

First meeting of St Barnabas environment committee **24 February 2010**

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We used the Eco-congregation checklist (www.ecocongregation.org) as a basis for discussion to see where our church could be more environmentally conscious. We discovered that there are many areas of church life where we are already ticking the boxes, but there are plenty of further actions that could be taken. We decided that Robin would present our ideas at the next PCC meeting (March 15).

Current environmental good practice at St Barnabas

Worship - Occasional outdoor services, using natural materials within worship (eg palm fronds), saying sorry for harm done to the environment in prayers

Children and Youth work - Children's garden, Building blocks (toddlers) and brownies planting bulbs

Church property – Monitoring energy consumption regularly, Regular service heating appliances, Choosing appropriate sized rooms for activities, heating system with timer and thermostatic controls, installing insulation in new toilet (wall and ceiling lagged), movement sensor on light switches in toilets, low energy lightbulbs installed throughout, water saving toilets and taps installed, collecting rainwater in water butt for use in garden

Church management – Using crockery rather than disposable cups and plates, using local suppliers, provide recycling bins, hold jumble sales

Church land – Wildlife friendly management (eg no pesticides, weedkillers), area for outdoor prayer, area for recreation

Personal lifestyle – Started publishing green tips in Ichthus

Community outreach – Drawing on members links with environmental bodies (eg FOE, RSPB)

Overseas concerns – Supporting the work of Christian Development agencies (eg Christian Aid, Chennai orphanage, Zimbabwe link)

Areas for improvement and action plan where appropriate

Worship

- Make sure the environment is included in intercessions ⇒ *Speak to worship team*

- Make sure hymns with an environmental theme are included in services ⇒ *Speak to Lesley Miller*
- Use organic bread and wine ⇒ *ask Yvonne if this might be possible*
- Invite a speaker to talk on environmental issues in one of our services. This could provide an opportunity to tell the congregation of the plans to reduce the church's carbon footprint. The diocesan environment contact might be able to come and speak to us? ⇒ *Speak to Sue Myers*

The following idea is not connected to the environment, but came up during discussion:-

- Include a variety of areas to pray for on prayer list, as well as sick people (eg exams, anniversaries celebrations etc). Display the 'to pray for' list on St Barnabas website.

Youth and Children's work

- Develop a small nature trail in the church grounds for young people.
- Plant some wildlife attracting plants (eg buddleia).
- Visit the uniformed groups to encourage them to act in an environmentally conscious way (eg recycling as much as possible).

Church Property

- Switch to a green electricity tariff ⇒ *research prices, then speak to Roy*
- Commission a feasibility study/environmental consultation on what installations might be possible. EDF provide 100% grants to achieve this. Possible installations discussed were:
 - Rainwater harvesting system with tank on church kitchen for flushing toilets
 - Photovoltaic panels on either church roof or BP hut roof. Asbestos roof on BP hut may be problematic.
 - Ground source heat pump

Church management

- Consider switching to an 'ethical' bank account (eg CAF) ⇒ *Speak to Roy*
- Use environmentally-friendly cleaning materials ⇒ *Use up existing materials, then source environmentally-friendly ones (eg Ecover). Wendy has a catalogue from her work.*
- Use recycled paper. Printer has not worked well with recycled paper in past, but may be replaced soon, so will try again once we have new printer to see if it will accept recycled.
- Buy fairly-traded products where possible (eg tea, coffee, biscuits?) ⇒ *Jane has already bought fair-trade tea/coffee and will see what people think. Stocks of regular tea/coffee will have to be finished first before switching, if it is acceptable to all.*

Waste minimisation

- There are recycling facilities available, but it was noted that some church users are better than others at using them. ⇒ *Visit all groups (eg uniformed groups, classes etc) to explain the importance of recycling and show where the recycling facilities are. It is possible to recycle most things – even dog hair swept up from the dog obedience classes can be put in the compost. We discussed how this may seem extreme, but that every action helps, and will help to change people’s attitude to waste/resources use.*
- Another idea to help waste minimisation was to hold a ‘swap shop’ after church one Sunday (possibly on the same day as the environmental speaker and could be more regular if popular). Everyone brings item/s they no longer need and are able to take things away if someone has brought something they would like. The possibility of a ‘swap’ list of unwanted items being put on the church website was discussed.

Other ideas

- Having a ‘Green mission statement’ or similar, for the use of the congregation and church hall users. It could include suggestions/statements about recycling, trying to reduce car use etc.
- Using the notice boards in the church hall for posters to raise awareness of green issues.
- St Barnabas offset scheme. Trying to encourage church users to walk/use public transport is of course best, but as not all the congregation or church hall users will be able to do so, an ‘offset scheme’ could be set up, where those using a car to visit the church (or possibly also flying on holiday) could make a contribution to offset their CO2 emissions. The money could be spent on environmental schemes at St Barnabas. In addition to bigger planned actions like photovoltaics, the money could immediately be put to good use by investing in nest boxes, insect houses etc which could be put up to encourage wildlife in the church grounds. The uniformed groups could be involved in such a project, and could be the start of developing a nature trail, as mentioned earlier.
- Sponsor a roll of insulation for the church ceiling. (However, there may be problems caused by the weight of insulation on the hung ceiling of the church. This would benefit from a feasibility study as mentioned above, to find out the options).