

NORTH WESTERN SYNOD ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

October 2020

From Green Apostle Team: Revds Daleen Ten Cate, Kate Gray & Rosalind Selby

SUMMARY

1. **Affirmation** As the North Western Synod of the United Reformed Church, we affirm with General Assembly that living lightly on the Earth, caring for God's Creation and protecting the environment are fundamental Gospel commitments, central to our Missional Discipleship.
2. **Synod acknowledges** humankind's culpability for causing grievous harm to poorer peoples and to all God's creation. Humanity faces a number of crises of its own making: **climate change/global heating; loss of biodiversity; pollution (air, sea and land); over use of resources (eg overfishing, and deforestation); rubbish disposal (linked to single-use plastics)**. We commit to work within the wider Church and with partners outside the Church to seek to transform this double injustice.
3. **Synod recognises** the significance and hope of the 2015 Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the imperatives of the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5%, the 2019 United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation report on the state of the world's biodiversity for food and agriculture and the global Fridays for the Future campaign on climate change by young people.
4. **Synod pledges to shrink the Synod 'carbon footprint'** (the total greenhouse gas emissions caused by all church activities including those related to travel and those embodied in buildings, building work and in equipment purchased) to net zero as rapidly as practicable. At the same time individual members should be helped to make corresponding life-style adjustments. The following targets are commensurate with the UK achieving net zero by 2045 and the world by 2055:
2030 target: to reduce the day-to-day CO₂ emissions from Synod activities and churches to net zero.
2040 target: to reduce the total carbon footprint of the Synod (as defined above) to net zero.
The expanded environmental policy indicates how these targets may be achieved by audits and actions such as switching to 100% renewable electricity and gas.
5. **Synod pledges to seek to protect biodiversity** by all means and vigorously to combat the causes of biodiversity loss. Synod encourages church members to make time to enjoy nature as part of their discipleship, to engage with political representatives, and to campaign with others.
6. **Synod encourages local churches to undertake systematic audits** of Synod and church buildings and activities for example to: eliminate single use plastics and other hard-to-recycle materials, use eco-friendly cleaning materials, enhance any church land (applying organic principles), significantly reduce use of meat, fish and dairy products in catering, and other appropriate changes.
7. **Synod promotes the 5 R's:** REFUSE, REDUCE, REUSE, REPAIR, RECYCLE.
8. **Synod pledges to work towards achieving Eco Synod status and to commend Eco church to local congregations.** Synod will implement measures to support people in living joyfully, simply and responsibly with respect to God's Creation including: promoting an environmental theology, training preachers and leaders, appointing 'Green Apostles', celebrating 'Time for Creation', undertaking practical projects, producing community artwork celebrating the Creator God and working in collaboration with other denominations, other Faiths and local environmental groups.
9. **Synod pledges to support and encourage the Youth and Children's work of the synod** in activities and campaigns to address climate change and respond to the challenge of bio-diversity loss.

The full document circulated with the Synod papers spells out the draft policy in detail and is being circulated to all the Synod churches. It will be posted on the Synod website and updated regularly.

North Western Synod

- i. **acknowledges with thanks the work of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Group in developing the draft Synod Environmental Policy**
- ii. **encourages local churches to study and discuss the draft policy and to submit any proposed improvements to the JPIC Group**
- iii. **asks The Green Apostles Team to work towards bringing the Policy with any revisions to the Synod meeting to be held on April 2021 for approval and adoption and integration.**