

# **The Fifth Mark of Mission**

**To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation  
and sustain and renew the life of the earth**

***A handbook to implement the Derby Diocesan  
Environmental Framework***

Humans, made in God's image, have a unique responsibility for the well-being of creation in all its variety (Genesis 1:26, 2:15). We are called to care for the earth because it is a gift, the product of God's love. Humanity has always had the capacity to both appreciate and destroy our environment. In recent years human activity has done great harm in many different ways and our fragile earth is very vulnerable. Now we must use our power wisely so that future generations can flourish and the diversity of life on earth be protected. The lives of future generations will depend on our actions now.

**The Revd Terry Thake**

Based on the Operation Noah Covenant

In May 2006 the Derby Diocesan Synod made a Commitment to the Environment and agreed a framework for action. Since then it has been used by a number of parishes and diocesan groups as they have worked on their own commitment to the Fifth Mark of Mission – “to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth”.

Within the framework were suggestions as to how progress could be measured, and the document itself reviewed and updated.

What we offer in this pack is an updated version of the framework in a more manageable format which we hope will encourage those who are already doing good work to do even more, and those who have not yet started to take the Fifth Mark of Mission seriously to do so. It consists of:

1. *Making the Framework your own*
2. *Resource Material*
3. *A Model Policy*
4. *Operation Noah's Ash Wednesday Declaration*

We intend to continue making new resources available, either by producing them ourselves or by signposting to the many excellent web based sites that are now available.

The Diocesan Environmental Group is made up of people with expertise in a wide range of environmental issues and are available to share their knowledge and experience. Please don't hesitate to contact us - details on inside cover.

Most of all let's enjoy this wonderful world in which we live and do all that we can to preserve its diversity and vitality now and for generations to come.

# ***1. Making the Framework your own***

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 This isn't just another diocesan initiative but rather an encouragement to take the Environment seriously and to do something about preserving it.**

As the people of God we have both a duty and a joy to care for the environment, to celebrate its diversity and to hand it on to our children and grandchildren in a better condition than we received it. Our care of the environment isn't an optional extra but an integral part of every area of life. We must learn to think differently!

### **1.2. But, please don't let this become a burden**

Don't focus on all the things you cannot do, but enjoy the excitement of doing new things that are within the reach of your parish. Make a beginning (of what might be a long but exciting journey), take one step at a time and you will be amazed at what you can achieve.

## **2. A suggested way ahead**

### **2.1. Recruit a 'Green Apostle'**

Consider who might be the best person in the parish to take a lead on the environment. There may well be someone who already has a passion and enthusiasm for environmental issues. They need not be a PCC member but would need to have access to PCC meetings from time to time.

### **2.2. Learn the process**

This person (perhaps on their own or working with a small group) then needs to:

- Familiarise themselves with the diocesan resources and, perhaps, environmental issues more widely. The environmental pages on the Diocesan web site is a good source for discovering possible training courses and resources.
- When looking at the diocesan papers on the environment consider how they might best be adapted to the parish. They provide only a model and we hope parishes will make the commitment their own by changing it to fit their own circumstances and the concerns God has laid on them.

## **2.3 Get cracking**

Hopefully there will be a 'Green Apostle'/Environmental Officer to take things forward, but even if there are no volunteers, do not let that stop the parish from adopting the environment framework, as the bulk of the responsibility rests with the whole PCC and congregation. The job of the Environment Officer is to keep the subject on the agenda of the parish, but this could be done in other ways, such as having a regular agenda item on the subject at PCC meetings. It is recommended that specific actions be given to a named person with a requirement that a report back on the progress of the action be received at the next meeting.

- One idea some parishes may find helpful is to set up a Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Action Group that incorporates Global Responsibility. These topics have been allied issues in the work of the World Council of Churches for many years, and there is a lot of overlap between them. Such a JPIC committee can support an Environment Officer so that they do not feel a lone voice, or it can even take on the role of the Environment Officer in a collective capacity.

## **2.4. Taking the Framework forward**

The next step is:

- to present the Diocesan Commitment to the Environment to the PCC (or equivalent body), seeking a continuous improvement in environmental performance
- together with your suggestions on how it could be taken forward by explaining the reasons for taking the environment seriously and for having a policy
- then set out some of the things churches and Christians can do to help
- and then get to the details of the text of any policy with its various clauses

## **2.5. After the framework is agreed**

When the PCC (or equivalent body) has agreed a framework, it would be helpful for the Diocesan Environmental Advisory Group to receive a copy. This is so that we can share your pleasure at getting this far and to learn from what you have done. We may be able to share your good ideas with other parishes (appropriately crediting the originators). We invite you to send a copy of your policy to the Bishop's Officer for the Environment (c/o Rita Brierley, Mission and Ministry Team, Derby Church House, Full Street, Derby, DE1 3DR). The Bishop's Environmental Officer is a good person to ask for more ideas and resources.

## **2.6. Celebrate!**

It is a good idea to celebrate your commitment, perhaps with a special service and certainly by letting other people know what you have done. An article in the parish magazine (or local press) will spread the message into the wider community. You may well find that ecumenical partners and local community groups will want to work in partnership with you.

## **2.7. Implement**

It is very easy for policies to be adopted and then to gather dust for a year or two before finding their way to the wastepaper basket. After your hard work, and for the sake of the creation, you will not want that to happen. Both established committees and ad hoc groups will need to look at how the parish does things and then make environmentally beneficial changes. As time goes by an environmental perspective can become a natural element in all decision making.

- Find local partners to work with .e.g. schools. Working with others in your community can be a great opportunity to form relationships and witness to a Christian commitment for the environment. There are lots of resources to help you – check out the environmental pages on the Derby Diocesan web site for more information.

## **2.8. Review**

It's important, right at the start, to agree how to keep track of how you are doing. This might include a six monthly review (keep in mind that environmental issues and the appropriate responses are changing rapidly), an item in the annual report and a biennial debate. If the parish has a keen Environment Officer, this will be easier to do, but even if you do not have such a person, the PCC secretary can establish the routine of putting the environment on the agenda at the agreed frequency.

## **2.9. Be encouraged. Be realistic. Beware of complacency.**

Every little helps. As Christians we believe that no good effort is wasted. Doing little things occasionally is good, but will not be enough. Expect and encourage people to educate and inform themselves about the issues and the solutions and to keep aware of changing concerns. There is now more of a consensus than ever before that climate change poses a real threat to the life of the planet. Our response must be adequate to the scale of the problem.

## ***2. Resource Material for your Environmental Framework for Action***

### **2. The environment and the mission of the church**

2.1 The Five Marks of Mission express the fundamental purposes of the church in a succinct way. They are backed by the Anglican Consultative Council, the Lambeth Conference of Bishops and the General Synod. For some years they have informed policy in the Diocese of Derby. In brief, they are: evangelism, nurturing discipleship, helping the needy, struggling for justice, and caring for the environment. In full, the Fifth Mark is:

***To strive to safeguard the integrity of  
creation and sustain and renew  
the life of the earth***

2.2 This resource document suggests practical ways to make this concern a real feature of parish, MMA, deanery and diocesan life. The spirit of the Framework for Action is to encourage colleagues at all levels to identify their own local, manageable and achievable targets. The resource document is in three parts:

- 1: a theological basis for environmental action including key tasks for the church
- 2: a Toolkit for implementing the policy
- 3: a local policy framework

### **3. Theological Basis**

3.1 The Genesis stories show the creation as inherently good. Humans are given dominion (stewardship) over it (Genesis 1:28) and are to care for it (Genesis 2: 15). Later, the prophets dreamed of a time when humanity and the natural world would live in harmony with each other (Isaiah 11: 6-9). In the New Testament Jesus often drew on nature to illustrate his teaching (Matthew 13), and St Paul sees redemption on a cosmic scale (Romans 8: 18-25).

3.2 Today we realise that 'dominion' has too often been interpreted to mean exploit, to treat violently, use for human ends. We now understand it to mean to be responsible for, nurture, manage sensitively and to recognise that there are circumstances where nature is allowed to take its course. We are increasingly aware of our inter-relationship with the natural world and our dependence on it. Taking the long view, our redemption is not complete until it includes that of the whole creation. This gives us a powerful motivation to heal our broken relationships with the natural world. The resources in this paper show how we can take further steps to put this into action.

## 4. Key Tasks for the Church

First of all, to make the Fifth Mark of Mission real in our lives, we can:

- i. Give thanks for the creation; confess the sin that damages it, pray about the natural world and for those involved in its use and care.
- ii. Study the scriptures and the Christian tradition, and environmental issues, reflect theologically and practically on them, relate them to the Marks of Mission, and work with adults and young people on appropriate attitudes and action.
- iii. Care for those parts of the environment for which we are especially responsible as the church:
  - the fabric and contents of our buildings,
  - plants and animals in our churchyards,
  - our glebe land, clergy houses, and other church property
  - the local environment over which we have control
  - the global environment for which we have shared responsibility
- iv. Protect our shared global resources and natural spaces, being aware of the temptation to use more than our share of resources, being particularly aware of sources which nature can only replenish slowly, and pollutants which nature takes a long time to assimilate.
- v. Commit to continuous improvement in our environmental performance.
- vi. Learn and campaign, often with others including joint working with secular organisations where appropriate, to put right damage to the environment, avoid further possible damage, and safeguard the integrity of the natural world.

Set an example, as individuals and as the church, of 'living lightly' on the earth.

## 5. Useful Websites

### **Anglican Communion Environmental Network**

To encourage Anglicans to support sustainable environmental practices as individuals and in the life of their communities, by providing information about policy, resources and good practice.

<http://acen.anglicancommunion.org>

### **A Rocha**

An international Christian conservation charity with a UK branch [www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org)

### **Christian Ecology Link**

Includes resources for prayer and action, from personal simple living to political campaigning

[www.greenchristian.org.uk](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk)

## **Christian Aid**

Disasters offer a stark reminder of how vulnerable the world's poorest communities are to natural disasters - and how rich countries need to act now on their behalf. See [www.christianaid.org.uk/ActNow/climate-justice/Index.aspx](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/ActNow/climate-justice/Index.aspx) for more information.

## **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland**

Environment and climate change [www.ctbi.org.uk/10](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/10). They also have resources for the Creation Season in September each year [www.ctbi.org.uk/](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/)

## **‘Creation care’ at heart of mission resource**

A new eco-resource launched to help churches tackle issues including climate change, over-consumption and threats to bio-diversity – all from a biblical perspective. The resource is available at [www.futureshape.org](http://www.futureshape.org)

## **Creation Challenge**

The environmental network of the Methodist Church in Britain, the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain. [www.creationchallenge.org.uk/](http://www.creationchallenge.org.uk/)

## **Derby Carbon Initiative**

[www.derbycarboninitiative.org/](http://www.derbycarboninitiative.org/)

## **Derbyshire Wildlife Trust**

[www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/](http://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/)

## **Eco-Congregation**

Log on to <http://ew.ecocongregation.org/newsletter> and download the latest Eco-congregation England & Wales newsletter.

## **Eco Schools**

Eco-Schools is an international award programme that guides schools on their sustainable journey, providing a framework to help embed these principles into the heart of school life. [www.eco-schools.org.uk](http://www.eco-schools.org.uk)

## **Footprint Friends**

Footprint Friends calls all young people, parents and influencers to sign up and get involved. Specifically created to give 10-18's a voice on climate change. [www.footprintfriends.com](http://www.footprintfriends.com)

## **London Diocese**

Study group material containing five studies on god's works n creation and redemption. [www.london.anglican.org/resources/Blocks/8812/Whose World study guide.pdf](http://www.london.anglican.org/resources/Blocks/8812/Whose World study guide.pdf).

## **Newcastle Diocese**

A prayer guide with a 7-day and 31-day cycle of prayers for public and private use [www.newcastle.anglican.org/userfiles/file/Newcastle%20Website/Mission%20and%20Ministry/Environment/praying-for-the-earth.pdf](http://www.newcastle.anglican.org/userfiles/file/Newcastle%20Website/Mission%20and%20Ministry/Environment/praying-for-the-earth.pdf)

## **Operation Noah**

Offers a variety of resources and also a well presented rationale for Christian involvement in Climate Change issues ‘ Climate Change and the purposes of God: a call to the Church’. There is also a declaration supported by a wide range of Church leaders that can be signed by individuals, churches or organisations. [www.operationnoah.org/](http://www.operationnoah.org/)



## **Tearfund**

Tearfund works on climate change because extreme weather patterns hit the poorest people hardest. Their resources can be found at [www.tearfund.org/en/what we do and where/issues/environment and climate change/](http://www.tearfund.org/en/what_we_do_and_where/issues/environment_and_climate_change/)

## **Shrinking the Footprint**

The Church of England's climate change campaign, including a toolkit offering advice on action that can be taken in Churches, Cathedrals, Vicarages and Schools.

[www.shrinkingthefootprint.org](http://www.shrinkingthefootprint.org)

[www.shrinkingthefootprint.smeasure.com](http://www.shrinkingthefootprint.smeasure.com)

[www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint/taking-action/energy-efficiency/audit](http://www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint/taking-action/energy-efficiency/audit)

## **Transition Towns in Derbyshire and beyond**

"It's about our local community taking control of its own future."

[www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)

Belper: [www.transitionbelper.org/](http://www.transitionbelper.org/)

Buxton: [www.transitionbuxton.co.uk/](http://www.transitionbuxton.co.uk/)

Chesterfield: [www.transitionchesterfield.org.uk](http://www.transitionchesterfield.org.uk)

Derby: [www.transitionderby.co.uk/](http://www.transitionderby.co.uk/)

Matlock: [www.transitionmatlock.org.uk](http://www.transitionmatlock.org.uk)

Melbourne: [www.melbourntransition.org/](http://www.melbourntransition.org/)

Youlgrave: [www.sustainableyoulgrave.org/](http://www.sustainableyoulgrave.org/)

East Midlands: [www.transitionnetwork.org/nearby](http://www.transitionnetwork.org/nearby)

**Leader:** Heavenly Father, through your Eternal Word all of creation came into existence, and is held in being by your Holy Spirit. In the lives we lead and the choices we make, help us to be mindful of the impact upon your world and its people, near and far, now and in future generations, so we may be faithful stewards of all that you have entrusted to us, until that time when all things are reconciled to you through the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

## 6. A Prayer

*This prayer comes from the Briefing Pack for Rio+20 produced by the Anglican Alliance:*

We pray for your wisdom, to safeguard the earth, its soil and all that grows in it. Creator and Redeemer, hear our prayer.

We pray for your understanding, to cleanse the air and all that breathes.

**Response: Creator and Redeemer, hear our prayer**

We pray for your knowledge, to find ways to preserve our waters and all that lives in them.

**Response: Creator and Redeemer, hear our prayer**

We pray for your guidance, to protect all living beings with whom we share our planet.

**Response: Creator and Redeemer, hear our prayer**

We pray for your insight, to use the resources entrusted to us wisely and well, justly and safely.

**Response: Creator and Redeemer, hear our prayer**

We pray for your compassion, to reach out to all those affected by extremes of weather, changes in climate, and the degradation of the environment

**Response: Creator and Redeemer, hear our prayer**

# 3. A Model Policy

## 3. Introduction

The following list of clauses to include in an environmental policy is intended to cover a wide range of groups within the diocese of Derby, from PCCs to Boards and Councils. The hope is that a particular group (PCC, MMA, Deanery, Board or Council, etc.) will select from them as appropriate. We encourage you to amend, and add to, the clauses suggested below. The process of formulating your policy is as important as the final result, so we encourage you to discuss the matter fully with your group. You will need to win hearts as well as minds to this concern. Comments for guidance are included within brackets.

## General Clauses

*[You will probably want to include most of the general clauses]*

1. We (Diocesan Board, Council, Deanery, MMA, Parish, etc.), affirm the Fifth Mark of Mission ('to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth') as a central part of our life, work and mission.
2. We will take environmental concerns fully into account in our mission, worship, study, education, training, (with other stakeholders within the Diocese, City and County) pastoral, administrative and other programmes and projects.
3. Keeping in mind the principle to 'Think Global - Act Local', we will identify environmental issues in our village, town, county or planet as a whole, and devise appropriate action on them and consider the consequences of our consumption and emissions locally, for all the peoples of the Earth.
4. We will appoint a person as our Green Apostle and encourage him or her to bring environmental concerns forward on a regular basis and identify and champion environmental improvements in their parish or equivalent community.

*[This is where you may mention a JPIC committee or other mechanism for keeping the environment before the church, especially if no volunteer is likely]*

5. We will seek appropriate information from a Christian environmental group (e.g. *Christian Ecology Link, Eco-congregation, Parish Pumps*) and keep abreast of wider environmental thinking and techniques for environmental improvement.
6. We will undertake an 'environmental audit' of our premises and property, make a list of the most significant environmental aspects and impacts of our activities on the natural world for which we are responsible, and devise appropriate plans to care for the Earth, and make our activities sustainable.
7. We will consider the local and global environmental impact of all our policies and plans, and accept that additional effort and short term costs may be incurred, although long term benefits may be anticipated.

8. We will ask our members to consider their personal impact on the environment in their daily lives and the actions they could take.
9. We will support the work of local and national environmental organisations, as appropriate.
10. Recognising that issues and concerns relating to the environment are rapidly changing we will review progress with the implementation and execution of the policy every six months and hold a formal debate or discussion on environmental issues and policy at least once every two years.  
*[It may be a good idea to also specify that the PCC or Annual Meeting receives a report on environmental activity more often than this]*
11. We will endeavour to consult with our ecumenical partners at an early stage in our progress towards our local environmental policy.

## Group Clauses

*[Although some of these may not seem relevant at first sight many of them could be adapted for parishes. They are included here as a way of indicating that all levels and structures within the diocese are encouraged to operate within the Diocesan Framework]*

## Finance

12. We will pay attention to environmental concerns in our banking and investment practice, and continue to pay regard to the national church ethical investment policy and whenever possible pursue ethical purchasing policies.  
*[The PCC may well invest funds and so this clause could be relevant]*
13. We will encourage the use of more environmentally-friendly vehicles and fuels and the sharing and public use of transport systems where possible.

## Buildings and Land

14. We will take environmental concerns into account in managing land, and other properties owned by the diocese, and seek to encourage tenants and occupiers to do the same.  
*[Does the PCC own land or property itself?]*
15. We will seek ways to assess the value of our land and property for wildlife, and to manage them to encourage and conserve biodiversity, wherever possible.
16. We will seek to meet the environmental standards set by the Green Guide for clergy housing, and accept that additional short term costs may be incurred, although long term benefits may be anticipated.  
*[Does the PCC control a curate's house or other worker's homes?]*

17. We will encourage parishes, architects, surveyors, contractors and the Diocesan Surveyor to take environmental concerns into account from the beginning of planning a project; to significantly exceed the statutory minimum requirements imposed by building regulations and provide formal briefs appropriate to these objectives to deliver long term sustainability.

*[This applies as much to work on the church itself, and on any halls the PCC has, as to houses]*

19. We will encourage church schools in the diocese to adopt environment policies, and to give environmental concerns a higher profile in their life and work.

*[The church Sunday school can do the same, and if there is a school, church or otherwise, within the parish, might they welcome encouragement and support from the church in addressing environmental issues?]*

20. We will commit our community to continuous improvement in our environmental performance, in support of all the ecosystems of the Earth, upon which all life depends.

## **Specific Clauses**

*[Most of the specific clauses will be useful to parishes, but they are, perhaps, the most challenging of the clauses, as they are specific about what is to change under the new policy. A useful adage is 'Best Available Technique Not Entailing Excessive Cost (BATNEEC)']*

### **Transport:**

21. We will encourage environmentally-friendly forms of transport, walk, cycle, use public transport, share cars, keep journeys to meeting venues short, and keep fossil fuel emissions as low as we can, wherever possible.
22. We will keep the necessity for particular meetings under review and seek ecologically friendly alternatives whenever possible.
23. We will encourage and support the adoption of alternative vehicle fuels, in particular those of sustainable carbon neutral origin, including waste food oil, and pure vegetable oil based biodiesels'. See [www.bio-power.co.uk](http://www.bio-power.co.uk)

### **Energy:**

24. We will make an energy audit of all buildings we use or own at least every two years, improve insulation, look for economies in heating, use thermostats, fit low energy light bulbs, switch to 'green' energy suppliers, install appropriate passive and active renewable energy systems (e.g. solar and wind technologies), when appropriate after seeking professional advice, keep temperatures down, avoid leaving appliances and equipment in stand-by mode and turn off computers and electrical appliances when not in use, and seek

to save energy wherever possible. Computers should where possible, participate in 'public good computing projects'. The following are recommended, but others also have ethical merit, and such projects will continue to emerge in the future.

<http://www.climateprediction.net/>

<http://folding.stanford.edu/>

The donation of computing resources to such projects may be seen as analogous to charitable giving.

25. We will seek ways to reduce consumption, particularly of paper and envelopes, and all other materials, and the impact of our activities on the environment, use recycled materials whenever possible, recycle waste and take it to collection points, reduce the negative social and environmental impacts of computers, use low environmental impact cleaning materials (avoiding chlorine-based products in general and phosphate based detergents), avoid using disposable items, avoid excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides, to use wood from sustainable sources wherever possible, and to keep abreast of developments in re-cycling and raise our awareness of the underlying principles of ecology and sustainability.

## **Water**

29. We will avoid using water unnecessarily, install water meters where appropriate, check for leakages regularly, fit water-minimising systems to taps and cisterns, specify such equipment in new and refurbished buildings and collect and use rainwater, for all possible applications. We will seek to understand the complexity of the ecology of creation and how to support and be part of it.
30. We will seek to understand the complexity of the energy flows, resources and ecology of creation.

## ***Derby Diocesan Advisory Group for the Environment Group***

Please feel free to photocopy this Toolkit for use by other parties, or encourage them to download the latest version from the environmental pages within the diocesan Faith in Action web site, <http://www.faithinderbyshire.org/environment>.

## **Help and support**

The Diocesan Officer for Environmental Affairs (The Rev'd Prebendary Terry Thake) and other members of the Diocesan Advisory Group for the Environment are very willing to respond to requests to speak at PCCs, MMAs, Deanery Synods etc, with sufficient notice. Please make your requests to the Diocesan Officer in the first instance.

We are keen to publicise good practice and share environmental good practice on the Diocesan Web site environmental pages. Please let the Diocesan Officer know if you have news or information that you would like to share. Thank you.

# The Derby Diocesan Environmental Committee

**The Rev'd Prebendary Terry Thake, Chair.**

01773 821404; [terry.thake@btinternet.com](mailto:terry.thake@btinternet.com)

Overseeing and co-coordinating the diocese's response to environmental issues; raising awareness of the environment, celebrating that which is good and identifying areas of concern; establishing and implementing a programme of action.

**John Beardmore**

07785 563116; [John@T4sLtd.co.uk](mailto:John@T4sLtd.co.uk)

Offers technical support and advice on sustainability issues, including facilitating decision-making processes, and the design and diagnosis of heating and renewable energy systems.

**Richard Henderson Smith**

0115 9460395; [r\\_smith07@btinternet.com](mailto:r_smith07@btinternet.com)

World Mission and Development Officer with the role to remind people about the urgent and ongoing needs of those most at risk and deprived beyond our horizon.

**Charles Jolly**

01298 22557; [charles.jolly1@talktalk.net](mailto:charles.jolly1@talktalk.net)

East Midlands United Reformed Church, Church & Society Officer and "Green Apostle" for East Midlands synod.

**John Millar**

0777 247 5821; [jmillar229@btinternet.com](mailto:jmillar229@btinternet.com)

Habitat Conservation Officer at the Amateur Entomologists' Society; Chair of EnviroARC

**Rosy Townsend**

[rosy.townsend@gmail.com](mailto:rosy.townsend@gmail.com)

Contact for the Catholic church.

**Graham Truscott**

07810 556743;

A founder of Derby Carbon Initiative, two local transition groups, national REconomy project and a director of Air Fuel Synthesis Ltd. Placed 10kW solar PV system on local grade 1 listed parish church. Passionate about delivering new socio-environmental economic models.

**Tom Veitch**

07905 534 580; [tom.veitch@globalactionplan.org.uk](mailto:tom.veitch@globalactionplan.org.uk)

Assistance with developing Eco-congregation work; Developing community projects; EcoTeams and other ways to understand energy and water use; ways to engage with the local community getting started on environmental initiatives.





### **Climate change and the purposes of God: a call to the Church**

The likelihood of runaway global warming, which will diminish food security, accelerate the extinction of huge numbers of species and make human life itself impossible in some parts of the world, raises questions that go to the heart of our Christian faith.

What should our relationship be with God as both the origin and the end of all things? How do we balance our energy and material consumption with the needs of the poorest communities, and of future generations and other species? How do we sustain hope in the midst of fear and denial? How can we encourage global cooperation, challenge unsustainable economic systems and change our lifestyles?

These fundamental questions prompt this urgent call to the Church.

### **FIND JOY IN CREATION!**

‘How many are your works, Lord!

In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures...

May the Lord rejoice in his works.’ (Psalm 104:24, 31)

According to the witness of our Scriptures, everything that we have, life and the means of life, comes to us as gift. This is the ground of our worship. The beauty and harmony of God’s creation is for all cultures a source of human wellbeing, spiritual nourishment and joy. Christians understand God’s relation to creation in three ways. All reality comes from God the Father; the flourishing of the earth and its future are foundational to the mission of God (and therefore to the Church’s mission). God embraces material reality in Jesus in whom all things hold together (Colossians 1:17). God the Spirit gives life to all reality at all times and in all places. ‘The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit’ (Romans 5:5) overflows in our love and care for all God’s creatures.

### **LISTEN!**

‘I appointed watchmen over you and said; “Listen to the sound of the trumpet!”’ (Jeremiah 6:17)

In recent decades, and with increasing urgency, climate scientists have warned of the dangers of catastrophic climate change resulting from human activity. Instability in weather systems is already bringing destruction and suffering to millions of people. In the light of the best knowledge we have, climate change could result in the loss of livelihoods and sometimes of life for huge numbers of people and the extinction of countless species. This matters because the well-being of all creation matters to God (Psalm 145:9). Prophets are those who speak truth, usually uncomfortable truth, to their generation. In ancient Israel, prophets were always shadowed by false prophets, representing the ruling powers. We must listen to the scientists warning us of approaching dangers, exercise discernment, and be wary of ‘false prophets’ representing the vested interests of the powerful.

### **REPENT!**

‘Jesus said; “The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”’ (Mark 1:14-15)

Continuing to pollute the atmosphere when we know the dangers, goes against what we



know of God's ways and God's will. We are failing to love not only the earth, but our neighbours and ourselves, who are made in God's image. God grieves over the destruction of creation and so should we. Repentance means finding creative, constructive and immediate ways of addressing the danger. It happens when God's Spirit enables a change of mind and change of heart, prompting a turn from past wrong and a decision to change direction. For our generation, reducing our dependence on fossil fuels has become essential to Christian discipleship.

### **TAKE RESPONSIBILITY!**

'The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the earth. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant.' (Isaiah 24:4-5)

Humans, made in God's image, have unique responsibility for the wellbeing of creation (Genesis 1:26, 2:15). We are to care for the earth because it is gift, the product of God's love. No sparrow falls without God knowing. Humanity has always had the capacity to destroy our environment, but today we have this to an unprecedented extent. Whereas previous generations did not know the damage they were causing, we do. We must use our power wisely to promote the flourishing of future generations and the diversity of life on earth. This is the responsibility of every Church and every believer.

### **ACT JUSTLY!**

'He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice. The mountains will bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness. He will defend the afflicted among the people, and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor.' (Psalm 72:2-4)

God is just and requires justice in response from us. This justice applies to poor communities already suffering the devastating consequences of climate change, to future generations, and to all other creatures. The prophets put economic behaviour at the forefront of their call to justice. The primary driver of human induced climate change is the belief that prosperity depends on limitless consumption of the earth's resources. Today, the challenge is to seek a different, sustainable economy, based on the values of human flourishing and the well-being of all creation, not on the assumption of unlimited economic growth, on overconsumption, exploitative interest and debt.

To seek justice for all, for present and future generations, our authorities must encourage and enable all people to live fairly and sustainably. Acting justly requires us to hold our governments and corporations to account.

### **LOVE OUR NEIGHBOURS!**

'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.' (Matthew 7:12)

Christ teaches us to love all our neighbours, not just our own family and friends. This love extends to our grandchildren and future generations. People in poor communities are mostly innocent of any role in causing climate change, whilst the nations that pollute the most, refuse to accept their responsibilities. Loving our neighbour requires us to reduce our consumption of energy for the sake of Christ, who suffers with those who suffer. To live simply and sustainably contributes significantly to human flourishing. As the nations fight over dwindling energy resources, Christians need to bear witness that the way to life, and not death, is the way of non-retaliation. In the future, Christians may also be called to receive into their communities refugees forced to leave their lands through climate change.

### **ACT WITH HOPE!**

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.' (Romans 15:13) Hope in God motivates us to take action that can lead to transformation, for by God's power at work within us, God is able to accomplish more than we can ask or imagine. Despite the strong probability of very serious effects from global warming, for Christians despair is not an option. It is when we follow Christ

and the way of the Cross, in response to his grace, that we experience the God of hope who gives us joy and peace. We are called to faith and action in trusting response to the God made known by the Holy Spirit in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Lord of all life. As Christians we can live in hope, despite the dangers that threaten us. Through God we hope for new life for all creation (Romans 8:19-25). Our planet, made new by the meeting of heaven and earth, will have an abiding value in the purpose of God (Revelation 21:1-5). We are called to live and work with hope in response to God's gift, and in the light of God's future: the promised coming of Christ's reign over all. O God, who set before us the great hope that your Kingdom shall come on earth and taught us to pray for its coming: give us grace to discern the signs of its dawning and to work for the perfect day when the whole world shall reflect your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Percy Dearmer)

**This Declaration from Operation Noah is supported by:**

The Most Revd and Rt Hon Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury  
Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh  
Mrs Val Morrison, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church  
The Revd Lionel E Osborn, President of the Conference of the Methodist Church  
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**Please add your signature of support on-line at [www.operationnoah.org](http://www.operationnoah.org), and sign your pledge here to keep as a reminder:**

**I support this Call to the Church and I pledge to respond.**

**Signed.....**

For a range of resources and responses based around this Call, please go to:  
[www.operationnoah.org](http://www.operationnoah.org)

This document has been produced by the Derby Diocesan Environmental Committee which is an ecumenical group seeking to encourage churches and congregations to continue acting on climate and justice issues.

More details can be found at [www.faithinderbyshire.org/environment](http://www.faithinderbyshire.org/environment).

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