

Minutes of Eco Church Meeting 2nd February 2025

The meeting opened with a prayer.

1. Gold Eco Church application

This has now been completed and are awaiting a visit from the assessor. We need to put a team together for her visit. This needs to consist of people who can speak about the five areas of Eco Church.

Building

Derek and James

Land

Heather or Freda and Alison – Quarry Churchyard

Anne, David, Mary L – Eco Church garden

Global Engagement – perhaps collect 1-minute videos

Catherine Black

Jenny Ayres

Paul Spray

Mary L – toilet twinning

Mel – engagement with young people

Lifestyle

Esther

Mel

Mary L

Worship

Janet

Miriam

David Bull

2. Eco Church Buildings group

- Derek reported that the ECPG has met twice since the last Church Council.
- At our last meeting, we considered two indicative quotations from local companies Joju Solar and EnergyMyWay.
- We agreed to invite Joju Solar to visit and prepare a more detailed quotation (their indicative figure was £15,031 (Including scaffolding and VAT)) for an annual estimated generation of 9,018 kwh.
- We agreed to incorporate the proposed Solar Panels project into a more major specification being drawn up following the Quinquennial Survey Report. We are expecting this to be available within the next two months.
- We have created a new project on the Methodist Property Consents website (Project ID 54280). Once the total estimated cost is known and how we expect it to be funded, we will need approval from Church Council, the Circuit Meeting and District, as well as planning permission and listed building consent from Manchester.
- The whole project is estimated at £150,000. We have been advised to apply for a grant for the whole scheme to the district even if we decide to do it in phases.
- James reported on our plans to produce renewable energy in three phases.

PHASE 1. Solar Panels South Side of Hall Roof.

- Probably happen spring/summer 2026. Delay is caused by repairs on roof. These require surveys, price quotes, various permissions etc. before the first builder comes.
- The ECO Committee has had many discussions, compared quotes and various specs etc. and has decided on a system which should meet English Heritage's requirements for listed buildings.
- 22 Panels, generate 9,000KWHrs of electricity per year and save 1.9 tons of CO2 per year. Over a 20 year period this equates to about 350 trees. It will pay for itself several times over in the first 20 yrs. Expected to last 30 – 40 years. 9,000KWHrs is about a 6th of our yearly electricity consumption.
- NO BATTERY as vast majority of electricity generated will be used to power the premises.
- It is inevitable that some excess will be exported to the grid. This excess will be part of Church's Mission to support the community. However, the system will also have an export meter so we will be paid a small fee for each unit we export. We will review the amount we export after a year. If this amount of electricity is higher than expected, it may be worthwhile to fit a gadget which diverts this excess power to provide solar hot water.
- COST. Not finalised. Somewhere between £11.5K and £15K. Two variables are the cost of scaffolding and VAT.... It might be possible to piggyback on builder's scaffolding. Regarding VAT, current exemptions for places of worship come to an end March 2026. Hopefully these exemptions will be extended.
- GRANTS. We are confident that eco organisations will provide a good proportion of the necessary money.

PHASE 2. 2030 – 2035.

More Solar Panels. A much larger and more powerful system on the south side of Church roof. This system will have a fairly large battery to store excess electricity for use in evenings (and) a gadget for using solar power to provide hot water. The two systems should produce vast majority of our electricity needs for the 7 months between March and September.

PHASE 3. 2035 – 2040.

We expect the present very efficient gas boilers to reach the end of their useful lives by 2038 – 2040. This gives us several years to commission a replacement heating system. Choosing a suitable ECO heating system is very specialised, especially for older buildings. The main thing is to start planning a new ECO heating system in 2035 and look at all available options so installation can start several years later.

Mary said that we need to look more into zoning our present heating system.

Thank you to James and Derek for all their had work regarding the building.

3. Food waste and other recycling

- So far, the congregation have been taking the food waste home and although this works some of the time, we still end up throwing some of it away. We have looked into having our food waste collected in the past and it was thought to be too expensive, but we have moved on with our thinking and it was agreed that Jo

will look into this again to find out how much it will cost and then we will make a decision.

- We have looked into whether we could become a collecting point for other recyclables such as blister packs. After some discussion it was decided that we don't have to do everything ourselves as there are plenty of recycling points. We just need to signpost others to where to find these. Jo will collect information and make or find a leaflet.

4. Eco Church garden

Anne and David Bull spoke about the front garden.

- We have a woodland garden, planted for semi-shade, which we hope will be almost self-sustaining, with the right things in the right places. Some plants were there already, some were brought, and we added others. It has year-round interest, providing shelter and food for wildlife from flowering and fruiting plants, a modest habitat pile, bird-feeder and a stepped birdbath and drinking source.
- Not all our visitors are well-behaved, though. Squirrels constantly dig up bulbs, blackbirds scatter the soil about, crows and magpies bombard the bird feeder to scatter the seed around, and night-time revellers occasionally throw things and break them.
- The long winter months have been brightened up by the winter-flowering jasmine and the berries on the pyrocanthus and stinking iris, and already now the spring flowers are appearing, with lots more to come.

Thank you to Anne and David for all their work with the front garden.

Mary L said that any donations of plants for the back garden would be welcomed.

Catherine has a garden twinning plaque for her allotment (which she has given up). She will give it to us for the garden.

5. AOB

- Organise another working party for Quarry Churchyard in the Spring.
- If anyone would like to join the buildings group or garden group, just let us know.
- Catherine suggested organising a gardening session after church one Sunday.
- Jo will add Frank, Catriona, Dorothy and Anthony to the Eco Church email.

The meeting ended with The Grace.