



DURSLEY TABERNACLE URC

Eco Policy

2019-22

Renewal Date

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ECO POLICY

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Dursley Tab URC Eco Policy

Background

The Tab's Eco Group has produced this policy, stating our beliefs, responsibilities and pledges as Christians towards God's creation and one another. As a church we acknowledge that our duties to act against injustice and to look after God's creation are often inter-related.

This policy, which forms part of the Tab's vision for 2030, is based on the environmental policy of the United Reformed Church. The URC environmental policy is in turn based on its vision 2020 document and reports such as the Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change, produced by the joint working group on climate change and theology convened by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing, 2009). It also takes into account the December 2015 Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC's) 2018 special report on the need to keep global warming within 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures and its urgent warning that we have until 2030 to take action to prevent a climate catastrophe.

Purpose

This policy:

- Sets out our belief as the cornerstone of our intent
- provides a declaration of the Tab's stance towards the environment
- sets aims and objectives and maps a way forward for the Tab in the decade ahead

We recognise that promoting equality of opportunity is not simply a matter of treating everyone the same. In some cases more favourable treatment for an under-represented group might be necessary in order to redress an inequality of opportunity.

Our Belief

As a church we affirm that care for creation, a just sharing of the world's resources and a concern for the environment are fundamental Gospel commitments.

Through Christ, God has created an awesome and majestic cosmos. We are but one part of God's created order. We believe that God created and continues to create the whole universe, sustains and nurtures creation, and will redeem the whole of creation from its bondage to decay (Romans 8.21).

Jesus has redeemed the whole earth through his life, death and resurrection. We believe that the reconciliation of all things to God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus cannot be separated from God's act of creation: that all things have been created through Christ and for Christ - the Word of God incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth - and that, through Christ, God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things (Col 1.16-20). We believe that creative and redemptive work also belongs to the work of the Spirit, who swept over the face of the waters in the beginning and who inspires a groaning creation as it awaits redemption. We acknowledge God the Trinity to be the source, sustenance and salvation of all creation.

We recognise that we have a special responsibility to care for the earth so that human life and all God's creatures may be sustained in harmony. We believe that God entrusts creation to our care, calling us to be stewards of it; calls us to be partners in God's ongoing creative, renewing and redeeming activity; commands us to act justly and in righteousness not only towards our fellow human beings but to all creation; and requires us to care for creation so that future generations, whom God also loves, can enjoy it and benefit from it.

We affirm that Christian mission includes caring for God's earth and all creation. It includes acknowledging humankind's responsibility, sharing in putting right the relationships within God's creation that have gone wrong and working within the church and with partners outside the church to grow towards justice and good stewardship.

We know that human activity has contributed to the degradation of the earth and that this is not the will of God. We believe that this degradation limits the attainment of the fullness of life that God wills for all creation and is a sin for which we should seek forgiveness. It also imposes most heavily upon the peoples of the developing countries of the world and is part of the intrinsic injustice to which we bear witness. As the Lambeth Declaration 2015 on Climate Change, to which the United Reformed Church is a signatory, affirms: 'The demands of justice as well as of creation require the nations of the world urgently to limit the global rise in average temperatures. We have a responsibility to act now, for ourselves, our neighbours and for future generations.'

Our Declaration

The changing climate and its consequences for all life on planet earth cannot be over-emphasised as the most significant underlying issue of our time. Our church, reflecting faith in God the creator and sustainer of life in all its fullness, must discover a radical voice for care of the earth and its people that is supported by the way we live, acknowledging this generation's specific mandate to act and speak out urgently. We will adopt an eco policy and actively pursue its targets to tread more lightly on this earth and seek a fairer distribution of the world's resources.

Our Aim

Acknowledging the validity of the fifth of the five marks of mission (to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain the life of the earth), we pledge to:

- urgently shrink our carbon footprint, aiming to reduce our carbon footprint by 45 percent by 2030 and to be as close to carbon neutral as possible by 2050.
- work towards Eco Church Gold status (www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk)
- intercede for those threatened by climate change
- set ambitious targets which will require active and widespread change and be reviewed every three years along with our policy

We recognise that these pledges call for conversion on the part of both individual church members and transformation of the Tab's internal processes.

Our Objectives

As a church community, we will take environmental concerns into account in our mission, worship, study, education, training, pastoral, administrative and other projects and programmes.

We shall use the framework of the A Rocha Eco Church scheme (www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk) to ensure good practice in all areas of church life and will walk towards the following goals:

Worship & Teaching

- We will promote an environmental theology
- We will include our concern for sustainability in our worship and teaching.
- We will raise awareness, through prayer, preaching, Bible study, teaching and discussion, of the need for confession and repentance in relation to the causes of climate change, and of our

calling, as God's redeemed people, to live joyfully, simply and responsibly with respect for God's creation.

- We will involve the children and young people in activities focusing on care for the environment

Management of Church Buildings

- We will maintain an Eco Group to lead our programme and an Energy Champion who together will bring relevant environmental issues and concerns forward to the Elders and Church Meeting
- We will carry out a systematic environmental audit of our buildings and follow strategies for reducing their carbon footprint. Identify the most significant issues and impacts which should be addressed and make and implement plans and programmes to tackle them, recognising that some additional costs may be incurred to minimise environmental impacts.
- As the church's energy use is arguably the source of its greatest environmental impact, we will seek to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of the electricity and gas used in church premises by for example:
 - ▶ switching to 'green' energy suppliers (renewably generated electricity and biogas)
 - ▶ using thermostats for temperature control
 - ▶ fitting LED light bulbs to replace less energy efficient ones
 - ▶ improving heat insulation wherever possible
 - ▶ using other energy-saving technologies as appropriate
 - ▶ turning off lights, appliances and computers when not in use
 - ▶ replacing old, inefficient boilers where practicable and investigating renewable heating alternatives
- We will avoid using water unnecessarily, check for leakages, fit water-saving systems to taps and cisterns wherever practicable. We shall seek to use the most environmentally friendly water supplier where economically viable.

Management of Church Land

- We will assess our land and property for wildlife and manage them to conserve biodiversity
- We will ensure that church-owned land is used in ways that encourage an enjoyment of nature and enhance and protect the environment

Community and Global Engagement

- We will work with others in our local community to identify environmental issues which should be addressed in our area and help develop actions to tackle them
- We will engage with local political representatives, urging them for example to support policies that take effective steps towards realising the goal of reducing global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) to net zero by 2050
- We will explore working in collaboration with local environmental or sustainability groups eg for the reinvigoration of Dursley's Fairtrade status
- We will support campaigns and popular action around climate change issues as appropriate

Lifestyle

- We will encourage our staff and members to use transport with minimum impact - to cycle, use buses and trains, car-share and use energy-efficient vehicles where possible. Members are also

encouraged to adopt the practice of carbon off-setting with respect to essential travel by making payments supporting sustainable projects (e.g. through Climate Stewards)

- We will seek ways to reduce material consumption and the impact of our activities on the environment by, wherever possible, for example:
 - ▶ serving locally-produced food
 - ▶ minimising the consumption of red meat and dairy products
 - ▶ using email or other electronic forms of communication rather than hard copies
 - ▶ using recycled paper
 - ▶ minimising packaging and use of single-use plastics
 - ▶ reusing or repairing items
 - ▶ using low environmental impact cleaning materials
- We will work towards a fairer sharing of the world's resources by promoting and using Fairtrade products and supporting campaigns such as Christian Aid's on tax and climate justice
- We shall revitalise our Fairtrade status, wherever possible using Fairtrade and/or ethically sourced goods at church services and events and being a 'green' community resource
- We will encourage individual members of our congregation to take actions in their personal lives to complement and supplement these actions of the church community.