

GENERAL SYNOD

London/Truro Diocesan Synod Motion on Environmental Programmes

Summary

This paper sets out the background to the joint motion of London and Truro Diocesan Synods. The motion aims to strengthen the Church of England's response to climate change and other environmental issues, at national and diocesan levels. This paper highlights the challenges of climate change especially, and the gospel imperative to join in tackling it. It affirms the benefits of action by the Church of England to date, while identifying areas on which continuing and further action is still needed, explaining how these may be addressed through the terms of the motion. Aspects of ways and means needed for implementation are discussed.

Mission and Climate Change

1. The Fifth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion commits us “to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth”.¹ The work of Creation Care remains an obligation upon all Christians, firmly set within our understanding of Mission; this includes helping to tackle climate change. Our primary duty is to God, then to our fellow human beings including our brothers and sisters now and in future generations. Moreover, the Church of England would be likely to appear more relevant in the eyes of outsiders if seen to be in the vanguard of action on this major first order issue; it might even contribute to church growth.
2. The occurrence of global warming has been shown by successive reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to be ‘unequivocal’. “Human influence on the climate system is clear, and recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history. Recent climate changes have had widespread impacts on human and natural systems.” These impacts have been very well studied; they include weather extremes, disruption of farming and food supplies, the potential for loss of land and displacement of populations.² All around the UK, the pattern of increasing rainfall and consequent flooding is among climate change impacts that have become well-known. To take just one county, Cornwall, the pattern of flash flooding of increasing frequency and severity has become inescapable, culminating in the ‘apocalyptic’ downpour and flash flooding in Coverack in 2017.³
3. Climate change bears most heavily upon the poorest countries and people, who lack resources and resilience. At the November 2016 sessions of General Synod, the Archbishop of York presented a report on a visit to the Pacific Islands, featuring an unforgettable interview with Christians there on the challenges they are facing, caused by the rising sea levels contributed to by global warming. “We are the Body of Christ.” How can we speak these words at the Peace in our Eucharist without each time thinking of members of our Anglican Communion who are facing such challenges in their daily lives because of our own lifestyles?
4. Climate change also “affects the social and environmental determinants of health – clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter ... Between 2030 and 2050, (it) is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year (worldwide), from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress”, costing an estimated \$2-4 billion/year by 2030.⁴ (next page)

1. www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/MTAG%20The%205%20Marks%20Of%20Mission.pdf

2. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, www.ipcc.ch

3. www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/29910099/dave-watkins-extreme-rainfall-events.pdf

In the UK alone, the latest Climate Change Risk Assessment tells us that health-related deaths will rise from 2,000 per year now to 7,000 per year in the 2050s, due to climate change as well as the ageing population. But “areas with weak health infrastructure – mostly in developing countries – will be the least able to cope ... Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through better transport, food and energy-use choices can result in improved health.”^{4,5}

5. The Paris Climate Agreement of 2015 achieved for the first time near unanimity among countries upon a plan to tackle climate change. Seven years before, the UK parliament enacted legislation and targets to tackle climate change; progress is monitored by the Committee on Climate Change. All countries, governments and societies need to turn the Paris agreement into effective action “by keeping (to) a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels” and pursuing efforts “to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius”.^{6,7}

Action by the Church of England

6. The contribution of faith communities around the Paris negotiations has been well recognised, including by the UN’s then Climate Change Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres.⁸ This position of leadership needs to be sustained and strengthened. Action is needed on the environment and climate change, as well as advocacy.
7. Key events so far, relevant to our motion, have included:
 - a) 2005 ‘Sharing God’s Planet’ paper to General Synod;
 - b) 2006 Shrinking the Footprint (StF) campaign established; 60% target set for saving energy and carbon by 2050;
 - c) 2007 Faber Maunsell (now AECOM) makes estimates of energy and carbon emissions across the whole CoE estate;
 - d) 2009 ‘Church and Earth’ report recommends raising target to 80% (same as UK targets under the Climate Change Act), with a 42% target by 2020. These targets have been campaign policy since that time, declared on the Churchcare website;⁹
 - e) 2012-’13 Second national energy audit.¹⁰
8. These and other initiatives have been a combination of top down encouragement and bottom up action. The Church of England’s Environmental Programmes (CoEEP, formerly Shrinking the Footprint) have been broad and deep, as can be seen on the Churchcare and many diocesan websites. The CoE has a high profile in this regard.
9. At the same time, criticisms have been expressed that the Church of England has failed to go far enough. It has been claimed that the CoE “makes no reference to how much savings (of energy and carbon emissions) have been made to date”.¹¹

4. World Health Organisation, www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health

5. www.theccc.org.uk/2018/01/04/uk-cities-climate-change/#_ftn6

6. UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>;

7. UK Climate Change Act 2008, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents>; Committee on Climate Change, www.theccc.org.uk

8. <https://unfccc.int/news/religious-leaders-call-for-effective-paris-agreement>; <https://thinkprogress.org/250-faith-leaders-demand-nations-ratify-paris-climate-deal-c150f6a30ec3>

9. www.churchcare.co.uk/images/PDF/Church%20and%20Earth%20-%207%20yr%20plan.pdf

10. www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint/about-shrinking-the-footprint; www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint/about-shrinking-the-footprint/about-the-campaign/the-church-s-carbon-footprint

11. www.lawandreligionuk.com/2015/06/30/climate-change-the-archbishop-and-the-pope; www.lawandreligionuk.com/2015/05/08/climate-change-and-the-cofe

That might seem unfair, bearing in mind the studies just referenced – but we are at present unready to update them with regular nationwide measurements. The audits in 2007 and 2012/13 were performed on different bases, and they were several years apart. To make a proper assessment of the trend, figures are needed on the same basis each year. Reports need to demonstrate progress towards our ambitious targets. Any level of ambition requires measurement and verification to sustain credibility. But to reach 2020 without a way to ascertain progress towards our public targets would entail a risk to the Church's reputation, potentially even to the reputation of the Gospel.

Provisions of the motion

10. **Clauses (a) and (b)** of the motion have been amplified above. The remaining clauses seek to support the CoE Environmental Programmes as they progress further, while remedying the gaps that have been identified. Dioceses need to be fully on board with the national effort; **clause (c)** therefore “calls on every diocese to have an environmental programme with a designated member of the bishop's staff team to lead and advocate for the programme”. A senior staff team member, cognizant of the complexities of the environmental challenge and with authority to speak into the financial and legal arrangements of the diocese, is key to providing the trusted leadership needed to make real advances in this area of work. The appointment of a Diocesan Environmental Officer (DEO) has been encouraged since the establishment of StF; DEOs, or coordinators of environment groups, are in post in 83% of dioceses; most are voluntary and/or combined with other portfolios.¹² Some can feel isolated, even beleaguered. Whereas the position of a DEO is hugely strengthened by the support and advocacy of a dedicated senior staff member, to whom they report.
11. The church in Cornwall offers examples of the benefits of such arrangements:
- a) In relation to emergency planning, the Church can become involved in planning from the beginning, helping local government to support the needs of local people. Confident of official backing, the DEO can help prepare individuals and churches for the climatic events that will come our way, before the inevitable trauma, damage and financial costs are further exacerbated by under-preparedness.
 - b) Cornwall's '10 Pledges' challenge has proved an excellent way of engaging church members in personal activity around environmental issues, gaining credibility among other groups, beyond the Church. Church leaders can become a 'trusted messenger', mediating positive action when people are asked to take feasible and well targeted steps.¹³
 - c) The promotion of Eco Church awards yields many missional opportunities, offering new ways to invite like-minded others into engagement with the church community.
 - d) Within the Diocese, the DEO can be crucial in mediating between stakeholders and helping churches negotiate barriers to improvements in a church's infrastructure – for example, the recent installation of a biomass boiler on a school playground, to be shared between a parish church and local authority school.
 - e) An important educational role can be exercised with clergy and readers. A recent event in Truro has raised the profile of the environment in parishes – as evidenced by invitations to preach and lead courses. Visits to parishes and deaneries, sharing knowledge, education skills, resources and stories can encourage and inspire. Our churches are typically clergy-led, therefore when clergy become engaged, encouraged by the Diocese's leadership, congregations will too.

12. www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/church-buildings-council/who-s-who/deos

13. <http://climatevision.co.uk/top-ten-pledges>

12. At national level, a framework plan for future action needs to be prepared and promulgated, and this is duly called for by **clause (d)(i)**. This presents a great opportunity for the Church, not just in ordering its own programmes, but in contributing to and engaging with those of local and national government. For example, as part of Cornwall's devolution deal, a Strategic Resilience Network has been established, able to look beyond current funding cycles into a future which acknowledges climate change. These plans and the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan call for a strong structure of community and partnerships to enable appropriate action to be secured.^{14,15}
13. **Clause (d)(ii)** in the motion focusses on energy and carbon emissions by calling for "a simple tool, aiming to be operational by 2020, for annual collation of the energy consumption of cathedrals, churches and church halls and calculation of their total CO₂ emissions, to enable monitoring of progress ...". In London, energy use (gas, oil and electricity) has been measured for the years 2005-2016 so far. CO₂ is calculated using nationally published carbon intensities and regional temperatures. Crucially, participation by parishes is voluntary; uptake has doubled from 25% in 2005 to 50% in 2016. Nationwide, returns from 10% of parishes would make a very good beginning.
14. Actions at national and diocesan level need to complement and reinforce each other. **Clause (d)(iii)** therefore advocates "promoting communication and peer-review between individual dioceses as a means of encouraging best practice in the area of environmental policy, with special reference to investments, property and land use; and activities supporting the CoEEP and Eco Church initiatives". A peer-review process has already proved fruitful across the whole range of activities in dioceses, identifying strengths, any weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. A similar process would bring further dividends, homing in on a particular area of work, in this case the environment, through which diverse knowledge and experience across different dioceses in their varying circumstances can be shared, adapted and applied more widely.
15. The policy of the NCIs on financial investments is treated by the motion preceding this motion on Synod's order paper. But investments at diocesan level extend beyond funds in the bank and in equities, to diocesan and parish property and land, which may comprise the greater part of a diocese's assets. These also need to be considered in relation to climate change, both in terms of the risks they carry as a consequence of climate change, and the contribution to climate change resulting from the operations that take place within them – their energy use, carbon emissions, water consumption, waste and recycling. Opportunities presented by churchyards and other diocesan and parish land include schemes to safeguard biodiversity, such as the Living Churchyard and Natural Capital evaluation.
16. Church-owned properties themselves can become targets for investment, contributing to sustainability and climate change mitigation. Major examples are the programmes of solar photovoltaic installations across parsonages in Chelmsford and Gloucester Dioceses, as well as Gloucester Cathedral and numerous other churches. Across the Truro Diocese's glebe land, a number of sites have been identified for possible renewable energy and energy storage, as a sustainable land use with a beneficial financial yield. Investments can also be made in non-church projects, such as the hydro-power project at Rydal Hall in Cumbria, in which Carlisle Diocese has invested.¹⁶

14. www.cornwall.gov.uk/resiliencenetwork

15. www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan

16. www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/news/1538/61/Rydal-Hall-hydro-electric-project-to-be-officially-opened-.html

17. Finally, progress on all aspects of CoEEP need to be monitored and publicly reported on. **Clause (d)(iv)** proposes that a triennial report from the national Environmental Working Group to General Synod would be appropriate.

Church growth and energy saving

18. The relationship between growth and energy saving is a key aspect needing to be addressed. We want church growth and mission to flourish, “a growing church for all people and all places”¹⁷, at the same time as we reduce our energy and carbon. This also saves energy costs for our churches, money which can be better used for mission. Narratives of hope and of the common good resonate with the CoE’s environmental campaigns. We desire to be a part of God’s redeeming work for all Creation as well as for all people.¹⁸ Climate change mitigation is a moral and a spiritual challenge, as well as a technical one. The Fifth Mark of Mission has already been referred to; one notable feature of which is how aspects of the Fifth Mark are implicit in all of the others.
19. But are mission and growth compatible with, specifically, saving energy? There is a complex relationship between the energy use of a church and its mission, depending on how much of the week and by how many persons the church is used. When places and times are unchanged, increased attendances do not require more light and heat (though improved comfort may draw more people in). Higher numbers can also increase income and scope for measures to improve energy efficiency. Increased week-round activity can help optimise heating and cooling cycles.
20. Experience in London has taught us that regular measurement and monitoring can be accompanied by absolute reductions in energy and carbon across the whole estate. Our data suggests that compared to the average, churches participating in our programmes¹⁹ are c 50% better at energy saving, and even c 100% better at reducing carbon emissions! Recent audits (2017) of 24 churches in a single deanery compare favourably with diocese-wide energy use; these churches are also very high performers in terms of their level of activity. Comparison with an earlier programme of audits in 2009 shows CO₂ down 37%, and person-hours up 36%. An open church and a busy church can be an energy-efficient church. These things go hand in hand.

Practicalities

21. Issues of implementation include timing, especially in regard to our proposed system for measurement and reporting. The target date suggested in **clause (d)(ii)** conveys the urgency, and the need for reliable reporting of 2020 results, to assess progress by that date against the 42% target. Baseline figures are needed for comparison. Faber Maunsell’s 2007 study (para 7 above) was a professional report by a well reputed firm, intended to be used as the baseline for future measurements. Henceforward regularity is essential; one-off measurements are not sufficient. Successive years are needed, or the years measured may miss peaks and troughs, invalidating the trend line.
22. London employs a system integrated with parish annual returns; should this be deemed unacceptable, a separate system would appear to be feasible. One-off energy audits have great benefits, but are no substitute for annual reporting. Data collection through quinquennial inspections has been suggested; but inspecting architects and surveyors are not necessarily qualified to collect energy data and would need to be paid more. The information would still have to be collated and analysed, while no more than 20% would be available in each year.

17. www.churchofengland.org/about/renewal-and-reform

18. *Romans 8, Colossians 1*

19. www.london.anglican.org/kb/climate-action-programme

23. A possible solution might be devised for voluntary reporting by parishes directly to a new freestanding national system, with outward reporting of results therefrom. Calculation of nationwide totals could be computerised, performing data cleaning and analysis automatically, then outputting results to Church House staff and committees, and to dioceses and parishes. We envisage that the role of dioceses would be limited to publicising and encouraging parishes to take part. We do not think this needs to place undue additional burdens on diocesan offices, at least not to collect or report data. But how can parishes provide the necessary information, on top of the multitude of demands they already face? Parishes opting in would need to gather figures from bills and/or meter readings, then make simple entries onto an online form. This is a limited but not negligible task; however, we have found in London that churches are generally content to provide data once they know good use is being made of it.

Resources

24. **Clause (e)** of the motion calls on the Archbishop's Council "urgently to assess and furnish such human and financial resources as may be proper and necessary to enable the aforesaid work ..." The Secretary General's Background Note will no doubt refer to resources implications; nevertheless we are conscious of the responsibility, implicit in any proposal for new work programmes, to have reasonable regard to costs. We are acutely aware of the stringency faced by the National Church and dioceses. In that spirit, we hope that ways might be found to support much of what is called for, including planning and reporting, and moderation of an inter-diocesan peer-review scheme, within existing resources, if integrated into work programmes over a period. At the same time, it is clear that data gathering and reporting of energy and carbon must incur some cost. It is also not for us to specify in detail the kind of system the National Church might wish to adopt, but tentative enquiries have shown that an off-the-shelf online system to meet the need could be available for c £25K (excl VAT) for set-up (possibly spread over 2 years), plus £5K annually for hosting & support (2017 prices).
25. That would not include staffing costs, training, and communication. The London system is promoted via episcopal areas; it does not include training, and is integrated with support for annual returns. To that is added central support from the DEO. Very approximately, an equivalent level of support for a national system might demand c 5 person-weeks per year, more for the first 2-3 years. Although this commitment would fall on Church House, we still think a centralised system would be most economical. We urge that the very real resource pressures ought to be balanced against the acute need not only to be taking the necessary action upon our energy use and contribution to climate change – and crucially its mitigation – but also to be seen to be doing that.

Conclusions

26. We should measure up to the challenges that the world presents to us, and spend what it takes to deliver on our commitments. The opportunities are huge to play our part as a church in Caring for God's Creation, in terms of personal discipleship, in missional engagement and stewardship. It is of course the challenges of the Gospel and of our Saviour that matter most. A far higher authority than any scientist or government or assembly of nations has warned us that "No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."²⁰ Well, maybe He will allow us the need to survey how far along the furrow we have ploughed, so long as we continue steadfastly to plan and move forward.

20. Luke 9:62, NIV