

eco- congregation



Canada

an environmental toolkit for churches

Module 1

church check-up

Eco-congregation Canada is a project of
A Rocha Canada – Christians in Conservation
512 172 Street, Surrey, B.C., V3S 9R3 Registered Charity # 86663 8943 RR0001

The Eco-congregation environmental check-up is designed to help churches:

1. Identify and affirm their existing environmental ministry
2. Prioritise what they would like to do next and identify supportive resources

Step 1 Getting started

It is recommended that you form a small group to work through the check-up and prioritise your first steps. Eco-congregation offers resources to support your chosen priorities – the following sections 2-12 each has an associated module. To order your choice of modules free of charge, complete the form with:

- Contact details
- An affirmation your church has undertaken the check-up, or a comparable audit
- An affirmation that a church decision-making meeting approves that environmental activities form part of your church’s life and mission (this step helps gain support for subsequent activities)
- Your church’s choice of resource modules

Step 2 Get Cracking!

On receipt of the resources, distribute them to appropriate people/groups in your church (e.g. worship resources to worship leader, property resources to property committee) and encourage the development and implementation of your plans.

Step 3 Share your story

Your stories help encourage and empower others in their biblical call to care for all creation. Share your story with A Rocha Canada and we will incorporate them into future versions of the modules as examples of what churches are doing. Churches that undertake initiatives with spiritual, practical and community dimensions are also encouraged to apply for the Eco-congregation Award. Keep a record of your church’s environmental activities to aid any application.

1. Life and Mission of the Church

The Five Marks of Mission is a model that can help churches identify their strengths and weaknesses. First formulated by the 1988 Lambeth Conference and adopted since by many denominations and ecumenical bodies, it has been widely used in church life. Note your church’s activities for each Mark and assess whether care of the environment has sufficient weight within your church’s mission:

Mark of Mission

Mark 1: To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom, e.g. preaching.

Mark 2: To teach, baptise and nurture new believers, e.g. children’s work, membership/Alpha Course.

Mark 3: To respond to human need by loving service, e.g. pastoral visiting.

Mark 4: To seek to transform unjust structures of society, e.g. supporting a housing charity, promoting fair trade.

Mark 5: To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation; to sustain and renew the life of the earth, e.g. having energy efficient premises, wildlife garden.

Activities

A church with a holistic mission has activities related to each of the Five Marks.

How to complete the check-up

Use sections 2-11 to identify your church's current environmental good practice and future priorities. For some questions you may wish to check more than one box (e.g. an environmental feature may be present but also have the potential to be further developed). There is space to write additional notes on each section if you would like to, but it is not essential. Skip those sections or check boxes that aren't relevant for your church.

2. Worship

Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta celebrates a Creation Awareness Sunday each year focusing on creation stewardship during a traditional worship service in the morning and then go for a liturgical walk in a natural area nearby in the afternoon.

Worship is the prime focus of Christian life from which the Church's life and mission flows. This section is designed to help you identify how thankfulness and concern for God's creation are expressed in your worship:

How regularly during the year are environmental concerns included in worship?

- Never Occasionally At special services
e.g. Harvest Festival, Rogation Sunday,
Conservation Sunday (1st Sunday in
June), St Francis' Day (October 4th),
One World Week, Earth Day (April 22)
- Frequently
eg. during
most services
regardless of
the topic

In your Church's prayer life do you:

(check any that apply to your church)

- Praise God the creator Ask forgiveness for mis-using creation
- Give thanks to God for the gift of creation Pray for the healing
& restoration of creation

Does your Church connect with God's gift of creation through worship?

(check any that apply to your church)

- Through occasional outdoor services through prayer walks
- Using natural materials within worship choosing organic bread and wine

Does your Church sing hymns or songs that celebrate the wonder of creation and express the calling to care for the environment?

- Regularly On special Sundays Hardly ever

Notes:

Module 2, 'Celebrating Creation!' contains ideas and resources for worship teams and leaders.

3. Theology

Crossroads Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba studied the creation texts in Hosea, Habakuk and Jonah.

Theology is concerned with giving and exploring a rational and orderly account of Christian belief, drawing on Biblical studies, Church tradition and history, ethics and the context in which the Church is present. Does your church:

| | Yes | No | Has potential to develop |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| have access to Christian environmental resources | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| participate in or organise study/exploration events that include environmental issues? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| include creation/environmental issues in its teaching or preaching programme? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Notes:

Module 3, 'Creation and Christianity' contains some eco- or green theological ideas together with suggestions for further reading.

4. Children's work

After focusing on environmental issues and taking care of God's world the Sunday school classes of Bethel Community Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta participated in a neighborhood garbage pick up and weiner roast after the morning service.

Christian work with children can inform, inspire and encourage youngsters as they grow in faith. Use the check-up to identify if your children's programme (infant and primary age) includes environmental issues and the potential for developing this ministry:

| Category of activity | Sometimes (check those that apply to your church) | Never | Has potential to develop |
|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Junior Church/Sunday School | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Uniformed organisations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Playgroups | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| After school/holiday clubs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In schools e.g. through Assemblies | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| All age worship | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Notes:

Module 4, 'Acorns to oaks' includes inspiration and ideas for incorporating indoor and outside environmental activities in children's work

5. Youth work

Churches undertake a range of youth work including groups meeting on Sundays, church and open youth groups and mid-week uniformed organisations. If your church undertakes youth work, review your existing activities and consider future possibilities:

| Have done | Could consider | Activities |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hold a debate on environmental issues and personal responsibility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Develop creation-care material to offer in worship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Undertake a practical environmental/conservation project |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Arrange a walk(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Organise an environmentally focussed community event (with young people from the whole community) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Assess how environmentally-friendly the church is and make recommendations for action |

Notes:

Module 5, 'Tread gently – go green' has ideas and activities for youth work.

6. All-age and Adult education

Following a service at Trinity Baptist church in Edmonton, Alberta, 40 members attended a workshop on how to integrate creation care into their everyday lives.

Church is a place where people can grow in faith from cradle to grave. Relating key topics, like environmental issues, with Christian thinking can be inspirational and faith-affirming. What opportunities are or could be available for your church:

| Have done | Could consider | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Undertake an environmental Bible study |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Invite a speaker on environmental issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Organise/participate in a creation-care Lent group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Provide books on creation stewardship in Church library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do an assessment of what people are already doing |

Notes:

Module 6, 'Exploring God's green word' includes two sets of Bible studies and an address suitable for house groups or sermon preparation

7. Church property

As part of the building planning at Meadowlands Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, ON, church council appointed a Creation Stewardship Committee to investigate and recommend various ways to make the building more stewardly.

Good stewardship of energy and maintenance issues can both reduce your Church's impact on the environment and save your Church money, particularly in the long-term. Assess your churches current environmental stewardship of property (sanctuary, halls, clergy housing) and the potential for developing this:

| Have done | Could consider | Energy- heating and light |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Monitor energy consumption regularly (monthly?) to check trends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Switch to 'green' electricity (electricity from renewable sources like solar or wind) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Regularly service boiler or heating appliances |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Choose appropriate sized rooms for activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Timetable meetings to minimise heating use |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Heating system with timer and thermostatic controls |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Commission an energy/environmental consultation (particularly useful if considering a new heating system or refurbishment or if any boiler is older than 15 years) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fit draft excluders around windows and doors to reduce heat loss |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Install appropriate levels of insulation where appropriate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Clean windows to maximise natural light! |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Encourage building users to switch off unnecessary lights and not leave items on stand-by (e.g. photocopier, computers, printers) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Replace cracked or broken windowpanes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Installed low-energy light bulbs where appropriate |

| Have done | Could consider | Water |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Check water outlets (eg..fix drips and leaks or install washerless faucets) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Install water-saving devices (e.g. dual flush toilets and low spray flow or auto turn-off taps) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Install heat on demand or solar water heaters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Paint reminders on parking lot drains that lead to fish habitat (eg. yellow fish road) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Collect rainfall from down pipes for use in garden |

| Have done | Could consider | Building maintenance |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Choose timber from sustainably managed forests, and reclaimed materials where appropriate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Install environmentally friendly insulation |

Module 7, 'Greening the cornerstone' includes ideas and sources of resources to help Churches put God's House in green order

8. Church management

To build their gardens and relationships Bergthal Creation Stewards at Bergthal Mennonite church in Didsbury, Alberta host a plant exchange, serving fair trade coffee to participants.

Churches are responsible for the good stewardship of money and a range of consumables. Use this section to assess your church's existing good practice and identify issues for consideration and action:

| Have done | Could consider | Financial management & purchasing policy |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Check the environmental policy of your bank and see if you are satisfied with it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have an ethical investment policy for any savings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Use environmentally-friendly cleaning materials & paint |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Purchase recycled paper and envelopes (to close the loop) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Purchase fairly-traded products (e.g. tea and coffee) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Use local suppliers where possible (so promoting a sustainable local economy and reducing transportation) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Include environmental approaches on the church's website |

| Have done | Could consider | Catering |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Use dishes rather than disposable cups and plates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Use farmers markets and other local suppliers (to promote local economy and reduce food miles) |

| Have done | Could consider | Waste minimisation |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Collection facilities for recycling items that church members, building users or local community can patronise (e.g. paper, cans, eye-glasses, stamps, printer cartridges, clothes, shoes, foil) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hold garage sales to raise funds, recycle goods and promote the availability of goods at affordable prices |

Notes:

Module 8, 'Greening the purse strings' includes ideas for good stewardship of financial, catering and purchasing matters

9. Church Land

Members and friends of Crossroads Mennonite Brethren Church near the centre of Winnipeg, Manitoba planted a community garden in a vacant lot owned by the church.

Many churches are responsible for land varying in size from a tiny patch to a large acreage. Use this section to assess the ecological value, value to the community and attractiveness of your church's plot and the potential to develop it:

| Present | Potential to develop | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Management that is wildlife-friendly (e.g. minimal use of weedkillers and pesticides, leaving some areas un-mown, valuing old trees, hedges, walls and stones, plant trees or shrubs as buffer zones for sound and pollution) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Native plant species and plants that benefit wildlife (e.g. flowers used by moths and butterflies and berry-bearing trees for birds.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other features to benefit wildlife (e.g. bird feeders, bird nest boxes, bat boxes, piles of leaves and rotting logs for insects and salamanders) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Visually attractive planting/features |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Area for prayer/contemplation/outdoor worship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Area for recreation |

Notes:

Module 9, 'Planting and conserving Eden' includes ideas, inspiration and sources of resources for churches to:

- assess the ecological value of their land and develop a management plan
- improve the community benefit or wildlife value of their plot

10. Personal lifestyle

Members at Grain of Wheat Church Community in Winnipeg, Manitoba created a list of lifestyle changes that reduce carbon emissions and save energy and give "ice cubes" for different levels of carbon emissions reductions.

More people attend church week by week than participate with any other voluntary body. Use this section to assess what your church is currently doing to encourage individuals to green their lifestyle and the potential to develop this mission

| Have done | Could consider | Greening personal lifestyle |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Publish green tips in any church/parish magazine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Promote awareness through posters or information from environmental organisations (e.g. home energy audit, Environmental Farm Plan, Living Lightly 24:1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Encourage recycling by providing collection points or informing people of municipal facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Encourage members to practice "green travel" (eg. patronize hotels that re-use towels and minimize water & soap, travel by train, live lightly even when away) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Provide a list of local suppliers (eg. food producers, re-usable goods, recycled products, repair shops) |

Module 10, 'Green choices' includes information and tips to green lifestyles.

11. Community outreach

Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton hosted a Garbage Fair where people brought usable items like books, clothing and art supplies that were then redistributed to daycares, hospitals, senior centres and schools.

Churches can work with and through their local community to improve their neighbourhood. Assess the links that your Church already has in the local community and the potential for further development.

| Have done | Could consider | Community outreach/mission |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Establish links with community organisations with a view to sharing your environmental ministry (e.g. schools, youth groups, local environmental bodies) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Advise building users of your environmental concerns and request that they utilise any environmental facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Participate in local environmental initiatives or policy formation – Local Authorities can advise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Draw on links that members have with environmental bodies e.g. Friends of the Earth, Wildlife Trust, WWF, A Rocha, Sierra Club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Support or initiate community activities with a positive environmental element (e.g. Pitch-In Week, LETS, Credit Union) |

Notes:

Module 11, 'Community Matters' includes stories, ideas and further contacts for undertaking work with and through local communities.

12. Overseas Concerns

Duncan Christian Reformed Church in Duncan, B.C. are partnering directly with farmers in Uganda to purchase and distribute shade grown, bird friendly, organic, fair trade coffee.

Living simply that others may simply live is a facet of Christian life. What does or can your church do to benefit the environment and people across the world?

| Have done | Could consider | Community outreach/mission |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Support the work of Christian development agencies (e.g. Canadian Food Grains Bank, World Vision) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Initiate or participate in activities on Earth Day or Environment Week |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Promote fair trade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Explore environmental issues through any linked or twinned overseas community or church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Support the work of international conservation and environment agencies (e.g. A Rocha, WWF, Friends of the Earth) |

Notes:

Module 12, 'Global neighbours' includes ideas and contacts to help churches think and act locally to promote environmental care globally

Summary and Action Plan

What is your church already doing to care for creation?

What are the first three things you would like to do to improve your care of creation and which modules will help you tackle them?

Actions

Modules to order

1.

2.

3.

About Eco-Congregation

Eco-Congregation is an ecumenical environmental project for churches in Britain, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Canada. It provides free resources, support and an Award program to help churches 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.

In Canada, Eco-congregation is managed and delivered by A Rocha Canada.
Contact: A Rocha Canada, 512 172 Street, Surrey, B.C. V3S 9R3
Tel: 604 542-9022
Email: canada@arocha.org
Web: www.arocha.org/canada

In England, Eco-Congregation is managed by A Rocha UK and supported by a grant from the Methodist Relief and Development Fund. The office base is at The Arthur Rank Centre (ARC). Contact: 024 7669 2491, Email: ecocongregation@arocha.org ,
Web: www.ecocongregation.org/englandwales

In Scotland, Eco-Congregation is managed and delivered through a partnership between Keep Scotland Beautiful (an Associated company of ENCAMS) and the Society, Religion and Technology Project (SRT) of the Church of Scotland. It is endorsed by Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) and is supported financially by the Scottish Executive's Sustainable Action Fund. Contact : +44 (0)131 556 2953 , Email: ecocongregation@srt.org.uk , Web: www.ecocongregation.org/scotland

Churches in Wales are supported by Eco-Congregation based at the Arthur Rank Centre.

Eco-congregation resources order form

To order Eco-congregation resource modules free of charge complete this form.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name of Church

Denomination of Church

Title and Name of Contact Person.....
(Green Apostle/Environmental Co-ordinator)

Address of Contact Person.....
.....

Country Postal code

Tel: Fax:.....

Email address:.....

My contact details may be passed to a third party* yes* no

* e.g. a church/denominational contact, local authority environmental officer but never for commercial purposes

Size of Church (members/regular worshippers) Under 50 51-200 200+

Location: Rural Suburban Town/City Centre Inner City

Name of Church decision-making body which approved this order:
.....

Date of Meeting:

Position of Church Officer chairing the meeting:

I affirm that environmental issues/caring for God's creation form part of our church's life and mission and that we have worked through the churches environmental check-up in module 1 or a comparable environmental audit

Name of Church Officer

Signature of Church Officer

eco-congregation resources order form

Please check the modules that your church would like to receive. Please note:

- to save resources only one copy of each module is available per Church
- modules will soon be downloadable from the internet. Keep checking: www.arocha.org/canada/ecocongregation for details.
- churches may freely photocopy modules
- it is recommended that you only order as many modules as you can use. Other modules may be requested later without completing a second form.

Grounding in Faith

- Module 2 Celebrating creation!**
Ideas and resources for worship
- Module 3 Creation and Christianity**
Some green theological perspectives

Growing in Faith

- Module 4 Acorn to oaks**
Ideas and activities for children's work
- Module 5 Tread gently – go green**
Ideas and activities for youth groups
- Module 6 Exploring God's green Word**
An address and two sets of Bible Studies for house groups

Managing in Faith

- Module 7 Greening the cornerstone**
Guidelines on caring for Church premises
- Module 8 Greening the purse strings**
Management of financial, catering and purchasing matters
- Module 9 Planting and conserving Eden**
Practical ideas and advice to care for Church grounds and land

Living in Faith

- Module 10 Green choices**
Information and suggestions to green personal lifestyles
- Module 11 Community matters**
Ideas to help Churches work with, through and for their local community
- Module 12 Global neighbours**
Sources and resources to help Churches think globally and act locally.

Return this form to:

By mail: A Rocha Canada, 512 172 Street, Surrey, B.C., V3S 9R3

By Fax: 604-542-9022 (please phone first)

By Email: canada@arocha.org