

## **Caring for God's Creation**

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# 1 Biblical background

## **God made the world and he loves it**

God is the creator of “the heavens and the earth” and declares it is “very good” (Genesis 1:1 & 31). He sustains it and cares for it (Psalm 65:9–13; Hebrews 1:3). The whole universe was made by, through and for Jesus (Colossians 1:16–17): this should affect our relationship with it.

## **God created us to look after it**

We are created beings, part of the whole community of creation, joining together to praise God (Psalm 148).

We have also been given a special task – to look after what God has made (Genesis 1:26–28; Gen. 2:15). It is part of what it means to be human.

## **Human sin has ecological and human consequences**

(Hosea 4: 1–3; Amos 8: 1–8)

Many problems we face are the direct result of human activity. Our environmental impacts have harmful effects on our wellbeing and that of future generations. This is a matter of justice: we have a responsibility to act. (Micah 6:8; Amos 5:21-24; Luke 10:27-37; Matt 25:40).

## **God has a purpose for the world**

God’s plans for salvation involve all he has made (Colossians 1: 19–20; Romans 8:18-22; Isaiah 11:9).

Since God loves and cares for the world, we want to love what he loves and take care of it for His sake.

## 2 Church of England background

### The Five Marks of Mission<sup>1</sup>

The Five Marks of Mission were adopted by General Synod of the Church of England in 1996. They are widely recognised as an understanding of what mission is about. One of the marks is a requirement to “safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth”.

### Climate emergency and net-zero target

In February 2020 General Synod set a net zero target by 2030: Synod recognised *“that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God’s creation, and a fundamental injustice, and... calls upon all parts of the Church of England, including parishes, to... reach net-zero emissions by 2030.”*<sup>2</sup>

### Routemap to net-zero<sup>3</sup>

The Routemap was endorsed by General Synod in July 2022. It is a plan for how the Church of England can be net zero by 2030, backed up with resources to support its implementation.

### Divestment from Fossil fuels.

In July 2023, General Synod commended the divestment announcements by the Church Commissioners & Pensions Board, and urged further urgent action.<sup>4,5</sup> The divestment was a move widely welcomed by evangelicals.

## Diocese of Lincoln “Cherishing Creation”

The Diocese of Lincoln’s Environment Policy sets out its own vision to be a healthy, vibrant and sustainable church, transforming lives in Greater Lincolnshire, with implications for us as individual Christians, each of our churches and as a Diocese together.

A copy of the revised policy is displayed at church and available [here](#).

The Diocese of Lincoln has committed to becoming an Eco Diocese; actively supports churches to sign up to A Rocha's Eco Church as a toolkit for change; and has adopted the Environmental Action Plan proposed by the Diocesan Environment Implementation Panel.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/mtag-the-5-marks-of-mission.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/general-synod-sets-2030-net-zero-carbon-target>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/net-zero-carbon-routemap>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/press-releases/church-commissioners-and-church-england-pensions-board-announce>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/general-synod-calls-church-and-government-move-faster-climate-emergency>

### 3 St Peter's Environmental Policy Statement

Building on Biblical background and encouraged by the Diocese of Lincoln Environmental Policy, and in view of the best scientific evidence currently available, **St Peter's Joint Council has acknowledged<sup>6</sup>:**

“There is a global climate and ecological emergency. It is a crisis for all God's creation, and a fundamental injustice.

“And commits our church to do our best to achieve our General Synod's target of “net zero emissions by 2030”;

Joint Council requires all the church sub-committees and teams/groups to frame their terms of reference to undertake their work and submit recommendations to Joint Council, (consistent with this commitment, above), in order to embed our agreed environmental recognition and commitment into all aspects of our church life.

Through this, we acknowledge that we need to live by our word and our intent in exercising care for all that God has created and loves. It is our response to God's love, in obedience and faith.

And so, we will aim to take environmental concerns into account in our worship and teaching; in the use of our buildings and land; in our community and global engagement; and in our corporate life as disciples of Christ.

To help us to identify the issues which should be addressed, and to make plans to tackle them, we have registered with the A Rocha Eco Church scheme.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The full wording of this September 2022 resolution is on page 6 below.

<sup>7</sup> <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

# Appendices

## 1 Diocese of Lincoln Environmental Policy

is displayed in our church and available here

<https://www.lincoln.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Environmental-Policy.pdf> .

## 2 Resources

This is not an exhaustive list: it is illustrative of what is available should we wish to use them.

1. A Rocha Eco Church<sup>8</sup> project offers many resources.
2. Church of England Environment Programme<sup>9</sup> offers support on range of subjects, including worship & teaching, care of buildings etc..
3. Church of England Routemap to Net Zero Carbon by 2030<sup>10</sup>.
4. Lincoln Diocese Environment Network<sup>11</sup> & Advisory Committee (DAC<sup>12</sup>)
5. Climate Emergency Toolkit developed by Tearfund et. al..<sup>13</sup>, and many other Tearfund projects<sup>14</sup>.
6. Creation Care<sup>15</sup>

Agreed by the JC (Date)	26.01.2024
Review date	26.01.2026

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<sup>8</sup> See <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/church-england-environment-programme>

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/net-zero-carbon-routemap>

<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.lincoln.anglican.org/diocesan-environmental-network/>

<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.lincoln.anglican.org/parish-support/church-buildings/dac-diocesan-advisory-committee/>

<sup>13</sup> See <https://www.climateemergencytoolkit.com/> and the list of promoters at the end of that page.

<sup>14</sup> See Tearfund's [Youth research](#) and their current [rubbish/plastic campaign](#)

<sup>15</sup> See <https://creationcare.org.uk/>

# Full wording of the Joint Council resolutions of September 2022

## Proposal 1

That Joint Council *acknowledges*<sup>1</sup> that *there is a “global climate and ecological emergency; it is a crisis for all God’s creation, and a fundamental injustice”*<sup>2</sup>; and commits our church to do our best to achieve our General Synod’s target of “net zero emissions by 2030”<sup>3</sup>;

*because we believe that the gospel calls us to repent; and to witness to God’s love by ‘loving our neighbour as ourselves’ and by exercising care for all that God has created and loves.*

Our commitment to the target is NOT ‘virtue signalling’, to make church appear ‘holier than thou’ or better than fellow citizens; nor is it in order to earn God’s favour by ‘salvation by works,’ but it is our response to God’s love and gift, in obedience in faith.

## Proposal 2

The Joint Council asks all the church committees to undertake their work and submit recommendations to Joint Council, consistent with Proposal 1, in order to embed our agreed recognition and commitment into all aspects of our church life.

The minutes record the following about the discussion that took place about **teaching & preaching about climate justice:**

The discussion included the importance of clarifying in further teaching and preaching exactly how Climate justice fitted with other Gospel priorities, that it should be seen as an integral part of the Gospel, an issue of Kingdom values and justice, not as a separate and even conflicting priority.