we could be doing/what others do	Research required about relevant speakers and costs (Initial idea: Dudley Waste and Pollution Group can provide speaker)	Church Groups Social Responsibility Sec	3

Useful eco-congregation resources: Module 6 'Exploring God's green world' includes two sets of Bible studies and an address suitable for house groups or sermon preparation.

SECTION FIVE: Church Property

Good stewardship of energy and maintenance issues can both reduce your Church's impact on the environment and save your Church money, particularly in the long-term. Church of the Ascension, Ealing, commissioned a free environmental consultation and are applying the recommendations in a phased way.

What we do already

- † Regularly service boiler or heating appliances
- † Choose appropriately sized rooms for activities
- † Timetable meetings to minimise heating use
- † Use a heating system with timer and thermostatic controls
- † Consulted on environmental considerations for refurbishment project
- † Clean windows to maximise natural light!
- † New windows and doors have been checked for energy efficiency
- † Encourage building users to switch off unnecessary lights and not leave items (e.g. photocopier) on standby
- † Replace cracked or broken window panes
- † Use low energy light bulbs where appropriate
- † Use FSC (Forestry Stewardship Council) timber and reclaimed materials where appropriate (many items in church are recycled for re-use – e.g. floorboards)
- † Accessible facilities: provision for people with hearing or visual impairments, development of accessible toilet
- † Check water outlets and fix any leaks or drips

New ideas

Idea	Why?	Costs/savings/practice implications	People	Priority
Evening worship in winter could be in Parlour	Less heating and light energy required, and cosier!	Change of practice, agreement by Minister and congregation required	Minister Stewards Evening Congregation	2
Install water-saving devices e.g. dual flush toilets, auto turn-off taps, if toilets were to be refurbished	To save water	Implications could be considered if toilets are redeveloped.		4
Install water hippos in toilet	Reduce the amount of	3 water hippos = £6.99, or £34.08	Property Committee	3

cisterns.	water flushed through our current toilets (saves 3 litres per flush)	for 25 (£1.16 each) – hippos left could be sold to congregation for small fee, encouraging water saving at home.		
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Useful eco-congregation resources: Module 7 'Greening the cornerstone' includes ideas and sources of resources to help Churches put God's House in green order.

SECTION SIX: Church Management

Churches are responsible for the good stewardship of money and a range of consumables. Dorking Society of Friends switched to a supplier of green electricity and have facilities to recycle a number of items.

What we do already

- † Recycle foil, paper, spectacles, stamps, printer cartridges, shoes.
- † Hold jumble sales to raise funds through recycled goods (clothes etc)
- † Use crockery rather than disposable cups and plates for most events
- † Luncheon club and Christian Care use local suppliers (e.g. local butcher for meat)
- † We only print what is necessary for bulletin and magazine, minimising wastage.
- † Church Magazine now published on church website, creating potential for less printing.
- † Firm commitment to Fair Trade through the Traidcraft stall and other activities.

New ideas

Idea	Why?	Costs/savings/practice implications	People	Priority
Change banking from Barclays to a socially and environmentally ethical bank (Cooperative, CAF – Charities Aid Foundation)	To support organisations and businesses which have ethical environmental and social investment policies, and so we know 'where our money is going'.	Church treasurer is willing to consider idea. Cooperative Bank is not practical because postal-based. CAF bank more positive - deposits can be paid in at HSBC branches.	Treasurer Church Council Group leaders who deposit funds to church account.	1
Switch to a green energy supplier	Lots of interest already from congregation. Tangible commitment to environment, relatively easy.	May be minimal increase in electricity bills, research required. May be locked in to contract with current supplier.	Treasurer, Church Council. Social Responsibility Sec	1
Use environmentally-friendly cleaning materials	To minimise the harm we do when keeping our church clean.	Probably more expensive (research required), commitment would be needed from Church Council to	Church Council Church volunteer cleaners.	3

		support extra expenditure. Different suppliers, possible transportation implications. There are concerns that Ecover products or equivalent would not be as effective as chemical-based cleaning agents.		
Use environmentally-friendly paint	To minimise chemicals used in church upkeep	Cost implications fairly significant, could be considered at point of planning decoration.	Church Council Property Committee.	4
Provide recycled toilet roll in church toilets.	Someone once said... ...if all the world used the same quality of loo rolls as we do in the rich West, there would be no forests left on the earth... Possibly an exaggeration, but an interesting point.	More expensive than the bargains Betty Rose sources currently, but a tangible way to show our level of commitment. Would need support from Church Council. Different suppliers, possible transportation implications.	Church Council Church volunteer cleaners.	3
BB and GB could consider recycling aluminium cans at each meeting	Lots of drinks from cans are consumed, would help waste minimisation	Would need someone to take cans home each week (volunteers have already come forward)	BB and GB	2

Useful eco-congregation resources: Module 8 'Greening the purse strings' includes ideas for good stewardship of financial, catering and purchasing matters

SECTION SEVEN: Church Land

Many churches are responsible for land varying in size from a tiny patch to a large acreage. Trinity URC, Wigan has a bird feeding station and their children made some bird nest boxes. Gildersome Baptist Church undertook a major churchyard project involving partnerships with a variety of agencies and schools and turned a hazardous wilderness into a wildlife haven and educational resource.

What we do already

- † We have a garden with native plant species (trees and shrubs, a hedgerow) that attract wildlife
- † We have a green space that is visually attractive for the local community, kept green, clean and tidy.
- † Grass cuttings are used as natural mulch for trees and shrubs
- † Bulbs and flowers are cared for
- † Plant species chosen which need minimum water

New ideas

Idea	Why?	Costs/savings/practice implications	People	Priority
Bird feeding stations (see section 3)	Encourage more wildlife	See section 3.		

Useful eco-congregation resources: Module 9 'Planting and conserving Eden' includes ideas and sources of resources for churches to:

- assess the ecological value of their land and develop a management plan
- improve the community benefit or wildlife value of their plot

SECTION EIGHT: Personal lifestyle

More people attend church week by week than participate with any other voluntary body. All Saint's Church, Wretton, published a monthly 'green your life' article in their parish magazine.

What we do already

- † Some environmental concerns have been highlighted in church magazine
- † Information about carbon footprint etc posted on Social Responsibility notice board
- † At environmental consultation congregation members came up with ideas for home as well as church

New ideas

Idea	Why?	Costs/savings/practice implications	People	Priority
Incorporate regular space on green issues in church magazine	To support and encourage congregation with environmental issues at home as well as at church.	Requires provider of ideas (Social Responsibility Sec willing)	Social Responsibility Secretary Magazine Editor.	1

Useful eco-congregation resources: Module 10 'Green choices' includes information and tips to green lifestyles

SECTION NINE: Community outreach

Churches can work with and through their local community to improve the quality of their neighbourhood and build links. St Osmund's, Derby organise an annual community litter pick.

What we do already

- † Encourage users of church premises to save energy by turning off all lights.
- † The environmental check-up group were not sure if we do anything more under this theme: if you know of any work that should be included here, please let Sally Taylor know.

New ideas

Idea	Why?	Costs/savings/practice implications	People	Priority
Establish links with community organisations with a view to sharing QMC's environmental ministry (e.g. schools, youth groups, local environmental bodies)	To broaden our perspective, to get involved in initiatives already happening locally	Research and willing volunteers required.	Neighbourhood Committee, Family Committee. Local organisations/initiatives.	3
Specifically advise building users of environmental concerns – ask that they consider using Fair Trade on our premises, be aware of energy use, offer our current recycling facilities for their use.	To encourage people who use church building, but not necessarily regular attendees, to consider their environmental impact	Could include in booking confirmation	Bookings manager Building users.	2

Useful eco-congregation resources: Module 11 'Community Matters' includes stories, ideas and further contacts for undertaking work with and through local communities.

SECTION TEN: Overseas concerns

Living simply that others may simply live is a facet of Christian life. Clarendon Park Baptist/Methodist LEP established a thriving Traidcraft stall in their church and sell the products at other local outlets.

What we do already

- † Church project supports overseas charity every other year (approx £10k fundraising)
- † We support the work of Christian development agencies regularly (Christian Aid, Methodist Relief and Development Fund, Leprosy Mission)
- † Members have participated in the Jubilee Debt Campaign, the Make Poverty History Campaign and the Cut the Carbon campaign
- † Promotion of Fair Trade and a very successful Traidcraft stall
- † Invite speakers to participate in church services (e.g. Leprosy Mission, Amala Children's Home)
- † Support for the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital

New ideas

Idea	Why?	Costs/savings/practice implications	People	Priority
We could consider supporting an environmental charity, or making sure that overseas charities we support take into account the importance of environmental sustainability in their development work.	To support projects that are about long term sustainability for people's access to land and natural resources	Additional criteria for projects to support.	Neighbourhood committee	3

Useful eco-congregation resources: Module 12 'Global Neighbours' includes ideas and contacts to help church think and act locally to promote environmental care globally.

5. Next steps

It is recommended to church council that the following steps are taken:

1: The Social Responsibility Secretary orders the following resources (free of charge!) from the Eco-congregation scheme:

- Module 2: Celebrating Creation!
- Module 3: Creation and Christianity
- Module 5: Tread gently – go green
- Module 7: Greening the cornerstone
- Module 8: Greening the purse strings
- Module 11: Community Matters
- Module 12: Global Neighbours

2: The three ideas at priority level 1 are taken forward (as relevant people are already willing). These are:

- Research into switching church current account to an ethical bank
- Research into switching church energy supplier to a green provider
- Potential GB bird feeding project
- Environmental tips included in each church magazine edition

3: This report is made available to the church congregation (mainly through website or requests for hard copies to keep printing low), for people to take a look and consider if they could have a role in any of the actions.

4: This report is forwarded to specific people listed in the action plan, for them to consider whether their group or area of responsibility could have an impact on the environmental sustainability of our church.

5: Anyone with further ideas or comments, or willing to commit to any of the actions, should contact Sally Taylor to let her know what they wish to find out more about.

This isn't intended to be a chore: if there are things to be done, great. If some things aren't possible in the near future, perhaps they can be worked into our future plans. The main thing is to celebrate what we do already (a lot!) and then to do what is achievable and meaningful for us as a church.