



A practical guide to
help your church reach
net zero carbon



'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;'

Psalm 24:1

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Working together to care for God's creation

Caring for God's creation is rooted in our Christian faith. The Bible teaches us that the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. Creation is entrusted to us to care for with love and responsibility.

The Net Zero Carbon programme is a practical expression of our calling to love God and our neighbour, protect the most vulnerable, and protect creation for generations to come. The Church of England has set an ambitious target: to reach net zero carbon. One of the ways we can tackle climate change is through reducing the carbon we release from our buildings into the atmosphere.

This is a journey we can all go on together, showing our local communities that we care about the world and about them. We understand this work takes time and effort. While we want all of our buildings to reduce their carbon emissions as quickly as possible, the important thing is to take the steps you

can, when you can. For your church, this might look like draught proofing and changing to LED lighting, rather than getting Solar PV. Every church, parish and diocese has a part to play, and every step forward matters.

We know many of you are volunteers, often already stretched and juggling many responsibilities. This work can sometimes feel like 'one more thing' on an already long list. We hope this booklet supports you and makes the process easier, lighter, and inspires your church.

This guide offers simple, practical steps to help your church on a decarbonisation journey. All resources mentioned are available on the Net Zero Carbon Programme pages of the Church of England website. We want our churches to be warm, welcoming, and energy efficient - good for our congregations, and good for the whole of creation.

Where Should I start?

Every church is different - size, usage, energy needs, and finances all shape the journey to **net zero carbon**



I'm interested to know what this all means for my church?
What should I do?

See if you can find a couple of people in your church, or wider community to help you.

I'M ALONE

I'M NOT ALONE

There's only so much you can do. Have a look at the steps, and ask for help from your diocese when you need it.

Work out your carbon footprint using the Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) (ask your treasurer to help – they receive the energy bills and can log into Parish Returns). Filling in the EFT will increase your eligibility for grants.

Have you got any other building plans or reordering projects coming up?

YES

NO

Think about whether you could include any energy saving measures or changes to heating as part of the plans. Get advice from your DAC.

Do you know what you could do in your church to save energy and reduce your carbon emissions?

NO

YES

Take time to co-ordinate net zero changes with your project and seize opportunity for improvements where possible.

Get independent advice by booking an energy audit.
If your church is one of the highest emitting churches you might be offered an energy audit - fill in the EFT so we can check.
If you can't afford it, you can do a DIY audit using our Church Heating Checklist.

Speak to your DAC or QI architect for advice. You will need to get quotes from suppliers and make a plan for how to fund the project.

What type of project do you need to do to reach net zero carbon?

CHECK OUT OTHER FUNDING OPTIONS HERE

LESS THAN £10K OF CHANGES
You could apply for small Church of England grants or get support to raise funds for your project.

SOMEWHERE IN-BETWEEN
You could break the project down into separate stages and apply for small grants. And take it one stage at a time.

LARGE COMPLEX PROJECT
There may be Net Zero Programme grants available - talk to your diocesan Net Zero Carbon Officer. You can also find support with fundraising.



Bedworth church to use savings from energy bills to fund youth work

All Saints' Church, Bedworth

"It feels like God is doing so much here. This is about being part of the solution - not just for the environment, but for our community too."

Christine Rigden



All Saints' Church in Bedworth, in the Diocese of Coventry, is showing how caring for creation can also strengthen community life. With regular worship, a People's Pantry, youth work, and a warm hub, the church is a busy and welcoming space at the heart of its town.

When the church began exploring ways to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions, project lead Christine Rigden brought valuable experience from installing solar panels at home. But installing them on a Grade II* listed church in a conservation area proved far more complex.

In December 2024, a 50-panel solar array was installed on the church roof, along with a battery to store energy. The project cost around £40,000 and was supported by grants from the Diocese of Coventry, the Church of England's Net Zero Programme and The Benefact Trust alongside generous giving from the congregation.

The impact has been significant. The system is expected to reduce carbon emissions by around 5 tonnes a year,

about 22% of the church's total, and cut electricity costs dramatically. Monthly bills have dropped from around £500 to under £100, with much of the church's energy now generated on site.

Over time, these savings are expected to exceed £150,000 freeing up funds to support the church's wider mission, including youth work and outreach.

"It feels like God is doing so much here," Christine said. "This is about being part of the solution - not just for the environment, but for our community too."

The church has already taken other practical steps, including installing LED lighting, improving insulation, and managing heating more efficiently. Now, they are planning the next stage of their journey: exploring low-carbon heating solutions.

All Saints' is now a Demonstrator Church, helping others learn from their experience. Their story shows that lowering emissions is not a single step, but a journey and one that can bring lasting benefits for both church and community.

Where to start with finding financial support for your decarbonisation project

Cornerstone is an online generosity tool available free of charge to all Church of England churches. It offers three distinct functions: Insights, Pathways and a comprehensive Grants database.

Insights:

Cornerstone Insights identifies different types of giving and shares comparisons with other churches both in the same diocese, and nationwide. Equipped with detailed information, churches can then pursue two different ways of changing or enhancing the picture: Pathways or Grants.

Pathways:

Cornerstone Pathways offer step-by-step support for the most common types of fundraising. Each Pathway takes a single topic, such as how to write a grant application or talk about your church's impact, and breaks it down into simple steps that take around half an hour. They are designed for volunteers or clergy who are new to fundraising or looking to refresh their knowledge.

Grants:

All churches have access to over 650 grants, curated for churches. Covering a range of purposes, values and geographic areas, this searchable database is updated weekly and is the biggest range of grants currently available to churches. There is a link to the grant making body so you can read further and apply.

Contact your Giving Advisor to request access to Cornerstone.



Prioritise which Trust and Foundations to try first. The top five funders for church capital projects are National Lottery Community Fund, Garfield Weston Foundation, Benefact Trust, National Churches Trust and the Landfill Communities Fund. Websites give limited information so contact funders with your questions and ask for a chat.



Create a fundraising strategy with diverse income streams. Community appeals, even if they raise small amounts, are great for engagement and showing that your project is owned by local people which will appeal to secular funders. Check your eligibility for match funded schemes such as the Church of England's [Give To Go Green](#) or the Big Give's Earth Raise.



Share your plans with your diocesan Giving Advisor, Environment Officer, Church Building Support Officer and Net Zero Officer. If you don't have digital and online giving set up, ask your Giving Adviser to help.



"It was manna from heaven"

Holy Trinity in the village of Sibford, on the edge of the Cotswolds, has taken a major step towards caring for creation by replacing its unreliable oil-fired boiler with electric under-pew heaters— thanks in part to grant funding from the Church of England's Net Zero Carbon Programme.

The project began when the church was simply exploring installing a toilet and improved access. An energy audit followed, recommending 121 under-pew heaters to replace the ageing boiler. "Sometimes we'd come to church and it had broken down," explained treasurer David Gill. "But more importantly, we wanted to protect God's creation. As a farming community, caring for the countryside is part of our faith."

The total cost of the project was £39,000. The parish secured grants from Oxford Historic Churches Trust,

the Benefact Trust, the Diocese of Oxford, and £19,284 from the Church of England's Boiler Replacement Hardship Fund. "It was manna from heaven," said David. "It made the difference between doing it and not doing it."

Installation took just three days, with the system first used on Ash Wednesday. "People don't want to sit in a cold church," David said. "Now everyone will always be warm." The change is expected to make the church building net zero carbon and cut heating costs significantly. "It is economically justifiable, but spiritually justifiable too—that's the starting point."

David's advice to other churches: Don't wait for your boiler to fail. Begin planning early, apply for grants, and take control of your journey to net zero.



"But more importantly, we wanted to protect God's creation. As a farming community, caring for the countryside is part of our faith."

David Gill



Top Tips



1

Build a team.

Don't go it alone. Draw on skills in your congregation and wider community - many people are keen to help.

2

Start with simple wins.

Good maintenance and small changes can make a big difference:

- Fix roofs, gutters and broken windows
- Draught-proof doors and insulate pipes
- Switch to LED lighting and add timers
- Buy heated cushions for pews

3

Understand your building.

Every church is different. Think about how your space is actually used and focus on what will make the biggest difference.

4

Know your numbers.

Install a smart meter, or take regular meter readings. Understanding your energy use helps you spot patterns and track progress.

5

Use the tools available.

- Complete the [Energy Footprint Tool](#)
- Explore the [Eco Church survey](#)
- Use the [Practical Guide to Net Zero Carbon for Churches](#)
- These will help you plan your next steps.

6

Share your progress.

Tell your congregation what you're doing and why. Celebrate small wins - this helps build support and momentum.

Where to Go for Support?

We know that caring for church buildings can feel overwhelming. You are not expected to do this alone. There is a wide network of people, expertise and resources to support you in this task and reducing your carbon emissions



Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) and Church Buildings Team

Both are there to guide you through permissions, faculty applications, and changes to your church building. Whether you're exploring heating upgrades, lighting changes or repairs, they can help you understand what is possible and how to approach it.



Net Zero Carbon Officers

Most dioceses now have Net Zero Carbon Officers to provide local, hands-on support. They can help you interpret energy audits, understand heating options, explore low-carbon technologies, and identify the most cost-effective next steps. They are your first point of contact for practical, tailored guidance.



Online Resources

A wealth of practical guides, how-to materials, and case studies are available on the Net Zero Carbon Programme pages of the Church of England website.



Diocesan Giving Officers

Giving Officers can support you with fundraising, stewardship, and building the financial resilience needed to care for your church. They can advise on local campaigns, grant applications, and how to communicate your vision for a warm, welcoming, sustainable church.



the GREAT SWITCH for creation

Taking a small step, to light the way.

By switching to a green tariff, your church will play an important part in reducing the Church of England's overall carbon emissions - helping lead the way towards a cleaner, fairer future for all.

Green tariff electricity supply is directly from mainly renewable energy sources, which means lower emissions are generated from the electricity you use.

Join us **SWITCH TODAY.**

1. CHECK YOUR ENERGY BILLS

Find out how many units of energy your building has used annually, by calculating the difference between two bills, 12 months apart. Do this via your monthly bills, or using your supplier's app.

Find out if you are in contract and/or have exit fees.

2. CHOOSE A SUPPLIER

Go to [Parish Energy](#) to switch your energy to its green tariff, or;

Get 2-3 quotes from [this list](#), by going on each suppliers' website and asking for a quote

3. SWITCH

Decide on a tariff and switch!

The supplier - or [Parish Energy](#) - will do the rest. Also, make sure to celebrate and share that you've switched!

"Imagine the impact we could make if we all switched to a green tariff..for our children, our grandchildren, for everyone in every nation on God's beautiful earth."

Joy, Churchwarden
St. Luke's Church, West Holloway



FOOTPRINTS FOR CREATION

The Energy Footprint Tool

Every footprint we leave behind shapes God's creation. Recording your energy use is an unseen but essential act of caring for people and the planet. By measuring and reducing energy use, we take practical steps to combat the impact of climate change and live out our calling to love our neighbours.

Completing your [Energy Footprint Tool](#) is a simple but powerful way to support the Church of England's shared journey to net zero carbon. Each year's data builds a clearer picture of our carbon footprint and helps us act more strategically together.

Step by Step guide:

1

Check which buildings are in scope

Usually, if a building is not owned by the Church of England, you don't need to report it.

2

Gather your information

Collect your energy bills for all your church or parish buildings. Include electricity, gas, oil, or any other fuels you use. If you have solar panels, note their generation for the past year.

3

Find your energy data

Look at your energy bills to find your consumption and costs for the past year. Anyone with access to your bills can do it. You'll need your kilowatt-hour (kWh) usage.

4

Enter your data online

[Log in](#) and submit your details on the Parish Returns system.

5

Receive your report

After entering your data, you'll instantly receive your carbon footprint results. You'll need this report to support any future applications for net zero or environmental funding.

6

Make the EFT an annual habit

Completing the EFT annually is essential to help build a long-term picture of your energy consumption and carbon footprint.

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

Colossians 1:16

If you have any questions, please contact your diocese; DAC, Church Buildings Department or Net Zero Carbon Officer.

www.churchofengland.org

