



TRAVELLING TOGETHER

Reducing transport emission as
communities of faith

By Richard Barter



WHY TRAVEL TOGETHER?



Many of our most memorable adventures were trips taken with family, friends or loved ones. I have travelled a lot on my own, I don't know about you, but I am good at missing those vital pieces of information such as which platform or departure lounge my train or plane was leaving from, I far prefer journeying with others. Here we are going to reflect on some of the benefits we can gain individually and as a church when we travel together.

There are a number of well-known stories that took place on the epic road trips Jesus undertook, such as when he appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–32). As well as discipling his followers, he met a lot of people, between Luke 9: 51 and Luke 24: 53 Jesus engages with more than forty individuals or groups of people! Strictly based upon the accounts in the Gospel, it is estimated that Jesus walked at least 4,830 kilometres or more during the three years of his earthly ministry, I am sure much of the time he was with others.

There are a lot of benefits to travelling with others; you will have shared experiences and learn more about your travelling companions; it's more affordable; you may experience things you would not have attempted on your own, etc.

In this Season of Care of Creation, we are considering actions corporately and individually to care well for the magnificent creation God has prepared for us. There are many ways we can reduce our carbon footprints; with good planning most will result in increased wellbeing for us, those around us, for our tamariki and rangatahi. Travelling together with others can be a way to reduce our carbon footprints and enjoy increased wellbeing.



THE CHALLENGE - TRAVELLING TOGETHER... TO CHURCH!

As communities of faith, let us reclaim the practise of travelling together in the full sense of the word for the good of the planet, for our health and for the good of our communities!

Set aside one Sunday or a season (e.g. Season of Creation, Biketober, Advent, Lent) to put some thought into how we are travelling to church.

What are the ways we can travel lightly on the earth and share the journey with others?



Left: ADJust catching the bus from climate strike. Middle: Ordinary Saints walk to various churches in the city during Easter. Right: All Saints Ponsonby installs bike rack for parishioners to park their bike

Creating new formational communities

Sitting together in a small group meeting face to face has many benefits, but how many of you have waited until you are in the car before having that heart-to-heart conversation precisely because you don't have to look the other person in the eye? Travelling places together can be a way to restore or create new communities and friendships. Some of the traditional church small group conversations could happen en route to church and as we are journey together as fellow pilgrims.

POSSIBLE PATHWAYS FORWARD

- Set aside 5 mins during the service, or after the service to facilitate discussion groups based on where people live (general suburbs and areas). Each group share ideas of how to travel lightly on the earth together. Encourage each group to decide on one action for a Sunday if possible. Or for the rest of the week.
- During church notices ask those interested to sign up to a carpooling register - use a sign up form to capture: where people are travelling from, seats available, suburbs they travel through to arrive at church, and their contact details. Put groups of people in touch with each other who are 'along the way' from each other to church.
- Set up a social media group (e.g. Facebook Messenger group) for those interested in taking up this challenge to share ideas, struggles and questions.
- Encourage those already walking, biking, busing, carpooling to church to share about their experiences.
- Count the number of cars in the carpark on a usual Sunday, and see if there are fewer cars on average during the challenge.

This could be an action project for a church green team, sustainability champion, or ministry team. NZTA has a [Carpooling Guideline](#) that could be of help for logistics.

IN ACTION: 2nd Thought Sunday - Tawa Anglican

When Tawa Anglican from the Wellington Diocese joined the A Rocha New Zealand Eco Church network, they instituted 2nd Thought Sunday on the second Sunday of each month. This is promoted on the first Sunday of each month in order to get people thinking about it for the following week.

This is a time to give a second thought to how people travel to church and consider the environmental impact of these choices. Everyone has different circumstances and will be able to respond in different ways. Instead of a 'walk to church' or 'bike to church' event they asked everyone to consider what they can do, even if it is small.

This could be arranging to carpool with someone who lives nearby. Or if somebody can't change what happens on a Sunday morning, they are being invited to consider the environmental impact of travel so that it can inform other choices throughout the week or when purchasing a new vehicle.

WE ALL HAVE A DIFFERENT PACE!

Each church is different and parishioners have different needs at different seasons of life. Some will be in a season where the car is already full of children. Others already offer a ride to others to get to church. If organising carpooling - please ensure everyone feels safe about the arrangements before they commence - encourage face mask wearing during the winter season especially.

Depending on the community a different approach to this challenge could be appropriate. Feel free to contact Richard Barter to discuss what are some different ways to approach this. (Contact details below).

For the good of creation and the climate

Every car journey uses on average 170g of carbon dioxide emissions and a corresponding amount of fuel per km (according to NZTA). This might not sound a lot, but it adds up! For example, if you are 8km from church, and attend 40 times a year, not driving could annually save 108kg of carbon.

It won't take too many people to travel together to make a big difference to the carbon footprint of your church. The journey to care well for creation can begin with small steps. While Jesus set a high bar for his disciples when he commanded them in Luke 9:3 "*Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt*", you are not being asked to make those kinds of sacrifices.

You can be blessing creation, and enjoying benefits of new friendships, safe talking spaces, reduced on road stress and costs by traveling together with others in your church community. Do you have a spare seat in your car, would you like a ride to church instead of driving? Put your hand up now!

Richard Barter

richard@seacliffe.co.nz +64 21 277 1213

Richard is a member of St Augustine's Church Auckland. He is also a Climate Catalyst part of the Auckland Councils Regional Climate Action Catalyst Network. The purpose of this initiative is to catalyse a low carbon lifestyle movement and enable Aucklanders to reduce their carbon footprint.