

Greening Your Church!

Save the environment! Save Resources! Save money!

Has your Church or group considered its environmental footprint or impact on Climate Change and thus the consequences on the poor communities who are already or will suffer the most and have the least ability to mitigate the impacts of Climate Change? Here are some ideas you might like to consider.

Getting started:

- Do an environmental or green audit of your buildings and facilities. Not sure how? There are many people in churches with expertise who may offer to do one for free, otherwise there are professional organisations that may be expensive.

Grow your own

- Plant a community garden in your church yard or even on the footpath if the council permits, using fruit trees – fruit can be given away or sold to provide food for those that cannot afford it or to fund mission.

Reduce Energy Consumption

- Choose appropriate sized rooms for meetings to reduce use of heating/cooling/lighting. Use the smallest room practical.
- Timetable meetings when possible to reduce use of heating/cooling/lighting.
- Don't turn on air conditioners for a one hour meeting – open windows instead.
- Encourage users of buildings to switch off unnecessary lighting.
- Always turn off stand-by on appliances.
- Install solar panels for power and hot water.
- Consider installing insulation.
- Have an electrician check that your lighting is the most efficient available. Many older buildings won't be.
- In offices, ensure desks and workspaces are situated well to ensure they are lit by natural light.
- In summer, ensure windows are protected by outside shade to reduce heat and glare.
- In winter, ensure windows allow heat and light to enter.
- Careful planting of deciduous trees may allow light and heat in during winter, while acting as cooling agents in summer.
- Reprogram the thermostat. Each degree warmer you leave the thermostat in summer, and each degree cooler you set it in the winter can save 6 to 8 percent in energy costs.

Reduce Water Consumption

- Check that water-saving devices have been installed (e.g. dual flush toilet).
- Ensure all gardens are mulched.
- Install rainwater tanks and collect water from the roof, recyclable 'grey water' filtered and re-used for flushing toilets, gardening etc.
- Discourage use of bottled water – in the church and amongst members.

Protect the Environment and Reduce Waste

- Check that environmentally-friendly cleaning materials are being used.
- Use crockery rather than disposable cups and plates.
- Recycle as much as possible: cans, spectacles, stamps, printer cartridges, clothes, shoes, foil etc.

- Be prepared – know what arty materials Sunday School/ Playgroup/Craft Groups need (foils/card/bottle tops etc) and give Church members time to collect them rather than purchasing new.
- Ensure minimal use of weedkillers and pesticides, leaving some areas unmown for wildlife.
- Encourage church members to practise recycle, reuse, and reduce in their everyday lives. There are plenty of sermons/resources around on these issues.
- Set up a compost bin for scraps from the kitchen.
- Set up a swap shop to pass on items that you no longer use or encourage sale of items (e.g. on Gumtree) and donate money to mission.
- Develop a Purchasing Guide to ensure products and companies are the most environmentally friendly.

Reduce Transport Emissions

- Source your supplies from local suppliers where possible to reduce transport emissions.
- Encourage walking and cycling to church.
- Organise home groups in all local areas so members don't have far to travel.
- Promote car sharing to church or amongst members who work in the same area.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Resources

- Print on double-sided paper, and re-use scrap printing paper where at all practical.
- Reduce margins on paper to use less paper.
- Look into telecommuting for meetings. Every commute not taken saves on money, time and fossil fuel. Plus, studies have found that telecommuting boosts productivity too.
- Watch the paper and ink. Avoid printing documents that could just as easily be emailed, and print necessary papers on both sides. It also helps to institute a recycling program, and to switch to recycled paper and water-based inks.
- Consider replacing aging desktop computers with laptops instead, which can use up to 70 percent less electricity and generate less heat waste.
- Put the annual report on your church website – print fewer copies.

Practise Justice

- Ensure that Fair Trade products are being used (e.g. tea and coffee).

Overall:

- Know your water, paper and electricity usage and then set targets to reduce usage slightly each quarter. Report back to church meetings to ensure accountability. Once people see the benefits and the savings, they will be encouraged to try harder and do more!