



Litter picking

Land and Nature

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What's so great about litter picking?

Background

In the Land and Nature category of the Eco Church survey there's a question that asks whether your church regularly takes part in activities like community litter picks, beach cleans, or river cleans. This question sits under the 'people' theme and is quite heavily weighted – meaning your church can earn a lot of points for doing this. But what's so great about litter picking?

Why?

The most obvious benefit of litter picking is that it directly helps the environment. Litter is not only unpleasant to look at – it can be quite jarring to see a piece of bright plastic peeking through natural vegetation – it can also harm wildlife. Animals can swallow it, get tangled in it, or be exposed to toxic substances. By clearing rubbish from streets, parks, rivers and beaches, we help prevent pollution from harming wildlife and ecosystems. Litter picking also makes us more aware of the waste we create, which can encourage more eco-friendly habits, like recycling or choosing reusable products.

Litter picking is a simple yet impactful activity that not only improves the cleanliness of our surroundings but also [benefits the litter picker](#) in profound ways. Litter picking is an opportunity for physical exercise; walking, bending, and stretching are all good for you! It is also widely understood that being outdoors and engaging with nature has been [linked to improved mental health](#) and overall wellbeing. Focusing on the task of finding litter and removing it can help distract you from worries or negative thoughts. Plus, there's a real sense of satisfaction and achievement that comes with taking part in tidying up your community spaces.

Another significant benefit is how it brings people together. Litter picking gives neighbours a chance to talk, work side by side, and build relationships across ages and backgrounds. Since churches often look for ways to support those in the community who feel lonely, inviting someone to join a litter pick can be a friendly and welcoming form of outreach.



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Being out in the community is also an opportunity to pray. Integrating prayer with your litter pick might be a personal response, or indeed the purpose of the litter pick through a [litter pilgrimage](#). Moving slowly through familiar streets helps you notice the people, places and nature around you – and pray for them as you go.

By taking part in this simple but meaningful activity, churches demonstrate their care for creation in a practical and noticeable way. Organising a litter pick is an opportunity for outreach, witness, and environmental action. It helps the planet, improves local spaces, and strengthens community life, all at the same time.

How?

A good way to organise your first litter pick is during an existing event, such as [Great Big Green Week](#) or part of a campaign such as [The Great British Spring Clean and Great Big School Clean](#), or [World Clean up Day](#).

There are several organisations that can help you get started. Alongside [Keep Britain Tidy](#) and [Keep Wales Tidy](#), you can find practical advice about organising a litter pick and keeping everyone safe from [CleanupUK](#) and [Wildlife Trusts – Do a litter pick](#). Many local councils provide equipment such as high-vis vests, litter grabbers and bags. If you register with your local council, they can also collect and recycle what you gather.

If you don't want to organise your own event, you can join a litter pick already happening nearby. There are clean-ups for beaches (e.g. [Beach cleans | Volunteering | Marine Conservation Society](#)), schools, waterways, cities, parks and just about anywhere else. Check local websites and social media to see what's happening in your area.



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Examples

We spoke to several Eco Churches, who share why they are involved in litter-picking.

As part of their Gold award application, [St George the Martyr, Shirley](#) commented: 'One of the best initiatives taken was the introduction of litter picks. We started with a 'trial' pick around the church site. The group soon progressed to organising, in liaison with the Council, three picks a year in the last remaining vestige of The Great North Wood which lies within the parish. This has now been increased to four picks a year. They have proved a great opportunity to chat with members of the public, some of whom now join us each quarter.'

Running litter picks with Sustainable Northstowe and Northstowe Town Council is just one way that the silver awarded [Northstowe Church](#) has made an impact in their community. Revd Dr Beth Cope, Pioneer Minister for Northstowe, explains: 'Last year we worked with Sustainable Northstowe and the Town Council to run a "spring clean in green" event together on St Patrick's Day. We organised the litter pick components on the day. By working in partnership like this, we can have a wider impact in our community.'



Photo: Churches Together in Porthcawl at a monthly beach clean.

[Churches Together in Porthcawl](#) join with other local community groups for monthly beach cleans, which are followed by coffee, cake and chats. Co-leader David Robinson, a member of Tabernacle Porthcawl, commented, 'Living by the coast, we regularly see large amounts of plastic and other rubbish on our beaches, car parks and grass verges. Once a month, we provide an opportunity for local people to do a litter pick around Coney Beach area, followed by a chance to socialise. We work in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy and Sussed/Sustainable Wales, who kindly provide equipment and a meeting place for us. Our faith calls us to be stewards of creation, and this is a great way to put that into action.'