



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

A summary of the discussion at the Eco-Congregation Scotland Local Networks Seminar Saturday 6th September 2014



From the Bible Study: different ways of reading the Bible affect what message we derive from it concerning the environment. We need to consider how the values and beliefs we bring to the Bible influence what we take from it, to understand, why other people read the same text but respond differently, and to think how we might open up a constructive conversation with those who see things differently from ourselves.

Ideas that work in the networks

- Visits to and involvement with local businesses (eg recycling companies) can prove educational and even profitable for network churches
- Adrian Shaw (Climate Change Officer for the Church of Scotland (ashaw@cofscotland.org.uk) and Trevor Jamison (trevor@ecocongregationscotland.org) are available to come and talk at network meetings and individual congregations
- Joint activities such as beach cleans or film showings can be popular and fun
- Talks on Energy Efficiency in churches and contacts made through the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) can draw in new congregations.
- Recruiting new members and even maintaining existing links is challenging for most networks. Glasgow network has been experimenting with rotating their meetings to different areas of the city, with mixed success, so far.

Climate Change is discussed in churches through:

- Worship services, magazines and meetings
- A Church of Scotland instruction to reduce carbon footprints
- Practical considerations to reduce energy use and costs
- A wider awareness of the social / environmental justice issues involved in climate change

Actions taken as a result of climate change discussion:

By individuals:

- improving home energy efficiency
- encouraging biodiversity, growing and composting
- using public transport / walking and cycling more and the car less / not at all
- making environmentally friendly lifestyle and consumer choices
- reducing waste

In church and community:

- regular services, twice a year, to focus on creation care
- carbon monitoring and reduction projects
- increasing recycling
- cycling and using public transport more
- waste reduction
- work with a local primary school to "grow your own"

MOTIVATIONS

For personal actions:

- reducing fossil fuel use and carbon footprints.
- reducing the cost of energy bills or travel
- improving health, fitness and wellbeing
- justice and helping others
- as part of their witness to family
- because it formed part of their work

However, only one person specifically mentioned that they were motivated by their Christian commitment to live more sustainably.

For actions in the church and community:

- reductions in fuel use, carbon emissions and costs
- trying to publicise the church's eco-friendliness
- a desire to communicate skills and enthusiasm for home grown fruit and veg to local primary school
- communicating messages about ways to reduce our carbon footprint (part of CCF grant conditions)

Controversy is useful for raising awareness helping people become more engaged, if the issue is a local one.

But:

- Feedback needed on key issues.
- Uncertainty [lack of knowledge] can also cause division.
- Any debate on the topic doesn't have to come to an answer, discussion is valuable in itself.

Controversial topics suggested:

- Government energy / economic policies
- Use and costs social, environmental and economic costs of renewables and nuclear
- Waste management
- Public transport (eg the Magnum Leisure Centre in Irvine has moved to the centre of town, so that it is more accessible by public transport).
- The role of churches as landowners.

Eco-congregations and networks can provide a safe space to talk about these issues. However, there is a need to consider whether the issues are too big /ambitious for individual eco-congregations to tackle? Is there fatigue about the issue? Is the policy agenda too crowded and are we 'competing' with other concerns and issues, which also touch upon the lives and interests of people. Involving others would also be necessary

Resources / support needed:

- Publicity
- Encourage congregations to speak out
- 'Neutral' premises
- The 'right' language for the setting e.g. a Climate Challenge Fund application
- A 'respectful discussion/dialogue'
- A promotional DVD on the work of Eco-Congregation / on the issue (Christian Aid?)
- Local resource materials (?produced by local networks)