



ECO CHURCH
RESOURCES

COMMUNITY
& GLOBAL
ENGAGEMENT

Why Should We Engage At All?

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think



Becoming an Eco Church is so much more than looking after buildings in an environmentally-friendly way – though that's a key part of the process. This journey affects every area of our church lives, including how we engage with our communities and the wider world. It is about holistic mission.

Live ecologically. Let your life speak louder than your words. Then the people around you will start to wonder why you are caring for creation. That was a key lesson learned by one church at Tartu, Estonia's second largest city.

They found out how local people respond to environmental action. The church sent a team to tidy up wasteland by a bus stop and plant flowers there. 'The impact that had, and the reaction from the locals, was amazing,' said Lina Toth, now lecturer in practical theology and Assistant Principal at Scottish Baptist College.

A similar thing happened for a church in the south of Russia, near the border with Chechnya. The congregation sent a team to do some cleaning in their town. There wasn't much public money for that, so it was a welcome move.

'The pastor said this was the only time when it wasn't them trying to stop people and talk to them about spiritual matters,' Lina explained. 'It was people stopping them and saying, "Why are you doing this?"'

This was an interesting angle to mission. 'It spoke more than words about salvation,' she explained. 'It's our lives that speak louder than our words or tracts.' Lina and her friends have found creation care is mission with meaning.

do



Engage with your community because it's the right thing to do. And as you make ecology enjoyable, you will impact your community even more. It's a snowball affect.

That's the experience of St Mary the Boltons, who hosted some simple events in the Earl's Court/Chelsea area of London. The locality is densely populated with little green space, lots of traffic and bad air quality. Having an impact on that community has been fruitful for the church.

'We were generally aware of the environmental challenges facing us and wanted to think about them and take steps to make a difference,' said Ruth Lampard, formerly Associate Vicar at St Mary's.

The PCC set up a sustainability group to work on these issues and integrate them into church life. 'The underlying motivation was simply that it's the right thing to do,' said Ruth.

They structured and reviewed their work. 'We found having enjoyable, do-able events with an environmental theme is a helpful way to "reach" people – in the church and beyond,' she added. 'The church is an oasis in an urban environment.'



Hope For The Future

This initiative was born at the beginning of 2014 when Diocesan Environmental Officers Michael Bayley and Jemima Parker saw the opportunity the Church has to make a real difference in getting climate change onto the political agenda. The project is an ecumenical, nationwide campaign that equips individuals and churches to lobby their MPs on climate change. There are lots of helpful resources on their website.

Seek simplicity as the way into community engagement

We engage with our community and wider world because it's a simple expression of faith. Yet the results can be far-reaching. There are many simple things we can do to care for creation both in a local and global setting. They include:

- walking to church on a Sunday;
- supporting your sisters and brothers across the world;
- urging political leaders to act.

An example to follow is Elizabeth Peredo, who is Head of Fundación Solón in Bolivia

She shows how community engagement can make a difference. Fundación Solón helps communities to understand the causes and consequences of climate change. They also campaign to promote more sustainable ways of managing Bolivia's rich natural resources.

Bolivia is now a major participant in the global climate change campaign and in international negotiations. That's just how powerful a simple step can be.

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HOPE FOR THE FUTURE
www.hftf.org.uk

BOLIVIA CLIMATE EDUCATION
www.christianaid.org.uk/ActNow/climate-justice/inspiring-stories/elizabeth-bolivia-climate-education.aspx

do more



Make the big issues accessible

We create pathways to the spectacular by engaging with the small. We can open little doors on a big world. For instance, some people find the subject of climate change too vast to tackle. But linking in with other more familiar areas can be a great way of engaging your community. For example:

- the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals offer sermon notes and fact sheets to get people involved in creation care;
- ChurchCare encourages congregations to play short films at the start of a service, meeting or event about environmental responsibility;
- a good leaflet, poster or display is an important way of explaining your church's ecological work.

Share your eco-journey as part of your engagement

Telling your story, with all its successes and struggles, is a part of this holistic mission. And you can communicate with your community in a number of ways:

- email is a valuable tool, especially for publicising events. Have an emailing list for your congregation and others who may be interested;
- have some internet presence, even if it's just a webpage with your contact details and/or Facebook and Twitter accounts for your church;
- face-to-face contact and word of mouth are vital. Conversations with friends, neighbours and colleagues are more important than we realise.

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ANGLICAN SOCIETY FOR THE
WELFARE OF ANIMALS

www.aswa.org.uk

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www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint/engaging-your-community

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Aim for lasting outcomes in community involvement

Community dreams can come true. The Bedford-based 'Golden Gardens' initiative found that out for themselves.

This local group transformed two ugly disused garage sites at Goldington into community gardens, where residents can meet together to tend plants, grow their own food or simply to relax and enjoy the outdoors.

Vicar Richard Howlett encouraged his church St Mary The Virgin to work in partnership with local agencies on the project. A grant of £80,000 was obtained from the People's Lottery, to redevelop the derelict sites.

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GOLDEN GARDENS WEBSITE
goldengardensbedford.weebly.com

CHURCH OF ST MARY THE
VIRGIN, GOLDINGTON
www.stmarygoldington.org.uk/index.htm