

Anglican News, October 2005

What have they been up to?

[Commission for the Environment]

The Commission for the Environment was set up by our Synod to promote a Christian theology of the environment and a sense of responsibility for environmental issues, both at local and global levels.

It seeks to provide objective guidance and direction on how the church might creatively address the problems and challenges that face our communities.

The Commission responds to the Christian obligation to nurture and care for the environment at three levels in the Church:

- Church as an institution or organisation,
- Church as a Faith Community, and,
- Church as an influential party in the development of community and governmental attitudes and policies.

Over the past year the Commission has worked on several projects.

Creation Sunday

Creation Sunday this year is in late September. The main theme is 'water', in line with the lectionary and the clear need for us to consider carefully the moral issues of water use in our community. The Commission would be very interested to hear from parishes as to how they celebrated the day.

Energy-efficient Retrofitting of Diocesan Buildings

An initiative of the Commission has been to improve the practical performance of diocesan facilities in terms of energy management.

This important activity will save money for participating facilities at the same time as improving the environmental performance of church assets. The focus on energy savings also sends a clear message to the faith community that environmental improvement is being done in a way that cuts costs, and brings increased amenity to facility users.

The Commission's energy project is in the ACT, in cooperation with ACTEW and aims to improve energy use by diocesan facilities and schools. The project is proceeding slowly but steadily to sign off. Attempts to establish a similar project in NSW jointly with other diocese has been unsuccessful.

Green Building Code

The greatest scope for achieving environmental benefits is in the construction of church facilities, and the greatest impact is by appropriate intervention at the design stage. The Commission, with assistance from the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA), has prepared a brief for architects to assist in the assessment of the environmental impact of designs submitted when tendering proposals for significant church properties.

As part of the Diocesan Administrative Guidelines, architects are informed that the GBCA ratings will be used when selecting the preferred design, and instructs designers to use the GBCA ratings tools to present a case to support their proposal, and a statement of the additional costs contributed to the design by the proposed measures.

The approach is designed to ensure that environmental attributes are considered in an evaluation process that is fully informed of the relevant facts, where assessment is based on accepted national standards, and where 'other criteria being equal' selection will be based on the design that results in the least harmful effect on the environment.

Environmental Education

A column considering environmental matters has appeared in each issue of *Anglican News* over the past year. The column has included consideration of eco-spirituality themes, and politically contentious issues including water use and nuclear power. A presentation and discussion session was also run at Convo3.

A course designed for small groups use has been developed and is available for parish use. It addresses the questions: *How should a Christian view the environment? On what basis should a Christian make decisions on environmental issues? What does scripture have to say about making such decisions?*

Regional Meetings

The Commission is exploring ways of holding local/regional meetings on environmental matters. We have held one such meeting at Narooma, which has led to the establishment of the Eurobodalla Anglican Environment Group. Other such meetings are being planned. We would welcome enquiries from any parish or group of parishes who would be interested in hosting such a meeting.

Anglican Communion Environmental Network

This international Network met in Canberra earlier this year and two members of the local Commission were able to attend. The resulting [*Canberra Statement on Climate Change*](#) is now on the Anglican Communion website at http://www.aco.org/ethics_technology/introducing_the_network.cfm.

The recommendations included in the statement have been accepted by the Anglican Consultative Council and distributed to all Provinces in the Anglican Communion across the world. Many are relevant to our diocesan and parish life.

Parish Audits

Following the urging of Synod last year, more parishes have responded by returning their forms. Rather than seeing it as 'yet another form', it is hoped that parishes will use the results of their survey in parish planning. An overview of the results of the Audit will appear in *Anglican News* later in the year.

The Future

Over the next year the Commission will be preparing the material needed for the next Creation Sunday. This will complete the first pass through the three-year lectionary cycle.

Consideration of the issue of the use of large, energy-wasteful, vehicles by parishes and agencies, purchased under fleet arrangements, will be the major area of energy use considered by the Commission this year. There are moral and social issues raised by the use of these vehicles.

The Commission can be contacted through its web page (<http://www.pastornet.net.au/envcomm/>) or through its Chair, Barry Richardson, 02 6258 1195, barrysalt@bigpond.com.au
