

Presbyterian Church of Wales (PCW) Environmental Policy

1. Background and Introduction

This Policy is the PCW's environmental statement and action plan. As a Church we are committed to the care of God's creation, by deliberately investing to reduce our carbon footprint, increase recycling, reduce waste and improve the efficiency of our use of natural resources in the world. Justice is at the heart of the Gospel, and climate justice is also about social justice in our world. We recognize that the deepest impacts of climate change are affecting the world's poorest countries and communities. By standing up to the injustice of climate, and taking responsibility for ourselves, we as a Church, and as a whole creation, praise and glorify God our creator.

We recognize the significance of the Paris Agreement of December 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). One consequence of the Agreement is to set a goal to keep the 'global average temperature rise far below the 2°C rise above pre-industrial levels and to try to limit the rise temperatures to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels'¹ recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and effects of climate change.

2. Reduce our carbon footprint

2.1 As we consider the aims and objectives set out in our Handbook of Order and Rules under 1.1 'Protecting our environment in every way possible', PCW reaffirms its promise to reduce its total carbon footprint (total greenhouse gas emissions from the activities of the Connexion) and to endeavour to protect and restore the environment.

2.2 The Church recognizes that this pledge calls for individual members to discuss this and transform our internal structures.²³⁴

2.3 Therefore, as congregations we will:

- a) Cut the carbon emissions that flow from our lifestyles by measuring these emissions personally and find suitable strategies (eg not using single use plastic);
- b) Involve children and young people in activity that focuses on caring for the environment;
- c) Ensure that church owned land is used in a way that promotes appreciation of nature and enhances and protects the environment;

¹ <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/109r01.pdf>

² https://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/documents/vision2020genlassembly_report.pdf

³ Hope in God's Future, p.4.

⁴ <http://arocha.org.uk/our-activities/living-lightly-take-action>.

- d) Ensure that we use energy efficiently and that our buildings are environmentally friendly through the use of energy-saving technology, and by identifying and using renewable energy sources as appropriate;
- e) Raising awareness, through prayer, sermon, Bible Studies, teaching and discussion on climate justice;
- f) Support general climate change campaigns and actions as appropriate;
- g) Use (and sell) Fairtrade goods on our premises;
- h) Heating and lighting the building only when there are people present, as well as encouraging congregations to come together for all worship, instead of heating large rooms with few present; and
- i) seek to gain 'Eco-Church' status.⁵

2.4 As Presbyteries we will:

- a) encourage churches to gain 'Eco-Church' status; in doing so they will see the positive benefits that come from the financial savings of being environmentally friendly;
- b) ensure that buildings, including manses, are environmentally friendly through the use of energy-saving technology and the identification and use of renewable energy sources as appropriate;
- c) encourage churches to work with local transition groups or sustainability groups or to set up similar groups;
- d) encourage churches to receive training and support on issues such as climate justice and environmental care;
- e) appoint one or more Presbytery members to monitor any progress in implementing this policy within the Presbytery;
- f) Allow up to 40% of the cost of installing a renewable energy system to be released from the Presbytery strategy fund;
- g) Add a point on assessing the eco-friendly nature of our buildings in our strategy plan as presbyteries.

2.5 As an Assembly we will:

- a) disinvest in companies that either continue to extract fossil fuels from the ground, or do not have a clear commitment to reducing their carbon footprint. We will do this with our church partners, and in particular by taking advice from organizations such as the '*Transition Pathway Initiative*';
- b) offer special grants / terms to Connexional ministers and employees when purchasing Hybrid or electric cars;

⁵ www.ecochurch.arochoa.org.ukpopular

- c) ensure that buildings are environmentally friendly by using energy-saving technology and identifying and using renewable sources as appropriate;
- d) reduce travel to meetings by car and aircraft and make use of videoconferencing. Bearing in mind distance and costs, individual members will be encouraged to use transport that has the least impact on the environment - cycling, using trains and buses, car sharing and using energy-efficient vehicles where possible. Members will be encouraged to adopt the practice of setting the carbon they use when making necessary journeys against a financial contribution to sustainable projects (eg through the Climate Stewards scheme);⁶
- e) not pay travel costs for more than one car coming from the same area to a Connexional meeting (up to 4 people). Individual members called to a meeting are expected to arrange all travel with another member nearby;
- f) advance environmental theology; and
- g) not print documents for Church courts, unless a special request has been made by an individual.

3. Resources

We acknowledge and commend the following:

Eco-Church, an environmental toolkit offering a network of support to local congregations: www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk.

Operation Noah: <http://operationnoah.org>;

The Transition Pathway Initiative - <https://www.transitionpathwayinitiative.org/overview>

- Green Christian (formerly Christian Ecology Link): www.greenchristian.org.uk;
- A Rocha: <http://arocha.org.uk>;
- Climate Stewards: www.climatestewards.org;
- Time for Creation (World Council of Churches): www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/time-for-creation).
- Greening Church Buildings (Eco-Congregation Scotland): www.ecocongregationscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Greening-Church-Buildings.pdf;
- Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change - the report of a working group on climate change and theology jointly produced by the Baptist Union of Britain, the Methodist Church and the WRU (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing, 2009) ;
- Laudato si ', Pope Francis' newsletter (2015);
- Nick Spencer & Robert White, Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living (London: SPCK, 2007);

⁶ www.climatestewards.org

- promoting links with transition towns etc: www.greenchristian.org.uk/churches-in-transition.