The Diocese of Peterborough

Model Environmental Policy for Parishes

This is a model policy and is intended as a starting point. This document should be shaped and amended in a way which is appropriate for the particular context of your parish. Environmental policies are living documents and should be updated and amended annually.

Policy summary

Climate change and the loss of biodiversity are two of the greatest threats facing humankind. These are a Christian concern, representing a failure in our stewardship of God's world, and a failure in our duty of care for each other, because across the world the people who have done least to cause climate change and the depletion of nature are often those most affected. In recognition that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and a fundamental injustice, the Church of England's General Synod committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

This policy is the response of the Parish of xxxxxx. It commits us to transition to net zero by 2030, and identifies roles and responsibilities from all parts of our parish life. It also highlights sources of information and support for this challenging journey. We will track progress annually.

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Approval and review

Approved by	
Policy owner	
Policy author	
Date	
Review date	

Revision History

Version No	Published	Revision Date	Summary of Changes

1. Introduction

1.1 "Climate change and pollution are huge problems, now and for the future. Much of this comes from our burning carbon (coal, gas, oil or wood) as fuel on a huge scale, some from our liking for plastics and synthetic polyesters for their cheapness and convenience. As Christians, we should have a great concern for our stewardship of God's world, and this will affect our individual lifestyles (food, clothes, travel, home energy, and so on). As church members we face tough questions around church buildings, church halls, church schools. Without sidelining Jesus – who must always be at the centre of our lives and our proclamation – we do need to take these responsibilities seriously."

-Bishop Donald, 2021.

General Synod passed the following motion in February 2020:

That this Synod, recognising that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and a fundamental injustice, and following the call of the Anglican Communion in ACC Resolutions A17.05 and A17.06;

(a) call upon all parts of the Church of England, including parishes, BMOs [Bishop Mission Orders], education institutions, dioceses, cathedrals, and the NCIs [National Church Institutions], to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target;
(b) request reports on progress from the Environment Working Group and the NCI's every three years beginning in 2022 and;
(c) call on each Diocesan Synod, and cathedral Chapter, to address progress toward net zero emissions every three years.

In response to this, Peterborough Diocesan Synod committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2030, in March 2021. It also adopted the Diocesan Environmental Policy.

It is essential that, as the Church of England, we remain united on our approach to this climate emergency. It is also important that we work collaboratively with other Christian denominations, faith groups, organisations and volunteer groups where we share a common agenda around environmental issues. It is our duty as a parish to respond appropriately to our call to care for God's creation.

1.2 As a parish, our response is driven by all five of the marks of mission.

i. **To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom** – Celebrate the gift of creation and understand that God is reconciling all things to himself (all parts of his creation).

ii. **To teach, baptise and nurture new believers** – Include helping them recognise God's creation, nurturing them in their awe and wonder. Bring God's great love for the whole of creation to attention. Incorporate wider environmental concerns and promote care and stewardship of creation into the theological and liturgical life of the Church. Encourage all who worship to engage in these issues for themselves.

iii. **To respond to human need by loving service** – Encourage engagement in the community, with care for the land and its creatures; as well as responding to and improving the environment in which people live.

iv. **To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation** – The climate and biodiversity crises are one of those unjust structures that we are called to transform. Those who will be affected first and worst will be those with the least resources to fight it and those who have contributed to it the least. We must therefore seek to do our part in transforming this unjust structure and tackle the source of it within the climate and biodiversity crises.

v. **To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth** – The parish of xxxxxx recognises its own environmental impacts. We will therefore seek to reduce our carbon footprint, address land management, improve environmental performance and educate across all areas of impact; thereby reducing our environmental impact and increasing our contribution to the sustainability, biodiversity and local ecology.

2. Purpose

2.1 This policy is an agreed, documented statement of the parish of xxxxxx's commitment towards living more sustainably and reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2030. It was agreed at the PCC meeting on *****.

2.2 This policy is the cornerstone of our intent, as a body of people committed to caring for God's creation. Our commitment is to reduce our impact upon the environment by minimising our use of the earth's natural resources. We are also committed to reducing our carbon footprint, improving recycling, minimising waste and improving efficiencies on the finite natural resources used in all of our operations. At the same time, we will act positively to restore nature across any churchyards and land holdings.

2.3 This policy invites all individuals within the parish of xxxxxx to reduce the environmental impact of our activities. It invites us to live sustainably in a way in which the needs of the present are met, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is also essential to recognise the global dimension of environmental issues. In particular that the most damaging effects of environmental degradation are likely to be felt first and most severely by those who have little responsibility for the causes of the damage. These are also the countries who have the least resources to respond.

3. Actions

We acknowledge the climate emergency and in response commit to:

1. adopting this environment policy on a parish level and ensuring that all members of the PCC and electoral roll are aware of the church's new commitments.

2. reducing our net carbon emissions, in line with the rest of the Church of England, by 2030.

3. appointing a person as our Environmental Officer/Champion to lead our programme and encourage them to bring relevant environmental issues and concerns forward to the PCC on a regular basis.

4. signing up to become an 'Eco Church' under the A Rocha Eco Church scheme and work, alongside the Environmental Officer/Champion to work towards the highest level of award.

5. supporting the Environment Officer/Champion, or a relevant member of the PCC, with their communication with the Diocesan central administration to complete the parish returns online energy footprint tool and use the information to reduce the church's carbon footprint.

6. communicating with the Diocesan central administration to share good news stories and good practice.

7. including God's love for creation, the climate crisis, climate change, our duty towards environmental care and living sustainably in preaching, worship and teaching.

8. including God's love for creation, the climate crisis, climate change, our duty towards environmental care and living sustainably in children and youth work within the Parish, as well as work with the local schools.

9. seeking to use caring for the environment and the local areas as part of a foundation for missional outreach within the local community.

10. working collaboratively with other local Christian denominations, faith groups, organisations and voluntary groups where the common agenda regarding environmental issues is shared.

11. promote parish policy and points for action on parish website and social media.

12. seeking to reduce our carbon footprint by:
    - switching to 'green' environmentally friendly energy suppliers
    - fitting LED light bulbs where possible
    - improving insulation wherever practicable
    - turning off lights, appliances and computers when not in use

- replacing old, inefficient boilers where practicable and investigating renewable heating alternatives

13. seeking to care for the environment and our local community by:
    - creating a wildflower/natural part of the churchyard or church owned land
    - creating and installing bug hotels with children's groups
    - creating a local litter picking group
    - using recycled paper
    - using recycled / recyclable / reusable cups for church refreshments or church events
    - install recycling bins in the church and office for parishioners / staff to use
    - using email wherever possible rather than sending hard copies
    - using low environmental impact cleaning materials
    - reusing / repairing items wherever possible
    - considering the impact to the environment / energy usage of any new items being purchased by the church

14. encouraging our staff and congregation, wherever possible, to use forms of transport which have a minimum or reduced environmental impact – e.g. walk, cycle, public transport, car sharing, environmentally friendly vehicles.

15. avoiding using water unnecessarily and install water meters where appropriate. Also check for leakages, fit water minimising systems to tap and cisterns wherever practicable.

16. assessing our land and property for wildlife and manage them to conserve biodiversity.

17. encouraging individual members of our congregations to take actions in their personal lives to complement and supplement these actions of the church community.

4. Ownership and Review

The responsibility for this policy lies with the clergy person and environment officer/champion who will ensure the policy is reviewed each year.

4.2 Any significant changes or amendments will be brought as an agenda item to the PCC for approval.