

Ten things we can do to care for the earth

JUSTACT
ACT WITH JUSTICE IN MIND

Climate change is impacting on people all around the world. In Victoria and Tasmania it is now hotter and drier, meaning the bushfire season lasts longer, food growing patterns are changing, and people's health is being affected. The Uniting Church has been advocating for the wise use of energy and resources ever since we first became a church in 1977. Here are ten things you can do as a church community and as individuals to stop climate change and care for the earth.

1. Faith and Worship

Hold a worship service to highlight our relationship with God's creation. The Uniting Church produces a resource each year for World Environment Day (5 June) and each September celebrates the Season of Creation. The Basis of Union (Section 11) encourages us to grapple with contemporary issues in light of our faith. Worship offers us one opportunity to do this. You can also find lots of prayer and worship resources on the Vic/Tas Synod's Green Church website: <http://greenchurch.victas.uca.org.au>

2. Get a group together

Maybe your congregation already has a justice or environment group but if not, consider setting up an 'eco-team' or justice group at church. A designated group of people who can provide leadership to the congregation and inspire others to get involved, can also help your church to take the next steps on integrating care for the earth more fully into its ministry and mission. It is not always easy for one person to drive change, but it's amazing what a small group of inspired people can achieve – even just two or three motivated people can make a difference!

3. Develop a green church policy

How do you make decisions as a church? Is sustainability and the impacts of climate change a consideration? Develop a green church policy and think through catering, paper use, waste, energy, transport, worship, mission, finances. Resources available: greenchurch.victas.uca.org.au

4. Conduct an energy audit

Energy audits are the first step in being able to work out how to reduce your energy usage. They will tell you how much energy your church consumes and where and when it is being consumed so you can make decisions. A simple audit involves getting all your electricity, gas and water bills together for the last year and analysing your usage. Most churches use the most energy for heating and cooling. Check if you use more in summer or winter. Check if there are any unusual variations. A more detailed audit will show you appliance usage and offer tailored suggestions.

The synod has auditors who are available to assist through the Uniting to GREEN initiative.

Email: Unitingto.GREEN@victas.uca.org.au





5. Make the most of your energy use

Generating electricity from coal and gas is one of the biggest contributors to climate change. Here are some ideas for using energy more efficiently:

- If you have lights that have multiple fluorescent tubes, take out some of the tubes to reduce the number down to one, you probably won't notice the difference in light.
- Have your lighting re-wired so that you can individually select the lights you want on, instead of having unnecessary lights on.
- Avoid Halogen down lights. Replace existing downlights with LED compatibles.
- Use natural light wherever possible.
- Switch off lights in areas that only have occasional use, ie. toilets and put up a sign encouraging others to turn the light off after their use.
- Ensure you have someone responsible for turning lights and appliances off after use.

• Put a timer on your hot water unit so that it only comes on when needed instead of being on all the time. More ideas, calculators and resources on the National Energy Efficiency Network website:

<http://neen.org.au/>

6. Transport ideas

Walking, cycling, carsharing and carpooling helps stop climate change as well as making us healthier and more connected to our community and local environment. Here are some ways to make it easier for people.

- Set up a carpooling system in your church. Invite people to write down if they would like a lift or could offer a lift and a contact phone number. Use this to then put people in touch to organise lifts.
- Organise a walking group to meet before church or to enjoy a day out walking together.
- Participate in ride/walk to worship day in October - resources at www.arcc.org.au/walk_or_ride_to-worship
- Ask people to donate the money they've saved by using healthy forms of transport to raise money for other sustainability initiatives in the church.

7. Hold a film night and/or small group discussion

Here are some great documentary films with an environmental theme: *Microcosmos* (1996) - stunning look into the life of insects, *I Am* (2010) - the personal story of film director Tom Shadyac and search for meaning, *Happy* (2011) - a documentary looking at different cultures and what makes us happy. You can also search online for climate change film titles. The JIM Unit has available for loan: *There once was an island, An inconvenient truth, The Corporation, The power of community: How Cuba survived peak oil, I Am, Promised Land (about gas fracking).*

8. Get involved in Uniting Church campaigns

The Justice and International Mission Unit runs a number of climate change campaigns. Join our Green Church mailing list to keep date (go to greenchurch.victas.uca.org.au) or visit: justact.org.au

9. Hold a letter writing morning tea

Writing letters is a powerful way to have your voice heard on climate change. Make it easy for people by inviting people to write a letter over morning tea and providing paper, stamps, addresses and points they can make in their letters. Resources available by contacting the JIM Unit (03) 9251 5279 or email: jim@victas.uca.org.au

10. Visit your MP

Your local member of Parliament wants to hear what you think about climate change. Gather a small group together, call your MP's office to make a time. Ensure you work out what you want to ask of them and that it is within their power to do what you ask. The Justice and International Mission Unit can assist you with any information you need.

