

eco- congregation



an environmental toolkit for churches

Module 1

church check-up

*Eco-congregation (England & Wales) is a project of A Rocha UK
13 Avenue Road, Middlesex UB1 3BL Registered Charity No 1089276*

Eco-congregation – working under the auspices of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

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

1. Identify and affirm their existing environmental ministry
2. Prioritise what they would like to do next and identify supportive resources

Step 1 Getting started

It is recommended that you form a small group to work through the check-up and prioritise your first steps. Eco-congregation offers resources to support your chosen priorities – the following sections 2-12 each has an associated module. To order your choice of modules free of charge, complete the form with:

- Contact details
- An affirmation your church has undertaken the check-up, or a comparable audit
- An affirmation that a church decision-making meeting approves that environmental activities form part of your church's life and mission (this step helps gain support for subsequent activities)
- Your church's choice of resource modules

Step 2 Get Cracking!

On receipt of the resources, distribute them to appropriate people/groups in your church (e.g. worship resources to worship leader, property resources to property committee) and encourage the development and implementation of your plans.

Step 3 Go for an Award

Churches that undertake initiatives with spiritual, practical and community dimensions are encouraged to apply for the Eco-congregation Award. Keep a record of your church's environmental activities to aid any application.

1. Life and Mission of the Church

The Five Marks of Mission is a model that can help churches identify their strengths and weaknesses. First formulated by the 1988 Lambeth Conference and adopted since by many denominations and ecumenical bodies, it has been widely used in church life. Note your church's activities for each Mark and assess whether care of the environment has sufficient weight within your church's mission:

Mark of Mission

Activities

Mark 1: To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom, e.g. preaching.

Mark 2: To teach, baptise and nurture new believers, e.g. children's work, membership/Alpha Course.

Mark 3: To respond to human need by loving service, e.g. pastoral visiting.

Mark 4: To seek to transform unjust structures of society, e.g. supporting a housing charity, promoting fair trade.

Mark 5: To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation; to sustain and renew the life of the earth, e.g. having energy efficient premises, wildlife garden.

A church with a holistic mission has activities related to each of the Five Marks.

How to complete the check-up

Use sections 2-11 to identify your church's current environmental good practice and future priorities. For some questions you may wish to tick more than one box (e.g. an environmental feature may be present but also have the potential to be further developed). There is space to write additional notes on each section if you would like to, but it is not essential. Skip those sections or tick boxes that aren't relevant for your church.

2. Worship

Worship is the prime focus of Christian life from which the Church's life and mission flows. Dunblane Cathedral held a St Francis' Tide service focussing on creation care which included an act of commitment by the whole church to care better for God's creation. This section is designed to help you identify how thankfulness and concern for God's creation are expressed in your worship:

How regularly during the year are environmental concerns included in worship?

- Never Occasionally Only at special services Frequently
e.g. Harvest Festival, Rogation Sunday,
Conservation Sunday (1st Sunday in
June), St Francis' Day (4th October),
One World Week

In your Church's prayer life do you:

(tick any that apply to your church)

- Praise God the creator Say sorry for the harm done to the environment
 Give thanks to God for the gift of creation Pray for the healing of creation

Does your Church connect with God's gift of creation through worship?

(tick any that apply to your church)

- Through occasional outdoor services through prayer walks
 Using natural materials within worship choosing organic bread and wine

Does your Church sing hymns or songs that celebrate the wonder of creation and express the calling to care for the environment?

- Regularly On special Sundays Hardly ever

Notes:

Module 2, 'Celebrating Creation!' contains ideas and resources for worship teams and leaders

3. 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. Does your church:

	Yes	No	Has potential to develop
have access to Christian environmental resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
participate in or organise study/exploration events that include environmental issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
include creation/environmental issues in its teaching or preaching programme?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:

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

4. Children's work

Christian work with children can inform, inspire and encourage youngsters as they grow in faith. As part of a special creation-focussed service, the children at St John's, Hamilton gave each member a gift of bulbs potted in a re-used plastic cup. Use the check-up to identify if your children's programme (infant and primary age) includes environmental issues and the potential for developing this ministry:

Category of activity	Sometimes (tick those that apply to your church)	Never	Has potential to develop
Junior Church/Sunday School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uniformed organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playgroups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
After school/holiday clubs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In schools e.g. through Assemblies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All age worship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:

Module 4, 'Acorns to oaks' includes inspiration and ideas for incorporating indoor and outside environmental activities in children's work

5. Youth work

Churches undertake a range of youth work including groups meeting on Sundays, church and open youth groups and mid-week uniformed organisations. Stirling Methodist Church's young people prepared and helped to implement an environmental action plan for their church buildings. If your church undertakes youth work, review your existing activities and consider future possibilities:

Have done	Could consider	Activities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hold a debate on environmental issues and personal responsibility
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop creation-care material to offer in worship
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Undertake a practical environmental/conservation project
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange a ramble(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Organise an environmentally focussed community event (with young people from the whole community)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assess how environmentally-friendly the church is and make recommendations for action

Notes:

Module 5, 'Tread gently – go green' has ideas and activities for youth work.

6. 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 the local school. What opportunities are or could be available for your church:

Have done	Could consider	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Undertake an environmental Bible study
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Invite a speaker on environmental issues
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Organise/participate in a creation-care Lent group

Notes:

Module 6, 'Exploring God's green word' includes two sets of Bible studies and an address suitable for house groups or sermon preparation

7. 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. Kirkwall East Church incorporated low energy lighting circuits and a high standard of insulation in its plans for renovations of the church. Assess your churches current environmental stewardship of property (sanctuary, halls, clergy housing) and the potential for developing this:

Have done	Could consider	Energy- heating and light
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitor energy consumption regularly (monthly?) to check trends
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Switch to 'green' electricity (electricity from renewable sources)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regularly service boiler or heating appliances
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Choose appropriate sized rooms for activities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Timetable meetings to minimise heating use
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Heating system with timer and thermostatic controls
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Commission an energy/environmental consultation (particularly useful if considering a new heating system or refurbishment or if any boiler is older than 15 years)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fit draft excluders around windows and doors to reduce heat loss
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Install appropriate levels of insulation where appropriate
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clean windows to maximise natural light!
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage building users to switch off unnecessary lights and not leave items on stand-by (e.g. photocopier)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Replace cracked or broken windowpanes
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Installed low-energy light bulbs where appropriate

Have done	Could consider	Water
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check water outlets – fix drips and leaks
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Install water-saving devices e.g. dual flush toilets and low spray flow or auto turn-off taps
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Collect rainfall from down pipes for use in garden

Have done	Could consider	Building maintenance
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Choose timber from sustainably managed forests, and reclaimed materials where appropriate

Notes:

Module 7, 'Greening the cornerstone' includes ideas and sources of resources to help Churches put God's House in green order

8. Church management

Churches are responsible for the good stewardship of money and a range of consumables. North Church in Perth re-cycle their printer and photocopier cartridges and the plastic milk cartons used by the catering team. Use this section to assess your church's existing good practice and identify issues for consideration and action:

Have done	Could consider	Financial management & purchasing policy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check the environmental policy of your bank and see if you are satisfied with it
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have an ethical investment policy for any savings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use environmentally-friendly cleaning materials & paint
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Purchase recycled paper and envelopes (to close the loop)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Purchase fairly-traded products (e.g. tea and coffee)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use local suppliers where possible (so promoting a sustainable local economy and reducing transportation)

Have done	Could consider	Catering
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use crockery rather than disposable cups and plates
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use farmers markets and other local suppliers (to promote local economy and reduce food miles)

Have done	Could consider	Waste minimisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Collection facilities for recycling items that church members, building users or local community can patronise (e.g. paper, cans, spectacles, stamps, printer cartridges, clothes, shoes, foil)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hold jumble sales to raise funds, recycle goods and promote the availability of goods at affordable prices

Notes:

Module 8, 'Greening the purse strings' includes ideas for good stewardship of financial, catering and purchasing matters

9. Church Land

Many churches are responsible for land varying in size from a tiny patch to a large acreage. St Saviours Episcopal Church in Bridge of Allan carried out a survey of their grounds and are now planning a bird feeding station and other improvements for wildlife. Use this section to assess the ecological value, value to the community and attractiveness of your church's plot and the potential to develop it:

Present	Potential to develop	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Management that is wildlife-friendly (e.g. minimal use of weedkillers and pesticides, leaving some areas unmown, valuing old trees, hedges, walls and stones)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Native plant species and plants that benefit wildlife (e.g. flowers used by moths and butterflies, berry-bearing trees for birds, hawthorn and blackthorn)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other features to benefit wildlife (e.g. bird feeding station, bird nest boxes, bat boxes, piles of leaves and rotting logs for insects and hedgehogs)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Visually attractive planting/features
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Area for prayer/contemplation/outdoor worship
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Area for recreation

Notes:

Module 9, 'Planting and conserving Eden' includes ideas, inspiration 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**

10. Personal lifestyle

More people attend church week by week than participate with any other voluntary body. Callander Church publish 'green tips' in the church magazine and the local community paper. Use this section to assess what your church is currently doing to encourage individuals to green their lifestyle and the potential to develop this mission

Have done	Could consider	Greening personal lifestyle
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Publish green tips in any church/parish magazine
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Promote awareness through posters or information from environmental organisations (e.g. home energy audit)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage recycling by providing collection points or informing people of civic facilities

Notes:

Module 10, 'Green choices' includes information and tips to green lifestyles.

11. Community outreach

Churches can work with and through their local community to improve their neighbourhood. Dalbeattie Parish Church held services in the forest as part of Treefest, attracting people who don't normally attend church. Assess the links that your Church already has in the local community and the potential for further development.

Have done	Could consider	Community outreach/mission
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish links with community organisations with a view to sharing your environmental ministry (e.g. schools, youth groups, local environmental bodies)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Advise building users of your environmental concerns and request that they utilise any environmental facilities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Participate in local environmental initiatives or policy formation – Local Authorities can advise
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Draw on links that members have with environmental bodies e.g. Friends of the Earth, Wildlife Trust, RSPB
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support or initiate community schemes with a positive environmental element (e.g. Clean-up, LETS, Credit Union)

Notes:

Module 11, 'Community Matters' includes stories, ideas and further contacts for undertaking work with and through local communities.

12. 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 does or can your church do to benefit the environment and people across the world?

Have done	Could consider	Community outreach/mission
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support the work of Christian development agencies (e.g. Christian Aid, Tearfund, Cafod, Trocaire or SCIAF)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Initiate or participate in activities in One World Week
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Promote fair trade
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Explore environmental issues through any linked or twinned overseas community or church
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support the work of international conservation and environment agencies (e.g. A Rocha, WWF, Friends of the Earth)

Notes:

Modules 12, 'Global neighbours' includes ideas and contacts to help churches think and act locally to promote environmental care globally

Summary and Action Plan

What is your church already doing to care for creation?

What are the first three things you would like to do to improve your care of creation and which modules will help you tackle them?

Actions

Modules to order

1. **Something 'spiritual':**

2. **Something practical:**

3. **Something to reach out:**

About Eco-congregation

Eco-congregation is an ecumenical environmental project for churches in Britain and Ireland. It provides free resources, support and an Award scheme to help churches to consider environmental issues in the context of their Christian life and mission and to take positive action. Eco-congregation was originally developed by the environmental charity ENCAMS on behalf of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). It is now overseen by CTBI and delivered in England and Wales by A Rocha UK.

For more information contact:

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Sheffield
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Email: ecocongregation@arocha.org

Web: www.ew.ecocongregation.org

Other Christian environmental organisations supporting Eco-congregation

A Rocha – Christians in Conservation is an international conservation organisation working to show God's love for all creation. Web site: www.arocha.org.uk

Christian Ecology Link – is a membership organisation for those who wish to demonstrate care for God's creation in their faith and lifestyle. Web site: www.christian-ecology.org.uk

The **John Ray Initiative** (JRI) is an educational charity with a vision to bring together scientific and Christian understandings of the environment. Web site www.jri.org.uk

eco-congregation registration form

It is important for future funding applications that we know how many churches are using the resources, so please complete this form stating:

1. your contact and church details
2. your choice of modules (overleaf)
3. that you have worked through the churches environmental check-up or a comparable audit
4. that a church decision-making body affirms that environmental activities form part of your church's life and mission.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name of Church

Denomination of Church

Title and Name of Contact Person.....
(Green Apostle/Environmental Co-ordinator)

Address of Contact Person.....

.....

County **Postcode**

Tel: **Fax:**.....

Email address:.....

My contact details may be passed to a third party* **yes*** **no**

* e.g. a church/denominational contact, local authority environmental officer but never for commercial purposes

Size of Church (members/regular worshippers) Under 50 51-200 200+

Location: Rural Suburban Town/City Centre Inner City

Name of Church decision-making body which approved this order:

.....

Date of Meeting:

Position of Church Officer chairing the meeting:

I affirm that environmental issues/caring for God's creation form part of our church's life and mission and that we have worked through the churches environmental check-up in module 1 or a comparable environmental audit

Name of Church Officer

Signature of Church Officer

eco-congregation resources order form

Please tick the modules that your church would like to receive:

'Spiritual': addressing worship and teaching:

- Module 2 Celebrating creation!**
Ideas and resources for worship
- Module 3 Creation and Christianity**
Some green theological perspectives
- Module 4 Acorn to oaks**
Ideas and activities for children's work
- Module 5 Tread gently – go green**
Ideas and activities for youth groups
- Module 6 Exploring God's green word**
An address and two sets of Bible Studies for house groups

Practical: buildings, land and church management

- Module 7 Greening the cornerstone**
Guidelines on caring for Church premises
- Module 8 Greening the purse strings**
Management of financial, catering and purchasing matters
- Module 9 Planting and conserving Eden**
Practical ideas and advice to care for Church grounds and land

Mission: reaching out locally and globally

- Module 10 Green choices**
Information and suggestions to green personal lifestyles
- Module 11 Community matters**
Ideas to help Churches work with, through and for their local community
- Module 12 Global neighbours**
Sources and resources to help Churches think globally and act locally.

Please note:

- to save resources only one copy of each module is available per Church
- modules are also downloadable from: www.ew.ecocongregation.org under 'Free resources'
- churches may freely photocopy modules
- it is recommended that you only order as many modules as you can use
- other modules may be requested later without completing a second form

Could your church support Eco-congregation financially? This would greatly help the development of the programme. Please make any cheque payable to 'A Rocha UK' and send to the address below. Thank you.

Return this form:

Post: Eco-congregation Resources, c/o Groundworks Sheffield
The Innovation Centre, 217 Portobello, Sheffield, S1 4DP
Email: ecocongregation@arocha.org