

## Questions for the Church

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today and the consequent 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. The following set of questions challenges us in our churches and our communities to consider what it means at this time of ecological crisis to fulfil our role as stewards of God's creation.

### 1 Engaging and working with others

- 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, inconvenient or financially costly?
- 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?
- What are the implications of the Church's responsibility to the parish and not just to its congregations? (ie residents, incomers, animals, the land)
- What is needed in order to communicate the gospel of hope in God in ways that are neither simplistic nor blindly optimistic?
- 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

- How do we help people deal with corporate grief for a lost future and develop new attitudes and relationships?
- How do we develop liturgies for adults, children and young people which adequately reflect what we believe about creation, sin, salvation and hope?
- 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?
- 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?
- Can we respond to people's concern for the life of the planet by helping people to appreciate the world as God's creation and helping them to grow in faith?

### 3 Discipleship

- How do we help people to reflect theologically upon what it means to be made in God's image and recreated by his Spirit through his Son particularly in relation to our place in the created order and our future hope of inhabiting a new heaven and a new earth? What does scripture have to say about our responsibility as stewards of God's creation?
- What does the life of a disciple who endeavours to be Christ-like in all aspects of their life look like in matters of global and environmental concern?
- How do we encourage greater interdisciplinary discussion within the local church? (Science, art, theology etc)

- How can we help church members be informed about and work with Christian and secular environmental networks?
- What is needed in order to strengthen the church's capability to respond to local crises?
- How should we 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?

#### **4 Resources**

- How do our churches and our diocesan organisation need to adjust their ways of operating in order to become more environmentally friendly?
- 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?
- How does the church in this diocese need to be organised differently in order to carry out its mission in this rapidly changing world?
- 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?
- How can we use our church buildings, churchyards, halls and schools in local efforts to live in a more environmentally friendly way?