

Ideas for Action - **Children and Creation Care**

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Making connections

Ideas for Action - **Children and Creation Care**

At birth, the world that we know is very small. We cry when we are hungry and sleep when we are tired. As the days pass, our circle widens. We may recognise the smell and warmth of our mother, perhaps the chatter of a brother or sister. As the days turn to months our circle widens, we recognise and gain concern for people and value for places. By exploring environmental issues with children, we encourage them to widen their circle further by learning about the world around them and how the way in which people live their lives can show either care for or harm to the environment.

By thinking about environmental issues within a faith context, we take children into a world of values where what we believe about God informs us about our relationship with the earth. This Ideas for Action is designed as an aid to help children makes connections between how humans act and the state of the earth, and between the Christian faith and caring for the environment.

Getting **started**

It can be useful to gather together the people involved in children's work at your church. Depending on the scope of your church's children's work, this may include some children, those who lead children's work on Sunday, representatives from any mid-week children's group, uniformed organisation, holiday or after school club. After introducing the aims of this Ideas for Action as outlined in "Making Connections" above, get the group to:

1. List any work or activities that they have undertaken in the last year that had an environmental element	4. Discuss how environmental issues could be incorporated in your children's programme
2. Review how this was received. Did the children enjoy it? Find it interesting?	5. Check that any activities meet good practice guidelines, so ensuring the safety and welfare of both children and children's workers
3. Explore some of the ideas contained within this pack	

Where possible it is good to involve the children in each step. Environmental issues are dealt with as part of school life either as part of the curriculum or by their school becoming an EcoSchool. Many children will therefore be able to offer insight and enthusiasm to the subject.

Additional ideas which can be adapted and used can be found in Ideas for Action 'Young people and the environment', which is designed for secondary school aged children.

Putting it on the **church agenda**

It is important that the whole church, including decision-making bodies, is aware of the work that you are doing with children, so that they can affirm interesting or exciting ideas that the children propose. Encourage a group of children to tell the adults about their work and concerns. Consider making a presentation in worship or putting an article in the church magazine.

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A child's **perspective**

Looking after the environment is important so that animals don't get hurt, and because pollution isn't very nice and damages humans too. Jamie, Age 7

Ask children to share their thoughts on environmental issues and why it is important to care for the Earth.

What we did!

Children's work at Torpichen Church

At Torpichen Church, the Adventurers Sunday School has taken on many caring for creation projects. "We visit Edinburgh Zoo annually to learn about breeding programmes for endangered species and we now sponsor the Asiatic Lions. We made our own t-shirts with the words "Going, Going, Gone" depicting two endangered species on the front ("Going") and an extinct one on the back ("Gone"). When we all wore them to the zoo, the keepers and staff thought they were so good that they asked where we had got them! We have also made our own environmental versions of snakes and ladders and ludo and led the whole congregation in a game of eco-bingo."

Making an Eco-House at St Mary the Virgin, Easington Village, Co. Durham

Inspired by the idea of making an eco-house and motivated to help improve the energy efficiency of homes in their village the children made an 'eco-house' from cardboard. Built at a similar scale to a dolls house, the home included a range of energy saving features including low-energy light bulbs, loft and wall insulation, foil reflectors behind radiators and thermostatically controlled radiators and hot water! The eco-home formed part of a display and was hailed as a model of good practice.

Recycling and Learning at All Saint's, Brailsford and in Bangkok

The children of Brailsford Primary School (linked with the Church) had a visit from Cyler the Robot who told them about the "3 'R's" – Reduce, Re-use and Re-cycle

Rachel wrote:

*Stop making so much rubbish
Don't throw so much away
Recycle what you can
Save the country today*

The children of Brailsford also discovered what children in a Bangkok School are doing to promote recycling:

"Every morning 24 children as young as 11 have helped keep their school a little bit cleaner and a little bit richer by making sure all their schoolmates sort out their rubbish before dropping it in trash cans. Trash cans are in different colours – blue for discarded paper, green for glass, tiles and light bulbs, yellow for plastic materials and grey for metal. The rubbish that can be recycled is then sold with the proceeds being used in a special school fund."

Mr Mike Cannon – All Saint's Church, Brailsford, Derbyshire

Could your church's children explore environmental issues through any international link your church has?

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More from the children of St Mary the Virgin

Over an eighteen month period, children's groups linked to the church, including the local Church Primary School, Guides, Brownies, Rainbows, Youth Club and Junior Church, got involved in a variety of activities to appreciate and care for God's creation. These included making the churchyard more wildlife friendly by planting bulbs, making and mounting bird nest boxes and making wood piles for mini beasts.

Within a Family Service 'Conserving the Planet', the children demonstrated on a huge globe the diversity of plant and animal life across the world, highlighting endangered species and ways in which their loss might be prevented.

The work was recognised with the gaining of an Eco-Congregation Award which was presented to the children by local environmentalist Prof. David Bellamy. Our children-led environmental ministry has moved the hearts and hands of the whole congregation and helped us appreciate the importance of caring for God's creation.

Myra Stonley, St Mary the Virgin, Easington Village, Co. Durham

Play Scheme at Providence

In August 2003 we ran 'The Good Life' - a week's play scheme for local primary-aged children. The following Sunday worship, to which all the children were invited, focused on 'Caring for God's world'. While the adults reflected on their responsibilities towards God's creation in the light of the creation stories in Genesis, the children made posters illustrating how to care for the environment, which subsequently formed a display. The children tipped some litter in the church and talked about how dirty places made them feel and behave and closed the service with enthusiastic singing of some choruses they had learnt through the week.

Penny Moon – Providence United Reformed Church, New Mills, Derbyshire

Recycling Shoes in Claybrooke Parva

The children of Claybrooke Parva promoted our church's recycling bank through notices at local schools and through a playgroup – St Peter's recycling bank now needs emptying monthly

Joy Hadley – St Peter's C of E, Claybrooke Parva, Leicestershire

St John the Evangelist go wild in the Lakes

The children of St John the Evangelist, Hurst Green nr. Clitheroe, had an outing to the nearby South Lakes Wild Park.

We could do it...

Consider how you could devise a programme for your church's children, drawing on some of the experiences of local people and resources that are in your neighbourhood. Use the experience to help the children explore what Christianity has to teach them about caring for the planet.

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Three **stories to tell**

Story 1 - In the beginning... the story of creation

A long, long time ago, before the wind blew and the sun shone, there was a silent emptiness. God was sad. Then God decided to fill it with something good. First, God made a big bang and out of the bang, lots of stars appeared. They whizzed through space like giant balls of light.

Then God made a switch. God called the off-switch 'night' and the on-switch 'day'. Then God got really busy. God took all the hard bits from the big bang and made them into round shapes like balls. God called one of them Earth. The bits in between were sky and space. It was starting to get really exciting.

On planet earth God made some bits dry, which were called land and other bits wet, which were called rivers and seas. The sea would be really handy for the fish that would come soon.

Next, God decided that the earth needed a bit of life. Soon little bugs started to grow and the earth came alive. After the bugs came plants and trees, fish and birds and then every sort of animal.

God looked and was delighted in all that was there. But God thought for a bit, and decided that there was something missing in the world. Can you guess what? Yes, God decided to make people like you and me.

God said to the humans, "I would like you to take care of the whole world, of all the plants and animals and all the living things."

The first two chapters of Genesis contain two stories of creation. The first is an account of creation in six days, with the seventh day as a day of rest. The second, sometimes called the garden story, is an account of the creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Each of the stories witnesses to an understanding of God as creator and points to the relationship between humans and God, land and all wildlife. Chat with the children about some of the questions that are posed.

Questions:

- What do you like in God's creation?
- How well do you think that we take care of God's world?
- When the earth gets spoilt, do you think that God is happy or sad?
- How do you think that we could take better care of God's Creation?

Follow-up activity:

Invite the children to produce a picture for each day of creation and mount it as a wall display.

Story 2 - The story of St Francis

Francis was born about 800 years ago into a fairly wealthy family. When he was old enough, he went to work in his father's clothing business. It was an occupation that he enjoyed for many years. Then he was taken ill. During his illness Francis decided to change the way that he would live. He left his family business and set out to help the poorest people. Some people thought that Francis's new life was so special that they decided to join him. They became known as Franciscans.

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Francis didn't just care for poor people. He thought that all that God had made in creation was very special. So special, in fact, that he thought of other parts of creation as his own family. Francis called the sun 'brother sun', the water 'sister water' and the earth 'mother earth'.

- What is your favourite bit of God's creation?
- Do you have a favourite fish, reptile or insect, animal or bird?
- Have you climbed a mountain or walked beside a river? What was it like?
- Can you draw a picture of your favourite place to visit?

Story 3 - Noah's floating zoo

Noah lived thousands of years ago, before computers were invented, before the first football game was played, even before Jesus was born in a stable. He lived with his family including his sons Shem, Ham and Japheth. Although God was pleased with Noah, many of the other people in the world did not please God because of the nasty things they did. God decided to wipe out all the badness with a flood.

God wanted to save Noah and his family so he gave him instructions to make a special boat called an ark. Noah and his family got busy, they collected wood and began sawing and hammering. The ark was enormous – longer than a football pitch, wider than a bus parked sideways and higher than two giraffes standing on top of each other! Then they rounded up two of every type of animal and bird and herded them squawking and bleating into the ark, along with food for every hungry tummy! As Noah's family joined the animals, the first pitter-patter of rain sounded on the roof.

It rained for the rest of the day, the whole night and the next day. In fact it rained for the next forty days. There was so much rain that the rivers rose, flooded the land all around, lapped at the edges of the ark and then, with a great groan, the ark was lifted from the land and started to float on the flood.

It took a long time for the waters to go down. When the ark at last rested on land again Noah waited another 40 days before sending out a raven to find land, but the raven flew around without finding a landing place. Then Noah sent out a dove, but this bird returned to the ark without finding a place to land. Seven days later Noah sent the dove out again, and this time it came back with an olive branch in its beak. Noah waited another seven days, then sent the dove out again, but this time it didn't come back. Noah knew that the land was now dry. He opened up the ark, got out with his family and released all the birds and animals to fly and roam across the earth again.

Then Noah said thank you to God for saving them and God made a promise to Noah, his family and all the living creatures that he would never again destroy the world with a flood. As a sign of God's promise a rainbow shone in the sky.

Activities:

1. Help the children to draw or cut out from magazines two sets of a variety of animals and stick each picture on a piece of card
2. Give out a card to everyone. Tell them to look at it but not to show it to the others
3. Encourage the children to make a noise or act an action associated with their animal and see if the children can then find their pair amid the chaos!

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Message:

God promised Noah and his family and all the animals that he would never destroy the earth again.

Encourage the children to suggest ways in which they could look after the earth.

Amazing facts**Earth facts:**

- The Earth is a large ball of rock spinning through space
- It is about 4600 million years old
- It has water in its oceans and oxygen in the atmosphere that allows it to support life
- The centre of the Earth is a ball of molten iron and nickel about 4500°C
- One fifth of the world's land is desert!

Cosmic fact:

- There are billions of stars in the galaxy. Some are so big that if placed at the centre of our solar system, they would stretch out beyond the orbit of the Earth!

Trifid facts:

- There are more than 400,000 species of plant in the world
- The Giant sequoia is the heaviest tree, weighing up to 2000 tonnes! It can take 2000 years to grow, and less than one day to cut down

Bugs and Beasties facts:

- There are more than 1,000,000 species of insects in the world!
- Whales are the world's largest living animals – the Blue Whale can weigh around 136 tonnes which is the same as about 2000 people and makes it larger than any of the dinosaurs! Currently 21 whale species are endangered because of hunting.
- Fish have been swimming in the oceans for nearly 500 million years!
- There are about 4000 different species of mammals, including humans, which live all over the world from hot deserts to the cold Arctic. Mammals are covered in fur or hair, feed their young on milk and have a special jawbone joint
- There are about 90,000 different kinds of flies!
- Soil provides the foundation for plant roots and home for many bugs and beasts. It is formed by rock wearing down. A small depth of soil can take from 100-2000 years to form, but can be washed away in floods or blown away by the wind in just a few minutes
- Some bacteria live for just 20 minutes, the adult mayfly lives for 12 hours, a goldfish for about 30 years, an elephant about 75 years, an English oak tree up to 1500 years and the Creosote bush up to 11,000 years!

Amazing fact activities

1. Draw or paint a picture of something from the amazing facts list above. Is anything in your picture threatened by human activity? What could be done to help protect it?
2. Play the North/South/East/West game – identify the four walls and devise four answers based around each fact – 3 wrong and 1 right – those who get the most right win
3. Consider making a local version of Amazing facts and then doing (1) or (2) above

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Things to do - indoor activities

Creating Planet Earth

Week 1

Make a papier mâché globe by pasting strips of newspaper onto a blown-up balloon. PVA glue is quite safe and a flour/water mix works well too. Avoid using wall-paper paste which may contain fungicide.

Week 2

Once the model is dry, paint it and suspend it from your ceiling.

Create an environmentally-friendly Garden of Eden

Make a Garden of Eden collage out of scrap or recycled materials pasted onto a large piece of cloth or card. The children may be invited to collect rubbish through the preceding week.

The Church Green-Cross Code

Christians believe that God made the world, that God cares for the world and that God wants us to care for it too. Can you make a Green-Cross Code for your Church?

It could contain a list of what the children believe about God and what each child can do to show their care for God's creation.

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Wildlife word search

Use the word search below to discover some of the creatures in the Bible, as well as practising finding different books of the Bible.

F L I E S F E
R X D A N E H
O O O G E H S
G F V L I O N
S H E E P R A
L E M A C S K
R A V E N E E

Clues (use the Good News Bible)

Matthew 23: 37

Exodus 19:4

Mark 10:25

Luke 15:4

Genesis 8: 7

Genesis 8:8

Matthew 8:20

Psalms 78:45 2 creatures

Daniel 6:19

Genesis 49:17 2 creatures

Total number of creatures to find: 12

Answers on page 15

Older children might enjoy making up their own word search. Encourage them to brainstorm some words with an environmental theme, then fit them into a pre-prepared grid.

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Rubbish chutes & green ladders (like snakes & ladders)

1. Draw a large (possibly giant sized) grid with 100 squares (10 x 10).
2. Work with the children to number each square consecutively from 1-100. Start in the bottom left hand corner and work along one row, up one column and back along the next row (like a snakes and ladders board).
3. Encourage the children to identify 10 good things to do with the environment. Examples might include: recycle bottles, put bird food in the garden, put used gum in the bin, compost waste vegetable matter, go shopping with a bag and refuse unnecessary wrapping, buy recycled paper, walk to church or use a car to pick up someone else, plant shrubs with berries for birds.
4. Encourage the children to identify 10 bad things to do with the environment. Examples might include: stick gum under chairs or pews, brush teeth with the tap full on, use a car to drive less than ½km, throw cans and glass bottles away, throw sweetie papers on the pavement, turn the heating up to maximum, leave lights on in rooms not being used.
5. Write the bad things on squares and draw a chute leading downwards.
6. Write the good things on squares and draw a green ladder leading upwards.
7. Colour the pictures and squares appropriately.
8. Write 'start' and 'green citizen award' on squares 1 & 100 respectively, then start the game by rolling the dice!

The children of Trinity United Reformed Church, Wigan enjoyed this game and found that preparing the board was fun and instructive.

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Things to do - outdoor activities

Lent and Easter Cross

If you have a little bit of garden at your Church, consider planting a Lent and Easter Garden. First ask whoever looks after your church grounds for their help and advice, for example where is a good place to site the cross? Then, in the autumn buy some snowdrop and daffodil bulbs. When you are ready to do your planting, dig a trench in the shape of a cross. Place the smaller snowdrop bulbs down and across the centre of the cross. Leaving a space around the snowdrop bulbs; plant the daffodil bulbs all around the edge of the cross. Once you have planted the bulbs, put the soil back and wait for spring. You should have two beautiful displays, one of bobbing snowdrops during Lent, then, as Easter comes, some daffodils should appear to trumpet Christ's resurrection. The bulb garden can grow under grass if the turf is removed prior to digging the shallow trench and then replaced following planting. To ensure a display year after year, allow the leaves to die back naturally.

Story - Helping hands at Highfield

We used the Creation Story (in Ideas for Action 4) to do some Eco work with our Junior Church. We decided to make the Church grounds more beautiful and used the suggested idea of planting bulbs in a cross shape. It was a whole church effort as one lady dug the cross shape in a grass area visible from the road, the bulbs were donated by 20 people and the children did the planting – with dirty knees a testament to their enthusiasm. We replaced the grass and let nature do its work – what a delight as snowdrops, crocus and daffodils flowered as a cross – the surprise and beauty is a sign of hope to all who pass by.

We continued with the creation theme on the Sunday nearest to 4th October – St Francis Day by telling the story of St Francis and thinking about birds and animals. To put our thoughts into action we invited some adults with learning difficulties, including one who worships with us, to make some nest boxes. What next? Maybe we will make some Christmas presents for the birds in the form of feeders and fat cake.

Mrs Virginia Corker Highfield United Reformed Church, Birkenhead

Care in the churchyard

If your church has a piece of land around the church, even if it is just a concrete yard, ask the children to consider how it could be used to care for God's creation. Consider making a bird feeding station and stock it with seeds and nuts or ask the church managers if the children could have a patch of land to look after.

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Ideas for **Worship**

Poems

Litter, litter everywhere
Litter, litter, everywhere
Lying on the ground
Litter, litter everywhere
Everywhere around

All the rubbish in the town
It really isn't right
Help us tidy up the place
Please join us in the fight

Inverurie's such a mess
We hear the people cry
Put the rubbish into bins
We really all must try

Don't be a litter bug we say
It messes where we have to play

Yoghurt pots, sandwich packs
And rubbish thrown from vans
Sweetie papers, bottle tops
And coca cola cans

*Composed by children from
Market Place Primary School, Inverurie*

Encourage your children to write a poem to express their wonder for creation, concern for the environment or positive actions that they can take. Put these on display in a prominent place in your church or feature their poems in your church magazine - just 12 poems will give your magazine editor copy for a year!

Creation drama

Tell the story of creation, then split the children into 7 groups and ask the children to act out their day starting with the first day.

Songs to sing

- Who put the colours in the rainbow
- If I were a butterfly
- My God is so big
- Think of a world without any flowers
- All things bright and beautiful

All of these songs may be found in *Junior Praise*.
Can you make any of these into action songs?

A beasty bugs prayer

Thank you God for
spotted ladybirds,
dangling spiders,
bees in trees,
and for creepy crawlies that live under rocks. Amen.

This is just one example of a 'Beasty Bugs' Prayer.
Encourage your children to write or draw their own prayer.
Consider praying the prayer with eyes open or even dramatically.

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Spreading **good news**

Enabling children to tell adults what they think is empowering for children and can be challenging for adults. Consider asking the children how they would like to spread the message of caring for God's creation. Possibilities include:

- Poster Activity: Make a poster featuring their favourite animal, flower, bird or insect and add a message about caring for the world. The posters could be featured in an exhibition or at a harvest festival
- Ask the children to write an article for the church magazine about what they have discovered or done
- Invite the local press along to an event involving the children in a practical environmental project

Further **Resources**

Books

- *Rescue Mission Planet Earth* is a Children's edition of Agenda 21, written and illustrated by children. ISBN 1-85697-175-9
- *Wonderful Earth* by Nick Butterfield and Mick
- *Caring for Planet Earth – Stories and Prayers for Children* by Ian M Fraser
Publ. St. Andrew Press 2000 ISBN 0 7152 0773 3 £5.99
- *Prayers for a fragile Earth* (which includes many prayers written by children). Written and compiled by Carol Watson. Publ. Lion Publishing 1991 & 1997 (paperback) 1997
- Big Blue Planet and other songs for worship in God's world by Judy Jarvis Publ. Stainer and Bel

|

Resource Pack

'Hunt the Daisy' is a resource pack linked to the National Curriculum Key Stage 2 (7-11 years) developed to encourage children to discover the world of nature in churchyards and cemeteries. For details write to: The Living Churchyard and Cemetery Project, The Arthur Rank Centre, National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2LZ

Resources for Schools

EcoSchools is a sister programme of Eco-Congregation, designed to help school communities move from environmental awareness in the curriculum to environmental action in the school and wider community. It is available for church schools, local authority schools and schools of other faiths.

Contact: W www.ecoschoolsscotland.org | **T** 01786 468234 | **E** ecoschools@ksbscotland.org.uk

REEP - The Religious Education and Environment Programme was established to encourage the study of environmental issues in the context of religious insights. It is based on the understanding that at the centre of the world's great religious traditions is a system of ideas and a corresponding set of values and practices which can provide people with effective tools for reflecting on, and responding to, the crisis that faces our planet. REEP has a web site to enhance teaching at both primary and secondary schools with classroom activities and ideas, links to the curriculum and aids to deliver ICT in religious education. REEP has published 'Faiths for a Future' it has a network of trainers drawn from specialists in six world faiths.

Contact REEP: W www.reep.org | **T** 01926 851966 / 851977 | **E** enquiries@reep.org

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A directory of **useful organisations**

A number of uniformed organisations have work sheets or badges relating to environmental issues

The Boys' Brigade:

Scottish Headquarters

The Boys' Brigade, Carronvale House, Carronvale Road, Larbert, Stirlingshire FK5 3LH

W scotland.boys-brigade.org.uk | **T** 01324 562008 | **E** scottishhq@boys-brigade.org.uk

The Girls' Brigade

The Girls' Brigade Scotland

11a Woodside Crescent, Charing Cross, Glasgow G3 7UL

W www.girls-brigade-scotland.org.uk | **T** 0141 3321765 | **E** hq@girls-brigade-scotland.org.uk

The Guide Association

Girlguiding Scotland

Girlguiding Scotland Headquarters, 16 Coates Crescent, Edinburgh EH3 7HA

W www.girlguidingscotland.org.uk | **T** 0131 226 4511 | **E** administrator@girlguiding-scot.org.uk

The Scout Association

Scouts Scotland

The Scout Association, Fordell Firs, Hillend, Dunfermline, Fife KY11 7HQ

W www.scouts-scotland.org.uk | **T** 01383 419073 | **E** shq@scouts-scotland.org.uk

Local authority ranger services

Based in your local country park or with your local authority many ranger services will provide free environmental education activities for children.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

RSPB Scotland

2 Lochside View, Edinburgh Park, Edinburgh EH12 9DH

W www.rspb.org.uk/scotland/ | **T** 0131 317 4100

Wildlife Trust

Scottish Wildlife Trust

Cramond House, Kirk Cramond, Cramond Glebe Road, Edinburgh EH4 6NS

W scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk | **T** 0131 312 7765

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World Wildlife Fund

WWF Scotland

Little Dunkeld, Dunkeld, Perthshire PH8 0AD

W scotland.wwf.org.uk | **T** 01350 728200 | **E** scotland@wwf.org.uk

Answers to Word Search on page 8:

Hen, Eagle, Camel, Sheep, Raven, Dove, Fox, Flies and Frogs, Lion, Snake and Horse

About Eco-Congregation

Eco-Congregation is an ecumenical environmental project for churches. It provides free resources, support and an Award scheme to help churches to consider environmental issues in the context of their Christian life and mission and to take positive action. Eco-Congregation was originally developed by the environmental charity ENCAMS on behalf of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). It is now overseen by CTBI and delivered by a partnership of organisations.

Eco-Congregation Scotland is an independent charity is supported by a range of denominations and relief agencies.

Tel: 0131 240 2274

Email: scotland@ecocongregation.org

Web: www.ecocongregationscotland.org
<http://ecocongregationscotland.blogspot.co.uk>

In England and Wales, Eco-Congregation is managed by AROCHA UK.

Tel: 0114 263 6421

Email: ecocongregation@arocha.org

Web: <http://ew.ecocongregation.org>