

THE ECO CHURCH LIFESTYLE CHALLENGE

The Eco Church project invites us to improve our care for God's Earth in all areas of church life: our Worship and Teaching; Church Buildings and Land; our Community and Global Engagement; and our personal Lifestyles.

To encourage us Eco Church offers Bronze, Silver and Gold awards, and provides a questionnaire setting out the steps we can take to achieve these. This paper aims to help you with the Lifestyle challenge. Please pray about this, and consider if you can adopt any of these measures in your own life and household.

1. **Reduce car use:** The months of the Covid crisis have forced us to adapt our lifestyles, and cut the greenhouse gas emissions from car journeys. As the restrictions are lifted, you can continue to reduce this element of the problem by:
 - *Using buses and trains (using face masks and social distancing as required). Long journeys by train are much more pleasant - you can read or work, enjoy a snack, admire the view, and avoid road rage!*
 - *Car sharing for work or shopping.*
 - *Considering an all-electric car when you next change your vehicle.*

2. **Measure your household's carbon footprint:** This is a simple and enjoyable process which uses an on-line survey to calculate your annual use of energy, and how many tonnes of carbon emissions it produces. This enables you to identify ways in which you can reduce these emissions, for example by:
 - *Switching to a 100% Renewable electricity supplier.*
 - *Improving the insulation of your house.*
 - *Finding the most environmentally friendly way of heating your home.*
 - *Using appliances more economically, to save money as well as carbon emissions.*

You can use an online calculator yourself (we recommend [carbonfootprint.com](https://www.carbonfootprint.com)) or ask someone from your church or Stretton Climate Care to help you.

3. **Reduce your personal energy consumption:** In addition to the measures listed above you can:
 - *Improve your fitness by walking or cycling whenever possible.*
 - *Avoid small single on-line purchases which require a separate delivery journey.*
 - *Use Zoom or a similar system for meetings, to avoid unnecessary travel.*
 - *Cut down on flying: plan holidays nearer to home; many European destinations are now readily accessible by train.*

Reduce waste: Follow the principles of Reduce, Re-use, Recycle (see www.reducereuserecycle.co.uk). In particular:

- *Don't waste food*
- *Avoid plastic waste*
- *Use loose tea, not tea bags*
- *Use white vinegar and bicarbonate of soda as cleaning materials*
- *Use local recycling facilities. In Church Stretton these include:*
 - *Batteries - Library, Co-Op*
 - *Light bulbs - Stretton Hardware*
 - *Mobile phones and ink cartridges - Charity shops*
 - *Books in good condition - Mayfair and Charity shops*
 - *Magazines (current editions) - Library magazine swap.*

4. Use Fairtrade and ethically sourced goods: These ensure that the products are obtained in a responsible and sustainable way, that the workers involved are safe and treated fairly, and that environmental and social impacts are taken into account during the sourcing process. See www.ethicalconsumer.org

5. At home, increase your use of food that is LOAF (Locally grown, **O**rganic, **A**nimal friendly, **F**airtrade). This is a campaign of the Green Christian movement (see greenchristian.org.uk)

6. Consider the ethical investment of any personal savings: Why risk your savings being invested, without your knowledge, in fossil fuels or armaments? The growing ethical investment market enables you to use savings as little as £50 to earn excellent returns from environmentally and socially responsible companies. Learn more from the following websites: www.ethex.org.uk; www.edentreeim.com; www.triodos-im.com

As well as offering practical advantages, there is a spiritual dimension to these suggestions. They can help us to live in more thankful, less frantic and less wasteful ways:

- to slow down and contemplate the world's fragile beauty,
- to conserve the health of the air, the oceans and the forests on which we all depend,
- to put less pressure on the habitats of endangered creatures,
- to act more responsibly in relation to the Earth's God-given resources.

MAY GOD OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE THE WONDER OF HIS CREATION.

MAY HE HELP US TO FIND THE STEPS WE NEED TO TAKE.

MAY HE GIVE US THE WISDOM AND COURAGE TO MOVE FORWARD.