

## Some practical things churches can do:

- Have re-usable cups at meetings – can members bring their own?
- Use Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar.
- Cut down food waste at church events.
- Turn off lights and heating as much as possible and avoid leaving devices on stand-by.
- Use recycled paper and eco-friendly cleaning materials.
- Reduce car use for meetings by encouraging car-sharing and installing a bike park.
- Develop a plan for more efficient energy use, aiming to reduce our carbon footprint.



## Take it out of your meeting place:

- Join with environmental projects in the local community, such as litter-picking and clean-ups. This fosters the common good and engages with neighbours.
- Partner with a church or churches in a developing country where climate change or nature degradation is an immediate issue.
- Support members who feel called to grapple with these issues politically or through local or national campaigning. Many of those already engaged are also Christians, and involvement can be positive in building relationships between churches. There may also be opportunities for witness to some who might otherwise have no contact with the gospel.

## Small steps for a big challenge

### The crisis is massive, but we have a great God!

- God does not call us to save the world but to respond faithfully to Him.
- We do not aim at perfection, just to take the next step.
- Each step can be an act of worship.
- Doing things together is usually most effective.
- Though what we do may seem small, its impact can go far beyond what we expect, just as the small boy's loaves and fishes fed 5,000 when offered to Jesus.

## What resources can help?



*L is for Lifestyle* by Ruth Valerio, Tearfund's Director of Global Advocacy, looks at many practical ways we can all start to make a difference.



*Tearfund's Climate Emergency Toolkit* is a set of resources to help churches make a climate emergency declaration, which is a helpful way of taking a clear stance.



*Jubilee+* founder Martin Charlesworth has filmed the *Climate Change Course*, a series of eight short videos to help Christians engage with the climate crisis.



*A Rocha's Eco-church scheme* is a systematic process to help churches plan and carry out their responses to the climate crisis, and learn from others doing likewise.



*Climate Stewards* (part of A Rocha) offers a really helpful online tool for individual households to calculate our environmental impact and carbon footprint.



*The Church of England's Environment Programme* offers a wide range of resources and experience, including guidance for individual churches to reach Net Zero.



For a sound theological background, there is an excellent paper: *Towards a Christian Approach to the Environment* by Jubilee+ founder Martin Charlesworth.

[jubilee-plus.org](http://jubilee-plus.org)  
[christcentralchurches.org/creationcall](http://christcentralchurches.org/creationcall)

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# Creation at the crossroads.

How churches can respond to the environmental crisis.



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God designed us – you and me – to steward His creation. As a result of the Fall, the physical world groans, but our call is the same: we are to take care of planet Earth until Jesus returns. This isn't just an environmental concern. It's a social justice issue. Around the globe, it's those who have the least who are the most adversely affected by changes to our climate. Many of us are daunted by the scale of the crisis, but there are small, practical steps churches can take today to make a difference.

## What's the problem?

The world is experiencing a double environmental crisis.

### The nature crisis:

- Our land, sea and air are heavily polluted, affecting all living creatures.
- Plastic spoils land and sea, threatening life and finding its way into our food.
- Deforestation, industrial farming and urbanisation are spoiling natural habitat.
- The thin crust of soils in life-giving, fertile areas is rapidly being lost by industrial farming methods.
- The intensive use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and weed-killers affects our health, kills bees and other natural pollinators, and destroys life-sustaining soil organisms.
- Many species of animals, fish, birds and insects are in danger and some have already been lost.
- Loss of biodiversity is a serious problem, as each group of animals depends on many others.

### United Nations (UNCCD, 2022):

“Taken together, human actions are undermining and challenging the fundamental processes that underpin a habitable biosphere and Earth system resilience. It can no longer be taken for granted that the planet will be able to continue to support human wellbeing and development.

(International Science Council, quoted in Global Land Outlook 2: Summary for Decision Makers, p1)

### The climate crisis:

- The Earth's average temperature has risen by over 1°C since pre-industrial times.
- This is largely the result of greenhouse gas emissions, mostly carbon dioxide (CO2).
- Most CO2 emissions have come through humans burning fossil fuels, such as coal, gas and oil.
- This warming is changing the global climate, bringing more frequent and more severe extreme weather events and their results, such as temperature highs and lows, heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, tropical storms, floods and landslides.
- It has affected crops, brought famine, disrupted stable life, endangered many species and provoked more migration.



- Melting glaciers and icecaps are raising sea levels, endangering coastal and island communities.
- Keeping temperature rise down to 1.5°C is vital to avoid unmanageable change, but even if CO2 emissions stopped today, temperatures would continue to rise.
- Urgent global action is needed if a 1.5°C limit on temperature rise is to be achieved.

### United Nations (IPCC, 2022):

“The cumulative scientific evidence is unequivocal: Climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health. Any further delay in concerted anticipatory global action on adaptation and mitigation will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all.

(Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation & Vulnerability, Summary for Policymakers, p33)

## Why should we care?

### Scripture

- Looking back: humans are made in God's image, with a responsibility to care for His good world. Despite our failure, this remains a core part of our humanity. To 'take dominion' requires care and preservation, not exploitation and destruction.
- Looking forward: through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we live in hope of the redemption and renewal of all things, including the created world. Despite the difficulties, this gives us motivation and faith to act.
- Acting now: we take seriously our responsibility as God's stewards. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray and work for His kingdom to come, on earth as it is in heaven. This will only be completed at Christ's return, but our actions now can have real impact and eternal value.

### Justice

- The greatest contribution to climate change has come from developed countries. They have largely been the cause of the problem in the industrial era.

- The greatest impact of climate change has been in developing countries, who have fewer resources to respond effectively and are relatively modest emitters of CO2.
- Within the Newfrontiers family of churches, people have been affected by devastating floods in Pakistan and Malawi and by sustained drought in Kenya.
- The God of justice calls His people to express repentance for our failures and to show mercy and compassion to those affected.

“Between 2010–2020, human mortality from floods, droughts and storms was 15 times higher in highly vulnerable regions, compared to regions with very low vulnerability. (IPCC, Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Summary for Policymakers, p12)

### Mission

- These crises are the context in which we share the gospel, touching the felt needs of global society.
- The world needs to see God's compassion and our responsibility, expressed by His people.
- The gospel offers forgiveness for all our sins, including failure to care for God's world.
- The gospel offers peace in all situations, even this growing crisis.
- There are particular opportunities for engaging with the many young people worldwide who are deeply concerned about their future.

“When the world looks back at the church in 200 years' time, will they think the church helped to stop climate change or were part of the problem? Will they view the church as a positive part of society which is a catalyst of change, or negative and outdated?

(Tearfund, Burning Down the House, p7)



## What could a godly church response look like?

### Rooted in the grace of God, we can:

- live in hope and peace amid surrounding fear, knowing that God is with us now and will finally renew all things;
- take individual and corporate steps to care for God's creation as a joyful act of worship;
- live simpler lives, rejecting the pressures of consumerism, finding pleasure in human relationships and the beauty of the created world rather than in material possessions, thereby releasing resources to meet the needs of those in poverty;
- take a leading role in community action;
- continue to share the good news of Jesus within our communities, demonstrating the close links between personal salvation and caring for God's world;
- express love, mercy and hope rather than anger and hatred, even while challenging ungodly actions and attitudes;
- support Christians in other countries who are more seriously affected by the crisis;
- plant new churches that demonstrate God's love by engaging with local nature issues;
- demonstrate and herald God's kingdom as the only ultimate answer to our problems.



## How can we get started?

### Some foundational steps

1. Preach and teach a biblical foundation. Include praise for God's creation in our worship. Pray for grace to be faithful to Him.
2. Learn together about the practical effects of the nature and climate crisis and the importance of our purchasing choices and lifestyle changes.
3. Encourage church members to make small, practical changes on a continual basis, reducing the impact of advertising and peer-pressure to contribute positively to the planet's health.
4. Audit the local church's progress in caring for God's world and responding to the nature and climate crisis. Then act on any short-comings found.
5. Encourage sacrificial giving to support those who are most severely impacted by climate change.