

Request for Approval of an Environmental Strategy for Romford Baptist Church

The Green Working Group has prepared the attached draft environmental strategy for Romford Baptist Church.

It is recommended that the Leadership Meeting agree to the following:

To accept the Environmental Strategy set out in this paper and recommend it to the Church Meeting, including the following:

1. Include teaching on creation, responsibility for the natural world, and the environment as a whole, in sermons, children's and youth and other group teaching programmes.
2. Lead prayer for important environmental events, eg Climate Change Convention events.
3. Include worship songs and other worship material that address these themes
4. Commit to making buildings as energy efficient as possible within ten years.
5. Commission a sustainability/energy assessment of the RBC premises with clear recommendations for improvement actions.
6. Use the above report to establish a buildings/premises strategy for the Leadership/Church Meeting to agree at a future date. (The quinquennial buildings review in summer 2024 would be a good opportunity for this.)
7. Take opportunities for energy efficiency improvements where works to the premises are required in the short-term/prior to any building strategy being agreed. This should include fitting appropriate insulation when replacing the hall roof.
8. Develop a Church Travel Plan and consider improving cycle parking facilities.
9. Promote environmental responsibility in our lifestyles and our approach to consumption, as an integral element of our discipleship.
10. Encourage writing to councillors and MPs as part of environmental campaigns.

The strategy sets out actions (from paragraph 26 onwards) mostly for a first phase, to last 3 years. However, the overall strategy envisages a further two phases, to be planned in detail nearer the time, and in the light of changing circumstances. Thus the strategy envisages a total of three phases, over nine or ten years. This long timeframe should allow us to achieve some of the more expensive objectives.

It is hoped that by implementing this strategy, the Church will be able to qualify for Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards under the Eco Church Scheme, perhaps one for each phase of the strategy. (See Annex 4)

| Aims: | Phase 1 | | Phase 2 (Indicative) | | Phase 3 (Indicative) |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| Teaching and Worship | Teaching, praise and prayer on environmentally relevant themes, including children and youth | | Continue and consolidate on Phase 1 | | Continue and consolidate on Phase 2 |
| Church Buildings | Assess ventilation and insulation, agree policies of taking opportunities to instal insulation, and adhering to BREEAM standards in all building projects. Insulate hall roof. | | Continue to implement Phase 1, making progress esp. on insulation and replacement of boilers with highly energy efficient ones | | Complete agenda, achieve full insulation of all church buildings |
| Church Land | Consider managing church land to benefit nature | | Continue to implement any plans made in Phase 1 | | Continue to implement any plans made in Phase 2 |
| Community and Global Engagement | Keep in touch with Havering Green Forum, pray for environmental issues esp. major international conferences, write to MPs, inform members of environmental problems affecting Christians overseas | | Continue and consolidate on Phase 1 | | Continue and consolidate on Phase 2 |
| Personal Lifestyle | Promote simple lifestyle as an integral part of discipleship, encourage members to insulate homes, avoid food waste, reduce car use. Regular tips on green living in Grapevine | | Continue and consolidate on Phase 1 | | Continue and consolidate on Phase 2+A4B10A1:F10A2:F10A1:F10B10A1:F10 |

Structure of Strategy

Romford Baptist Church Environmental Strategy, 2023-33

Introduction:

1. Romford Baptist Church is seeking to develop its response to the global environmental emergency, including the global heating crisis and the species extinction crisis.
2. It is now clearly recognised that the way in which we live our lives and consume energy and goods is unsustainable and damaging to God's world/creation and that this is already resulting in severe effects on many of communities around the world that are least able to adapt to these changes. It is predicted that these consequences will become significantly more severe over time if action is not taken counteract this.
3. This paper proposes a strategy for the next three years which would enable the church to carry out its existing mission in a more sustainable way and play its part in the efforts of the wider community to limit future climate change and adapt to the effects of climate change that are already taking place. It is envisaged that two further three- or four-year phases of the strategy would take place, thus setting a ten year time horizon for the most ambitious plans. **At this stage, approval to: a) implement the first phase, and b) adopt an ambition to complete the second and third in due course, is being sought.**

Rationale:

4. The 'environment' is simply a way of saying 'God's creation', but from a particular angle, seeing it as a complex system of interacting parts.
 - a. Romford Baptist Church believes that all things were created by God (Genesis 1:1), through Jesus (John 1:3). All things are from and for Jesus, and in Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:16-17). Through the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross, God is reconciling 'all things' to Himself (Colossians 1:20), including the environment.
5. Christian concern for the environment has at least four motivations: valuing God's creation because it is His; seeing something of God's glory in His creation (Isaiah 6:3); recognising that God's purpose of redemption includes all of His creation, and seeking to protect people around the world from the deadly threats that are generated by environmental problems, eg drought, famine, floods, wildfires etc. (See also Annex 1.)
6. There is a need for the Christian church to respond in at least four ways:
 - a. Fostering a greater awareness of Biblical teaching relevant to God's creation, through teaching and worship
 - b. Putting our own house in order: using church buildings and other resources in ways that reduce our impact on the environment – and hopefully save money as well
 - c. Corporately taking action to promote care of creation, whether through local action, influencing local politicians, or giving to creation care work overseas.
 - d. Adopting simpler individual lifestyles, which have less harmful effects on God's creation, as part of our discipleship.

7. Analysis by the council shows that 80 per cent of Havering's carbon emissions come from transport and people's homes. The largest elements in most households' carbon footprint are:
 - a. Heating (of water and space) – which is related to levels of insulation
 - b. Food, particularly
 - a) food waste
 - b) too much meat eating (meat, especially beef, has a disproportionately high carbon footprint)
 - c. Transport:
 - a) driving cars with no passengers
 - b) flying
8. It is recognised that these issues, which are built into the structure of our society and economy, cannot all easily be addressed at one time and in some cases the action will only be possible in the light of specific opportunities (for example, when relevant building refurbishment or replacement is undertaken). It is also important that the actions in this strategy do not detract from the Church's mission, rather they should be a part of the way we do the things we would do any way (for example, how we develop and manage our buildings, or how we organise our services and weekday activities and a travel to and from these).

Proposed Strategy themes and approaches

Teaching and Worship

9. In order to make progress with an environmental strategy there will be a need for relevant Bible teaching, focusing on creation and its fundamental goodness, the spiritual and mental benefits of experiencing the natural world, and the renewal of creation in the age to come. Worship songs which express some of these ideas will help to consolidate them in people's minds.

Church Buildings

10. Romford Baptist Church buildings and premises present a significant opportunity for reducing our current level of carbon emissions as a church and to undertake use and activities within the buildings/premises in a more sustainable way.
11. It is recognised that what make buildings more energy efficient and generally more sustainable is a complex and specialised area. Addressing this issue would significantly aid reduction in our carbon footprint and reduce the cost of running the premises in the long term. However, some of the more significant opportunities to do so may only occur when there is a need to undertake specific works such as heating system replacement or refurbishment works. Works requiring building control approval or planning permission will also come with increasingly tough environmental standards and requirements, including for example energy efficiency.
12. To help understand the realistic options, opportunities and, where possible, the likely costs, it is recommended that a specialist report is commissioned to inform a specific strategy for adaptation of and investment in the church premises. This would help to ensure that there is a coherent approach to works to the premises and that opportunities to reduce energy use and carbon footprint are not missed.

13. Notwithstanding the above, in the event that a short-term action such as a roof replacement were necessary, opportunities to integrate improvements such as inclusion of insulation in a new roof should be taken.
14. Further areas to address include using biodegradable paper cups, recycled paper and toilet paper and turning off lights when not need.

Community and Global Engagement

15. As citizens of Great Britain we have the right to send letters and e-mails to our MPs and councillors. (We can also sign petitions, but they are less influential.) As such we are able to lobby politicians about our concerns. If we care about the future of our planet, and the world our children will inherit from us, we ought to try to make our voices heard in this way. We should also keep in touch with the efforts of Havering Council, especially its Climate Change Action Plan, with a view to identifying efforts which we should support. The Council consider that with their constrained budget they will welcome community engagement in climate change reduction and adaptation. Toward this end they have joined with the Havering Green Hub to form the Havering Green Forum, which RBC have been invited to attend.
16. There is still a tendency to think of climate change as something that will affect us in future. Drawing attention in worship and prayer to Christian people around the world suffering from the effects of climate change already, would help to show the urgency of the issue. For example, the Lynches could give us information about floods in Bangladesh and the effects on local Christians.
17. There are many opportunities which RBC should explore around serving environmentally-friendly food, ('locally-grown', 'ethically sourced' and/or 'vegetarian') in the Meeting Place, and at events in the Willow Hall. A number of these are already our regular practice.

Personal Lifestyle

18. Public and corporate action on creation care will lack integrity and credibility if Christians do not take action to reduce their own personal impact on the earth. Church members should be encouraged to assess their carbon footprint and to consider ways in which they might reduce it. Owner occupiers should consider how they might improve their insulation and double-glazing. Council tenants should be encouraged to accept any offer by the council to install insulation.
19. How we travel to and from the premises is also an important factor in our over environmental impact as a Church. We have a town centre location with good public transport links and so. The use of private cars is one of our most environmentally damaging aspects to our use of the premises both in terms of fuel use (carbon emissions) and pollution. It may not be desirable to restrict access to parking on the premises but there are actions that can be taken to encourage increased use of walking, cycling and use of public transport. Development of a Church Travel Plan to encourage this by providing information and education might be a positive action in this area. An increase and improvement in cycle parking facilities on-site might also be a relatively straight forward and low-cost option.
20. Other measures such as reducing consumption of meat and reducing food waste, should be encouraged.
21. The Havering Waste Team could give a talk (at an evening meeting?) on what to re-cycle, as there is considerable confusion on this point.

25. In order to present this in a positive way, the spiritual discipline of simplicity should be promoted (cf Richard Foster, 'Freedom of Simplicity'). The leadership might consider the Evangelical Declaration on Simple lifestyle (1980) at Annex 2. Simplicity not only reduces environmentally harmful consumption, it rejects the service/idolatry of Mammon (Mathew 6:24) and releases resources for mission.

(See also Annexes 2 and 3.)

Eco Church

26. The evangelical organisation A Rocha runs a scheme 'Eco Church' to help and recognise churches that wish to address the urgent environmental problems of our time. It is hoped that in implementing our strategy we will qualify over time for their bronze, silver and then gold awards, which would entitle us to receive and display a plaque, which would give us a tangible 'prize' to aim for.

27. In the light of these considerations, the Green Working Group propose the following strategy:

Purpose:

To inspire Romford Baptist Church (RBC) to a greater appreciation of God's glory in His creation, and to a greater commitment to care for it, both individually and corporately.

-

Aims:

- A. The leadership to inspire thought, awareness and action to care for God's earth, through teaching, prayer and worship songs.
- B. RBC to use its buildings and land in ways that have a progressively less destructive impact on God's creation. This includes, but is not restricted to, its carbon footprint.
- C. RBC corporately to support campaigns, locally, nationally and internationally, to reduce the destruction of the environment, and to restore it to health. The leadership should consider how RBC might take action in line with the fifth 'Mark of Mission' – '*To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth*'
- D. RBC members to move to ways of living (eg energy-saving insulation in the home) which have steadily less negative impact on God's creation, as an integral part of their discipleship..

Actions:

RBC will seek to achieve the aims above, as set out in the actions below:

A. Worship and Teaching

1. Celebrate special Sundays relating to caring for God's earth (eg Creation Time, Environment Sunday, etc)
2. Use hymns and songs in our services that enable us to celebrate God's creation, at least quarterly
3. Pray for environmental issues regularly
4. Preach on God's creation, including caring for it, at least annually
5. Caring for god's earth to be featured as a teaching theme in our youth work at least annually
6. Ditto in our children's work
7. Ditto in our small group studies
8. Church communications (eg Grapevine, social media, etc) should include items relating to caring for God's creation at least annually

B1. Buildings

1. Swich to electricity from renewable resources, or green tariffs (Done?)
2. Instal new boilers rated 'A' or above for energy efficiency, or possibly heat pumps, when they are due for replacement
3. Insulate all walls and ceilings of church buildings and manses
4. Instal low energy bulbs in all church buildings and manses
5. Create a policy to limit the amount of energy consumed by flood-lighting and security lighting
6. Instal rainwater collection and make use of 'grey water' in an appropriate way
7. Ensure all toilets have dual flush buttons or other water-saving devices (Done?)
8. Provide re-cycled toilet paper in church toilets
9. Use environmentally benign cleaning products
10. Use only biodegradable disposable cups, plates, cutlery
11. Reduce paper usage (eg double-sided printing)
12. Use recycled paper
13. Establish a policy that any building/refurbishment project should adhere to the BREEEAM 'Very Good' standard. (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method)
14. Provide cycle racks
15. Consider the possibility of generating renewable energy on church premises (eg solar panels)
16. Include an assessment of heating and ventilation in the buildings at the next five-yearly building survey.
17. Establish a policy that whenever renovation work is done on the buildings, opportunities will be taken to improve insulation, in the light of the heating assessment at 16.
18. Agree an ambition that all church buildings will be fully insulated by the end of 2033.

19. Make an assessment of church users' habits (eg leaving lights on, wasting water) that have an environmental effect.

Already done:

Instal double-glazing in all church buildings
Meter the water supply to the church
Provide recycling facilities ('inside – primarily for use of church members'? – we recycle to Havering orange sacks)

B2. Land

1. Manage land for the encouragement of native wildlife
2. Provide bird boxes/bug hotels/hedgehog boxes
3. Provide bird tables and bird feeders
4. Grow plants on church land that benefit birds, bees, etc
5. Maintain an area for native wild flowers
6. Research and establish a mowing regime to conserve grassland and wildlife
7. Establish a policy to avoid the use of harmful chemicals
8. Create a management plan for the church land

Done:

Composting facilities on church land

C. Community and Global Engagement

1. Church engages with local MPs and council on environmental issues Use [Green Forum?](#)
2. Have local environmentalists speak at the church (eg Council Waste Team)
3. Participate in appropriate activities organised by Green Forum.
4. At least some members organise or participate in community clean up projects (eg litter picks)
5. Train users of church premises to minimise resource use – eg turning off lights
6. Speak about creation care at other churches (eg our lay preachers)
7. Participate in campaigns concerning global environmental initiatives and events (eg meetings of the UN Climate Change Convention and the UN Biodiversity Convention) – particularly by writing letters/e-mails to MPs
8. Keep members informed of the impact of Climate Change and environmental degradation on Christian people in other parts of the world (eg Bangladesh, through the Lynches)
9. Use Fairtrade ingredients in food at church events (Sometimes)

Done:

Organise events providing opportunity to get out into God's creation in the local area (well-being walks)

Twin all our toilets using TearFund's toilet twinning scheme (Already partly done)
Use Fairtrade or ethically sourced goods (Generally Yes)
Use organic ingredients in food at church events (Generally yes)
Offer a vegetarian option at church events involving food (Yes, always)
Take steps to reduce food waste. (Yes)

D. Personal Lifestyle

1. Encourage switch to low-meat diets
2. Encourage efforts to avoid food waste.
3. Encourage insulation and double-glazing in the home
4. Encourage a reduction in car use, including by promoting walking and cycling to church
5. Encourage members to reduce personal energy consumption
6. Encourage church folk to limit their waste by adhering to principles of 'reduce, re-use, recycle'
7. Host activities or events to facilitate recycling or re-use of goods
8. Operate communal Christmas and Easter card schemes
9. Promote personal use and consumption of Fairtrade and/or ethically-sourced goods
10. Encourage ethical investment of personal savings
11. Invest church funds ethically
12. Give practical lifestyle tips and advice on caring for God's earth included in Grapevine (or news sheet?)
13. Encourage church folk to undertake a personal lifestyle audit

Done:

Appoint a group to champion the cause of increased environmental sustainability of the church community (the Green Working Group.)

Financial Implications

The financial demands of the many actions vary greatly in size. The actions which are likely to be most expensive for the church are probably:

- Insulate all walls and ceilings of church buildings and manses
- Consider the possibility of generating renewable energy on church premises (eg solar panels) (NB the 'considering' might not cost anything, but installing generating equipment would)

Whilst this list of costs might be intimidating if we consider a short period of time such as t years or less, it should be reasonable over a ten year period. The actual costs involved might be affected by:

- Changes in the availability and generosity of (local or central) Government help
- Changes in prices (eg the very rapid fall in costs of solar energy since 2010)
- Unforeseen new green technologies becoming available

Installation of insulation should lead to lower energy costs in the long term. Possibly this could be funded from reserves as a capital investment that would benefit the church financially in the long term.

Annex 1

Extract from the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation's Cape Town Commitment (2010):

7. We love God's world

We share God's passion for his world, loving all that God has made, rejoicing in God's providence and justice throughout his creation, proclaiming the good news to all creation and all nations, and longing for the day when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

A) We love the world of God's creation. This love is not mere sentimental affection for nature (which the Bible nowhere commands), still less is it pantheistic worship of nature (which the Bible expressly forbids). Rather it is the logical outworking of our love for God by caring for what belongs to him. 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.' The earth is the property of the God we claim to love and obey. We care for the earth, most simply, because it belongs to the one whom we call Lord.

The earth is created, sustained and redeemed by Christ. We cannot claim to love God while abusing what belongs to Christ by right of creation, redemption and inheritance. We care for the earth and responsibly use its abundant resources, not according to the rationale of the secular world, but for the Lord's sake. If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says 'Jesus is Lord' is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth, since Christ's Lordship is over all creation. **Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ.**

Such love for God's creation demands that we repent of our part in the destruction, waste and pollution of the earth's resources and our collusion in the toxic idolatry of consumerism. Instead, we commit ourselves to urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility. We support Christians whose particular missional calling is to environmental advocacy and action, as well as those committed to godly fulfilment of the mandate to provide for human welfare and needs by exercising responsible dominion and stewardship. The Bible declares God's redemptive purpose for creation itself. Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out, the biblical truth that **the gospel is God's good news**, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, **for individual persons, and for society, and for creation**. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God's people.

Annex 2

Lausanne Occasional Paper: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle 1980
(convened by John Stott and Ron Sider):

<https://lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-20>

Annex 3

This webpage is a good short guide to simpler individual/family lifestyles:

<https://www.climatestewards.org/resources/lower-carbon-living/>

Annex 4

The website of the Eco Church scheme:

[How Eco Church Works - Eco Church \(arocha.org.uk\)](http://arocha.org.uk)