



Neighbourhood Church Beckenham and the Climate Emergency

This paper to the NCB leadership team and Trustees seeks support, and asks that as a church we move to make a positive commitment to action with regard to the climate emergency.

Our Eco-Church group has been working for a while specifically using the Eco-Church questionnaire (produced by A Rocha) and 'scoring system' to rate our current position. We are not too far away from reaching their bronze standard.

Working with this questionnaire we have produced a detailed action plan - attached as an appendix to this paper. This has mainly had an 'inward-focus' - our recommendations include many areas where we can make a difference immediately and others where there will be the need for more detailed and long-term planning, and potentially considerable expenditure. At this stage we are only asking that these areas of expenditure be investigated within agreed timeframes - not committed to now.

We have also started to consider more 'outward-focusing' actions. This proposal is based on Tearfund's Climate Emergency toolkit - which we as the Eco-church group endorse.

So we would like to see NCB publicly recognise the climate emergency and begin a coordinated effort to respond, based on our calling to love our neighbours, live justly and steward God's creation. This year, with COP 26 in the UK creating even more focus on this key issue for our times, it is an ideal moment to organise and take action.

Why recognise a climate emergency?

- + Global heating is already causing a rise in sea levels, increase in ocean acidity, and an increase in extreme weather events and droughts. Tearfund and other NGOs have identified climate change as a contributor to rising hunger globally and in making storms, floods and droughts more severe for people already living in poverty.
- + These changes, predicted to become significantly more severe, are set to catastrophically affect the lives, health, food and water supplies and

economic security of many millions of people, and the fundamental ecosystems on which humans and other life depend.¹

- + There is broad agreement that the next 10 years offer an unrepeatable window of opportunity for action.
- + The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us the importance of listening to scientific advice and the fragility of the systems we all depend on daily

As Christians we have reason to speak and act in this area:

- + We have a mandate to speak truth without fear. This includes the truth of the precious interdependence of God's creation, of which we are only a part. It also includes a warning of the need for radical action to mitigate future disaster, in the Biblical tradition of Noah, Jeremiah, Jesus & Agabus.
- + We are called to show love to our neighbours around the world already suffering the effects of climate change, and to act now to reduce catastrophic harm in the future.
- + We are called to act with hope, refusing the temptation to despair, moralism or self-preservation. Our witness of love is a witness to the power and freedom of the gospel.

Some NHS Trusts, Universities, and Councils have already declared a climate emergency.² The Tearfund toolkit suggests a three phase approach, which we endorse :-

PREPARE - DECLARE - IMPACT

The whole toolkit can be found at <https://www.climateemergencytoolkit.com> - the section on Why Declare? Is particularly worthwhile reading.

Declaring an emergency is supported by: Tearfund, Christian Aid, Operation Noah, A Rocha UK, Eco-Congregation Scotland and Ireland, the John Ray Initiative, Green Christian, Eco Church, and Climate Sunday. They recognise the importance of national political action and individual lifestyle change, but also the role every church and charity can play.

What can we do?

Prepare	<p>We can help our whole church learn more of what it means to follow Jesus and live justly with all of their lives.</p> <p>Through small groups, sermons, interviews and other activities we can help people to see how responding to climate change is core to living out our faith in the world today.</p>
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	<p>We have used the A Rocha Eco-Church questionnaire but we may also want to use the Creation Care survey to help everyone in our church to play their part too.</p> <p>Prepare people and bring them on the journey, so that this process is something owned by the whole church community.</p>
<p>Declare</p>	<p>Formally recognise, declare or acknowledge the climate emergency and announce this, plus a planning process to be concluded within six months of our declaration. Add this commitment to our website, alongside other key statements. We feel an ideal time for this would be September 2021.</p> <p>This demonstrates to those viewing our church that we understand the context we live in and are committed to practical action and are living out the calls to love, justice and mission.</p> <p>We will identify the key emission areas for our church and include in our plan how we can minimise the emissions from each: eg. travel; heating/lighting/energy; food provision; as well as environmentally positive use of our land, building, etc.</p> <p>Our proposed action plan includes specific measures and timescales. We also want to explore if we can commit to net zero by 2030, as some churches and denominations already have.</p>
<p>Impact</p>	<p>Use our influence for change, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Involvement in campaigns running up to COP 26 international climate conference in Glasgow late 2021 + Influence other churches in the town, to make their own declarations + Reach out to those in the community who are already campaigning on these issues locally, to work together and offer our support. + Encourage members to ask others to recognise the emergency, including their workplaces, other churches, charities, schools and businesses – as part of living out our mission in the world around us.

[1] IPCC, 2018: Summary for Policymakers.

[2] See www.climateemergency.co.uk and <https://www.cat.org.uk/new-report-zero-carbon-britain-rising-to-the-climate-emergency/>

Appendix

NCB Eco-Church Group – Action Recommendations

(based on the the Eco-church questionnaire sections – the full questionnaire can be found at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Bw-mNZ66JUuLDMLvYz3D_81BmKYhyayxXHyzf1p1Rs/edit?disco=AAAAliG90NE)

1. Worship & Teaching (*all underway*)
 - 1.1. We run two Climate Sunday's per year, and have a guest speaker at least once per year.
 - 1.2. We will be intentional in the use of hymns and songs to celebrate God's creation.
 - 1.3. We will be intentional to ensure we pray, at least monthly, for climate issues, and we will pray for a specific overseas environmental project.
 - 1.4. Caring for God's Earth features as a theme in youth / childrens work and small groups at least annually.
 - 1.5. Our external communications (web-site, social media, newsletters etc) will include regular specific reference to our views on climate change.
 - 1.6. NCB leadership and Trustees will make a specific commitment to Declaring a Climate Emergency before the end of 2021.
2. Buildings
 - 2.1. We commit to reducing the carbon footprint of our building year-on-year. (*this is complicated by the impact of much less use of the building during 2020 and 2021 – however it can remain an aspirational target*)
 - 2.2. We will investigate carbon off-setting, and before the end of 2021, make a decision as to whether we will commit to off-setting what we can't reduce or eliminate. (*As far as the use of carbon at the building is concerned the last 12 months electricity and gas usage equates to approx 12 tonnes of CO2. Climate Stewards use a figure of £20 per tonne for off-setting*).
 - 2.3. We will review our heating, lighting and insulation to produce 1, 5 and 10 year plans. We will bring forward a recommendation by the end of

2021 as to whether we can commit to being net-zero by 2030. (little progress so far on this aspect so suggest it is reviewed with 2.4 by the end of Q1 2022).

- 2.4. Before the end of Q1 2022 we will consider the possibility of generating renewable energy at our building.
 - 2.5. We will review water usage and bring specific recommendations for reduction, including the potential for rainwater capture etc. (No progress)
 - 2.6. We recommend cycle racks are provided before the end of 2021. (No progress)
 - 2.7. We will investigate further options for more effective recycling at the Cromwell Road building, and look to reduce the use of disposable cups/plates wherever possible - including by people / organisations hiring the hall. (Review underway)
3. Land
 - 3.1. We will provide a detailed, costed plan to manage the land around the building for native wildlife, with a phased proposal covering a 3 - 5 year timescale. (Target for plan end Q1 2022)
4. Community & Global Engagement
 - 4.1. We are committed to Declaring a Climate Emergency before the end of Sept 2021. (example from St Paul's Beckenham <https://www.stpaulsbeckenham.org.uk/climate-emergency>)
 - 4.2. We will have produced a plan for the on-going engagement with our external community (e.g. local environmental groups, Bromley Council, our MP, etc) by the end of Q1 2022.
 - 4.3. We will engage with other churches in Beckenham, and Churches Together in Beckenham (if appropriate), for mutual support and encouragement, and also promote Eco-church.
 - 4.4. We will, wherever possible, use FairTrade and/or ethically sourced goods, use local, and organic ingredients, and provide a vegetarian or vegan option, when serving meals.
 - 4.5. We recommend we twin both toilets.
 5. Lifestyle
 - 5.1. We will encourage our members to reduce car use, fly less, walk and cycle more.
 - 5.2. We will promote and encourage personal use of carbon footprint calculators; mind-sets of reduce / re-use / re-cycle; personal carbon off-setting; ethical investments; environmental audits; and many hints & tips to help people find ways that work for them to continuously improve and reduce their carbon footprint and environmental impact. We recognise that some lifestyle changes can be costly and out of reach for some people, so we will always keep this in mind when we share ideas.