



St Anne's Church Wandsworth

Save the planet – and save money!

WE ALL KNOW about global warming. At the moment Britain seems to have missed out and we might think that it has gone away. But already other parts of the world are suffering, and one day our grandchildren will be asking us what we did to prevent a disaster which everyone knew was coming. How will you reply?

It is our Christian and moral duty to care for this planet. It is also common sense and enlightened self-interest to make sure it is still there for our descendants. The Bible's picture of ideal humanity - the Adam and Eve bit in Genesis – has them as gardeners, not as exploiters of the world. It is a good picture.

So we know there is a problem, and it is around our use of energy. Most energy comes from fossil fuels: coal and gas, which produce CO₂ when they are burnt. The more CO₂ in the atmosphere, the hotter the world gets. (And some fuels produce other gases which add to the effect.) We cannot stop the world getting hotter – we are now getting the effects of years before us – but by cutting back now we can lessen the effect in years to come.

We can feel pretty helpless.

What can I do?

What difference can I make?

We can all do a lot. And as better ways of doing things catch on, the difference made by each person will become all the greater

Cut waste: improve efficiency

So much energy is simply waste. Isn't it great to think that by saving money we can help the planet as well!

- Make sure all your light bulbs are energy saving (how many have not been changed even now?).
- Switch off lights when you are not in the room.
- Switch off the computer and the television when you are not using them. (And not just by the remote control – the appliance on standby is still using lots of electricity!)
- Don't leave phone chargers etc. on. Are they hot? That's wasted energy, and wasted money.

Insulate your home. Household heating is responsible for about 60% of domestic energy use, and we lose about half our heating energy through poor insulation. Insulation can be expensive now, but the savings come quickly though smaller fuel bills.

- Check your loft insulation. To be really efficient, it should be 270mm thick – that's above the joists.
- Do you have cavity wall insulation?
- Are your windows double glazed?

- Turn down the thermostat on your hot water tank (BUT minimum 60°C to prevent legionnaire's disease)
- Turn down the thermostat on your central heating (within reason - again don't put yourself or others at risk). Have you noticed how we have our rooms hotter in winter than on a summer's evening. Why???
- Shorten the time the central heating and water heating are on.

Lifestyle choices

But we are not going to save the planet just by trimming inefficiencies – putting the family on one holiday with a long-haul air flight uses much the same energy as a year running the home. Europe needs to change its lifestyle if we are going to make a difference. We cannot do this in one go, but even a few basic choices will start to make a difference.

Why do some people always go everywhere by car? Often other ways are easier and more fun, but we don't stop to think ...

Walk? That's what our feet were made for. We suffer bad health, our children grow up over weight, and the solution is at our feet ...

Get on the bus or train. We can hardly say we are badly off for trains. Bus services have improved enormously in this part of London. And the kids love it on the top deck!

On your bike! The bike is the future. Bicycle journeys on the National Bicycle Network are up year on year. Cycling is cheap, green, keeps you fit, and you can park almost anywhere! Get the kids on to bikes and you have great days out as well. And it's perfectly safe if you follow basic rules.

Fly less

Cutting out a plane flight is far the biggest saving you can make.

Sometimes (but not always) the trip is necessary for work. It is not always necessary to fly – especially to parts of Europe. And companies want to sharpen up their green credentials too. Holidays are up to you. Plenty of places to go in Britain; and the ferry, the train, the car, can get you to a lot of places in Europe. We may not be able to wean ourselves off flying altogether, but we can set ourselves at least a proportion of “green” holidays.

Two basic principles of enjoyable green travel:

- Make the journey part of the holiday
- Travel less often, go away for longer

Prevention is better than cure

Many of us are still early on in our careers and the rewards are only beginning to come in. But with them comes the temptation to enormous energy use. Build your life round eco-common sense.

- Beware of “food miles” – so much of our food is flown round the world. Buy locally produced when you can
- Make sure any equipment you buy is energy efficient. Freezers, washing machines, televisions ... all have their energy use on their labels. Remember: energy costs money!
- Buy a smaller car. In this area, many of us have growing families, and so our cars have to grow as well. But we can still ask, not how big a car can I afford, but how small a car can do the job? (As for 4x4s – even Jeremy Clarkson thinks they are mad.)
- Buy a green car (beats the congestion charge too!) The technology is new, but there is a lot of development ...
- Rent a car instead of buying. Car rental schemes are becoming more and more versatile – you can hire one by the hour or by the day or week for when you need it. There are several car clubs in the area offering easy short rental. Imagine saving the licence fee, the insurance bill, the servicing charges, the parking permit, the parking fines ...
- Beware of the energy costs of a second home (as well as all the headaches!). And please not one you have to fly to ...

We cannot cut every energy use in our lives, BUT:

- Make sure your energy use does not increase
- Take some steps each year to decrease it.

Some websites (and there are many more):

www.open2.net/choices BBC / Open University climate website

www.chooseclimate.org helps you see the real cost of flying ...

www.est.org.uk the Energy Saving Trust

www.seat61.com or www.guardian.loco2.com for train travel to Europe made easy...