

## Climate Change Resolution Conference of the British Methodist Church, 2007

Climate change is increasingly dominating the national and international agenda. It is important for the churches to engage in the crucial issues raised from their faith perspective. The Methodist Church's Environmental Policy adopted by the Conference in 2000 states that:-

*The Biblical creation stories give human beings privilege and responsibility in relation to the earth and every living creature. We are called to be partners with the rest of creation and co-partners in the ongoing creative and renewing activity of God. Such partnership goes wrong when human beings act as if the whole earth were simply for their present benefit.*

Scientists are warning of an impending 'tipping point', a point of no return after which the level of carbon in the atmosphere will cause an irreversible and accelerating change. Low-lying countries such as Bangladesh and nations prone to flooding or drought are feeling the effects. Consequently World Church, MRDF and Christian Aid partners are already reporting the effects of climate change on their environments. Yet the poorer nations have contributed least to the problem of climate change. The average Briton, for example, has a carbon footprint 10 times the average for someone living in Africa. Climate change is probably now the most serious threat to long term development.

The current UK government aspiration is to achieve a 60% cut in carbon emissions from the 1990 level by 2050. This requires an average reduction of around 3% per year. This is clearly not being achieved with present policies and even this level of reduction will fail to address the problem of climate change. The UK Government has published a draft Climate Change Bill for consultation. It is important that such legislation introduces effective measures to reverse the pattern of rising carbon emissions.

The magnitude of the challenge requires decisive international action not only by governments, but also business and the voluntary sector including churches. Adaptation to a low carbon economy must cause us to think deeply about lifestyles. If we are called "to live more simply in order that others may simply live" our response to God's covenant relationship with all creation should cause the church to be active in the call to address climate change.

Various groups support the response of the Churches in the UK. Operation Noah, the UK Churches Campaign on Climate Change, maintains a critical voice and is urging stronger political leadership in the UK to establish policies within a framework of fairness and justice. The group might also offer Christian denominations support in measuring carbon emissions through an easy to use web-based tool in order to help churches to shrink their footprint. Climate change is now the major campaign focus for Christian Aid and MRDF who are drawing attention to the devastating impact on the world's poorest

communities. Christian Aid has produced campaign and other resources for supporters to take action. The agency is offering support and resources to Methodist congregations to campaign in the areas that will make a real impact on reducing emissions including individual, church and community group, company and government actions. For the Methodist Church to support such campaigns it is important that the church acknowledges its own impact on the environment and seeks to reduce its own carbon emissions.

The Youth Conference adopted a resolution on this subject, as has the Assembly of the Federation of United Reformed Youth. A similar resolution is going to the URC Assembly. The Church of England General Synod adopted recommendations in [2005] which have resulted in a campaign 'Shrinking the Footprint'. Materials to help individuals, Local Churches, Circuits and Districts to respond to these challenges are in preparation. Some Methodist Districts have already addressed climate change at District Synods and urged every Circuit to take action. This resolution encourages Districts, Circuits, and individuals to work together to reclaim a spirituality of caring for the whole of creation and to encourage the whole church to act for the common good.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

#### **29/1. The Conference:**

- a) notes the recommendation contained in the Environmental Policy of the Methodist Church (adopted by the Conference in 2000) that “for significant change to take place, monitoring of plans and targets will be essential at every level of the Church's life”;
- b) notes the work of the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church in encouraging major UK companies to sign up to the carbon disclosure project;
- c) urges the UK Government to introduce robust policies to reduce carbon emissions and establish independent monitoring, including an annual assessment of carbon output and the active promotion of renewable sources of energy, particularly photo voltaic systems;
- d) supports the MRDF and Christian Aid in putting justice at the heart of our response to climate change and in particular supports Christian Aid in its current campaign which includes working towards a new internationally binding agreement on reducing carbon emissions;
- e) notes the disproportionate responsibility of developed nations for climate change and the impact this is already having on poorer communities throughout the world;
- f) notes the call of Operation Noah to a radical new lifestyle for churches and their congregations;

- g) urges Local Churches, Circuits and Districts to monitor and reduce their carbon emissions and directs the connexional Team to identify available resources for these purposes;
- h) directs the Methodist Council to consider updating the Environment Policy and report to the Conference of 2008;
- i) wishing to put words into action directs the Methodist Council to consider ways of making Manses environmentally friendly, including consideration of how support can be given to poorer circuits.

### **NOTICE OF MOTION 118: CLIMATE CHANGE**

In light of the Representative Session's discussion and expression of concern regarding Climate Change, Conference directs the District Chairs to communicate the support of the Conference to those Circuits and community leaders affected by the recent floods here in the United Kingdom.

The Conference adopted the Motion.