

Methodist Church of New Zealand Response

to

Global Warming and Atmospheric Carbon

The 2013 Conference asked the Investment Advisory Board and Public Issues Network (PIN) to facilitate the Church's consideration of its position on "Global Warming and the benefits of a low carbon economy including practical steps the Connexional could take".

Background papers were prepared by PIN and the Investment Advisory Board including reference to a wide range of web sites and other external resources.

Over twenty responses were received, mostly written with one or two as notes of discussions. Responses are listed in Appendix One. Betsan Martin, on behalf of PIN, provided notes from Synod workshops and discussions she had had with Church groups and individuals.

(Copies of the original papers, the written responses and the conversation notes are available at on request from betsan@publicquestions.org.nz).

Overview

Care for Creation and Stewardship

There was a common thread through the responses of **the need to care for God's creation and see ourselves as stewards for the future**. The principle of stewardship was consistently reiterated. A comparison was drawn with "Let the Children Live" suggesting "Let the Planet Live". Emphasis is given to intergenerational equity with responsibility to ensure the life supporting capacity of the planet and its ecology. Responses identify local parish level activities, possibilities for Connexional policies including funds, parsonages and building requirements, and the need for political commitment in New Zealand and globally.

A Tongan youth group is aware of the impacts of climate disasters such as king tides and cyclones on Pacific Islands. They recognize that as Pacific people living in New Zealand they do not always take account of the environment. They refer to traditions of fishing, lighting fires and of the more recent additions of electricity and petrol run vehicles. They notice that development is now taking a turn away from oil and diesel. *"Why have we got all these developments and now wish to revert to other ways and means of providing energy?"*

Attention was given to the need for personal responsibility in taking care of the environment, in transport decisions and in using recycled and biodegradable products.

Theology for Climate Justice and 'Green Church'

Bringing climate justice into theological education was featured as important for the church. A theology that includes the many aspects of climate issues and their relevance to the mission of the church would include creation, ecology and science, stewardship of resources, impacts of climate change on people, impacts of climate disasters and the vulnerability of those in poverty.

Theological considerations included rethinking church with an emphasis on new models of faith-community building and community-facing church. This involves using assets in the wider community and sharing physical assets. It also signals a more dispersed model of church, with small groups meeting to accommodate working lifestyles with more occasional meetings of the full parish/ faith community.

A proposal for a Green church initiative comes from the WCC Workshop on Ecology, Theology and Justice attended by Mark Gibson, Liliuokahlani Teofilo and Peter Lane. ‘Green church’ offers pathways for parishes to take practical actions in worship, theology and education, purchasing and recycling, transport and building. Green churches are underway in Denmark, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Canada and Australia. ‘Green Church’ covers a range of mission areas of the church and community collaboration.

The youth group appreciate the global significance of climate change and support the Methodist church leading an ecumenical endeavour to work collaboratively. They support the church making a financial contribution and making it possible for members to install solar panels or take steps that poorer communities can support.

Low Carbon Initiatives – Funds and Building

A third common consideration was to **provide for the cost of low carbon initiatives** including capital investment in parsonages, new building structures, renovations, water storage and local energy production. In the face of the urgent need to rebuild and strengthen many church buildings there was attention to decision-making on rebuilding and on resourcing decision making to include low carbon, clean energy and cost effective options.

Suggestions included the use of PAC grants to subsidize or provide low interest loans for such options, tapping Church sale proceeds held in Church Building and Loan Fund and undefined “Church grants”. Proposals for the CB and L funds included that the criteria for withdrawing funds be extended to include ‘green’ initiatives (details to be developed), and a further suggestion was to release \$100,000 (or more) from CB and L funds as a contestable fund for transitions to low carbon. This comment included provision for social needs, which indicates the church’s ongoing concern with social commitments and poverty alleviation.

The idea of making funds available was specifically for climate related, or green initiatives was rejected by one synod response as PAC was perceived to be already under pressure. An approach of partnership with government was suggested as an enterprise approach, such as in the Matanikolo housing project. This is a way for church funds to be amplified by public funds for project that are in the public interest. This is an approach of shared responsibility.

MMS, as a Social Service expressed the priority need for funds for social services and the funding pressure of social services. Child poverty is a major concern for the Methodist church. Rather than see social and planet issues as being in conflict many saw the need to reconcile these in recognition that addressing global warming in the interests of the future for children.

Advice and Information

The fourth common thread was a call for **more advice and information**. Ideas proposed include resources in Pacific languages and producing an audio-visual for the church.

A number of areas for consideration and practical steps were suggested. In completing the report we have not looked to identify the level of support for each concept but rather to demonstrate the breadth of the ideas suggested. This Report identifies the principles for further action in the church with some specific proposals for action in 2015 and beyond.

Areas for consideration and practical steps

The ideas are grouped into five areas:

1. Theology, Education, Information and 'Green Church' Initiative

- Include “Climate Justice” and care for creation in theological education and develop a theological liturgy around Church plant procurement, use and disposal
- Deepen creation theology in theological education, in liturgy and in worship services.
- Provide information on climate change, including in Pacific languages. An audio-visual would be beneficial
- ‘Green Church’ or the Danish “Gron Kirke” is a model for parishes to take practical steps towards low carbon systems. It has an accreditation system with “48 Steps” for accreditation (on website). Gron Kirke is ecumenical. Accreditation is based on meeting criteria on a proportion of actions on the 6 key themes. These are:
 1. Worship and Liturgy
 2. Information, Education and Service
 3. Church shopping and land
 4. Church energy use
 5. Church transport
 6. Treatment of church waste

Further discussion of ‘Green church and the possibilities for this in Aotearoa NZ are in the reports of the WCC Workshop on Ecology, Theology and Justice, by Mark Gibson and Peter Lane. These reports are on the Public Issues website www.methodist.org.nz/public_issues

- The importance of a holistic approach was emphasised, with caution against piecemeal actions. The impetus is to shift from institutional maintenance to more engaged congregations in the missions of the church.

This means a strategic plan for say 20 years, with a review of church funds and a refreshed evaluation of missions with a view to ensuring all aspects of mission are balanced and resourced. Such a review and strategic plan could involve demolitions, the sale of land, investing in new state of the art multi-use buildings, shifting from Sunday worship to more decentralized strategy of house church, café church and small groups to suit participants (close to earlier reform movements of the church). A central structure could resource the church

- Use Church land for community and foraging gardens and orchards
- Encourage integrated, linked up thinking

Practical Steps:

- **Discuss a climate and theology unit with Trinity College with a view to implementing Care for Creation with climate responsibility in theological education**
- **Establish a steering committee for the establishment of ‘Green Church’ in AotearoaNZ. Although initiated by the Methodist church it would be open to all churches and thus will be an ecumenical initiative**

- **Develop information resources, including in Pacific languages, and provide workshops to parish and community groups to share information and build knowledge and capacity to respond to climate/global warming**

2. Buildings, Clean Energy, Transport and Services

- An assessment of low carbon materials and clean energy systems for building planning and design will contribute to climate responsive church policies. Information can be developed using existing resources and on-line information and made available to parishes.
- The preparation of a template or design brief for whole of life cycle benefits and with provision for responsiveness to local needs and resources are further resources to support decision-making.
- Use of the template for Low carbon / clean energy to be considered as part of internal consent process for all Church buildings/renovations
- Generate energy locally through solar panels (photo voltaic and/or hot water) and wind, according to a cost benefit and carbon analysis. Special advice was given to the value of utilising north facing church roofs for solar. Problems with storage of solar produced energy were noted.
- Installations of energy efficient and renewable energy systems in parsonages were frequently identified as an action for the church. Solar, insulation, double glazing, wind energy, water storage were identified as possibilities for these church properties.
- Use of composting toilets
- It was noted that with NZ's renewable energy the main challenges are to reduce coal and oil. This means transport is a major focus for attention. Several contributors prioritized fuel efficiency when purchasing vehicles. Electric vehicles will be the best option for the future for cars.
- Installing charge points in church car parks would accelerate transitions to plug in electric cars.
- Promote fuel efficient transport through incentives via management of travel allowances

Practical Steps:

- **Prepare a resource with information on 'whole of life' energy audits and on building materials for use in Church building projects.**
- **Produce a template to guide decision making on building and renovation decisions and to support 'Green Church' initiatives**
- *Prepare a plan, including a cost benefit analysis for renewable energy installations and insulation in parsonages*
- *Provide information on installing charge points in church car parks*

3. Operations and Procurements Services

- Operational systems need to be included in decisions on low carbon, including waste reduction, recycling, waste water minimization and procurement.

Preferences for biodegradable materials, recycled paper, vegetable based ink cartridges and low energy printers were noted. There is strong support for Fair Trade products

- Bulk purchases of supplies (eg solar panels) achieve the benefits of efficiencies of scale.
- Purchasing using a recyclable/renewal filter and using robust “carbon miles” numbers (whole of life not just transport to point of sale)
- ‘Green economy’ encourages purchasing locally produced food and products. This has to be assessed against economies of scale and cost of mass produced goods.
- Ban plastic bags

Practical Step:

- **Establish a purchasing and procurement plan for Church suppliers and services, taking account of local production and highlighting the use of renewable and recyclable products.**

4. Political Activism

Issues raised in the feedback include:

- The need for New Zealand to have effective policies to transition to low carbon and renewables. The main focus for this at the political level is to phase out coal and oil. An important tool for this is tax policies to encourage transitions to a low carbon economy
- Promote climate justice
- Church people actively lobby MP’s and government to develop policies to reduce carbon emissions and bring NZ into alignment with climate responsibility
- Local Government is important for church engagement re transport and energy systems.
- Churches and Social Services are stretched to the max to provide services and practical help to alleviate poverty.
- Along with the many initiatives of churches to alleviate poverty and to support children, the deep and systemic issues of poverty have to be addressed at a political level. One respondent identified the ‘piece-mealing’ effect of disparate efforts, and the need for church leadership and political leadership to achieve changes in income with active job creation with Living Wage remuneration policies

Practical Step:

- **Include climate / global warming as a prime reference for voting and policy engagement.**
- **Church leaders actively engage with MP’s and political policy sectors to achieve action on poverty and climate justice**

5 Church Funds and Divestment

- There is support for the use of church funds to be used to subsidise installations of solar, or develop a low interest loans scheme for solar and to implement energy efficiency systems in church property. Specific suggestions include a plan for solar panels on north facing church roofs, insulation and a

plan of action for parsonages using alternative energy sources with a low carbon footprint most suited for the particular application.

- Although solar is perceived to be expensive, ‘social payback’ needs to be taken into consideration. This is the cost offset of reduced power bills. Solar payback is currently assessed as 5-7 years (Dr. David Haywood <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/saturday/20140913>)

As noted there are reservations about solar because of NZ’s renewable energy and the intermittent use of church buildings (in contrast to houses). The cost of solar or other investment in clean energy needs to be balanced against the importance of addressing child safety and wellbeing and reducing poverty. One synod opposed the use of church funds to address climate matters.

- Consideration of the use of church funds can include joint investments, ie negotiating funding partnerships with Trusts and Foundations
- The World Council of Churches has decided to withdraw investments from fossil fuels. Divestment is part of a suite of responses to transition from dependence on fossil fuels. Proposals on divestment ranged from one recommendation for the Church to proceed with a divestment plan, to other suggestions including setting a threshold for fossil fuel involvement for unit funds and only considering new investments in funds that can demonstrate compliance with the threshold. However commentary on divestment was not actively sought. There is a consensus that investment in renewable energy is a primary mode for transitioning to low carbon emissions. This in line with the global movement for sustainable development which entails economic, environmental and social dimensions.

Practical Steps:

- **Conduct a review the funds which the church distributes and propose a plan of action that integrates the theological, social and care of creation mission goals of the church. This review to include the possibility of investment partnerships.**
- **Prepare an analysis of the practical impacts of divestment for the Methodist church, including investment through consolidated managed funds.**

The Church has produced a wide range of concepts and practical ideas.

Proposed Conference Decisions:

1. That a Steering Committee for ‘Transitions to Low Carbon’ /Let the Planet Live / (!!)
- be established to take forward the practical steps identified in the five sections of this Report, prioritizing as needed. That a steering Committee include Te Taha Māori, all Synods, MTA, Public Issues Co-ordinator, Mission and Ecumenical and members with expertise in transitions to a ‘new’ low carbon economy.
That the Transitions to Low Carbon Steering Committee work in association with:

2. A 'Green Church' steering committee be mandated to prepare a proposal and implementation plan for parishes in Aotearoa New Zealand. That this proposal and plan be discussed with Council of Conference with a view to proceeding with implementation in parishes at a feasible scale. Suggestions for membership of the Green Church Steering Committee include those who attended the WCC workshop, the Public Issues Co-ordinator, Mission and Ecumenical, Mission Resourcing and Greg Hughson.
3. That MTA prepare an analysis of the practical impacts of divestment with an assessment of the exposure that divestment would entail; that analysis include a corresponding indication of renewable energy investment options for the Methodist Church, Te Hahi Weteriana. That this analysis be reported to Council of Conference.
4. The 'Transitions to Low Carbon' and 'Green Church Committees report to Conference in 2015.

Prepared by Betsan Martin and Greg Wright

Appendix One: Considerations for Building Design for Low Carbon and Energy Efficiency

Design

- Orientation of building
- North face
- Prevailing wind direction
- Economy of plan – flexible spaces
- Grouping of service / ablution areas
- Position, size and number of windows
- Solar access i.e. light / heat from exterior into interior of building
- Roof overhang and shading

Construction

- Exceeding the minimum standard for thermal performance
- Insulation / double glazing / window types
- Thermal bridging
- Thermal mass / heat storage
- Waste water minimization

Energy Use

- Light fitting types
- Automated controls on lighting
- Hot water heating type / use / reticulation system selected
- Space heating / Ventilation / fresh air makeup
- Energy efficient appliances and equipment

Appendix Two: Respondents

Central North Island Synod

Auckland Manukau Synod

Waikato Waiariki Synod

Otago Southland Synod

Lani Tupu, Filo Tu on behalf of Sinoti Samoa and Social Issues Committee

Vahefonua Social Issues Committee

Methodist Mission Southern

Palmerston North Public Issues, Sunday Group and Let the Children Live, Convened by A. Jarvis

Darren Shadbolt and 'Futures Directions'

Tony Bell, CNI Superintendent

Jean Faithfull on behalf of Nelson Marlborough group

Dale Kelly, Public issues Takapuna

Ofa Dewes, Papatoetoe Public Issues

Mark Gibson, Report of WCC Workshop on Ecology, Justice and Theology

Merrett Smith and Mark Gibson, River of Life

Peter Lane, Manurewa Parish; Report of WCC Workshop on Ecology, Justice and Theology

Senorita Laukau, Avalon Uniting / Alipate 'Uhila and St Marks Lower Hutt

Graeme McIver, Wesley Taranaki St

Edwin Clark and Hamilton and City Action Study Group

Warwick Silvester, Chartwell Co-operating Parish

Brian Turner

John Murray, Director, Lifewise