DIOCESAN SYNOD

Title: DIOCESAN ENVIRONMENT GROUP AND REDBRIDGE DEANERY SYNOD MOTION

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The Five Marks of Mission

As Anglicans, we’ve been called to follow the five marks of mission. All are deeply relevant to environmental action:

1. To proclaim the good news of the kingdom.
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

We have tended to ignore the 5th BUT the 5th cannot be separated from the other four.

- There is good news in the message of the Bible and the message of the gospel for the whole of creation.
- We must teach people of God’s passion for the whole of creation and our responsibility as his people.
- We need to see the desperate plight of the poorest and the marginalised as they are impacted the most by climate change and all of us across the Diocese will be severely affected unless urgent action is taken in the next decade.
- We need to recognise that climate change contributes to civil unrest and to migration. We need to be passionate about seeking justice and peace.

Diocese of Chelmsford has a history of engagement in the 5th Mark of Mission. These include decisions made previously by our Diocesan Synod.

In March 2003 Diocesan Synod passed a resolution

“ This synod requests Bishops Council in consultation with deaneries and parishes to develop an environmental policy for the Diocese which will reflect the Fifth Mark of Mission and to report back to synod before the end of 2004”.

In November 2004 The Diocesan Synod resolved

“that this synod commends the attached paper ‘Sustain and renew the life of the earth for widespread use throughout the Diocese....”

In June 2010 Diocesan Synod passed a Resolution on the Environment

“It is possible... to live differently.

In 2015 The green collar campaign led by the Diocesan Environment Group gained support both through synod and also across the diocese by raising awareness and enabling
prayer throughout the year. The wearing of the green collar was noted and approved by other dioceses with bishops and clergy across the country adopting wearing the green collar. This campaign focused on the meeting of world leaders in Paris in November/December 2015.

However, whilst there are examples of good practice across the diocese progress has been slow. In 2017 we carried out an audit to find out how many parishes had become Eco Church and how many parishes were Fairtrade. Eco-Church is an award scheme run by the international environmental charity A Rocha, and A Rocha is part of the UK Climate Coalition (working with CAFOD, Christian Aid, Tear fund, the National Trust, RSPB, and other agencies and denominations). The Audit was incomplete and results very poor. By 26 March 2019 we had only 20 Churches registered as Eco-church. The Eco-church scheme provides a vehicle by which a parish may engage in discussion and explore their thinking and the way in which they use and care for their buildings and their land. The A Rocha UK and Eco church website provides a range of resources to enable discussion, reflection and an audit followed by advice on actions that are needed both in church life as well as personal lifestyle.

https://arocha.org.uk/

https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/

During 2019 interest was shown through debates and invitations for people to speak at deanery synods on the environmental crises. Alongside the motion from the Diocesan Environmental Group there is a motion from Redbridge Deanery. This is important as it demonstrates that this is not just led from the top down but there is a growing movement at parish and deanery level and reflects a growing desire to develop an awareness and action across our parishes and deaneries.

The DEG commends Redbridge Deanery for debating and then bringing the following motion to Diocesan Synod.

**Redbridge Deanery Synod**

This synod

1. Encourage each Parochial Church Council in the Diocese of Chelmsford to engage with the A Rocha Eco Church scheme, aiming for at least a bronze award

2. Invite the Bishop of Chelmsford to register Chelmsford’s Diocese intent to become an eco diocese

3. Commission the Diocesan Environmental Group to coordinate progress towards Eco Diocese status.

Information on what is expected of an Eco-Diocese can be found here - https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/denominational-awards/eco-diocese/
2019 also saw discussions at Bishop’s Staff and the letter from Bishop Stephen in September as well as the involvement of clergy and lay people from across the diocese in Christian Climate Action (the Christian wing of Extinction Rebellion) as well as involvement in local school strikes.

This renewed interest has gained momentum in 2020 with commitment from parishes across the diocese and with our Cathedral set to gain silver eco church status and other parishes working towards this currently. Following on from Bishop Stephen’s letter in September we are seeing a commitment to creation care and eco church in each episcopal area. On 18th January we held our first event in the Barking episcopal area at Wanstead which saw some 86 people attend and engage with different themes of creation care, the global south and eco church. During Lent a series will run with input from our bishops thinking about our response as Christians to the environmental and climate crises which runs alongside the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent book by Ruth Valerio “Saying yes to life” and the Church of England’s Lent App and resources #LiVELENT.

**Motion Passed at General Synod February 2020**

General Synod debated and then passed the following motion.

*That this Synod, recognising that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God’s creation, and a fundamental injustice, and following the call of the Anglican Communion in ACC Resolutions A17.05 and A17.06;*

(a) call upon all parts of the Church of England, including parishes, BMOs [Bishop Mission Orders], education institutions, dioceses, cathedrals, and the NCIs [National Church Institutions], 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;

(b) request reports on progress from the Environment Working Group and the NCIs every three years beginning in 2022 and;

(c) call on each Diocesan Synod, and Cathedral Chapter, to address progress toward net zero emissions every three years.

This is a huge but necessary challenge which will require a fundamental change to the way we do church.

**Motion**

1. To invite Synod to take note of the motion passed by General Synod.

2. To ask the Diocesan Environmental Group to present to the next Bishops Council on 12th May 2020 a draft plan which seeks to scope the task and possible strategy for consultation; Bishops Council to then initiate a process of consultations across the diocese. The consultation to take place between May and 31st July 2020 The DEG then to draw up an amended plan to present to Bishops Council on 5th November 2020 and then to be presented for adoption by Diocesan Synod on 21st November 2020.