A route map for your church or organisation to respond to the climate emergency

www.climateemergencytoolkit.com
Welcome to the Climate Emergency Toolkit.

As the climate crisis accelerates, millions of lives are at risk. Christians around the world are taking urgent action, to love our neighbours, tackle the climate emergency and save lives.

The Climate Emergency Toolkit provides your church or Christian organisation with a route map to respond to the climate emergency. Step by step, it contains simple but powerful actions that will have an impact far beyond your own walls or community, and enable you to influence the decisions of those in power.

In November 2021, world leaders will gather in Glasgow for critical talks on how to address the climate emergency. 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.

The Climate Emergency Toolkit and accompanying website have been produced by a broad coalition of organisations and in collaboration with activists and church leaders. It has also been endorsed by a number of Christian climate scientists.

Cover photo by Ann Johansson
A young girl in Indonesia wears a mask to protect her from the thick, poisonous smoke from huge peatland fires spreading across Central Kalimantan. Tropical peatlands are naturally fire resistant, but climate change is making the dry season longer and more severe, resulting in dried-out, and highly flammable, peat.

Source: Borneo Nature Foundation (2019). Fighting Peatland Fires in Central Kalimantan

Photo by Aulia Erlangga/CIFOR
Introduction.

The Toolkit contains three key steps for your church or organisation. You can take them in any order, whichever is most effective for your context.

Prepare.

Start the conversation about the climate emergency and begin planning your response.

Gather a small team, or work with your existing justice/eco/green group, and keep the leadership of your church or organisation as informed as possible.

Conversation is crucial. Take your church or organisation on a journey that helps them see responding to the climate emergency as part of their discipleship and worship. Make space for people to learn more, ask questions and share their reactions to climate change.

As soon as you are ready, draft a proposal for your governing body to make a declaration. This will help get your own house in order and should include schemes you are already using, such as Eco Church.

Declare.

Recognise, declare or acknowledge an emergency in a way that engages your community and amplifies the need for leaders everywhere to act.

This is a critical step and should not wait until you have finalised a plan of action as a church. As part of your declaration, include a commitment to making your plan in the following six months.

Whether you ‘recognise’, ‘declare’ or ‘acknowledge’, the crucial part is making a clear, public and formal statement that communicates that your church or organisation understands the urgency of climate change and will not be silent in the face of injustice.

If you’re already working through Eco Church or Eco-Congregation, you might find starting with Declare will be most beneficial for amplifying the need for action.

Impact.

Increase your impact by partnering with your local community and speak up for the scale of change we need.

Our response to the climate emergency can’t stop with just our own actions; this huge crisis will only be addressed if we keep building support for action at every level. When it comes to influencing decision-makers, churches and Christian organisations have a powerful voice. Not only are we involved in and committed to our local communities, but our membership represents the full breadth and diversity of society.

By connecting with local campaigners, and using our influence in every direction, we can stand together to bring meaningful, lasting change at the scale this emergency requires.
‘I’ve been involved with justice for a number of years but climate change wasn’t high up on my agenda... What kicked me into action was recognising that I have a role, we have a role, the church has a role to play in this and we can do something about it.’

Catherine De Souza
Pastor, City Church Cardiff
Prepare.

Start the conversation about the climate emergency and begin planning your response.

Get leaders on board.
Consult your leadership team early in the process and engage them as much as possible. If they're unsure or unclear about the climate emergency, check out our resource below to bring them on board.

Build a team.
Gather a group who are willing to pray for and pursue this process. Try to reach beyond those normally involved with environmental issues and bring together different gifts, skills and networks.

Prepare together.
Many people feel under-informed about climate change and as a team it’s important you go on this journey yourselves too: praying, learning, lamenting and acting.

Tool
- How to talk to your leadership

Tool
- Webinar on ‘Forming your team’ from the Church of England Environment Programme

NOTE: You may already have a justice/green team at your church and you may already be working through Eco Church or Eco-Congregation. That’s great! These projects complement one another and can easily be combined.

Tools
- Basic introduction: Tearfund’s Climate factsheet
- Prayer resources: Pray and Fast for the Climate
- Biblical reflection: Operation Noah’s Tenants of the King Bible studies
- Theological learning: Ruth Valerio’s Saying Yes to Life
- More in-depth learning: Church of England Environment Programme
Prepare.
Start the conversation about the climate emergency and begin planning your response.

Bring your congregation with you on the journey.
A crucial part of this journey is discipling those in our organisations and churches. Plan a discipleship/education journey with your leadership team, perhaps launching with a Climate Sunday or encouraging small groups to work through 'Tenants of the King'.

Write your proposal.
Produce a clear proposal for your governing body, covering why you should declare an emergency, what the key areas for reducing your emissions are likely to be, and what declaring an emergency would commit you to.

Begin planning...
At this point, you’re ready to move on to the Declare step!

Tools
+ Organise a Climate Sunday
+ All-age service ideas from Christian Aid
+ Sample sermon from Tearfund
+ Develop a sermon series and group study using Planetwise by Dave Bookless
+ Organise a day, week or regular time of prayer as part of the Climate Prayer Chain
+ Invest in your Carbon Literacy as an organisation

Tools
+ Template proposal
+ Let us know that you’re on the journey: info@climateemergencytoolkit.com
Solar panels being installed on St George’s Church, Brighton, as part of the Brighton Energy Co-op. The electricity generated feeds into the community centre in the crypt below the main church hall.

Photo by Ruth Knight / 10:10 Global
‘In November 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 [and] now hope to mobilise the whole church in this initiative.’

John Davy, Gateway Church Leeds
What is a declaration?
A declaration is a clear, public and formal announcement. By declaring or recognising the climate emergency, 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.

- It’s a clear announcement to make sure everyone in your congregation or organisation is aware and invited to play their part.
- It’s a public announcement, perhaps on your social media, through a press release or an email to other churches and local institutions.
- It’s a formal statement from your governing body – whether that’s your eldership, PCC, members, trustees or other form of leadership team.

Why Declare?
The language of ‘emergency’ has gained a lot of traction over the past couple of years because it communicates both the scale and urgency of the climate crisis.

Making a declaration, or formally recognising the emergency, unites us with a growing movement of citizens, councils, businesses and organisations who are doing the same. It publicly communicates your commitment to pursuing justice and loving your global neighbours who are already facing the worst of the climate emergency.

Your public statement also has a positive impact way beyond your own congregation. By speaking up together, you will be contributing to the growing movement of people calling for much faster action from local institutions and national governments. This is vital in the coming year as the UK will be hosting leaders from around the world for the UNs climate talks (COP26) in November 2021.

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.

Recognise, Declare or Acknowledge?
Some churches will choose to declare an emergency as this is commonly used language by councils, businesses and governments. Others will prefer to ‘recognise’ or ‘acknowledge’ the emergency, emphasising that your role is to recognise the validity of the science and the crisis at hand. What’s crucial is making a statement that leaves people in no doubt about the situation we’re facing, and engaging them in meaningful, empowering action as a result.

Councils, businesses, universities, churches and governments have declared or recognised a climate emergency. Check out the map to see how many places around the world have done so already.
Declarer.

Recognise or declare an emergency in a way that engages your community and amplifies the need for leaders everywhere to act.

Make your declaration

Have a look at our template and discuss with your team and leadership how your church or organisation can make your declaration in a way that’s clear, public and official.

Tools

- **Template declaration:**
  - Our template declaration
  - Green Christian template declaration

Once you’ve recognised the emergency, let us know and we can add you to the map of churches in the UK who’ve already done so!

Over the coming year, thousands of churches across the UK are holding climate-focused services, to explore the theological and scientific basis for action on the climate emergency. Why not use a Climate Sunday to make your declaration or recognition and deepen people’s understanding?

Tool

- For service resources and to register your Climate Sunday go to: www.climatesunday.org

‘Climate change directly threatens the lives of millions of people. If your church is serious about loving people, it has to be serious about climate change.’

Dr Tim Gordon
Marine biologist and Honorary Research Fellow, University of Exeter

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Declare.

Recognise or declare an emergency in a way that engages your community and amplifies the need for leaders everywhere to act.

Making a plan.

You don’t need to have agreed your final plan when you declare. As part of your declaration, commit to making a plan of action in the following six months.

Your plan can include reducing your church’s carbon footprint, pushing for divestment from fossil fuels or influencing other power holders beyond your church. Given we’re in an emergency we encourage you to think big!

Whatever the focus and goals of your plan, make sure you identify some ‘SMART’ goals with your leadership team, agree some key milestones and identify initial key steps to get things moving.

Once you’re up and running, review your plan on a regular basis, perhaps every 6 to 12 months, to celebrate your progress and identify areas where you can increase your ambition.

Reduce emissions and set a target.

If your plan will include reducing your church’s carbon footprint, you might want to set a target: perhaps becoming carbon neutral by 2030, or reducing emissions ten per cent a year. For lots of help and support, sign up or continue working through Eco Church and/or similar schemes.

Tools

- Measure your emissions with the 360 carbon calculator (Church of England churches also have access to the Energy Footprint Tool in the online parish returns)
- Begin or continue your Eco Church or Eco-Congregation journey and set targets for reaching awards
- Use the Practical Path to Net Zero to identify actions you can take at your church
- Help every household in your church make lifestyle changes with the Creation Care survey
- Calculate the cost of offsetting emissions you can’t avoid with Climate Stewards

Energy switching.

Your focus could be on renewable energy and encouraging all church members to switch.

Tools

- Citizens UK’s Fair Energy Campaign
- Big Clean Switch

Some church denominations offer their own schemes: find out if yours does!

Divestment.

You could focus on getting your church or organisation to divest from fossil fuels.

Tool

- A guide to divest your church step-by-step, from the Bright Now campaign

Finally, to make a difference beyond your church, have a look at the impact section overleaf for ways to maximise your influence.
In February 2020, Storm Dennis triggered a record-breaking number of Environment Agency flood warnings in England. More than a thousand homes were flooded and hundreds of people evacuated after a month's worth of rain fell in 48 hours. Storms like this are becoming more powerful and frequent because of climate change.

Sources:

Photo by PA Media
‘In 2018 my friend Mel and I decided to start Taunton Green Parents [and] the group’s membership exploded: people were just waiting to find others who cared too. Within just a few months we met our MP, found other groups who were working on climate change and together we were able to support Taunton council in declaring a climate emergency.’

Laura Glass
Taunton Green Parents
Climate change will only be addressed effectively by action at every level, from international bodies to national governments, local bodies and all the way down to individuals. To see this scale of change, we need as many voices, talents and experiences with us: everyone taking action where they are, in their workplaces, schools, communities and constituencies.

In this crucial step of the Toolkit, work with your team to discover how each member of your church or organisation can use their influence: upwards, outwards, alongside and together.

Impact.
Increase your impact by partnering with your local community and speaking up for the scale of change we need.
### 1. Upwards

As a church, you can influence leaders and decision-makers, people with power, to make significant change. This could include: senior leaders in your network of churches, association or diocese; leaders in your local area, such as mayors, the council, your local politicians; and even the UK government.

Consider mapping your ‘upward’ connections and planning how you will engage each of them. You could consider sharing the journey you have been on as a congregation and encouraging them to be more active in responding to the climate emergency, or joining with others (see ‘Partnering with your local community’) to campaign and petition decision-makers.

#### Tools
- Add your voice to The Climate Coalition’s declaration: [The Time is Now](#)
- Influence your MP or council: [Hope for the Future](#)
- Influence your church network or denomination to divest from fossil fuels: [Operation Noah’s Bright Now campaign](#)
- Campaigning to make change: [Christian Aid’s Campaigns Toolkit](#)
- Support campaigns to influence governments and businesses with [Christian Aid, Tearfund, Operation Noah, Green Christian](#) and other campaigning organisations

### 2. Outwards

Each member of your Christian community has been placed in their home, community or workplace as a beacon of light. As a church or organisation, you will be connected to many other businesses, schools, groups and organisations through your staff and congregation. Consider how you can support those in your church to champion climate action where they already are, and encourage the church to pray regularly for them as they do.

#### Tools
- A plan for businesses: [Climate Emergency Playbook](#)
- Influence your workplace with [Make My Money Matter](#)
- [Sustainable Office Guide from WWF](#)
- Taking action in schools: [Classrooms4Climate and Let’s Go Zero](#)
- [How to have a climate change conversation](#) – Climate Outreach
3. Alongside

From other local churches to groups who use your church, from suppliers to mission partners, your church or organisation serves alongside so many others.

Consider the best ways you can encourage them to take action, by sharing your declaration and plan. For church schools, churches or Christian organisations, ask them whether they’d begin their own journey through the Toolkit too. As a church, commit to praying regularly for Christians around the world who are caring for God’s creation in inspiring ways and consider how your church and individual giving can support the work too.

Tools

- Having good climate conversations, with Christian climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe
- Britain Talks Climate: a toolkit for engaging the British public – Climate Outreach
- Inviting others to campaign – Christian Aid
- Prayer Chain – Christian Aid
- WhatsApp prayer – Tearfund

4. Together

There are likely to be many local community groups advocating for climate action in your area, and even groups in other local churches who would love to connect with you and work together. Partnering with local climate groups can bring mutual benefits, and bolsters community efforts to bring about change.

Working together can help your church find meaningful ways to campaign and take action locally while bringing extra numbers, support and influence to those campaigning tirelessly already. We can strengthen them, and they us, as we seek to create change together.

Start with a Google search of 'local climate groups in X' and pop in your local area. This should bring up some great suggestions for where to begin your search.

Tools

- How to find and work with your local climate groups – Eco Church resource

Examples of groups that might meet in your local area:

- Map of Transition Towns
- Friends of the Earth local groups
- Greenpeace
- Local Extinction Rebellion (XR) groups
- Christian Climate Action groups
- Repair Cafes
- Green Christian Local Groups
Orbisa and her young family rear goats and cattle in the Afar region of Ethiopia. Over the last few years, rainfall in her region has reduced dramatically because of climate change. Orbisa says, ‘In the past we had rainfall every six months, but now we don’t know when the rainfall will come. The length of the dry season is increasing.’ Without rain, her animals are dying and she has to travel many hours every day to fetch water, but still her children go thirsty as the climate emergency pushes them deeper into poverty.

Photo by Chris Hoskins/Tearfund
Is it really a climate emergency?
As temperatures continue to rise, people living in poverty are already facing devastating consequences of our changing climate. Rains are less reliable and droughts, floods and storms are becoming more frequent and extreme. These changes are destroying farmland, spreading disease and pushing people back into poverty. For our global neighbours, this is already a very real emergency.

In 2015, 195 countries came together to sign the Paris Agreement, a ground-breaking commitment to stop the global average temperature from increasing by more than 2°C, and do all they could to limit it to 1.5°C, based on the average temperature before the industrial revolution.

Temperatures have already climbed 1.1°C and we’re on course for over 3°C of warming this century, which would be catastrophic. Even the difference between 1.5°C and 2°C is devastating: it would mean more than 100 million additional people struggling to get water.

To limit warming to 1.5°C we now need to cut emissions by eight per cent every year. Yet, despite all of this, global emissions are still rising. We are heading towards a climate with more severe droughts, storms, heatwaves, floods and wildfires and a world where pandemics and biodiversity collapse are far more likely: this is now a climate emergency.

Why should we get involved – as Christians and churches?
As Christians, we know ‘the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world and all who live in it’ (Psalm 24:1).

We’re called to act justly and to love our neighbours. This is God’s good creation, but the way we’ve exploited it is already pushing people back into poverty and risks the collapse of society as we know it.

As churches and Christians in the UK, facing the climate emergency, might we have been called for such a time as this? Together we can speak up, live prophetically and protect the lives of millions of people already at risk from this crisis.

Like you, we believe the church is God’s Plan A for his mission in this world. We can play a crucial role in society, serving our communities and speaking up for justice. We are the largest community organisation on the planet and together, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can play a crucial role.

What kind of organisations can do this?
We’ve designed this Toolkit to serve local churches in the UK. As more and more of us as churches recognise the emergency and make a plan for action, we’ll create a real momentum for change.

But this Toolkit isn’t just for churches: the key steps of Prepare, Declare and Impact have been designed with flexibility in mind. No matter the size, shape or structure of your organisation, you should be able to take this Toolkit and adapt it for your own situation, whether you are a church network, denomination, diocese, church school, theological college or a Christian organisation. Collectively, as the people of God, we can speak up and take action on this global crisis together.
Frequently asked questions.

+ **How do I get started?**

Tackling the climate emergency can’t be done alone. We want to support you along this journey and would encourage you to build a team within your church, school or organisation to help too.

You’ve already downloaded the Toolkit, which is a brilliant start. As a next step, we would suggest you talk with your church or organisation leadership and gather a team of people willing to work on this with you. Then head back to the introduction and discuss with your team where to go from here.

+ **How does this relate to other initiatives we are involved with?**

The Toolkit is designed to help organisations make a step change in their response to the climate emergency. Churches that already have sustainability plans, or are pursuing Eco Church or Eco-Congregation awards, can incorporate declaring an emergency into this process.

Declaring an emergency and making a clear action plan should help focus attention on the crucial issue of lowering emissions. This Toolkit also aims to help mobilise individual Christians to influence their households, local communities and workplaces. This isn’t just about the sustainability of Christian communities: it’s about inspiring each other to be a beacon for change wherever God has put us.

+ **Can we reach zero emissions?**

The exact target you set should be determined by your governing body. In order to recognise the climate emergency in a meaningful way, the target will need to be substantial and the timescale urgent. This could mean aiming to become carbon-neutral by 2030, or seeking to reduce emissions by ten per cent every year. As a guide, the Church of England and the Church of Scotland share an ambitious goal of ‘net zero’ by 2030, while the UK Climate Change Act commits the UK to reach net zero by 2050, but even though this is so late, the UK is still not even on track to meet that target.

+ **What does it mean to ‘adapt’ to the changing climate?**

Climate change is already causing significant issues globally, but this is now increasingly being felt in the UK. A realistic action plan needs urgently to reduce our contribution to potentially catastrophic climate change, but also to prepare for further changes in the coming years as the emissions of previous decades take effect.

Adaptation measures could include:

- Make sure climate change impacts are on your organisation’s risk register.
- Consider the risk of flooding at your church building, overheating in the summer, over-topping of the gutters during extreme rainfall, and stonework damage due to the foundations swelling and shrinking. Can you take practical actions to reduce the impact, such as moving your fusebox higher up? This guidance may help.
- Make plans to respond with compassion and hope to rising climate anxiety.

Arrange some community conversations about climate resilience. Consider how might your local community be affected by:

- higher temperatures
- more extreme weather conditions, including flooding
- a rise in food prices or food-chain problems
- migration following environmental disaster
- power shortages/energy insecurity

Adaptation planning is good stewardship of resources. Research also shows that naming these issues now can help people acknowledge the need to take action on the climate emergency.
Final notes.

Well done for making it through the Toolkit! We hope you’ve found it a useful guide.

If you’re planning to use the Toolkit with your church or organisation, or are already doing so, then we would love to hear from you! Get in touch via our website or via email to info@climateemergencytoolkit.com and we would be delighted to pray with you and talk more about how to make the most of the Toolkit and your journey through it.

The Climate Emergency Toolkit and accompanying website have been produced by a coalition of organisations and in collaboration with activists and church leaders. If you have stories to share from your experience of using it, or ideas and ways we can improve the resource for others, then please do get in touch.

‘Today let us decide to marshal our individual and collective strength to show through our actions and decisions that we love ourselves, our children, our grandchildren and our neighbours across the globe.’

Christiana Figueres, former Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
Supporting organisations.

The Climate Emergency Toolkit has been put together in collaboration with several organisations, as well as activists and church leaders.

**Tearfund**
We’re Christians passionate about ending extreme poverty. We’re following Jesus where the need is greatest, working through local churches to unlock people’s potential. Tearfund is part of Renew Our World, a global movement of Christians calling for a more just and sustainable planet for all.

**Christian Aid**
Christian Aid exists to create a world where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty. We are a global movement of people, churches and local organisations who passionately champion dignity, equality and justice worldwide.

**The Church of England Environment Programme**
We aim to enable the whole church to fulfil its calling to nurture and care for God’s creation, encompassing worship and teaching, reaching net zero, land and nature, community action, ethical investment and a strong faith voice.

**The John Ray Initiative**
The John Ray Initiative (JRI) is an educational charity with a vision to bring together scientific and Christian understandings of the environment in a way that can be widely communicated and lead to effective action.

**Eco-Congregation Ireland**
**Eco-Congregation Scotland**
Eco-Congregation is an ecumenical programme helping churches make the link between environmental issues and Christian faith, and respond in practical action in the church, in the lives of individuals, and in the local and global community.

**Green Christian**
We are a community of ordinary Christians from all backgrounds and traditions who believe the Gospel is for all Creation. Inspired by our faith, we work to promote social change through prayer, living simply, public witness, campaigning and mutual encouragement.

**Operation Noah**
Operation Noah is a Christian charity working with the church in the UK to inspire action on the climate crisis. We work with all Christian denominations and support interfaith work on climate change. We are faith-motivated, science-informed and hope-inspired.

**Hope for the Future**
Hope for the Future is a climate charity which works to equip communities, groups and individuals across the country to communicate the urgency of climate change with their local politicians.

**Climate Sunday**
The Climate Sunday initiative is calling on all local churches, Christian denominations, ‘streams’ and networks to hold a climate-focused service before COP26 in November 2021.

**Eco Church**
A Rocha UK’s award scheme for churches in England and Wales who want to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God’s earth. The free online survey and resources equip churches to plan and take action across the whole of church life.

**A Rocha UK**
A Rocha UK is a Christian charity working for the protection and restoration of the natural world and committed to equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment.

Supporting organisations.

The Climate Emergency Toolkit has been put together in collaboration with several organisations, as well as activists and church leaders.
The Toolkit has also been endorsed by a number of Christian scientists, including:

- **Dr Colin Abbiss**  
  Senior Visiting Fellow at City University, London

- **Dr Tim Gordon**  
  Marine biologist and Honorary Research Fellow, University of Exeter

- **Professor Nicholas Harmer**  
  Assistant Professor in Biochemistry, University of Exeter

- **Dr Brian Simpson OBE**  
  Honorary Professor, Civil Engineering, University of Nottingham

- **Dr Michael Charles Thorne**  
  Former Visiting Fellow at the Climatic Research Unit, University of East Anglia, Scientific Consultant

- **Dr Erik Toorman**  
  Professor in Theoretical and Computational Fluid and Sediment Mechanics, KU Leuven, Belgium

If you are a Christian climate scientist, and would be willing to endorse the toolkit, please email us: info@climateemergencytoolkit.com

Finally, we are grateful for the vision and time of Hannah Bowring, Seren Boyd, Helen Eldridge, Luke Harman, Howard May, Jemima Parker, Mark Powley and Jack Wakefield.