



PRESS RELEASE

100 days before the start of international climate negotiations, a unique Christian coalition calls on every UK church to act

With only 100 days to go until COP26 - the critical international climate negotiations which the UK government will host and chair in Glasgow in November - a broad coalition of Christian denominations and charities is calling on all churches to hold a 'Climate Sunday' and commit to effective action themselves, before talks begin. So far more than 1,500 churches across Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland are taking part and hundreds more, including several cathedrals, are planning to do so.

This widespread take up of the initiative across diverse church traditions indicates a growing commitment by churches to act on climate change, and to demand that the government act too. The Climate Sunday Initiative wants to see Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government bring out domestic policies before the international conference, to get the UK back on track with its own emissions targets. It is also calling on the government, in its role as chair of COP26, to seek faster and deeper global emissions cuts and the delivery of long-promised finance to help poorer countries adapt to the climate disruption which they are already experiencing.

There is deep concern among climate specialists within the churches and charities that the UK government is undermining its influence to deliver a successful COP26 outcome by failing to implement policies to achieve the UK's own emissions targets and by slashing the UK's overseas aid budget, so needs to take rapid action before COP to restore its own credibility as a 'climate leader'.

The Climate Sunday initiative is the broadest-based church response to the climate crisis in the UK in the run-up to COP26. Participating churches are asked to do three things: hold a climate-focused service to explore the science and theology around addressing human-caused climate disruption; commit to taking ongoing practical action themselves, and sign a joint call for the government to act - the Time is Now Declaration. A website contains a 'toolbox' of free resources, and enables churches to register their commitment. Typically, churches are committing to progress through one of three major 'church greening schemes' (see Notes).



Many are 'speaking up' for the first time joining tens of thousands of other members of the public, organisations and other faith groups in signing the Time is Now declaration.

A key milestone of the campaign before COP26 will be a national Climate Sunday event in Glasgow Cathedral on Sunday 5 September 2021. This will celebrate the commitments made by churches so far, and to present the Government with a list of those commitments and the signatories of all churches who have signed the Time is Now Declaration. The final total of participating churches and commitments will be presented to the Government at the COP conference itself.

Andy Atkins, Chair of the Climate Sunday Coalition and CEO coalition member A Rocha UK, a Christian nature conservation charity A Rocha UK, said: *'The climate crisis is accelerating alarmingly; but we have the unique opportunity in rich countries to accelerate the solutions by directing Covid recovery funds towards building a new, green economy. At present the government is in danger of 'building back worse'. So, there has never been a more crucial time for UK churches to come together to pray, act locally and speak up nationally on the climate crisis and on the need to 'build back greener'*

Christine Allen, Director of CAFOD, the biggest Catholic overseas relief and development charity in England and Wales, and members of the coalition said *'It's becoming a matter of integrity for churches to put their own house in order on this threat to people and nature. Local church communities across Britain and Ireland are also signalling loud and clear that they expect the Westminster government to show integrity too, and get the UK firmly on track to meet its own emissions targets before chairing the UN climate negotiations in November.'*

Hannah Eves, a member of the Young Christian Climate Network who are also supporters of the coalition, from Northern Ireland said: *'It's five to midnight on the ticking clock to avoid catastrophic climate change. We're thrilled to see churches now acting on the concerns of my generation. But the grand statements we hear from the government are so often undermined by contradictory actions. Boris Johnson says 'We're committed to Net zero,' then launches a massive new road building programme for example. The whole world is watching. Our government needs to put it's own house in order fast, to have a fighting chance of delivering a successful COP for the world and my generation'*

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For images and to arrange interviews with spokespeople please contact:

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Spokespeople available for comment in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland include:

Andy Atkins, Chair of Climate Sunday and CEO of A Rocha UK - England
Stephen Curran, Manager of Eco Congregation Scotland, on the Steering Committee for Climate Sunday
Hannah Eves, Christian Climate Coalition, and Researcher at A Rocha UK - Northern Ireland
Gethin Rhys, Policy Officer at Cytun (Churches together in Wales), Steering Group of Climate Sunday

Notes to Editors:

1) Climate Sunday initiative, organised by the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)'s Environmental Issues Network (EIN), is the UK's largest joint project planned by UK Churches on Climate Change.

- The vision for Climate Sunday is to leave a lasting legacy of thousands of churches better equipped to address this critical issue as part of their discipleship and mission and to make a significant contribution to civil society efforts to secure adequate national and international action at COP26.
- The collective action and commitments from local churches across Great Britain & Ireland will be presented to the UK Government at **a Nations Climate Sunday Service in Glasgow on Sunday 5th September 2021**. Further details about this event will be published shortly.
- Climate Sunday has formal backing from CAFOD, Christian Aid, Tearfund, The Salvation Army, A Rocha UK, Operation Noah, Climate Stewards, Eco-Congregation Scotland, Eco-Congregation Ireland, Green Christian, the Church of England, the Catholic Bishop's Conference of England and Wales, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Baptist Union of Wales, the United Reformed Church, The Church of Scotland, Churches together in Wales, the Union of Welsh Independents, The Church in Wales, World Vision, The John Ray Initiative, USPG, The United Reformed Church, The Salvation Army, Joint Public Issues Team, CTBI, Christian Concern for One World, Church of Ireland, Young Christian Climate Network, Catholic Bishop's Conference of England and Wales.

More details on Climate Sunday, including the full range of free resources, can be found at:
www.climatesunday.org

2) Church Greening Schemes

There are three principal independent schemes in the UK to help grass roots churches tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and other pressing environmental issues. They work closely together. More than 4000 UK churches are now registered with one or other scheme.

Eco Church, run by A Rocha UK, for churches in England and Wales - <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>

Eco-Congregation Scotland is an ecumenical environmental charity supporting local churches throughout Scotland to care and act for God's creation, reducing their impact on climate change and living sustainably - <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org>

Eco-Congregation Ireland is a project of the Church in Society Forum, a standing committee of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, encouraging churches of all denominations across Ireland to take an eco approach - <https://www.ecocongregationireland.com/>



Live Simply is the environmental award scheme of the Catholic Church in England and Wales - <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Livesimply-award>

3) Time is Now Declaration - organised by the Climate Coalition, of which most members of the Climate Sunday Initiative are also members. It can be signed by individuals, business and community organisations. So far, 146,570 individuals, 640 businesses/organisations, and 264 community/faith groups have signed up (147,474 in total). These figures are shown here <https://thetimeisnow.uk/>.

4) A Rocha UK is the UK's only Christian nature conservation charity. Its mission is to equip UK Christians and Churches to care for the environment. It runs the popular 'Eco Church' 'greening scheme' now with more than 3,500 participating local churches, as well as a growing programme to support christian land managers in managing their land for nature and to cut carbon (Conservation Partner in Action), and the Wild Christian programme to help individuals and families address the environmental crisis in their home and community and by speaking up. www.arocha.org.uk

A Rocha UK is part of an international family of christian conservation organisations now in 20 countries.