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The Different Types Of Cups Available (Recycled/Disposable/Compostable)

www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk

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think

When making teas and coffees at church, we need to ask the question, what kind of cup has the least impact not only on the environment – but also on taste and hospitality towards guests and visitors?

We could save the planet, but scare the people. As a result, much creativity and compassion are needed as we make this most important of decisions – which cup should we use?

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Kendra Juskus of online magazine Flourish analysed the great tradition of the post-service drink, and asked what kind of cup should contain it.

Not for her the 'dubious environmental beginnings and endings' of polystyrene foam and paper cups.

'Cupping a reusable mug unburdens landfills and the ecosystems that suffer from their waste,' Kendra explained. She also believes that creating the habit of reusing what we have distances us from the 'narrow throw-away mentality' that pervades society, and steers us toward what is 'more lasting and nourishing'.

Why not try a conventional cup that can be washed up and rinsed each week, with low environmental impact? Certainly china cups can be reused, but a further consideration might be to ask where and how the china is sourced. Is it from sustainable origins? Find out, then put the kettle on and enjoy!

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REUSABLE MUGS IN CHURCH
www.flourishonline.org/2009/12/cultivating-community-reusable-mugs-in-church

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Carry out an audit of your coffee cups

What if your church doesn't have its own kitchen facilities? It may not be possible to wash china cups. In that case, a 100 per cent biodegradable cup may be an alternative. Such items are supplied by companies like Berkshire-based Kingdom Coffee. Managing Director Darren Rayner said their 'envirocup' is made of plant extracts, so it breaks down when placed in the ground. Other companies may well offer similar products. It is worth shopping around.

Beware of the indestructibles

Styrofoam cups are the worst culprits, as they never degrade, warns The Recycler's Handbook. Americans throw away 25,000,000,000 styrofoam cups every ear. Even 500 years from now, the foam coffee cup you used this morning will be sitting in a landfill somewhere.

Recycle your grinds

If your church uses fresh coffee, have you ever thought about what happens to all those waste grounds each week? Bio-bean is an award-winning clean technology company that has industrialised the process of recycling waste coffee grounds into biofuels. The process diverts waste from landfill, incineration and anaerobic digestion to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create carbon-neutral biofuels. If you are inside the M25, Bio-bean can pick up your waste grounds and use them for good.

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DISPOSABLE PAPER CUPS
www.kingdomcoffee.co.uk/disposables-cleaning/disposable-paper-cups

AVOID STYROFOAM
www.wisebread.com/the-coffee-cup-revolution-lets-take-a-stand

BIO-BEAN
www.bio-bean.com/

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Review the reusables

The desire to drink coffee has led to more than 2.5 billion cups being thrown away every year in the UK, says The Guardian. People assume these cups are recyclable, but the recyclable bit is trapped under a film of plastic that stops the paper getting soggy. It's also difficult to remove. Most go straight to landfill. The Guardian has gathered the facts and reviewed some of the different reusable cups available. Here are the top three:

1 JOCO cup – an unusual glass vessel with a silicone sleeve and lid. An Australian company has taken a vintage idea (remember those smoked glass coffee cups your mum and dad used to keep in the sideboard?) and brought it up-to-date with an environmental kick.

2 KeepCup – a colourful plastic cup with a moveable clip instead of clamps over the sip hole. Yet another Australian company took an established idea – the traditional plastic beaker – and made it trendy for eco-coffee lovers.

3 Starbucks reusable cup – surprisingly for those who may not warm to the corporate coffee world, the article recommended this coffee giant's environmentally-friendly option. The Starbucks cup is light, cheap and is good for 30 uses. It actually looks and feels quite good.

FIVE OF THE BEST REUSABLE COFFEE CUPS

www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jul/04/five-of-the-best-reusable-coffee-cups

JOCOCUPS

jococups.com

KEEPCUP

www.keepcup.com

STARBUCKS

www.starbucks.com/responsibility/global-report/environmental-stewardship/reusable-cups

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Where does your china come from?

It is worth remembering that the source for the permanent cup is just as important. If your church's china cup has travelled 4,000 miles in a container ship after being supplied from a mine on a former nature reserve, it may actually possess a considerable energy factor.

Remember your coffee sends out a signal!

Leading expert in carbon footprinting Mike Berners Lee is director of Small World Consulting, which focuses on climate change. They develop and communicate multi-disciplinary understanding of the essential issues and help organisations of every size and type understand what they can do. Mike offered some simple guidance to Eco Church on the subject of coffee cups:

- avoid disposable cups. Think about signalling your support in a world where we get maximum use out of products by using cups and mugs from secondhand shops. Of course, charity shops are ideal;

- if any church feels they have to buy new, then encourage high quality purchases that are made to last;

- in itself the choice of mugs looks trivial, but it gives an opportunity to send a big signal. Churches are doing some great thought and action on the environment and there are plenty of opportunities to send signals about what eco-living could be like.

SMALL WORLD CONSULTING
www.sw-consulting.co.uk