

Diocese of London



Shrinking the Footprint REDUCING WATER CONSUMPTION IN CHURCHES

Water is a precious commodity; life would not be possible without it.

However, the water supply in the UK is under threat. Concern is mounting that in London and the South-East especially we are, on average, experiencing decreases in average annual rainfall. And rainfall is coming more irregularly and erratically – none at all for weeks on end, then the whole backlog all at once.

Rising populations are also putting strains on our resources. Roughly speaking we each use about 160 litres of water every day per person – this figure needs to be reduced to ease these considerable pressures.

Much water is wasted and there are a number of simple ways of cutting down water consumption, as outlined below.

- Consider installing a water meter if you don't have one already. A meter increases the awareness of how much water is being consumed in a building, and enables you to pay only for the water you use, a reward for being careful with your water.
- Check for leaks on both pipework and taps. A good way of checking for leaks is to use your water meter. Turn off all the taps and the outside stop valve, where the water enters the building. Take two readings a couple of minutes apart. If there is any movement in the reading you may have a leak.
- A dripping hot water tap could, over the course of one week, waste enough hot water to fill half a bath. Fix leaking taps and make sure they are fully turned off. If necessary, put up signs to not leave taps running. If replacing taps, install spray taps or taps with a timer that turns off automatically.
- Check if your cistern is leaking by putting a little food colouring in the cistern. If the colouring appears in the bowl when the toilet has not been flushed, you should get the cistern checked.
- Lag your pipes. As well as keeping your pipes warm and saving on your heating bills, this will prevent them from bursting in cold weather and flooding your house. Do not, however, lag the loft floor underneath the water tank or it may freeze, as it prevents warm air from circulating.
- Save both water and electricity by only boiling as much water as you need whilst making sure the electric heating element is fully covered.
- Make sure all sinks have plugs and use bowls in sinks for washing up.

- When purchasing either a new washing machine or a dishwasher for your church hall, choose one that is water efficient. It is best to use these machines only when full, but if you are not filling them up use the half-load or economy programme.
- Approximately one third of water used in homes is flushed away. Older types of cisterns can use as much as 10 litres of water per flush, whilst the new ones tend to use only seven litres. Place a 'Water Hippo' or 'Save-a-flush' inside your toilet's cistern to save water when flushing – a supply of the 'Save-a-Flush' type is available from the [Head of Environmental Challenge](#) at London Diocesan House – (020) 7932 1229.
- If you have a dual-flush cistern, use the light flush whenever possible. Or consider installing a dual-flush mechanism.
- Recycle water by collecting rainwater in a water butt. This could be freestanding or carefully placed to receive out-flowing water from drainpipes. Re-use the rainwater to water flowers and plants.

Sources

For Creed and Creation: A simple guidebook for running a greener church, Gillian Straine & Nathan Oxley, Aldgate Press, 2007

www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org

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www.christian-ecology.org.uk/noah/index.htm

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