

Being an Eco Champion

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ECO  **CHURCH**
AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT

A  **UK
ROCHA**
Caring for God's Earth

www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk



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Eco Church is growing because people want to demonstrate their love for God's earth and all that is in it. In many congregations, it is often an individual or small group that encourages the church to begin its Eco Church journey.

What is an Eco Champion?

Eco Champions are volunteers who play a valuable role in guiding their church towards its eco objectives and act as a point of contact for the church on environmental matters. They will typically be [signed up to Eco Church Connect](#) to keep up to date on news and information that can be shared with the wider church community. The Eco Champion is typically the person who takes on the task of completing the Eco Church survey on the [Eco Church platform](#) and sharing progress with the church. The specific tasks an Eco Champion carries out will depend on their church setting and needs, as well as the person's skills and interests.

Working together

Ideally, an Eco Champion will not be working alone. Pivotal to making progress with Eco Church will be an Eco Group or Green Team, to work together on the various activities and actions – everyone has a part to play. All this will take time, perseverance and prayer to establish, but having representatives from across the whole church helps to embed and champion creation care into all areas of church life.

The role of the Eco Champion and their team is broad and varied. It can include administrative tasks such as reporting on eco progress in meetings and services, developing documentation or policies and helping the church to draft and implement environmental action plans.



Photo: Revd Canon Lucy Davis facilitating an Eco Connect event at St Andrew's Church, Bedford.
Credit: Polly Eaton



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They also act as a link for sharing information, news and resources through notice sheets, websites, social media or church publications. The role can involve practical action too, such as maintaining notice boards, measuring a church's carbon footprint, planting pollinator friendly plants or looking after the recycling station. The eco team may promote opportunities for conversations and spiritual growth through facilitating small groups, leading or sharing prayers for God's creation or encouraging participation in a course.

Please be aware that an Eco Champion, or even the team, is not expected to do all these things themselves, but rather to prompt the church in their Eco Church progress.

As Eco Champions grow in their experience and confidence, they may like to share the story of their personal environmental journey or the experience of their church with others. They may do this as a speaker at the front of the church or through receiving visits from other churches that are keen to learn more. Eco Champions may extend their role beyond their home church and support other churches or promote Eco Church in their local area or region. Many denominations have a growing network of regional eco-leads to further grow and support the number of churches engaged in creation care.

Make use of resources

Once you have 'had a go' at the Eco Church survey, you will see the areas where you are already well on the way towards an award and areas you might need more support. Be sure to refer to the [Eco Church resources](#) to help you throughout your Eco Church journey, as well as seek out knowledgeable people from within the congregation or [other Eco Churches](#). The [Getting started with Eco Church](#) resource provides some helpful suggestions, and you may wish to use the [Environmental Policy and Net Zero Carbon Action Plan information sheet](#) to guide the planning and implementation process.

Remember to celebrate!

Celebration can also be a time for encouragement. Stop every now and then to recognise all that has been achieved. Eco Church has three award levels – bronze, silver and gold. You may well be able to achieve a bronze Eco Church award relatively quickly. Publicly marking this milestone also helps inform the congregation and provides the opportunity to celebrate together. It's also likely to build momentum, encouraging greater support and inspiring others to join you as you continue your Eco Church journey.



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Promoting Eco Church

Once a church is participating in Eco Church, we encourage them to spread the word about what they are doing and encourage others on their eco journey. There are lots of ways you can promote Eco Church: talks and presentations, speaking at events, running workshops or having a stall or display. Read more about [Promoting A Rocha UK and Eco Church](#), including [editable slides](#) and an [editable script](#). You may also find the '[Eco Church survey at a glance](#)' and '[Getting started with Eco Church](#)' useful resources.



Photo: High Street Baptist Church, Tring, holding a stall at a local Eco Fair. Credit: Polly Eaton

Financial support

We recognise that speaking directly to others is a valuable opportunity to invite donations. Further information about how to financially support the work of Eco Church and the wider conservation work of A Rocha UK, can be found on the [Donation](#) and [Fundraising](#) pages of the A Rocha UK website.

A simple sentence during a presentation can highlight the value of financially supporting the ongoing work of A Rocha UK and the Eco Church programme, for example:

"A Rocha UK is a registered charity reliant on donations and grants. The largest proportion of their funding is from individuals and churches – so if you would like to support their work through a one-off donation or regular giving, please visit their website."



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Training and development

You don't need to be an 'expert' to be an Eco Champion, but it's important to feel equipped. At the end of this document, you will find links to training and learning resources to support understanding of topics such as climate change, creation care theology, eco-anxiety, and more. In addition your denominational group may offer relevant training that you can access either as a member of the clergy or a layperson.

Alongside developing your knowledge, it is also important to think about your own support and wellbeing. We want to sustain Eco Church – and sustain you too! You may already have a strong support network, or you may find this through other Eco Champions, local or regional networks, including cross-denominational groups. You can use the [Eco Church map](#) to find nearby Eco Churches, or connect through online prayer meetings, webinars or events which you can explore via our [Events Page](#). Or you may look beyond the church to local sustainability networks or climate cafes. Whatever form it takes, a mutual support group can be invaluable for sharing ideas, encouragement and as a source of ongoing motivation.

Further resources

Please refer to our [Preaching](#), [Prayer](#), [Worship](#), and [Small Groups](#) resources on the [Eco Church resources page](#).

Denominational environmental weblinks

- [Church of England](#)
- [Church in Wales](#)
- [Methodist](#)
- [URC](#)
- [Salvation Army](#)
- [Joint Public Issues Team \(JPIT\)](#)
- [Baptist Union Environment Network \(BUEN\)](#)



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Training and learning resources

Theology

Most denominations offer forms of ongoing training and development to clergy; sometimes this is also available to lay people or those in other roles within the church. Some theological institutions offer short courses or longer-term training or professional development.

Explore theological educational institutions and approach your regional representative to find out more about what is available in your area.

- [Christian Rural and Environmental Studies \(CRES\)](#) is a two-year certificate programme to study rural and environmental issues from a Christian viewpoint.

Eco-anxiety

- [Borrowed Time, a small group resource from Green Christian](#)
- [Eco-anxiety blog from A Rocha International](#)

Climate change and carbon

- [Carbon Literacy Training](#)
- [Centre for Alternative Technology](#)

Nature

Many conservation charities and organisations offer information to develop skills, knowledge and understanding about how we can support nature.

- [Eco Church Land resources](#)
- [Field Studies Council](#)
- [Caring for God's Acre](#)

Other organisational resources

There are many opportunities to develop knowledge – from podcasts and webinars to online workshops and meetings. Here are some other organisational resources to check out. Don't forget that webinars are often recorded and can be a source of information and deepen understanding without committing to a course or paying for content.

- [A Rocha International](#)
- [Equipping Christian Leaders in an Age of Science \(ECLAS\)](#)
- [Green Christian](#)
- [Katharine Hayhoe](#)