



Ideas for practical action

Suggestions to include in your *livesimply* award parish plan

“Churches need to be giving an example of practical ways of caring for God’s world.”





Introduction

This sheet suggests practical things a parish or community can do to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor.

There are all sorts of ways a parish or religious community can get its own house in order – from its maintenance of church buildings and property to decisions on how money is spent and daily business is organised.

“As followers of Jesus, we all have a part to play in increasing awareness of the damaging effects of climate change on creation and human life. I hope that parishes take forward practical suggestions.”

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop Emeritus of Westminster

Simple ideas

Is your church community organised in a way that encourages people to enjoy moments of quiet reflection? What practical steps can it take to use less and recycle more? Think about the everyday decisions and choices that could bring the principle of living simply to the habits and routines of church life.

Make space

If you have outdoor space, create a special area for prayer and contemplation where people can be inspired by creation.

Reduce waste

Create some rules for your church hall, presbytery, events and parties:

- Compost kitchen and churchyard waste.
- Minimise disposables by using washable napkins, cloths, mugs and cutlery. Stop 6bn polystyrene cups ending up in UK landfill each year.
- Replace paper communication with email or texts.
- Print double-sided.

Visit livesimplyaward.org.uk to find further resources for ideas marked with this symbol 

Swap shop

Help parishioners share and recycle by running a monthly toy or music library, or second-hand uniform exchange for parish schools.

Make recycling easy

Make sure your church, its hall and everyone who uses it, recycles everything possible. As the hub of a community the church can be an ideal facility for recycling things that are not generally segregated, such as batteries, plastics, textiles, tools, mobile phones and toner cartridges.

Sustainable ideas

Rising sea levels and increased frequency of extreme weather such as floods, droughts and hurricanes hit poor communities particularly hard; their homes and livelihoods are more precarious to start with and they have fewer resources to adapt to their changing environment.

The largest factors contributing to global warming are high levels of consumption of the Earth's resources and the burning of fossil fuels such as oil, gas and coal for energy. One of the first things a sustainable parish needs to address is its own use of energy and natural resources.

Carbon check-up

One of the first things you should do is give your church an energy audit. This will show you how much carbon – and cash! – your buildings are wasting. Audit tools and advice are available.

Save energy

Get together with your parish priest, finance committee or whoever is responsible for paying bills. Start with the last month's bills for electricity and gas and make a note of units used and money spent. Over the coming months, as you make some of the following improvements, you'll be able to see your energy consumption coming down.

- Draught-proof doorways and windows and replace any broken panes.
- Clear obstructions from heaters, put reflective foil behind radiators, bleed radiators and get the boiler serviced every year.
- Consider how your parish or community can insulate the roof of your church and buildings – up to a third of heat is lost up there. Also cavity walls, hot water pipes and tanks. It's cheaper than you might expect and if you talk to your local council they'll be able to help you discover if there are any grants available.
- Switch to a renewable energy provider.
- Install energy-saving lightbulbs.
- Turn down thermostats – and put notices up to remind others to do the same.
- Timetable meetings to minimise heating and if you have floodlights, reduce their use.
- Shut down computers when not in use and turn off the photocopier at night. A photocopier left on standby mode can use the equivalent energy of making 1500 copies.
- For a better return on investments, invest church reserves in double glazing or your own renewable energy system, such as solar panels or a ground source heat pump.

Sunny Side Up

St Oliver Plunkett's Catholic Church in West Belfast fitted solar panels in 2005 with the help of grants from Northern Ireland Electricity and the Energy Saving Trust. It has been producing 4,000 units of electricity for lighting and heating ever since, saving over £400 worth of electricity a year. "Churches need to be giving an example of practical ways of caring for God's world," said parish priest Fr Martin Magill.

Nearly all churches are aligned East-West and so they often have south-facing roofs which are ideal for solar power generation.

Save water

"Care of water resources and attention to climate change are matters of grave importance for the entire human family... I invite all of you to join me in praying and working for greater respect for the wonders of God's creation." Pope Benedict XVI, September 2007

- Fix leaking taps, and provide plugs and bowls for washing up.
- Put up signs asking people to turn off taps and not to boil more water than they need.
- Collect rain for watering floral displays in buckets or water butts.
- Install water-saving devices, such as toilet hippos (or use a brick) in all the appropriate toilet cisterns. They can help save up to 3 litres of water per flush.

Cut car use

Another important first step for a sustainable parish is to review its use of transport – and to find ways of helping parishioners be less dependent on their cars.

- Display local bus routes.
- Provide bike racks.
- Car-share for meetings.
- Organise a lift share scheme for church - both car owners and those without will benefit.

Walk to Church Sunday

18 July 2010 was Walk to Church Sunday in Woodley, Portsmouth. Parishioners from St John Boscoe Catholic parish invited other churches in the neighbourhood in leaving their cars at home. They made posters and asked people to send letters to the Prime Minister asking the government to support people's efforts to reduce their carbon footprints.

Spend wisely

- Switch cleaning products to ones that don't harm the environment.
- If buying timber products, choose from ethical, sustainable sources.
- Use recycled paper and envelopes.
- Buy food that is either: locally produced; organic; animal-friendly; or Fairtrade.

Go wild

Encourage diversity of wildlife on any church land by having:

- bird feeders, boxes and bat boxes.
- unkempt areas for local insects and plants.
- a pond.
- no pesticides.





Solidarity ideas

The Church teaches us that: "Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a love of preference on the part of the Church." (Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation, 68, 1986). This is known as the "preferential option for the poor" and there are many practical ways a parish can put the needs of the poorest people before the wants of others.

Fairtrade

Fairtrade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world.

There are now nearly 6,000 Fairtrade churches in the UK and eight Catholic Dioceses certified as Fairtrade. That consumer power is improving the lives of millions of families across the globe. Is your parish using only Fairtrade products and promoting it at events? If not, find out more.

Campaign

Join one of the *livesimply* member organisation's campaign actions. Members of *livesimply* work on behalf of the Catholic community to promote change and to build justice throughout the world. CAFOD promote regular campaigns issues for parishes and communities to support. Other campaigners include: Progressio, Housing Justice, Pax Christi and YCW. There are different ways to get involved in campaigns, from joining a march to signing a postcard, from lobbying your MP to giving a talk after Mass. There's an action for everyone!

Money wise

How ethical are the parish's bank and insurance policies? Discuss with diocesan authorities whether any savings are invested with *livesimply* principles in mind.

Fight fuel poverty

People with metered electricity and gas (usually those on low incomes) pay more for their fuel than those who pay direct debit. EBICo, founded in 1998 by four Christians, is the only UK supplier of gas and electricity to offer an equal tariff to all customers, regardless of payment method or how much they use. To make the scheme work, EBICo needs customers who pay in a variety of ways.

Give a gift

Raise money for a World Gift from CAFOD. Bring people together by aiming for a pair of piglets (£25), a community water supply (£750) or a secure place to live (£5,000).

"Buying a World Gift is a humbling and enriching experience. It drew together our parish community in a common goal!"

Anne Harrison, St Wilfrid's Parish, Northwich



Resources

Links to resources for all the ideas in this sheet and many more are at www.livesimplyaward.org.uk

You can also use the website to share ideas and get advice from other Catholic parishes and communities who are working towards a *livesimply* award.

Some of your practical ideas may encounter obstacles, such as buildings' listed status, or decisions that need to be taken at a diocesan, rather than parish, level. Do what you can to balance the challenge of living simply with the need to maintain good and fruitful relationships with everyone in the parish.



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The *livesimply* award is being coordinated by Eco-Congregations on behalf of CAFOD, a member of the *livesimply* network.

CAFOD Registered charity no. 285776.

Photography: Sandra Barrett, Christina Harradine, Lucy Hurn, Kate Stanworth, Caritas Internationalis, Marcin Mazur

Design: Stadium Creative

livesimplyaward.org.uk

Printed on 100% recycled paper

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