



Environmental Policy for St Mark's Methodist Church

Background

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.

St Mark's been awarded the Bronze Eco Church award, however, we recognise we need to further embed sustainable living in church and community life in order that our environmental focus becomes habitual rather than simply seeking awards. We build upon the dedication and hard work already undertaken and seek to continue this.

1 . St Mark's commits to:

- 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.

In practical terms we commit to the following action:

2. Worship

- a) hold a Climate Sunday service each year
- b) ensure environmental issues regularly feature in the monthly Messenger magazine
- c) request to the circuit that no preacher travels more than 15 miles to lead our worship (unless using an electric vehicle or public transport)
- d) consider continuing to hold some meetings and services on Zoom, thus reducing our carbon footprint with travel to and from the church building

3. Buildings

- a) arrange for a carbon footprint calculation of our premises to identify where improvements can be made
- b) whenever lightbulbs require replacing, low-energy bulbs to be used

4. Land

- a) explore the possibility of encouraging wildlife to our outdoor space, including the use of wildlife feeding stations and bug hotels
- b) participate in annual wildlife surveys (for example, the Big Butterfly Count or RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch) and encourage Sparx to assist with this

5. Community & Global engagement

- a) conduct an audit of church members and their current participation in community and global organisations
- b) establish links with local environmental groups
- c) organise or participate in a community clean-up project (for example, a litter pick)
- d) organise or participate in regular local walks encouraging people to enjoy God's earth
- e) all toilets in our premises to be twinned under the Toilet Twinning scheme
- f) encourage church members to participate in periodic sustainability initiatives such as a Lenten carbon fast or Veganuary
- g) through our engagement with Christian Aid, to participate in global environmental campaigns

6. Lifestyle

- a) encourage church members to calculate their personal carbon footprint
- b) explore divestment from fossil fuels both as a church and encourage church members to question their personal banking investments

We commit to undertaking these practical steps by September 2022. This policy will be reviewed annually.

May 2021