



# Eco-congregations

## People of faith caring for the sacred community of life

An Eco-Congregation is a local faith-based community committed to working for a more just and sustainable world, in response to the wisdom of sacred texts and faith traditions.

Caring for the Earth and the life it supports, including people, is a deep expression of our faith. It is a uniting, community building process that cuts across social and generational boundaries. It gives us an opportunity to put into practice the slogan “think globally, act locally”.

By turning awareness into small actions, we become a witness to our sacred and secular communities. We encourage sharing, simplicity and celebration and reject gross consumerism and materialism. At a time when much of the world faces destruction and despair, local Eco-Congregations grow into centres of good sustainable practice. Most importantly, Eco-Congregations are places of hope for the future of all life, in all its fullness.

Your congregation will receive an illustrated poster to acknowledge registration. Display it as an inspiration and witness to your collective pledge to “cherish living Earth”.

Use this poster as a three-step guide and get started as an Eco-Congregation today!

- Make a collective decision to become an Eco-Congregation
- From each of the three categories below, choose at least two actions that your congregation can take now, and mark others for the future:
  1. Worship, celebrating, spirituality, and learning
  2. Stewardship and responsible care of gifts and resources
  3. Local and global community action
- Renew your annual registration as an Eco-Congregation and network with other congregations in southern Africa to share your stories and learn from each other.

Send your stories to [info@safcei.org.za](mailto:info@safcei.org.za)

**safcei** SOUTHERN AFRICAN FAITH COMMUNITIES' ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE

t +27 21 701 8145 f +27 86 696 9666 w [www.safcei.org](http://www.safcei.org)  



**EARTH  
KEEPER**



## 1 Worship, celebrating, spirituality and learning

### We will:

- Celebrate at least three eco-justice days in the year
- Set aside times in the year to focus worship, celebration, preaching and teaching on a “Season of Creation”
- Include eco-justice concerns in regular worship (e.g. prayers, liturgy and music)
- Host an annual outdoor service, retreat or pilgrimage focusing on the local environment
- Develop or adapt and celebrate appropriate environmental liturgies
- Set up small study group(s) or programmes to help explore how our faith should respond to environmental challenges
- Build up and encourage the use of resources including books, DVDs and CDs relating to faith and the environment
- Include environmental issues in work with children and young people
- Host opportunities to share information about faith and the environment
- Include environmental challenges and learning in youth training
- Make opportunities for leadership to undergo training in environmental issues and eco-theology
- Establish a notice board to display environmental posters and news
- Include eco-justice information regularly in newsletters or announcements
- .....
- .....

## 2 Stewardship and responsible care of gifts and resources

### In collaboration with the congregation our administration will:

- Appoint a group to promote and co-ordinate eco-congregation activities
- Develop an environmental policy which can be integrated into our general mission
- Invest financial assets ethically in social and environmental projects
- .....

### Our catering group will:

- Use cups and plates and knives and forks that you do not throw away
- Try not to use polystyrene, plastic or other non-biodegradable materials at big events
- Buy local and avoid imported items
- Promote healthy, wholesome, locally produced and environmentally friendly food
- .....

### With regard to BUILDINGS owned or used by the congregation, we will:

- Keep them in a good state of repair
- Consider green standards for all renovation and new building projects

### Our office staff will:

- Recycle paper and encourage congregation members to do so too
- Turn off equipment and appliances when not in use
- Dispose of non-functioning office equipment at ‘e’- waste or recycling centres

**safcei** SOUTHERN AFRICAN FAITH COMMUNITIES' ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE

t +27 21 701 8145 f +27 86 696 9666 w [www.safcei.org](http://www.safcei.org)  





**With regard to WATER, we will:**

- Develop a water management and conservation policy
- Monitor, manage and report on water consumption on the property
- Install rain-water tanks and use 'grey' water for irrigation where possible
- Install water-saving devices like dual-flush toilet systems and waterless urinals
- Encourage water saving through notices or posters in bathrooms, kitchens and public places
- Regularly check and repair dripping or leaking pipes and taps

**With regard to ENERGY, we will:**

- Develop an energy management and conservation policy
- Regularly monitor and report on the congregation's energy consumption
- Switch off unnecessary lights and make use of natural light wherever possible
- Install energy-saving light bulbs and not leave appliances like hot water urns switched on
- Avoid heating systems, meet in smaller spaces or outside in the sun
- Conserve heat by insulating ceilings, hot water pipes and geysers
- Install renewable energy systems like solar hot-water geysers and photovoltaic panels
- .....

**With regard to WASTE, we will:**

- Actively promote the ethic and practice of the 3 "Rs": reduce, reuse and recycle
- Establish a collection and recycling centre for waste and used goods like spectacle frames, books, and second-hand clothes

**With regard to TRANSPORT, we will:**

- Try to share transport to reduce the use of private vehicles
- Encourage people to walk or ride bicycles to meetings and services
- Lobby local authorities for more efficient, affordable and safe public transport
- Support local businesses and suppliers to reduce the distance goods are transported
- .....

**With regard to LAND owned or used by the congregation, we will:**

- Care for and use it as a sanctuary for outdoor celebration, recreation, education or for growing produce
- Grow indigenous, water-wise plants and create a refuge for birds and other creatures

### 3 Local and global community action

**We will:**

- Check on and respond to inappropriate development and events in the community
- Initiate and support community project(s) that care for the Earth
- Link with organisations that have a positive social impact
- Speak out boldly about moral and ethical injustices
- Promote fair trade and ethical investments
- Support and partner with development and conservation agencies that champion the poor and the environment
- Lobby business and political leadership to uphold justice for people and planet
- .....
- .....

**safcei** SOUTHERN AFRICAN FAITH COMMUNITIES' ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE

t +27 21 701 8145 f +27 86 696 9666 w [www.safcei.org](http://www.safcei.org)  

