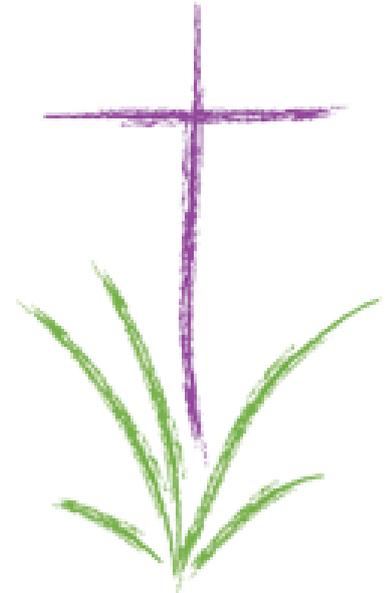


eco Congregation Scotland

Eco-Congregation is an ecumenical programme to help churches make the link between environmental issues and their Christian faith and respond in practical action in the church and wider community.



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Editorial

Time for some real leadership

Over recent months we have had floodwater threatening our homes. Weeks of rain have turned into days of deluge, transforming the fields, farms and roads of our countryside into a "waterscape". Buildings have been damaged, lives and property lost at sea and many trees blown down across the country.

This is just in Scotland. Others, in less wealthy countries, less able to cope with the effects of climate change are suffering more. Yet in the shops the mad dash of a consumerist Christmas and the New Year sales have been in full swing and many are booking their flights for holidays in the sun.

Can you demonstrate your commitment to using God-given resources wisely?

We know we have to make changes and some of us have started in our own lives but what are churches doing? Does your congregation, does your community, your council know that your church is committed to action to care better for God's creation? Can you demonstrate your commitment to using God given resources wisely? Do you have practical projects with information and advice at hand to help others so that you can initiate, encourage and support action? Are you prepared to show leadership to those around you?

We need to act and we need to act now.

Networks

Across the country churches are coming together to encourage others to act.

We now have networks of Eco-Congregation churches active in Edinburgh, Perth, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Stirling and South Lanarkshire and "embryo" networks in Orkney, West Lothian and North Ayrshire. These networks have been set up to help churches to exchange ideas, access information and grants and provide a basis for working on bigger, joint projects. They also play an important role in promoting the programme to other churches and the community as a whole.



Perth Network Climate Change Workshop

Already networks have organised workshops on climate change action, recycling and renewable energy for households and community buildings and many more are planned. Networks play an important role in providing speakers for churches new to the programme as well as supporting congregations that are already active. Individual churches are also generating exciting and innovative projects with Stirling Methodist's involvement in a Going Carbon Neutral project and Westray's use of a legacy to establish a fund to give grant aid to help other Orkney congregations generate renewable energy. Read more about these projects inside and be inspired... Then go out and do it!

A view of the Climate from Down Under

Lyn Comben and Rosie Catt are introducing the Eco-Congregation programme to the Anglican Diocese of Grafton in Australia. In this article they describe their perspective on climate change.

Currently most of the southern half of Australia is suffering from prolonged drought while the north is recording abnormally high rainfall. The drought areas cover our major centres of population and a large percentage of our farming regions. Some areas have not had significant rainfall for ten years. Farmers have to leave the land, often after generations of managing a property well. These are people who have been proud to contribute to national productivity, who cannot now pay their grocery bills, let alone buy new seed or stock. There is a tragically high incidence of male suicide.

Productive land is now barren dust. Breeding lines have disappeared from many properties. Businesses in the towns are being forced to close down. There is a significant movement of population away from rural areas which may never be reversed. In our towns and cities we have enforced water restrictions.

It is difficult for people to understand what has caused all this. There are predictions that one culprit, the El Nino weather system operating over the Pacific, is about to subside and rainfall averages may return to normal. But other studies suggest that we are in a stage of a climatic cycle that occurs only once in a thousand years. Most scientists recognize that global warming is exacerbating

Communities facing devastation by bushfire, were covered in snow two days later.

this situation but given the history of climate in Australia it is difficult to present people with a clear picture of responsibility.

All this becomes even more confusing where communities in the south during December, facing total devastation by bushfire, were covered in snow two days later. A full climate statement for Australia can be found at

www.news.com.au/couriermail

The church is operating at many levels. Advocating action to remedy environmental damage, support for the people affected by drought and offering prayers for rain are all ways our churches are responding to this crisis:

- A newly established Australian Anglican Environment Network will see nation wide resourcing and support for churches as they pursue positive environmental action.
- In what is believed to be a world first, 16 of Australia's leading faith communities released a collection of theological and spiritual statements on the climate change debate entitled 'Common Belief'. This excellent publication is at www.climateinstitute.org.au/cia1/cianews.html
- We regularly pray for those affected by drought, and those who care for and support them.

Clergy are under great pressure. In areas where the loss of population has led to a reduction in the number of churches operating fully clergy are called on to offer support to families suffering the tragedy of loss of livelihood, loss of life and loss of family. A number of church and community groups have collected money, household goods, food for families and fodder for livestock and found ways to distribute these to rural families in need while maintaining their personal dignity.

Please join us throughout our Diocese of Grafton as we pray for those affected by drought:

- those facing economic devastation.
- those tempted to extreme actions and responses
- those whose crops have failed
- those whose livestock is dying
- those who provide support - economic, physical, pastoral - in the community
- those who are on 'suicide watch'
- those who seek to walk with others, showing love and compassion
- the churches reaching out to the needs of their communities in hope, love and compassion
- the return of life-giving rains - waters of hope
- those giving of their worldly goods e.g. money, etc. in response to those in need

- those who are connecting from beyond the drought affected areas

We too will pray for you as you also experience unseasonable weather conditions.

Going Carbon Neutral

Jon Cape from Stirling Methodist Church describes how they are engaging with the community to support substantial action on climate change.

Summer 2006 saw Stirling Methodist Church join over forty across Scotland, and many more south of the border in gaining recognition as an Award-winning Eco-Congregation.

In the spirit of the Eco-Congregation movement, we wanted to see this as the start of a larger journey, one which should involve looking out to the wider community.

Could we be a catalyst for some wider initiative which would help tackle the key environmental challenge of climate change - and also do something about rising energy bills?

A model which really got us to sit up was the Going Carbon Neutral initiative launched early last year in the village of Ashton Hayes, Cheshire. What was striking was the real engagement seen in the community and the structured approach to driving down carbon emissions. With imitation the sincerest form of flattery, so was born the Going Carbon Neutral initiative in Stirling.

The Stirling initiative has got underway first in one community: Riverside. Riverside has a population of around 1500, a little more than the 1000 or so of Ashton Hayes. Bounded on three sides by the River Forth and by the railway line on the remaining side, Riverside does form a naturally well-defined community.

From an initial meeting of Methodist Church members, two further house meetings were held with friends and friends of friends, and soon a broadly based and eager action team was formed.

Going Carbon Neutral Riverside, www.goingcarbonneutral.net, held its first public meetings in October and November, when 80 or so people heard the Ashton Hayes story first-hand. Both meetings were held in the Primary School which, Ashton Hayes experience suggested, could play a key role in establishing community interest.

And so it has proved, with children providing an enthusiastic presentation on their eco-team work at

our November public meeting and the school generously inviting us to share a stall with their eco-team children at the school's open day in October.

We have got off to a good start with funding from Scotland Unlimited and are looking to private sponsors. Scotland Unlimited may consider other similar applications.

So what are the key ingredients in the Going Carbon Neutral approach?

- Engaging the community
- Quick wins - simple things which can make a start. Ashton Hayes highlighted 'using the tumble dryer less' as one early item - sounds simple, but the alternatives need to be properly thought through in small homes with no garden/washing line etc. We are lending residents a consumption meter which shows how much energy a single appliance is using. At our public meeting, we had a large stereo system on standby and invited participants to take part in a prize competition to guess the annual electricity cost (winning entry £34!)
- Baseline survey: capturing the baseline carbon footprint of the community: we have created a structure of the survey and spreadsheet which uses DEFRA data to convert energy and transport use into carbon emission equivalents
- Actions to reduce carbon emissions: energy efficiency, renewable energy, transport and lifestyle. Renewable energy can play a major part both in the home and at the community level. We have been invited by Scottish Community and Household Renewables Initiative (SCHRI) to submit a feasibility study grant application to look at energy options - biomass, heat pumps, wind.
- Actions to offset remaining emissions: this is an addition not an alternative to carbon reduction. It will include global and local support to address energy use and fuel poverty.

Continued engagement through annual monitoring against the baseline, sharing ideas, and giving positive feedback.

Continued engagement through at least annual monitoring against the baseline, progress-reporting and sharing of ideas. Giving positive feedback is a must!

What next? Following a meeting with our MP, MSPs and Council Leader, a Big Lottery application is being prepared to take the approach Stirling-wide, with the Eco-Congregation Stirling Network as a key stakeholder.

An Inconvenient Truth

Several churches are showing Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth*, which is an excellent way to raise awareness about climate change and launch community action. Churches which show the film must get a license, costing around 50p per audience member - you could perhaps cover this by charging for cups of tea. You can obtain a license, and more information, from Christian Video Licensing International on 01323 636 199. Alternatively, see p.4 for some forthcoming showings!

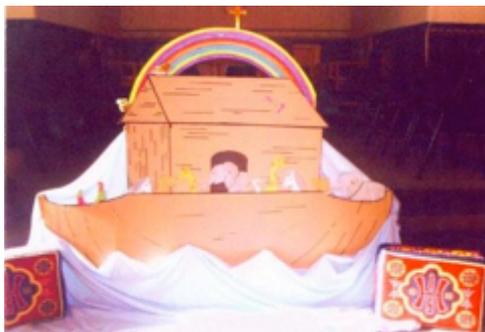


News

137 Churches in Scotland are registered on the Eco-Congregation programme, and 44 have gained awards.

Award Winners

Pardovan, Kingscavil and Winchburgh



This church in West Lothian showed creative flair in making the link between environmental issues and Christian faith. They produced banners of the seven days of creation and the Sunday School used the story of Noah's Ark as an opportunity to lead worship with a climate change theme. They have rebuilt the mission hall using recycled materials and to a high standard of energy efficiency, and are developing a biblical garden. Environmental thinking underlies all of church life, for example in decisions about where to hold services, provision of transport, and open air services and activities. Practical community action is demonstrated in support for Fair Trade and the village clean-up.

Carlops and West Linton

The strong Eco Group at Carlops in the Scottish Borders works closely with the congregation and local community. They have used these links to raise awareness of environmental matters and demonstrate that care for creation is part of Christian life. As a small rural church, they are eager to keep doing more and learn from others.

St Andrews Uddingston and St Cuthbert's Cambslang

These Episcopal churches have taken the programme into many areas of their work and this is particularly impressive given the small size of the congregations. Support for sustainability issues has clearly become part of the culture of each church. The churches' support for Castlemilk Refugee Centre was an excellent example of practical recycling of clothing, household goods, furniture etc, while tackling broader social needs beyond the churches' walls. The wildlife garden and involvement of local children in planting seeds is

using the church's grounds to encourage biodiversity.

Stop Climate Chaos

In our last newsletter we invited you to make the Stop Climate Chaos pledge as part of your Harvest offering, to demand annual reductions in UK emissions and international action.

The call from Eco-Congregation churches was clear: we received 878 pledges, not including those sent directly to SCC. The pledges that you made, to change light bulbs, turn down thermostats, reduce car use, and switch to 'green' electricity, will save over 500 tonnes of CO₂ per year. Additional pledges included efficient driving, loft insulation, switching off appliances, avoiding short-haul flights, using less hot water, reducing waste, and of course taking action in your church.

When people get together in churches, and churches get together across Scotland, little actions can change the world. The pledges are on their way to Tony Blair's desk, to let him know that when it comes to hope in the face of climate change, Scottish Christians are saying 'I will show you my faith by what I do' (James 2.18)



Margaret and Eleanor count pledges

Resources Review

A Living Landscape

The Stern Review highlighted the threat to wildlife: "Climate change will require nature conservation efforts... to operate at the landscape scale with larger contiguous tracts of land that can better accommodate species movement." This report from the Wildlife Trusts uses case studies from around Britain to show how they are taking nature conservation out of the reserve and into the landscape, a strategy which needs everyone's participation. Could your church grounds, or the gardens of your congregation, be the vital link in a wildlife corridor?

You can download "A Living Landscape" from www.wildlifetrusts.org (under 'free publications'), or order a copy from 01636 670 091.



Signs of Spring

Spring is approaching and churches are marking the passing of time with Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. But nature has its own calendar of budburst, migrant arrivals, flowers opening, and nest building – and its calendar is changing. By joining the national phenology network you can help scientists understand how climate change is affecting our wildlife, and become more aware of the seasons and holy days of God's creation.

nature's calendar

Visit www.naturescalendar.org.uk to register, or if you'd like to get your Sunday School involved, you can find the Springwatchers kit and all kinds of fun things to do at www.naturedetectives.org.uk.

Climate Stewards

You cannot offset your carbon emissions, but if you are already trying to reduce your emissions it is possible to mitigate the damage caused by the remainder with positive environmental projects. Climate Stewards is a carbon mitigation scheme from the Christian environmental organisation A Rocha, which brings years of experience in practical conservation and an attitude of Christian compassion. So, unlike some commercial offset schemes, you can be sure that their reforestation programmes are sensitive to the ecosystems, wildlife and people in which they are located.

Visit www.climatestewards.co.uk to get involved.

Christian Aid

Christian Aid has produced a pack called 'It's time to change the climate' with posters, information and a personal carbon calculator to make the link between global poverty and personal action on climate change. In February Christian Aid will be launching its own climate change campaign asking individuals, churches, companies and MPs to reduce carbon emissions. During the summer they will hold a 1000 mile Cut the Carbon march through the UK. There will be local rallies and large events along the route joint with Stop Climate Chaos' campaign I:Count.

To order packs or find out about the campaign contact your local Christian Aid Office: Glasgow 0141 221 7475, Edinburgh 0131 220 1254, Perth 01738 643 982 or visit www.christian-aid.org.uk.

Contraction and Convergence

This global framework for climate negotiations is the only fair and equitable model on the table. You may have heard of it, but could you explain it? It is explained and expertly advocated in this short video featuring multinationals, religious leaders and NGOs:

climatechangeaction.blogspot.com/2007/01/contraction-and-convergence.html

Dates for your diary

February

5-12 Scottish Environment Week

www.scotlink.org

14-20 National Nestbox Week

www.bto.org/notices/nbw2006.htm

26-11 Mar Fair Trade Fortnight

www.fairtrade.org.uk

26 Edinburgh Network

contact Eleanor Todd if you would like to attend

27 "Our Planet: Our Choice?"

Environmental Justice: What is it and how can it be achieved? with Professor J. R. Downie, University of Glasgow and Friends of the Earth, 7.30pm at Kelvinside Hillhead Parish Church (Observatory Road). Opportunity for questions, and tea and coffee at the end of the evening.

28 "Our Planet: Our Choice?"

Guardian Creatures: The Human Vocation on Earth Dr Michael Northcott, New College, details as above.

March

1 "Our Planet: Our Choice?"

Eco-Congregation at Wellington: A Case Study with Elspeth Kelman and Christine Johnston of Wellington Church, details as above.

14 Stirling Network Meeting

contact Margaret Warnock if you'd like to attend.

17 Eco Awareness Day

10am-2pm at St Andrews Erskine Church Robertson Road, Dunfermline.

20 Perth Network Meeting

Contact Morag Green (01738 643 459, greenup@tiscali.co.uk) if you would like to attend.

22 World Day for Water

www.unesco.org/water/water_celebrations

26 Glasgow Network Meeting

contact Chris Weir, chrisweir@ntlworld.com, if you'd like to attend.

April

21 "An Inconvenient Truth"

Film followed by discussion. Organised by St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Glasgow. Details to be confirmed: please contact Margaret Porter (07981 659 755) if you are interested in attending.

26 Stirling Climate Change Hustings

7.30pm, Stirling Methodist Church, chaired by Maxwell Craig. More details from Chris Ward, 01786 449 215 or chris@forthenvironmentlink.org.

May

Various Walk in the woods events

www.treecouncil.org.uk

6 International Dawn Chorus Day

www.wildlifetrusts.org

7-13 Compost Awareness Week

www.compost.org.uk

12 International migratory bird day

www.birdday.org

17-28 Be Nice to Nettles week

www.nettles.org.uk

19-21 Scottish Wood Fair

www.scottishwoodfair.co.uk in Perth

24 European Day of Parks

www.europarc.org/internationaldata/edp.htm

21-25 Walk to School week

www.walktoschool.org.uk

27-11 June Scottish Biodiversity Week

www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk

June

3 Environment Sunday

en.arocha.org/ukconsunday

5 World Environment Day

www.unep.org

8 World Oceans Day

www.mcsuk.org

10 Great Scottish Walk

www.greatscottishwalk.com

13 Stirling Network Meeting

Contact Margaret Warnock (details below) if you would like to attend.

12-16 School Grounds Week

www.ltl.org.uk

16-24 Bike Week

www.bikeweek.org.uk

19-26 National Insect Week

www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk

July

1-9 National Mammal Week

www.abdn.ac.uk/mammal

29 International Bog Day

www.swt.org.uk

Prayer

Prayer from Australia

God our Heavenly Father,
we come before you in humility.
We confess our lack of trust in you,
the giver of all good things.

We have mistreated your good creation,
and have wasted the resources of the earth.

Our land suffers under the burden of drought,
and now we realise the blessings we have taken for granted.

Father, forgive our lack of trust in you,
our wastefulness and greed,
and the fruits of faith which we haven't borne.

Hear our prayer, forgive us our sins,
release us and our land from your judgement,

through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Contact Us

The Eco-Congregation Co-ordinators are always pleased to hear from you. Please contact us for a programme introduction pack, advice, encouragement, items for the newsletter or website, or just a chat!

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Website

For information about the programme, how to register, resources to download, news, links, and more, visit our website:

www.ecocongregation.org/scotland



Eco-Congregation Scotland is delivered by a partnership between Keep Scotland Beautiful and the Society Religion and Technology Project of the Church of Scotland. It is endorsed by most major denominations and Action of Churches Together in Scotland, and supported by the Scottish Executive Sustainable Action Fund.