

Memorial M6 (2020) Global Climate Emergency

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Resolutions	8/1. The Council receives the report.

Summary of content

Subject and aims	Memorial M6 (2020) Global Climate Emergency – This memorial is referred to the Council for a reply.
Background documents	2020 Methodist Conference Memorial M6 and reply 2019 Methodist Conference Memorial M55 Declaration of a Climate Emergency 2011 Statement of Conference ‘Hope in God’s Future’ 2010 Methodist Conference report ‘12 Carbon Reduction’

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Memorial M6 (2020) called on the Methodist Church to achieve measurable year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030. In its reply, the Methodist Conference recognised that the implementation of such a programme would have implications in many areas of our mission and practice across the Connexion and therefore referred the memorial to the Council.
- 1.2 Following consultation with Districts and others this report outlines the issues presented to the Church regarding carbon reduction and requests the Council’s wisdom in regards to how the requests made in the memorial M6 might best be addressed.
- 1.3 Every District was consulted via the mechanism of an online form. This generated 14 responses. The consultation took place during a busy time, as Chairs had time taken up with stationing and one or two regretted the lack of time available, but were generous in their understanding. In addition nine Districts were contacted directly by the Connexional Team and this generated a further five responses giving 19 responses in all.

The Methodist state school sector was consulted via Barbara Easton and this generated six individual responses from Methodist state schools.

The Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) was contacted via David Humphreys and Keith Norman and this generated a report with accounts coming from a number of MIST schools.

2. Background - the ambition for net zero in the UK

- 2.1 This year the UK government takes on a leadership role on climate change in the hosting of the Glasgow COP26 Conference. A key aim of this major summit is to obtain from each nation that is party to the Paris Agreement an upgraded nationally determined contribution to reduce global

emissions. The ambition is to significantly step up efforts across the globe to achieve a carbon neutral world in as short a timeframe as possible.

- 2.2 If global warming is to be kept to 1.5 degrees, the budget for further emissions into the atmosphere is very tight. It is therefore vital that nations manage transitions to low carbon economies as early as possible. In November 2020, the Prime Minister outlined the UK Government's ten-point plan for a 'green industrial revolution' over the next ten years. It includes quadrupling production of electricity from off-shore wind, making our homes, schools and hospitals greener, warmer and more energy efficient and transforming our national infrastructure to better support electric vehicles. The UK government aims to achieve an overall cut in emissions of 68% by 2030.
- 2.3 In December 2020, the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference joined with other church leaders and with Christian Aid to urge the Government to go further in its actions to achieve the best prospect of keeping global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees.
- 2.4 The UK government emphasises that an important aspect of the drive for net zero is the involvement of every part of our society including local, regional and national government, businesses, schools and universities, and other organisations including faith groups. It is anticipated that transformation will come about through change in behaviour alongside investment in new technologies.

3. The Methodist Church and carbon emissions

- 3.1 In 2011, the Conference adopted "Hope in God's Future" as a statement of the Conference. The Methodist Church aims in its own emissions to at least match the ambition in emission cuts proposed by our Government. In 2018, the Methodist Council stated that the UK government needs to take action to achieve net zero well before its stated target of 2050 and that this implies a further ambition in terms of the efforts of Methodist circuits and districts in the management of energy and emissions.
- 3.2 The 2019 Conference recognised the climate emergency that we face and reiterated the importance of providing space for reflection on the protection of God's creation in our prayer, preaching and worship.
- 3.3 The current Methodist Youth President, Phoebe Parkin, for her presidential year has taken the theme of "God's World, Our Home" and she is working with fellow Connexional Team staff and others to develop a set of resources to make accessible to young people the Conference Statement "Hope in God's Future".
- 3.4 In this crucial year of climate negotiations the Methodist Church is supporting a special Climate Sunday on 5 September, 2021, when thousands of churches across the UK will pray and take action.

4. What is involved in becoming a net zero church?

- 4.1 Many companies, large charities and even whole cities are pledging to achieve net zero emissions within a specific timeframe. This realisation of net zero requires significant planning and investment and may have a major impact on the way in which an organisation functions.
- 4.2 In becoming 'net zero', the first priority must be to ensure that emissions are reduced as much as possible. Subsequently remaining emissions that cannot be eliminated can be offset through the investment in programmes such as tree planting that sequester carbon from the atmosphere.

The Church would need to ensure that emissions are reduced to a relatively low level as this represents the surest approach to addressing climate change and without doing this the cost of offsetting would be high.

- 4.3 In 2010, an assessment of energy consumption from buildings across the Methodist Church in Britain suggested that the total energy costs related to church buildings were around £16 million/annum and energy consumed in manses at around £2 million/annum. Representing about 120,000 Mt of CO₂, the energy consumption within properties will be a large part of the Methodist Church direct emissions.¹
- 4.4 A commitment to net zero implies that the ecological impact of activities will be a consideration within every mission plan. As mission plans envisage growth, there will be a need to determine how to drive down carbon intensity such that mission growth is sustainably resourced.

5. Planning a pathway to net zero

- 5.1 There are examples within Districts and Circuits of assessment and management of carbon emissions that are instructive in our thinking around net zero.

5.2 Assessment and planning

The synod of the **Yorkshire North and East District** has adopted a target to achieve net zero by 2040 and earlier if possible. This commitment builds on, and arises out of, a growing energy amongst local churches to respond practically and faithfully to the climate crisis.² An assessment of the district footprint (achieved with the help of consultancy support) demonstrates that, given the dispersed nature of the managing trusteeship, a 2030 target would be very challenging. While the complete pathway is difficult to determine now, it is possible to identify high impact interventions that can deliver early gains. The initial strategy of the Yorkshire North and East District will prioritise buildings with high usage and will use consultancy expertise to help build an investment case for accelerated action and to seek external funding to invest in the transition to net zero.

5.3 Measuring emissions

The **Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit** received a bronze Eco Circuit award in 2020, the first Circuit or District to receive such an award. The Circuit and the Southampton District recommend four straight-forward steps for churches to embark on the path to zero emissions. These include undertaking an assessment of the current energy use and recommend the 360Carbon church footprint assessment tool provided by Climate Stewards. Romsey Methodist Church has implemented a large renovation of the building in recent years. The church implemented various energy efficiency measures including the installation of a solar array, and monitors energy consumption each year. The electricity is on green tariff and gas consumption is offset. If these are counted as carbon neutral then, overall, the building can be said to be carbon negative, balancing against the carbon output of travel and other activities of the church and circuit.³

¹ The carbon cost of people's travel to church may also be significant but this would count as indirect emissions outside of the direct control of churches and circuits.

² A number of churches in the District are signed up to the Eco Church scheme including one church that has gained the Eco Church Gold Award.

³ In 2020, Romsey became the second Methodist Church to qualify for an Eco Church Gold Award.

5.4 Embedding action in the wider life and worship of the church

The **Northampton District** is one of three Methodist districts to have registered with A Rocha to become a Methodist Eco District in due course. The District has a network of Green Champions and has recently adopted a District Environmental Policy. The policy promotes action across all areas of church life through the promotion of Eco Church. The policy at this stage does not require the monitoring of year-on-year carbon emissions but Eco Church awards encourage an assessment of the church building and other aspects of a church's carbon footprint. The District Green Champions encourage and monitor the adoption of Eco Church across the District as this determines the progress of the District towards an Eco District bronze award. A growing number of Methodist Churches have reached the basic standard of a bronze Eco Church or Eco Congregation award. Circuits and Districts are encouraged to register their intention with A Rocha UK to become Eco Circuits or Eco Districts. A District focus on Eco Church will further support its assessment of transition to net zero.

6. Local Ecumenical Partnerships and ecumenical working

- 6.1 6% of Methodist Churches are in a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) with a Church of England congregation and 6.4% are in an LEP with a United Reformed Church (URC). In order for LEPs to grow it becomes all the more advantageous to work with these two ecumenical partners in particular, in order to simplify the approach for Methodist LEPs.
- 6.2 In the spring of 2020, the General Synod committed the Church of England to achieving net zero by 2030. The resolution calls on all parts of the Church to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in 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. Each Diocesan Synod is called to address progress toward net zero emissions every three years and the General Synod will receive reports on progress from the National Environmental Working Group.
- 6.3 To date, 25% of all Dioceses have achieved a bronze Eco Diocese award. In 2020, 4,500 churches, 28% of all Church of England churches nationally, have entered data into a new Energy Footprint Tool that provides churches with an energy efficiency rating. The 360Carbon tool has an interface with the online system that collects data from Parish Annual Returns.
- 6.4 The use of 360Carbon is also recommended by the United Reformed Church enabling URC Synods to collate data. A network of Green Apostles has representatives from every Synod. The URC's Environmental Task Group is required to report to the General Assembly in 2022 the progress by Synods on implementation of the Environmental Policy. The URC's current commitment to achieve net zero well before 2050 is likely to be re-examined at in this context.

7. Methodist Schools

- 7.1 Methodist schools (both state Methodist schools and the independent school sector)¹ have not so far adopted net zero targets but they offer further insights on pathways to net zero. The National Governance Association, the independent organisation for school governors and trustees, provides governors with guidance on developing a 'whole school' approach to environmental sustainability. In this respect the wider involvement of pupils and parents in environmental management is evident throughout Methodist schools. Many examples could be cited such as Shebbear College, which has introduced two biomass boilers that run on wood chips sourced from

¹ The Independent School sector includes Affiliated and Associated Schools as well as Trust and Acquired Schools that are managed fully by MIST

sustainable suppliers and where pupils are involved in saving power and monitoring their (reducing) use of fossil fuels over time.

- 7.2 Targets and data-gathering should be designed to inform not only governing bodies but also the wider set of stakeholders involved within a whole school approach. It appears that few schools have set measurable targets for lower overall carbon emissions in the future (other than their acknowledgement of the national 2050 target set by the government to which they have a duty to give consideration). However, environmental concerns are well embedded in school management and the monitoring of carbon emissions from energy usage is being introduced.
- 7.3 The Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) is required under the Government's Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) Scheme to report annual UK energy use (in kWh), emissions intensity ratio (enabling comparison over time with other organisations) and a narrative of measures taken to achieve energy efficiency. This information is currently being compiled for the first time and will be published in the 2019/20 Statutory Report and Accounts of MIST.

8. Some key considerations for the Council

- 8.1 The final section of "Hope in God's Future", 'Sending Out', describes our response to climate change as a journey of a whole community, citing as a possible parallel the journey of the Israelites out of exile. The Council is invited to consider how our accountability to one another and to the Methodist Conference is exercised and how appropriate structures for the provision of inspiration, guidance and practical support can be established.
- 8.2 The text of Memorial M6 (2020) is modelled on the motion passed by the General Synod of the Church of England in February 2020. The memorial recognises that local churches, Circuits, Districts and the wider Connexion (including Methodist Schools) all have responsibility for various aspects of the footprint of the Methodist Church.
- 8.3 Feedback from a consultation with Districts suggests that the Methodist people have a growing awareness of the gift of creation, the fragility of our eco-system and our responsibility as Christ's disciples to ensure that we work to overturn systems that exploit the earth to the detriment of present and future generations. The feedback reveals some impressive examples of practical action with respect to the environment and climate but presents a mixed picture overall.

How might the Methodist Church ensure that living sustainably in harmony with God's creation becomes an essential aspect of every mission plan?

- 8.4 While responsibility for policy and implementation for much of the footprint rests with Districts, Circuits and churches, there are some aspects of a net zero ambition that it may be helpful for the Connexion as a whole to address. In order to develop these the Council is invited to consider the following questions.
- a. The Council could recommend to Districts and Circuits that particular attention is paid to two areas: firstly, the energy usage in churches and manses and, secondly, the travel of ministers, local preachers, paid employees, and volunteers. Local Churches could be encouraged to look at the whole of the carbon footprint¹ but from the perspective of Circuits and Districts, the two areas of energy and travel will cover the bulk of carbon emissions and provide a good basis for strategic planning. **What degree of granularity should be applied to the monitoring**

¹ The whole picture is helpful as is can be argued that a combination of individual behavioural change, targeted investment by churches and changes in national transport and energy infrastructure will ultimately deliver the radical transformation required.

of the carbon footprint? Specifically should this initially be limited to energy usage in church buildings/manse and emissions from travel or should data gathering from other activities also be considered?

- b. The Council could ask for the collation of energy data at the level of the local church and then at circuit and district level. With smart-metering and newly available tools, the task is now more straightforward than in the past. Districts could be requested to report their plans to the Council in advance of its meeting in January 2022, for example. Churches and circuits would be asked to assess their carbon footprint and invited to evaluate the 360Carbon or other footprint tool that is specifically designed for use by churches and offered by Climate Stewards as a free resource. **Does the Council feel that data collection should be required, by when, how often and to what body should reports be made?**
- c. The Council could invite Methodist independent schools to consider what a commitment to net zero might entail for the independent school sector and offer a report to the Council in advance of its meeting in January 2022. **Does the Council feel that a net zero ambition should include the schools? Are other aspects of the Connexion missing? If so, what might they be?**
- d. The reduced carbon footprint of Circuits and Districts could be assessed over time in proportion to the number of churches, or to the number of members, or to a combination of the two, **if so, when and how does the Council consider progress towards net zero should be benchmarked?**
- e. **What tools might be valuable to assist the local churches, Circuits, Districts and the wider Connexion in this ambition?** For reference the Church of England resources can be found here, <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/the-practical-path-to-net-zero-carbon-for-churches-FINAL-April-2020.pdf>
<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/practical-path-net-zero-carbon-churches>
Our current resources are to be found here and may require some updating.
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/public-issues/environment-and-climate-change/carbon-reduction-opportunities>
Does the Council consider these sufficient? What more tools might be required? If more are needed from where might they be found?
- f. **Does the Council consider the Standing Orders of the Methodist Church require revision in the light of a net zero commitment?** (for example Standing Order 803 in relation to the energy performance of manse or with respect to the requirements of Quinquennial inspections).
- g. Currently there is not a consistency of approach in 'green' electricity tariffs. **Does the Council feel that work should be undertaken by the Methodist Church to determine which forms of green energy might qualify for rating as zero carbon? If so how might that work be resourced?**

*****RESOLUTION**

8/1. The Council receives the report.

MC/21/8 Memorial M6 (2020) Global Climate Emergency