

Christians Together on Climate

On 13 November 2019, just over 60 people turned up at St Laurence's Church for presentations, workshops, worship and stalls to resource ourselves to respond to the climate.

We began by looking at some of the things already happening in Reading. Firstly interviews with members of Reading **EcoChurches** - St John and St Stephen's, Park URC and Caversham Heights Methodists - key points included how useful EcoChurch audits are, regardless of whether you decide to sign up for the award scheme; and working in small groups often gets things done more quickly!

Then Francesca, a **school climate striker** was interviewed, sharing her sense of being alone in caring about this until the strikes made her realise otherwise, the support she has received from her school and the curious experience of classmates thanking her for doing this, but not being prepared to join in themselves.

Next Liz Kitch from the DAC and Paul Canning from St Catherine's Tilehurst told us about the **energy audits** being offered to churches - the take home message seemed to be that it's very much up to each church how much they act on the advice and therefore how useful they will be in practice. <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/mission-ministry/environment/resources/church-energy-audits/>

Finally Tricia Marcouse from **Reading Climate Action Network** briefly explained how the plan is being drawn up under different themes and particularly mentioned that her Nature strand would want to work with churches on green corridors and carbon sequestration. <https://readingcan.org.uk/>

After this we split into groups for five workshops: How do we . . .

Lament – as Churches we are uniquely placed to facilitate this crucial part of the response – we can use psalm structure of: an address to God, a complaint, a petition, a statement of trust

Green our buildings – Liz Kitch, Senior Church Buildings Officer

Talk to our church and our neighbours – Lydia Messling, University of Reading

Use stories rather than facts;
be sensitive to your audience;

5 narratives that often work better than 'climate change' are: 'future generations' 'creation care' 'being Christ's hands and feet' 'climate justice' (but only to more left wing audiences) '(disruption of) natural balance'

actions must be: accessible - who are you excluding? sustainable - will it fizzle out? visible - do people know it's being done? collaborative - does it bring people together? encouraging - do you want to keep doing it? attractive - do you want to do it?

Build constructive relationships with politicians - Hope for the Future have great resources and will lead workshops at churches if invited: <http://www.hftf.org.uk/>

Work together with other local groups –

Opportunities for involvement discussed included national groups such as Operation Noah and Green Christian as well as more local ones:

Reading Climate Action Network <https://readingcan.org.uk/> would like us to engage with the public consultation on their climate action plan for the town in the New Year

Reading Energy Co-op <https://readingenergy.coop/> are still looking for churches and other public buildings with high daytime usage to benefit from their solar panel project (they pay for the survey and panels, you get a share of the profit). They will also shortly be launching a share offer which churches might like to consider investing in to promote local renewable energy.

Reading Council's children's services – Brighter Futures for Children – held a conference for teachers on climate change at Alfred Sutton Primary School <https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/childrens-services-host-first-reading-wide-climate-change-conference-for-headteachers/> . Our schools need our support in their journeys to zero carbon.

Each workshop fed back briefly to the whole group before our final act of **worship/lament** led by Susie Templeton from Emmanuel Church, Woodley

Stall holders who attended included: Reading Friends of the Earth, Reading XR, Reading Hydro, DraughtBusters, Refill, Reading Plastics Action, A Rocha/EcoChurch, Christian Climate Action, Green Christian, Operation Noah, John Ray Initiative