

Climate and Buildings

Here you can find resources to help you cut the environmental impact of your church and church hall, understand how this fits into worship and creation care, and join with others to call for change. This resource has been produced by Catherine Ross and Jo Chamberlain of The Church of England Environment Programme.

Climate-Focused Service

Ideas for thinking about managing your church building in the context of worship and creation care

We know that care for creation is an integral part of our worship and how we live out our faith as individual Christians and as a church. We know we need to reduce our carbon emissions as part of this expression of faith - our individual emissions and our corporate ones. The energy used to heat and light your church and church hall makes up the largest part of your church's corporate carbon footprint, so it's really important to make sure we are using energy as efficiently as possible, and not wasting any. There's lots of practical advice and guidance about this below.

But how to incorporate this into a climate-focused service? Including our church buildings in a service is not easy at this time, when the use of our buildings is restricted. We can't move about if we're in a service, and many of us are worshipping at home. So, some of these ideas could be done virtually, using photographs if you have them, or stock images if you don't, or just using your imagination.

Think about the different parts of your building and what they are used for. Start with the spaces used for hospitality. This might be the first space that people come into when they enter the building, or the kitchen, the coffee lounge, or the welcome

area. How do you make people feel welcome? How, as a church, do you build community? Have you thought about the food you serve - check out the resources on [climate and food](#). Pray for the people who join your community and pray that you will be a welcoming church. Jesus was clear that welcoming people we don't know is a demonstration of our love for him (Matthew 25:31-46).

Think about the main space in your church, where the people sit for the service. What is it about this space that helps you to worship? Many churches were built to inspire awe and wonder, or have introduced elements to do this. Spending time in nature has been shown to increase our appreciation for nature, and nature itself inspires wonder at the glory of God (Psalm 19:1). We often bring nature into churches in the form of flowers, but you might be able to think of other ways to do this. Or perhaps your building has commemorations to those who have already run the race, encouraging us to persevere (Hebrews 12:1). Who are your environmental encouragers?

Which part of the church do you use for preaching, reading from the Bible and leading prayers? As you think about the pulpit, the lectern, or any other spaces, pray for those who preach and lead in your church. And ask yourself, how often do you hear about climate change, or the environment, or biodiversity in the sermons, readings and prayers in your church. Could this happen more often?

Do you have a special place in your building where you prepare and receive the bread and wine? For many Christians, this is the most holy place in their building. It is also the place where the whole family of God comes together symbolically as the body of Christ. Our true and proper worship is to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). This could be the moment to recommit to doing everything we can in our daily lives to cherish and nurture God's gift of creation.

Finally, think about the door in your church, the exit. At the end of a service, we are sent out into the rest of the world to continue our lives as witnesses and disciples. Think about what your next steps might be to better care for creation. As a community, decide how you will come together to make sure the way you look after your building is a part of this. Perhaps a small group can be commissioned to take this forward and follow up the practical ideas below. And pray for this group of people too.

Prayer:

An act of commitment for the care of creation

‘While all creatures stand in expectation, what will be the result of our liberty?’

(Thomas Traherne)

As the whole of creation looks with eager longing for the redemption of humankind, let us pledge ourselves anew to serve our Creator God, the Father who is the maker of all things,
the Son through whom all things are made, and the Holy Spirit,
the giver of life, who renews the face of the earth.

Let us stand to affirm our commitment to care actively for God’s creation.

**All: Lord of life and giver of hope,
we pledge ourselves to care for creation,
to reduce our waste,
to live sustainably,
and to value the rich diversity of life.
May your wisdom guide us,
that life in all its forms may flourish,
and may be faithful in voicing creation’s praise.**

May the commitment we have made this day be matched by our faithful living.

All: Amen. Amen. Amen.

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Commit

Resources to help you commit to change as a community

These resources come from our experience of trying to reach net zero in the Church of England, but the principles apply to your buildings whatever your denomination.

What are we talking about? Click through to see what a Net Zero Carbon church might be like.

Take a tour of a net-zero carbon church on the Church of England website [here](#). You'll find outside features from bike racks to solar panels, and inside features like low carbon heating and LED lighting, and explore the six principles which underlie become net-zero:

Not sure where to start? Use the Practical Path to Net Zero self-guided checklist

You can download the very practical two-page guidance note on *The Practical Path to Net Zero* from the Church of England website [here](#). To make it easy for you to review your own buildings, you'll also find a self-guided checklist. There is a version to complete on-screen, or a printable version you can walk around your church with. Either way, complete the review and then discuss the results at your next church council, PCC or other church meeting.

Although the principles involved in getting to net-zero apply to all church buildings, you will need to seek denominational advice on the correct procedures to follow before you get to the point of seeking permission to carry out work on the building, especially if it is a historic building – the *Practical Path to Net Zero* guides you through the procedures of the Church of England only. If your church is

not part of a denomination, then you should contact the planning officer of your local authority for this advice.

You'll see in the Practical Path that the best thing is to start with the basic maintenance that keeps your church water-tight; repair the roof, clear the gutters, and fix the broken windows. Most small rural churches already have a very low carbon footprint, because you are only using the church a few hours per week, so once you've done the basics and switched to a renewable electricity tariff you will be close to net-zero.

Want to know where you are starting from? Use the online tools to work out your carbon footprint

All denominations can use the [360°Carbon tool](#) to work out the carbon footprint from their energy, travel, food, purchases, and waste. You gather information on each of these areas and then input it online, to find out your carbon footprint, and can then choose click through to offset with Climate Stewards.

Think it's impossible? Get inspiration from real-world case studies

Click through the [case studies here](#) and you'll find churches that have made changes, including two which are fully 'net-zero'.

These are churches like yours which taken steps such as; cutting heat loss, changing lights to LEDs, switching to 100% renewable electricity and/or installing solar panels, and - most importantly - changing their heating systems so they don't

burn fossil fuels.

You can also find more stories from real churches on the [Eco Church website here](#).

Want to understand how? Find FREE online webinars and guidance

There are lots of webinars and guidance out there to help you. The Church of England net zero webinars are designed to help people all around the country learn about the steps needed. You can find sessions on action planning, forming your team, solar panels, heating, lighting, and more. You don't need to be from the CofE to come along, and the [webinars are all free](#).

Heritage organisations also issue excellent guidance on the performance of your building. You can find advice from [Historic England](#), [Historic Environment Scotland](#) and [CADW in Wales](#) has issued useful advice on micro-generation systems in historic buildings.

Call

Resources to help you join with others to call for action

Write to your council

Has your council declared a climate emergency? [Find out here](#)

If yes, why not write to your local councillors expressing support and asking what grants and advice the council offers to vital community buildings like yours. Perhaps you would like to ask about their planning policies, if there are changes you want to make.

If no, write to your local councillors expressing surprise and expressing how important it is that they make a public commitment before COP26 in November.

Write to your MP about funding

At the moment, there is funding available for home-owners and landlords to make changes, through the Energy Saving Trust, and funding for the public sector,

through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund and SALIX, but no major grant funding scheme for community buildings.

Why not write to your MP or MS and highlight this? Explain that churches like yours want to make change, but need financial support. That simple things like LED lights may pay back quickly, so could there be low cost green loans? That switching from an oil/gas boiler to a new heating system is expensive, so could there be grants? Ask them to update you on progress.

Call on your church community to make changes

As well as making change at the church, can you engage members of the church community in making changes in their own lives? A great way in is to use [Count Us In](#), which really clearly lays out the 16 most effective steps a person can take.