

A truly green mission

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by Jane Still

Inspired by Earth Hour 2007 and convinced by the many reports and synod discussions on the problem of climate change, one Anglican parish decided it was time to act.

The day after the inaugural Earth Hour in Sydney last year, which was Palm Sunday, St Mark's in South Hurstville launched EcoChurch, a project which is not only enriching the parish as it develops a deeper understanding of stewardship, but is also reaching into the local community.

St Mark's signed up for Earth Hour, an event where individuals and organisations turn off their lights for one hour to show their concern for the need to reduce green house gas production.

Bruce Cooke, the EcoChurch co-ordinator, and an electrical engineer with 7 years experience in Government policy and practical energy management in the NSW public sector, says the parish decided to take this commitment further and to embrace a range of environmental issues. Their project has focused on encouraging parishioners to take individual action, and trying to influence local community members.

"The most significant achievement so far is to install a 10,000 litre water tank for toilet flushing in St Mark's Kindergarten," says Mr Cooke. The tank was fully funded by parishioners. They also undertook an environmental audit of all parish activities.

"The establishment of a recycling centre was also another significant achievement: toner cartridges, mobile phones, spectacles for developing countries, magazines for prisoners, candle stubs for the Church Candle House, postage stamps for ABM, Christmas cards for Planet Ark, as well as clothing for Anglicare."

The parish has adopted a "Goals Agreement," in which households promise to undertake a range of actions such as buying fuel-efficient cars and installing their own water tanks.

"Discussions have commenced with the local Council about co-hosting eco-living workshops at the Church for the community," says Mr Cooke. "These gatherings will complement other forums that St Mark's hosts like 'Meet the Candidates', Tai Chi and dance groups, BookBusters club, and ecumenical Remembering Services."

While EcoChurch is only a one year project that will end on World Environment Day in 2008, Mr Cooke hopes that the activities and conversations of the past year will have a lasting impact.

"Sometimes we lose sight of God as God of all creation," he said in a multi-faith climate change seminar sponsored by the Faith Ecology Network last June. "If we are to worship this God, we will find ourselves driven to concern for all God's world, but especially for those parts that are suffering and in danger. So therefore as an Anglican Christian, I very much see that my colleagues and I need to continue to widen our missionary vision further. We need to make real the fifth Mark of our mission, that is to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation



and to sustain and renew the life of the earth."

www.southhurstville.anglican.asn.au/ecochurch.htm