

First Steps

The *ecocell* programme, organised by Christian Ecology Link, can be seen as a journey, or pilgrimage, to be travelled by groups of friends, neighbours, or church or faith group members.

The final destination of this pilgrimage is sustainable living, in our personal lives. When we reach it we will be living within the limits of the resources available on Earth, and of the Earth's capacity to absorb our waste products, perhaps our greatest challenge in the 21st century.

In practice this means action to avoid (further) climate destabilisation, species extinction and depletion of non-renewables. Through *ecocell* we hope to fulfil our personal responsibilities to Creator and Creation. But, more importantly, we can use our personal demonstrations of what can be done to support campaigning at parochial and political levels. People are more likely to listen to those who walk the talk.

The earth's ecological problems can make us wonder 'What on earth can I do?' But living in a way that respects what God has made is part of our joyful discipleship and, by inspiring others to join us, we can begin to change the world.

The First Nine Steps to live gently on the Earth

In this module are nine first steps to take. You may be doing some of the things that you already do. You can do this on your own, with your family, or with a group of friends. These steps will help you to live more gently on the Earth.

and choose
will help you



First
Steps

1. Don't fly!

- Of if you must, at least donate £50 to £100 to sustainable energy projects and/or to disaster relief agencies (in reparation for the climate damage of your flight.)
- Most European travel is possible by train: www.seat61.com for more information.

2. Limit your driving:

- Walk, cycle, take the bus, tram or train whenever you can, and use local shops.
- Organise a lift share scheme for your Church – for both car owners and those without.

3. Limit your electricity use:

- Turn lights off and use low energy light bulbs.



- Don't leave appliances on stand-by.
- Get rid of the tumble dryer.
- If buying a new fridge, freezer, washing machine go for AAA rated.
- Use less electricity and switch to green providers. Visit www.greenelectricity.org for a comparison of all the green tariffs.
- Install solar photovoltaic panels and generate your own electricity.
- Place your desk and dining table by a window.

for a comparison of

4. Use your LOAF! Buy and grow some food that follows Green Christian's LOAF principles for food: Locally produced, Organically grown, Animal friendly and Fairly traded.

'Living in a way that honours rather than threatens the planet is living out what it means to be made in the image of God. The way we face today is nothing less than a choice about how genuinely human we want to be.'

- Grow some of your own food.
- Buy British fruit and veg in season and support local shops.
- Eat less meat and dairy, eat some vegetarian or vegan meals every week.
- Buy free range eggs and meat and sustainably caught fish (MSC).
- Arrange a communal LOAF meal at your Church.



'Our responsibility is to cultivate and care for the Earth in accordance with God's command (Gen. 2.15). We are called not only to respect the natural environment, but also to show respect for, and solidarity with, all the members of our human family. These two dimensions are closely related.'
(Pope Francis)

5. Repair, re-use, borrow or share rather than buying new:

- Use local swapshop networks, jumble sales and charity shops to acquire what you don't have to donate to.



- Use your own cloth or canvas shopping bags at local shops.
- When buying wood products, check the wood is from a legal and sustainable source (FSC).

6. Limit your gas or heating oil use:

- Insulate loft and walls and hot water cistern.
- Wear an extra layer, and turn central heating thermostat down 1 or 2 degrees
- Use hot water bottle in bed, or an extra blanket, instead of heating the whole house at night.
- Make sure your heating and hot water are set on a timer.

7. Save and cherish water:

- Fix water butts to down pipes.
- Fix dripping taps.
- Pour non-greasy left-over water on the garden plants.
- Take short showers.
- Don't water your lawn in dry weather – grass is very robust and will recover!



'We should care for God's creation—not out of fear about what is going to happen, but out of love ... So Christians should be at the forefront of the environmental cause and movement because in our care for creation we reflect our love of the Creator.'
(Revd Nicky Gumbel. Pioneer of the Alpha course)

8. Reconnect with the natural world. Go for a walk. Get wet. Dig the earth:

- Include the Earth in all Church liturgies.
- Plant trees for special occasions such as baptisms or weddings.
- Support a nature conservation organisation.



- Take an interest in particular groups of organisms: e.g. wild flowers/bees/ butterflies/fishes/birds.

9. Exercise citizenship. Campaign to protect the Earth:

Arguably THE most important thing you can do.

- Support Christian environmental organisations such as Green Christian: www.greenchristian.org.uk and Operation Noah: www.operationnoah.org
- Sign petitions, write letters, email MPs.
- Join demonstrations and civil resistance groups.



The Next Step

If you have followed these nine 'First Steps', and have started to make changes to your life to cut your carbon footprint and live more sustainably, you may consider tackling the *ecocell* 'Journeys in carbon-free discipleship'. This is a programme for those who are willing to

'To hurt the earth is a sin.' (Patriarch Bartholomew 1)

take on the very demanding commitment of completing the journey to sustainability. On this journey we commit ourselves to getting our carbon footprints down to the actual level required for sustainability. It will involve significant further learning, very committed action at the personal level, and at the local political level. We will also ensure that we respect the laws

of nature, in which we see the hand of our Creator, and the needs of the natural world, in all aspects of our lives. To find out more go to main *ecocell* page on www.greenchristian.org.uk/ecocell