

# Holy Trinity Brussels Environmental Audit Report and Action Plan

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This HTB Environmental Audit was undertaken using the Eco-congregation resources provided by A Rocha UK. It aimed to identify and affirm the church's existing activities to care for God's creation, and to prioritise actions that the church can increase or put into place. As Christians, we recognise that the 'earth is the Lord's and everything in it'<sup>1</sup> and are called to act as stewards of God's creation<sup>2</sup>. We are not only called to social outreach, which traditionally is well recognized in the church, but also to environmental consciousness and action; recognising at the same time that our social and environmental responsibilities often are more interlinked than we may acknowledge (we often forget just how dependent we are for our wealth on the natural resources that are currently being depleted).

However we know that we have all too often failed to adequately carry out this responsibility, and that we live in a society and world with many shared environmental problems. As a response to this, the Diocese of Europe is currently developing an Environmental Policy, and this action plan will help to ensure that Holy Trinity Brussels is doing its part to implement this policy in Brussels.

This environmental audit was undertaken through a series of structured interviews of a wide range of people involved in different aspects of the life of the church. The audit was comprehensive, covering the following areas:

1. Worship and teaching
2. Management of land, buildings and resources
3. Mission and outreach, both local and global

This is a brief summary of our main findings and conclusions, ending in suggested list of action points, which we hope will contribute to the ministry and life of Holy Trinity Brussels.

## **Main conclusions**

### **1. Worship and Teaching**

Environmental teaching has already been fairly well incorporated into the preaching programme. From time to time environmental themes have been included in the teaching, and they are also sometimes brought up in teaching on related subjects. We concluded that there was potential to do more of it, especially as there are still many people in the church who are not convinced that this is an area that is particularly relevant to their Christian life.

Very little teaching on the environment has been undertaken within home groups, which may also be a reflection of the lack of awareness of its relevance within the church. The situation is similar within the Sunday school, although it was felt that there is potential to include environmental teaching if resources are made available and support can be given to leaders. The youth group / CYFA are possibly the group within the church who would be the most interested in learning more about environmental issues.

There is, therefore, still more to be done to make teaching and worship on care for God's creation a central part of the church's mission and life. There is a need to raise awareness about this subject amongst church members through the teaching programme. It seems that much of what the church has done has been through A Rocha, on the mission Sundays. We've therefore suggested a number of action points to address this.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 24 v1

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1 v 28 and 2 v 15

The best way that we can make a real difference in terms of environmental action as a church is by each individual member of the congregation changing their own behaviour. It seems there is a lot of interest from people, but often they are not sure what they can do or else are bombarded with a confusing array of sometimes conflicting information. We've therefore come up with a number of actions to encourage individuals in the church to raise awareness and provide information so that we can all make personal changes to our lifestyles.

## **2. Management of Church Land, Buildings and Resources**

The church is already doing well in some areas, for example, energy consumption has already been reduced due to tighter control of timers, door closing and improved boiler maintenance. However, it could be reduced even further if the heating system could be adjusted to avoid having to heat the hall at the same time as the Lejeune centre, as is currently the case. Another change would be replacing the light-bulbs with energy saving ones.

These two changes – heating and light-bulbs - could both be considered as part of the Buildings Review which is being undertaken. Also, as the church's energy consumption has already been significantly reduced since 2006, and could be reduced even further, we thought it would be encouraging to put up a chart on a notice-board showing this information and also to raise awareness amongst the church congregations. There was a lot of enthusiasm for taking environmental issues into consideration as part of the Review of the Church's Purchasing Policy, and this is already being looked at.

In terms of the church garden, it is currently not particularly wildlife-friendly or else user-friendly for people in the church. It is not worth doing anything to it unless the path is fixed, as it is currently dangerous and prevents people from using the garden. The path hasn't been fixed until now because of financial reasons, but it is recommended that this be reconsidered when some money becomes available. It would then be possible to make some changes to the garden to make it more user-friendly and attractive as well as more wildlife-friendly.

## **3. Mission and Outreach both Local and Global**

This was the section of the environmental audit in which it was evident that Holy Trinity already does extremely well for two major reasons. The first is because of the support and close links that Holy Trinity has maintained with A Rocha over the years, which has included financial and prayer support, welcoming visiting speakers, and volunteering by some members of the congregation at A Rocha centres, and the commitment to build on this in the coming years.

The second is because we have been privileged to have Denzil Walton in our congregation. He has done a huge amount to raise awareness of conservation issues in the church and get people involved in practical activities such as nature walks, conservation work-days and activities at La Foresta, e.g. putting up nest-boxes and a children's nature walk. These events have also attracted interest from people who aren't members of the church and therefore also provide a link to the wider community. Denzil wishes to continue with this, and is in contact with Foret de Soignes foresters with a view to a team from HTB regularly helping with woodland maintenance tasks. It would be great if the church could continue to support this.

### **People Interviewed and/or Asked for Input:**

Teaching and worship: Guy Milton, Robert Innes, Augustine Nwaekwe, David Mitchell, Homegroup leaders and coordinators, Heather Roy

Management of church land, buildings and resources: Barry O'Halpin, Paul Gray, Martin Wasmeier, Paulina Robbins, Denzil Walton

Community outreach and mission: Denzil Walton, Sarah Collen and Diana White

## Suggested Environmental Action Plan for Holy Trinity

Action	Nominated lead	High Priority
<b>1. Teaching and Worship</b>		
Intentionally include opportunities for specific teaching related to care/stewardship of the earth and the theological basis for Christian involvement within the preaching programme, as well as worship material and prayers of intercessions where appropriate. More teaching on the use of money in today's world and on our identity being 'the people of God' rather than 'consumers' might also be useful.	Ministers/preachers/worship leaders	Yes
Take part in and promote Environment Sunday in HTB. This is one Sunday a year which is dedicated to the environment, which many churches in the UK participate in, normally in June. A Rocha UK produces a pack of materials which churches can use within services, the Sunday school and in home-groups.	Ministers / Service leaders / Sunday school teachers / HTB Environment group	
Suggest using the Chassepierre weekend as an intentional time to enjoy being in the creation and build a time of reflection into it.	Chassepierre organisers	
Ask Denzil and Liz Walton to see if there are any relevant 'environmental' bible study resources which could be promoted to home groups.	Homegroup coordinators/ Homegroup leaders / HTB Environment group	Yes
Lead discussions on this topic in CYFA and home groups	CYFA leaders / Homegroup leaders / HTB Environment group	Yes
<b>2. Changing our Personal Behaviour</b>		
Provide 'green tips' (which could also include items for prayer) to the congregation in the weekly newsletters, to raise awareness and give people some good ideas and non-confusing information.	HTB Environment group / Newsletter editor	Yes
Promote awareness through posters and information from environmental organizations on church bulletin boards; and environmental books on the church bookstall	HTB Environment group	Yes
Promote a car sharing scheme for people to get to church (and to help them get to know each other!)	HTB Environment group	
Organise/ encourage a cycle to church day on car-free day in Brussels	HTB Environment group	
Encourage people to sign up to making changes by signing up to A Rocha's 24:1 Living Lightly commitment ( <a href="http://www.livinglightly24-1.org.uk/">http://www.livinglightly24-1.org.uk/</a> )	HTB Environment group	Yes
Encourage carbon-offsetting, perhaps by encouraging HTB and HTB members to offset for certain types of climate-impacting activities, through A Rocha carbon off-setting scheme: <a href="http://www.climatestewards.net">www.climatestewards.net</a>	HTB Environment group	Yes
Encourage awareness raising through a contest with prizes to win, especially for the Sunday school	HTB Environment group / Sunday school teachers	
Set up an environmental network for people in the church who are interested in taking these actions forward	HTB Environment group	Yes
<b>3. Church Management: Land and Buildings</b>		
Aim to reduce energy consumption in the church hall and centre, for example, by checking whether it is possible to change the heating so that only those rooms which are in use are heated rather than heating the whole building unnecessarily.	Buildings Committee	Yes
Review where it is possible to replace incandescent light-bulbs with	Buildings Committee	Yes

energy saving bulbs and progressively change them as possible.		
Post the church's energy use figures up on a notice-board (we already have a graph from the energy provider) so that people can see how it has been reduced over time, as an encouragement and an awareness raising activity.	HTB Environment Group	
Include environmental considerations in the church's Building Review (which is being undertaken by the Buildings Committee). Some suggested ideas to be looked at include looking at reducing water use, such as dual flush toilets, using rainwater to water plants, replacing light bulbs; improving the heating system; and fixing the path and making other improvements to the church garden (as mentioned above).	Buildings Committee	Yes
Get the path fixed in the church garden when money is available and then make it more wildlife friendly (Denzil has some good ideas eg putting up nest-boxes with the children)	Buildings Committee / Decision to be taken by the Church Council on the finance	
<b>4. Church Management: Finances and Purchasing</b>		
Include environmental considerations in the review of the church's Purchasing Policy (which is being undertaken by the Finance Committee). Some suggested ideas to be looked at include looking at the opportunity for fair trade and organic products; environmentally-friendly sourced flowers for displays; recycled toilet and kitchen roll, eco-cleaning products; recycled paper for the newsletters, and to stop buying disposable cups and plates. Martin Wasmeier has already agreed to begin working on this with Marlene.	Finance Committee / HTB Environment Group	Yes
Consider investing HTB finances in an ethical investment fund, if/when investing finances becomes an opportunity. From an initial look into the options through Belgian banks, the most well developed approach seems to be provided by the Triodos bank, a Dutch bank also operating in Belgium ( <a href="http://www.triodos.be">www.triodos.be</a> , rue Haute 139).	Finance Committee	
<b>5. Mission and Outreach : Local and Global</b>		
Continue with the A Rocha mission focused months and specific services, distribute information and encourage members of the congregation to take up volunteering opportunities.	Mission Committee / HTB Environment Group	Yes
Encourage church members to engage in environmental projects in the city (try to find an environmental project that could be part of 'Serve the City')	HTB Environment Group	
Have a 'bring and buy' sale in the church (maybe as a fund-raiser) so that people can get rid of things they no longer need and as a way of promoting recycling. Or encourage people to give things away for free eg to the Protestant Social Centre	HTB Environment Group	
Continue promoting nature walks and conservation workdays to the congregation	Denzil Walton / HTB Environment Group	Yes
<b>6. Follow-up/Review</b>		
Present results of eco-audit to church members by e-mail and by paper copy being made available at church entrance and possibly also through information in the notice sheet.	HTB Environment Group	Yes
Perform an annual mini-review of how the above action points are being implemented. The results of the annual review should be raised as an issue for discussion on the Church Council agenda every March/April, with room for additional action points/improvements/follow-up steps. Results should be made available to members (by e-mail and paper copies in church).	HTB Environment Group/Church Council	Yes