

# ST JOHN'S METHODIST CHURCH ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY OBJECTIVES AND CHURCH COMMITMENT

**Issue 1d. – March 2021. Church Council Approved**

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This document is a work in progress. It will be continually updated. At present a formal review every two years is envisaged.

Our world faces greater environmental challenges than throughout human history, challenges caused by the human race itself. Climate change is real and without positive action will consume our species. Against this background St John's has prepared its environmental policy.

Jesus was a man of his time. He condemned the Pharisees for hypocrisy and self-interest. Today he would challenge the large numbers of gross and profligate consumers and point out that they (we) are destroying his Father's world. The current world economic model is not compatible with the 'necessary' green agenda to prevent catastrophe.

This policy document has been prepared within the rules determined by Methodist Conference and is being released with the authority of the St John's Church Council. They have delegated the drafting and implementation to the Finance and Property committee. The National Environmental Policy of the Methodist Church has been followed closely. The document also focuses St John's intent on gaining Eco Church Awards. Now is the last and only time for action.

The policy seeks to identify the immediate problems, review the potential routes to an overall solution, and identify what the members of St John's can do **now** to assist the situation. The emphasis of environmental issues does not diminish St John's commitment to guiding its members in spiritual issues

## CARING FOR THE EARTH

St. John's Methodist Church affirms that Christian mission includes caring for God's earth and will endeavour to develop both the theology and practical implications.

The Biblical creation stories give human beings privilege and responsibility in relation to the earth and every living creature. We are called to be partners with the rest of creation and co-partners in the ongoing creative and renewing activity of God. Such partnership goes wrong when human beings act as if the whole earth were simply for their present benefit. God's way, revealed in the Bible and particularly in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, is a generous sharing of the divine love to serve the needs of God's creation until it reaches its fulfilment.

Great challenges have faced people before. Wars, plagues, famine, climatic disasters such as volcanic eruptions and floods. Some of the tussles where the children of God deserted his ways are recorded in the Old Testament. The

environmental challenge we face today is worldwide and will require the cooperation of nations across the world to resolve it.

Christian mission includes sharing, putting right the relationships within God's creation that have gone wrong, and creating the right balance within us. That will promote the good stewardship envisaged in the Biblical vision of the world as it is meant to be.

St. John's Methodist Church is challenged and encouraged to care for the earth by following sustainable practice, taking into account global and local environmental considerations, for present and future generations. We should:

- Help to develop more sustainable lifestyles.
- Encourage active involvement in community initiatives.
- Drive for awareness of, and active calls for national and global action on environmental issues. Only global action can bring a solution

To help St. John's Methodist Church to fulfil this commitment, this policy identifies objectives relating to five aspects of the environment. The objectives are considered relevant to individual lifestyles, the ongoing life of the Church and to the construction, maintenance and use of church buildings.

Action in working towards achievement of the objectives should have regard to:

- The challenge of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the prospects of future generations.
- The potential for harnessing the skills, expertise and enthusiasm of the Methodist people of St. John's Church.
- The opportunities for co-operation and joint initiatives with other Churches or environmental initiatives within the district and circuit.
- The effectiveness of the overall mission of the Church and the overall demands upon St. John's Church budgets.
- The valuable contribution of small steps by individuals as well as major initiatives.

## **THE LONG TERM VIEW. - THERE IS NO PLAN 'B'**

The present environmental issues are a result of too many people consuming far too much of the world's resources. Governments of all nations have been made aware of the issues and targets have been set. Each have responded to a greater or lesser extent. For once our government has set a good example, although it is still not enough.

The Government objective is for the country to become carbon neutral between 2040 and 2050. This requires extensive reductions in carbon emissions from transport activities and space heating, including domestic properties. This will require a carbon neutral church and outbuildings plus massive reductions in the use of petrol

and diesel cars. All these initiatives require government policy to deliver low carbon electricity.

Carbon neutral buildings require high efficiency electrical appliances to replace gas fired ones and also the use of the most efficient lighting. Gas fired boilers would be replaced by electric drive heat pumps. Cookers would be electric. Building insulation and air tightness would be maximised having taken into account the need for air changes (with its associated health implications).

The use of other consumables such as water and the generation of waste would be reduced to a minimum in line with the internationally developed standards.

All this is medium term. 2040 is not long in the future. It depends on our government (post Brexit and Covid 19) to provide the overall infrastructure. The next section describes what we need to do now.

## **WHAT WE DO NOW. - IMMEDIATE POLICY OBJECTIVES**

- To promote awareness within Methodist people of these principles and objectives and of the values underlying them.
- To spread that awareness to all the people of our community and more widely.
- To ensure that Methodist Church employees and office holders are familiar with and implement this environmental commitment and its objectives.
- To ensure that Methodist Church activities comply with all relevant environmental regulations.
- To ensure that the St John's facilities continuously drive towards desirable environmental targets.

On all issues we endeavour to identify and, where practical, to implement best practice.

See appendix A for environmental regulations and policy documents.

Specific topics under review are awareness of the situation (Appendix B), energy, water, waste, material, resources, travel and living and spreading the word.

## **ENERGY**

A driver of our present situation is the large consumption of fossil fuels. These release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, carbon that was 'captured' by photosynthesis a long time ago. The atmosphere is returning to its state before the coal measures were laid down millions of years ago.

A two pronged solution is required, the reduction of overall energy use and a switch to low or zero carbon energy sources.

This will require regular reviews or audits of consumption of both electricity and gas. Technical reviews of the use of each service will be necessary followed by

identification of any energy saving technology. Once a route to saving has been identified a full technical and financial evaluation can be made.

Energy is used in the church for space heating (mainly gas), cooking (gas) and lighting (electricity). Low carbon providers of electricity should be favoured.

The building lighting is continually upgraded in line with best practice and having regard to available finance. Sections of the building fabric have had insulation increased to eliminate cold areas and condensation and to reduce heat loss.

For confirmation of implementation of the policy in detail refer to Appendix C.

## **WATER**

Water is a precious commodity in the south east of England. Consumption is increasing due to population growth and increased use per head.

The church uses water for cooking and servicing toilets. Very seldom are the gardens watered. The use of drought resistant plants is now being implemented.

Wastage through leaks etc. are repaired rapidly by an efficient fault detection system and the 'Fix it' group who repair or organise repair of defects.

Low water consumption practices are promoted on the notice boards.

The use of grey water has been considered and a study is being prepared but not implemented at present due to the low consumption.

Avoidance of contaminants entering drains is achieved by review of and compliance with environmental regulations.

Water is not metered. The use of metering was rejected due to the very low usage.

For confirmation of implementation of the policy in detail refer to Appendix D.

## **WASTE**

The process of running a church and its peripheral activities will generate waste. This waste comprises:

- Containers for cleaning materials and other consumables
- Food waste
- Waste packaging from materials used to upgrade church facilities and systems.
- Waste from building refurbishments and repairs

The church has a purchasing policy. This is to be reviewed in accordance with this document.

Preparation of food for use on the premises is somewhat restricted since the Sunday Lunches operation closed down. However there is very careful control of quantities

of food purchased. This has both a financial and environmental advantage. Tight budgeting of events minimises waste.

For confirmation of implementation of the policy in detail refer to Appendix E

## **MATERIALS AND RESOURCES**

This issue tends to overlap with waste. Materials always have a significant cost and resources always have finite limits. Any project or initiative to upgrade a church facility is subject to budgetary control and needs authorisation from the Church Council.

Church Council approval of projects will not be forthcoming without the preparation of a detailed cost/value analysis. In preparing this analysis the likely environmental impact is considered. This includes energy and water use and potential saving, noise and other impact on neighbours and generation of unavoidable waste.

The church is looking for the best through life outcome. An upgrade that has a relatively short life and low cost will be compared with a higher cost but more durable option. In this comparison the energy consumption and generation of waste are considered.

On the provision of items such as hymn books, bibles and church magazines the use of technology such as in church video screens and on line magazines are preferred to 'hard copy'. This reduces the consumption of materials and generation of waste.

For confirmation of implementation of the policy in detail refer to Appendix F

## **TRAVEL AND LIVING (CHURCH AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBER)**

Travel is a matter for the individual. However the congregation and employees at St John's are reminded on a continuing basis of the carbon footprint of the various means of travel. The object of these reminders is not to coerce individuals but to allow individuals to make an informed choice.

The reminder process takes the form of discussions at group meetings, notices concerning local environmental group activities and some very direct and pointed presentations in services.

Car sharing is actively encouraged as is walking to services and meetings.

Members are encouraged to manage and upgrade their homes with regard to energy use.

St John's News runs articles on lifestyle from time to time.

## **SPREADING THE WORD TO THE CONGREGATION AND BEYOND**

The Harvest Festival service is an ideal opportunity to spread the word. In addition the environment is frequently an issue in services. This may be at home or in other parts of the world where poverty has become an increasingly serious issue due to climate change.

The outreach committee has recently been reconstituted. Whilst awaiting any new initiatives, active members of our church take action when opportunities arise. Signing petitions is an example. Working with churches together in Potters Bar is another.

## **Appendix A. ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS AND POLICY**

The St John's Church Council implements Conference instructions and sets major policy objectives. The Property and Finance Committee has several environmental issues (IE building upgrades, and control of income/expenditure) within its brief and implements the Church Council instructions. Members of this committee are actively working to develop St John's environmental vision.

In preparing this document (ST JOHN'S METHODIST CHURCH ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY OBJECTIVES AND CHURCH COMMITMENT) reference has been made to the following Documents:

METHODIST CHURCH REPORTS

Special Report

**Environmental Policy for the Methodist Church**



Welcome to 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

Action is now in hand to become a member of the ECO Church project.

## **Appendix B. COMMITMENT TO OBJECTIVE – AWARENESS**

There are three special observances and events on the Environment held at St John's Methodist Church each year to promote and raise awareness of our commitment to caring for Gods earth. Fair trade Fortnight held in the last week of February and first week of March, Environmental Sunday in June, and Racial Justice Sunday in September, which focuses on global unfair trading terms.

The following are addressed:

- Each of the above special environmental events promotes an awareness of environmental matters across the church.
- The church also works in partnership with Churches together in Potters Bar, promoting Fair Trade within the wider church.
- The church also raises awareness through signing petitions to the UK government and local authorities to address environmental issues and improve global trading terms.
- The church notice board, newsletter, and website are used to promote and raise awareness of environmental matters and concerns, locally and internationally.
- The church encourages members to car share, walk or cycle to church by launching an annual campaign for alternative ways of travelling to church.
- Use of Zoom meetings to reduce travel in the Circuit and wider.

Appendices C to F set down how improvements in specific objectives, such as energy use, are monitored and recorded

## **Appendix C. COMMITMENT TO OBJECTIVE – ENERGY USE**

The following documents record the state of church energy use:

- Use of low carbon electricity. Costs are being investigated prior to presenting to the Church Council for approval.
- A continuous record of energy consumption is maintained to determine trends and identify any unexpected increases. Records of energy consumption are kept and trends monitored.
- Continuous maintenance of the building fabric and equipment ensures maintained efficiency. Both fabric and equipment are upgraded when specific improvements are identified.
- LED lighting is being fitted throughout the buildings as finance becomes available
- Roof insulation has been added in the church vestibule and areas of flat roof in the surrounding buildings.
- A study was instigated to replace the current three main church boilers with upgraded units. This was rejected due to insufficient cost/benefit.
- Plans are in hand to replace the remaining single glazed windows in the church and church hall.

- Audits are carried out from time to time to ensure compliance with the policy and identify potential upgrades.

Records of compliance are energy bill summaries, audit reports, property and finance committee minutes and 'St John's Environmental initiatives' mentioned below.

## **Appendix D. COMMITMENT TO OBJECTIVE – WATER USE**

- Water efficiency is promoted in the church via the notice board and newsletters. Records of these are maintained.
- Leaks are repaired promptly and recorded in the Property and Finance Committee minutes.
- Annual up-date on our responsibility to avoid pollutants entering the drainage system is achieved by consulting the environmental agency on such matters and making reference to the churches annual Environmental Legislation update report.

## **Appendix E. COMMITMENT TO OBJECTIVE – WASTE**

- Implementation of a purchasing policy that minimises waste generation.
- The accounts record the practice of purchasing cleaning materials and consumables from sources with minimum packaging.
- When replacement or upgrade building services components are purchased the level of packaging containing the materials is considered as well as price.
- Building and infrastructure upgrades are considered for cost/value and waste generation levels. Records of these decisions are held in the Property and Finance Committee minutes.
- Purchase of food is carefully controlled so that food waste is minimised. The event budget records the careful control of quantity.

## **Appendix F. COMMITMENT TO OBJECTIVE – MATERIALS AND RESOURCES**

Records of projects considered and authorised are kept. These records show how waste generation was taken into account. Refer to Church Council minutes and Property and Finance committee minutes and reports appended to each. A good example is the cost/value study before the car park upgrade.

In addition a record of 'St John's Environmental initiatives' is maintained to record the history of the Church's work.