



## Report on SCIAF / Eco-Congregation Pilot Project 2011

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The pilot project was set up to help more Roman Catholic parishes become eco-congregations. The benefits for each organisation were defined as:

- **For Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF):** helping Roman Catholic parishes become more aware of environmental issues, in particular how they are affected by and affect developing countries and the connections between our actions and their quality of life.
- **For Eco Congregation Scotland (ECS):** to develop links with the Roman Catholic community and to enable a focus, in particular, on the global consequences of climate change.

The aim of the project was to enable:

Eco Congregation Scotland to work directly with a group of 3-5 parishes interested in becoming eco-congregations. This was to be achieved by identifying one (or two) areas where there are parishes that might be interested in exploring the idea of becoming involved in Eco Congregation and include:

- Preparation and delivery of one or more events with the group of parishes, introduction to Eco Congregation Scotland materials, (which are free to use), and follow up work with specific parishes
- The event would then be delivered by Eco-Congregation Scotland staff and from that a follow up programme agreed.
- Contact with the local eco congregation network, so that whatever happened was ecumenical.
- A wider event based on a pilot as suggested above and aimed at a diocese could also be developed, if that seemed the best way of involving more congregations.

A second pilot group was also to be delivered as above in another part of the country with a similar time commitment. Or a wider event based on a pilot as suggested above and aimed at a diocese could be developed if that seemed the best way of involving more congregations.

It was planned to work with a range of parishes in the pilot: from both urban and rural areas, in different geographical areas and different socio-economic mixes. In all cases, the theme was to be around international development, the environment and the effect of our lifestyle choices on the lives of others who do not have those choices.

The budget for the project was £2,000, which covered 12 days of the consultant's time and other associated costs.



## 2. PROJECT PROGRAMME

The details of all meetings, workshops and events that were part of the project are shown in Appendix 1.

### Participation

In order to recruit suitable parishes for the pilot SCIAF circulated all their supporter parishes in April. Expressions of interest were invited from parishes interested in becoming part of a pilot to improve their green credentials by responding to climate change through local action.

Five parishes originally put themselves forward. However, there was a strong Edinburgh bias in those willing to participate in the pilot:

Sacred Heart, Loanhead, Edinburgh  
St John Ogilvie, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh  
St Joseph's, Clarkston, Glasgow  
St Margaret's, Penicuik  
St Peter's, Morningside, Edinburgh

Unfortunately, the two parishes that were linked and share the same priest: Sacred Heart and St Margaret's had to withdraw from the pilot. Firstly, the priest was called away to Rome and then, as he was new to the parishes, he was only able to find a volunteer in one of the parishes to take the pilot forward. However, St Margaret's have now identified a contact and expressed an interest in becoming involved early in 2012, once the priest has had more time to settle in.

To compensate for this, three parishes in the Angus area, which had all that registered in February 2011 were also involved in the pilot:

St Anne's, Carnoustie  
St Bride's, Monifeith  
St Thomas', Arbroath

### Workshops

In the light of experience and in consultation with SCIAF, it was decided that the most effective type of event for introducing Eco-Congregation and the resource materials would be to provide individual workshop events. Two hour introductory workshops were therefore prepared and presented for all three of the original pilot parishes. The aims of the workshops were to:

- Introduce Eco-Congregation Scotland and the pilot

- Establish that learning was two way ie for parishes to learn more about taking action to care for creation and for ECS and SCIAF to learn what works for individual parishes and what doesn't
- Assist parishes in completing the Churches' Check Up and in drawing up an action plan, in preparation for registering as eco-congregations.

See Appendix 2 for workshop programme

Information gathered from workshops is noted in the reports from individual parishes below.

## PILOT PARISHES

Each of the pilot parishes were at different stages on their eco-congregation journey when they volunteered for the pilot and each has progressed at different rates.

### 1. St John Ogilvie's, Wester Hailes: Contact - Susan Ferguson



This parish serves the areas of Baberton, Calders, Clovenstone, Dumbryden, Hailesland, Murrayburn, Sighthill, Westburn and Wester Hailes. The parish was established in 1970 with the current Church building being opened in 1978. Fr Tony Quinlan OMI is the resident priest at St John Ogilvie's and attended all meetings, which were held in the parish house.

Introductory workshop: 11 people attended representing a wide range of interests within the parish, including justice and peace, property, young people and liturgy. Some in the group had already begun fill in the Churches' Check Up and soon after the workshop they completed it and then registered as an Eco-Congregation. A separate Eco Group was then formed to formulate and carry forward an action plan.

As they had already achieved a lot before registering, the parish was encouraged at the workshop to consider applying for an award. In consultation with Susan Ferguson, a draft award application



was drawn up, approved by the Eco Group and then submitted. Following the assessment in October, St John Ogilvie's were given an Eco-Congregation Award.

Among the actions listed in their award application were:

**Spiritual:** Outdoor services; regular use of bidding prayers to highlight concern for environment; hosting a World Day of Prayer ecumenical service in 2011, which used natural materials and regular retreats with space for outdoor reflection; with other parishes undertaking the "Just Church" course, which includes environmental sections.

**Practical:** Energy - new energy efficient boilers, low energy and movement sensitive lighting, double glazing, draft proofed new doors installed in church and /or church house; the Energy Saving Trust was asked to prepare a report to identify where energy savings could be made; church house is used for meetings to save heating larger spaces; many walk to church, others share cars generously.

Waste - recycling taken home or elsewhere via council collection; paint recycling promoted; spectacles clothes and household goods collected for reuse; second hand book sales used for charity fundraising; Community Help & Advice Initiative (CHAI) supported through furniture recycling; production of paper copies of parish information limited and recycling encouraged.

Biodiversity - maintain a hawthorn hedge around the grounds and planted sedum and lavender to attract butterflies.

**Community:** Local - arranged an information stall for the Parish relating to climate issues; church website has many links to supporting organisations and parish newsletters promote creation care; promotes a credit and debt support service through (CHAI).

Global – calculated carbon footprint of church buildings as 19.53 tonnes and are taking steps to reduce it; held Carbon Fast in Lent 2010 and 2011, distributed Archdiocesan information sheet and encouraged its use, Justice and Peace notice board has information on climate justice; worked with Stop Climate Chaos coalition eg promoted "the Wave" march in Glasgow and campaigned for Scottish Climate Change Bill and mass lobby of MSPs; took part in postcard campaign on Climate Change from SCIAF; children's liturgy group are trying to raise money to sink a well; a Fairtrade Parish - since 2003 with regular stalls after Sunday mass; supported Brazil Partners in Justice (a year long SCIAF initiative) which has highlighted environmental issues such as the growing of biofuels and included fundraising; invited speakers on various connected topics eg Fairtrade, SCIAF Mission appeals and highlighted environmental concerns causing poverty in developing world.

## 2. St Joseph's, Clarkston: contact - Michael Martin



St. Joseph's Parish serves a large area of the South Side of Glasgow which includes Clarkston, Netherlee, Muirend, parts of Giffnock, Carmunock, Williamwood, Waterfoot and Thorntonhall. St Joseph's had already registered as an eco-congregation in August 2010, before the start of the pilot. They have a large 1960's building with ancillary halls.

Introductory workshop: around 20 people attended, including Dr Sheena Wurthmann who came to give support and share her experiences. Sheena is an ECS Board member, leads the Glasgow ECS network and is a member of a neighbouring award winning congregation at Netherlee Parish Church (Church of Scotland). As the parish had already registered, the workshop was aimed at generally raising awareness of how ECS worked and ensuring that the parish had an action plan in place. The main focus of activity at the time of the workshop was to set up and promote a "Green Fair" Event for all local churches and the community in general. Interest was also shown in applying for an award but this was postponed until after the Green Fair event on 8<sup>th</sup> October.

Due to a clash of bookings at St Joseph's the Green Fair was held in the nearby St Aidan's Episcopal Church. The event ran from 12 – 3pm and consisted of about 8 different stalls from local churches and environmental organisations, including: Fair Trade, Energy Saving, local Eco Schools, local food production, bulb planting in pots for children and ECS. In addition, two talks were put on by people connected with St Joseph's on environmental topics. The event was well supported by the local ecumenical Justice and Peace group and a good contact was also made with the Diocesan Justice and Peace group who took away 8 introduction packs and promised to recruit all the active parishes in the group.





Other actions planned and listed in the Churches' Check Up, include:

**Spiritual:** Occasional inclusion of environmental concerns in the liturgy with praise and thanks given for God's gift of creation; projects with young people; making the link between environmental issues and the Christian faith.

**Practical:** Energy – Measures such as using appropriate heating controls, fitting draft excluders, insulation and low energy light bulbs already in place; plan to commission an external energy efficiency survey for all parish buildings.

Waste - promote reuse and recycling through jumble sales and collections.

**Community:** Local - invite speakers on environmental issues. "Green tips" already regularly published in the parish magazine.

Global – fair trade products used and promoted and work with agencies such as SCIAF and international conservation organisations on-going.

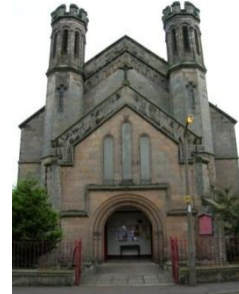
### **3. St Peter's, Morningside:** Contact - Norma Emm Daniels

This parish is located in Morningside, Edinburgh with a very large church built in 1907. They had a little knowledge of Eco-Congregation before the pilot, through a Justice and Peace talk and contact with Fr Chris Boles.

It proved difficult, initially, to find a suitable date for the introductory workshop as the main contact was first away from home and, once a date was fixed, the workshop had to be further postponed due to the personal circumstances of the co-ordinator. Unfortunately, it was therefore completed later than intended. Eight people attended the workshop, mainly from the Justice and Peace Group, but also including representation from the young people in the parish. The group was keen that young people should be involved and suggested that perhaps they (with support) could undertake the Churches' Check Up on behalf of the parish. The group was also very motivated by understanding that changes in personal lifestyles were needed to help combat climate change. Due to the delayed start of the project they now plan to complete the audit and register early in the New Year.

Actions already undertaken include taking part in a carbon fast and publicising action around the Copenhagen summit. The courtyard garden is well maintained and water and energy saving measures have been included in recent work to install a new toilet in the church buildings. Fair trade is promoted in the parish. The priest is very supportive and often mentions creation care themes in his sermons. However, concern was expressed that the new translation of the liturgy might mean that there were fewer opportunities to include environmental issues.

**The Angus Parishes of St Anne's (Carnoustie), St Bride's (Monifeith) and St Thomas' (Arbroath):**  
Contact – Chris Boyle



These three parishes, in different Angus towns, share a priest who is very supportive. Having registered at the same time, they have continued to work together, holding regular tri-parish meetings to plan and organise their eco-congregation work.

Since becoming eco-congregations they have: introduced Harvest Masses, to include a creation/harvest theme for children's liturgy and in some of the Bidding Prayers; pursued provision of recycling bins with the local council and have begun to work with a local environmental group: Monifeith Eco Force, this may involve practical help with litter picks and beach cleans. All three parishes have Fair Trade accreditation and plan to involve their young people in initiatives such as publishing FT recipes and organising tasting sessions. The Youth Group has also requested a presentation/discussion on a faith based environmental issue. They are also looking at greening of parish grounds.

#### **4. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PILOT PROJECT**

In order to assist in learning from this pilot project a questionnaire was issued to all participating parishes to gain information about their eco-congregation experience. The points below are therefore a summary of the questionnaire responses and experience gained from giving workshops, information and advice to all pilot parishes over the project period.

The main findings are:

**i. Involvement with ECS increases awareness of how environmental issues, particularly climate change, affect and are affected by developing countries. Involvement also served to improve understanding of how lifestyle choices impact on poorer countries of the world**

All pilot parishes supported this statement and one commented *"it has allowed a cross-section of parishioners to join together, and work as a team to make positive changes in the way that we go about looking after the world that God has given us. It has, without doubt, allowed us to spread the Gospel message in practical terms!"*



## **ii. Roman Catholic parishes can become eco-congregations**

Although all the parishes involved in the pilot were at different stages, they had already carried out some eco-congregation type initiatives. All have now either registered or are soon to do so.

## **iii. Roman Catholic parishes can lead the way but support is vital**

The feat achieved by St John Ogilvie of registering, applying for and gaining an award within six months is almost unprecedented! Their work was already well under way before the pilot but they lacked confidence that they had done enough to even register. With a little bit of encouragement and support they were able to go on to achieve an award and have now begun working for a second award.

## **iv. Parishes need to be allowed to proceed at their own pace**

Dealing with individuals and differing circumstances in each of the pilot parishes clearly demonstrated that it isn't possible to push or rush involvement with eco-congregation. Support needs to be tailored to individual circumstances.

## **v. Internal promotion and local networks are a good way of introducing parishes to eco-congregation**

Local Justice and Peace groups and diocesan meetings were mentioned by three out of the four pilot parishes as the way in which they had heard about Eco-Congregation. A recommendation from Bishop Peter Moran (President of SCIAF and the Justice and Peace Commission for Scotland) served to raise awareness in the fourth parish.

Suggestions for promoting eco-congregation more effectively included using:

- Justice and Peace networks and magazine
- Diocesan monthly e-bulletin
- The Catholic Press – keeping up a flow of information
- Access through the SCIAF website, newsletter and parish briefing
- Information sent to parish councils and priests
- Through schools: Catholic schools, in particular, but also through Fair Trade and Scripture Union groups and, perhaps, the Curriculum for Excellence

## **vi. Pilot Churches are willing to help promote ECS**

Some would only want to do this informally or at a local level.

## **vii. Motivation comes from a variety of factors**

Commitment to Justice and Peace, support for SCIAF, interest in connecting faith with environmental issues, being part of an ecumenical movement and being selected were mentioned as motivations by nearly all participants.

An additional motivation for some was the opportunity to involve young people in the parish in this work.





### **viii. Improvements are needed to make entry to Eco-Congregation programme easier**

The majority of participants reported that their first impression of ECS was that it was quite difficult to access. It was suggested by one response that *“It's possible that Catholics, who are aware of ECS, view it in the same way as previous initiatives such as Water Aid - very laudable and worthwhile Church of Scotland projects, but not something Catholics would necessarily be involved in (or asked to join even....?), particularly with our own heavy emphasis towards SCIAF”*.

However, once involved, all found the Churches' Check Up helpful and the registration process straightforward. The new inclusive wording and improved layout of these documents were welcomed but it was noted that some of the questions in the Check Up would require “a co-operative and transparent clergy”.

### **ix. All found staff support helpful and most used the website**

However, not every parish had used the resource modules and no one had used the blog. One parish also commented that the website was off putting and it was difficult to fill in forms online

### **x. Resources need to be clearer, simpler and more user friendly**

Of those that used the modules, a wide variety of modules had been looked at. However, the comment was made that *“On first viewing [of the resources], it seemed like an enormous amount of work would be required. Indeed, it was only when we spoke to a neighbouring Church of Scotland congregation (Broughty Ferry New Kirk) that it all became clearer - that we didn't have to complete each module in its detailed entirety to become an eco-congregation and that in fact some of the simplest actions contributed to our status as parishes actively caring for God's creation”* and a further plea was *“Could they be written in a clearer, simpler, more 'user friendly' way?”*

ECS is currently addressing this issue with a major redevelopment of the resources and the way in which they are presented on the website.

## **5 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the findings above the following key recommendations are made:

### **For SCIAF:**

#### **Devise a strategy to promote Eco-Congregation and recruit new parishes**

This might be achieved in a number of ways:

- Using the stories of the pilot parishes to publicise the links to SCIAF's work and the range of activity undertaken through website, newsletter and parish briefings
- Emphasising suitability and the ease of access for Roman Catholic parishes
- Promoting the possibility of involving young people as part of the “Green Team”



- Using speakers from pilot parishes to enthuse and inspire other parishes at SCIAF, Justice and Peace, Diocesan and other network meetings
- Creating a link from the SCIAF website to signpost parishes as to how to take action on climate change (and creation care) in their parish
- Forging links with supporters in Eco-Schools and through other opportunities in schools such as the Caritas Award. This award provides opportunities for senior pupils to become involved in community service and parish life, which could involve environmental work.

**For ECS:**

**Provide on-going staff support for parishes enquiring about ECS**

Until ECS becomes better known in the Roman Catholic community in Scotland it is important to try and increase the number of parishes taking action. Numbers of participating parishes need to reach a critical mass to enable the programme to become self-publicising and therefore self-sustaining. From the results of the pilot, this would best be achieved initially if a member of staff can provide a tailored support for each new parish so that they can proceed at their own pace. A degree of “hand holding” to give those starting out confidence that they can be an eco-congregation seems essential. This mentoring role might later be taken on by award winning parishes as part of their eco-congregation work.

**Raise awareness of what ECS offers by supplying a flow of information and stories to the Catholic press**

Include success stories from the pilot parishes and information on resources available such as local networks, website, newsletter and blog. Stress the ease of registering.

**Pilot the improved resource material with a range of parishes new to ECS**

To ensure that the current redevelopment of the materials and the way in which they are presented is user friendly for Roman Catholic parishes.

*120130 Margaret Warnock*