

Church Waste Reduction Guide



Let nothing be wasted...

In 2021, the Auckland Diocesan Synod passed a motion encouraging all ministry units to: “reduce waste produced as a result of church services, activities and events.”

This resource is to support ministry units to measure and set targets to reduce their waste.

Ministry units are invited to:

- 1. Share this resource with staff, volunteers and governing bodies.**
- 2. Spend 15–30 mins to evaluate the church’s current waste approach and create an action plan during a ministry team and/or governing body meeting.**
- 3. Consider joining the Zero Waste Church programme.**

The **Zero Waste Church Programme 2022** is run by A Rocha Aotearoa and Para Kore. They run zero waste workshops with churches, develop waste strategies appropriate to context, and provide ongoing support and accountability. To find out more: www.ecochurch.org.nz/zero-waste-programme



If you would like someone to talk to or have any questions, please contact the Sustainability Fieldworker at: sustainability.fieldworker@aucklandanglican.org.nz

Why is reducing waste important to the church?

“To reduce, re-use and recycle is our responsibility, and part of how we take care of God’s creation. After all, there is no such thing as waste in nature – the output from one organism is the input for another.”

Dr Ruth Valerio (Theologian & Environmentalist)

In nature as God designed it, nothing is ever wasted. In the ecosystem everything operates in cycles. Jesus often drew comparisons between the cycles of nature and the kingdom of God (John 12:23–25). Organic matter breaks down and is repurposed and used again to nurture other life, indefinitely. It is a regenerative picture of creation that reflects our call to a regenerative life through Jesus.

In contrast, our modern lifestyle results in a tremendous amount of harmful waste. We have too much stuff and we are reliant on disposable products that don’t break down easily. Instead of nourishing the earth, the waste we produce contaminates the land, contributes to climate change, pollutes our waterways and creates hazards for all living things.

Excessive waste is a problem for Aotearoa New Zealand. In 2018, the [World Bank](#) named New Zealand as the 10th most wasteful country in the world. In that year, each person produced 734kg of rubbish. This was a 20% increase from 2015 and five times the global average.

We are running out of space to dispose of our rubbish. As an [example](#) – Auckland’s largest landfill is likely to be full within the next eight years. Waste Management New Zealand has received a contested resource consent to build a 60ha landfill in Dome Valley, north of Walkworth. Local iwi are concerned about potential poisonous leachate running into Hōteu River and into the Kaipara Harbour. Nobody wants to see new landfills or polluting incinerators being built near them, but our current wasteful patterns are leading us down that path.



We can do better!

The Government's proposed new waste strategy encourages businesses and the public sector to set targets to reduce their waste by 30–50% by 2030. As churches, we can easily achieve these targets and go beyond.

At the Sustainability Champions Workshop 2021, four Auckland Anglican churches contributed a sample of waste from their landfill bins for us to conduct a waste audit with Para Kore.

We were surprised to find that about 75% of the waste could have been diverted from the landfill to soft plastic recycling, general recycling or the compost. If recycling/composting bins and systems are in place and used correctly, these churches can reduce their waste immediately.

Many churches who have taken steps to intentionally reduce their waste have found many benefits for themselves and their wider community:



- **It becomes an important part of living beyond ourselves and serving others.** Existing waste reduction initiatives in our diocese have connected churches to their wider community in the form of pātaka kai (food pantries), community composts, and zero waste workshops for the local community.
- **Having a robust and highly visible zero waste system manifests our Christian values.** It speaks volumes to those within our faith community, our young people, those who use our facility and our physical neighbours; demonstrating care for people and creation.
- **It is a financially sensible choice to make.** Churches who shift to bulk purchases, washing and reusing rather than purchasing single use, reducing printing and choosing to compost/recycle will save money in the long run.

Waste Reduction Checklist

What is your church doing already? What would you like to start doing?

GENERAL

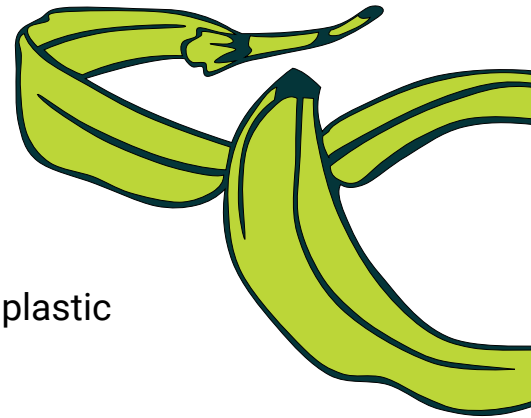
- Provide recycling bins throughout church facilities with clear signage
- Have compost collection in food preparation areas with clear signage
- Collect and recycle soft plastic (if available in your area)
- Conduct regular waste audits
- Other: _____

FOOD AND KITCHEN

- Avoid disposable plates, cups and cutlery
- Choose low-waste packaging for morning tea - avoid plastic
- Bring/keep reusable containers in the kitchen
- Give away leftover food where practical
- Compost organic waste onsite or offsite
- Choose caterers with a low-waste policy
- Clearly communicate low-waste values/goals to all church members including via signage in kitchen and in communications to volunteers and staff
- Other: _____

OFFICE

- Seek to repair or give away furniture/equipment before taking to landfill
- Choose to buy bulk/refill where possible e.g. cleaning products, snacks/coffee
- Avoid laminating (which turns recyclable paper into unrecyclable plastic)
- Reuse paper and avoid printing where possible
- Have an e-waste bin for e-waste collection (batteries, etc.)



CONSTRUCTION/BUILDING

- Choose environmentally conscious contractors with a low-waste policy
- Choose deconstruction over demolition where possible
- Choose natural fibres for carpet and non-laminate for wooden floors
- Reuse off-cuts for community projects/Sunday school/youth group activities
- Other:_____

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- Intentionally apply zero waste approach in kids church/youth group
- Invest in resources that are reusable, shareable and recyclable
- Avoid using non-compostable, non-recyclable resources - pipe cleaners, balloons, laminated cards, glitter, etc.
- Opt for resources made of paper, cardboard, wood, natural fabrics, seeds, recycled materials, etc. that can be diverted from landfill

OTHER AREAS

- Include low waste values in church hire contracts/agreements with instructions regarding recycling and composting; and gentle encouragements to cut back on plastics and disposables (plates, cutlery, table cloths, decorations, etc.)
- Collaborate on community activities that encourage low waste. e.g. host a repair café, community compost, zero waste workshops, collection point for e-waste or chip packet project, etc.

ZERO WASTE TIP: REUSABLES are generally always better than single use even if it is recyclable or compostable. Studies evaluate different factors (emissions, water use, energy consumption, etc) when comparing specific reusables and single use products, but most studies do point towards reusables being better for the environment the more times they are used.

DIY Waste Audit

Waste audits are a good way to build a picture of the current waste patterns of the church and highlight changes needed.

Ideally, pull together a group to undertake the waste audit, including those responsible for operations in the ministry unit with a knowledge of the current waste disposal systems. Plan to do the audit the day before rubbish is collected, or after church on a Sunday.

Start with an estimate of how much (litres) rubbish the church currently sends to the landfill during each collection: Size of the bins/bag (60L? 120L?) number of bins? how full is each bin? _____ L

Equipment needed: a large tarp, gloves, hand sanitiser, closed footwear, a large floor area that is easy to sweep.

1. Collect all the general waste bins and bags currently onsite. (Do NOT include existing recycling and compost bins.)
2. Tip out content of general rubbish bins/bags onto tarp.
3. Sort the rubbish into piles for: landfill, compost, recycling, other (can be op-shopped/given away.)
4. Assess what percentage of the waste could have been recycled or composted and diverted from the landfill:

10%

25%

50%

75%

- Is there anything surprising about the waste sorted?
- What might our waste tell us about our community and our habits?

Email sustainability.fieldworker@aucklandanglican.org.nz for more information or support.

Other Resources

Here are some useful websites for more information:

A Rocha Aotearoa NZ's Eco Church resources on waste:

www.ecochurch.org.nz/waste

Plastic Free July resources:

www.plasticfreejuly.org/aotearoa/

Auckland Council directory for unwanted items:

www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/rubbish-recycling/Pages/get-rid-unwanted-items.aspx

For e-waste drop off sites:

www.ewaste.org.nz/

Auckland Council Waste Minimalisation and Innovation Fund:

www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/grants-community-support-housing/grants/regional-grants/Pages/about-waste-minimisation-innovation-fund.aspx



Sustainability champions undertaking a waste audit with Para Kore.

Church Waste Reduction Action Plan

Date:

WASTE REDUCTION ACTION	WHO WILL DRIVE THIS ACTION?	WHEN WILL THIS HAPPEN?