

The trouble with plastic

- If you laid all the plastic bags we use in the UK end to end, these would stretch to the moon and back five times
- Each year we throw away 100,000 tonnes of plastic bags, the weight equivalent of 70,000 cars
- On average, each person in the UK acquires 150 plastic bags per year, most of which will be binned rather than re-used
- To produce 8.7 plastic bags uses the same amount of energy as it takes to drive 1 km
- Plastic bags are now banned in Bangladesh, having twice contributed to severe flooding caused by blocked drains. Bans are also being considered or have been introduced in South Africa, Kenya and India
- Globally, plastic bags lead to the death of 100,000 marine animals and 1,000,000 birds each year
- Last year there were 43 plastic bags per km littering the British coastline
- The British Antarctic Survey have found plastic bags from Spitsbergen 78° North to Falklands 51° South and expect to find them washed up in Antarctica within the decade.

Jean Leston, a CEL member, is a freelance journalist who writes primarily about business and the environment. She is also an Anglican.

EcoTeams

Global Action Plan and Christian Ecology Link

EcoTeams are small groups of six to eight people who each represent their household. The EcoTeam meets once a month for four months. At each meeting representatives share their experiences, ideas, achievements on the environmental actions they have undertaken.

Global Action Plan provides the handbook for lessening our impact in the areas of waster, energy and water. CEL is providing the theological backdrop to the action.

Some CEL members have volunteered to become EcoTeam facilitators and we need more.

The Facilitators training day has been arranged for:

**Saturday February 4th 2006
(venue to be decided)**

Please respond to say that you can come whether or not you have already been in touch.

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Eight Ways to Live Gently on the Earth

The Incarnation shows us that the material world matters to God. If we are to honour Christ we too must take responsibility for caring for the whole Earth. Here are eight ways to live gently on the Earth. How many of them can you manage to do? If you can't do everything, at least do something.

1. Don't fly!

– or if you must, at least donate £50 to £100 to disaster relief agencies (in reparation for the climate damage of your flight) and/or to sustainable energy projects.

2. Drive less:

- walk, cycle, take the bus, tram or train whenever you can, and use local shops
- organise a lift share scheme for your church — for both car owners and those without

3. Use less electricity:

- turn lights off
- use low energy light bulbs
- don't leave appliances like televisions or computers on stand-by
- dry clothes outside
- as well as using less, switch to green electricity through CEL's Operation Noah, and then the National Grid will have to buy equivalent electricity from renewable sources. Telephone Good Energy (0845 456 1640) or Green Energy (0845 456 9550) and mention 'Operation Noah'.

4. Use less gas or heating oil:

- insulate loft and walls and hot water cistern
- turn central heating thermostat down 1 or 2 degrees
- turn hot water thermostat down to 45-50 degrees and have it on a timer.

5. Use your LOAF!

Buy and grow some food that follows CEL's LOAF principles for food: **L**ocally produced, **O**rganically grown, **A**nimal friendly and **F**airly traded.

- try to buy British, seasonal fruit and veg
- use fruit and veg in local shops; it's often cheaper than in supermarkets and frequently from more local sources
- buy free range eggs and free range British meat, and eat less meat anyway
- arrange a communal LOAF meal at your church.

6. Save and cherish water:

- fix water butts to down pipes
- fix dripping taps
- re-use water.

7. Repair, re-use, borrow:

or buy second hand rather than buying new:

- recycle — find out about local swapshop networks, jumble sales, charity shops
- use your own shopping bags at local shops — again and again and again
- if buying a new fridge, freezer, washing machine go for A rated
- if buying a new boiler, because the old one's not working, get a condensing one
- when buying wood products check the wood is from a sustainable, legal source.

8. Reconnect with the natural world:

Go for a walk. Get wet. Dig the earth:

- include the Earth in all church liturgies
- plant baptismal trees
- support a nature conservation organisation
- take an interest in particular groups of organisms: e.g. wildflowers / bees / butterflies / fishes / birds.

Eight Ways is reproduced in the issue of ChurchLink being distributed with GC59. Additional copies of ChurchLink are available from CEL Resources. CEL will be producing it as a leaflet, available from CEL Resources in the new year.