Eco-Church Management in CSI Madhya Kerala Diocese

(A draft prepared for discussion in the clergy meeting of February 2007. After getting the reports of the discussion , addition/ deletion/corrections will be made. After getting the approval of concerned bodies it will become the official policy of the Diocese)

We have a Mission statement

Our objective is to define the Eco-Church fellowship and to play an active role in the spiritual-environmental revolution and to encourage an eco-friendly life style. Christians, at least in part, seem to be responsible for the present environmental crisis, primarily because of their misunderstanding of the scripture. Jesus Christ, our saviour, guide, and mentor, tells us to repent, love God and our neighbour. The concept of neighbour include the whole creation. Just as we meet Christ in our human neighbour, we meet Christ in every part of creation. In all aspects of its life, the Eco-Church fellowship will strive to re-establish the fundamental spiritual relationship of humanity with God, the Earth and all its creatures. A basic tenet of its evangelism is found in II Corinthians 5:19 which reads, "God is reconciling the whole world — or cosmos — through Christ." We encourage parishes to incorporate ecological concerns in their order of worship and include both advocacy and direct action for social justice and the integrity of creation in missional activities. We encourage the active participation of our fellow Christians, and all people of good will through prayer, partnership, and involvement, which will help humanity to return to an eco-friendly life style

I. First Things First: A Scriptural Basis for Eco-Management

Managing the Church's facilities-buildings, grounds-from an ecological standpoint is grounded in God's covenant with the whole world: " I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you- the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you-every living creature on earth...." And God said, ˜This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth... Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth." (Genesis 9)

God keeps watch over the earth-all creation-and "all living creatures of every kind on the earth" because of this covenant of protection, surviving, and thriving. This watch is extended to the results of human creativity provided it resonates with the will of God. Our managing the facilities and grounds of the church in an environmentally responsible and friendly fashion is a part of the covenant between God and us humans. God is clear about how important the creation and all the earth's creatures are to Him. We are called to be equally clear about our commitment and covenant with the earth as central to our commitment and covenant with God.

"Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain.

Unless the LORD guards the city, the guards keeps watch in vain."(Psalm 127:1)

II. Comprehensive Planning

Before enumerating specific actions to take, a congregation's first step toward eco-facilities management is to develop a long-range, comprehensive plan. To understand the foundation of such plan and to identify its components, the following steps are suggested:

1. **Designate a staff person and select a committed group of lay people to form an oversight committee.** The committee becomes responsible for guiding the development of the management plan, for instituting and monitoring practices, and for being alert over time to better and improved approaches, means, and technologies of eco-management.

2. **Lay the Scriptural and theological basis for congregational actions.** This can provide an exciting study with the entire church, though the Eco-Management Oversight Committee may want to lead it.

3. **Get an overview of what is possible, what assistance is available, and the items to be considered.** See Resources" section of this guide.

4. **Do an energy audit.** An energy audit will identify areas of inefficiency, and other problems that waste energy, generate it poorly, and waste money. Cost analyses help with understanding what types of usage drive system costs and, therefore, where savings can be initiated

5. **Be prepared for higher up-front costs as the details of eco-efficient management emerge.**Switching over to efficient equipment and methodologies is an integral part of ecological, integrated resource management.

6. **Develop an all-inclusive framework of the entire property.** A landscape architect can assist the congregation in doing this. Look inclusively at the "facility" as the management integration of both buildings and grounds.

7. **Create an education plan to inform, educate, and train all users of the buildings and grounds of the church in eco-management.** Such a plan can call for special events and training sessions as well as integrate the concerns into the regular curriculum. Education is critical to the success of any conservation program.

8. **Constant Evaluation**

III. Specific Areas of Resource Management

A. Grounds , Landscaping , Composting

A.1. Designing A Garden

Create a church garden with birdbaths, bird feeders, trees, vegetation, ponds, fountains, and small waterfalls.

Include images and symbols of the Christian faith in strategic spots to remind people of the centrality of the faith in our eco-stewardship. If they include water features, recycle the water.

Consider xeriscaping wherever possible to conserve water. An efficient approach to landscaping, xeriscaping minimizes water usage by planning and designing, limited turf (lawn) areas, ecologically aware irrigation, soil improvement, mulching, using low-water-demand plants, proper maintenance, and careful monitoring.

A.2. Composting

Compost leaves, grass clippings, trimmings and food wastes. Choose from a number of possible composting bins or even experiment with several different approaches, as a way of educating the congregation and deciding which is best for the church. Use the compost in the garden areas of the grounds. Mulching in planting beds lessens evaporation, retains moisture, and reduces weed growth.

Aerate the lawn. Punch holes in the lawn about six inches apart so water will reach the roots rather than run off the surface.

A.3. Watering

Monitor the sprinkling system carefully. Limit areas demanding large amounts of water on a regular basis, and conserve water wherever possible. Water early in the morning or late in the evening. Doing this, when temperatures are cooler, minimizes evaporation and allows for deeper penetration of the water.

Investigate using drip irrigation throughout garden and shrubbery areas.

Use gray water for non-potable uses such as plants and explore possibilities of black water utilization. This includes water from fish tanks. Besides saving water, it's a good fertilizer.

Harvest rainwater through the creation of a cistern, swales, berms, and basins. Assess the topography of the property for the proper design of harvesting structures. Cisterns may be placed anywhere, including the roof.

A.4. Controlling Pests, Planting Trees, & Creating Special Gardens

Explore ways to have natural pest control, both inside and outside.

Plant a tree or a small garden area to commemorate special occasions such as a birth, a baptism, a new member, a milestone anniversary or event, or a memorial (person or event). This could be designated a prayer garden.

Use live Christmas trees for the church's celebration of the birth of Christ. Plant these afterwards on the church grounds.

Start a community vegetable, herb, and/or flower garden if enough space is available on the church property. If not, consider doing this elsewhere in the community.

B. Energy Conservation

B.1. Air Circulation

Study the ventilation flow and, if necessary, redirect it, especially in relation to the roof/attic lines.

Plant deciduous trees outside windows to shade them from direct rays of summer sunlight (especially in the afternoon). Because they are deciduous, these trees will allow the windows to act as passive solar devices in the wintertime.

Use alternative forms of energy wherever possible, including solar, both passive and active forms.

Consider installing solar voltaic panels to generate electricity. Place solar-absorbing panels on the roof(s) for hot water and reduction of heat build-up within the building.

B.2. Appliances

Replace old appliances with the most energy efficient ones. Be sure they include an energy saver switch or its equivalent.

B.3. Lighting

Turn lights off when the space is not in use

Convert lighting fixtures, including lamps, to fluorescent

C. Water Conservation

Train all Church members in water conservation principles.

Do an audit on all water piping, values (including faucets), junctions, and receptacles. Do the same for all wastewater conduits. Check for both seepage and leaks. While checking for water loss, check also for high lead content in piping and the presence of other toxins.

Determine where water is used. Before implementing any kind of conservation program, know where water is being used and how much water is being used for each location and type of usage.

Install low-flow devices.

Use toilet tank displacement devices or install vacuum flush toilets. If the church already has these types of toilets, make sure they are adjusted to use the minimum amount of water required per flush.

All showering facilities should be equipped with low-flow showerheads. Showerheads with on-off valves provide the opportunity to conserve more water than those without valves.

Explore installing composting toilets that use little or no water.

D. Office Management - Program Development - Kitchen-Dining Operation

Environmental ethics calls for the treatment of natural resources not merely as commodities and tools but as parts of the ecological whole, regardless of whether they are found in their natural state or in the form of a product to be used. The Church, in operating an office or managing the kitchen and fellowship hall or developing and directing program, is called to do this with as little negative environmental impact as possible. Such an approach only begins with water and energy conservation and the integration of buildings and grounds for eco-management.

Many other key areas should also be considered. Most environmental decisions are complicated. Many factors need to be considered. For instance, in the debate over whether to use plastic or paper products, one could argue that paper consumes trees, reduces forest biodiversity, produces pollutants during the manufacturing process, and supports economically companies that have policies that are not environmentally sound. Plastic, such as styrofoam, though, consumes petroleum, increases the risk of oil spills, further locks the world into dependency upon oil, creates pollution in its manufacturing process, and supports economically companies that have policies that are not environmentally sound. Washable and reusable products also are manufactured, consume energy and water in the recurring washing and sterilization process, and take up more time for those cleaning up after an event. Both paper and plastic increase solid waste while reusable products eliminate solid waste. Companies that are sensitive to environmental considerations regularly go through this type of analysis. The church should do the same.

D.1. Waste Management

Have as a hallmark of operation "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle."

Analyze all operations to see which items can be either eliminated or reduced. If the item itself cannot be done away with, see what other things associated with the product can be reduced, particularly in packaging and other waste by-products associated with the item in question.

Develop a system for reusing paper products, particularly office paper or education posters.

Study the full life cycle of products and the effect on the environment at each stage of that life cycle before making a decision concerning which product is better or which material is preferable.

Place all scrap foodstuffs (both in preparation and after a meal) in the compost pile. Those who do not want to take their leftovers home after a covered-dish supper can clean their dishes into a scrap bucket specially marked for composting. Protect compost piles that include all foodstuffs from large animals such as dogs.

Purchase products that are not only recycled but also recyclable.

Create a thoroughgoing program of recycling, which involves paper products, cans, and glass.

Produce an educational program for recycling to train all users of the facilities. Have the children and youth design posters, write essays, produce a drama, and make other presentations to the adults about recycling. Study the economics, environmental considerations, and long-range consequences of recycling for developing a sustainable society.

D.2. Space Utilization

Hold meetings in rooms that require the least amount of energy to heat or cool and to light.

Add a "teleworking" component to the workweek. Also known as "telecommuting," this encourages staff to work at home when their on-site presence is not needed. It eliminates commuting time and expense, reduces energy use, optimizes space utilization, and, overall, promotes greater efficiencie

D.4. Education Programs

A variety of educational and promotional programs need to be created as a part of launching the new approach to facility management. The consciousness of the staff, membership, and other users needs to be raised significantly and in sync with each other. The educational phase also needs to be an ongoing process,

written into each age-level of education (including adults). Reminders should be highly visible throughout the buildings and grounds.

Every decision, every old or new act, every old or new program must have built into it an environmental consciousness which is not merely one more component, but instead, runs throughout the whole as does any other portion of our basic commitment and covenant with God.

Celebrate an Environmental Festival with all age groups participating. Make it an annual event.

Conduct a tour of the facility to familiarize people with the new procedures.

Write a curriculum component for all educational groupings throughout the entire week.

Include environmentally related symbolism in the trappings of the sanctuary and along the walls in the hallways.

Have a bulletin board dedicated to environ-mental issues.

Bring people together in an annual Eco-Stewardship conference with invited experts to speak to the attendees. In long-range planning, stagger the Eco-Stewardship conference about six months apart from the Environmental Festival.

Place signage throughout both the building and the grounds as a tool for instruction, gentle reinforcement, and awareness.

Publicize what is happening: in your regular church newsletter and bulletin; in a periodic "Eco-Times" church publication; in the local newspaper, radio, and television; and in your denominational news outlets. Make it a key element within your church's website. Talk it up in the community as a point of significant expression of faith.

Alert the congregation to where they can go to learn more on their own.

Form special study groups or task forces around specific environmental issues, Bible study, or theological concerns.

Have members and other constituents bring leftover items from home or office to be used by the church, especially in the educational section.

Organize a Rummage Sale of items from everywhere possible that can be reused in one fashion or another.

IV. Resources

The Following Books available at CSS, Thiruvalla . The clergy of the Diocese can avail these books by paying 50% cost upto 15th February 2007. The Diocese will pay the rest of the amount.

1) Haritha Daivasatram(Rs.75) 2) Paristhidi Daivasatram (Rs40), 3) Ecological Challenges and Christian Mission(Rs.95) 4) Bible, Ecology and Environment (Rs 195) 5) Christian Response to Ecological Challenges(Deepika Kottayam) 6) Reconciling with Nature (Rs.50), 7) Spiritual Values for Earth Community Rs.90) 8) Greening of Minds (Rs.95) 9) The Ecological Vision of Jesus(Rs.150) 10) The Road Back to Nature (Rs 300) 11) One Straw Revolution (Rs 30) 12) God is Green (Rs60) 13) Towards an Eco Justice (Rs60), 14) Prakruthiyuda Rothanam(Rs.22) 15) Paristhidee Vedapadanangal (Rs.40) 16) Njanoru Nisabda Kolayali(Rs.40) 17) Muthassiyuda Paristhidika Kadakal (Rs 50)18) Paristhidee Kadhakal, Parichindanangal (Rs.40)

V. Afterword

"Environmental ethics means treating natural resources not just as commodities (and largely undervalued commodities...) but as parts of the ecological whole. It means building and operating homes and businesses with as little environmental impact as possible and with minimum consumption of material and natural resources. It means accepting responsibility for the environmental impacts arising from processes and products over their entire lifecycle-from raw materials acquisition to waste management.

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