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**The Diocese of**

**Southwark**

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**Ways of starting your church’s eco journey . . .**

The key is to find ways of engaging the congregation, and every church will be different.

**Get People Thinking**

The best first step may be a sermon or intercessions focusing on creation and the 5th Mark of Mission. When people are motivated to think deeply about the subject, they often start to want to take action.

**Assess Engagement Levels**

Use [this mini-questionnaire](https://southwark.anglican.org/downloads/environment/ecochurchquestionnaire_web.pdf) from Southwark with just five tick boxes to assess interest levels and gauge which areas of action are most likely to engage people.

* + Put it inside your service booklet one Sunday.
	+ Ask people to fill it in straight away and collect it after the service.
	+ You could also make an ‘eco postbox’ out of a recycled shoe box (children might like to decorate it) and invite people to put suggestions into it.

From the questionnaire responses, you may find you already have a team of people willing to be involved in making things happen. The questionnaire should also suggest which type of action your congregation will best respond to as a starting point.

**Check Your Baseline**

Fill out the [Eco Church questionnaire](https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/how-eco-church-works/) – this is a fantastically useful resource which tells you what your church is already doing well, and offers a framework for your next steps.

Don’t be put off by the length! – the results are helpful even if you don’t have all the answers to hand. Use the results as a starting point for your first meeting.

**Bring People together**

If there is the appetite for it, have an Eco Church ideas-sharing meeting and publicise it well in advance. Extend personal invitations to people you feel are likely be interested.

**Listen, encourage and delegate!**

At the meeting, introduce Eco Church and/or your own approach to the environment and reasons for being there. Sharing personal motivations can be an effective way of connecting with people.

Suggestions for running the meeting:

* + Appoint someone to take brief notes.
	+ Listen listen listen! When people bring their own ideas, they are more likely to want to put them into action.
	+ Make sure everyone has the opportunity to make suggestions.
	+ Share out the actions that arise, aiming to give everyone one task or area of responsibility. Encourage ownership!
	+ Set clear goals – a good one is ‘we aim to achieve one action every month’ (e.g. a litter pick, a talk, a trip to the local recycling plant, a gardening project, a climate write-in).
	+ Share the notes afterwards.
	+ Follow up at an agreed time – either at regular meetings or (if you think ‘committee fatigue’ is likely) through announcements and emails, with occasional gatherings to celebrate progress.
	+ If your Green Team needs inspiration, see below for a list of simple eco actions.

**If interest is limited, don’t give up!**

**Other ideas to try**

**Children and Young People** are often very concerned about the Climate Crisis and their input could be another way of engaging the rest of the congregation. Consider asking some of your young adults to present their thoughts in a sermon slot.

Invite **a guest speaker** one Sunday – Christian charities such as Tearfund, Christian Aid and A Rocha are often able to provide speakers, or the Diocesan Environment Advisors would be happy to help.

Choose an **environmental charity** and spend a period of time fundraising for them. Any simple event can be an opportunity to raise awareness.

**Pray** for the environment in church whenever appropriate. Occasions like Harvest, Creationtide, Climate Sunday, World Car Free Day, Earth Day, World Oceans Day, the feast of St Francis, Plough Sunday and so on, all provide opportunities to contemplate creation. Notice when the environment is in the news and pray for those suffering the effects of climate change.

**Use your voice as a community.** The UN climate talks are being hosted by the UK in 2021 and political parties across the spectrum need to know there is strong support for positive environmental action. **Hope for the Future** is a brilliant charity which offers tailored support for churches who want to contact their MPs about environmental matters: <https://www.hftf.org.uk/campaigner-workbooks>

**Simple Eco Actions**

Some ‘easy wins’ which can boost morale and help raise awareness:

* Hold a Climate Sunday service: <https://www.climatesunday.org/faqs>
* Make sure lights are turned off whenever they aren’t needed; ask your children and young people to make reminder posters and put them by all light switches.
* Replace lightbulbs with energy-efficient LED bulbs wherever possible.
* Switch to a Green Energy provider.
* Buy recycled paper for use in the church office, printing notices, orders of service etc.
* Consider using virtual service sheets or projectors to reduce paper usage. Always print double-sided, save and re-use scrap paper.
* Commit to using environmentally friendly cleaning products (buy them whenever they’re on special to save money!)
* Consider buying in bulk and refilling smaller containers to save on packaging (e.g. cleaning products or hand sanitising gel).
* Buy recycled or charity loo paper (e.g. <https://uk.whogivesacrap.org/> or <https://www.ethicalsuperstore.com/category/cleaning-and-household/tissues-and-towels/> )
* Set up a collection for toilet twinning or tap twinning; e.g. place a collection tin by the loos and encourage people to donate when they spend a penny: <https://www.toilettwinning.org/> or <https://www.toilettwinning.org/tap-twinning/>
* Pledge to buy Fairtrade tea, coffee, biscuits, etc., for church events and affirm this commitment on the Fairtrade website [here](https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get%20involved/In-your-community/Faith-Groups/Fairtrade-Churches).
* Set up a community car pool for journeys to and from church; celebrate World Car Free Day.
* Plant flowers to attract pollinators; have a wildflower & grasses area in your church garden; build a ‘bug hotel’; install a water butt.
* Make sure recycling facilities are clearly labelled and used properly.
* Stop using disposable cups/plates/crockery.
* Put an ‘Eco Suggestions’ postbox at the back of the church with postcards for people to write ideas on (get Junior Church to decorate a shoe box for the purpose!).
* Put up an ‘Eco Noticeboard’ with top tips for lifestyle changes, displays about charities’ campaigns, posters about events, children’s drawings etc.
* Share a weekly ‘Eco Tip’ or ‘Green Challenge’ via your newsletter or social media. Sign up at <https://everyoneofus.co.uk/> for a weekly ‘easy action’ to your inbox.
* Use your parish/church magazine, notices, newsletter or pewsheet to tell everyone about the actions you have been taking!
* Share your actions on social media, using the tags: @SouthwarkCofE, #Ecochurch

For more support, please contact Laura: Laura.baggaley@southwark.anglican.org