

Eco-Plan for Parishes

Why?

O Lord, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. *Psalm 104:24*

... for in Christ all things in heaven and on earth were created ... *Colossians 1:16*

Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all creation. *Mark 16.15*

The Fifth Mark of Mission for the Anglican Communion is:

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

The Church of England's General Synod passed the following motion in February 2020:

That this Synod, recognising that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and a fundamental injustice, ... call upon all parts of the Church of England, including parishes, ... to work to achieve 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 ...

Ely Diocesan Synod passed the following motion in June 2021:

This Synod endorses the work of the Diocesan Environmental Task Group and their proposal that the Diocese of Ely become carbon neutral by 2030, in line with the decision of General Synod, and requires that work be planned and executed to effect this within the Diocese and parishes.

This Synod requires that the Diocese be registered with A Rocha as soon as possible as a first step towards becoming an Eco Diocese.

This Synod asks that regular reports on progress are provided on the above motions.

A Rocha Eco Diocese and Eco Church Scheme

A Rocha is a Christian charity, strapline 'Caring for God's Earth', whose mission is to restore and protect the natural world, and to equip Christians and churches to take part in that work. Its core values are summed up in the five 'C's – Christian, conservation, community, cross-cultural and cooperation.

It was started just over 20 years ago as a local Christian conservation project in a deprived part of west London, led by the local vicar. The 'original' A Rocha was started in Portugal in the 1980s, and was their inspiration – hence the name (which means 'the rock').

The Eco Church scheme (see the Resources section below) provides a framework for churches and dioceses, which is particularly helpful in getting started.

We urge each PCC to sign their church up to the A Rocha Eco Church scheme and to decide on a few straightforward priorities to get started towards their Bronze Award.

Who?

This **Ely Diocese Eco-Plan** has been drawn up by members of the Diocesan Environmental Task Group and is offered for use to parishes, with the support of the Bishop. It provides tools to help parishes assess their environmental response to date and to integrate creation care action planning into the heart of their parish's life and mission.

The DETG asks that every parish makes adequate space and time to discuss this Eco-Plan in their PCC and to **build ambitious creation care objectives** into the ongoing life and mission of their parish.

This Plan is a framework which provides wide scope for the drawing up of different priorities according to the varying context and circumstances each parish finds itself in. There are many resources and much knowledge in the Diocese and elsewhere which can be drawn on to help with creation care action planning, so parishes do not have to re-invent the wheel. Information about resources is given at the end of this document.

We commend this Parish Eco-Plan to your prayers, consideration and action.

What?

Worship

Include Creation Care themes fully in your church's worshipping life, teaching and education.

You could:

- Engage with the Season of Creation (1 September – 4 October).
- Have a guest speaker and service themed around creation care each year, eg. Climate Sunday.
- Include prayer for the environment regularly in the weekly intercessions and prayer diary.
- Commission a Creation Care Champion.
- Inform, educate and invite personal responses through sermons, Bible studies, courses, books, films and one-off evenings on creation care.

Church Buildings and Other Premises

Reduce your carbon emissions as much as possible year on year, by greening your buildings, events, and administration.

You could:

- Switch your church's electricity to a 100% Renewable Supplier through the Parish Buying Energy Basket, or with Good Energy, Ecotricity or Octopus.
- Use the 'Practical guide to Net Zero' on the CofE website.
- Use the CofE Carbon Footprint Tool to measure and reduce the church's carbon-based energy consumption, available via Parish Returns.
- Change light fittings to LEDs.
- Plan ahead for a change in heating system, using the advice on the CofE website.

Churchyards

Develop out door spaces on church premises for increased biodiversity (plants, flowers, insects, birds, bats) and develop quiet spaces for people to be in nature especially in urban areas.

You could:

- Enter the Wildlife Trust Churchyard Conservation Award Scheme.
- Use the Care for God's Acre Action Pack.

Discipleship

Encourage a sustainable lifestyle.

You could:

- Encourage the forgotten virtue of 'simplicity'.
- Invite households to reduce their carbon footprint. (eg. switching to 100% renewable energy tariffs, LED lighting, turning the thermostat down, switching to renewable energy sources, lowering emissions from transport, and so on...).
- Explore environmental concerns around the production and consumption of meat.
- Encourage individuals and families to grow their own food and make their gardens pollinator friendly.
- Encourage households to sign up to the 'Creation Care' Awards.

Campaign for Creation Care

You could:

- Join and support an environmental charity such as A Rocha or one of the organisations listed under resources below.
- Join on-line campaigns, sign petitions, write letters and lobby your MP and parliament for policies that put ecological and environmental wellbeing at the heart of decision making in all areas of life.
- Join in with local actions and protests for environmental change.

How?

1. Commit this Eco-Parish Plan to prayer and to God for his guidance.
2. Put this plan on the agenda for a PCC discussion.
3. Appoint a Creation Care Champion and Group (or sub team of the PCC).
4. Register with Eco-Church on the A Rocha website and complete an initial survey. Bring the results to the PCC for discussion and future goal setting.
5. Create a 3-year Creation Care Action Plan within the existing Parish Development Action Plan or separately alongside it.
6. Launch the Action Plan at a parish event or service.
7. Commit your Eco-Plan in prayer to God and move forward with implanting the plan.

Resources

The Diocesan Environmental Task Group is there to advise and support parishes. Get in touch via the Rev'd Dr Jenny Gage or the Rev'd David Newton. Jenny is working with Creation Care Champions in Ely Deanery and is happy to collaborate more widely on this.

revd.jennygage@gmail.com

davidnewton@lordsbridge.org

A Rocha Eco Church awards are a good way to get started.

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

Creation Care has been set up to encourage households to care for God's world.

<https://creationcare.org.uk/>

Films:

The Climate Race: free from <https://climateracefilm.org/>

An inspiring 40 minute film both realistic and hopeful, with contributions from experts and change makers, it tells how humanity can rise to the challenge, and ensure a flourishing future.

Caring for our Common Home: www.ourcommonhome.co.uk/

Global Healing & Global Caring are free film-based events for parishes, groups and individuals. They will inform, challenge and equip people to engage with the vital call to Care For Our Common Home.

Books:

Saying Yes to Life: Ruth Valerio. SPCK 2019

A Christian Guide to Environmental Issues: M & M Hodson. bnf 2017

Planetwise: Dave Bookless. IVP 2008

Bible Studies:

Caring for Creation: York Courses, 2021

Organisations and Websites:

Diocese of Ely:

<https://www.elydiocese.org/church-in-action/environment-and-sustainability/>

CofE General:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change>

CofE Heating Advice:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/heating>

CofE Pathway to Net Zero Carbon:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/net-zero-carbon-church/practical-path-net-zero-carbon-churches>

A Rocha: www.arocha.org/en/a-rocha-uk/

Operation Noah: www.operationnoah.org/

Green Christian: www.greenchristian.org.uk/

Wildlife Trust Churchyard Conservation Scheme:

<https://www.wildlifebcn.org/advice-landowners/churchyards>

Creation Care: <https://creationcare.org.uk/>

Caring for God's Acre: <https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>

Sustaining God's Creation - Other Organisations:

Transitions Network

WWF

Friends of the Earth

Greenpeace

Fauna and Flora International

Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC)

Soil Association

Compassion in World Farming

Plastic Oceans

Wildlife Trust

RSPB (with a useful section on biodiversity in our gardens)

Energy Saving Trust

Climate Stewards (for offsetting)