

## Durham and Deerness Valley Methodist Circuit

### Environmental Policy

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

What are we called to do? 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. In 2019 the Methodist Conference recognised that we are facing a climate emergency.

God our creator, you have made us one with this earth to tend it and to bring forth fruit. May we so respect and cherish all that has life from you, that we may share in the labour of all creation to give birth to your hidden glory, through Jesus Christ. Amen

*Janet Morley: All Desires Known (SPCK 1992).*

Durham and Deerness Valley 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

As well as 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.

#### **Background:**

In September 2021 the Durham and Deerness Valley Circuit declared a climate emergency and acknowledged that we face an existential threat without precedent, and that this requires actions without precedent. We believe it is incumbent on us all to work together to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises in all areas of our church's life.

The Circuit Leadership Team, alongside the Circuit Meeting, seeks to encourage, enable and equip ministers, worship leaders and preachers, church leaders and all church members to take action in response. A Circuit Eco Group, the *Code Red Response Team* was established in August 2021 initiated the climate emergency declaration by the circuit, and by each of the churches within the circuit.

#### **Durham and Deerness Valley Methodist Circuit commits to:**

- ❖ recognising that as Christians we are responsible for the care of God's earth, embedding sustainability in all of our activities and reflecting on the environmental consequences of all our decision-making.
- ❖ making care for and restoration of the environment central to our worship and teaching
- ❖ reducing the impact of our buildings and our use on the environment

- ❖ using any land around our buildings in ways which benefit the environment and the community
- ❖ engaging with local and global organisations in seeking a fairer, more environmentally friendly world, and engaging with the political process at all levels to generate political action to protect and restore the planet
- ❖ encouraging lifestyles both personally and as church members which reflect these aims.

### **What we have achieved so far**

- ✓ 80% of churches registered as ECO Churches.
- ✓ 80% of churches achieved ECO Church Bronze award
- ✓ Created a Circuit ECO team, comprising at least one representative from each church to look at practical eco steps, grants available etc
- ✓ hold a Climate Sunday service each year
- ✓ ensured environmental issues regularly feature in the monthly *The Link* magazine
- ✓ held local and circuit-wide coffee mornings to share information and encourage both practical action and lifestyle changes for individuals
- ✓ set monthly personal challenges

### **In practical terms we commit to the following action:**

DDVC Aims for the next year (2023 - 24):

- 100% of churches registered as ECO Churches.
- 100% of churches achieved ECO Church Bronze award
- 80% of churches working towards ECO Church Silver award with an expectation of achievement before September 2025.
- Have a Circuit Steward / Circuit Leadership Team member responsible for Circuit environmental issues to work in partnership with the Code Red Response Team supporting the churches' eco work and to advocate for environmental issues across the circuit.
- 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.
- Encourage churches to hold an annual ECO Sunday and help signpost them to imaginative worship resources
- Establish an annual Circuit ECO Sunday and hold a Climate Sunday service
- Every Church Council to include ECO updates as an agenda item on every Church Council with a focus on encouragement and action
- Each Church to debate divestment from fossil fuels in addition to a Circuit debate on divestment, including a commitment to use ethical / eco friendly banks.
- Encourage all churches to share what environmental steps they are taking in Church and Circuit magazines/websites and social media. How we will support one another to do this:
  - Pray
  - Support will be given to the Circuit Environmental Group comprising a representative from each church.
  - Draw on other organisations such as Operation Noah, Methodist Zero Carbon Group, District resources and A Rocha.
  - Set up a circuit social media group to share questions and offer support.

We commit to undertaking these practical steps by September 2024. This policy will be reviewed annually.

SIGNATURES, DATE ETC - TO BE PRESENTED TO CLT TUESDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023 AND TO CIRCUIT MEETING THURSDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023