



The Diocese of  
**Southwark**

# The Diocesan Environment Policy



God's creative and redemptive love embraces not just humankind, but all creation (Psalm 148, Colossians 1, Romans 8, I Corinthians 15, Revelation 21).

The Church is called to participate in God's mission of love and salvation, embracing all five of the Anglican Marks of Mission in a manner which thoroughly intertwines them all in the story of salvation of all things in Christ.

– *The Bishop of Kingston, the Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham*



## Church commitments: caring for God's gift of creation

*"God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good" – Genesis 1:31*

As the Bishop of Kingston says in his introduction, the Bible calls us all to respond to God's love by caring for the creation which he has given to us. The Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion reflect this explicitly in the fifth mark, which calls us to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The Church of England has demonstrated its commitment to this responsibility by voting at General Synod in February 2020 to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in carbon emissions and "urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target"<sup>1</sup>

“  
The Archbishop of Canterbury,  
the Most Revd Justin Welby  
Responding to climate change  
is an essential part of our  
responsibility to safeguard  
God's creation  
”

### The Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Revd Christopher Chessun

*"We have a duty to care for creation which amounts to treasuring and protecting the land that grows our food, the water that we drink and the air that we breathe. Currently those who suffer most from climate change are the poor and vulnerable, both in our own community of South London and East Surrey where air pollution is a serious issue, and our Link Dioceses in Zimbabwe where so many face food insecurity due to global warming. The future for life on our planet should we fail to rise to the challenges being presented to us are even more troubling.*

*"Our efforts to protect the environment will look different in our many diverse churches, schools and parish communities, but we are called to a common purpose to safeguard the future of the Earth, the generous gift of creation given to us by God. Together we can make a difference for the better and that I believe is what we are being called to do. I commend this policy to the Diocese and encourage everyone in the specifics of your local context to commit to appropriate actions."*



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/general-synod-sets-2030-net-zero-carbon-target>.

## A fruitful future in Southwark

The Southwark Vision 2017-25 is for a Diocese which is Christ-centred and outward-focused in all that we do. It outlines a fruitful future which includes a shared commitment to the integrity of creation.

Christ is the centre of creation. “He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being” (John 1:3). Any Christian response to climate change and the environment must start with him in whom “all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible” (Colossians 1:16). We must set out on our journey alongside Jesus, following his instruction to his disciples to tread lightly, to “carry no purse, no bag, no sandals” (Luke 10:4).

The earth is the shared home of all humankind, given to us for our shelter and sustenance as we seek to bring God’s Kingdom alive on earth as it is in heaven. Our focus outward is on honouring and protecting this earth in accordance with the environmental principles set out below.



## 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 humankind, 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.

## Commitments

Every parish, school 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 becoming an Eco-Diocese by 2025, 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 build on their schools’ work in addressing these principles within their curriculum offer. It will also ensure 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.

In this policy 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. This is in keeping with the Diocesan approach of Lead, Enable, Serve.

## Diocesan commitments

As a Diocese, we are committed 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
- 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 Deanery Environmental Champions
- campaigning for wider change, raising our voices to influence policy-makers in local and national government
- measuring and reducing our carbon emissions, working with Archdeacons, parishes, schools and deaneries, to achieve carbon net zero before the Government target of 2050. While the national Church has set a target of 2030, we in Southwark, taking into account all other pressures, are aiming for 2035 and will review this ambition in 2025
- achieving the A Rocha Bronze Eco Diocese award by 2025, and thereafter working towards Silver and Gold Awards, 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.

*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



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Loving God  
Walking with Jesus  
Led by the Spirit

Luke 24:13-35

Luke 24:13-35

Luke 24:13-35



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