

## **Guide to reducing water consumption in churches**

Water is a precious commodity; after all, life would not be possible without it. However, the water supply in this country is under threat. Experts are concerned that we are, on average, experiencing decreases in average annual rainfall. Rising populations are also putting strains on our resources. Roughly speaking we each use about 160 litres of water every day, a figure which 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 haven't got 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 air from circulating.
- Save both water and electricity by only boiling as much water as you need and remember to cover the element.
- Make sure all sinks have plugs and use bowls in sinks used 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. Buy a 'hippo' to place inside your toilet's cistern to save water when flushing. Alternatively you can try using a one litre plastic bottle, half full of water and placed in the cistern where it won't impede the ball valve. Cut the bottle in half and make a small hole in the side. Put the bottom half in the cistern, weighted down with a pebble.
- If you have a dual-flush cistern, use the light flush whenever possible.

- 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:**

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