

Make COP26 Count programme - April 2021

The UN Climate talks this November in Glasgow, also known as the Conference of Parties or COP26 will bring together international leaders to tackle climate change.

It's a crucial meeting: countries have been invited to present updated national plans to cut emissions and to agree the rulebook for implementing and monitoring progress on the groundbreaking Paris Agreement, signed in 2015. Scientists have told us that we need ambitious and immediate action to meet the challenge the world faces. As part of the church's mission, we need to make it clear that the time to act decisively on this issue is right now. **We are therefore inviting churches to become part of a programme designed to help them take manageable and appropriate action themselves and to build constructive relationships for climate action.**

This isn't about one-size-fits-all approaches. Make COP26 Count is designed to help you work out what your church should do – and to equip you to carry out your plans. It's flexible to allow for different church situations and preferences for action. The aim is to provide a supportive structure to make whatever action you choose focused and doable.

The programme understands action to be holistic - practical action is rooted in shared faith motivation. It will offer input from partners in other countries, bringing global perspectives to deepen our understanding of the urgency the world faces. The programme also acknowledges the political influence of the UK as hosts of COP26, which makes this year a particularly strategic time to mobilise our churches to action.

A cohort of 30 churches began the programme in January. They have found the programme and the monthly calls invaluable in moving their church to action. The success of this first group has spurred us to organise a second cohort.

This cohort is being coordinated by Hope for the Future, Christians for Creation Care (an east London and Essex network) and Christian Concern for One World (an Oxford network).

The programme combines the principles of -

Connection

Building relationships across participating churches, with global church partners, and within your church. These connections are a source of information and encouragement, facilitated by monthly Zoom calls, and groups on Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp.

Inspiration

The regular Zoom calls will often include guest speakers from churches in the global south. By learning more about how climate is affecting their communities, we will develop a deeper understanding of the urgent need for action.

Commitment

Churches are asked to identify which action they will take and focus on meeting these goals within the set time frame. Hope for the Future, Christian Creation Care and Christian Concern for One World bring practical support, training and access to expertise to make this possible.

What will the programme look like?

Churches will be asked to name two lead participants who will report back to their church. Participants will:

- Commit to the regular calls
- Plan and undertake a particular action with their church
- Share in the exchanges of information and inspiration among participants

Calls

The centrepiece of the programme will be the regular Zoom calls, when we'll have a chance to be inspired. There will also be additional sessions which focus on how to build constructive relationships with politicians in order to create change. These will be run by Hope for the Future, who are a leading agency in this field.

Information about regular guests to the Zoom calls will be given closer to the time.

	Regular Zoom Calls Mondays, 7.30pm	Additional Sessions and information Main months of action are May - July
April	26th - Introduction	Three weekly schedule
May	17th	Monday 24 May: Session 1 on creating constructive relationships with politicians. Attend either 11am or 7.30pm.
Jun	7th	Monday 14 June: Second political session. Attend either 11am or 4.30pm
June	28th	
July	19th	
Aug	Break	
Sep	13th	Close and joint celebration with first cohort
Oct		
Nov		COP26

Each church will choose actions that are relevant and appropriate for their particular congregation. Some churches are choosing to become an [Ecochurch](#); some are focussing on hosting a Climate Sunday event; some are using energy footprint tools to completing an Energy Audit of their church and create a plan to reduce emissions to Net Zero by 2030; others are hosting an energy switch day event (moving energy providers to renewable energy); all are encouraged to meet their MP to discuss COP26.

How to join

As a first step, we are asking all churches to identify a primary and secondary contact, and get agreement from their church leadership to participate in this programme. Hope for the Future has learned that securing the support of the church leadership at the outset is crucial for any successful action. **Please complete [this Google Form](#)** as soon as possible and the [participant agreement attached](#) by 19 April.

I'm an additional named contact, what's my role?

Please feel free to participate as fully as you can in the programme - everything is as open to you as it is the lead contact. However, we would like to keep attendance at monthly calls as consistent as we can, so if you don't want to commit to the calls, you can speak with your lead contact. Other than this, it is very much up to individual churches to arrange how you want to organise your participation in the programme and divide up steps you need to take to act together as a church.

How will this programme have an impact - especially politically?

You will find out far more about this at the political training sessions in May and June. But broadly speaking, meeting with MPs is the best way to get them to take action (MPs largely ignore campaign emails). Hope for the Future has gained lots of experience in facilitating MP meetings to secure concrete action (some of our best work has been with Conservative MP Alex Chalk who then introduced the Net Zero legislation into Parliament - we'll talk through some other examples in the training too).

MPs are often keen to engage with churches because they represent a wider group than just an individual. They are also not necessarily associated with environmental concerns (unlike local campaigning groups) so this gives churches additional influence in this area.

Can this be taken further?

Of course! To some extent, how far the programme goes is dependent on participant churches. There is opportunity and welcome of action taken as a cohort rather than by individual churches. Suggestions to date from individuals on the programme: engaging with the press, contributing collectively to a new or already existing campaign. It may be that some or all of the participant churches join in with other planned events.