



# Ideas for reaching out

Suggestions to include in your *livesimply award* parish plan

**“To live in solidarity with those living in poverty is to make a strong and lasting commitment to the common good.”**



# Introduction

"Individual actions may seem insignificant but together the small steps of many people can have an astonishing impact. Each person's joyful choices can be a visible example to others and give them courage to follow."

*The Call of Creation, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2002*

One of the requirements of a *livesimply* parish is that it reaches out to the wider community with the principles of living simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor.

This might involve encouraging changes in parishioners' own lifestyles; helping people find more sustainable and spiritually satisfying ways of living at work, home and school.

It also involves forging connections with others in the community beyond the Catholic parish, being visible, taking a stance, engaging in and influencing political debate.

As well as speaking, it involves listening; hearing what poor communities at home and in the developing world are saying; making connections and working in solidarity to fulfil their hopes for justice.

Whatever activities you choose to organise, send photos with a few words of description to diocesan and local newspapers to encourage and inspire others.

Once your parish has gained its award you will receive a *livesimply* plaque for the church. You might also consider making and displaying a banner outside, declaring: "Our Parish, proud to be living simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor".



## Reaching out simply

One of the hardest messages of *livesimply* is perhaps also the one our society most urgently needs to hear. Are we exercising our own real choices or sometimes falling for spin? Can we buy our way to happiness? Do we want the super-rich and celebrities as our prophets? Perhaps we're getting our priorities wrong - for the planet, for justice and for our own peace of minds. To truly live life to the full, we need to learn again to take only what we need from the earth, not to demand more and more.

By showing and sharing enjoyment of living simply, we can help each other find joy, even in difficult circumstances, and get closer to our true God-given natures.

### Less is more

Help members of the parish to strip away the distractions of noise, possessions and desire and in doing so get closer to God within. Not only is this good for the soul, reducing consumption is good for the planet too! Try these:

- a parish unplugged day – with TVs, phones and computers switched off.
- Lenten or Advent calendar – with a *livesimply* idea for each day.
- *livesimply* tip of the week for your parish newsletter or noticeboard.

### Simple pledges

Hold a pledging ceremony – asking everyone to make a public commitment to change one particular aspect of their lifestyle. Choose from the many ideas in the 'Taking *livesimply* home' sheet.

### Share nature

Run monthly parish walks, organised by the church but open to all. Or a gardening club for primary school children.

### Reduce, re-use, recycle

Hold jumble sales to provide affordable goods to the local community, and recycle at the same time. Publicise local council recycling facilities.

# Reaching out sustainably


Saving the planet can seem awfully hard work on your own - it's definitely a job that needs sharing. There are probably environmental initiatives already going on in your area that your parish could link up with and contribute to. And there is much to learn together – about the impact of our choices on other people and on the earth that nourishes us. Reaching out sustainably is also about our own learning, education and action.



Visit [livesimplyaward.org.uk](https://livesimplyaward.org.uk) to find further resources for ideas marked with this symbol 

## Facts can be fun

Get sociable while learning about climate change:

- Have a film evening: show *An Inconvenient Truth*, or *The Age of Stupid*.
- Hold a climate change quiz night; and raise money for CAFOD's work to help communities affected by climate change.
- Play CAFOD's Climate Change Game with your parish youth group or help your local school to hold a Climate Justice assembly. 

## Make connections

Draw on links any parishioners have with groups such as Friends of the Earth, Wildlife Trust, and RSPB and help to safeguard the local environment. Encourage parishioners, including children, to take part in projects such as a litter pick or developing nature trails or a wildlife garden.

## Encourage Composting

Help people turn their garden and vegetable waste into compost by joining or setting up a community composting scheme.

## Tips and tricks

There's lots of know-how on living sustainably. Share it at events such as green Christmas workshops or hold a green fair and invite experts from the council and local groups such as Friends of the Earth, RSPB, CAFOD, and Transition Towns.

## People power

- Harness the community's power to influence decision makers by writing to local council leaders, MPs or MEPs or inviting them to your *livesimply* events. CAFOD's MP correspondents scheme can provide you with support every step of the way
- Write to local newspapers on your concerns about environmental issues.
- Take co-ordinated action with CAFOD's Climate Justice campaign. If there are national events or demonstrations, make sure your parish takes part.

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# Reaching out in solidarity

To live in solidarity with those living in poverty is to make a strong and lasting commitment to the common good so that all people can have life, and have it abundantly. The common good means that every person has a duty to help build a flourishing community, as well as the right to benefit from it.

## Accept an invitation

Communities in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Rwanda, Ethiopia, El Salvador and Brazil are looking for parishes to link with in England and Wales. Through CAFOD's Connect2 you can share messages, photos and updates, and raise money for their development projects.

## Support refugees

Refugees are some of the most vulnerable and excluded people in our society. See if you can support the work of your local refugee group, such as the Jesuit Refugee Service.

## Grow food on church land

If you're a church with land, help people who would like to grow their own vegetables by offering them a patch. Landshare can put you in touch.

## Give credit

Credit unions are financial co-operatives offering savings and great value loans, helping their members avoid loan sharks. Could your church host its own credit union, or act as an access point for a local one?

## Car clubs

Join or set up a car club allowing people to have access to a car when they need one, without all the expense of buying and maintaining their own vehicle. You'll be helping to reduce the number of cars on the road.

## Home from home

Support your local furniture re-use organisation by passing on unwanted furniture, white goods and other items to households in need.

## Pool your pans

The Furniture Re-use Network also encourages local groups to provide starter packs of basic household items to people moving out of homelessness. Could your parish help by pooling unwanted cutlery, crockery, pots and pans, kitchen utensils, cleaning materials, towels, bedding and bed linen?



# Contact

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# Resources

Links to resources for all the ideas in this sheet and many more are at [livesimplyaward.org.uk](http://livesimplyaward.org.uk)

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



In partnership with



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

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