



ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP GUIDELINES



“It is a fact that life is tied with the environment”

Puja Mondal



“Leadership skills are critical in driving processes of change”

John Kotter

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR LOCAL CHURCHES AND GROUPS

- Importance of environmental leadership
- Establishing an Environmental Action Plan
- Examples of possible projects
- Resources available and contacts

IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

The importance of the initiative by the Synod of South Australia is emphasised by the resolution urging churches to *‘renew their commitment to model ways of living and working that minimise our impact on the climate and include matters of environment and lifestyle change in prayer and worship, study and communal decision-making’*.

Leadership as a concept is regularly debated, with different meanings in different situations. When considering environmental action in the church, we need leadership from people who are able to grasp the ecological issues associated with climate change, and motivate people to address these issues in diverse, creative and energetic ways.

ESTABLISHING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN

Once the Church Council has agreed on the need for environmental leadership, a small group of interested people could then determine how to proceed by:

1. Considering the best ways of becoming a prophetic voice on matters of faith and environment.
2. Identifying energy saving projects within the church.
3. Assisting church members and others to be environmentally responsible.
4. Establishing working relationships with other community environmental organisations who share the same purposes.
5. Appointing a convenor or spokesperson to report to the Church Council and to the congregation.
6. Liaising with the Synod Mission Resourcing Environmental Action Group.
7. Keeping records of the decisions made and actions taken.

YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUP

Your Environmental Action Group might consider using the suggestions below to engage your church congregation and individuals in ways to minimise the impacts of climate change on God's creation by.

1. Asking your Church Council to establish an Environmental Action Group or at least appoint a person who can liaise with the Synod Environmental Action Group on relevant environmental matters.
2. Encouraging ways of living and working that minimise our impact on the environment.
3. Creating opportunities for members of the congregation to discuss how the church and individuals can act in environmentally responsible ways.
4. Assisting in the tasks suggested by Synod to 'further the work of education, advocacy and research into the climate impact of the church'.
5. Inviting guest speakers to take part in services of worship with environmental messages.
6. Offering prayers for the people that include environmental themes.
7. Consulting with other congregations and Synod/Presbytery members.

EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE PROJECTS

- Encouraging members of your congregation to integrate climate issues into their theology and faith.
- Picking up some of the practical energy saving suggestions in *Facts Sheet #2* that provide ways to **live lightly; travel lightly and shop lightly**.
- At the personal or household level, carrying out some of the host of actions that people can take to contribute to environmental sustainability at home, when travelling, when accessing services or buying goods, at work, in community organisations or when investing our personal funds.
- Encouraging an audit of the church property to identify energy saving possibilities.
- Holding church group or house group discussions on environmental subjects.
- Introducing Bible studies that highlight care for God's creation.
- Supporting community forums to raise the awareness of ecological impacts of climate change.
- Using worship themes like 'Seasons of Creation'.
- Sharing practical ideas for establishing *Green Churches*.
- Using social media to raise environmental issues.
- Reduce amount of waste: promote the "reduce" – "re-use" – "recycle" philosophy.
- Consider installing solar panels to reduce electricity demand (and power bills) and therefore emissions during the day time.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

There is a bewildering range of resources available to assist church leaders and members of congregations to take responsibility for implementing good ecological practices in churches. Here are a few suggestions for some readily accessible information.

From the National Energy Efficiency Network (NEEN)

- Facts Sheet for Churches

<http://neen.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Fact-sheet-Places-of-Worship-Oct-14.pdf>

- NEEN Learning Community Forum

<http://neen.org.au/project/neen-forum-2/>

Green Church Association

http://www.greenchurchassociation.org/Certification/Energy_Conservation.html

Videos

Also, there are a number of videos that are helpful including:

An Inconvenient Truth - Al Gore

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0497116/>

An extensive series related to current impacts of climate change, “Years of living dangerously” is available for download at:

<http://yearsoflivingdangerously.com/>

For help in answering difficult climate related questions, the website Skeptical Science is the best available:

<http://www.skepticalscience.com/>

For tracking heat wave information in Australia see:

scorcher.org.au

For real signs of a brighter future for the environment see:

<http://www.1010uk.org/itshappening?joined=true>

The web site “Ethics and Climate” is useful site to explore topical issues:

<http://ethicsandclimate.org/>

Contacts

Environmental Action Group, part of UCA SA Mission Resourcing

Adrian Nippres,

Mission Officer

Bev Freeman

justice@sa.uca.org.au

Phone: (08) 8236 4203