

CARING FOR CREATION POLICY IN THE DIOCESE IN EUROPE

2022

Theological background

The Christian doctrine of Creation is imbedded in Scripture and the later tradition of the Church. Yet for many years so many people have ignored the teaching concerning the relationship of human beings with the world that God created. The themes of the doctrine of Creation include the goodness of Creation itself, the way that our fallen human nature has done damage to Creation, the redemption offered by Christ and the hope of the *new Creation*, established by His resurrection. Thus 'Caring for Creation' immediately goes to the heart of what we as Disciples of Jesus Christ are about.

1 *God made the world and loves it*

God is the creator of the world and declared it to be 'very good' (Genesis 1:31).

God is involved with creation, sustaining it and caring for it (Psalm 65:9–13; Matthew 10:29; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:16–17).

If God loves the world, then we are called to love what God loves and take care of it.

2 *God created us to look after it*

We are created beings, part of the whole community of creation, joining together to praise God (Psalm 148). But we have also been given a special task – to look after all that God has made (Genesis 1: 26–28; Gen. 2:15). This is not an optional extra for a few keen environmentalists, but a fundamental part of what it means to be human.

3 *It has gone wrong because of us*

It is a sad truth that many of the problems our world and its inhabitants face are caused by human activity. Our acts of human sin have far-reaching ecological consequences (Hosea 4: 1–3; Amos 8: 1–8). Our thankfulness for the gift of creation that God gives us prompts us to act.

4 *God's amazing plan for this world*

For Christians, the doctrine of Creation is bound up with the whole saving mystery of Christ himself. John 3:16 states: 'For God so loved the **world**, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life''

God's plans for salvation involve all of creation (Colossians 1: 19–20). Jesus died on the cross so that the whole of creation could be redeemed. Through his death on the cross and resurrection, death was defeated and the long-awaited Kingdom ushered in. In sharing in Christ's mission and bearing witness to the Kingdom of God which Christ inaugurated, we work to bring all of creation back into harmony with the Creator, looking with faith and hope to the fullness of time, when all things are made new. (Revelation 21 – 22:6).

5. Celebrating God and God's Creation and Calling for a Human Response ¹

Psalm 104 is one of the most significant expositions of creation in the Bible. It is a hymn *praising* God the creator and sustainer of the world and at the same time it paints a beautiful picture of the created world, the whole cosmos in front of our eyes. Continuing the narrative set “in the beginning” in Genesis. 1, the psalm is a song of praise to God's continuous activity and care of Creation.

The psalm indicates that the ecological crisis we are confronting is, at its root, a spiritual crisis. Many human factors have brought us to this point, but fundamentally – as “Laudato si” has also pointed out – it is a spiritual crisis where humans have forgotten their origin in and dependency on God, the giver and sustainer of life. A spiritual crisis calls for a conversion, a new thinking, and a new search for a lifestyle in accordance with God's will. Human beings are portrayed in the psalm not so much as the “crown of creation” ruling over the earth, but as creatures, living amid many other creatures. It is an ecological vision of the co-existence of all beings created and cared for by God.

The text calls for a four part human response to God's continuous acting and concern for creation. The psalm paints a portrait of God and God's creation and there are four human responses that emerge:

- Praising and celebrating God and God's creation – the liturgical dimension in ecological concern;
- Opening up for the experience of nature and world – the emotional dimension of human response;
- Exploring the world – the cognitive and educational dimension of celebrating God and creation;
- Protecting creation – the ethical dimension of human response to the beauty of God's creation.

The motto of the Anglican Community in South Africa can help us in the Diocese in Europe, too, to move forward: God made it all and said: It is good. *We are trying to keep it that way.*

6. Summary – Our calling to Care for Creation

Our mandate could also be summed up in the following words of Jesus:

“Love the Lord your God
with all your heart and with all your soul,
and with all your mind.”

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it:

“love your neighbour as yourself”

Matthew 22. 37-38

¹ *Extracted, edited and adapted from a Bible Study presented by the Rev Dr H.C Klaus Schaefer at a German Deanery Synod in 2021*

We find ourselves in the middle of a world-wide crisis, which if not immediately addressed will bring distress and chaos throughout the world – not just the areas which are already suffering from years of neglecting our responsibilities. We are not called to SAVE God’s planet, but we are called to care for it, responsibly - whatever the eventual outcome.

Climate change and ecological breakdown are facts we can no longer deny. The evidence is plain to see all over the globe, in drought, flooding, pollution of air, water and land, deforestation, loss of species and biodiversity.

Commitments

The Diocese in Europe is committed to three projects which can help us navigate our way through these issues.

In relation to these three projects the Diocese in Europe, across all its activities and chaplaincies, commits to:

1. **ECO CHURCH** AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT

Becoming an Eco – Diocese and continuing to build on the foundations already laid in many chaplaincies until ALL our chaplaincies are on the journey together. We were awarded the Bronze Eco Diocese Award in 2022, which is a great beginning but now we need to move forward and on to the Silver! For each level a progressively rising proportion of churches is required to be registered as Eco-Churches and a set proportion to have been awarded Bronze, Silver or Gold.

In order to implement this all Chaplaincy Councils are expected to appoint a LEO (Local Environment Officer) who not only acts as the direct link to the DEO (Diocesan Environment Officer) but is also encouraged to form a group to tackle the task. The LEO does not have to be an elected Chaplaincy Council member, **but they are** to be regularly invited to update the Council as to progress made etc. Reducing our environmental footprint and achieving carbon neutrality is a task for the whole community and not just for one individual.

Similarly, each Archdeaconry will establish a Creation Care network and include an agenda point on Creation Care in all Archdeaconry Synod meetings.

2. Working towards Net Zero Carbon by 2030

We understand the urgent need to reduce emissions and embed caring for creation into all aspects of our church life from worship, teaching and training, to the sustainable management of buildings, land and financial resources. To become ‘Net Zero Carbon’ by 2030 is a big challenge requiring urgent action.

Working towards Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2030 we commit to:

- promoting and taking action for reduction of carbon emissions associated with all areas of our church life and work. To this end, we will engage in a programme of

activity in all areas of Diocesan life and support each other in our efforts. The programme will be reviewed and updated annually with the support of the Net Zero Working Group.

- using relevant tools to measure our progress in reducing CO2 emissions and sharing information, resources and good practice.
- seeking to reduce emissions by improved energy efficiency, increased use of renewable energy sources, modifications to buildings and the way they are used, prioritisation of sustainable transport modalities and behavioural change.
- Establishing environment and climate related criteria for Diocesan investment and purchasing policy and applying them across the Diocese

We will pursue improvements urgently and continuously. We will explore options for offsetting for emissions that cannot be avoided.



SEASON OF CREATION

3.

Chaplaincies across the Diocese commit to a variety of activities and services, both indoors and out, which will celebrate the Season of Creation. This starts on 1. September, the Day of Prayer for Creation, and ends on 4. October, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology.

Clergy and readers commit to focus on Care for Creation themes during this season, and are called upon to engage with the relevant resources made available through Environment Officer and website.

The Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through repentance, celebration and commitment together. The Season of Creation is also an opportunity to engage with local ecumenical partners wherever possible in prayer and action for our common home.

Support for turning commitments into action

The Ministry Team of the Diocese will work to embed Caring for Creation into all training programmes including post ordination, MES, Readers and lay training. The Care for Creation content of all training programmes will be regularly reviewed and updated.

The Diocesan staff and officers will encourage and support chaplaincies in their work towards becoming Eco-Chaplaincies and the goal to be 'net zero carbon' by 2030. The aims of the projects will also be anchored in the training programmes of the Diocese, for example in the preaching and mission sections.

All Diocesan activity will be assessed with a view to reducing our carbon footprint including progressively reducing emissions from travel, energy use and other areas of activity, using agreed (and regularly updated) targets and standard metrics.

The Diocese will use all its Communications tools to promote Care for Creation, and to share information supporting chaplaincies in their environmental work.

The Diocese will seek to develop and resource specific role(s) that will support the widespread implementation of this policy.

All of the above are underpinned by:

The Five Anglican Marks of Mission



Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.



Teach, nurture, and baptize new believers.



Respond to human need by loving service.



Seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation.



Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.