

Section

1

# ECO-CONGREGATION IRELAND

An environmental check-up  
for your church

2011 edition



eco  
congregation

# **Welcome to Eco-Congregation Ireland!**

This section has been developed to help you get started as an eco-congregation. It will

- help you identify and affirm the environmental work you are already doing with your congregation, church centre and/or church offices
- give you advice on how to develop and grow as an eco-congregation
- show your areas of strength and those that can be further developed
- point you to help for the areas you want to get involved in.

It is not a test! It is here to help you.

To become an eco-congregation, we recommend you form a small group to work through the check-up and prioritise your next steps. When you have done this, send us your registration form. You can download this, as well as your choice of topics from the website <http://ecocongregationireland.com/modules>. Distribute the resources to appropriate people/groups in your church (e.g. worship resources to worship leader, property resources to property committee) and encourage them to develop and put into effect your plans.

## **The environmental check- up**

### **1. CHECK-UP**

Use the following sections 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 for additional notes on each. 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. 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

**In your Church's prayer life, do you:**

- 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?**

- Through 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

**Does your Church observe Creation Time (1<sup>st</sup> September to 4<sup>th</sup> October)?**

- Every year
- Some years
- Hardly ever
- Never

**Notes:**



Tip: Section 2, 'Celebrating Creation', contains ideas and resources for worship 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.

<b>Does your church:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Hope to develop</b>
have access to Christian environmental resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
produce worship resources with environmental themes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
participate in or organise study/exploration events that include environmental issues?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
include creation/environmental issues in its teaching, studying or preaching programme?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Notes:**

Tip: Section 3, 'Creation and Christianity', contains green theological ideas and suggestions for further reading.

## 4. CHILDREN'S WORK

Christian work with children can inform, inspire and encourage youngsters as they grow in faith.

**Does your children's programme (infant and primary age and sacramental preparation) include environmental issues and the potential for developing this ministry?**

	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Hope to develop</b>
Junior Church/ Sunday School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uniformed organisations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playgroups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After school/ holiday clubs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In schools e.g. through assemblies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Baptism/Eucharist/Reconciliation/Confirmation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All age worship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Notes:**

Tip: Section 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 group meetings on Sundays, church and open youth groups and mid-week uniformed organisations. If your church undertakes youth work, you can review your existing activities and consider future possibilities here.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Have done</b>	<b>Could consider</b>
Involve young people in auditing and improving the environmental management of the premises	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hold a debate on environmental issues and personal responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop creation-care material to offer in worship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Undertake a practical environmental/conservation project	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arrange a ramble(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organise an environmentally focused community event (with young people from the whole community)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### ***Notes:***



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

## 6. ALL-AGE 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.

### What opportunities are or could be available for your church?

Activities	Have done	Could consider
Undertake an environmental Bible study	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invite a speaker on environmental issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organise/participate in a creation-care Lent group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produce study material on environmental issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organise a lecture or course of lectures on creation theology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### **Notes:**

***Tip: Section 6, 'Exploring God's green word', includes two sets of Bible studies***

## 7. GREENING THE CORNERSTONE

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. This section can help you to assess your church's current environmental stewardship of property (sanctuary, halls, clergy housing) and the potential for developing this.

	Have done	Could consider
Insulate church buildings wherever possible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Choose appropriate sized rooms for activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timetable meetings to minimise heating use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Heating system with timer and thermostatic controls	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fit energy saving light bulbs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage building users to switch off unnecessary lights and not leave items on stand-by (e.g. photocopier)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Check water outlets – fix drips and leaks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Install water-saving devices (e.g. dual flush toilets and low spray flow or auto turn-off taps)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Notes:**



Tip: Section 7, 'Greening the cornerstone', includes ideas and sources of resources to help churches to put God's house in green order.  
 Section 13, 'Climate Change: Managing your carbon footprint' offers help with managing your energy use.

**8. CHURCH MANAGEMENT**

Churches are responsible for the good stewardship of money and a range of consumables. You can use this section to assess your church's existing good practice and identify issues for consideration and action.

	<b>Have done</b>	<b>Could consider</b>
<b>Financial management &amp; purchasing policy</b>		
Check the environmental policy of your bank and see if you are satisfied with it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have an ethical investment policy for any savings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- Use environmentally-friendly cleaning materials & paint
- Purchase recycled paper and envelopes (to close the loop)
- Purchase Fairtrade products (e.g. tea and coffee)
- Use local suppliers where possible (so promoting a sustainable local economy and reducing transportation)

**Catering**

- Use crockery rather than disposable cups and plates
- Use farmers markets and other local suppliers (to promote local economy and reduce food miles)

**Waste minimisation**

- Collection facilities for recycling items which can be used by church members, building users or local community (e.g. paper, cans, spectacles, stamps, printer cartridges, clothes, shoes, foil)
- Hold jumble sales to raise funds, recycle goods and promote the availability of goods at affordable prices

**Notes:**



***Tip: Section 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. This section can help you assess the ecological value, value to the community and attractiveness of your church's plot and the potential to develop it.

	<b>Present</b>	<b>Potential to develop</b>
Wildlife-friendly management (e.g. minimal use of weedkillers and pesticides, leaving some areas unmown, valuing old trees, hedges, walls and stones)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visually attractive planting/ features	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Area for prayer/ contemplation/ outdoor worship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Area for recreation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### **Notes:**



Tip: Section 9, 'Planting and conserving Eden', offers inspiration and resources for churches to assess the ecological value of their land and develop a management plan and to improve the community benefit or wildlife value of the plot.

## 10. PERSONAL LIFESTYLE

More people attend church week by week than participate with any other voluntary body. You can 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
Publish green tips in a church/ parish magazine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promote awareness through posters or information from environmental organisations (e.g. home energy audit)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage recycling by providing collection points or informing people of civic facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage walking and cycling to church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### ***Notes:***



***Tip: Section 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. Here you can assess the links that your church already has in the local community and the potential for further development.

	Have done	Could consider
Establish links with community organisations with a view to sharing your environmental ministry (e.g. schools, youth groups, local environmental bodies)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advise building users of your environmental concerns and request that they utilise any environmental facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participate in local environmental initiatives or policy formation – local authorities can advise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Draw on links that members have with environmental bodies (e.g. Transition Towns, Friends of the Earth, Wildlife Trust)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support or initiate community schemes with a positive environmental element (e.g. An Taisce spring clean-up, Tidy Towns, local exchange trading systems, barter websites)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### **Notes:**



***Tip: Section 11, 'Community matters', includes stories, ideas and 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.

### What can your church do to benefit the environment and people across the world?

	Have done	Could consider
Support the work of Christian development agencies (e.g. Trócaire, Christian Aid, Tearfund, Oxfam, VITA)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Initiate or participate in activities in One World Week	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promote Fairtrade	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explore environmental issues through linked overseas communities or churches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support the work of international conservation and environment agencies (e.g. A Rocha, WWF, Friends of the Earth)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### **Notes:**

Tip: Section 12, 'Global neighbours', includes ideas and contacts to help churches to think and act locally to promote environmental care globally.

### 13. CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change poses a serious and immediate threat to people everywhere, particularly to the poor of the earth. This section can help you to identify what you can do in your church buildings and in your daily lives to reduce your carbon footprint.

	<b>Have done</b>	<b>Could consider</b>
Read your meters regularly/ assess your energy usage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Calculate the carbon footprint of your buildings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take steps to reduce your carbon footprint	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage the congregation to reduce their carbon footprint in their everyday lives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take part in national events organised by groups like Stop Climate Chaos, Friends of the Earth and 350.org.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Notes:**



Tip: Section 13, 'Climate Change: Managing your carbon footprint', enables you to calculate the carbon footprint of your church buildings and at home and to take steps to reduce it.

**CONGRATULATIONS** on all the work you are already doing to care for the environment!  
You can now download the sections your church or community might like to work on  
from <http://ecocongregationireland.com/modules>.

For admin, support and funding purposes, it would be helpful if you could print and send this page with your details to Karen Nicholson, 45 Belvoir Drive, Belfast BT8 7DH. Thank you!

**Full Name of Church** .....

**Denomination of Church** .....

**Title and Name of Contact Person**.....  
(Environmental Coordinator)

**Address of Contact Person**.....

.....

**County** ..... **Postcode** .....

**Tel:** ..... **Mobile:**.....

**Email address:**.....

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

Location: **Rural** · **Suburban** · **Town/City Centre** · **Inner City** ·

**Name of your Local Authority:** .....

**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:**.....

**For further information contact:**

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**Eco-Congregation Ireland** is an inter-denominational project operating under the auspices of the Church in Society Forum – a standing committee of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting.

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