

Catholic Parish of Napier Eco Audit

Technologically advanced societies must be prepared to encourage more sober lifestyles, while reducing their energy consumption and improving its efficiency. (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', n. 193)

Background

In September 2016 the Parish promulgated a vision and mission statement which included to be wise stewards of God's creation. Subsequently, the Parish Pastoral Council asked the Care of Creation (COC) group to develop and begin implementing a plan to encourage action for the environment, with the goal that responsible and sustainable stewardship of the earth and its resources is part of the faith life of the parish and every parishioner.

COC's 2017 plan works towards this goal through a range of activities, one of which is a parish eco audit. As suggested by the parish Health and Safety group coordinator, a COC team visited the parish plant at its three locations. Recommendations to the PPC follow - they are based on detailed inventories and assessment of 'what is' from an eco perspective (these are available on request).

First impressions were that an eco audit is a big project: the parish has a multi-million \$\$ plant with a large number of people involved - employed and voluntary, professional and casual, regular and occasional, full-time and part-time. This makes communication and implementation a challenge; but the people we met with appreciate the idea of care of creation and want to make a contribution to this.

Recommendations

- 1 As opportune, that lights be replaced with CFL and LED.*
- 2 That dual-flush cisterns be installed and that toilet areas get "turn off lights/recycle paper" notices.*
- 3 That the flush system for the urinals at St Pat and St Mary be converted from timed-flushing (24/7) to sensor-activated as in St TM. And that a baby changing rack be installed in St Pat and St Mary women's toilets and in the disability toilet (to be used by fathers)*
- 4 That hot water cylinders and piping be efficiently insulated/lagged.*
- 5 That the oven doors in St Mary's hall kitchen be serviced to give a good seal and that the gap between the outside door frame and the wall in St Mary sacristy be stopped.*
- 6 That cleaning chemicals and equipment be selected on the basis of their environmental impact and that guidelines, which COC can produce, on best eco-use of kitchen facilities be prominently displayed .*
- 7 That reusable plastic cups for children be purchased for St Pat and St Mary and the use of polystyrene, disposable cups discontinued.*
- 8 That heat pumps be used in the most economic manner and together with exit lights and other equipment be regularly serviced..*
- 9 That doors, where needed, get sliding or non-sliding draft stoppers; and that at dark, curtains are closed to retain the heat.*
- 10 Given that offices are generally used every day/all day, that recycling facilities be adequately and conveniently set up in the rooms most used, esp. the secretary's room.*
- 12 Given that halls and kitchens are used in a much more ad hoc way, that those using these accept the responsibility for recycling and composting, ie 'take as you go' - what they bring they take away after use (cf. National Parks principle).*
- 13 That community gardens will be part of the redevelopment at St Pat.*
- 14 That a parish eco audit is carried out every 1-2 years and its findings with recommendations received by the PPC **for consideration and implementation.***

Eco audit team (Ruth Smithies, Catherine Hollands, Fr. Tony Williams SM, David Pryor), June 2017

Additional comments

Eco audit position

1 This is not a financial audit. It is based on the Catholic tradition of thanks to God for the gifts of creation, of respect for the resources we share which lead us to union with our Creator and with each other, of the importance for society of the 'common good' and the consequent call to sacrifice, self-denial and generosity.

2 However, if accounting has regard not just for 'income & expenditure' but also for things such as health costs due to pollution etc, then environmentally responsible procedures will often be cheaper than conventionally financially efficient ones.

3 The parish plant was built to serve the needs of three separate parishes. It now 'belongs' to one parish – providing various services at three sites. The work is done by a mix of employed staff and volunteers, with all the strengths and weaknesses that accompany such a system.

4 Modern technology has resulted in an increasing impact on the environment. We need therefore a continual re-appraisal of what we regard as the normal way of doing things. We need to ask ourselves each time: what exactly are we trying to do, what are the practicable options for achieving this, and which is the most responsible environmentally?

Eco reflections

1 All the plant is relatively new. It shows thoughtful design, and care and respect in its use and maintenance. In terms of frequency of use, and for how long they are used on each occasion, the plant can be placed under three headings; churches, halls, offices with variations between and within each. It is an open question at this stage whether "eco" administration is best done under these three headings, or alternatively as three separate sub-units (St Pat, St Mary, St TM) for each grouping.

2 Looking at work-load, availability and familiarity with what's what, the smaller units have an advantage. But from the point of view of replacement and maintenance there is merit in common buying of supplies if the fittings can be standardised. Given that a lot of the work needs to be done by professional electricians etc with specialist equipment, it could be argued that the whole matter is best left to their professional competence, yet get them on board with a 'care for the environment' ethic.

In view of the size and value of the plant, *the Parish might well need a designated Plant Manager with over-all responsibility for plant and operations and routine inspection and maintenance.*

3 We have not covered use of cars and other transport (for New Zealand the major contributor to climate change). This seems to be a matter of individual responsibility rather than parish level strategy.

4 In terms of priorities the decision is not always obvious. Heating uses a lot more power (usually measured in kilowatts) than lighting (usually measured in watts - sometimes even single figures). But commonly there are a lot more lights than heaters, and the lights tend to be used for longer periods than the heaters.

5 Eco audits are not one-off actions: we are called to continually improve the way we do things and identify more ways to minimize our impact on the environment. Also, situations change and we know

that significant changes are on the cards at St. Pat.