

GREENBANK CHURCH

ECO-CONGREGATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 – 2028

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is Greenbank's second Eco-Congregation Strategic Plan and runs from 2024-2028. It is linked closely to the criteria of Eco-Congregation Scotland for evaluating the plans of its members; and to Greenbank's own Strategic Plan for 2019-2024. The Plan was approved by the Kirk Session on 13 March 2024 and by the Congregational Board on 20 March 2024.

The Plan is based on Eco-Congregation Scotland's three key themes of **Spiritual Living, Practical Living and Global Living**. For each theme there are ideas for action and specific objectives with milestones. Progress will be measured against these and reviewed and reported on each year.

It's a Plan for the whole congregation and reaches out to the wider community. There is a strong focus on communication to raise awareness and understanding. Success will depend on commitment by the congregation, assisted and often led by the Eco-Group.

This Plan builds on its predecessor and takes forward existing initiatives. There is a firm foundation of interest and commitment and measures taken already. This has all been communicated to the congregation and community through various channels, including articles in Connections each month.

Some visible successes include:

- Developing our outside areas to have a more positive environmental impact
- Introducing environmental themes into worship
- "Greening" our expenditure on building works/maintenance and day to day purchasing, working alongside the World Church Group
- Regular Forest Church events.

Future plans include:

- Events to promote knowledge and understanding about environmental matters
- Installing more lights that are motion sensitive
- Promotion of repair and recycling initiatives
- Conducting a fresh survey of the congregation's engagement with eco matters.

2. INTRODUCTION

In 2022, Greenbank Church was awarded an Eco-Congregation Scotland Gold Award for its environmental achievements. A key application document was the Eco-Group Strategic Plan 2019-23. During 2023, the Eco-Group renewed the Strategic Plan, renaming it the Eco-Congregation Strategic Plan 2024-28 embracing the church, congregation and wider community. It is developed around the Eco-Congregation Scotland award criteria. It also aligns with Greenbank's own strategic priorities for faith and mission expressed in the congregation's overall strategic plan. It provides detail on Greenbank's core aims, objectives and milestones, as well as setting out measures of success, timescales and leads. Although led by the Eco-Group, it is a plan for the whole church and congregation, and our engagement with the wider community.

The Plan is developed from the four general issues set out by the Eco-Congregation Scotland scheme:

- **Evaluation and Planning** - the congregation will have an "action plan" of eco activities and will monitor its progress
- **Initiation and Co-ordination** - the congregation will have an established group (or groups) with responsibility for initiating and co-ordinating eco activities, supported by the leadership of the congregation
- **Communication** - the congregation will communicate about eco issues, both within and beyond the congregation, using, for example, public noticeboards, websites and local media

- **Eco-Congregation Scotland** – involvement so that members of the congregation actively support local network and cluster events, and contribute ideas for sharing with other congregations.

The Plan is based on the Eco-Congregation Scotland themes of:

- Spiritual Living
- Practical Living
- Global Living

It is a four year plan which will be subject to an Eco-Group Annual Review and reporting of progress.

Over-arching Activity - Communications

An activity that will apply to each of the milestones and activities below is the need for communication to raise awareness, increase understanding, engender care and promote action. This will be done through Connections, newsletter, a more dynamic webpage, social media, posters, case studies, wayside pulpit and other media.

Key Challenge for the Eco-Congregation

The Eco-Group can lead and assist with eco-activities but this is a plan for the whole church and congregation, so requires the input of all which can sometimes be limited by time or other constraints.

3. STRATEGIC AIMS 2024-2028

STRATEGIC AIM 1: SPIRITUAL LIVING

Key Criterion: Helping the whole congregation to make the link between their Christian faith and environmental concerns.

Ideas for Action:

- Greening Worship
- Theology and the Environment
- Children and Creation Care
- Young People and the Environment

Spiritual Living Objectives	Spiritual Living Milestones/Actions
<p>OBJECTIVE 1 Discussing issues: Active support for leaders and members of the congregation to meet to discuss environmental issues and practical actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep environmental issues on the agenda of the Kirk Session and Board, and promote these to other groups and the congregation. • Post-service coffee exhibitions prompting discussion about eco-matters, linking with other organisations as appropriate. • Involve younger members and young people in a range of eco-discussions and activities. • Recruit a young person to the Eco-Group Committee. • Collaborate with other cluster churches by reaching out for eco-matters – supporting each other to discuss issues and take practical action.
<p>OBJECTIVE 2 Worship and congregational life: Care for creation is regularly reflected in worship, prayers, bible studies and sermons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Minister with an inclusive (especially young people) programme of indoor and outdoor worship and study group elements with Care for Creation, eg: Reading Group, music, including Creationtide. • Worship outdoors, eg: Easter. Hold periodic events, eg Forest Church.

STRATEGIC AIM 2: PRACTICAL LIVING

Key Criterion: Taking practical action in individual lives, the church and/or church grounds

Ideas for Action:

- Greening church buildings
- Greening church spending
- Church ground conservation

Practical Living Objectives	Practical Living Milestones/Actions
<p>OBJECTIVE 1 Action in church buildings: The congregation is developing and beginning to implement a strategy for the church as an organisation to significantly reduce its impact on the environment by considering issues including energy use, recycling, travel and finance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out an annual inspection of church buildings and grounds and consider options for reducing their environmental impact. • For future roof works, explore the possibility of integrated solar panels • Increase the areas of motion-activated lights, eg: the crypt. • Window replacement / double glazing for upper hall, office and main hall • Explore energy efficiency measures for the upper hall. • Increase rain water collection if possible using water butts, especially for pre-school garden.
<p>OBJECTIVE 2 Greening church spending</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement the Ethical Procurement Policy for church purchasing and encourage others too, eg: green products, local sourcing. • Continue to ensure that utility providers are green. • Encourage contractors to provide evidence of sustainable and ethical policies, where possible.
<p>OBJECTIVE 3 Individual members taking action: Members of the congregation are being challenged and supported to find ways of significantly reducing their own impact on the environment, by considering issues including energy use, recycling, travel, finance, utilities and consumables in households.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and support local repair initiatives and host periodic social events, eg: Fix it Fridays using local skills. • Host events, eg: film evenings in response to global situations or other prompts. • Develop a calendar of topics for Connections, reflecting the seasons, events and new themes. • Signpost resources, podcasts, articles, sources for how to get started on eco-matters. • Support recycling and congregation collections, extending as opportunities arise. • Raise awareness of the hierarchy of provision for church flowers. Appeal for local flower growers. Eco-Group flowers once a year.
<p>OBJECTIVE 4 Biodiversity, wildlife, grounds and gardens: Members are being encouraged to take practical steps in and around both the church grounds and their own properties to be more environmentally friendly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green the church frontage, including new planters and pollinator planting • Build “Digging Day” teams to support pollinator patch, planters and church grounds. • Organise a seed swap, plant swap, produce swap – harvest and spring. • Encourage congregation to be active members of Friends of Parks and other environmental groups, and encourage collaborative action where appropriate.

STRATEGIC AIM 3: GLOBAL LIVING

Key Criterion: Having a positive impact on and/or working with national and global environmental justice concerns

Ideas for Action:

- Lifestyle issues
- Community matters
- Global neighbours
- About food
- Managing your carbon footprint

Global Living Objectives	Global Living Milestones/Actions
<p>OBJECTIVE 1 Local and national concerns: Members of the congregation are actively involved in supporting positive environmental initiatives in the local area or the UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop policy and practice in support of positive initiatives linking national concerns to what we can do locally, eg: emissions reduction and using local public transport. • Water usage awareness – link church and personal water use to global campaigns and climate change. • Eliminate peat and reduce pesticide and herbicide use (own gardens, grounds and pre-school). • Promote local, national and international campaigns for climate change, biodiversity loss and sustainability, eg: RSPB and Scottish Wildlife Trust (local/national), Wateraid (international) – invite speakers, events, etc. • Promote Edinburgh Council environmental and local consultations and initiatives. • Support Edinburgh-specific habitat creation, net zero and off-setting opportunities, eg: Tree Time Edinburgh.
<p>OBJECTIVE 2 Global and international concerns: The congregation is actively involved in supporting FairTrade, Christian Aid, and charities working in parts of the world impacted by climate change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think Global: Act Local – link global climate change and biodiversity loss concerns to what we can do locally. • Create or share case studies and films of climate change impact from around the world. • Survey congregation support for Fairtrade choices? Most unusual? Photos for annual display. • Support for Christian Aid and World Day of Prayer, particularly addressing eco-issues. • Lobbying material to be sent to MPs and MSPs.
<p>OBJECTIVE 3 The congregation is actively involved in personal actions to reflect Care for Creation and environmental justice, collaborating with social justice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregational commitment to UN Climate Change COP26 Pledge + support for subsequent COPs. • Explore shared objectives between social justice and climate justice • Use Eco-Congregation Scotland resources to encourage green personal lifestyles.

Eco-Group
 January 2024