

# **eco-** ***congregation***



*an environmental toolkit for churches*

Module 8

## **greening the purse strings**

*Management of financial, catering and purchasing  
matters*

Eco-congregation (England & Wales) is a project of  
A Rocha UK, 13 Avenue Rd, Southall, Middlesex UB1 3BL Registered Charity 1089276

# Module 8 – **greening the purse strings**

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# Module 8 – **greening the purse strings**

## The Agenda

St. John's Church – Finance and Housekeeping Meeting

Monday 23rd July 2007 7.30pm

### Agenda

Devotions: Rev G.O. Green

Apologies: Mr F.R. Itter

1. Minutes of the previous Meeting
2. Financial statement – current and deposit account
3. Report from the Caretaker incl. purchase of cleaning materials
4. Flower rota and review of policy on cut flowers
5. Minister's travel allowance
6. Any of business
7. Date of next meeting – proposal – same date next year?

Closing prayer

Many churches have a finance, catering or management committee that works to ensure that the weekly housekeeping needs of their church are met. Typically such committees are responsible for finances, church property, catering, cleaning and ministerial expenses. This module addresses some of the issues raised in the agenda above with suggestions as to how management committees can help their church show practical care for God's creation. The care of church premises are dealt with more fully in Module 7 'Greening the cornerstone'.

### Opening Devotion

Lord God we thank you for your gifts of:

This world - given through your creative energy;

The Kingdom of God – revealed in the life and witness of your Son;

The Church, given birth through your Holy Spirit.

We thank you for our own church

and ask that you guide us

as we seek to act as good stewards

in accordance to the Kingdom values of Jesus,

and with respect for the well-being of your creation. Amen.

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## **Finance**

Churches, along with individuals, have a variety of opportunities to use their financial influence to promote the values that they hold.

### **Managing money**

If your church is concerned about environmental issues, consider asking your bank the following questions:

- £ Do you have an environmental policy?
- £ What environmental charities/schemes have you supported?
- £ Do you consider the environmental impact of a scheme before agreeing a loan?

Banks are influenced by the opinions and choices of their customers.

### **Investment**

Increasingly churches are choosing to invest any financial resources that they hold according to the principals that they believe in – it is about putting money where the church's heart is. In today's language this is called ethical investment. Ethical investment developed from the desire of people and organisations wanting to avoid profiting from certain activities. Churches adopting ethical investment policy through so-called 'negative criteria' typically avoided investing in businesses whose main activities included:

1. The manufacture or sale of alcohol
2. The manufacture of tobacco
3. The provision of gambling facilities
4. The production of armaments

Additionally, some churches avoid investing in companies that benefit from trade with nations which have a poor human rights record.

Ethical investment has developed so that it is possible to select investments on the avoidance of certain activities (negative criteria) and focus on positive criteria. For example, if your church wanted its investment to promote care of the earth it might choose companies with activities such as developing renewable energy technology, recycling and waste minimisation initiatives or companies with a transparent environmental policy.

If your church has some investments, investigate the environmental or social criteria which are operated. If you feel that the criteria don't match your church's values, consider moving your investment. There is a wide range of ethical funds available. Consider exploring some funds and taking a recommendation to your churches main decision-making meeting. This will enable the whole church to 'own' the decision and also spread the message of investing where your heart lies.

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### ***Story from the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church***

The 1992 General Assembly of the United Reformed Church passed a resolution linked to this subject:

‘Assembly welcomes the ethical policy statement of the Co-operative bank. We support and encourage this development and urge the principle on all commercial and industrial undertakings’

The resolution reminds churches and banks that choices do exist and can be made!

### ***Further Resources on Ethical Investment***

Christian Ecology Link has produced a range of short leaflets on environmental topics including ethical investment.

Contact: CEL 3 Bond St, Lancaster, LA1 3ER Tel 01524 33858  
Email [info@christian-ecology.org.uk](mailto:info@christian-ecology.org.uk) Website [www.christian-ecology.org.uk](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk)

The Good Shopping Guide uses over 12 years of research from the Ethical Consumer Research Association to reveal the human rights, animal welfare and environmental records of the "ultimate holding companies" behind over 700 every-day consumer brands. This includes banks and building societies, ethical investments, insurance and charity credit cards.

The Good Shopping Guide, £10, is published annually by the Ethical Company Organisation, 105A Westbourne Grove, London, W2 4UW. Tel: 0845 257 6850  
Website: [www.thegoodshoppingguide.co.uk](http://www.thegoodshoppingguide.co.uk)

Advice can also be obtained from the Ethical Investment Research Service [www.eiris.org](http://www.eiris.org)

### **The Minister's expenses**

Local churches are usually responsible for ensuring that their minister's work-related expenses, including travel costs, are met. Some churches just pay a mileage or car allowance, which doesn't give an incentive for the minister to use more environmentally-friendly forms of transport. Consider the following:

- in addition to any car mileage allowance/expenses, consider offering cycling allowance/ expenses. This may save the church money and encourage the minister to cycle
- indicate that the church will meet the cost of local bus fares
- remind the minister that the Inland Revenue gives tax allowances on a per mile basis for journeys undertaken by bicycle for all work related business – cycling really can save money!

### ***Story from Torphichen Church, West Lothian***

Rev Cliff Acklam, Minister at Torphichen and Avonbridge, has largely given up the car and prefers to cycle round his parish. As well as saving energy and not polluting the atmosphere, he also finds that he manages to stop and speak to many more of his parishioners than before.

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### **Fundraising**

The jumble sale is an environmentally friendly form of fundraising as in addition to actually raising some cash it:

- encourages people to recycle goods
- makes goods available to people on low incomes

### **Giving**

Many churches give financially and some choose to support a Christian environmental organisation.

#### ***Stories from churches***

**Dumfries Baptist Church** gives regularly to A Rocha – an international Christian conservation organisation – and also prays for A Rocha’s work.

**St John’s Church in Hamilton** gave the £2234 raised through their Harvest Appeal and Craft Fayre one year to Floresta – a Christian charity which helps tropical subsistence farmers to move away from ‘slash and burn’ agriculture towards more sustainable farming practices.

Module 10 ‘Green Choices’ lists Christian environmental organisations in the UK.

***‘For where your treasure is,  
there will be your heart also’***  
Matthew 6:21 Revised English Bible

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### **Catering**

Many churches undertake catering. This may range from a cup of tea/coffee after a morning service to the occasional or regular provision of meals. The following good catering practice can help churches care for the environment:

#### **Minimising waste**

- Use your church's china wherever possible and avoid 'throw-away' cups and plates. Washing-up can be good for fellowship and avoids needless waste!
- Install recycling facilities for glass bottles/jars/cans/plastic cartons used on the premises
- If you have an outside garden area, install a composting point for vegetable matter (food and flowers). The compost can enrich the church garden. Some local authorities have such compost bins available at a reduced price or for free.

#### ***Stories from churches***

**Perth North Church** found that their many fellowship activities used a lot of milk in tea and coffee and the youth groups consumed a lot of canned drinks, so they decided to start recycling the cans and milk cartons and inviting members to bring theirs in too. The local Homebase store donated two green bins for the purpose and the initiative was launched at the all-age Harvest Thanksgiving worship. The response was so good that the two bins rapidly had to be replaced by a large "Wheellie Bin" donated by the Council. Volunteers take the collected cans and cartons to the local recycling centre. The Church feels that the project has been a great success and has engaged with all ages in the congregation. They also re-cycle paper, printer cartridges and polystyrene cups, and encourage members in January to re-cycle their used Christmas cards in the appropriate local shops.

Churches often make use of kerbside collections for recycling, when available. **St Mary the Virgin Church in Monkseaton** lobbied their Council to provide kerbside collections in their part of town.

#### **Food and the environment**

Food is necessary for life, but some methods of producing, processing and distributing food have a bigger impact on the environment than others.

Whilst it is recognised that the development of chemical fertilisers and pesticides and more intensive agricultural methods has resulted in the ability to significantly increase agricultural production, so enabling more people in the world to have sufficient food, there have been some negative side effects. For example, in the UK the growth in the application of chemical pesticides has led to the sharp decline of many native species of wildlife and poor water quality in some streams and rivers. In developing nations there are also health and safety concerns about the welfare of some agricultural workers in relation to their exposure to pesticides.

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There are also concerns about the growth of so-called food-miles. Food-miles is a concept that encompasses the environmental and social costs involved in transporting produce from field to plate. The concern about 'food-miles' has arisen because of the growth of the amount of food transported:

- over vast distances between the country of origin and where it is eaten
- within countries as food is stored, processed, packaged, taken to distribution centres and then to shops!
- from the demand to have a full range of produce available throughout the year rather than just in 'season'

The following steps can reduce the impact of our need for food on the environment:

- Where possible, choose local produce and use a farmers or co-operative market if one is operating to reduce 'food miles'
- Whilst recognising that people enjoy choice, try to offer seasonal produce wherever possible
- Avoid produce which has excessive packaging
- Consider choosing organic produce and providing vegetarian options
- Consider advertising any policy initiatives that are taken (e.g. on a menu, in the church magazine, through the local press)

### **Use your LOAF!**

Christian Ecology Link developed a set of 'LOAF' principles for food and produced a LOAF place mat that can be downloaded from: [www.christian-ecology.org.uk](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk)

**L**ocally purchased  
**O**rganically grown  
**A**nimal friendly  
**F**airly traded

### **Grace**

#### **Traditional grace with a creation theme**

Thank you for the world so sweet  
Thank you for the food we eat  
Thank you for the birds that sing  
Thank you God for everything

#### **A Just after dinner grace**

For fairly-traded chocs and fairly-traded tea  
For bananas that spread smiles from the producer to me  
For rich and fragrant coffee that cost more than a bean  
We give thanks  
In the name of the one who paid the full price for life

#### **A (tongue in cheek) grace mindful of over-indulgence**

God of goodness bless this food  
Keep us in a pleasant mood  
Bless the cook and all who serve us  
Lord from indigestion  
Preserve us!

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### **Fairtrade**

Whilst it is good to minimise food miles, it is not possible to grow products like tea and coffee in temperate climates. However, there are concerns that workers in the developing nations may not necessarily receive a fair wage or have reasonable working conditions. To deal with this justice issue, churches have taken a lead in communities by promoting fairly-traded products and encouraging members of their congregation to buy them.

- Ensure that your church purchases fairly-traded tea, coffee and sugar, which are readily available from suppliers like Traidcraft and also from some supermarkets.
- Consider running a Traidcraft stall to enable your congregation to readily purchase fairly-traded goods. This could be run after worship services and at other regular events such as a Mums and Toddlers Group.
- Host an event for Fairtrade Fortnight each March

### ***Stories from churches***

**Stockton United Reformed Church** has run a Traidcraft stall for over 10 years. Staffed by a willing rota of volunteers, it stocks a supply of ‘core’ goods and also has catalogues available for perusal from which it takes orders. Whilst the stall aimed to break even from the outset, it has generated a profit each year which goes towards social responsibility activities and outreach. It has been remarked that the Traidcraft stall acts as an additional incentive for people to come to worship week-by-week!

**St Mary the Virgin, Easington, Co. Durham** host a display of fairly-traded (and environmentally-friendly goods) for sale in their local supermarket to raise members’ awareness of their availability.

**Papa Westray Church, Orkney** persuaded the community co-operative shop to stock fairly traded goods. Now they are easily available to the whole island community.

During Fairtrade Fortnight, **Wanstead URC** had a talk on Fair Trade as part of their Sunday worship. The talk involved active participation by the children, using a very large inflatable banana supplied by the Fair Trade Foundation. Feedback from worshippers indicated that some would be changing their shopping habits as a result.

**Dundee Church of Scotland Presbytery** has become a Fairtrade Presbytery. Almost 70% (and rising!) of charges in the presbytery use Fairtrade tea and coffee and a range of Fairtrade produce is available and served at Presbytery meetings and other events. They have also raised awareness of their efforts through the media.

Module 12 ‘Global Neighbours’ has more information about fair trade. Contact Traidcraft at: Traidcraft, Kingsway, Gateshead NE11 0NE Tel 0191 491 0591 Email <a href="mailto:comms@traidcraft.co.uk">comms@traidcraft.co.uk</a> Website <a href="http://www.traidcraft.co.uk">www.traidcraft.co.uk</a>
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### **Good catering practice**

- Fill kettles with only the amount of water required, to save energy and money!
- Save energy, money and getting steamed-up by turning kettles off rather than leaving them boiling on a hob
- Sometimes church catering results in more food being laid on than is eaten - often due to the generosity of church members! If you are planning a shared meal and there is a chance of good food not being consumed, identify a place in the community where it could be usefully used, for example a homeless hostel and arrange to take any surplus to them.

### **Promoting recycling and green products**

Increasingly churches are greening their church by choosing environmentally-friendly versions of products from purchasing fairly traded products to recycled paper and environmentally-sensitive cleaning materials to organic paint. Churches can also promote recycling and lighten their 'footprint' on the environment by minimising waste and promoting recycling of products/materials used on church premises and in some instances by providing resources for the local community to use.

### ***Stories from churches***

**All Saint's Church, West Bromwich** have an internal recycling point for church consumables and, in their large car park, host a Council serviced collection point for paper and glass and have a compost pit for dead flowers from church displays and graves. *Rev Liz Brown.*

**Selly Oak Methodist Church** have a 'Big Green Machine' in their church foyer which accepts over 15 different items for recycling from egg boxes to empty pill bottles and used paper to empty ink jet printer cartridges. The Big Green Machine is serviced by several church members responsible for specific items and receives regular contributions from the local community as well as church members. Achievements include recycling over 1000 pairs of spectacles in three years. For more information visit [www.somc.org.uk](http://www.somc.org.uk). *Prof. David Edden.*

**Evesham Methodist Church** has an aluminium can guru in the shape of their green co-ordinator, Mr Graham Gooderham. Graham encourages the collection of a substantial number of aluminium cans each year, tidying up public spaces and collecting from a variety of premises. The church has collected over 78000 cans and raising around £1200 for church funds.

A member of **St Osmund's Church of England, Derby** receives used Christmas, Easter and Birthday cards to use to make new cards. The cards are sold @ £1 each and the proceeds go to the church roof fund. They also collect fabric and second hand clothes which are taken to the Padley Recycling Centre. The Centre sorts items, with some being sold through the Padley shop and others available for use by clients of the Padley drop-in facility. *Rev Canon Donald and Mrs Jean MacDonald.*

The vicar of **St John's, Spittal**, has established a wax recycling workshop in the vicarage stables. Old candles and candle ends, which come from churches, businesses and individuals, are melted down and cleaned using a simple settling process. The clean wax is then made into decorative coloured candles which are sold in aid of charity – several hundred pounds has already been raised.

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## **Shopping for church Supplies**

### **Greening the purse**

Many churches have an office and run children's work, both of which require some paper and other office or art supplies; most churches have a toilet that requires a number of products to keep it functional, and all churches need cleaning! To meet these needs churches need to purchase products. Churches could consider the following choices for their shopping list to demonstrate their care for God's creation:

- £ Buy recycled paper products for office, children's work and in the toilet
- £ Where there is a choice choose durable rather than disposable products
- £ Source a supply of eco-friendly cleaning products. Avoid chlorine-based bleaches, phosphate-based detergents and any cleaners that are not 100% biodegradable

#### **To make maximum use of products and minimise waste, set up storage facilities for:**

- used paper which can be used on the reverse
- paper which has been fully utilised and is to be recycled
- envelopes which can be reused (labels available from Traidcraft)

#### **And spread the message that your church cares for the environment by:**

- Stating that you have chosen recycled paper on items such as your church stationery, service sheets and magazine

### **Stories from churches**

**Christ Church Methodist/United Reformed Church, Ross-on-Wye** also promote recycled products through their annual fayre. Their 'Eco-Congregation stall features a range of recycled goods including attractive costume jewellery made from old glossy magazines and sun hats made from plastic bags. *Mrs Jean Pickering*

**Bethesda Methodist Church in Cheltenham** had been using Fairtrade tea and coffee for years but signing up to Eco-Congregation led them to change the name to the 'Traidgreen' stall. The stall still carries a comprehensive range of Traidcraft goods but also sells a number of environmentally-friendly goods including recycled paper, nest boxes and bird seed. Sales have also included more than 70 energy-efficient light bulbs (bought in bulk to reduce costs). After 11 months sales have almost reached £3000. *Mark Boulton*

**Baldernock Parish Church** switched to eco-friendly cleaning products and recycled stationery and toilet paper. The Church highlighted their policy by having a strap-line printed on their church stationery.

### **Cut Flowers**

The cut flower industry has taken over large swaths of land in South and Central America and Africa. This industry exacts a heavy toll on workers and on the environment. Cut flowers and foliage are typically grown with large amounts of pesticides and fertilizers. Workers, spending many hours each day in the fields are exposed to these hazardous chemicals, often with little or no training or safety gear.

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There are serious threats to forests and other biodiversity-rich ecosystems in the tropics resulting from the conversion of wild land to floriculture and the run off of pesticides and fertilizers used. Transporting the flowers to Europe, and keeping them refrigerated for freshness, use up vast amounts of fuel and generates climate-changing gases.

Alternatives to imported cut flowers in church could include:

- Flowers and/or foliage from members' gardens or other local sources
- Flowering plants which can then be planted in the church grounds or members gardens (some flowering plants, such as cyclamens, cope particularly well with cold, dark conditions)
- Increased use of colourful banners/displays etc to brighten up the church

**Module 7 'Greening the Cornerstone'** and **Module 10 'Green Choices'** feature related information on caring for church premises and living sustainable lifestyles.

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### **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 by a partnership of organisations.

In England, Eco-Congregation is managed by A Rocha UK and supported by a grant from the Methodist Relief and Development Fund. The office base is:

Groundworks Sheffield  
The Innovation Centre, 217 Portobello,  
Sheffield, S1 4DP

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Web: [www.ecocongregation.org/englandwales](http://www.ecocongregation.org/englandwales)

In Scotland, Eco-Congregation is managed and delivered through a partnership between Keep Scotland Beautiful (an Associated company of ENCAMS) and the Society, Religion and Technology Project (SRT) of the Church of Scotland. It is endorsed by Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) and is supported financially by the Scottish Executive's Sustainable Action Fund. Contact

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Churches in Wales are supported by Eco-Congregation based at Groundworks Sheffield.