

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

December 2022

“The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it – you have founded them. Psalm 89:11”

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God’s love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. Caring for creation is one of the ways, we as churches, can share God’s love with others, challenge injustice and help people in our own communities and beyond.

The Methodist Church, in recognition of the injustice of climate change and urgency of the need for action, published the third edition of ‘Hope in God’s Future’ in 2020. This helps individuals and local churches to understand the position of the Church on climate change, become aware of a vital connection between climate change and the Christian faith, transform lifestyles through studying, praying and acting on the issues, and to inspire others in the community to live in harmony with the whole of creation.

The Methodist Church has set an aspirational target of becoming a net zero carbon emissions church by 2030. Many districts, circuits and churches have already begun to work towards net zero goals, an Eco District award, or other aims in caring for creation. The Action for Hope – path to net zero was approved by Methodist Council in 2021 with focus on Faith – consistent use of assets, Wisdom and Lifestyles.

Wharfedale & Aireborough Methodist Circuit aims to set up an ‘Eco Task Force’ to advise, encourage, equip, inform and co-ordinate all the work that is being done around our Circuit as we work towards Eco Circuit status and care of creation. This is through our worship, use of buildings, land and financial resources, global engagement and lifestyles.

Rather than having environmental issues as a separate agenda item for the Circuit and its Churches, this policy seeks to encourage all churches to embed care for God’s creation in all aspects of decision making. It is a way of living well and considerately with all those we are connected with; whether our local communities, global neighbours or the natural world. It is the recognition that all of our actions have an impact on those around us. This policy seeks to encourage us to make sure our impact is ‘net zero’, but also challenges us to be transformative in our communities.

The Wharfedale & Aireborough Methodist Circuit policy is to:

- Ensure our Methodist response to the climate crisis is at the heart of our worship, discipleship and theological reflection.
- Use our assets including buildings, land and other resources to reflect and prioritise our care for all God’s creation and future generations
- Let the Methodist Way of Life and call for climate justice inform change in our corporate and individual lifestyles

Moving towards a sustainable future is not about being perfect, it's about taking steps in the right direction.

The Plan - Policy into practice

Wharfedale & Aireborough Methodist Circuit goals are:

1. 50% of churches registered as Eco Churches by September 2023, 75% by September 2024, and 100% by September 2025
2. Register for the Eco-Circuit Award
3. Implement training for local preachers and worship leaders to inspire and assist them to address environmental concerns in worship either through one off or regular inputs to worship
4. Encourage churches to hold an annual Eco Sunday and help signpost them to imaginative worship resources
5. Encourage the sharing of resources across the whole Circuit
6. Debate divestment from fossil fuel and other ethical considerations for managing our finances
7. Carry out environmental/energy audits on all Circuit and Church property and ensure Energy Performance Certificates are up to date for all Manses.
8. To ensure consideration is given to the recommendations made in the audit reports and encourage churches to make improvements through assistance with grant fund writing and grant applications to the Circuit Model Trust Fund where mission criteria are met
9. Encourage every Church Council (Trustee Body) to include consideration of the cost to the environment and impact on our global neighbours for all decisions
10. Encourage churches to also think beyond 'Net Zero'; where can they have a positive impact in their environment
11. Encourage all churches to share what environmental steps they and their community partners are taking in their local Church and Circuit magazine, website and social media
12. Encourage travel for Circuit events that facilitates public transport/bike/walking or car-pooling where possible and make use of Zoom where appropriate to save on environmental costs
13. Offer plant based food products as default with animal sources as an option at Circuit events

How we will support one another to do this:

- Pray
- Draw on other organisations such as Operation Noah, Methodist Action for Hope, District Net Zero resources and A Rocha.
- Include resources for churches and individuals on the Circuit website and in newsletters to share knowledge, offer support and encourage the change we are committed to.