

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This Policy is a statement of intent for the United Reformed Church, Yorkshire Synod, *agreed* by synod at its meeting on 9th October 2021. The policy uses as its basis the teaching and word of God and his Son, Jesus, that requires of us to be good stewards of the Earth in all its abundance for now and for future generations.
- 1.2 In being good stewards, we aim to reduce our carbon footprint, reduce waste, recycle wherever possible and purchase wisely enough for all to live. In doing so, we aim to protect the Earth's land, flora and fauna, oceans and atmospheres to bring equilibrium to all God's creation.
- 1.3 This policy is intended to be a supportive and active document for Synod, churches and congregations for application within each setting and community. The annex offers guidance and links to some useful sites for churches to dip into as needed.
- 1.4 In referencing Biblical teaching and the URC Environment Policy updated in May 2019, Synod proposes to work towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030, acknowledging the love of God for us and all creation and recognising recent developments in Earth Sciences and declarations of climate emergency. Hence, the Policy and Annex will be reviewed annually.
- 1.5 Synod encourages churches to have regard for the 10 Statements of Mission of Vision 2020, including care for God's creation in regular worship and teaching.

[Annex 1: URC Environment Policy. Annex 2: net zero carbon. Annex 3: Statement Ten of Mission, Vision 2020]

2. Why is Good Stewardship important?

- 2.1 From the beginning of the Biblical message, we were appointed by God to be good stewards of Earth, to nurture and care for all creatures just as it is God who loves us. God also gave us responsibility to care for all creation and enough for us to live by and be blessed through all good things.
- 2.2 In recent times we have been profligate with earth's resources and exploited others, leading to catastrophic loss of biodiversity and massive increase in harmful greenhouse gases that have adversely impacted those who contributed least to climatic crisis and having fewer resources to combat significant changes.
- 2.3 For that reason, Synod maintains its ethical stance on investment, including divestment from fossil fuels, illegally logged wood, products from unregulated sources and avoiding plastics from petroleum and unsustainable sources wherever possible.
- 2.4 For that reason, **Synod declares a climate emergency** and promotes changes that will aim to mitigate unsustainable losses to God's natural world.

[Annex 4: notes on COP 15 and COP26]

3. How will we achieve Good Stewardship?

- 3.1 Synod commits to achieving Gold Standard as an Eco Synod by 2030
- 3.2 Synod commits to managing Synod investments positively towards a greener environment, and to encouraging local churches to do the same.
- 3.3 Synod commits to reducing its carbon footprint by
- adopting a policy of 'recycle, reuse, repair' where-ever possible; also, renew, rethink, resell, reduce, refresh.
 - considering the use of video conferencing for meetings where appropriate, rather than travelling for meetings and encourages local churches to do the same.
- 3.4 Synod commits to including consideration of the environmental impact in all its decisions, and to encourages local churches to do the same.
- 3.5 Synod appoints one or more Green Apostles to work across the Synod to champion environmental mission inherent in the Policy.

3.5.1 Among other duties, the Green Apostle(s) will sign up the Synod to Eco Synod, monitor and report regularly on progress and gather an Environment Task Team to support them in their work.

3.5.2 The Synod Green Apostles and Environment Task Team cannot achieve its purposes alone. The active support of churches is needed. To aid this process Synod encourages churches to appoint an individual or group to:

- Develop a Church Environment Policy that operates across all of church life
- Sign their church up to Eco church, if not already signed and to guide progress through bronze, silver and gold levels.
- Report regularly to elders and to church meeting on how the church's Environment Policy is being met.
- Participate in environment meetings with The Task Team and share with champions from other churches.

[Annex 5: Green Apostle's remit Annex 6: Eco church explained.]

4. Achieving Eco Targets in Church and Beyond

4.1 Synod encourages all churches to ensure there is wide participation across all aspects of church life when setting eco targets. What unites us as church and people is the need to live as children of God in all our prayerful decisions.

4.2 Church's Policy should cover and consider areas such as worship, young people, elderly, user groups, maintenance, buying goods and services, finance, and utilising space, in all cases respecting and involving the local and wider communities.

4.3 Eco church helps churches and individuals to achieve its environment goals by encouraging each church to have an active and current Environment Policy that operates across all of church life.

[Annex 7: Guide to being Greener]

5. Review and Accountability

5.1 The Synod Green Apostle(s) will

- report bi-annually to Synod, ensuring the Policy is maintained annually and kept up to date
- liaise with churches through their appointed environment representative(s)
- Work with the Synod Environment Task Team to set targets for one, two and five years, to be reviewed annually.

5.2 The work of the Green Apostle(s) and Synod Environment Task Team is accountable to Synod Council

[Annex 11: 1, 2 and 5 Year Targets]

6. Education and finance

6.1 To help churches tackle the climate emergency and to mitigate unsustainable loss to God's natural world, **Synod commits to**

- offering support and advice on best practice to churches as needed
- providing an annual budget to the Synod Environment Task Team, managed by the Green Apostle(s).
- providing financial support to churches through a dedicated Green Fund for projects designed to decrease their carbon footprint in line with Statement 10, Vision 2020.

[Annex 8: websites to support worship, property, community and global outreach.

Annex 9: Review of Carbon calculators]