

5. FACING THE FUTURE

Questions for the Church

The future has always been uncertain. Perhaps there have been times when people could carry on with life assuming things would continue much as they have been before. Certainly people have done that, whether it was justified or not. But we cannot do that. The ecological crisis presents us with a difficult and uncertain future. It raises serious questions for us as a church. It also presents us with opportunities.

1. Engaging and Working with Others

1. Do we have a particular Christian contribution to make in working with other people in our communities and in wider organisations which are concerned to care for the life of this planet?
2. What are the implications of the Church's responsibility to the parish and not just to its congregations? (i.e. residents, incomers, animals, the land, etc.)
3. How do we help people realise that acting in environmentally friendly ways is a Christian responsibility? How do we have the courage to act in that way even when it is counter-cultural?
4. What is needed in order to communicate the gospel of hope in God in ways that are neither simplistic nor blindly optimistic?
5. Are we able to contribute as a church to the major local and national debates about issues such as electricity generation, transport, immigration, food production and world development?

2. Worship and Prayer

1. How do we help people deal with corporate grief for a lost future and develop new attitudes and relationships?
2. How do we develop liturgies for adults, children and young people which adequately reflect what we believe about creation, sin, salvation and hope?
3. Are we prepared to deal with a general increase in religiosity stimulated by crisis? And

to do so in ways which have ecological and theological integrity?

4. To what extent are our churches places where simplicity and respect for the integrity of creation are encouraged? Is there more that can be done?
5. At a time when there is an increase in spirituality often stimulated by a concern for the life of the planet can we respond in ways that help people to appreciate the world as God's creation and to grow in faith?

3. Discipleship

1. How do we encourage greater interdisciplinary discussion within the local church? (Science, art, theology, etc.)
2. How can we help church members be informed about and work with Christian and secular environmental networks?
3. What is needed in order to strengthen the church's capability in responding to local crises?
4. What do we need to do to prepare to respond to national crises which are likely to be characterised by scapegoating, boundary protection, and political extremism? How can we help shape the political response to these prospective crises?
5. Our School of Formation is developing a theology and training network. What more does it need to do to help local churches respond to these issues?

4. Resources

1. How do our churches, our cathedral and the diocesan organisation need to adjust their ways of operating in order to become more environmentally friendly?
2. Is there more that we can do to present visitors to our churches with a theology that is relevant to the ecological crisis we face?

3. How does the church in this diocese need to be organised differently in order to carry out its mission in this rapidly changing world? (If the price of fuel quadrupled would we do things differently?)
4. In the light of what is happening in our world and the kind of future we face do we have the right priorities in our handling of money and our use of church buildings and other resources.
5. How can we use our church buildings, churchyards, halls and schools in local efforts to live in a more environmentally friendly way?

We are concerned with changing lives, changing churches and changing communities for a changing world. Our response to the significant changes that are happening in our world needs to be in our individual lives, our churches and our communities. It is not simply one or another but all of them together.

These are some of the questions the Environment Working Party has tried to address in its consultations. They are not questions that can be answered once and for all. They lie behind some of the thinking and writing in this policy document but they need to be considered further in our parishes, Local Ministry Groups, synods and diocesan committees. Changing lives... in a changing world is a process, not a solution.



BUT MRS POTTS YOUR ENERGY QUOTA WONT STRETCH TO A NEW FRIDGE

A Prayer

Father, Lord of creation,
you have created the universe by your eternal Word,
and have blessed humankind
in making us stewards of the earth.
We pray for your world,
that we may share and conserve its resources,
and live in reverence for the creation
and in harmony with one another.

You have given the human race a rich land,
a land of streams and springs,
wheat and barley,
vines and oil and honey.
We have made by sin a world
of suffering and sorrow.
We pray for those who bear
the weight of affliction,
that they may come to share
the life of wholeness and plenty.

In Christ you call us to a new way of life,
loving our neighbours before ourselves.
Help us to treat with care and respect
the world as it is
as we live in hope and anticipation
of the world as it will be
when your kingdom comes
and your will is done.

We thank you for those,
living and departed,
who have shown a true respect for your creation.
Help us to follow in their footsteps,
until with them we see you face to face,
where all is made new in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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