



How green is your church?

Suggested actions

This list is not meant to be exhaustive but merely a starting point for getting your church and community more engaged with environmental issues, including climate change. It recognises that what you do depends on where you are starting from. Church engagement on green issues is a journey that needs to unfold gradually. Of course, those who lead this journey also need to 'walk the talk', caring for God's creation as a part of personal discipleship. (*Further resources on personal actions is provided at the end.*)

Regardless of how green your church is, it is important that you **identify other green-minded individuals** in your congregation that you can work with and **meet with your vicar or priest** to explain why you believe that caring for creation and addressing the threats to God's earth (such as climate change) are important moral issues for Christians today.

'Beginner' churches

Worship

- Go for walks as a congregation
- Hold a service or have quiet times of contemplation outside
- Sing hymns celebrating God's creation
- Preach on the goodness of creation as a life-giving gift from God and our role as stewards to love and protect what God has made and to love our neighbours as ourselves
- Include prayers about environmental concerns in your church services
- Use poetry/reflections which emphasise the awe and wonder we feel in response to the beauty of God's creation; how we feel closer to God when we are surrounded by all that he has made
- Celebrate Harvest

Education and awareness raising

- Display materials on climate justice / caring for creation from the Christian charities supported by your church (eg Christian Aid, Tearfund, All We Can, CAFOD, Operation Noah)
- Hold a plant sale to raise money for charity
- Hold a Harvest supper serving/displaying local food

Church resources

- Become a Fairtrade church
- Encourage the use of locally sourced, seasonal food for church meals
- Reduce, re-use, recycle, refuse (to buy something new)
- Use washable plates, cups and cutlery instead of throw-away paper/plastic

Church building and grounds

- Plant a remembrance garden
- Take simple energy efficiency steps (eg switch to low-energy bulbs, put heating on a timer switch, eliminate draughts, improve insulation, service the boiler, turn off lights, switch off computer equipment)

Church community and wider links

- Contact your Diocesan Environment Officer (DEO) or equivalent to find out what is going on locally and to develop networks with other green churches

'Intermediate' churches (all the above plus...)

Worship

- Preach on creation care as central to the mission of the church
<http://operationnoah.org/resources/sermon-notes-creation-time-climate-change-purposes-god/>
- Preach on climate justice and how climate change is impacting those who are least responsible, stressing the need for simple, low-carbon lifestyles as part of Christian discipleship
- Celebrate Creation Sunday
- Screen film clips from Christian charities (eg Christian Aid, Tearfund) showing how climate change is already hurting our global neighbours

Education and awareness raising

- Start a 'green group' in your church which leads worship, carries out green actions, holds workshops on living simply, and writes green articles for church publications
- Display a wide range of materials on environmental/climate issues from faith-led organisations (eg Operation Noah, Tearfund, Christian Aid, A Rocha, CAFOD), including actions people can take
- Undertake a Carbon Fast for Lent:
<https://catholicclimatemovement.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/clri-nsw-lenten-carbon-fast-calendar-2015.pdf>
<http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/resources/docs/Carbon%20fast%20calender%202015.pdf>
- Share information about the Lambeth Declaration (being updated in 2015) on the response of faith communities to the environmental crisis
<http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/770/faith-and-climate-change#Statement>
- Introduce environmental activities into children's/youth work
- Encourage people to walk or cycle to church (install bicycle racks)
- Hold a 'swishing' event to swap clothes and encourage congregational sharing of goods (eg power tools, ladders) rather than buying new
- Give a talk at a PCC meeting or other local meeting or event about climate change and what the church can do.

Mark special environment days such as:

- Meat Free Monday
- FairTrade Fortnight (February)
- World Water Day (March)
- Earth Hour (March)
- Earth Day (April)
- International day for biological diversity (May)
- World Environment Day (5 June) and Environment Sunday (closest Sunday)
- World Oceans Day (June)
- Creation Time (September to October)
- World Car Free Day / walk to church Sunday (September)
- Good Money Week (mid-October)
- World Food Day (October)
- Buy Nothing Day (November)
- Reclaim Christmas (December)

Church building and grounds

- Get started on reducing the carbon footprint of your church <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint/ways-to-take-action/getting-started>
- Switch to a green energy supplier
- Encourage and protect biodiversity in your churchyard (eg by installing bird boxes, leaving wild areas, planting bee and bird-friendly shrubs and flowers)

Campaigns and lobbying

- Encourage church members to support the environmental/climate campaigns led by the faith charities supported by your church
- Encourage church members to get involved in the 'Pray and Fast for the Climate' movement <http://www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk/>
- Encourage church members to support the 'For the Love of ...' campaign. Show the 'For the Love of' short film clips in your church service www.fortheloveof.org.uk

Church resources

- Use your LOAF (Locally produced, Organically grown, Animal friendly, Fairly traded) in all food and drink served, as per Green Christian guidelines <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/resources/loaf>
- In addition to food, ensure your church purchase sustainably sourced, Fairtrade and environmentally friendly products, such as recycled paper, cleaning products, etc
- Start a compost bin and use it for church gardening projects

Church community and wider links

- Become an Eco-Congregation <http://www.ecocongregation.org.uk/>
- Join the Living Churchyards project <http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/index.php/national-info/projects-from-around-the-country.html> working with local conservation groups
- Encourage church members to become involved in the Transition network <https://www.transitionnetwork.org/>

'Advanced' churches (all of the above plus...)

Worship

- Start a 'Forest Church' group http://www.mysticchrist.co.uk/forest_church

Education and awareness raising

- Hold events or debates on environmental issues (eg the UN COP21 climate talks or fossil fuel divestment), inviting external speakers, or show environmental or campaign films
- Offer study courses or Bible studies exploring environmental concerns, such as Operation Noah's Lent course 'Climate Change and the purposes of God' <http://operationnoah.org/resources/lent-course-climate-change-purposes-god/>
- Make green issues a regular part of your church communications, eg parish magazines, newsletters, website or blogs featuring environmental concerns, green lifestyle tips and campaign actions and events

Church mission

- Include the church's role in care for creation and addressing climate change in your church mission statement
- Make the importance of addressing climate change as part of Christian discipleship a stated aim of your church's values and ethos
- Share information about Operation Noah's Ash Wednesday Declaration and the role of the church in responding to it <http://operationnoah.org/what-we-do/ash-wednesday-declaration/>

Church building and grounds

- Undertake an energy audit and monitor emissions
- Install solar panels or other renewable sources of energy

Campaigns and lobbying

- Disseminate information about environmental and climate change campaigns from environmental and faith NGOs
- Support Operation Noah's Bright Now divestment campaign and 350.org fossil free movement
- Encourage church members to sign the petition to the Church of England / Methodist Church calling for disinvestment from fossil fuels www.brightnow.org.uk
- Have members of your church or eco group contact senior church leaders, such as a bishop, to discuss environmental concerns and the role of the church
- Support Hope for the Future before the General Election by holding a hustings event or letter-writing workshop to express concern about climate change to MPs and political candidates
- Encourage your vicar to promote fossil-free church investment and pension policy with church leaders
- Get your church and PCC to express their concern about an environmental issue (eg fracking, fossil fuel investment, airport expansion) to local government, MPs or Church decision-makers
- Get your church community to raise environmental concerns through official Church channels, for instance by submitting a motion for debate at national Synod
- Publicise key national or local actions or events, such as the national climate marches, speaker events, etc

Church resources

- Harvest rain water (eg for toilets) and re-use 'grey' water for church gardens
- Encourage your church to bank ethically and ensure they have an ethical investment policy for savings, including avoiding investment in fossil fuels

Church community and wider links

- Work in partnership with the wider community on environmental projects or events
- Lead a microgeneration project in your community
- Work on environmental projects with local schools, perhaps using your church yard as a 'field project'

Personal actions

Suggestions for actions you can take in your own life to honour God's Creation can be found in:

Operation Noah's *Finding a Path: Getting to grips with climate change*

http://operationnoah.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Follow_up_leaflet.pdf

Green Christian's *Nine Ways to Live Gently on the Earth*

<http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/leaflet/nine-ways.pdf>

Eco-congregation's *Lifestyle Issues and Climate Change: Managing your carbon footprint*

<http://ew.ecocongregation.org/system/files/resources-module13.pdf>

A Rocha's Living Lightly campaign also provides regular information and resources to encourage sustainable, low carbon lifestyles as part of Christian discipleship

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