



CHURCH of IRELAND GENERAL SYNOD
CHURCH in SOCIETY COMMITTEE
Ecological and Environmental Sub-Committee

The Ecological and Environmental Sub-Committee has been acquainting itself with the wide variety of topics currently attracting attention and concern in the media. It is notable that the general populace is becoming increasingly aware of the threat to the planet caused by global warming, the effect of greenhouse gases, the growing problem of waste disposal etc., and therefore an opportune time for the Church to highlight these matters, and to seek to gain a response from each parish, both in emphasising the problems, and in encouraging local action.

Already, an attempt is being made to target certain dates each year, such as Conservation Sunday, the first Sunday in June, and 1st September, a Day of Prayer set aside by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and adopted by the World Council of Churches, for prayer for the world in which we live. In 2003, the committee provided clergy with a special set of prayers, readings and suggested hymns for use at Harvest Thanksgiving services, and the request was made, to the clergy, and in an article in the Church of Ireland Gazette, that Harvest Thanksgiving should be used as a time when parishes may concentrate on the beauty and fragility of God's Creation, and on our responsibility to safeguard what has been entrusted to us.

This year, the concentration is to be on the distribution and advertisement of the Eco Congregation Programme to parishes. This programme, initiated by the Churches together in Britain and Ireland, seeks 'to encourage and enable churches to green their life and mission', and is an environmental programme to be operated locally, but supported and resourced centrally, and with an award available to those who fulfill the requirements. Not only is it an incentive to parishes to become more environmentally aware, but it offers a special programme that can unite all age groups, cross denominational lines in the locality, and help churches to connect with their local communities.

The committee notes with concern Ireland's failure to meet the agreed Kyoto Treaty targets to limit harmful emissions, and their sanction of increased levels of Carbon Dioxide emissions by major Irish industries, without suffering penalties. It welcomes, however, the Geiranger Declaration on Responsible Stewardship, adopted by participants in the North Sea Sailing Seminar last June. Church leaders, environmentalists, politicians and representatives from scientific institutions met to consider the riches of the sea and what must be done to protect it. The Church of Ireland was represented by Rev. Canon Walter Lewis.