



Eco-Congregation Scotland Local Networks Seminar Saturday 6th September 2014



This Seminar is organised to create an opportunity for networking between the networks, to provide them with ideas for action and for them to give feedback to ECS. This year there were more people attending than in previous years but from fewer networks with 10 of our 18 networks represented on the day (for a full list of participants, please see Appendix 1). Highland, Moray and Orkney networks were unable to attend due to the distances involved in travelling to a meeting in the Central Belt. The representatives from Mid Argyll and two from Angus and Dundee had to call off at the last minute due to personal circumstances.

The meeting opened with a welcome and prayer led by the Rev Trevor Jamison, Environmental Chaplain to Eco-Congregation Scotland.

1. *Starters*

'For the Bible Tells me so?'

led by Rev Trevor Jamison, Environmental Chaplain

Trevor led this session looking at *how different ways of reading the Bible affects what message we derive from it concerning the environment*. Those present looked at two Bible readings, Romans 8: 18-25, which speaks of creation set free, and Genesis 1: 26 -2: 2, which generates much discussion of the proper human role in relation to creation.

Participants were invited to take up and defend (!) readings from different perspectives, influenced to a greater or lesser degree by commitments to 'biblical authority' and/or 'ecological values'. This helped participants 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.

2. *Soup*

Intra-Networking

Each network told us about an activity (speaker, visit, talk etc) that worked well in their area:

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire (Karen and Vicky)

This network meets twice a year and in May 2013 they invited Grant Keenan of Keenan Recycling to speak to them. They collect food waste from the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire area, provide processing services and recycle organic materials into BSI accredited compost.

As legislation has recently been brought in which means that all organisations producing more than 50 kg of food waste a week are obliged to pay for uplift and disposal, the network asked if Mr Keenan was able to assist churches with this and offer some kind of charity rate. This resulted in Keenan Recycling offering to collect food waste free of charge from churches in their area. Keenan's

seeks to incorporate any church wanting to take up this offer on existing commercial collection routes.

Ayrshire (Ann) Other than Fairlie, congregations in the network are fairly new to Eco-Congregation. This year they have had a bible study at Fullarton Parish Church, led by Trevor on Jesus Christ and creation entitled, "The Firstborn of all Creation". Glasgow network also visited Fairlie Community Garden (see www.organicgrowersfairlie.co.uk) and there was a Christian Aid/SCIAF roadshow on Climate Change at Clark Memorial Church, Largs.

Fife (Alan) organised a successful beach clean in St Andrew's, in co-operation with Fife Council. A meeting focussing on Energy Efficiency in church buildings drew in an audience from a wide area, including some congregations new to ECS. However, meetings are usually held in North East Fife and it has been a challenge to get people to travel from where they reside in other parts of Fife.

Glasgow (Jan) covers a large area including, not only the city, but also other surrounding council areas, such as Renfrewshire and Dunbartonshire. This year, to try and engage with more congregations, they have taken their meetings to different outlying areas, with mixed success. They recently hosted the talk and discussion on Fracking led by Adrian Shaw, which was well supported.

Helensburgh and Lomond (Mary) had an interesting and informative visit to Deerdykes recycling centre near Cumbernauld (<http://www.biogas.org.uk/plants/deerdykes-composting-and-organics-recycling-facility>). They have also run a beach clean in Helensburgh for a number of years, which has encouraged other community groups to start their own clean ups, too! Network members also accompanied Trevor for the first part of his walk on the John Muir Way.

Perth (Bill) Adrian and Trevor have both spoken at the network meetings recently. John Ferguson of Binn Eco Park (see <http://www.ecoideam.co.uk/>) will host a meeting at this innovative and an inspirational recycling facility near Abernethy in October.

Stirling (Mike and Tom) hold four meetings per year, with one of these being a planning meeting. These usually involve a speaker, but they have also had a showing of the Food Inc. film (<http://www.foodincmovie.co.uk>) at the MacRobert Arts Centre, which was open to the public. A number of local churches have been successful in securing Climate Challenge Fund grants. This has created an opportunity to bring more congregations into the local network.

West Lothian & Falkirk (David) St Michael's Church received a Climate Challenge Fund grant for new lighting and some community involvement work. The network has also run a number of stalls at various community events to take the message out to the wider community.

Trevor commented on the number of positive connections being made between congregations and businesses in the recycling industry.

3. Main Course

How do we engage with congregations and the general public?

Led by Adrian Shaw (the Church of Scotland's Climate Change Officer)

Introduction

One of the biggest challenges we face in responding to climate change is to persuade people that climate change is a subject that they must be aware of and must respond to. This is not easy in a

country where we are completely dependent on fossil fuels; for heating, transport, electricity generation, business and manufacturing, agriculture and food.

We know from the IPCC reports of 2013 -2014 that:

- Climate Change is happening
- It is anthropogenic (we are causing it)
- It has huge implications that while unpredictable may be of immense significance.

Governments understand that we have to reduce our carbon footprints and have set targets to reduce carbon emissions. Yet all these targets, negotiations and strategies are paper thin without a commitment to change. The Scottish Government has a public engagement strategy and is concerned to promote awareness and action. What are the barriers to awareness and action and what are the opportunities in congregations to promote discussion and action?

The seminar then divided into groups to discuss the following questions:

1. Is Climate Change an issue that has been discussed in your congregation or community and if so in what terms?

In general, the congregations represented agreed that the topic had come up for discussion but for a whole host of different reasons. These included being prompted by others eg the Church of Scotland's instruction to Presbyteries to have their congregations measure their carbon footprint, Christian Aid campaigns and roadshows and, of course, by becoming an eco-congregation and working towards an award.

However, the topic was also raised by congregations themselves in worship services, in their magazines and, in one congregation, through meetings organised specifically to discuss the science behind climate change. Practical considerations such as the need to renew boilers and reduce energy costs highlighted the issue to some congregations.

A wider awareness of the social / environmental justice issues involved in climate change, including water (including sanitation – see <http://www.toilettwinning.org/> and irrigation), as well as how we use our cars, also provided the context for discussions on climate change.

What were the outcomes of these discussions?

Outcomes following these discussions were also varied. Some congregations introduced regular services, twice a year, to focus on creation care. Others undertook carbon monitoring and reduction projects, through refurbishment of their church buildings. Publishing the carbon footprint of their buildings monthly helped motivate further reductions in the church and at home. Increasing recycling was another response and one congregation even reported that their minister started cycling and using public transport more!

However, it was also noted that getting started with taking action can be difficult, although once momentum has built up it is easier to get further projects going.

Participants also noted down the actions had taken in their own lives, church and community. For each action they also recorded their motivation(s) for the actions. A summary of these is given below but a full list is available in Annex 2.

PERSONAL ACTIONS

These could be grouped under five headings:

1. Improving home energy efficiency

Some had made changes in their own homes, including improving energy efficiency by insulation, using low energy fittings, installing renewable energy or choosing to “down-size” or even, in one case, building their own Passiv House (see <http://www.passivhaus.org.uk/>).

2. Biodiversity, growing and composting

One or two people had changed their gardens to encourage wildlife, enable them to compost and / or to grow their own food. One person had undertaken a whole range of measures including introducing forest gardening, beekeeping and permaculture (see <http://permacultureprinciples.com>). One also supported Gorilla conservation!

3. Transport

Eleven people mentioned changes in the way they got about including trying to use their cars less, changing their car or just not owning a car at all. Making increased use of public transport, as well as walking and cycling more, were popular choices

4. Lifestyle and Consumer Choices

Others made changes to their everyday lives: eating vegetarian / less meat / dairy products, sourcing local, seasonably produced food, making ethical purchases, such as Fair Trade (including a “Fairphone” – see www.fairphone.com) or, in one case, simply not going shopping! One person also reported they now buy all their energy from a company that only generates renewable energy. One person also works for an environmental organisation.

5. Waste

Recycling and campaigning to reduce food waste (<http://scotland.lovefoodhatewaste.com/>) were also mentioned.

ACTIONS IN CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

The focus here seemed to be much more on energy saving projects. However, projects to reduce waste and work with a local primary school to “grow your own” were reported.

One innovative project recorded preferential use of lower carbon transport. “Green tickets” were issued to members of the congregation on which they could record mileage used of alternative transport. The “tickets” were then collected in the offertory plate to assess the amount of carbon saved.

MOTIVATIONS

Reasons for personal actions recorded were mainly related to reducing fossil fuel use and carbon footprints. A few also mentioned reducing the cost of energy bills or travel as being a motivation for making changes. Improving health, fitness and wellbeing were factors for some. For one or two, justice and helping others were motivations. Some took action because they saw it as part of their witness to family and others because it formed part of their work. The unusual action of supporting Gorilla conservation was motivated by the need to act globally. However, only one person specifically mentioned that they were motivated by their Christian commitment to live more sustainably.

Reductions in fuel use, carbon emissions and costs were also motivating factors in actions taken by churches. Trying to publicise the church’s eco-friendliness was also a reason for making changes. Recycling was motivated by the need to reduce landfill and the effect of waste on carbon footprints.

In the community, in working with local primary school, there was a desire to communicate skills and enthusiasm for home grown fruit and veg, as well as reducing food miles. Communicating messages about ways to reduce our carbon footprint (in a couple of cases, motivated by Climate Challenge Fund grant conditions) were also mentioned.

2 - Is controversy useful?

It was agreed that the debate about wind farms and fracking could be a good starting point to get congregations talking about climate change and /or other environmental issues. The following views were also expressed:

- Controversy is useful for raising awareness and people become more engaged if issue is a local one.
- People want feedback about issues, such as fracking, and their implications for churches (and others) as landowners.
- Whilst these issues could engender debate, 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 environmental subjects related to climate change in the different network areas represented included:

- The government's economic policy – which seems to be increasingly all about oil?
- Energy security – can we afford to burn more fossil fuels for energy?
- Could government do more with solar power?
- The impact of government, both positive and negative
- What are the true costs of wind generation?
- Hydro power and use of Scottish rivers (Scottish Water is a big generator [and user] of hydro power).
- Power Generation: Hunterston.
- Nuclear issues – Fission and Fusion, as well as Faslane and implications for employment.
- Waste management eg encouraging recycling by reducing bin sizes, differing local authority policies on free uplift of recyclables from churches.
- 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.

3 – What is the role of eco-congregations and networks in public engagement?

It was considered that eco-congregations could provide a safe space to talk about these difficult issues. However, the following reservations were expressed:

- Uncertainty about whether these issues were too big /ambitious for individual eco-congregations to tackle.
- Is there fatigue and is the policy agenda too crowded?
- Need to remember that we are 'competing' with other concerns and issues which also touch upon the lives and interests of people
- Involvement of others would be necessary

To organise a discussion to gain public engagement on these topics congregations / networks would need to:

- Publicise: local media, social media (and not just by young people), through denominations (eg Church of Scotland's Life and Work magazine)
- Encourage congregations to speak out
- Consider using 'neutral' premises – church feels a safe place for discussion for church-goers but possibly feels less so for those who are not part of the church
- Speak the right language for the setting e.g. Climate Challenge Fund application
- Ensure a “respectful discussion/dialogue”
- Approach other, potentially useful, local organisations e.g. NFU
- Perhaps use Earth Hour as a “hook” to get people engaged

Suggestions for the type of support needed:

- Information about what is happening with good data to back it up
- A promotional DVD on the work of Eco-Congregation
- DVD on the issue (Christian Aid?)
- Local resource materials (?produced by local networks)

4. Shopping Basket:

What did participants take away from this meeting for their networks and what do they need to stock the “network larder” for the coming year?

Climate Change and the Church's agenda – we learned that:

- There is a wide variety of reasons why climate change might get onto the agenda
- It is important to get church leadership people/group to 'buy in' to the significance of environmental issues
- Saving money is an important factor in decision-making with regard to energy saving in congregations
- Themed worship services makes a significant contribution to securing engagement from the congregation, who are also part of the general public
- It is useful to get material into the church magazine to raise awareness in both the congregation and the community (though this does not of itself translate into actions).
- The Climate Challenge Fund puts conditions on their grant funding that encourage churches to engage with the language and concerns of wider society
- 'Eco Congregation' can be used as a title to get a hearing in community discussion of environmental issues.
- Nothing is too controversial to discuss
- Need to accept that raising awareness is not the same as securing agreement and that the former may be the only practical objective at the time
- Discussing these issues draws attention to the public voice and witness of the Church when it is **not** being reactionary!

5. Check Out

We received sixteen completed evaluation forms. There were six questions in all. Respondents overwhelmingly found the seminar to be useful and gave a range of interesting suggestions on how to make improvements and helpful ideas for next year's seminar. Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the evaluation form. The questions with an overview of responses are listed in Annex 3.

Annex 1 – List of Participants

Name	Network
Ann Ralph, Karen McCrossan and Vicky Mitchell	Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire
Shiona Baird	Angus and Dundee
Robin Burnett, Nigel Lawrie and Ann Gregory	Ayrshire
Alan Werritty	Fife
Jan MacDonald, Katy Owen, Barry Watson)Glasgow
Billy and Jean Gilchrist)
Mary Sweetland and Margaret Horrell	Helensburgh and Lomond
Bill Wilson and Mary Mitchell	Perth
Michael Adam, Tom Pollok and Jon Cape	Stirling
David Timperley	Falkirk and West Lothian
Gordon Hudson	ECS
Trevor Jamison	“
Adrian Shaw	“
Margaret Warnock	“
Alice Hague	Edinburgh University, Ancestral Time Project
Apologies:	
Alex Robertson and Vicky Fraser	Angus and Dundee
Jean Hodgson and Anne Watson	Mid Argyll

Annex 2

Actions and Motivations

PERSONAL

ACTION	MOTIVATION
Eating less meat – see Meatfree Mondays www.meatfreemondays.com using fish on other days	Aware of impact on environment [of animal husbandry]
Encourage use of Fair Trade products in church	
Recycling	
Walking to meetings instead of using the car	To reduce fossil fuel use and so global warming
More walking, less car use (visiting parishioners)	Needed more space / thinking time and really enjoy walking!
Installed solar panels and tried to reduce electricity consumption by installing double glazing and cavity wall insulation	Reduce fuel consumption

ACTION	MOTIVATION
[Increase] use of public transport	Cost, exercise, wellbeing
Using bus instead of car	No cost and good for environment
Built a Passiv House - see http://www.passivhaus.org.uk/	Reducing energy bills (was using Calor gas)
Source local, seasonably produced food	Reduce food miles / better nutrition
Eat vegetarian Don't own a car Recycling whatever is possible	Knowledge of carbon footprint impact and cost saving. It's what you should do!
Walk not drive Use public transport Recycle more Engage in conversation on environment	Cut carbon footprint and live a healthier lifestyle
New [more energy efficient] heating system Monitoring [car] mileage Use train if possible Don't go shopping	It's my job!
Erected own wind turbine Have solar PV panels Only buy from 100% renewable energy company	Practise what I preach
Reduced car usage	Carbon saving. Partly financial but also driven by Christian commitment to live more sustainably
Change car	Reduce carbon footprint
Replace oil fired boiler with heat pump, pv and wood burner	Reduce carbon footprint
Walk / cycle more	Reduce carbon and fitness
Leave an area of garden to encourage biodiversity and for compost bins	Biodiversity
Increased food production, permaculture, forest gardening and beekeeping	Reduce footprint
Work with Wise Group Composting Love Food Hate Waste [campaign]	Enjoy working with people Helping those on low incomes Healthy eating Reducing food miles

ACTION	MOTIVATION
Installed solar pv panels Replace tungsten filament bulbs with LED bulbs	Reducing electricity costs
Ordered a "Fairphone" see www.fairphone.com	Fair trade justice
Better insulation and down-sizing	Comfort and energy saving

CHURCH

ACTION	MOTIVATION
Encourage use of Fair Trade products in church Recycling of paper cans Improvements to heating / lighting systems	To increase information to Hall users
Installed: New central heating boilers in church and halls Loft insulation in church, halls and manse Low energy lighting in all properties Double glazing in some buildings	Reducing carbon footprint by 5% per annum
Installed more efficient heating	Cost reduction
Reducing energy use and reporting CO ₂ savings in church magazine	Reduce amount of fuel used and make the congregation aware of the saving if lights and heating switched off [when not in use]
Recording preferential use of lower carbon transport in "green tickets" and recording mileage of alternative transport used. Tickets collected in offertory plate [to assess carbon saved]	Part of public engagement required as condition of Climate Challenge Fund grant
Minister has electric car (Renault Zoe) and has a blog to encourage others	To publicise within community eco-friendliness
Changed some lighting to LED	Recommended by eco-consultant as effective
Serve more non meat meals at church / work	Knowledge of carbon footprint impact and cost saving. It's what you should do!
Reduce waste to landfill by 60%	Reduce carbon footprint and easier to recycle than reduce energy use [in church?]
Detailed energy audit of church buildings and [carbon reduction?] measures for short term life of building	Part of role as church treasurer
Have secondary glazing	Need to reduce energy costs

ACTION	MOTIVATION
Reduced energy usage (new heating and lighting)	Mainly financial but some concern over carbon and social justice
Replaced lighting with low energy LED lighting	Reducing energy costs
Upgraded roof insulation	Jointly money and carbon saving Vestry support
Regular energy monitoring	Carbon footprint and cost
Guidelines and checklists for other users of building (used by others most days). Checklists re switching off in various areas and appliances	Saving energy and cash
Recycle everything	Reduce landfill to a minimum and carbon footprint
More walking, less car travel more public transport	Show example to family and others Climate change awareness
Support gorilla conservation	Thinking globally

COMMUNITY

ACTION	MOTIVATION
Involved in management of Housing Association for 20 years	Necessary to create movement in situation
Work with local primary school on “grow your own”	Important to communicate skills and enthusiasm for home grown fruit and veg Reduce food miles Encourage healthy eating
Renovation encouraged greater community use of church halls Training in heating [controls] for hall users	Reduce carbon footprint
Provide one simple “carbon cutter” [idea] in church magazine each month	Initially Climate Challenge Fund condition now established feature to reduce carbon footprint

Annex 3 Evaluation

1. How useful do you feel the seminar was in terms of giving a) inspiration and motivation, b) facilitating networking between the networks, c) ideas about how to engage better with congregations and the general public d) ideas and information to take back to your network

All of the respondents found the seminar very useful or useful in providing:

- inspiration, motivation
- facilitating networking between the networks
- ideas about how to engage better with congregations and the general public
- ideas and information to take back to their network

2. Which aspect of the seminar did you find most useful?

There was a range of answers to this question including:

- Trevor's talk
- Networking between networks and the interchange of ideas
- Group discussions
- Ideas for / the session on community engagement and encouraging congregations

3. Which aspect of the seminar did you find the least useful?

Aspects that respondents found least useful were:

- Discussion on "fracking"
- Network sharing when there were relatively few ideas – although that doesn't mean they are not worth repeating
- "Main course" on congregation / community engagement
- Heating and lighting discussions – there is a lot on this already
- It was too rushed at the end / rather crowded agenda

4. How do you intend to follow up on the seminar with your network?

Ideas for follow up were:

- Ideas for network meetings (including Adrian speaking about Fracking and John Ferguson on waste management (http://eco-partnerships.abertay.ac.uk/Poster_Binn.pdf)).
- Be in touch with another eco-congregation
- Go back to congregation with enthusiasm and ideas
- Possible speakers / activities for the future
- Try harder with network
- Pass on to church magazine
- Pass on my notes to other members
- Act on ideas and suggestions
- Don't know yet
- Good to get write up as memory of new ideas
- Make contact with local network
- Find out about the work of the Eco-Congregation Network
- Closer co-operation with mentor

5. Do you have any suggestions about topics for discussion at the next year's Local Network Seminar?

These were:

- Taking today's topics further
- Fossil fuel divestment
- More of same
- Genetic modification
- More relevant discussions
- Combining eco-congregation topics and other work of Church of Scotland – commonality of topics
- Climate Change – where are we now?
- Focus on spiritual aspects – prayer, worship etc

6. Other comments / suggestions or requests for further information

“Always inspiring to hear the range of things other groups are doing”

MW141029