

Saving Creation: Strategic action to combat climate

A toolkit to help churches achieve carbon net zero by 2030



Combating climate change by driving down carbon emissions is a universally agreed priority both globally and locally and the Diocese of Leeds is dedicated to this task for the sake of God’s Kingdom and all its inhabitants.

The 2020 General Synod of the Church of England made a commitment to be Carbon Net Zero by 2030 and much good work is already underway at a national level and in our diocese.

This is evidenced by our Bronze Eco Diocese Award achieved in 2020, and those churches and church schools who have already embarked on this journey are to be applauded, learned from and encouraged.

This toolkit aims to give your church a step by step guide on how to be become a carbon net zero church. Find out how in the Six Steps to Net Zero section.

The journey to carbon neutrality will be easier for some than others, but every parish’s actions to cut carbon emissions displays leadership in our communities and demonstrates the relevance of the gospel in the current context of the climate crisis.

Jesus said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation”. Mark 16:15

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An introduction from Bishop Nick



Opinions can be quite entertaining, but they can never substitute for facts. The science of climate change is not a mere matter of opinion. In some parts of our country we might have the luxury of choosing to ignore it; in some of our partner dioceses around the world, that luxury is looked upon as a selfish error.

The Diocese of Leeds has been working hard to produce a Carbon

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Net Zero strategy that has a chance of being achieved. It is ambitious, but realistic. And, like a journey of a thousand miles, it starts with a single step. That is what we are encouraging in the months and years ahead.

Why? Well the quick answer is that, according to the Bible, human beings were created from the stuff of the planet and have been given the role of nurturing nature, so that humanity and all creation can flourish. Loving our neighbour does not

stop at making the most for the material benefit of this generation, but handing on a planet to our grandchildren and their grandchildren after them. Love is not selfish. Justice is not shortsighted.

Every parish and each individual can play their part as we seek to do our bit. And this is not in parallel with our Christian discipleship or worship – it is essential to it. Spirituality cannot be separated from the stuff of the cosmos. So, our strategy encourages us to grow in discipleship, re-frame our living together, and re-shaping the way we see our commitment to God and each other.

This diocese will provide training, support and advice on how to decarbonise. We have put in place a £80K year Grants and Loans for Church Buildings fund to assist churches to decarbonise their buildings, and are investing in retrofitting clergy properties to reduce energy use.

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The bishops are taking steps personally in this, not least (for example) in moving to electric or hybrid cars.

A couple of simple steps each parish can take now are (a) to report on carbon emissions annually from 2023 (using the online parish returns Energy Footprinting Tool), and (b) to make a

plan as to how to be carbon net zero by 2030, the first step of which would be to switch to a renewable electricity (which can be done through the Diocesan Green Journey scheme).

I strongly commend our strategy to you and look forward to working with you as we address the crisis together.

The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds

Practical guidance

Saving Creation: Acting for Christ in Love

The actions contained in this toolkit provide practical ways of Loving, Living and Learning together.

Loving

Reducing our carbon usage is an act of love. For many of the world's most vulnerable people climate change is not a future threat but a present reality. Its effects compound problems of hunger, poverty and conflict, and destroy homes, livelihoods and harvests. "Treading lightly upon the earth" is increasingly being seen as part of Christian discipleship. At its heart lies the idea of sharing. God shares his beautiful and diverse creation with us, in love and in trust. We share "a common home" with other people, other species and future generations. How we behave has an impact beyond ourselves. The Earth is bountiful but its resources are not limitless. If we carelessly or greedily use more than our share, it is others who pay the price. Loving our neighbour as ourselves calls us to reduce our carbon usage as individuals, and as a Church.

Living

Facing up to the reality of climate change requires us to live differently, to ask difficult questions, and consider our priorities. It is a question of credibility. How we live reveals the nature of the God we believe in. If

we believe that God created this world in all its magnificent diversity, that he loves the poor and stands with the marginalised, and that he offers hope, forgiveness and new ways possibilities, then these beliefs must be reflected in how we live our lives and run our churches. Achieving net zero by 2030, communicates to the world and to ourselves, who it is that we believe in.

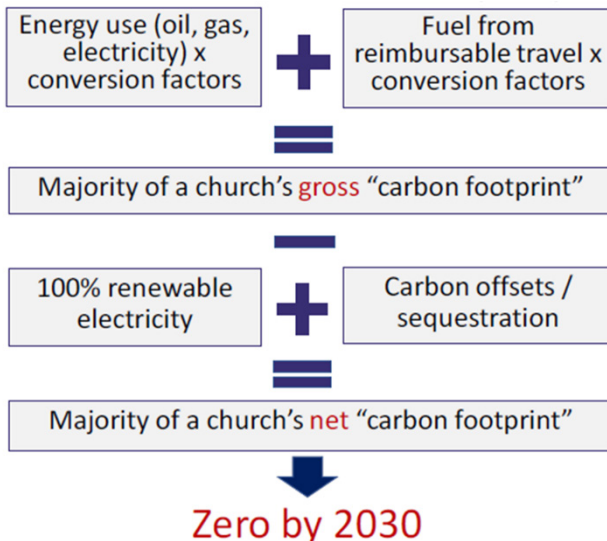
Learning

The questions and challenges which emerge from climate change are unique to our generation. In aiming for net zero by 2030, we are seeking to meet them boldly and courageously. It will be a costly journey, but one we believe we are called to undertake. As we embark upon it, let us seek to support one another to learn, grow and discover more about God, his mission and the role of the Church in the 21st Century.



What do we mean by carbon net zero?

- The Church of England has decided to start by only counting its Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions for the commitment to be carbon net zero by 2030. That means carbon dioxide produced from directly burning fossil fuels (gas/oil for heating and petrol/diesel used for church business travel) and carbon emitted from using fossil fuels to generate electricity.
- What about the “net” carbon emission? Some activities take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere for example as trees grow, they lock carbon into their leaves, trunks and roots and store it away. So additional tree planting can count as a carbon offset..



Six Steps to Zero

Step 1: Measure and Monitor

- When you complete your Online Parish Return use the Energy Footprinting Tool (EFT) section to calculate the church carbon emissions. Enter your church's energy bills data from the previous year and receive your Church Carbon Emissions Report.
- Add the Church Carbon Emission Report to your Annual Parish Council Meeting (APCM) reports and use it to inform your church Carbon Net Zero Plan.
- Currently, only energy data can be processed by the EFT. The Online Parish Returns will soon include a tool to record travel data (your church's ministerial miles) as well. In the meantime you can calculate the carbon emissions for mileage using the [360Carbon tool on the Climate Stewards website](#).
- If you would like a more comprehensive assessment of your church carbon footprint the 360Carbon calculator can give you more details, including the carbon emissions from items like refreshments served at church, insurance and waste (Scope 3 emissions).

Step 2: Plan and Prepare

- Use the [Practical Path to Net Zero: A checklist for your church](#) to help you identify which are the right actions for your church to take. Look over the [Net Zero Carbon Church interactive advice picture](#) for inspiration.
- Put in place a carbon net zero plan. You can use the [parish template](#) or devise your own.

- For most churches becoming carbon net zero will be a marathon and not a sprint. Make sure you act quickly on cheap and easy actions and schedule and budget more challenging items.
- Communicate the plan, and the reasons for it, to the whole church and your wider community to garner their support. Report back on your Carbon Net Zero Plan at each APCM.
- Appoint a [Parish Environment Officer](#) to champion this area of mission.

Step 3: Essential Energy Actions

- Reduce your church energy use as much as possible. There are many small actions that will help to reduce your church energy use. Use the [Practical Path to Net Zero: A checklist for your church](#) to help you identify which are the right actions for your church to take or watch the [Housekeeping and Quick Wins Webinar](#).
- Switch your electricity supply to a 100% renewable tariff. You can do this through the [Diocesan Green Journey scheme](#) or another supplier.
- In 2019, 21% of the carbon emissions from churches in the Diocese of Leeds came from electricity generation. This could be cut to zero immediately if every church switched to a renewable electricity tariff.

- If your church heating is gas or oil there are some longer term plans to be made to replace this with an electric based system (as electricity can be generated renewably) such as under pew heating, electric radiators, far infra-red panels, air source or ground source heat pumps. Watch the [C of E heating webinars](#) for advice. In the meantime you could switch to a carbon offset gas tariff, such as the one offered by the [Green Journey](#).
- When considering your long term heating plans check the [DAC \(Diocesan Advisory Committee\) Sustainability Policy and Guidance](#) and seek advice from your church architect and the DAC team.

Step 4: Essential Travel Actions

- Church related travel may be a bit more complicated to calculate. Using clergy and volunteer travel expenses or a survey to estimate these journeys by car will provide a reasonable evaluation.
- Reducing journeys by car, switching to public transport or active travel (walking and cycling) for those that can, car sharing and holding some meetings online will all help. Over the next ten years the move to electric vehicles will cut emissions for most remaining vehicle journeys.

Step 5: Carbon Offsetting

- All remaining carbon emissions will need to be offset to bring your church balance to zero.

- There are many reputable and local carbon offsetting schemes. [Climate Stewards](#) is a Christian charity that offsets carbon at a cost of £20 per tonne of carbon dioxide. So if, for example, a church had 4 tonnes of carbon left after switching to a renewable electricity tariff, it would cost £80 a year to be net zero carbon. Including this in your annual budget will help to reflect the true cost of any actions your PCC may be considering.

Step 6: Stepping Out and Up

- Finally, remember that becoming a carbon net zero church is part of your active love for your local community, global neighbours and for future generations. Make sure you celebrate what you are achieving and publicise your good news in the local media, on your social media, and please also tell us at communications@leeds.anglican.org.
- You could hold a [Climate Sunday](#) inviting local dignitaries or join the [Eco Church award scheme](#) to recognise your achievements.
- Don't forget to embed creation care in your weekly worship and discipleship as we learn together how to live and love as people of Christ in the context of the climate crisis. There are worship and small group resources on the Diocesan website. You could encourage your congregation to take [the 10 Pledges](#) to cut their own carbon emissions.
- Jesus called his disciples to preach the good news to all creation. Your actions in decarbonising the church are a beacon of hope in your community. There are plenty of opportunities for your congregation to join in with climate action in their workplaces, schools and community groups. Use the [Climate Emergency Toolkit](#) for inspiration on step out and up.

Visit the Diocesan website to read case studies of churches who have started to take the Six Steps to Zero.

Resources for Parishes

More detailed advice is available on the environment pages of the diocesan website: www.leeds.anglican.org/saving-creation. If you need further advice on the Six Steps to Zero please contact the Diocesan Environment Officer who will put you in touch with one of the Diocesan Environment Group advisors.

- Details of the General Synod motion and 2030 net zero carbon target can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/general-synod-sets-2030-net-zero-carbon-target>
- Climate Stewards 360Carbon calculator can be found here: www.climatestewards.org/
- [Template Carbon Net Zero Parish Plan](#)
- A practical Path to Net Zero: A checklist for your church: www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/PP2NZC_SelfGuidedChecklist_onscreen_version.pdf
- [Template role description for a Parish Environment Officer](#)
- [The Diocesan Green Journey Energy Package](#)
- Church of England webinars on Getting to Net Zero: www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/webinars-getting-net-zero-carbon
- Net Zero Carbon Church interactive advice picture: www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/net-zero-carbon-church
- The Climate Emergency Toolkit Tearfund: www.climateemergencytoolkit.com/
- [DAC Sustainability Principles](#)

For more resources ideas and help, please visit
<https://www.leeds.anglican.org/environment/saving-creation>

For support with anything in this document, please email
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