

Churches urged to consider carbon reduction measures as new warnings come in about our warming globe

Another milestone in human history was widely reported earlier this year. Climate-warming greenhouse gas reached 400 parts per million (ppm) in May 2013 according to data from two monitoring stations on the Hawaiian volcano of Mauna Loa.

The last time that the atmosphere had this level of Co₂ was more than 3 million years ago when the Arctic was ice free, the sea level was up to 40 metres higher than to-day and average global temperatures were 3 or 4c higher than we experience now. We know this from data including analysis of fossil air trapped in ancient ice.

The speed at which Co₂ is rising – some 75 times faster than in pre-industrial times according to experts – unless it is checked could lead to the unimaginable displacement of millions of people fleeing extreme weather conditions including heat-waves and flooding and migrating across the globe in search of land.

What is the Church of England doing about it?

The Church of England has responded to these growing concerns by adding a new tool to its national carbon reduction campaign ‘Shrinking the Footprint’ which is aimed at churches, schools and other church buildings. [Smeasure](#) enables churches to manage their energy, save money and cut carbon by using a very simple on-line programme..

What is our Diocese doing about sMeasure?

Alison Davidson is a member of St Paul’s Church in St Albans who is really keen to share her experience of using the campaign’s Smeasure project in our Diocese. This is a simple and free online energy monitoring tool which enables churches to keep a record of their energy use and have it analysed to show where energy savings may be possible.

Alison says: “A particularly useful feature of the program is that your energy use is compared with local weather conditions so that you can see immediately whether increased energy use is due to a spell of cold weather or poor heating controls.”

She adds that all that is needed are a couple of people in every church who are willing to take gas and electricity meter readings regularly and enter them on the website. Ideally this would be weekly but even monthly readings will quickly give you a picture of where your church’s energy is going.

Crucially, this needn’t be an additional task for already busy clergy, staff or PCC members. It can be done by any member of the congregation who is interested and can be trusted with access to the meters as is the case with Alison who has been entering data for St Paul’s Church for two years.

Energy bills are high at St Paul’s but this reflects a building (recently renovated to high conservation and ecological standards) which is in constant use 7 days a week.

“What we can see” says Alison “is that our gas use is correlated very closely with the weather, which tells us that our heating controls are set appropriately. But we need to look more closely at our electricity use.”

Alison is now looking for more churches in St Albans Diocese to join her in the Smeasure project:

“When twenty buildings are signed up to the software in the Diocese, a Peer Group will be created to track our footprint results together. It will be useful not only to link up churches with similar sized buildings and patterns of use (whether small and infrequently used and expensive to heat up one day a week or like St Paul’s, in constant use) but also provide a forum for sharing ideas, reducing energy bills and modelling our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint to our wider local community.”

Help for parishes

- If you are interested and would like to know more about using Smeasure contact Alison at alison4y@btinternet.com
- If you are at the stage where you would like someone to come to a PCC or Deanery meeting to talk about energy reduction and the Shrinking the Footprint campaign, Ken Ebbage leads for the Diocese on this project and you can contact him on kenebbage@hotmail.com