

CHURCH AND EARTH 2009-2016

The Church of England's Seven-Year Plan on Climate Change and the Environment

Coventry Cathedral: devastation, reclamation, hope

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*"Is it not easy to conceive the World in your Mind? To think the Heavens fair? The Sun Glorious?
The Earth fruitful? The Air Pleasant? The Sea Profitable? And the Giver Bountiful?
Yet these are the things which it is difficult to retain.
For could we always be sensible of their use and value,
we should be always delighted with their wealth and glory."*

Thomas Traherne (Priest and Poet, 1636?-74)

*"He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?"*

Micah 6:8

1. Introduction: about the Plan

- 1.1 This plan is a statement of the Church of England's beliefs, activities and ambitions relating to climate change and environmental action over the next seven years. It forms part of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation's '*Seven-Year Plans for Generational Change*', to be presented to the UN Secretary General at the Windsor Celebration in November 2009, prior to the UN's Copenhagen Conference in December.
- 1.2 The Church of England has been working on issues of environmental care for over thirty years, and aims to build on its many policies and projects as part of the global effort to tackle climate change, leading with its flagship programme, *Shrinking the Footprint (StF)*.
- 1.3 The plan has been commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, and conducted with the generous support of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Church Commissioners. It has been drafted by a task group established under *StF*, and it draws on extensive discussions with experts within and beyond the Church of England. They are listed in the full document, and we are extremely grateful to them.
- 1.4 The *Shrinking the Footprint* Task Group comprises Stephen Bowler, Brian Cuthbertson, Rachel Harden, Stephen Heard, Charles Reed and David Shreeve, with Ian Christie and Nick Spencer of Theos, the public theology think tank, working as consultants to the project.
- 1.5 This plan is divided into three further sections: the basis for environmental action; the environmental record of the Church of England; and challenges for future Church action.
- 1.6 The plan sets ambitious targets for 2009-2016 and beyond. It recognises that none of these goals will be achieved easily; but it draws strength and hope from the conviction that God cares for, sustains and has acted to renew creation, and that human beings are mandated to serve joyfully and work with God as 'priests of creation'.

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2. The basis for environmental action

"To say that creation is there for us to take advantage of is in the end to dethrone Christ for it is 'through him and for him all things came into being'."

Rt Revd James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool

- 2.1 The world faces a profound crisis of ecological disruption and depletion. A great collective effort is needed to avert further dangerous climate change, to help and protect those who are suffering most acutely from environmental stress, and to safeguard the earth's rich web of habitats and wildlife.
- 2.2 The Christian scriptures and theological reflection place repeated emphasis on the goodness of creation, and on humankind's role in working for and with God in the process of 'repairing' that creation. Christians are called to respect God's world, to model the life of Christ, and to live in the hope and joy of what God, in Christ, has done for 'all things'.

Although the environmental challenges facing us are daunting, a faithful Christian response recognises the hope there is in Christ and his work, and the joy inherent in a way of life that liberates us from the relentless pursuit of consumption for its own ends, and enables us to live lives of 'shalom', or full human flourishing.
- 2.3 The Church of England has long recognised the need "to take all possible action to ensure man's responsible stewardship over nature" (Lambeth Conference, 1968), coming to see stewardship as part of the challenge of sustainable development: conserving the richness and health of environments and wildlife while advocating economic and social action that promotes justice and decent living standards for all.

3. The environmental record of the Church of England

“For the Church of the 21st century, good ecology is not an optional extra but a matter of justice. It is therefore central to what it means to be a Christian.”

Archbishop Rowan Williams

3.1 The Church of England has been speaking out on and responding to environmental issues since the 1970s at latest. Throughout this period many clergy, officers and lay members have worked tirelessly in driving forward the Church’s action, with leadership and notable public interventions being made by Archbishop Rowan Williams, Bishop Richard Chartres, Bishop James Jones and others in the Bishops’ Environment Panel, not least in influencing the passing by Parliament of the Climate Change Act 2008.

3.2 The Church of England is the Mother Church of the Anglican Communion, a worldwide family of churches across every continent, with more than 70 million adherents in 38 provinces in 161 countries. The Anglican Communion forms part of the worldwide Christian Church, with which the Church of England joins in responding to the imperative to cherish God’s creation.

3.3 The panel opposite offers a brief summary of some of the Church of England’s activity concerning the environment.

Milestones in the Church of England’s engagement in environmental issues

- 1978** The Lambeth Conference passes resolutions calling for fresh approaches to economic well-being and livelihood and for a move away from wasteful forms of growth.
- 1986** The General Synod receives the report ‘*Our Responsibility for the Living Environment*’.
- 1988** The Lambeth Conference formally adopts Five Marks of Mission, one of which is “to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain the life of the earth.”
- 1990** ‘*Christians and the Environment*’ is published and circulated at General Synod.
- 1995** The Church of England is represented at the congress marking the 1900th anniversary of the Revelation to St John the Divine, when the *Religion, Science and the Environment Symposium* is launched by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.
- 1998** The Lambeth Conference draws up a theology of the environment, and resolves to establish a global Anglican Environment Network.
- 2003** Bishop James Jones’s pioneering book on ‘*Jesus and the Earth*’ is published.
- 2005** General Synod passes a resolution endorsing the message and recommendations of the report ‘*Sharing God’s Planet*’.
- 2006** Launch of the Church’s *Shrinking the Footprint* campaign.
- 2007-2008** Continued work on *StF*, including auditing of Church’s carbon footprint with Carbon Trust and AECOM Consultants. Publication by Church House of handbooks by Claire Foster and David Shreeve on Church action to reduce environmental impacts: ‘*How Many Lightbulbs Does it Take to Change a Christian?*’ and ‘*Don’t Stop at the Lights*’.

Significant contributions by the Bishops of London and Liverpool to the House of Lords debates on the Government’s Climate Bill.
- 2009** On 11th June over 100 delegates from nearly every diocese gather for the Church’s ‘Milestone’ Conference reviewing progress with *StF*. A comprehensive website and set of online guides for energy and carbon management in churches is launched for the *StF* programme – www.shrinkingthefootprint.org.

Launch of the *Climate Justice Fund* for climate change adaptation.

- 3.4** The Church of England is committed to an ambitious and exemplary environmental programme over the coming years. Its activity is underpinned by these principles:
- Putting Christian values into action: responding responsibly and joyfully to God’s care for creation and humanity’s role as priests and co-workers with Him;
 - Acting on the best available evidence: basing all policies and action on the best available scientific evidence and technical advice from experts in the Church and beyond;
 - Putting our own house in order: recognising that the Church must act collectively and convincingly to reduce its own footprints if it is to serve as a signpost and example of life in God’s kingdom;
 - Partnership and local action: recognizing that, given the size of the challenges and the fact that the Church is not a centralised body, partnerships with a range of other organisations, and a wide variety of local, parish-level, activities must be encouraged;
 - Climate action and environmental sustainability as a common cause: as the established Church, the Church of England has a special role in the life of the nation and, as such, is uniquely placed to convene debate and encourage cooperation, and to work with other organisations for the common cause of climate change mitigation, adaptation and environmental care.

3.5 The *Shrinking the Footprint* campaign (*StF*), established in 2005, is the Church of England’s lead programme to reduce the carbon footprint of its buildings and operations, and to lessen its wider environmental impact. Initially, the target was set for a 60% reduction by 2050, in line with national policy. After debate in Parliament the national target was increased to 80%; it was accepted that the Church should follow suit resulting in ‘the 20% Church’ – in terms of its carbon footprint.

- 3.6** There is a wide range of Church of England activities in support of *StF* that reduce environmental impacts, promote more sustainable living, and reflect on the theological implications of environmental issues. Examples of these are given below:

Durham and Newcastle Dioceses

- Collaboration on energy savings from clergy houses – these neighbouring dioceses are working together to reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency – and boost quality of life for tenants – in clergy housing and other buildings.
- A Joint Houses Environment Group has carried out work to audit the carbon footprint of clergy houses and identify opportunities for energy saving.
- So far the insulation measures undertaken have produced savings of some 14% in carbon emissions as well as giving financial savings and better quality of life in the houses to tenants.

Exeter

- Exeter Diocese is active on many fronts in the county of Devon and in the south-west region, and has a record of church and community action on the environment stretching back to the 1980s.
- Church members are involved in projects connecting the Cathedral, diocesan teams, parishes, community groups and local councils to reduce environmental impacts and cut carbon emissions, including the Devon Christian Climate Change Coalition.



Exeter Cathedral

Gloucester

- Gloucester has set up a new fund for environmental investments, based on contributions from its electricity supplier Ecotricity, in exchange for signing-up of church members to its service.
- The Diocese has set up a Gloucestershire Churches Environmental Justice network for awareness-raising, exchanges of information, ideas and project experience between church activists in the county.

London

- London Diocese has set a target of a 20.12% reduction in carbon footprint by 2012 - a goal adopted also by the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority (GLA). The aim is to reach this target early, by the end of 2011.
- The diocesan head office exceeded the 20.12% target by the end of 2008, and is now working towards a 50% saving by 2012.
- A major project underway with the Carbon Trust is aimed at identifying '*Generic Building Solutions*' – approaches to energy saving, efficiency and alternative technologies that can be applied to churches of diverse types and ages wherever they are, and that can produce reductions in carbon footprint going well beyond the 20% target set for 2012, towards and even beyond the 80% target for 2050.

Towards greener churches

Numerous churches have introduced renewable energy systems.

- In **London** diocese, solar power is in use at St James's Piccadilly, St Mary's Isleworth and St Aldhelm's Edmonton.
- In **Lichfield** Diocese the Church of St Alkmund's in Shrewsbury has installed solar panels on the roof and a smart display system to show how much energy is being produced and what carbon emission savings are being made.

- **Chelmsford** Diocese is the home of the first designated '*Eco-cathedral*' in the Church of England.

- In **Southwark** Diocese, St Mary's Church, Addington is an award-winning 'eco-church' that has developed numerous environmental projects and is acting as a hub via its local Churches Together ecumenical network to encourage other churches to carry out environmental audits and become more active in environmental work; while St Alban's Church, Streatham is using 18 solar panels to help power its buildings. St Alban's is the second church in Southwark Diocese to go for solar power, following the pioneering work of St Peter's, Brockley, in 2006.

3.7 In the next seven years the scope of *Shrinking the Footprint* will expand in a number of directions:

- Continued core activity with further action to measure, monitor and reduce the carbon footprint of the Church's total building stock;
- Expansion of the scope with successive phases to cover reduction of our ecological footprint (waste, water, food, travel) and to enrich the environment (biodiversity and land);
- Development of the *Climate Justice Fund*, a voluntary scheme for church members to contribute to projects for climate change adaptation in developing countries;
- Establishment of strategic partnerships with organisations in the voluntary, public and private sectors to reduce carbon and ecological footprints;
- Enhancement and strengthening of the Church's contribution to interfaith cooperation upon environmental matters.

4. Challenges for future Church of England action

“It is important to note that the biblical tradition goes beyond merely commending care for creation as it is, but also enrols human beings as co-creators with God. This is what we assert every time we offer bread at the Eucharist as ‘fruit of the earth and work of human hands’.”

Rt Revd Richard Chartres, Bishop of London

- 4.1** The challenge before the Church of England is to realise the commitment to a reduction of 80% in its carbon footprint by 2050, in line with current consensus on steps needed to keep the global temperature increase to tolerable levels; and, if necessary, to revise this target if so required by emerging evidence, new findings and international agreement.
- 4.2** The Church is also challenged to cut its carbon footprint by at least 42% by 2020, in line with the recommendations of the UK Committee on Climate Change. This would involve at least 5% year-on-year cuts in emissions wherever possible. Development of further phases of *Shrinking the Footprint* will aim to reduce the Church’s ecological footprint to a ‘One Planet’ level by 2050 at the latest.

- 4.3** This plan identifies the following key areas of activity for the Church and its *Shrinking the Footprint* campaign to engage in over the next seven years:

Buildings and Assets

StF will continue to improve the performance of Church buildings and operations.

- By 2016 all dioceses will have established systems for measuring and reporting annually on carbon footprints.
- *StF* will develop a rigorous basis for reporting on reduction of ecological footprints, and set up guidance and supporting IT systems for sustainable procurement in churches, a *Code for Sustainable Churches*.
- *StF* will seek funding for energy saving investments and for renewable energy in churches and on suitable church land.
- The Church will continue to monitor and influence the companies in which it invests to ensure its environmental and ethical policy is implemented, and will work with companies to influence them in shrinking their carbon footprints, ensuring that its portfolio of investments is carbon-neutral by 2020.

Governance and partnerships

- *StF* will encourage dioceses that have not yet developed environmental policies and *StF* processes to set them up by the end of 2010.
- At national level, *StF* will work with a new Environment and Sustainable Development Strategy Board, bringing together church leaders and expert voices from partner organisations.
- Dioceses will be encouraged to work in regional networks for action on climate change and the environment – for example, investing in renewable energy systems, creating environmental funds, and developing systems for sustainable procurement of goods and services.

Education and young people

- *Shrinking the Footprint* will work with public and voluntary schemes for *Education for Sustainable Development*, and encourage all 4,700 church schools by 2016 to be sustainable schools.
- It will promote integration of environmental issues in our work with young people at all levels.

Lifestyles

- *StF* will promote the *Climate Justice Fund* with Tearfund, encouraging take-up across the whole Church and participation by partners across faiths and civil society.
- All dioceses will be encouraged to become Fair Trade partners well before 2016, and also to promote more local projects for lifestyle change.

Pastoral and community work

- *StF* will build on the lessons of effective church involvement in communities that have suffered from flooding and other environmental impacts, and on the examples of engagement by the Church in the *Transition Towns* and 'Low Carbon Communities' movements.
- It will work with partner organisations to ensure that poor and vulnerable communities in England are not put at risk or placed in greater financial hardship by necessary increases in energy prices.

Media and advocacy

- *StF* will continue to testify to the need for change and to the work that church members at all levels are doing.
- It will continue to improve communications within and beyond the Church, via our partnerships and websites.

- The Church of England will improve training and awareness throughout the ranks of the clergy, and will lobby for ambitious action on climate change and other ecological crises, and for policies to protect the interests of poorest and most vulnerable people worldwide.

Celebration

- Following on from previous publications, David Shreeve is currently preparing a new title, '*Whose Light is it Anyway?*' – which develops ideas for interfaith collaboration in environmental action.
- By 2016, dioceses and cathedrals will be holding annual Creation Time festivals and services of worship and prayer; running courses, retreats, artistic events and celebrations connecting the themes of *StF* to the church calendar; commissioning new art works, hymns, choral pieces, stained glass and other church art inspired by *StF* and the *Climate Justice Fund*.

for the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England

October 2009

Lambeth Palace, London

