

TOILETS



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WHY?

Toilets are an inescapable feature of life so it is a pretty standard expectation that churches will provide some, including accessible toilets and baby-changing facilities. The choice of toilet system can have a big impact on the environment, with opportunities to reduce the amount of water used, to reuse grey or rainwater or simply to select recycled toilet paper.

In 2010, a National Churches Trust survey found that a third of churches did not have toilets available. Conventional toilets need both a water source and sewage disposal to operate; for rural areas or older buildings, this makes provision of toilets complicated. There is now a range of odourless, waterless toilets which are not only water-saving, but also deal with sewage efficiently on site rather than shipping it downstream to become someone else's problem: <https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/toilets>

HOW?

LOWER YOUR WATER USAGE

Toilets are one of the biggest users of water in modern life. Old-style toilets used 14 litres per flush. Now, the UK average toilet uses nine litres, but by using dual flush or low-flush toilets, water usage can be reduced to less than half that. If you don't yet have low-flush toilets, a 'save-a-flush' can save you many litres of water. Some water companies give these away free, so do check with yours. A Thames Water review in 2020 suggests that some dual-flush systems might be more prone to leakage, so do check regularly for water running into the pan when not in use: <https://www.ccwater.org.uk/businesses/save-water-for-your-business/>

http://www.reduceuserecycle.co.uk/greenfreebies/free_water_saving_devices.php

THINK ABOUT THE USERS

In planning toilets, remember that different ages and stages of life have different needs (baby changing, smaller size for children or fully accessible for people in wheelchairs). Churches often



BUILDINGS

Toilets

have some activities with a higher proportion of one gender than the other. In thinking about this, St Stephen's Twickenham, for example, decided on six toilets: three cubicles together in a 'Ladies' loo and three separate unisex toilets, two of which include baby-changing facilities and one which is fully accessible.

GREY WATER AND RAINWATER

It is possible to install a system to capture grey water or rainwater to flush toilets, topped up from the mains when there is inadequate rainwater. See our case study for how Stratford Methodist Church captures rainwater for flushing toilets.

Grey water systems capture water from sinks and dishwashing. These are quite complicated systems, so be sure to find a supplier who is familiar with the British Standards Greywater Code of Practice: <https://cat.org.uk/info-resources/free-information-service/water-and-sanitation/rain-and-grey-water/>

WATERLESS TOILETS

Modern, waterless toilets are a realistic odourless option for many churches and communities. They are a very environmentally friendly solution as there is no need for electricity, water or sewage for the toilet to operate (although you may wish to install lighting in the venue!). The waste is usually composted and can be used for plant fertiliser.

There are a variety of systems. Some separate out liquids and solids and encourage a draught to ensure they are odour-free; others require the addition of pine or other materials for efficient composting. Depending on the frequency of use, both types will need a little maintenance as the dry waste may need to be moved somewhere to store until it is fully composted and available for use in the garden.

Gloucester Diocese showcases a few in church settings for inspiration: <https://www.greengloucestershire.org.uk/resources/composting-toilets/>



BUILDINGS

Toilets

THINK GLOBAL

Around 2 billion people around the world don't have access to hygienic toilets, so whether you have low-water, grey-water or waterless toilets, you might want to consider twinning your loos: <https://www.toilettwinning.org/>

LONGER READS & OTHER RESOURCES

These commercial suppliers have some great videos explaining how different waterless toilets work:

<https://www.waterlesstoilets.co.uk/>

<https://natsol.co.uk/>

<https://www.biolan.com/products/toilets>

Please note: Eco Church cannot recommend suppliers. These have been included simply as they provide useful information about how the systems work.

The Church Growth Trust has created a resource for accessible toilet design: http://churchgrowth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Accessible_WCs_within_church_buildings_Nov2014.pdf

CASE STUDIES

See the separate case study showing how Stratford Methodist Church captures rainwater and uses it to flush their toilets.

Composting toilets have been installed in these rural churches without direct access to sewage systems: <https://allsaintschurchdogmersfield.org.uk/our-loo/>

<https://ecochurchsouthwest.org.uk/2014/05/02/composting-toilets-week-st-mary/>



BUILDINGS

Toilets

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Taking action on this topic will contribute to these UN Strategic Development Goals:

