



The Diocese of
Southwark

The Diocesan Environment Policy

A renewed commitment 2024–2027

The earth is the Lord's,
and everything in it.

Psalm 24:1

Christ
Centred
Outward
Focused

“Humanity is in a deep crisis with regards to the health of our planet. We are putting at risk the systems that have regulated the stability of our common home for the past 12,000 years. The Church is called to preach the gospel of creation and salvation, of God’s love for and ultimate redemption of the created order in Christ. To do this requires we safeguard the integrity and intrinsic value of God’s creation, that we love our neighbour by doing everything we can to restore the balance of life on Earth on which we all depend. Christ’s love compels us to act.”

The Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kingston



A greener vision for our diocese

Caring for Creation is a key part of our discipleship, honouring God as we steward and safeguard the integrity of the Earth that has been entrusted to us. A priority in Southwark Vision 2024–2035 – **Christ Centred | Outward Focused** – is healing. We believe, through little and large actions, we can support the healing of the Earth. We understand that the Earth, through nature, is to be enjoyed and demonstrates in its very creation the handiwork of God. We also believe that care of creation will directly support the tackling of poverty in its various forms globally and locally.

Healing – a Southwark Vision priority: We will seek God’s healing for our communities and our world. Christ’s call for healing and reconciliation requires us to grapple with many of the issues that we face including safeguarding, social justice, racial justice and care for creation. Working to achieve our shared goal of achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2030.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Dominion does not mean do as we please but through the wisdom given to us by God to work alongside the earth so it can be fruitful and benefit all within it.

Genesis 1:28

Principles

The Diocese of Southwark is committed to a direction of travel which values and honours the earth and all its biodiversity as part of God’s Kingdom, and which seeks to safeguard this for future generations. This means that we will seek to adhere to three core principles in everything we do:

1. Treading lightly on the earth, being always mindful of the environment and the care of creation in our decision-making and action.
2. Remembering that the earth is a gift of God to be shared with all creatures, and so take only what we need, ensuring enough for all.
3. Valuing the earth that shelters and sustains us and speaking up for the voiceless: those suffering the worst effects of climate change and the earth itself.



Living our commitment to creation

Every parish, school, diocesan and bishops' office, and individual will seek to embody these principles in different ways, working together as a diverse fellowship to make God's Kingdom present on earth as it is in Heaven. Some congregations are working to achieve Eco Church awards, contributing to the Southwark Diocese target of achieving an Eco Diocese Silver Award by 2027/8, and all parishes and places of worship are encouraged to join the Eco Church movement. Others speak out against climate injustice or have individuals who are knowledgeable and passionate about sustainable lifestyle choices.

The Southwark Diocesan Board of Education will continue to build on their schools' substantial success in addressing these principles within their curriculum, ensuring that there is relevant training to encourage schools and their local church congregation to work together to secure Eco Church awards and to maximise their own commitment and response to this diocesan pledge.

We recognise that there will be some areas of work where the diocese can make its own decisions and set its own policies, and other areas where we are encouraging, helping and enabling others within the autonomy of their own remits. This is in keeping with the diocesan approach of **Lead, Enable, Serve** and ensuring that those involved remain key stakeholders and included as key partners in meetings and strategy formation.

O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
May the glory of the Lord endure forever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works.

Psalm 104: 24, 31



Our diocese commits to...

- + Embedding care for creation in our worship and ministerial training, and encouraging all parishes to include reference to the Fifth Mark of Mission in their Mission Action Planning.
- + Encouraging all parishes, schools and places of worship to embrace environmental themes in their worship pattern throughout the liturgical year.
- + Where we have direct influence, taking environmental impact (emissions, waste and sustainability) and use of resources into account in our work, decision-making, travel, projects and programmes, and encouraging parishes and schools to embed this in their preaching, worship, decision-making, travel, and buildings maintenance.
- + Subject to resources, developing a plan to maintain our vicarages to be as environmentally friendly and low-carbon as possible.
- + Showing due consideration of the use of our land as pertains to biodiversity and carbon reduction.
- + Developing structures to support a greener future, including how to enable deaneries to provide local environmental support to parishes, for example through a network of Area Environmental Champions.
- + Campaigning for wider change, raising our voices to influence policymakers in local and national government measuring and reducing our carbon emissions, working with Archdeacons, parishes, schools and deaneries, to achieve net zero carbon before the Government target of 2050.
- + To make best efforts to achieve the Church of England ambition of being net zero by 2030. Whilst making this commitment we also acknowledge the significant challenges in achieving this and have 2035 as a backstop net zero target, by when we must have fully overcome these challenges and achieved net zero. We fully expect that many of our churches and schools will achieve the 2030 target.
- + Achieving the *A Rocha* Silver Eco Diocese award by 2027/28, building on our current Bronze award foundation. Thereafter working towards a Gold Award, and as part of this supporting and encouraging all our parishes to achieve Eco Church awards.
- + Collaborating with a wide range of colleagues, both lay and ordained, to inspire and encourage all individuals in the diocese to adapt their ways of living to minimise their impact on the environment, providing resources to support all church members to make care for creation central to how they choose to live.

“Caring for our world is not just a duty – it is a joy and a privilege. Sometimes we may feel disheartened at the magnitude of the challenges facing our society and our world, but we can celebrate the fact that we can now do more than ever before to bless, tend and steward the great gifts entrusted to us our by our Creator God.

The first step in taking our calling as stewards of creation seriously is to open our eyes to see the possibilities before us. These may seem few or minor, but if taken seriously they can make a huge impact over time. If we seek to be faithful in the small things as well as the big, we can trust that God will honour our efforts, even as he holds the bigger picture. We do so not just for ourselves, our communities and our children, but for our global friends and neighbours, knowing that they are already paying the greater cost of climate change.”

The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark

