

Climate Emergency

Here you can find resources to help you explore the climate emergency in worship, commitment to action, and in joining with others to call for change. This resource has been produced by Tearfund, a Christian organisation passionate about ending poverty, in collaboration with Christian Aid and many other organisations and activists.

Throughout scripture we see God's love for this world. 'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,' declares the psalmist (Psalm 24:1). But with record-breaking storms, severe droughts and rising temperatures, we're seeing creation being knocked out of balance – and, as a result, people being pushed back into poverty. If we are to truly love our global neighbours, we have to tackle the climate emergency.

In November 2021, world leaders will gather in Glasgow for critical talks (called COP26) on how to address climate change.

Christians around the world are taking urgent action, to love our neighbours, tackle the climate emergency, and save lives. Your church can be part of this, taking simple but powerful actions enabling you to influence the decisions of those in power. Each church that declares or recognises the emergency shines a spotlight on the crisis, underlining its seriousness and the need for world leaders to agree to significant progress during the talks. Together, we can be a prophetic voice for change.

There are three things that Climate Sunday is asking churches to do:

- Worship: Hold a climate-focused service
- Commit: to long-term action on carbon emissions
- Speak up: Sign the common call

Some churches may want to particularly highlight the climate emergency theme as part of their Climate Sunday, or build on their Climate Sunday by exploring this theme more in the future. For these, there are a range of resources available to help you.

A Climate Emergency Toolkit has been put together in collaboration with various organisations and church leaders to help you do this.

The Climate Emergency Toolkit also contains a route map of three key steps for your church or organisation which align well with these:

- Prepare – this step makes space for people to learn more, ask questions and share their reactions to the climate emergency, considering how they can respond through their worship and discipleship.
- Declare or acknowledge the climate emergency – it's important to make a public statement; doing this during a Climate Sunday service would work well.
- Impact – working with others in your local community and speaking up for change.

We hope that the toolkit and resources below will help you to deepen your response to the climate emergency alongside or after you have participated in the common actions all churches are encouraged to take. You can take the steps in any order, whichever is most effective for your context.

Holding a climate-focused service

Many of the organisations linked to Climate Sunday have produced resources to help you plan a service about climate change. You can find some on the [resources page](#), and can choose what works for your church context, including worship, prayer and Bible content, as well as making a public statement of intention to act on the climate emergency.

In the Bible, Jesus tells us the most important commandments are to love God and to love our neighbours. Tackling climate change is vital to both of these – honouring God by protecting his creation and loving our global neighbours who are hit first and worst by what is now a climate emergency. [Tearfund's climate sermon notes](#) (and [PowerPoint](#)) take you through areas to include, and Bible passages to choose from. [A film featuring Orbisa](#), an Ethiopian farmer, will help you tell the story of one of our global neighbours. This [climate emergency factsheet](#) includes useful stats and quotes.

Part of your climate-focused service could be declaring, recognising or acknowledging the climate emergency as a church, alongside adding your voice to the Common Call, which all churches across the country are being asked to sign. By doing this you're communicating to your members and wider community that your church or organisation understands the urgency of climate change and commits to taking action. It also invites your community to join you on that journey.

By speaking up prophetically together, we are increasing public understanding of how urgent this is, inspiring people to play their part, and encouraging national leaders to act with the necessary ambition.

Gateway Church in Leeds did just this at their climate-focused service. John Davy, one of the leaders, explains,

'Gateway Church in inner-city Leeds is linked to the ChristCentral network of churches (part of Newfrontiers). Until 2020, we really had no commitment to the environmental crisis but have now committed to taking this issue much more seriously. In November (2020), we held a Climate Sunday where we made a statement of Climate Emergency Recognition during the service. We see ourselves at the very beginning of a journey. To help us with a framework to follow this up with action, we have enrolled in A Rocha's Eco Church scheme, and we are currently recruiting a team to move this forward. Our plan is to produce a comprehensive plan, with targets, no later than September 2021. With the full support of the senior leadership team and trustees, we now hope to mobilise the whole church in this initiative.'

You can [watch their service here](#) and find some [template statements in the toolkit](#). .

Prayer

Father God, we thank you that you are a God of justice.

Thank you that you know all those already impacted by climate change.

Jesus, we are sorry for the ways we've damaged your creation. Help us make changes in our own lives to love our global neighbours well.

Holy Spirit, would you stir the hearts of our government, Guide them in all their decision-making, and inspire them to protect the most vulnerable.

Amen.

Commit

Resources to help you commit to change as a community

The climate emergency compels us all to take long-term action to reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions. As Gateway Church demonstrates, you can start with a service and follow this up with planning and taking action on your emissions. Or, if you've already made a start on taking action, a service can be a way of making this more visible. Either way, making a climate emergency declaration can help churches focus and feel a sense of accountability to their members.

[The Climate Emergency Toolkit](#) encourages churches to make a plan and start to implement this action and provides a clear path through many brilliant tools like [Eco Church](#) and [Eco-congregation](#) to help your church community take action together.

Other tools include:

- Measuring your emissions with [the 360 carbon calculator](#) (Church of England churches also have access to the [Energy Footprint Tool](#) in the online parish returns).
- Using the [Practical Path to Net Zero](#) to identify actions you can take at your church.
- Helping every household in your church make lifestyle changes with the [Creation Care survey](#).
- Switching to renewable energy with [Citizen UK's Fair Energy Campaign](#) or [Big Clean switch](#).

Call

Resources to help you join with others to call for action around the climate emergency

A simple petition action we can all take is to sign [the Climate Coalition Declaration](#).

The impact section of [the Climate Emergency Toolkit](#) is all about the wider impact you can have as a church by using your voices to speak up for change, working with others locally. We need to see a movement of ordinary people calling for action during 2021 ahead of the Glasgow climate talks (COP26). There are many ways to do this and different campaigns to get involved with. [Download your own copy of the toolkit](#) to find out more and read Laura's story below for inspiration on the impact and influence our actions can have.

Laura's story

My name is Laura and I live in Taunton. When I read the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, it really shocked me. My friend Mel, who I'd known since doing an NCT class (our children are born one day apart), felt similarly. So, we decided to start a Facebook group, Taunton Green Parents, to see if there were others who wanted to do something. The group's membership exploded, people were just waiting to find a way to show they cared.

Within a few months, we had written to and then met our MP. We found other groups in the town who were working on climate change and together, we were able to support Taunton Council declaring a climate emergency. We've done all sorts of activities since – organised a climate march, been part of Taunton's first ever green market, and contributed to a weekly green column in the Taunton Gazette. We regularly meet with other groups from The Wildlife Trust through to Extinction Rebellion to push for action to tackle climate change both locally and globally.

My church is working towards Eco Church and becoming plastic free. We believe we are worshipping God, both when we are holding a Sunday service or out in the community doing a litter pick. I have been inspired recently by some words of Martin Luther King Jr, he talked of unlocking 'tightly sealed doors of hope'. People in our communities need hope for the future when it comes to the climate, and I believe God is giving us keys to some of these doors.

So, let's take this emergency seriously, and with our hope in God, step up to take the just action needed.

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly^[a] with your God. (Micah 6:8)