

**Report from Scottish Episcopal Church to
ACEN meeting in Lima August 4-8, 2011
Alan Werritty**

Environmental initiatives in province, diocese and parish

Since the last meeting of the ACEN in Canberra in 2005, environmental issues have taken on an increasing significance in the life of the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC). This is most clearly evidenced by activity at the contrasting levels of province (reports by the Church in Society Committee to General Synod and associated motions) and congregations (by July 2011, 34 of the 269 congregations registered with Eco-Congregation Scotland were drawn from the SEC). At the provincial level a series of reports and motions in successive General Synods led up to the June 2011 *Statement of Principles* concerning environmental sustainability and its place within the mission of the church. This *Statement of Principles* comprises:

- Our daily thanksgiving, prayer life, and worship should acknowledge the wealth and beauty of God's creation.
- Sustainability has to be applied to an environment that is constantly shaped by the forces of a dynamic earth.
- Pressure on sustainability from economic expansion and increasing population cannot be ignored.
- Exploitation of human and material resources, the global energy demand, and uncontrolled consumerism undermine the basis for sustainable living in Scotland.
- A dialogue with modern science and technology is required to address global sustainability issues
- Understanding the systems that sustain life as a whole should shape our responses and actions for sustainable living.
- Natural biodiversity of the land mass and its surrounding seas is a precious resource which we lose at our peril.

In the associated motions passed by the 2011 Synod it was agreed that each diocese and congregation would conduct an environmental sustainability audit and identify opportunities to reduce energy consumption. Dioceses were charged with auditing this requirement, possibly via its quinquennial building surveys. This represents the strongest and most focused action yet in terms of the SEC reducing its collective carbon footprint. Success will crucially depend on how far dioceses push to ensure its implementation. But given 34 Eco-congregations across the province there is considerable "leaven in the dough" and some grounds for optimism.

In 2008 the Provincial Youth Network initiated its "Midgies" campaign designed to raise the profile of the Millennium Development Goals within the Church. The acronym "midgies" (a persistent small, almost invisible insect widespread in the summer in the west of Scotland, with an irritating bite) was deliberately chosen to reflect the style of the campaign.

Partnerships with other churches or secular organizations

The most significant partnership is with Eco-Congregation Scotland an ecumenical charity (<http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/>) which offers a programme to enthuse and equip churches to weave environmental issues into their life and mission via resources with a focus on:

- **Growing in faith and understanding**
make the link between environmental issues and Christian faith
- **Putting God's house in green order**
Take practical action in the church
- **Changing lives, change communities**
Influence attitudes and take action in the local or global community

Eco-Congregation Scotland (founded in 2000) now supports 269 congregations across Scotland, of which 34 are from the SEC. The resource materials provide materials for reflection (creation theology and bible study), worship (liturgical resources for both everyday worship and festivals), work with young children and youth groups, more sustainable use of church buildings and their surroundings (energy efficient buildings, sustainable procurement processes, promotion of bio-diversity in church grounds) and sustainable living by individuals and across the community (waste management, promoting local food, reducing carbon footprints and fair trade initiatives). New resources broadening the scope of Eco-Congregations Scotland into international development and poverty alleviation are currently being developed with assistance from Christian Aid.

Eco-Congregation Scotland is seen as a key partner by the Scottish Government in its engagement with civil society to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 42% (2020) and by 80% (2050) against 1990 levels. These targets are amongst the modest ambitious in the world and will not be achieved without major take-up by civil society and associated behaviour change. Current Scottish Government funding of a full-time manager is evidence of Eco-Congregation Scotland's perceived value in providing direct access to civil society via nearly 300 local groups which can begin to promote the necessary behavioural change.

The SEC has supported Eco-Congregation Scotland by grants, resourcing the current redrafting of its resource materials and having myself as a Trustee and member of the Board.

Serious local concerns in relation to **agriculture, water, land use, vulnerable peoples, displaced persons, economic development, climate change response**

Agriculture: Many remote rural areas in Scotland are experiencing depressed incomes for livestock farmers, threats to key support services (public transport, affordable housing, accessible health care) and out-migration of school leavers and graduates threatening the long-term viability of small communities. Along with the rest of Scotland, these communities are also beginning to report the impacts of climate change (increased flood risk, changes in length of the growing season, changes in biodiversity). The Report of the Rural Commission to the 2009 General Synod provided an insightful commentary on these issues and practical ways in which the Church could assist rural communities address these challenges.

Climate change response: The threat posed by climate change both locally and globally has been repeatedly brought before successive General Synods. Motions urging governments to develop policies to meet the challenge of ever-increasing greenhouse gas emissions have been combined with initiatives by the Church in Society Committee to promote ownership of the issue by congregations and individual church members. Congregations eager to take up this challenge have used resources promoted by Eco-Congregation Scotland or, in the case of St John's Edinburgh, have

developed their own in house activities funded by the Government's Climate Challenge Fund. One of the key outputs of the St John's "Let the Earth be Glad" programme (<http://www.earthbeglad.org.uk>) has been a 25% reduction in energy use by 40 people 2007-09 with a further 60 participating by January 2011.

Why were you chosen to represent your province?

My professional background is in academia – until last year I was Professor of Physical Geography and Research Director of the UNESCO Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science at the University of Dundee. Towards the end of my academic career much of my research was focused on climate change and flooding on which I advised the Scottish and UK governments and the United Nations. Most recently I served as the Vice Chair of the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Inquiry *Facing up to Climate Change: Breaking the Barriers to a Low Carbon Scotland* (<http://www.royalsoced.org>) which explored how to enhance the take up of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures across Scotland. The role of civil society was seen as crucial to success and the potential role of the churches and other faith communities strongly endorsed. I am currently a member of the Science Advisory Committee of Scottish Natural Heritage (the government body charged with promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity across Scotland) and on the Board of the James Hutton Institute (Scotland's largest agricultural and environmental research platform).

My first encounter with "greening the Church" came from representing the SEC at the 1990 WCC Convocation on *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* in Seoul. I subsequently represented the SEC at the first meeting of the ACEN in S Africa in 2002 and the 2005 meeting in Canberra. In 2005 I was invited to join the Board of Eco-Congregations Scotland as its SEC representative and subsequently spoke on climate change and related matters at the General Synod and at the Board for Mission and Ministry. I see my current work with Eco-Congregations Scotland as my most important contribution to raising environmental awareness across the Scottish Churches. In my local congregation I lead the Eco-Congregation group with recent success in reducing gas consumption by 50%, the introduction of low-energy lighting and ambitious plans for a week-long celebration of Creationtide 2011 in late Sept/early October.

This comes with greetings to all the ACEN members meeting in Lima and the prayers, support and best wishes from the Province of Scotland.

Alan Werritty