

Making money work for God's creation

Theological principles
for green investment



“We want to invest in what is right for the Church and not just look at this as an investment portfolio to maximise.”

Mike Sturgess, Chair of Finance Board, Diocese of Truro - Signatories of the Green Investment Declaration

Care for creation

Our mandate to care for God’s creation is clear from the beginning of Scripture. Humans are created “in the image of God” and told to “rule” over the rest of creation (Genesis 1:26-28). Yet we are also fellow members of God’s ‘community of creation’. In Genesis 2, plants, animals and humans alike are all created out of the ground, and Eden is a place of peace, harmony and mutual dependency between humans and the rest of creation. Humans are given a special responsibility to “till and keep” or “serve and protect” the garden (Genesis 2:15).

Human rule is part of our being made ‘in the image of God’. We see this rule modelled in the divine kingship of Christ, who, through his incarnation, joined the community of creation and took on human flesh. He did not consider his status as something to be exploited but gave up himself for the sake of the world (Philippians 2:1-11).

The nature of human rule over creation is therefore not about exploiting and extracting to fulfil only human ends, but is enacted out of love, mimicking God’s own love and pastoral care, and recognising that we are fellow members in God’s ‘community of creation’.

“Humans are to echo God’s own skilled, authoritative, and creative action as one who acts out of love”

Prof. Luke Bretherton*

How we use our money, as individuals and institutions, is an important part of how we exercise our divine calling to care for creation and mimic God’s rule on earth.

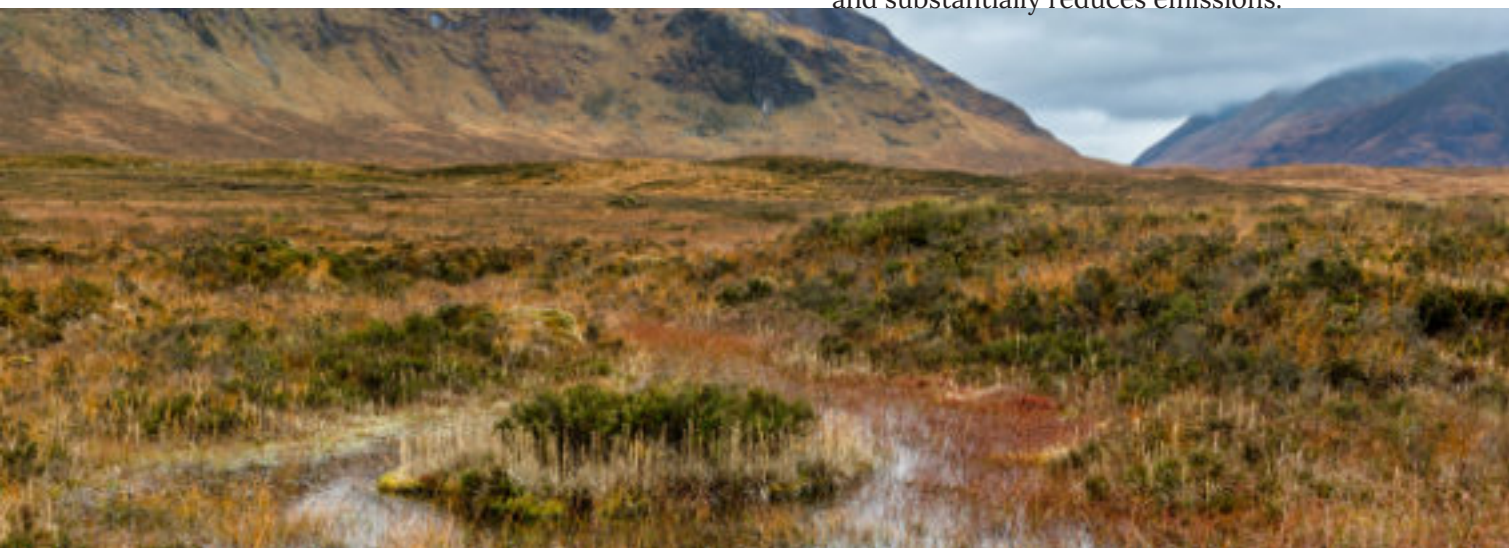
Justice for everyone

Climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, particularly the poorest in the world. These include inhabitants of low-lying island states, communities in areas affected by extreme weather events such as hurricanes, flooding and drought, and those that do not have the financial resources to develop resilience. The injustice of climate change is compounded by the fact that many of these communities have contributed least in terms of carbon emissions.



“What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”
(Micah 6:8)

Investments have the potential to exacerbate injustice or challenge it. Sadly, the Church has a history of profiting from some investments in harmful activity. While progress has been made to divest from or screen out harmful activity, investing in solutions that tackle the climate crisis is an opportunity to positively address the injustice of climate change. Acting justly with our money can include investing in activity that promotes a circular economy, develops resilience, brings economic benefits that address the imbalance and substantially reduces emissions.



Love your neighbour

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), Jesus challenged the Jewish traditional understanding of neighbour to include not just the Jewish people but anyone (even enemies). And he showed what being a neighbour really looks like: in the parable, the one who showed love and compassion was a neighbour to the man in need.

The command of Jesus to 'love our neighbours as ourselves' challenges us in all sorts of ways including how we use our financial resources. In a complex and financially interconnected world, our 'neighbours' can just as easily be people on the other side of the planet as well as those living nearby. We have a responsibility and opportunity to ensure our money is being used in a way that benefits our global neighbours as well as ourselves. Notably, being a good neighbour means having an active compassion for those in need, just as the Good Samaritan did.

"Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."

(Romans 13:10)

We are at an important juncture where we need to rapidly transition to a green economy. There is huge opportunity to invest in activity that fulfils Jesus' command to love our neighbours, and ensure the ecological and financial benefits are evenly distributed across the world and especially to those in need.



Prophetic action

Prophecy is about truth-telling and, in the Old Testament, prophets had a particular gift from God to see into the present and shed light on actions contrary to the will of God. Indeed, often their foretelling contained a warning about potential consequences if the people or nations continued to act as they were doing.

Prophecy is one of the gifts God gives to his Church. The church can be prophetic in a number of ways: through speaking up and challenging those in authority; calling out the actions of people, organisations and governments if they are acting in ways that are harmful or contrary to God's will; and also being prophetic through its actions, showing the world what the Lord requires of us.



With regard to investments, the Church also has a history of playing a powerful prophetic role through decisions to divest from harmful activities such as oil and gas. These actions have caused ripple effects in the investment world and the Church has 'punched above its weight' in terms of influence. The same can be achieved with the decision to invest in climate solutions: the Church can be a prophetic voice and leader in a just transition to a green economy.

Hope and the new creation

Christian hope is in a restored, redeemed and renewed heaven and earth. The book of Revelation gives us a vision of this restored heaven and earth. God will come down from heaven and dwell with his people, there will be no more death, mourning and pain (Revelation 21:4).

Christian hope is founded on the historic event of Jesus' resurrection and, at the resurrection, the making of a new heaven and new earth began.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

(2 Corinthians 5:1)

As part of this new creation, we are called to be 'ministers of reconciliation' (2 Corinthians 5:18). Reconciliation is ultimately about a restored relationship to our Creator but it is also about restoring the broken relationships with each other and with the rest of God's creation.



The ministry of reconciliation that has been entrusted to Christians therefore includes ministry to all of God's creation. Being 'in Christ' and a 'new creation' is about fulfilling our original mandate in Eden and exercising the godly rule of love and care for all of creation.

Financial assets are among the resources God gives to his Church to enable us to fulfil this ministry of reconciliation, and the Church's investments can be an important part of this mission. As mentioned above, there are huge opportunities for positive investment, moving beyond just a negative screening of harmful activity to actively promoting God's kingdom in the world and investing in activity that protects, nourishes and blesses life and God's creation. In this time of climate crisis the Church can invest its money in activity that focuses on the most effective ways to protect and sustain both human life and nonhuman creation.

The Green Investment Declaration

Faith institutions hold significant financial power, and the Green Investment Declaration urges them to use it for good. This initiative, from Operation Noah and JustMoney Movement, encourages churches and faith organisations to invest their money in solutions that combat the climate crisis.

By signing the declaration, faith institutions commit to aligning their investment policies with their values, moving assets into climate solutions, and communicating this to their networks. Together, signatories can create a ripple effect throughout society, inspiring others to make environmentally responsible investment decisions. Find out more by visiting:

collab.faithinvest.org/green-investment-declaration

Three stages on the journey:

Acorn

Signatories at this level make a commitment to invest in climate solutions within 2-3 years, which includes ensuring their investment policy reflects the values of the organisation and its intention to invest in climate solutions.

Sapling

Signatories have already made, and communicated, their first investment in climate solutions, and have plans for further investments.

Oak

Signatories at this level will have already invested at least 5% of assets in climate solutions, and commit to increase this within 5 years, demonstrated by a plan for investing for impact.

