

## The Church and Environment Program

(Main activities: 2014-2016)



The Church and Environment program of the Center for Environmental Solutions was established in 2014 and it is a branch of ecofriendly lifestyle program of the organization.

The Church and Environment program is a friend of Synodal Department for Youth Affairs of the Belarusian Orthodox Church. The Synodal Department supported the initiative and has been promoting eco-friendly lifestyle among

Belarusian Christians together with the Center for Environmental Solutions.

The program develops ecological activities at Belarusian Christian churches and follows ecological recommendations and ideas declared in official church documents.

Since the program was established, there have been various educational projects including



discussions, lectures with priests and ecologists for the believers, ecology screenings, environmental care presentations, ecological excursions for children and adults, ecological cycling trips carried out. Since September 2014 more than 30 educational environmental events have been held for the Christians of all ages. The events are mainly based at Orthodox parishes' Sunday schools in the city of Minsk, as well as in Minsk, Vitebsk and Grodno regions.

The program regularly cooperates with some Minsk parishes (Minsk Orthodox Parish of St. Martyr Tatiana, Orthodox Parish of the Mother of God's Icon "Vsetsaritsa", St. Nicholas Yaponskiy's Parish, Holy Epiphany Parish (Loshitsa), St. Alexander Nevsky's Parish), also Kolozhaa Parish and Lutheran community in Grodno have been participating in the program.

Church and Environment program in collaboration with Synodal Department for Youth Affairs holds an annual seminar on the Day of Prayer for God's Creation, and has also prepared "Recommendations for holding eco events on the Day of the Prayer for God's Creation" for the eparchies.

Spiritual Education Center under the Printing House of Orthodox Book of Belarusian Exarchate gives support to the youth center "Octopus" to hold monthly educational meetings "Eco-hour" in the form of discussions and presentations.

About 800 believers have taken part in eco-educational events organized and supported by the program.

In social networks a group "Church and Environment" appeared to spread information about the program activities. A number of booklets describing the program and postcards with eco tips were developed.

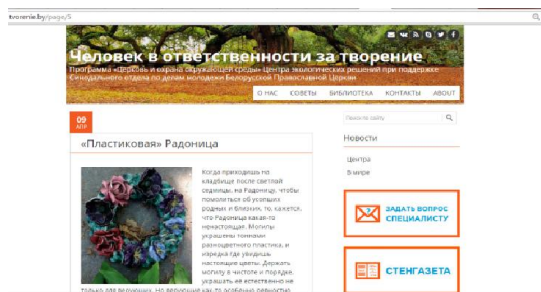


Since the first days of the program, there has been collaboration with mass media. The Church and Environment program prepared materials and interviews for both, religious and secular newspapers and

magazines. The closest cooperation is with such editions as “Царкоўнае слова”, “Воскресение”, “Минские Епархиальные Ведомости”, newspaper “Звезда”, and also with the web-sites: <http://krynica.info/>, <http://ecoidea.by/>, <http://sobor.by/>, <http://church.by/>.

The information and news website [tvorenje.by](http://tvorenje.by/) was launched in the test mode. Today it is the only Belarusian internet source dedicated to the environmental activities of the church in our country. One can find the following materials on the web-site:

- ❖ Tips on how to organize an eco-event for the Christian community;
- ❖ Recommendations to a priest;
- ❖ Everyday eco tips for the believers;
- ❖ Prayers of creation;
- ❖ Discussions and presentations about ecology with the youth, children and adults;
- ❖ Digital library on the Christian attitude to creation;
- ❖ News regarding eco-church activities in Belarus and abroad.



All the necessary materials are available for downloading.

Moreover, booklets, leaflets, handouts, “cribs” and wall newspaper on ecology (more than 10 different kinds of materials) were prepared:



• The wall newspaper “Church and Environmental Care” for the parishes on:

- Christian attitude to animals;
- Man - the priest of Creation;
- Water - the gift of God;
- Christianity and consumer society.

• Booklets on:

- “Water, the gift of God” – eco tips for the Epiphany Day;

- “The Great Lent as reconciling with Creation” – eco tips during the Great Lent;
- “Tips for Christians, how to spend Christmas without harming the environment”;
- The Russian Orthodox Church position on ecological problems.

• Prayers for God's creation

• Leaflets:

- Human is responsible for Creation;
- Ecological initiatives.

A layout of an information board (poster) on eco-friendly lifestyle was developed specially for Christian parishes. Each parish can afford to set a stand with a brief explanation of Christian mission to save the

creation around us and simple everyday eco tips.

Creation of the demonstration areas in the parishes, aimed at preserving the environment, was one of the most



significant program aims. An ecological trail named “Kamennaya Gorka” was organized at the St. Nicolas Yaponskiy’s parish in Minsk on the initiative of the Church and Environment program. Along this route information boards describing biological diversity of the territory as well as those on eco-friendly lifestyle and human attitude to the God’s Creation are set. All the boards are placed at the territory of the parish, which enables it to arrange informative excursions, eco master-classes and other environmental events hosted by the church.

Grodno Sunday School of Kolozha Parish organized an environmental corner “Noah’s Ark” aimed at teaching children to be animal-friendly. Sunday school can be a place to hold informative excursions and discussions for children from all Grodno schools, both public and religious.

The Church and Environment program takes part in the dialog on environmental protection issues with the government institutions. Some program representatives are members of the working group on implementation of the Cooperation Program of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus with the Belarusian Orthodox Church. In 2015 the Church and Environment program participated in drafting the Cooperation Program and arranging the Coordinating Council on the implementation of joint programs between the state authorities and the Belarusian Orthodox Church. The Cooperation Program between the Belarusian Orthodox Church and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus for 2016 – 2020 was signed on December 15. The program was signed by Metropolitan bishop of Minsk and Zaslavl Paul, Patriarchal Exarch of all Belarus, and Andrey Marlenovich Kovhuto, Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus.

The Church and Environment program has been the initiator and participated in organizing and holding seminars and meetings on ecology for priests and representatives of youth congregations. The seminars “Scout’s Green School” (2014) and “Belarusian Orthodox Church Perspectives in nature protection activities” (2015) can be mentioned among them.



A special questionnaire was designed to find out how many believers are informed and interested in the environmental protection problems. It was offered to fill in at the events such as youth Orthodox forums, exhibitions, meetings. The analysis of the poll’s results is published at the program’s website and in the social network groups.

The Church and Environment program is open for team projects with secular and religious environmental organizations.