

**Church of Scotland
Church and Society Presbytery Representatives Conference
12 September 2009**

Workshop : Climate Change

Background

The Church of Scotland established the project *Responding to Climate Change* in November 2007. One of the main aims of the project is to help congregations understand climate change; its importance and why as Christians they should respond. Over the past two years we have identified that most congregations are aware of climate change but do not know how they can respond to the challenges it raises. To help congregations move from understanding we have developed a simple three point plan.

- **First:** Be aware of climate change: learn about its importance and why as Christians we should respond.
- **Second:** Measure your carbon footprint. We can help you do this in your church property and in the homes of members of your congregation.
- **Third:** Take action. If possible make a commitment to reduce your carbon footprint by 5% a year. Can you become an eco-congregation or can you get involved in local or national climate change activities.

General Assembly 2009

The General Assembly debated climate change when it met in May 2009. The report from the church and society council noted that:

“climate change poses a serious and immediate threat to people everywhere, particularly to the poor of the earth; and that climate change represents a failure in our stewardship of God’s creation. We accept the need to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases urgently to avoid dangerous and irreversible climate change; and to promote a more equitable and sustainable use of energy.”

The General Assembly then debated and agreed a deliverance to:

Instruct Presbyteries, in association with the Church and Society Council, to produce a plan for each congregation in their bounds, setting out how they will measure energy consumption in their church buildings, ascertain their carbon footprint and achieve a year-on-year reduction of 5% of their carbon footprint...

What we want presbytery reps to do is to help their presbyteries respond to this instruction. There are a range of ways in which you can do this.

Suggestions for presbytery representatives

- Host a 1/2 day conference on climate change. We have worked with presbyteries in Ardrossan, Gordon, Buchan, Dundee and elsewhere and have found such conferences helpful and well supported. If presbyteries can provide a venue and an audience we can provide a speaker on climate change, and help suggest other speakers from the Energy Saving Trust and local eco-congregations. Every time we have been involved in such conferences presbytery members and congregations have found them useful and interesting.
- Help the presbytery to develop a plan to encourage all congregations to measure their carbon footprint. We can help and have prepared a very simple draft report that may be of issue to the presbytery.
- Encourage congregations and others to use the carbon calculator we have developed and put on the Church of Scotland website. Any congregation can use this tool to calculate the carbon footprint of its buildings and publicise the information on church notice boards or in their church magazine, etc.
- Encourage congregations to become eco-congregations. There are a range of resources on the eco-congregation website including the new publication *Climate Change: Managing your Carbon Footprint* (Eco-Congregation Scotland module 13) which gives detailed information on climate change and how congregations can respond.

Questions for discussion

- Have presbytery representatives be involved in discussions in presbytery on the General Deliverance in May 2009?
- Are presbyter representatives aware of work underway in presbyteries to put the deliverance into effect?
- What additional support or resources would presbytery representatives find helpful in helping take forward the deliverance?

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