

ECOLOGICAL AUDIT OF HOLY TRINITY

INTRODUCTION

Following a discussion at Parish Church Council of the activities of the Eco-congregation organization, it was agreed that a preliminary audit be carried out of the Church building and its grounds and of the procedures involved in our activities. The objective would be to see whether actions of any kind may be necessary in order to ensure that we are behaving responsibly in relation to these issues which are assuming increasing importance in all aspects of everyday life.

The Eco-congregation partnership — Churches Together in Britain and Ireland — provides what it calls an *Environmental Toolkit for Churches* which gives useful guide-lines for carrying out checks of this kind, and this was used as the basis of a preliminary audit carried out by the author with the help of the Verger and one of the Churchwardens. The following brief report considers many of the aspects of church life dealt with in the Eco-congregation tool kit, but is not intended to be either rigorous or all-embracing by the ticking of all boxes, leading to some kind of formal registration of our findings. It is merely for the guidance of PCC.

The Eco-congregation approach is all-embracing, and includes consideration of issues under the following headings:

1. Life and Mission of the Church
2. Worship
3. Theology
4. Children's work
5. Youth work
6. All-age and Adult education
7. Church property
8. Church management
9. Church land
10. Personal lifestyle
11. Community outreach
12. Overseas concerns.

but in what follows, it is only those aspects of church life that impact directly on the environment that are discussed.

ASSESSMENT OF HOLY TRINITY'S ECOLOGICAL CHARACTER

CHURCH PROPERTY (ITEM 7)

Energy — heating and light

- It is recommended that we monitor energy consumption monthly in order to check trends. This used to be done, but is not done at present. We should consider this.
- We are not on a 'green' energy tariff. Many commentators consider green tariffs to be something artificially promoted by energy companies and although many people in Bradford are on green tariffs, it is not at all clear just how significant the effect is since it is known that at present only a very small proportion of available UK electricity comes from renewable sources (*ie.* wind generators). This is expected to increase, and perhaps it would be reasonable for Holy Trinity to consider switching.
- We do regularly service our heating appliances
- We do choose appropriately sized rooms for meetings and activities
- We probably do not timetable meetings specifically to minimize heating use.
- We have not commissioned an energy/environmental consultation, but this will be done when consideration is given to installation of a new heating system
- It is infeasible to fit draught excluders to doors and windows of buildings like the church and church hall.
- It is recommended to install insulation. However, the church walls are naturally insulating, and it is infeasible to install common insulating materials in the roof space. It would also be a waste of money, because by the time the wooden ceiling (another natural insulator) begins to transmit heat, the service is finished and the heating switched off.

- We are encouraged to clean windows to maximise natural light. This is inadvisable with valuable and ancient stained glass.
- We do encourage users to switch off unnecessary lights, and although we may leave some equipment on stand-by, there is considerable disagreement between experts about the amount of energy that is wasted in this way.
- We do replace cracked or broken window panes or stained glass lights.
- We are encouraged to install low-energy light bulbs. This is difficult in Holy Trinity because there are few ordinary lights. The ceiling lights are already considered to be eco-friendly, but since the lighting arrangements are still under consideration for modification, this issue can be dealt with at the time. The Church Hall already contains mainly fluorescent lighting.
- Questions have been asked in the town (*eg.* from Climate Friendly Bradford) about our use of floodlighting. This may be more to do with people's objections to light pollution rather than with energy saving, but we have been asked whether it is necessary to have the floodlights on Holy Trinity and St Mary Tory until such a late hour. We should consider this.

Water

- There is relatively little water usage at Holy Trinity. Leaks and drips have recently been dealt with, and we have new kitchen and toilet installations. It is unlikely that the cost (and energy) of switching to dual-flush toilets and auto-turn-off taps would be worthwhile, ecologically speaking.
- It is infeasible to collect rainwater for use in the grounds or elsewhere, even though a great deal of water is involved. Distribution after collection would be difficult.

Building maintenance

- We do not specifically source timber from sustainably maintained forests, but we have an excellent record of recycling/reclaiming timber from within the church (*eg.* pews) in the construction of new items.

CHURCH MANAGEMENT (ITEM 8)

Financial management and purchasing policy

- We use environmentally friendly cleaning materials and paint
- We do not use recycled paper and envelopes. Reliability of printer function generally requires good quality paper.
- We do purchase fairly traded products (tea, coffee, *etc.*)
- We do use local suppliers where possible.
- We are asked whether we have checked the environmental policy of our bank and whether we have an ethical policy for our savings. The main bulk of our funds are held by the Central Board of Finance (CBF) Church of England Deposit Fund managed by CCLA* Investment Ltd which supports the CoE Ethical Investment Advisory Group. This group coordinates and develops ethical investment policy on behalf of the CBF. Ongoing funds are mainly held at the HSBC which appears not to have any major interest in ethical investment,

Catering

- We are asked whether we use crockery rather than plastic cups. There is a logistics issue here, since it is probably not good management to use crockery for Sunday morning coffee (time being an issue). We do,

* CCLA = Charities/Church/Local Authorities. Further information may be obtained from the CCLA website: www.ccla.co.uk

in any case, use crockery in the church hall (and thereby consume water in washing up — where do we draw the line?)

- We are asked whether we use Farmers markets and local suppliers? The former is irrelevant, since they do not sell the kinds of things that we use for Sunday morning coffee. But we do use local traders.

Waste minimisation

- All paper (old bulletins, *etc.*) and cardboard from the church and the office which can be recycled is recycled, and the office printer cartridges are refillable. Bottles are also recycled.
- All garden waste is composted, and tree cuttings/trimmings are recycled as a matter of course.
- It is unnecessary for the church to provide recycling facilities for church members because the local authority recycling scheme is more than adequate.
- We are recommended to hold jumble sales to raise funds and recycle goods: however, the Holy Trinity Street Market bric-à-brac and book stalls are excellent examples of this already being done.

CHURCH LAND (ITEM 9)

Under this heading, Eco-congregation asks us to consider wild-life friendly management of the church grounds, including not using pesticides, leaving unmown areas for wildlife habitats, installing wild-life feeding stations, establishing visually attractive planting features, having an area for prayer and contemplation, and having an area for recreation. We already have an excellent Garden of Remembrance for contemplation/prayer and the churchyard is much used as a natural walk-through for local people and visitors. But there must be some question over whether any of the other suggestions are either practicable or desirable. The ever-present threat of vandalism makes it unreasonable to do many of the things suggested. If Holy Trinity were an inner city church, then perhaps creating wild-life sanctuaries might be a good thing to do. But it is difficult to see how having untended areas in our churchyard could have any real impact on wild-life and this would make what is at present a quiet and pleasant green space a wilderness for no good reason. This, it must be admitted, is a personal view: PCC will perhaps feel the need to discuss it further.

OTHER ISSUES

Much of the remaining material in the Eco-congregation Check-Up list relates to the raising of awareness of church members in our prayers, in sermons, in our Sunday School work, and in our relationship with the wider community through outreach. These areas have not been 'audited'. Awareness of ecological issues and the problems the inhabitants of this planet face now and will increasingly face in the future is maintained at an extremely high level by all branches of the media — newspapers, radio, television, cinema — and it seems inappropriate and unnecessary for the church to be part of what currently has the appearance of a frenzy. It certainly seems an entirely superfluous activity for the church to search out 'environmental sensitive' hymns to sing for example, or to encourage church members to undertake home energy audits when they are already being encouraged to do this from all directions by both government, local and national, and commercial organizations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This partial audit suggests that Holy Trinity already has a very good ecological profile, and that although there are one or two areas relating to energy use where we are not at present meeting the requirements of good ecological practice, these areas are or will be under review when replacement equipment is being considered.

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