

Trinity Methodist Church Chelmsford Environmental Policy and Action Plan

Policy statements

We recognise the climate and nature crises and the fundamental injustice these represent.

We recognise and teach that creation care and action to address the climate and nature crises are integral to Christian faith, life and worship.

We recognise the need to manage our land for nature.

We recognise that we need to take action locally, nationally and globally to tackle climate injustice.

We recognise that integrating creation care into our daily lives is an act of worship and obedience to God as we grow in discipleship.

Denominational commitment

As a member of the Methodist Church of Great Britain, we recognise that Action for Hope is a connexional priority, which was created following the establishment by the Methodist Conference in 2021 of an aspirational target to become a net zero Church by 2030.

In line with our denomination's commitment to net zero, we have committed to reduce our carbon footprint.

Our principles and values

The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it – you have founded them. Psalm 89:11

We have a special responsibility to care for the Earth so that human life and all God's creatures may be sustained in harmony.

Our church is committed to minimising our negative impact on the environment.

As Christians it is our responsibility to care for creation, using resources wisely so that climate change is mitigated, biodiversity protected or enhanced, finite resources conserved, and waste and pollution minimised.

Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it... (Isaiah 42:5, NIV).

Seeking climate justice is part of Christian discipleship and practice.

Following Christ's teachings means loving our global neighbours and caring for creation. The climate crisis both reflects and feeds off inequality, exploitation and greed: often the

communities who are suffering the most from its effects, particularly in the Global South, are those who have done the least to cause it. We will aim to act in accordance with this understanding, making changes to improve our sustainability and to show solidarity with those across the world who are suffering in this crisis.

What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8, NIV).

Our Commitments

Worship and Teaching

We will communicate our biblical understanding of responsibility to God for all that is entrusted to us through creation, making the links between poverty, wealth and environmental degradation. We will strive to equip leadership, staff, volunteers and church members with the skills, knowledge and confidence to respond to this responsibility.

Buildings and Energy

We recognise the most important environmental impact will be an ongoing reduction of our carbon emissions. We will seek to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions as much as we can, working toward net zero carbon.

Land and Nature

We will respond to the nature crisis and loss of biodiversity through practical action, collaboration and campaigning.

Community and Global Engagement

We will highlight and raise awareness that the climate and nature crises affect the poorest first and worst so our responsibility is to them and the places they live, wherever they are in the world, to promote justice for people and nature.

Lifestyle

We recognise that we have an impact on the world through the choices available to us and our use of money and resources. We will strive to support our church family and wider community in bringing about positive change and care for God's Earth. We will seek to encourage our church

community and beyond to live gently on the Earth and be prepared to challenge systemic injustice.

Our church seeks to promote ethical and environmentally aware consumption patterns by individuals and households.

Application

We are committed to applying these principles in the following areas:

1. Worship and Teaching

• Awareness

- All leadership team, staff, volunteers and church members will be made aware of this policy and it will be accessible on our website.
- This policy and action plan will be regularly reviewed at leadership meetings, communicated and embedded in work plans.

• Skilled and equipped

- We will offer opportunities for more in-depth engagement with environmental issues through our sermon series and/or small-group studies.

2. Buildings and Energy

• Energy use (buildings, office, church hall, etc)

- We will assess our energy use annually
- We will set annual carbon reduction targets and review our progress annually.
- We will monitor our water use.
- We recognise that digital data has a footprint and we will encourage regular digital clean-ups.
- We will encourage staff working from home to consider their energy use and switching to a green tariff.

• Travel

- We are committed to minimising unnecessary travel and encouraging use of the least polluting means of transport.
- We will encourage the use of public transport, bicycles and car sharing for church business.
- We will consider the pros and cons of meeting in person versus online, e.g. for staff meetings.

- **Fabric**

- Through the annual fabric review and quinquennial review, we will monitor the upkeep of the building, ensure repairs are undertaken promptly and continually review ways in which we can improve.

- **Operations**

- We will regularly review our operations plan (heating protocol, lighting procedures, etc.) to ensure energy efficiency.

- **Climate resilience**

- We will seek to be a 'warm space' and 'cool space' during the winter and summer as the need arises.
- We will develop a climate resilience plan.

- **Procurement**

- We recognise that the decisions we make in what we consume for church life (such as materials, products, equipment and consumables) have an impact on the environment.
- We will aim to encourage positive action by suppliers and partners. Strong preference will be given to suppliers who take environmental responsibility seriously.
- We will use recycled paper wherever feasible and otherwise use paper derived from sustainably managed forests.
- We will avoid the purchase of products and packaging that use non-recyclable and non-biodegradable materials in the first instance.

- **Lettings**

- Our Lettings policy includes the clause: As an Eco Church we encourage all who use the premises to be as environmentally friendly as possible. You are more than welcome to use our plates and cutlery for your event, or to bring your own reusable items. If using disposable items (plates, cutlery, etc.), we encourage you to purchase biodegradable items that can be placed in a compost bin after use and to recycle as much as possible of food packaging materials. We encourage you to avoid serving red meat as a means of reducing the carbon footprint.

3. Community and Global Engagement

- **Advocacy and action**

- We will raise awareness of, and encourage participation in, taking action as a means to loving our neighbour and caring for creation.
- We will seek ways to support and campaign on environmental issues as a whole church.

- We will collaborate with, and encourage awareness of, local environmental groups and other churches to share resources and best practices.
- We will seek to provide opportunities for marginalised groups in our community to have access to nature.
- We will raise awareness about ethical finance.

- **Food and drink**

- We will opt for Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar when purchasing for the church
- We will avoid the use of red meat in meals served at TMC and inform our user groups of this policy. (See Lettings)

- **Sustainable transport**

- We will encourage the use of sustainable forms of transport.

- **Waste**

- We are committed to reducing waste, re-using and recycling waste as far as practically possible.
- We will offer recycling of 'difficult' items to the wider community.

- **Finance**

- We are committed that a portion of our charitable giving will go toward charities that care for the environment or to support those who are adversely affected by climate change.
- We will avoid banking with banks most heavily invested in fossil fuels.
- We will not knowingly invest in or deal with companies or organisations whose activities significantly conflict with our own environmental policy.
- We will actively seek to work with financial institutions that make a positive difference.

- **Communication and promotion of Eco Church**

- We will respond to enquiries and seek to promote Eco Church locally.
- We will participate in denominational and other events to promote Eco Church and care for the environment.

4. Lifestyle

- **Sustainable lifestyle**

- We will conduct an annual ‘Lifestyle’ survey of our church members to enable us to share practical lifestyle actions that can be taken. Information will be shared via newsletters and social media.
- Throughout the year we will share information, stories and examples of lifestyle action to encourage individual members of our congregations to take actions in their personal lives to care for God’s creation.
- We will promote and encourage our church members to undertake personal auditing of individual and household carbon footprints.

Implementation and monitoring

- ECO Church will be on the agenda of every Church Council meeting. The Eco Team will report progress and updates from the Action Plan to the Church Council.
- The Eco Team will review the targets and revise the Action Plan annually.
- The Eco Team will ensure communication with the church membership.
- This policy document will be fully reviewed every two years or earlier as needed considering developments.

| Category | Action Point | Tasks | Person Responsible | Date to achieve |
|---------------------------------|---|---|--|------------------------|
| Worship and Teaching | Skill and equip the church with opportunities for more in depth engagement. | Arrange a short sermon series or small group study on the theme of Creation Care. | Worship and Outreach Group in collaboration with Minister. | |
| Buildings and Energy | We will assess our energy use annually | Compare KWh of gas and electricity used annually and communicate results to church. | Property Committee | |
| Community and Global Engagement | We will raise awareness of, and encourage participation in, taking action as a means to loving our neighbour and caring for creation. | Encourage participation in Earth Hour - last Saturday in March. Publicise through notices and social media. | Worship and Outreach Group. | |

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| Lifestyle | Promote a sustainable lifestyle | Encourage annual completion of personal carbon calculation. https://climatehero.me/ | Action Group | |
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