

## How Port Melbourne Uniting Church achieved the Five Leaf Eco-Awards Basic Certificate

The congregation at Port Melbourne Uniting Church is a diverse group of people who live and work in and around the City of Port Phillip. During the past few years there has been increasing interest amongst members of the congregation to look at our effect on the environment and how we use resources. We have been moved to consider how we as a Christian community should respond to the call to be stewards of the earth and good neighbours. In July 2007 we began an EcoProject to examine our own use of resources and develop a program that will help our community become more sustainable. Later, we applied for the Five Leaf Eco-Awards Basic Certificate.

### Energy Audit

A walk-through audit of the church, hall and kindergarten took place in September 2007.



### Three Actions to Reduce Resource Use

Implementing suggestions for energy reduction:

1. Clear Comfort plastic window glazing was applied to the hall windows to reduce heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer;
2. The fridge in the church kitchen was only being used to store a very small amount of perishables, so it was turned off. Now it is only turned on when there is a need for it (eg for catering for special occasions). Milk for morning tea is kept in a cooler bag if the weather is warm.
3. Lights in the church were replaced with more energy efficient globes where possible. Some could not be replaced as alternative globes are not yet available for the fittings.

### Two Behaviour Change Campaigns

1. Recycling: A worm farm was purchased to be shared between the church and the kindergarten. The worm farm is kept in the kindergarten yard and supplied with the children's food scraps during term time. Church members keep an eye on the worms during holidays. A new recycling system was set up in the church kitchen with separate containers for food scraps, recyclables and rubbish.
2. Bike racks – a request was made to the local council to install bike racks on the street outside the church to encourage church members and kindergarten families to ride. This was installed in November 2007. More people ride their bikes now they have somewhere they can safely put them when they arrive.



### Environment Themed Worship Service

A number of our church services have had an environmental theme or have included reference to the environment. During September 2007 (and again in 2008) we participated in the Season of Creation. The church decoration for these services reflected the theme each



*"Storm", one of the artworks used during the Season of Creation*

week. The first Season of Creation came soon after the launch of the Eco Project where a net had been set up to lower the church ceiling and hold black balloons which had been part of the launch. Storm clouds and other features were hung from the net on appropriate Sundays. An artist from the congregation also painted a scene for each service.

## **Two Resources Provided to the Congregation to Help Them be Greener at Home**

1. Eco Notes in —News & Notes, the church newsletter. The Eco Notes ranged from information about practical issues such as grey water systems, energy efficiency rebates and composting to notes about Synod —green resolutions and the effects of climate change on vulnerable communities.
2. A Sharing Board and —Green Balloon Book where congregation members were encouraged to share items of interest about environmental issues and record their personal actions. Some examples from the Green Balloon Book include: taking a rubbish bag on morning walks along the foreshore, planting vegetable gardens, and switching to renewable energy.

### **Eco-Outreach Event**

The Port Melbourne Eco Project Launch in August 2007 was a public event with guest speakers Cath James, Uniting Church Environment Project Officer and Janet Bolitho, then Mayor of the City of Port Phillip and strong supporter of environmental sustainability.

In 2008 the congregation hosted a Winter Forum with the theme —Think Local, Act Local. Four speakers who are actively involved in our local community gave presentations on topics including community food gardens, City of Port Phillip Community Climate Plan, the 7-Star house project in South Melbourne and Locals Into Victoria's Environment, based in Albert Park.



*"Think Local, Act Local" panel discussion*

### **Special Project**

The Simply Living Community Garden grew out of the Eco project. The garden was funded by a Community Grant from the City of Port Phillip and built in a series of community working bees during October 2008. The garden design and supervision of the working bees was provided by the gardening team at the Port Phillip EcoCentre. Thirty nine people participated in the working bees to help build the garden and others have since come along to help work in the garden.



*August 2008 - laying out the garden plan*



*October 2008 - building the garden*



*November 2008 - garden working bee*

For more information on the Five Leaf Eco-Awards contact [fiveleafecoawards@gmail.com](mailto:fiveleafecoawards@gmail.com)