



The Zero-carbon Church of the future

In our fractured world, the Church must demonstrate commitment and leadership to reduce carbon emissions, says Marcus Zipperlen, Diocesan Creation Care and Sustainability Officer

Back in the nineties one celebrated political scientist wrote about the *End of History* when he foresaw the majority of countries moving towards liberal democracy and international cooperation. These days there is a darker mood abroad, with the spread of authoritarian governments, go-it-alone politics, and natural systems on the brink of collapse threatening a more catastrophic end of history.

It is complacent to think people will drift in the direction of justice and generosity; these goals must be actively pursued. Similarly, it would be complacent to think nations and people will just drift towards a greater care for creation, because this too is a good that has to be worked for with application and energy. And that is what the Church increasingly is doing, together with many secular institutions.

Did you know that Carmarthen County Council was one of the first councils in Britain to declare a climate emergency and a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2030? The Church of England recently declared the same goal. What you might not be aware of is a proposal soon going before Governing Body asking the Church in Wales to do likewise, by declaring a climate emergency and committing to a pressing timetable to become a Zero-carbon Church.

Being zero-carbon will mean reducing the energy we use in heating and travel, obtaining what power we do use from renewable sources, generating some renewable energy of our own, and probably supporting tree planting to soak up whatever carbon emissions we can't avoid. It will require reordering our priorities and habits, yet in directions we are already becoming familiar with.

Becoming zero-carbon is an urgent task for us as an institution, and we will, in humility, need to accept help and advice from the secular world to get there. But zero-carbon living isn't the be-all and end-all of caring for our Earth. The Church has so much to offer the world in turn, through our understanding of the Earth as a gift, with ourselves as custodians not owners, and through our recognition that the love Jesus shows is the very energy behind all creation, the goal to which creation moves (Col. 1: 15-18), and the way we are to get there.

Let's hope that by setting our own house in order the Church's voice can be heard more clearly.