

## **Environmental Policy**

In May 2019 the Bristol District Synod declared a climate emergency and acknowledged that we face an existential threat without precedent, and that this requires actions without precedent. The Synod called on circuits, ministers, preachers and all church members to take action in response.

In 2020 the Gloucestershire Circuit Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favour of a memorial to conference that called upon all parts of the Methodist Church, at local church, circuit, district and connexional level, to work to achieve measurable 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.

We believe it is incumbent on us all to work together to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises in all areas of our church's life.

- 1 Across the whole Circuit we want to see local churches:
  - a. recognising that as Christians we are responsible for the care of God's earth, embedding sustainability in all of our activities and reflecting on the environmental consequences of all our decision-making
  - b. making care for and restoration of the environment central to our worship and teaching
  - c. reducing the impact of our buildings and our use on the environment
  - d. using any land around our buildings in ways which benefit the environment and the community
  - e. engaging with local and global organisations in seeking a fairer, more environmentally friendly world, and engaging with the political process at all levels to generate political action to protect and restore the planet
  - f. encouraging lifestyles both personally and as church members which reflect these aims.
  
- 2 In order to achieve this vision the Circuit:
  - a. has registered its commitment to become an Eco Circuit with A Rocha
  - b. has appointed the Social and Climate Justice Group to coordinate progress within the Circuit and to encourage church reps and groups and direct them to helpful resources
  - c. encourages all churches to become Eco Churches.
  
- 3 In becoming an Eco Circuit the Circuit will:
  - a. ask all churches to appoint an environmental officer / representative or small group to act as a focus for work in the church and to liaise with the Circuit
  - b. seek for as many churches as possible achieve Eco Church awards
    - Bronze Eco Circuit: at least 10% of local churches awarded
    - Silver Eco Circuit: at least 20% of local churches awarded
    - Gold Eco Circuit: at least 40% of local churches awarded)

- c. manage the Circuit office, manses, land and graveyards as sustainably as possible
  - d. ensure that materials to enable theological reflection on environmental issues are included in the support given to local preachers and worship leaders both in training and in practice
  - e. manage its investments ethically, commit to divesting as soon as possible from fossil fuels and seek to invest at least some of our reserves in the fossil-free Epworth Climate Stewardship Fund
  - f. seek to work with other circuits, denominations and faith groups to encourage environmental action
  - g. record and celebrate individual environmental initiatives within the Circuit.
- 4 In practical terms the Circuit will:
- a. encourage the use of the season of Creationtide to emphasise environmental issues, alongside harvest festival services
  - b. encourage the use of public transport or, where this is not possible, car sharing to attend meetings, including in making decisions about the location of these meetings. We will give first consideration to venues and meeting locations where public transport can be used
  - c. seek ways to encourage, enable and incentivise the use of electric cars and bikes for circuit staff
  - d. seek to make use of conferencing facilities (like Skype, Teams and Zoom) for Circuit meetings where appropriate and feasible to minimise carbon emissions, and maximise the use of electronic communication in preference to paper
  - e. encourage the use of reusable or recyclable materials for catering, and of environmentally friendly cleaning materials throughout the District
  - f. promote the use of LOAF foodstuffs (and especially fairly traded tea, coffee and biscuits) at all events (LOAF is an acronym for Locally produced, Organically grown, Animal friendly, Fairly traded)
  - g. encourage all churches to switch to a renewable energy provider
  - h. include as an at least annual item on Circuit Assembly agendas a report on progress being made in the Circuit, including celebrating any awards
  - i. review this policy annually.