

“Cherish creation, cut carbon, speak up”

A Diocesan vision and strategy for Creation Care



A. Our vision

Back at the beginning of everything, after making the earth, the sky and sea, the animals, plants and humans, Scripture tells us that God stood back and, looking at this glorious diversity, *"He saw everything he had made, and indeed, it was very good."* Not iffy, not so-so, not a first draft, but very good. Creation is very good.

And this good creation is a gift. It is given by God as an expression of his overwhelming abundance of goodness and love, shared because divine love is too generous to be kept hidden away for its own pleasure. And it is a gift with a purpose: it is to be enjoyed because it is an expression of God's joy and glory; cherished because it needs care and attention, and shared because there is enough for everyone, but only if none of us take more than we need.

And in Pope Francis' words the destiny of this glorious gift of a good creation is *'bound up with the mystery of Christ, present from the beginning because "All things have been created through him and for him (Col 1:16)'"*.¹

But we don't have to look far to see that we have failed to properly enjoy, cherish and share creation and that the earth, sky and sea, and the plants and animals that live in them are suffering as a result, as are the poorest people around the world. We face a global climate and biodiversity crisis, which are already impacting the coastal communities of Cornwall, and levels of global injustice and human suffering that shame us all.

And this isn't just a practical problem. In the Bible it is often the land that cries out against human sin and selfishness. The prophet Hosea, in words that are profoundly prescient, put it like this *'The land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing.'*²

The causes of the current crises are deep and complex, but at their root lies the same problem that tempted Adam and Eve immediately after God created his good universe, and the problem that led to Hosea's challenge; the temptation to run the world for our own purposes and without care for the Creator and his purposes. The environmental crisis has spiritual roots; it is about ultimate meaning and purpose, how we treat our neighbour, both near and far, and how we understand the nature of human flourishing - and these are all issues of faith and spirituality. Sir Ghillian Prance, previous Director of Kew Gardens and Scientific Director of the Eden Project, put it like this; *'Science alone will not be able to resolve the situation, because it is a moral, spiritual and ethical problem, requiring major changes in our behaviour.'*³

The solution, which we are called to be part of, starts with God and is lived out by disciples of Jesus Christ, in whom we are called to be a 'new creation'. It is by faith and action together that God's very good creation can be restored.

This Diocese has long been committed to creation care. Christians in Cornwall have long had a deep connection to the land and sea, expressed richly in the Celtic spiritual tradition. Cornwall has long been connected to the wider world and had a care for those suffering from injustice.

As the Church of England in Cornwall and as the generation responsible for God's creation at this time, called to enjoy, cherish and share the gift of God's goodness, we commit ourselves to playing our part in the spiritual and practical renewal that is required, we are ready to repent and to change and to make the sacrifices that will be required.

We will cherish creation, cut carbon and speak up.

B. Our priorities

There are many ways in which we might choose to act on this commitment, but our resources are limited and we know that churches and organisations are more effective when they choose to do a few things and to do them well. Following a process of consultation and discernment, we have therefore named three specific commitments or priorities for our continued and renewed work on creation care.

Cherish creation : We will encourage the Diocese at every level⁴ to care for those parts of God's good creation for which we have responsibility, stewarding them for the benefit of plants, animals and biodiversity.

As well as the climate emergency, we also face an ecological crisis, with the dramatic loss of wild spaces, species and biodiversity. We will therefore encourage individuals to care for the parts of creation that they have involvement with and responsibility for; we will encourage and equip church communities to maximise biodiversity in land in their care. And at Diocesan decision making level⁵, recognising the complex balance of demands on land use, including our commitment to the poor, the need to operate within statutory frameworks and to make a financial return, we will consider the place of wildlife and biodiversity in every decision.

To support this, we will establish and build on partnerships with other churches and relevant external experts to help us think through the complex decisions that need to be made.

Cut carbon : We will cut our carbon footprint year on year and to net zero by 2030.

We recognise, along with the rest of the Church of England, that we, individually and corporately, need to act urgently on the climate crisis, which is the single greatest environmental challenge before us, and to cut our carbon use to net zero.

We recognise that this is a significant challenge and we take responsibility for the part that we alone can play. We acknowledge that if we are to speak boldly and prophetically on creation care, we need to be putting our own house in order and to be living in ways that are coherent with this aim.

We know that the missional call made *to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and to sustain and renew the life of the earth*⁶ is integral to and connected with our overall mission as the church of Christ, and that achieving this target is therefore about discipleship, evangelism, prayer, worship and the study of Scripture as well as practical action.

Speak up : At every level of the Diocese, we will speak and act boldly to promote the enjoyment, cherishing and sharing of God's good creation and, where possible and resources allow, we will work in partnership with others who share the same aims.

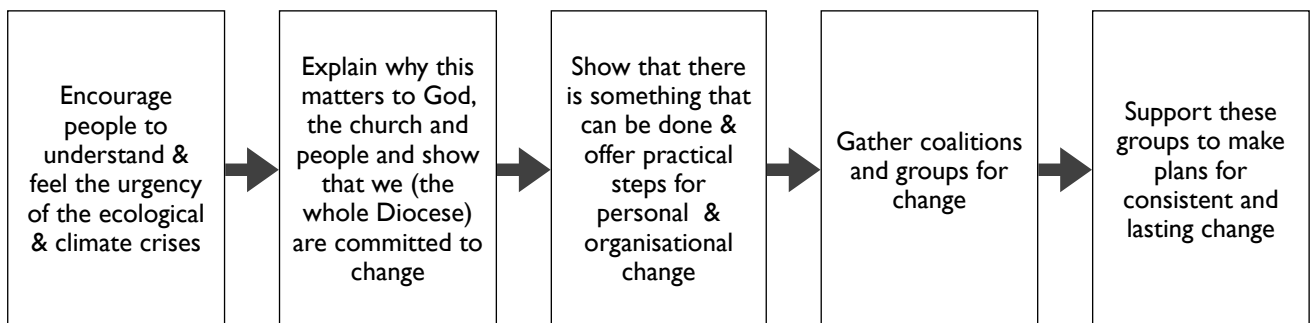
We recognise that we have a part to play alongside others in this work; individuals, groups, ecumenical partners and organisations. We will therefore encourage every level of the Diocese to act boldly to put our own house in order, to work in partnership with others on creation care, listening to their experience and expertise, using our voices for persuasion and protest, and to build partnerships for action.

We will speak boldly and publicly, taking a lead in public discussion, debate and action, especially here in Cornwall. We will work ecumenically, advocating for carbon cutting and for nature and supporting those seeking creative solutions to the challenges we face. In particular we will speak of God's love for his whole creation, of the spiritual and moral dimension to the climate crisis and ensure this is seen as an issue of justice for the poorest and most vulnerable.

C. Our approach to change

Our approach is based on the following principles and process:

- 1. Practical change starts with a compelling vision.** The clarity and persuasiveness of our vision is critical, as it is the basis of being able to tell a coherent and compelling story about why our response to the ecological and climate crises matters, and in particular, why it matters to us as Christians. This vision needs to be rooted in Scripture and the Christian tradition, to outline the problem and the solution, it needs to be sufficiently broad to include the whole Diocese and sufficiently focussed to give a clear direction and it needs to invite everyone to play their part. Above all, this vision needs to be theologically and spiritually rooted.
- 2. The priorities are there to help us say ‘no’.** As we cannot do everything, we will focus on doing these few things and doing them consistently, relentlessly and well, and we will make the difficult decision say ‘no’ to other choices (even to good choices).
- 3. There is a price to pay.** In order to meet these targets we will have to pay a price, both financially and in opportunities foregone. That price will be paid by different people and groups at different times and so needs to be chosen, supported and encouraged rather than forced. We will pay particular attention to ensuring this price is not paid by those who are already poor.
- 4. Groups and organisations do things differently when individuals start to imagine the world differently and to behave differently.** While systems and structures matter, it is what people think, hope for and believe that brings real change. Changes in mindset and imagination then need to be supported with practical steps for behavioural change. This is how we understand the process of change, recognising that change often begins and embeds when people take action, and that it is often a cyclical rather than linear process.



- 5. Truro Diocese is a complex federation of individuals, communities, networks and groups,** each with their own area of responsibility and accountability, and with different priorities and needs. This means a clear shared vision, building partnerships, negotiating decisions and being mutually accountable will be the key tools in bringing about change. It also means that different parts of the Diocese will, rightly, focus on different specific areas of the strategy. The aim is not for everyone to do everything, but for everyone to do something that contributes to the priorities. Diverse responses to clear goals will be encouraged.
- 6. Change needs to be both bottom up and top down.** Creativity and practical change are most likely to happen when people and groups take responsibility for themselves and their own areas of care and concern, and are given resources and support to do so. This also

needs consistent public leadership and clear direction from those called to lead the Diocese, including in their own behaviours.

7. **Consistent and lasting change** requires clear targets, which measure what matters most and which are overseen by a clear leadership structure which has authority to make decisions.

D. Our Strategy

1. **Share the vision.** Using the grid below we will map the Diocese and design a communication strategy for each of the three groups, recognising that each part of the Diocese has a different set of priorities and needs and will contribute to the overall vision in different ways. The vision will often be best shared through stories, Scripture, prayer and worship, and our communications strategy will therefore focus on story telling and faith. Everything we do will tie into the three priorities and the underpinning vision, in particular to making connections between faith and action for creation. We will use this grid to monitor and encourage focussed and consistent attention to the priorities, but in ways that can be chosen locally.

	Individual	Church community	Organisation
Cherish Creation			
Cut Carbon			
Speak up			

2. **Lead and act.** Those with responsibility for leadership, at every level of the Diocese, will be supported and encouraged to grow in their understanding of the issues and in theological, practical and public responses, both personally and for those they lead. Where possible, we will use existing systems for this, for instance in Deanery planning, Archdeacons Visitations and CMD.
3. **Provide a route map for personal, community and organisational change.** Offering people and communities easy steps that help them cut carbon, cherish creation and speak up. This might be based on the model used in the 10 pledges, reviewed to the revised priorities, or something similar or something new.
4. **Empowering local champions.** We will grow the existing Environment Champion scheme, equipping them to be vision carriers and local change leaders who will advocate for the Diocesan priorities of cherishing creation, cutting carbon and speaking up.
5. **Green churches.** We will provide resources for Church communities to design their plan for action. We will review and redesign the Green Church Kernow Award to reflect these priorities, and will encourage more churches to gain the awards.
6. **Prayer and worship.** Because these are spiritual rather than solely practical challenges, we will resource peoples prayer, bible study and worship for creation care.
7. **Work in partnership across the Diocese.** We will work closely with the formal decision making bodies that have responsibility for the resources of the Diocese as a whole (including Glebe, Property, Investments and Finance) working to bring the Diocesan priorities onto their agendas and decision making processes.
8. **Set targets.** Because we know how easy it is to start off well, and then to be distracted, we will set clear targets for each of the priorities, and design an accountability structure to monitor them.

E. Governance and resources

For all of this to happen, we will need the following structure and groups in place

1. **An Environmental Board** to oversee the implementation of the vision and priorities,
 - i. The Board will be made up of people from key parts of the Diocese including the Cathedral, Transforming Mission, parishes, the BDC, the DBE and Church House. Others with specialist skills or expertise, including external partners to be invited as required.
 - ii. The role of the Board will be to hold and hone the vision, to set targets and to receive reports on progress, to oversee the key work of sharing the vision and communication, to ensure good partnership and collaboration within and beyond the Diocese.
 - iii. The Board will be chaired by the Bishop of St Germans, through whom it will report to the BDC.
 - iv. The group is likely to need some limited administrative support to keep it focussed and efficient.
2. **The Net Zero group** to lead the detailed work on cutting carbon. The current membership will be reviewed to ensure it has the right people to deliver the focussed work of carbon cutting and to ensure there is not too much overlap with the Board, to whom it will report. While acknowledging that cutting carbon is profoundly connected to other areas of creation care, this group will be solely focussed on driving down the carbon output of the Diocese as a whole in a strategic, focused way. We will consider taking on specialist paid consultancy to help us develop a plan for Net Zero.
3. **The Creation Care group** to share the vision widely, particularly at local level, to inspire individuals and local church communities to take part and to develop the Environment Champions scheme and to work towards the Green Church Kernow Awards. It will be responsible for generating prayer, worship and theological resources that support the priorities. It will report to the Environmental Board and be supported by the Diocesan Environmental Officer. The role description for the DEO post will be revised to reflect this changed role.
4. **A School of creation theology** will be set up at the Cathedral, with a new Environment Canon appointed, and a regular resource and teaching program established to deepen our understanding of the theology and practice of creation care.
5. **Communication support.** This will require some time from the Diocesan communications team to ensure the vision is shared consistently and widely, especially through stories of individual and collective creation care. Work is still to be done to establish the need and possible cost of this work, which may need some extra resource.

END NOTES

¹ Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si*

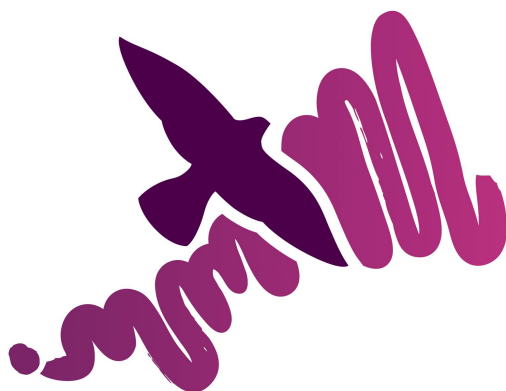
² Hosea 4:1-3

³ Quoted in Dave Bookless, *Planetwise*

⁴ Which includes: Parish churches big & small, home groups, parent & toddler sessions, Messy Church, Transforming Mission, the Cathedral, the Glebe portfolio, Finance, property and investment teams, church schools, prayer groups, Synods of different sorts, Church House, BDC, Episcopal College, Deaneries, church leadership teams

⁵ Which includes Synod, BDC, Episcopal College, Glebe, Property, Finance and assets, Investments and DAC

⁶ The fifth of the *5 Marks of Mission* that underpin the Anglican theology of Mission



DIOCESE OF TRURO

DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM
GROWING THE CHURCH