

# eco-congregation

England and Wales  
Summer 2005 newsletter



Eco-congregation provides a structure to help churches get going on environmental issues:

- a check-up for churches (module 1)
- modules designed to resource church life
- newsletter 3 times a year
- support from the co-ordinator
- an Award scheme

If you would like to know more about the wider work of Eco-congregation, please do get in touch or request the introductory leaflet and the churches' check-up.

There is so much excellent work happening – lots of resources to help churches, this is just a small selection!

With all good wishes

Jo

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PS If you have an email address and could receive future newsletters via email, please email me and let me know! It saves paper and postage!

## Latest Eco-congregation Award winners:

### **Christchurch, Clarendon Park, Leicester** *Second award*

- energy audit for church members
- regular tree planting sessions
- part of local trade justice group
- recycles Christmas tree into Easter tree

### **Endcliffe Methodist Church, Sheffield**

- church garden created
- worked with Council on fair trade issues
- fashion show

### **University of East Anglia Chaplaincy**

- held climate change workshop
- fancy dress party with recycling theme!
- chaplains cycle in to work

### **Northallerton URC *Second award***

- Operation Noah materials used in church
- Community garden, involving local groups
- sensors used so energy not wasted
- maintaining trees & shrubs planted locally
- engaging with local Environmental Action Group

### **Holy Trinity Shaw, Swindon**

- Fairtrade Church status
- lots of groups involved in maintaining church grounds
- converted to green electricity
- energy efficiency programme

### **St Mary the Virgin, Ringmer**

- Lent study groups using Eco-congregation study
- Rogation services at local farms
- Living churchyard project
- distributed low energy lightbulbs
- links with Community College on environment
- Public meeting on GM crops

### **Holy Trinity, Skipton**

- Trees project with local school
- provided LOAF meal for Diocesan conference
- animal blessing services
- active support of local agricultural community
- Green pages produced for town

Congratulations to all these churches demonstrating how Christian discipleship includes taking care of God's gift of creation.

## Finances for Eco-congregation

I'm struggling to find significant funding for Eco-congregation (England & Wales): our current funding (thanks to Methodist Relief and Development Fund and the Allchurches Trust) is £7,000 for one year.

Could your church help? How about contributing to the cost of a plaque for the next church to win the award in your Diocese/District/Synod? St John's Hurst Green, Lancashire did just that, and their contribution of £38 paid for the plaque for the next Award winner in the same Diocese of Bradford, which was Holy Trinity, Skipton! Many thanks to 3 Award winning churches which have contributed £100 each to the project.

## Churchyard challenges!

### **God's Golden Acre**

Bill Graham tells his church's story:

The Anglican parish church of St George is situated close to Birmingham city centre and has members of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities. As part of its ministry, the church decided to take a fresh look at its grounds. The challenge was to develop the area in a way that met social, environmental and economic needs. In addition, being in a conservation area any major changes required planning consent.

The first stage was to consult the congregation and draw up a plan. It was decided that as many of the changes would be undertaken by volunteers to help generate a sense of ownership and reinforce community. The next two phases have involved the digging up and removal of eight skip loads of tarmac and replacing with grass, trees and shrubs. We were lucky enough to have assistance from the nearby Birmingham Botanical Gardens with planting plans.

The next stage will be the area for car parking. At present this consists of plastic matting on grass but over the years less and less turf is surviving resulting in a barren, unsightly area. The plan is to use interlocking squares of recycled plastic set into the ground and filled with gravel. This low tech approach will not only cope with the pressures of parking but also allow water to naturally soak into the ground.

### **Churchyard mission at St Chad's Far Headingley**

This church has used caring for the churchyard as a way of reaching out to the local community: local folk help out with churchyard work parties, events with local Mammal Group and Lichen Walk attract non-church members, as well as the Geological and Wildlife trail, which was sent out with the parish magazine. A conservation information board educates all those walking through the churchyard and alerts them to the fact that a churchyard can be maintained for the living as well as those who have died.

Many local Wildlife Trusts offer help and advice in managing a churchyard for conservation, and groups such as Caring for God's Acre in Herefordshire point out that widening out 'ownership' of the churchyard can involve many different groups (heritage groups wanting to trace ancestors from gravestones; archaeology groups; lichen, botany, butterfly, bird and bat groups; dry stone walling; local primary schools). Involving a wider network can extend the church community, and build positive links. Could you build links with the local Lifelong learning groups?

How about this idea also from St Chad's: a regular magazine exchange after the morning service? Brilliant. And any left over go to the local hospital waiting room.

### **Congregations for a Low Carbon Future**

Marches Energy Agency are working with Hereford Diocese and Herefordshire County Council to bring about real changes in CO2 emissions. They are providing energy efficiency work in vicarages, and encouraging church members to improve the energy efficiency of their property, installing renewable energy technologies, or switching their electricity supply to a 'green' tariff.

If you'd like to be involved, contact Katherine Shepherd, the project officer by e-mail ([katherine@mea.org.uk](mailto:katherine@mea.org.uk)), telephone (01743 246007) or post (23 Swan Hill, Shrewsbury, SY1 1NN).

### **Christian Animal groups**

The quote at the end of this newsletter is from an article by Edward Echlin in "The Ark", the journal for **Catholic Concern for Animals**. Other excellent articles to be found also! If you'd like to join and subscribe to the journal, contact Deborah Jones, 12 Swan Court, Witney OX28 6EA Email: [deborahjark@aol.com](mailto:deborahjark@aol.com) Website: [www.catholic-animals.org](http://www.catholic-animals.org)

There is also the **Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals** whose main aim is to raise awareness of animal welfare issues within the Anglican Church and the wider Christian community. They are ecumenical and welcome all Christian denominations as members and supporters.

Website: [www.aswa.org.uk](http://www.aswa.org.uk)

Contact: [feedback@aswa.org.uk](mailto:feedback@aswa.org.uk)

Post: PO Box 7193, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 8GT.

**Animal Welfare Sunday** in 2005 will fall on Sunday 2nd October. A special Ecumenical Service organised by the 'Association of Christian Animal Welfare Societies' will be held at York Minster at 2pm on Saturday 1st October, speaker Rt Revd James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool.

### **Book recommendation**

**The Atlas of Food** by Erik Millstone and Tim Lang

Published by Earthscan 2003

isbn 1-85383-965-5

This is packed full of facts about food, and the essential reference book for any LOAF campaigners! Who eats what, where and why. Each double page addresses a different issue and is packed with facts and figures from feeding the world, pesticide usage, food miles, subsidies and advertising and much in between.

### **Talking of food...**

If people switched to buying locally produced foods they would save £2.1 billion a year in environmental and congestion costs. One of the facts from a paper\* published on 2 March which measures the environmental cost of transporting food around the UK, from farm to supermarket. The answer of course is to buy local. Have a look at the Farma website for a directory of farmers markets and farm shops ([www.farma.org.uk](http://www.farma.org.uk) or [www.localfoodworks.org](http://www.localfoodworks.org)).

Importing food by air generates 50 times as much CO<sub>2</sub> as importing it over the same distance by boat. Benefits of local food networks are:

- greater access to fresh seasonal produce, leading to healthier diets
- increased employment and 'recycling' of money in the local economy
- closer links between farmers and consumers
- reduced pollution and congestion
- reduced risk of crises like BSE, foot and mouth and chicken flu.

\*Farm costs and food miles: An assessment of the full cost of the UK weekly shopping basket by J N Pretty, A S Ball, T Lang and J I L Morison. Paper to be published in Food Policy, Volume 30/No1.

## European Christian Environment Network

European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) aims to ensure the protection and care for God's creation. It is a network linked with the Conference of European Churches. ECEN was established in 1998 following the recommendation of the second European Ecumenical Assembly.

ECEN recently met in Basel, and the Archbishop of Canterbury sent a message to the meeting, and here's a quote:

"There is little doubt that we in Europe, and across the globe, are now facing critical issues about the human relationship with the non-human world in general, and our human ecological management in particular. The effects and implications of Climate Change, resource depletion, pollution and systematic breakdown raise enormous questions of discipleship for us.

It is dangerous to separate economic costs from ecological values. Such thinking risks the loss of a sense of our rootedness in God's Creation Covenant with the Earth, and with all that is therein."

### A message from ECEN to every church and congregation in Europe

The 120 delegates and guests represented Christians from 30 countries in Europe and overseas. As members of Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant, Old Catholic and Roman Catholic churches, we brought a rich diversity of theological traditions, environmental issues, and church experiences. But together we shared one urgent concern: how, as the people of Jesus Christ, we are called to manifest his love for the whole of God's creation in the midst of the environmental crisis.



We call on churches, congregations and individual Christians throughout Europe to find a new and sustainable way of living:

- Celebrate Creation time during September and October each year.
- Rediscover the Eucharist as the place where God is already healing creation.
- Promote education for sustainable living in your churches, in your communities, and in the national curriculum.
- Play your part in tackling climate change by reducing your energy consumption and using green electricity.
- Form relationships of eco-justice with communities in the South who are affected by our profligate lifestyle.
- Change the way you travel, dramatically reducing car use and air travel, and promoting alternatives.
- Manage your church life sustainably, by implementing policies on energy efficiency, purchasing, waste, land and finance.

- Value water, by using it carefully and advocating its availability for the benefit of all creation.
- Learn about, protect and enjoy the diversity of nature around you.

There are many programmes and resources around Europe to support you in this work: you can find out about these on our website, [www.ecen.org](http://www.ecen.org), along with materials which ECEN has developed. Small actions are already adding up to big results and many churches are taking action. When ECEN next meets we look forward to praising God for all that Christians have done to care for creation throughout Europe. And when we again share our stories and experiences, your story will be among them.

## Facts and figures

The Independent published these facts in an attempt to get environmental issues to higher up the agenda during the course of the election:

- **10** of the hottest years in the world on record have occurred since 1990
- **3.5C** predicted rise in average UK temperature by 2080. For every one degree rise, Spring advances six days
- **1.5 per cent** rise in UK carbon dioxide emissions in 2004
- In its 2001 manifesto, Labour reaffirmed its pledge to cut greenhouse emissions by **20** per cent from 1990 levels, by 2010. They are currently **12.6** per cent lower than in 1990
- **8.6 months** is the estimated reduction in lifespan of average European due to pollution
- **434,000,000** tons of waste is produced in Britain each year - enough to fill the Albert Hall every two hours
- Rubbish is dumped illegally in UK every **35 secs**
- **22m** tons of rubbish from British homes sent to landfill sites every year
- **10** species of wild flower are believed to be disappearing from each county in Britain each decade
- **21** native flowering plants have disappeared from Britain in the past 150 years
- **50 per cent** fall in the population of birds living in agricultural fields since 1970 (with tree sparrows down by 87 per cent )
- **95 per cent** of our important, wildlife-rich lowland peat bogs have been destroyed in the past half century
- **97 per cent** of our flower-rich lowland grasslands have disappeared since 1930
- **17 per cent** of household waste was recycled last year. The target is 35 per cent by 2015
- **19 per cent** of municipal waste recycled last year
- **50 per cent** of household and municipal waste is recycled in Austria, Germany and the Netherlands
- **97m** passengers flew between the UK and the rest of Europe in 2003 - almost double the 51m in 1993
- **32.26m** vehicles were on Britain's roads last year, a rise of 3.2 per cent on 2003.

## Caring for Creation with Bishop John Oliver

Friday 26 August(6 pm) - Sunday 28 August (2 pm)  
Ammerdown Retreat and Conference Centre near Bath

Bp John will be "inspiring us to live sustainably into the future". His particular focus will be on the role of literature and poetry in celebrating the importance of landscape and place as revealing eternal truth - the link between soil and soul.

Cost: £96 (incl accommodation and meals)  
Bursaries of up to a third of the fees are available for people on low income and for full time students.  
For further information, please contact Tessa or Kelly on 01761 433 709 or at [centre@ammerdown.org](mailto:centre@ammerdown.org)

## A Rocha conference: Hope for the planet Thursday 24th November, London

This conference will bring together top theologians, scientists, and hands-on conservationists from five continents, to look at how the Christian message is one of liberating hope for the whole creation. The day aims to be biblical and practical, aimed particularly at church leaders, but essential to all thinking Christians. Confirmed speakers already include Peter & Miranda Harris, Sir Ghillean Prance, Elaine Storkey and Prof Alister McGrath.

Why not sponsor your minister to come? Book through A Rocha UK Office: A Rocha U.K. 13 Avenue Road Southall MIDDLESEX UB1 3BL Web: [www.arocha.org.uk](http://www.arocha.org.uk)  
Phone: 020 8574 5935 Email: [uk@arocha.org](mailto:uk@arocha.org)

## Computers for charities

[www.computersforcharity.co.uk](http://www.computersforcharity.co.uk)

offer recycling facilities for computers (of specific types), mobile phones, inkjet and laser printers, etc. Also offer refurbished computers for church and charity use for low prices. If you have large numbers of computers to recycle (eg company upgrading) then do have a look and see if Computers for Charity can use them.

## Recycling paint

Community Re>Paint is a network of paint reuse schemes across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The purpose of the project is to collect leftover reusable paint from householders, and redistribute it to those who need paint but cannot afford it.

More than 80% of us live within 20 miles of one of over 50 now running in the UK. Have a look at the website: [www.communityrepaint.org.uk](http://www.communityrepaint.org.uk)

## Day trip idea

Live in or near the West/East Midlands? How about taking a church group for a day out to the National Forest? Have a look at the website [www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org)

## Quote

"Love all God's creation, the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals. Love the plants. Love everything. If you love everything you will perceive the Divine Mystery in things."  
*Dostoevsky*

## Maximise profit

How to encourage those business people in your church who are not interested in environmental issues? Tell them it can save them money! And then tell them that there is free advice available to help them do it! This FREE Government programme is busy saving £1000s for businesses. Take a look at [www.maximiseprofit.org.uk](http://www.maximiseprofit.org.uk) or phone for up to 2 hours free advice on the Environment and Energy helpline on 0800 585794.

## Lent 2006

Thinking about next year's Lent project? If you'd like to find out what St John's Hurst Green did with their KIDZONE Lent project, drop me a line and I'll send you their ideas, transcribed by Clare Hyde (thank you, Clare!)

## An Act of Commitment

*...as used by UEA Chaplaincy in the service where their Eco-congregation Award was presented (please feel free to use and adapt):*

As we celebrate the goodness, diversity and wonder of God's creation, we admit our collective guilt in allowing species to become so swiftly extinct, in depleting finite energy and raw materials, and in polluting the earth's soil, water and atmosphere. Let us be ready to change the way we think and live.

Let us commit ourselves, as individuals and within our churches, to do all we can to heal and restore the damage people have caused to God's earth, and to develop sustainable lifestyles, both for ourselves and to inspire others.

**Through our lives and by our prayers  
Your kingdom come.**

Let us commit ourselves to do all in our power to support church communities planning a better way of living in their localities.

**Through our lives and by our prayers  
Your kingdom come.**

Let each of us commit ourselves to play our part and take what action we can to cherish God's creation.

**Through our lives and by our prayers  
Your kingdom come.**

**We pledge to pray and work for an environmentally sustainable and socially just world, in the interest of all earth's inhabitants, both present and future generations, and for the well-being and flourishing of the whole earth.**