**YORK METHODIST CIRCUIT ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Review May 2024 DRAFT

**The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it – you have founded them. Psalm 89:11**

**BACKGROUND & CONTEXT**

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God’s love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

Caring for creation is one of the ways we as churches, can share God’s love with others, challenge injustice and help people in our own communities and beyond.

The Methodist Church, in recognition of the injustice of climate change and urgency of the need for action, published the third edition of ‘Hope in God’s Future’ in 2020. This helps individuals and local churches to understand the position of the Church on climate change, become aware of a vital connection between climate change and the Christian faith, transform lifestyles through studying, praying and acting on the issues, and to inspire others in the community to live in harmony with the whole of creation.

The Methodist Church has set an aspirational target of becoming a net zero carbon emissions church by 2030. Many districts, circuits and churches have already begun to work towards net zero goals, an Eco Church award, or other aims in caring for creation. Action for Hope – path to net zero was approved by Methodist Council in 2021 with focus on consistent use of Assets, Wisdom and Lifestyles.

In 2020 Yorkshire North and East Methodist District commissioned a study by the specialist consultancy Project Rome to identify a strategy for setting an achievable Net Zero target for the District. In response to the study’s findings, the District has appointed a Net Zero Officer, set up the Net Zero Programme Board and has registered to become an Eco District.

York Methodist Circuit has set up an ‘Eco Task Force’ to advise, encourage, equip, inform and co-ordinate all the work that is being done around our Circuit as we work towards Eco Circuit status and care of creation. This is through our worship, use of buildings and land, global engagement and lifestyles.

**PRINCIPLES**

Rather than having environmental issues as a separate agenda item for the Circuit and its Churches, this policy seeks to encourage all churches to embed care for God’s creation in all aspects of decision making. It is a way of living well and considerately with all those we are connected with; whether our local communities, global neighbours or the natural world. It is the recognition that all of our actions have an impact on those around us. This policy seeks to encourage us to make sure our impact is ‘net zero’, but also challenges us to be transformative in our communities.

**POLICY**

The York Methodist Circuit policy is to:

* Ensure our Methodist response to the climate crisis is at the heart of our worship, discipleship and theological reflection.
* Use our assets including buildings, land and other resources to reflect and prioritise our care for all God’s creation and future generations
* Let the Methodist Way of Life and call for climate justice inform change in our corporate and individual lifestyles

Moving towards a sustainable future is not about being perfect, it's about taking steps in the right direction.

**THE PLAN - POLICY INTO PRACTICE, what we are committing to**

York Methodist Circuit goals are:

* 1. 30% of churches will be registered as Eco Churches by 2025 and 60% by 2027
  2. Implement training for local preachers and worship leaders to inspire and assist them address environmental concerns in worship either through one off or regular inputs to worship
  3. Encourage churches to hold an annual Earth Sunday/ Climate Sunday/ Churches Count on Nature service and help signpost them to imaginative worship resources.
  4. Improve the insulation at Circuit office hub following an energy audit
  5. Continue to review reduce/reuse/recycle practice at hub and use ethically sourced cleaning products
  6. Encourage the sharing of resources Circuit wide through use of hub storage and Circuit networks
  7. Where resources are no longer needed within the Circuit, seek ways for reuse across the District or Freecycle
  8. Continue to monitor ethical considerations for managing our finances
  9. Instruct Energy Performance Certificates/ Energy Audits as well as Quinquennials (churches, manses and other properties) and consider recommendations for manses and other Circuit properties where appropriate and encourage churches to make improvements through assistance with grant fund writing and MTM grants where mission criteria are met
  10. Encourage every Church Council to include the consideration of the cost to the environment and impact on our global neighbours for all decisions. Use the Annual Returns and facilitate peer to peer mentoring to assist.
  11. Encourage churches to also think beyond ‘Net Zero’; where can they have a positive impact in their environment
  12. Encourage all churches to share what environmental steps they and their community partners are taking in their local Church and Circuit magazine, website and social media
  13. Urge churches to only consider ‘Carbon Offsetting’ with informed caution because of the complexity of impact and seek advice from District’s Net Zero Programme Board or chose a project with Climate Stewards’ seal of approval.
  14. Regularly receive reports from the Eco Task Group to the Circuit Leadership Team and Circuit Council to monitor progress and provide information to inform decision making.
  15. Encourage travel for Circuit events that facilitates public transport/bike/walking or car-pooling where possible and make use of Zoom where appropriate to save on environmental costs
  16. Offer plant based food products as default with animal sources as an option at Circuit events

How we will support one another to do this:

* + Pray
  + Draw on other organisations such as Operation Noah, Methodist Action for Hope, District Net Zero Officer, District Grant Enabler and resources and A Rocha.
  + Include resources for churches and individuals on the Circuit website and in newsletters to share knowledge, offer support and encourage the change we are committed to.