**XXXXXXXXXX Methodist Circuit -**

**ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY DOCUMENT**

**Introduction: Caring for God’s Creation**

* God declares his creation to be good – fundamentally beautiful as a complete and harmonious whole.
  + We celebrate in worship, God’s work of creating and maintaining the Earth and Christ’s work of reconciling all things to each other and to God.
  + We understand Christian mission to include:
    - Caring for the natural world, of which we are a part, as good stewards of creation.
    - Trying to put right those relationships in creation which have gone wrong, as disciples of Christ.
* While recognising the relative resilience of the Earth over millions of years, we also acknowledge the unique, disruptive influence of human activity at this moment in Earth’s history. The burning of fossil fuels is rapidly changing the composition of the atmosphere, heating the planet and driving climate change at a rate that threatens future generations of human beings and the present ecological balance.
  + We therefore acknowledge a climate emergency.
  + We commit ourselves to reducing carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 in our churches and among our people as best we are able.
* This environmental policy details the specific actions that we will take as a circuit:
  + to act urgently and responsibly to address global heating and the climate emergency
  + to act seriously and responsibly in other important matters of ecological and environmental concern
  + to establish and monitor progress against targets

**Actions Relating to the Climate Emergency**

* GENERAL
  + Follow advice from the District Climate Emergency Action Group to keep up to date and to be aware of deadlines and funding opportunities to assist in the transition to Net Zero. The Yorkshire West District acknowledged a Climate Emergency at its Spring Synod in 2022 and urges change among our circuits and churches relating to: 1) assets; 2) wisdom; and 3) lifestyle. These are reflected in the following advice from the District Climate Emergency Action Group.
  + Set up small circuit and local church groups to lead and encourage the transition to net zero (these will be necessary to secure awards from Eco Church – see below).
  + Use the Methodist **Net Carbon Zero Checklist** (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/25511/net-carbon-zero-checklist.pdf>) to develop a circuit/local church response to becoming net zero by 2030. The checklist divides actions up in a way that makes the transition to net zero feel manageable and encourages all churches to make a start.
    - Step 1 – Baselines a carbon footprint for monitoring progress.
    - Step 2 – Lists easy actions to reduce carbon emissions.
    - Step 3 – Lists actions that have a fast payback on modest expenditure.
    - Step 4 – Lists more expensive projects that drive emissions down to net zero.
  + Register your intent to become an Eco Church circuit – the actions on the Net Carbon Zero Checklist will make you gradually eligible for different Eco Church awards.
  + Establish criteria for travel to meetings: car sharing, public transport, and online meetings
* CIRCUIT
  + Manses and other circuit property. Progress towards net zero will involve:
    - Baselining carbon emissions using available audits/assessment tools (the ***3600 Carbon*** website) and annually monitoring reductions towards net zero by 2030.
    - Aiming for a C energy rating moving to B by 2030
    - Improving insulation asap
    - Selling old manses as necessary and buying new by 2030
    - Using renewable energy providers
    - Installing solar panels (and batteries) by 2030 latest
    - Installing EV Charging as required by the resident minister and at the latest by 2030
    - Replacing fossil fuel heating with alternatives by 2030
  + Set aside a budget for grants and loans to support the circuit and local churches transitioning to net zero – this will supplement other grants and local fundraising.
  + Review how many buildings are needed to make mission and ministry practicable while reducing our carbon footprint.
  + Aim to become an Eco Circuit by having a percentage of local churches registered as Eco Churches (see <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/denominational-awards/eco-circuit/>)
  + Identify training around environmental issues to support local preachers and worship leaders in their work
* LOCAL CHURCHES
  + Church buildings. Progress towards net zero will likely involve:
    - Assessing whether a church building is really needed and identifying resources which may be shared with neighbouring churches to serve the needs of the local community for worship and mission.
    - Baselining carbon emissions using available audits/assessment tools (the ***3600 Carbon*** website - <https://360carbon.org/en-gb/> ) and then annually monitoring reductions towards net zero by 2030. (This is not necessary where churches do not expect to be open beyond 2030.)
    - Improving insulation asap
    - Using renewable energy providers
    - Installing solar panels and (and batteries) by 2030
    - Installing EV charging where possible and needed by local communities
    - Replacing fossil fuel heating with alternatives by 2030
  + Consider ways of using the land associated with church buildings in ways which benefit the environment and the community
  + Develop community engagement with local stakeholders to maximise the community benefit of net zero churches – this will also assist with later grant applications for larger project work
  + Evangelism and Witness - encourage conversation about the need for personal and corporate change in relation to the climate emergency and celebrate progress regularly
* CHURCH MEMBERS
  + The circuit will encourage members to make progress towards lower carbon lifestyles in concert with corporate developments in local churches by:
    - Monitoring personal carbon footprints
    - Insulating homes well
    - Using green energy
    - Transitioning from heating systems reliant on fossil fuels to no- or low-carbon alternatives
    - Transitioning from petrol driven cars to electric vehicles or public transport
    - Engaging with local and global organisations in seeking a fairer, more environmentally friendly world

**Actions Relating to Other Environmental Concerns**

* WORSHIP & PRAYER
  + Encourage walks of pilgrimage and other forms of outdoor worship that connect us with the natural world
  + Mark special times and seasons with worship and prayer – e.g. Creationtide; Prayer for annual international COP meetings.
  + Integrate the climate emergency and environmental concerns into personal prayers
  + Ensure that weekly intercessions regularly include prayers for God’s creation
* ETHICAL CONSUMPTION and RECYCLING
  + Increase the availability of vegetarian options and locally sourced produce at church functions
  + Encourage the ethical consumption of products along the principle of *“re-use, recycle and reduce”*
* COMMUNITY RELATIONS
  + Build local relationships with environmental interest groups to develop synergy in addressing the climate emergency and other environmental issues and to witness to our concern for God’s world.

By adopting this policy we demonstrate that we care about the future of our planet by loving our fellow humans, both those alive now and future generations. We also show love for God by caring for creation.

We will regularly review and amend this policy as advised by the District Climate Emergency Action Group and to keep pace with new understandings in climate science and developments in technology.