

Response by the Church Council to the Environmental Footprint Group Recommendations to the Church Council, April 2008

Environmental Footprint Discussion (Church Council meeting 10th November 2008)

Konvikt Chapel

*1. After services the sidesmen should be instructed to **switch off the lights** before leaving the chapel. Sometimes they are left on for some time although there is nobody there.*

1. Someone *does* turn the Chapel lights off - John Overstall is the prime suspect. It was agreed that this should be added to Sidesman duties. More people should know where the switches are (by fire escape).

Vicarage

*2. We recommend **switching to a 100% green electricity tariff**. This would provide for investment in renewable sources corresponding to the amount of electricity used in the Vicarage. Greenpeace recommends both Cegedel Nova Naturstrom¹ and EIDA². We consider that Cegedel Nova Naturstrom is preferable as it seems to be cheaper. Cegedel charges 0.5 cents per kWh over the normal electricity cost (basic price 13.20 cents per kWh), which they suggest would mean an extra € 20 per year for the average family. It is very easy to make the switch, it just requires filling in a form. EIDA quotes a price of 15.25 cents per kWh. In both cases there is a cheaper rate for using electricity at night.*

2. The switch to a green electricity tariff is in hand. (now accomplished - 12/1/2009)

*3. We recommend getting an **estimate for an energy audit** of the Vicarage. Whether an audit is actually carried out would depend on how long the Vicarage building is likely to remain in service, as an audit is likely to recommend capital projects such as extra insulation. Government help is available with the cost of both the audit itself and any work that is recommended³, but obviously there would be a cost which would not be worth paying if the Vicarage site is to be redeveloped. If the Vicarage site is redeveloped, we recommend using an environmental consultant to advise on the most energy-efficient form for the new building. (see annex)*

3. The Treasurer pointed out that we may well have to get an energy audit for the vicarage even just to gift it to ourselves. The *notaire* will be asked about this. Campbell will get an estimate of the cost of an audit.

*4. Regardless of any redevelopment, we recommend looking at **household appliances** in the Vicarage, to see if any of them should be replaced with more energy-efficient models, taking account of their carbon emissions over their whole life cycle. **Light bulbs** should be replaced with low-energy bulbs as they wear out⁴. The **heating** might be turned down if this can be done without discomfort to the occupants, and if not already in use, timed heating could reduce energy use when the building is unoccupied. Electricity and oil consumption should be **measured** annually to see if these efforts have produced any savings.*

4. The vicarage, though a lovely house, is a very difficult one to make energy efficient. The doors do not fit well, many windows are single glazed, and the high ceilings make it quite dark, so energy efficient bulbs are not, so far, up to the task. Parts of the living quarters, including the Chaplain's icy study, have no insulation. Making the house energy efficient would require extensive renovation which we would not undertake unless we were sure that we will be keeping the house for a considerable time. Meanwhile, however, an annual measurement will be done to see if some improvements can be made. The boiler is a new, efficient model.

Transport

*5. It is impossible to continue normal church activities without using **cars**. When the time comes to replace the Chaplains' cars, we recommend choosing the most efficient models possible, taking account of both fuel efficiency in operation and full life-cycle footprint.*

5. It should be pointed out that the Chaplains buy their own cars, and that fuel-efficiency was an important criterion in their choice. Control of their car-purchase is not within the remit of the congregation.

*6. Members of the congregation also use cars to attend church activities, and in many cases it would not be practicable for them to use public transport. The new Veloh scheme in the city may provide a solution for some, and **car sharing** should be encouraged. When there is no option other than travel by car, the idea of **offsetting** should be considered⁵. People could buy offsets from an organisation such as Climate Care, but what we have in mind is a **simple in-house scheme**. Since we already support environmental charities*

through our charity giving, and are hoping in future to direct more money to them, if members of the congregation who arrive by car put more money in the collection bag, more money would go to environmental charities, although admittedly this would only be a small proportion of what they give (10% of overall giving goes to charity; the proportion of this going to environmental charities will depend on which charities are chosen each year). Another option would be to provide a separate collection box, from which all the money collected would go to environmental charities.

6. Carbon offsetting is a very controversial business. Our dependence on cars is certainly unfortunate and it would be interesting to see if there would be support for an offsetting scheme. No initiative on this has yet been taken.

Charity giving

*7. The **Charities committee** should be asked to seek projects we could support that would help to mitigate climate change while also improving the lives of people who need help. Annex 2 lists some suitable projects. See Annex 3 for principles of carbon offsetting and examples of worthwhile projects.*

7. The balance of consideration in selecting charitable causes gave rise to a long, somewhat theological discussion. As a church we are following the example of Jesus and trying to look after the 'lost, last and least', and to help these live with dignity. Any action we take has obviously a direct and practical effect. But following Jesus in this way also states very clearly where we believe God's priorities are, and says something about our understanding of human worth in the light of the Gospel. Our actions are indicative of our beliefs and point away from our society's scale of values to the values clearly illustrated in the Gospels. In this sense they are not about "charity" but rather about justice. It is for this reason that we prefer to help specific people in need, rather than directing our relatively meagre funds to big global issues. We would prefer a change in emphasis to the statement in No 7, to something like:

We would like to support charities which reflect Gospel values of human worth and dignity, and which are improving the lives of people who need help, while also contributing to environmental sustainability. We would not wish to stop supporting charities like Christian Aid and Tear Fund, but would also like to choose charities where our money will really make a difference, perhaps even tipping the balance of feasibility for worthwhile projects.

Recycling

8. With regard to the use of other materials, such as paper and plastic (coffee cups), we gave this a lot of thought, but there is less scope for savings here, and any savings would have less of an impact on reducing carbon emissions. For comparison, production of a ream (500 sheets) of paper releases 4.7 kg CO₂⁶, which is about the same as one 20-km

*journey in a small car. With regard to coffee cups, the general conclusion is that plastic disposable cups are still the best bet, energy-wise⁷. We recommend a general policy of **using e-mail** rather than paper as far as possible for communications, **avoiding waste** as far as possible, **recycling** the waste we produce, and buying recycled products, such as paper.*

8. We are recycling where possible, and looking into recycled paper. Campbell pointed out that fast draft printing not only saves ink in the short term, but also makes paper cheaper to recycle because of the lesser ink load. We have been using email much more for between-meeting discussions.

Catherine Allen suggested that members might read Minutes onscreen before meetings, and make notes only of corrections, rather than printing it all out. Agendas should be photocopied instead of printed out.

It was felt that, at the moment, pew sheets and the *Konvikt* are too valuable as they are, to be changed to online only.

Church members

We also considered the issue of whether we should recommend lifestyle changes to members of the congregation. On the whole we were wary of a 'nannyish' approach, but felt that the following action could be taken

*9. This report and recommendations should be **made available to the whole congregation**, possibly through publishing it in full on the website and including in the *Konvikt* magazine a shorter article, so that people who are keen to reduce their own environmental footprint could consider what aspects of the recommendations might apply to them.*

9. We think the report should definitely be published on the website, with a *Konvikt* article directing readers to it (**ACTION POINT**).

*10. There could be a regular '**environmental tips**' section in the *Konvikt* magazine and on the website, where church members could share ideas. Area contact groups could discuss energy saving.*

10. The Environmental Group should feel free to publish 'tips', but caution is advised with regard to publishing material submitted from outside the Environmental Group which may not be backed up by adequate research. Suggestions can often be very controversial, and actions which seem practical at first often turn out to have hidden

environmental costs.

We thank the Environmental Group members very much for their hard work. The discussion will have to be resumed, as we could not manage the 13 'ideas' as well.

SECOND PART OF DISCUSSION BY CHURCH COUNCIL

Environmental Footprint Document - (Church Council meeting 12 January 2009)

The Council tackled the remaining points in the Environmental Footprint Document under the heading 'More Ideas for the Longer Term'. Its responses were as follows:

More ideas for the longer term, requiring further thought and research

a) *The choir has a fairly heavy environmental footprint, as its members travel into town both for the Thursday practice and the Sunday service. Could it practise only on Sundays and thus halve its travel?*

a) The Choir rejected outright the idea of practising only on Sunday.

b) *One of the 'special' Sunday services when people talk to each other might take energy saving as its theme.*

b) Joan Lyon said that coming up with suitable questions for 'special' Sundays is not easy - their direction and purpose must be carefully considered. Perhaps the 'Live in Lent' course could be used as a template. It was decided that the Environmental Footprint Group should compose possible questions.

(Campbell Thomson pointed out that the Council should not really deal with document points written as questions, only recommendations. Questions should be investigated by the Environmental Footprint Group itself.)

c) *What about green funerals? What is the comparative carbon footprint of burial versus cremation? Can Luxembourg undertakers provide green (cardboard or wicker) coffins?*

c) The Environmental Footprint Group should investigate green funerals.

d) *The Wattson energy monitor is a device that measures how much energy each domestic appliance uses. Does anyone have experience of using one of these?*

d) No

e) *Luxembourg's Green party and Oeko Zenter might have some useful tips.*

e) The Environmental Footprint Group should follow up tips.

f) *'Ecumenical means ecological': the Easter Sunday Observer magazine had an article about an energy-saving church in Freiburg which has a partition down the middle— Catholics at one end, Protestants at the other. A lot of resources are pooled. On days when large numbers are expected the partition is removed so that a larger space is available (it was not clear whether services would then be at different times or ecumenical). Is this what we need in Luxembourg?*

f) Again, the Environmental Footprint Group should investigate building sharing.

g) *Could we join forces with other churches in Luxembourg?*

g) Joining forces might be possible, but the Church Council asks that the Environmental Footprint Group elaborate and make recommendations.

h) *We could analyse whether one does more good in the long run for the poor and needy through climate change projects than through direct relief and alleviation. We support rural education and women's development. These projects spread awareness of man's effect upon climate and natural resources.*

h) The Charities Committee is bearing this in mind.

i) *Should we support green lobbying, advocacy and research charities? Whatever we do should be designed to foster awareness and giving.*

i) The Charities Committee operates according to a policy laid down by the Council. We give directly to selected charities and do not support advocacy, lobbying etc groups.

j) *What should be our attitude to carbon offsets? Does paying for waste of others make little sense, except as a self-imposed penalty for delay in taking our own action to cut back?*

j) It is not up to the Church to recommend or condemn. Individuals must make a choice.

k) *Links in recommendations 2 and 3 above lead to many green home consumption hints. Perhaps we could set up a free church-based technical home energy-saving consultancy, if that is a good use of talent.*

k) No. This is not within the remit of the Church.

l) How to convey the big issues of heating and transport? Is there scope for a paper on transport, covering savings by slower driving, hybrid motors, switching car models, biking?

l) These issues are being addressed in the *Konvikt* magazine.

*m) A **Prayer Day** might be conducted in the wood or open air. Perhaps, to the contrary, we could hold the prayers in a polluted environment, like an unauthorised rubbish dump. It should be ecumenical, naturally: perhaps the church could include the rabbi. The object of prayer might be a spirit of union with nature and instilling of a sense of duty to learn how to reduce our adverse impact on nature.*

m) This idea has been passed to the Chaplains for consideration.

Again, the Church Council thanks the Environmental Group members very much for their hard work.