

Eco Church

Lessons distilled from the journey of St Peter's, Maney, Sutton Coldfield.

The following are the ideas from the PCC's Environment Sub-Committee (known as Eco Maney).

Our journey started from the congregation deciding to make 'Shrinking their Carbon Footprint' one of their 'Transforming Church Targets' in 2009. To achieve the Bronze award, we did nothing different from other churches. We planted bee-friendly plants in the church grounds, we installed solar panels and then LED bulbs; we lobbied our councillors and our MP on aspects of climate change; we helped the congregation to look at their individual carbon footprint on-line.

But from the journey here is what we learnt:

1 The Theology of caring for God's Earth is our bedrock.

2 We could not make progress until we had a 'Critical Mass' of active people. One of us invited a newly-widowed friend to return to church attendance in 2011 (note the two year wait to get going). The latter was a retired teacher of environment studies. We then had enough members to achieve lift-off.

3 There will be Failures on the way. Several of us were enthused by attending a 'Green Day' at St John's Harborne. The local Churches Together in asked us to run a similar day in Sutton Coldfield. We made plans, collected material & speakers. Only two people signed up for it; and we cancelled the event.

4 Find ways to be 'Persistent'. We meet regularly; and set a new date each time. We write an article for each edition of the Parish Magazine; we make suggestions every Lent for 'green' things to give up (this year the theme was plastic). We now make sure we take part in Creationtide each September. We send reports to PCC meetings. We put achievements on the church website.

5 Going with persistence is 'Opportunism'. Always keep an eye out for what is going on in the world. We used the Paris Conference to call some public meetings. Having found Hope for the Future, we had training from them about how to get to constructive dialogue with our MP. The Birmingham motion on disinvestment succeeded because one of us just went up to the Bishop and

asked him face to face to meet a group of climate activists. Our town decided to enter the Britain in Bloom event, so we set up Maney in Bloom; got a grant for planting and did a litter pick.

6 Networking. We are conscious that we are not alone. We became a PCC sub-committee; and give reports to the church AGM. We have used the structure of the C of E. To send a motion from the PCC, via Deanery & Diocesan Synods to the General Synod, gathering contacts in other dioceses on the way. We look ecumenically and to other faiths (via Footsteps who were at the conference). In Sutton we have allies in other Anglican churches, with URC, Methodist, Roman Catholics, Quakers and lay organisations.

These are the six process lessons that we have learnt and try to practise.

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