

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Parish Environment Guide

Working together as one diocese united towards creating transformative change and healing for our common home

September 2025

Laudato Si' Centre

Introduction



God calls upon us all to serve as stewards of creation, caring for the world entrusted to us.

In the Book of Genesis, it is stated, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” *(Genesis 2:15)*.

This guide, inspired by the teachings of the late Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, seeks to equip us with the necessary tools and knowledge to fulfil this divine mandate, not just as an add on but to fully integrate it into parish life.

As Catholics, we recognise that “it is good for humanity and the world at large when we believers better recognise the ecological commitments which stem from our convictions” *(LS, #64)*.

Our faith drives our response to the ecological crisis, and our mission is to enable all to hear and respond to the cries of the earth and of its inhabitants. It is a call our new pope, Pope Leo XIV, has echoed , following the teachings of his predecessor, Pope Francis, saying: “May Laudato Si’ continue to inspire us, and may integral ecology be increasingly accepted as the right path to follow. In this way, seeds of hope will multiply.”

Within this guide, we hope you will discover accessible methods for embodying the stewardship to which God calls us, through living simply and with care in order to live out more regenerative practices and fostering nature in your green spaces—regardless of its size. Every effort contributes significantly.

We know there are parishes already on the journey to care for creation and there are many that have already done wonderful things to support the environment. However, if you are looking for ways to further improve or even looking for a place to start, hopefully you will find the information in the following guide.

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Getting Started

Starting a parish project is undoubtedly daunting and so we have pulled together a few guiding steps to help you on your way or support you as you continue on your journey. Schemes such as CAFOD LiveSimply or Eco Church are also a great for support.

1

Gather a number of volunteers to form your group

Your group will focus on being stewards of God's creation, encouraging the parish to reduce the use of resources, be efficient in its operation, support nature and bring caring for our common home into parish life. This can also be an extension of an existing group you already have in your parish or you may want to recruit volunteers by through a sign-up sheet in church, an insert in the parish newsletter, or speak with parishioners after Mass.

2

Sign the Care for Creation Promise

Once your group is established, sign the Care for Creation promise. You will find the promise at the end of this guide. It will remind your group of its purpose. Remember to email a signed copy to laudatosi@dioceseofsalford.org.uk

3

Survey your Parish

Before implementing regenerative practices, which renew and restore leaving a healthier environment, it's essential to assess your parish's current environmental footprint. Gather a team of volunteers to conduct this assessment, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment among parishioners. A survey can be found at the end of this guide.

4

Establish goals

Now that you know exactly what your parish is like, the good that already happens and areas for development, think about what you would like your targets to be and ask yourselves the question that Pope Francis posed to us, 'what kind of world do we want to leave those that come after us?' (LS, #160). What is it your group would like to achieve?

5

Action Plan

All goals are now set, and you know exactly what you have already going on in your parish. Each parish is unique, and your parish action plan will depend on what your survey has highlighted, including any opportunities. The next step is to look at actions that will help you achieve your targets. You can set your action plan up in any way that suits your group. There is an example plan at the end of this guide that you can adapt.

Living and Praying Laudato Si'

"Everything is connected. No one is saved alone" (LD, #19).



We must all work together to truly live our mission of being stewards of God's creation. We cannot do this on our own, we must work together and embed the caring for creation agenda into every aspect of our faith life, not just as an add on. Regenerative living should be woven into the fabric of parish life through liturgical practices, parish celebrations and formation.

- **Liturgical Practices:** Incorporate themes of creation care into homilies, prayers, children's liturgy and liturgical celebrations.
- **Season of Creation:** Celebrate the Season of Creation (1st September to 4th October each year) with special events and reflections on environmental stewardship.
- **Faith Formation:** Include discussions on sustainability in catechesis programmes for all age groups. If you would like any help with this, you can get in touch with the Environment Team via laudatosi@dioceseofsalford.org.uk
- **Sharing Resources:** Learn from other parishes that have successfully implemented sustainable practices.
- **Ecological retreats:** You can run your own or come for an Away Day at the Laudato Si' Centre. We can plan an ecological retreat for your parish, bespoke to the needs or wants of your group. You can also come and spend some time in nature to reflect on your saint, if your church is affiliated with one specific saint, on your church's feast day and spend time together with your parish family in our peaceful woodland.



Energy Use

"Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures; especially Brother Sun, who is the day, and through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour, and bears a likeness to You, Most High One."

Excerpt from St Francis' Canticle of the Sun

Energy use and its production can significantly harm the environment, highlighting the urgent need for a transition to more sustainable practices. Continued use of fossil fuels "risks further sea level rise, extreme weather, biodiversity loss and species extinction, as well as food scarcity, worsening health and poverty for millions of people worldwide." *(Client Earth)*.

However, we can make a difference, as noted by Pope Francis: "we can keep hoping that… allow for a decisive acceleration of energy transition, with effective commitments" *(LD, #54)*.

This underscores the importance of reducing our energy demand and then making substantial commitments to renewable energy sources to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and as Bishop John reminded us, after the COP29: "Sadly, those who are least responsible for climate change will continue to bear the brunt of its devastation.' By prioritising energy efficiency, cleaner energy options and implementing effective strategies, we can mitigate environmental damage and promote a healthier planet for current and future generations."

Over the page are some ideas in ways which you can look at your parish's energy usage to reduce your parishes' impact on the environment.

Upgrade Lighting: Lighting is a significant source of energy consumption. Replace incandescent bulbs with LED lights to reduce energy consumption. Switching from incandescent bulbs to LED lights can drastically reduce energy usage. LEDs use up to 80% less energy and last significantly longer than traditional bulbs. Consider using motion sensors or timers for outdoor lighting and in frequently used indoor areas to further minimise unnecessary energy usage - and remember to switch off lights!

Smart Thermostats: One of the largest energy expenses in church buildings is heating. To conserve energy, consider investing in a programmable thermostat. This device allows you to set temperatures according to your schedule, ensuring that your heating system operates only when needed. Additionally, regularly maintaining your heating system can enhance efficiency. Sealing drafts around windows and doors with weatherstripping or caulking prevents heat loss and keeps cool air in during summer. Don't forget to check timings when clocks change!

Heating Water: Heating water is energy-intensive, so conserving hot water can reduce energy bills. Do you need to fill the kettle before you boil it every time? Insulating your water heater and the first few feet of hot water pipes can also reduce energy loss, ensuring that less energy is used to maintain water temperature.



Use Energy-Efficient Appliances: When it's time to replace appliances, choose energy-efficient models. Look for the energy rating, which indicates that an appliance meets strict energy efficiency guidelines. Energy-efficient appliances use significantly less energy, reducing both bills and environmental impact.

Unplug Devices When Not in Use: If your church has any electronic devices, ensure they are unplugged when not in use. Many electronic devices continue to draw power even when turned off, a phenomenon known as "phantom load."

Be Mindful of Energy Use: Cultivating an energy-conscious mindset can have a profound impact. Simple habits, such as turning off lights when the church hall is not in use, using natural light during the day, and running dishwashers, if your parish has one, with full loads, can collectively make a big difference. Using a carbon calculator is also a useful place to start! A free-to-use carbon calculator can be found at https://360carbon.org/en-gb/?r=

Further Steps

Having explored some of the simple steps to get started, there are some heavyweight options to make a real difference to your energy use and our common home.

Already, parishes and schools across the diocese are exploring more sustainable ways to power their buildings, with an impressive widespread solar panel power project being carried out across the majority of our diocesan schools. Read more at: https://dioceseofsalford.org.uk/schools-solar-project/.

If you would be interested in learning more about working with our property team to explore more sustainable energy solutions, please email property@dioceseofsalford.org.uk as your first port of call. However, here are one or two ideas for you to think about:

Solar Panels: Explore the feasibility of solar energy. The diocesan curial offices at Cathedral Centre has already successfully reduced energy costs through solar installations. Whilst there is an initial investment, solar energy can dramatically reduce reliance on traditional power sources and lead to long-term savings. In fact the savings from the solar panels at Cathedral Centre have nearly paid off the initial investment. Contact the Property Team for further information and contact laudatosi@dioceseofsalford.org.uk as initial solar studies have been completed for several churches and the data can be shared with you.

Look at heating systems that run on electricity: St Mark's Hall in Pendlebury has recently upgraded their heating system to panels that run on electricity. Solar panels and batteries provide electricity to help run the heating.



Water Conservation



"Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste."

Excerpt from St Francis' Canticle of the Sun

Water gives us life, "fresh drinking water is an issue of primary importance, since it is indispensable for human life" *(LS, #28)*, yet one of the impacts of the ecological crisis is "in many places demand exceeds the sustainable supply, with dramatic consequences in the short and long term" *(LS, #28)*.

There are places where water is scarce, this essential substance to every living thing on the planet is so low in places that there are "over 2 billion people living in water stressed countries" *(World Health Organisation)*.

However, innovative water management technologies, such as advanced water recycling, is making significant strides in providing clean water in regions facing scarcity.

Below are ways you can conserve this precious resource in your parish:

Low-Flow Fixtures: Upgrading to water-efficient fixtures can greatly reduce water usage. Low-flow taps use significantly less water without sacrificing pressure. Dual-flush toilets allow users to conserve water by choosing between a full or reduced flush.

Efficient use of water: Install a water butt to collect rainwater. Water outdoor plants in the early morning or late evening to reduce evaporation. Consider using a drip irrigation system, which delivers water directly to the plant's roots, minimising waste. Ensure you are doing full loads in the dishwasher and washing machine to maximise water use.

Monitor Water Waste: Keep track of your water bills and monitor usage patterns, identifying trends can help pinpoint areas where water is being wasted. Some utilities offer online tools to help you track and compare water usage. Keep track of any leaks and fix as soon as possible.



Consumption and Waste

"Praise and bless my Lord, and give Him thanks, and serve Him with great humility." *Excerpt from St Francis' Canticle of the Sun*

It can be argued that the world has become very consumer driven, "we have "a sort of 'superdevelopment' of a wasteful and consumerist kind" *(LS, #109)* and we have forgotten the examples of the saints that came before us of a simple living. We need to get back to "learning familiarity with the simplest things and how to enjoy them" *(LS, #223)*.

However, as well as consumerism driving waste, the lack of respect for things we have left over or no longer need exacerbates waste. Educating people on what they can do with items they no longer need goes a long way to restoring hope, as Pope Francis writes "Hope would have us recognise that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems" *(LS, #61)*.

Greater Manchester has been on a recycling education drive and has managed to save 375,000 tonnes of carbon by the recycling that goes on across the city. The recycling rate for Greater Manchester is over 50% (2023/2024). Lancashire have reported that they have increased their recycling, reusing and composting figures by 1.6 per cent compared to their 21/22 statistics. The national average in England is 44%. Only 0.7% of Greater Manchester household waste was sent to landfill.

Recycling Programmes: The foundation of waste reduction lies in the Rs. Start by reducing the amount of waste generated. This can involve making conscious choices to buy less for parish events and choose products with minimal packaging. Reuse items whenever possible instead of discarding them. When you have parish events, use ceramic crockery and cutlery rather than plastic. Rather than throwing away, try to repurpose items around your parish or from event to event. If anything gets broken, try to repair it rather than first thoughts being to throw it away. Finally, ensure you recycle materials such as paper, cardboard, glass, and metals according to your local recycling guidelines. Set up recycling bins in common areas and educate all parishioners on proper recycling practices. At the Laudato Si' Centre, our flooring, tables and benches are all made from recycled materials.

Composting: Food waste is a significant contributor to overall waste. Start a composting initiative for kitchen waste from parish events as composting food scraps is an effective way to reduce waste while enriching soil for gardening. You can use the composted food to enhance the soil around your church grounds. Store food properly to extend its shelf life and make use of any leftover biscuits from parish events creatively.

Food: Food production has significant environmental impacts, from the amount of fresh water used and greenhouse gas emissions produced, to the amount of fertilisers and pesticides used. Meat and dairy have higher impacts. When catering for church events, think about the 'less and better' approach when it comes to meat. Look at the opportunities to reduce the amount of meat products you use at events and make sure the meat is ethically sourced. Put the vegan and vegetarian options first at the table and have fewer meat options towards the end.

Digital Communication: In an increasingly digital world, reducing paper waste is more manageable than ever. Encourage electronic communication to reduce paper waste, including newsletters and bulletins. For parishioners who find the internet a challenge, you could print out one copy and display it on a parish noticeboard instead.

Procurement: When looking at putting on events in your parish, make sure you opt for products made from sustainable materials that are designed for longevity and are ethically sourced. Look for items that are biodegradable or compostable and prioritise brands that have a commitment to reducing waste in their production processes. Have an idea of numbers so that you only buy what you need and to cut down on waste.



Travel

"Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather through which You give sustenance to Your creatures."

Excerpt from St Francis' Canticle of the Sun

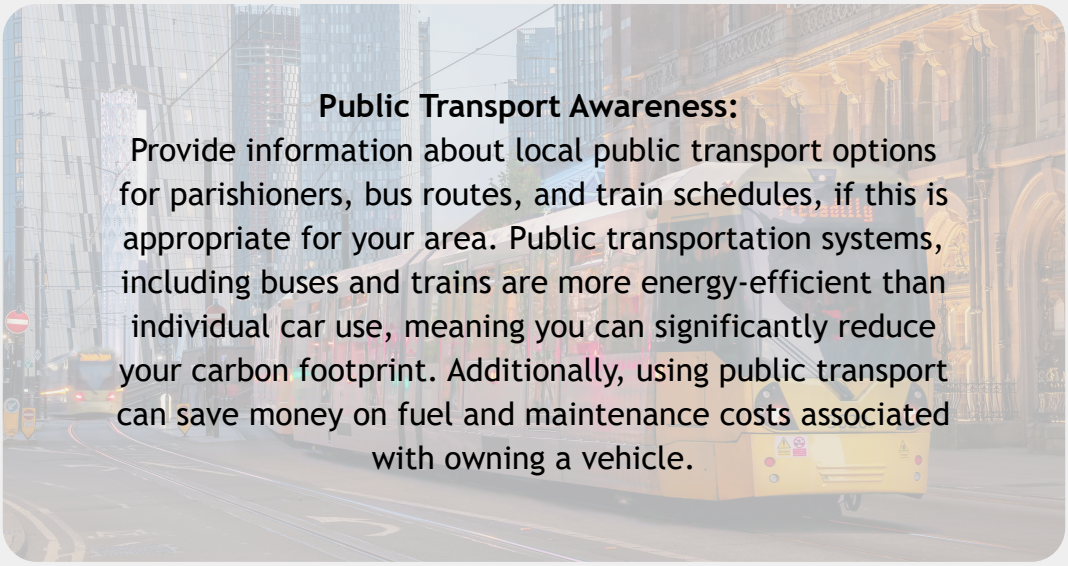
We cannot escape the impact our cars and chosen methods of transport have on the environment, "pollution that affects everyone, caused by transport" *(LS, #20)* is in the air we breathe every day.

According to a study from the Clean Air Fund, "air pollution is the largest environmental threat to human health worldwide. Thinking about our modes of transport can have such a positive impact, Clean Air Zones around the UK have seen a 'reduction in roadside air pollution by 29%" (Clean Air Fund) and reducing our reliance on cars is something that we can contribute to if we "can inspire… greater creativity and enthusiasm" *(LS, #220)* for alternative methods of transport, we can continue the positive work of the Clean Air Zones.

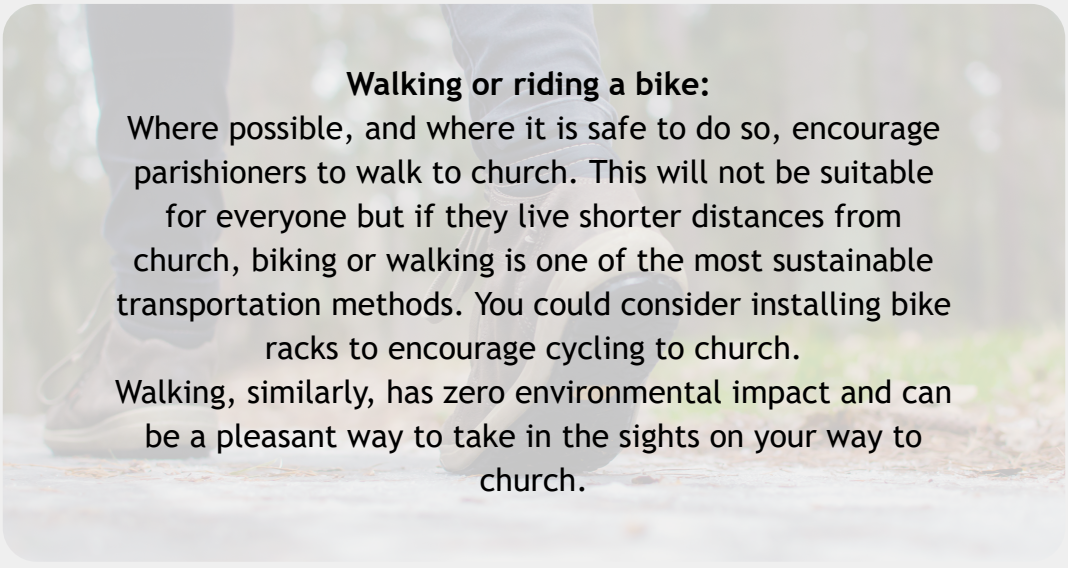
Research from The University of Manchester suggests maintaining lower air pollution levels by 20% could improve the development of a child's working memory by 6.1%, the equivalent of four weeks extra learning time per year.



Carpooling Initiatives:
Are there parishioners who are willing to drive others to and from church? Speak with our Safeguarding team about organisng carpooling among parishioners to reduce carbon footprints. Email safeguarding@dioceseofsalford.org.uk



Public Transport Awareness:
Provide information about local public transport options for parishioners, bus routes, and train schedules, if this is appropriate for your area. Public transportation systems, including buses and trains are more energy-efficient than individual car use, meaning you can significantly reduce your carbon footprint. Additionally, using public transport can save money on fuel and maintenance costs associated with owning a vehicle.



Walking or riding a bike:
Where possible, and where it is safe to do so, encourage parishioners to walk to church. This will not be suitable for everyone but if they live shorter distances from church, biking or walking is one of the most sustainable transportation methods. You could consider installing bike racks to encourage cycling to church.
Walking, similarly, has zero environmental impact and can be a pleasant way to take in the sights on your way to church.



Nature & Green Spaces

"Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste."

Excerpt from St Francis' Canticle of the Sun

There are an estimated 9.6 million people in the UK alone who are deprived of green space, according to research by Friends of the Earth UK.

Not only that but there are an estimated 440,000 people living in grey deserts according to the National Trust.

Green spaces have health and wellbeing benefits as well as providing habitats for God's creatures, which we share our planet with.

The situation can seem dire, "thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us." *(LS, #33)*. But there is so much we can do to start to put this right, Pope Francis "ask[s] everyone to accompany this pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world that is our home and to help make it more beautiful" *(LD #69)*.

Many people are responding to the call from Pope Francis. In Greater Manchester, 648,173 trees have been planted since 2017, keeping 13,000 tonnes of carbon out of the air as well as.

There are ways your parish can respond to this call as well. Please continue reading for one or two ideas:













Supporting wildlife: If your parish already has areas of grassland in its environment, leave parts of your grassland free from the mower to grow wild. This has a huge impact on the biodiversity in the area, giving the flora chance to grow and the fauna a habitat and food source. You can encourage further growth by planting wildflower seeds to create a wildflower meadow. Make sure you use peat-free compost and no herbicides or pesticides. You can also add in water sources to the environment, you may not have room for a pond but a drinking station for bees and a bird bath also have positive results. Think about removing any astroturf that has been placed and always opt for natural grass.

Increasing beneficial plants: We know that there are some parishes that do not have access to lots of space or that there are parishes who only have tarmacked areas. There are ways of bringing green space into these areas such as creating a vertical garden or planting in pots and hanging baskets. You could also make your own deep planters and fill them with lots of different flora. If you are lucky enough to have access to grassy areas or a bed, concentrate on planting pollinator friendly flowers such as lavender, salvia, cosmos, and borage for example (we have a list of plants beneficial for wildlife). Grow nature friendly herbs such as chives, rosemary, and mint to not only support nature but stimulate your senses as well.

Increasing wildlife: Having designated areas to attract wildlife around your parish grounds will certainly look beautiful as well support biodiversity. Think about putting up bird houses or feeders to attract birds, bat boxes, insect hotels, and hedgehog houses into the grounds. Create a pile of logs for amphibians and insects to live in, and don't be afraid to leave 'untidy areas' for nature such as piles of leaves and unmanaged areas.

Remember: You may not be in a position to do it all at once. Focus on one thing at a time and do that well until you are ready to try the next improvement. There are many wonderful examples in our parishes here in the Diocese of Salford. The Parish of the Nativity have done wonders with their parish grounds and received a number of awards in recognition.

In each of the above sections, there are many ideas suggested, in our further Information section, you will find guides on how to establish some of the items mentioned as well as other resources to support your development of becoming a parish that puts Christ and caring for creation at the heart of all it does.



Measuring and Celebrating Success

When there is so much to do and think about, it can be easy to lose sight of the excellent achievements your group has made. It is important to establish metrics to evaluate the success of sustainability initiatives and to celebrate your achievements.

Some metrics may include:

- Reduction in energy and water usage
- Increased recycling and composting
- Participation levels in green initiatives
- Increase in planting spaces

You could celebrate achievements through newsletters, social media, and parish gatherings, as well as informal meetings to celebrate achievements. Reinforcing the importance of these efforts and encouraging ongoing participation will be important for the legacy and continuation of such projects. And we love case studies! Please send your details to, laudatosi@dioceseofsalford.org.uk we will share your good work.

By embracing sustainability, we as Catholic parishes can live out our mission of stewardship and care for creation as well as embracing Pope Francis' Laudato Si' encyclical and Laudate Deum's exhortation. Through practical initiatives and community engagement, we will not only reduce our environmental impact but also deepen our commitment to social justice and community well-being. As Pope Francis beautifully puts, "may our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope" *(LS, #244)*.

Together, let us honour God's creation and, with hope, inspire future generations to continue this vital work. After all, "all it takes is one good person to restore hope," *(LS, #71)* and with the help of all the good people in Salford Diocese, we can restore a lot of hope.

Visiting the Laudato Si' Centre

If you looking for further inspiration about how you can ensure your parish grounds are working to support nature, then why not visit the Laudato Si' Centre?

Please see our digital brochure available here for more information about what you can do at our Centre or visit our website to see what events are upcoming.

Visit our website: laudatosicentre.org.uk
By email: laudatosi@dioceseofsalford.org.uk
Follow: @laudatosicentre on Instagram and Facebook

Mass for Care of Creation

Pope Leo has approved a new Mass for the Care of Creation, encouraging Catholics across the globe to come together in the highest form of prayer for our common home.

The translation for the text has yet to be formally approved by the Bishops' Conference of England, which is set to take place in November 2025. However, a temporary text is available for parishes and schools to celebrate the Mass during the Season of Creation.

The Mass text is available here.



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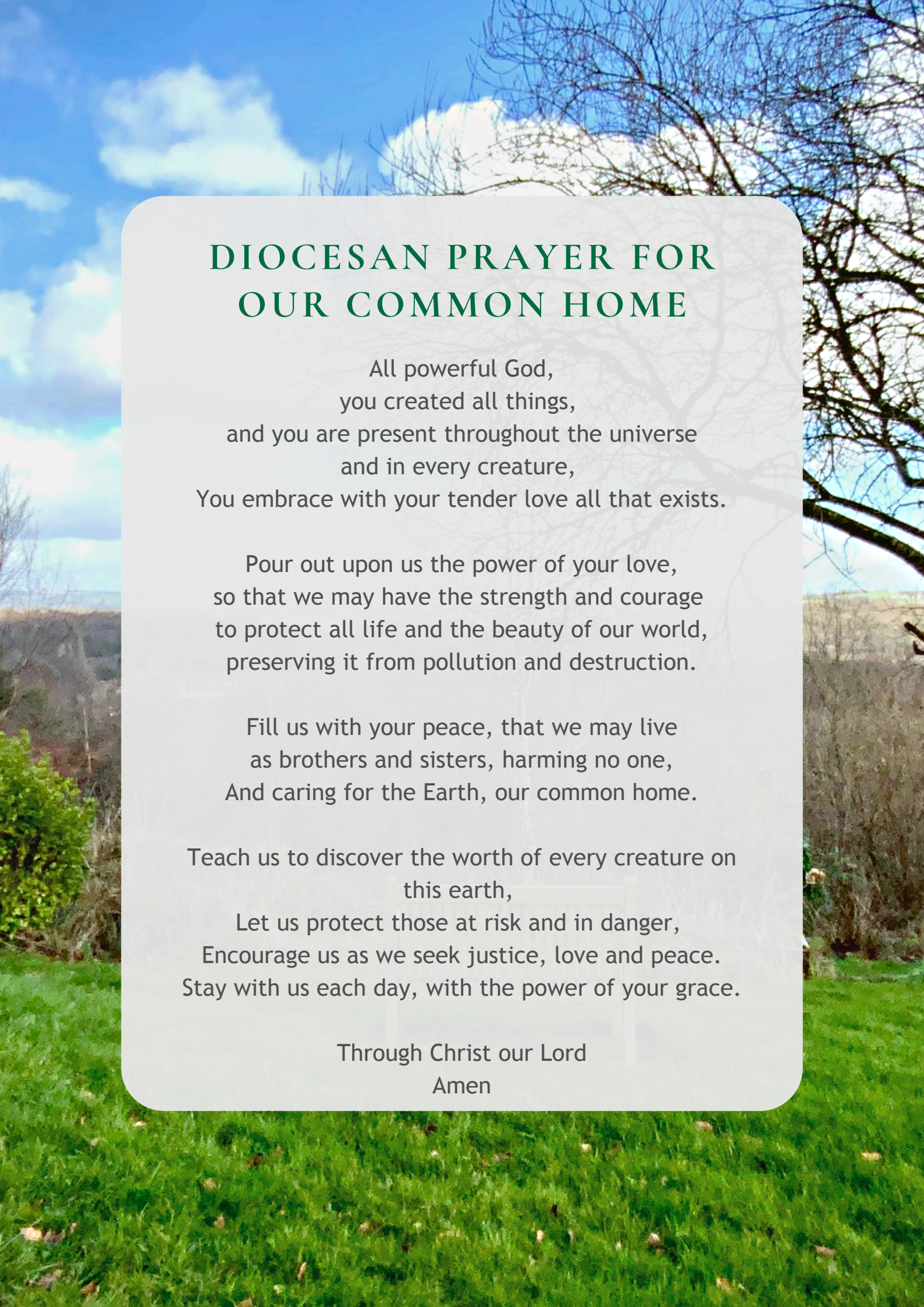


DIOCESAN PRAYER FOR OUR COMMON HOME

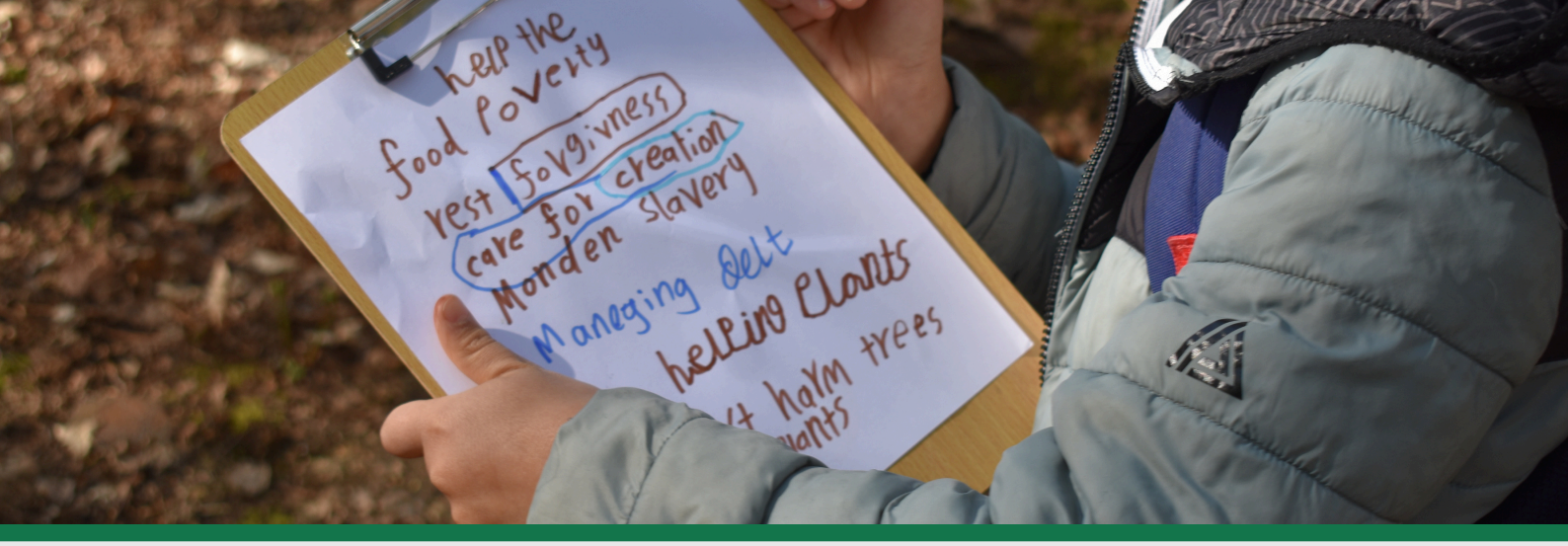
All powerful God,
you created all things,
and you are present throughout the universe
and in every creature,
You embrace with your tender love all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,
so that we may have the strength and courage
to protect all life and the beauty of our world,
preserving it from pollution and destruction.

Fill us with your peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one,
And caring for the Earth, our common home.

Teach us to discover the worth of every creature on this earth,
Let us protect those at risk and in danger,
Encourage us as we seek justice, love and peace.
Stay with us each day, with the power of your grace.

Through Christ our Lord
Amen



Care for Creation Survey

As we take the next steps to boosting sustainability and care for creation on our parishes, it can be helpful to take a moment to assess where we are at on our journey. To help you on your way, we have created a short survey to help focus in on different areas of parish life and opportunities for improvement, from prayer and liturgy, to building maintenance, nurturing green spaces, and more! You are welcome to send your completed forms by emailing laudatosi@dioceseofsalford.org.uk so we can see how best to support you on your journey!

Church name:
Address:

Prayer & Liturgy Life

Is care for creation regularly included in the prayer and liturgy life of your parish, such as bidding prayers? If so, please share details.	
Do you hold any special liturgies or prayer services to pray for our common home?	
Our schools are vibrant champions of environmental stewardship. Does your parish tap into the knowledge and enthusiasm of our young people and echo that in the life of the parish?	

Continued

Buildings

What fuel/energy is used to provide heating and hot water to your parish buildings? Is there opportunity to consider more sustainable options? Our property team is on hand to advise! Email property@dioceseofsalford.org.uk	
If you have boilers, are they maintained regularly? Do you know the age of the boilers, or how efficient they are?	
Do you have any lights that are not low energy bulbs? Can these be upgraded when bulbs next need replacing?	
Have you inspected any insulation in your buildings recently? Could this be improved to save both energy and money? Draft proofing on doors and windows is another great opportunity!	
Are there any opportunities to upgrade single-glazed windows in your buildings? Are there any broken windows that could be letting warm air escape?	
Do you have capability to ensure heating is programmed to come on only when required and only in the areas where it is required? Is this used to its full potential?	
Do any of your lights operate on a sensor? Is this something that could be developed?	

TOP TIPS

Don't forget to check what temperature your heating is set to. Dropping just a degree or two can save both energy and money!

Continued

Transport

Is your church easily accessible by public transport? If so, is there space to share this information to encourage more people to opt for sustainable transport methods?	
Do you have any at your church cycle racks? If not, is there space to install some cycle racks?	
Do you have any electric charging points for cars and/or bikes? If not, is this something that could be considered by liaising with our property team?	



Combine caring for our common home with caring for our brothers and sisters around the world by taking on a walking challenge for charity! CAFOD's Big Lent Walk is a fantastic place to start and transform into longer term commitments for some parishioners!

Nature

Do you have grounds for tree planting, gardening for wildlife, or other nature activities? If yes, please detail.	
Do you have room for a window box to encourage local wildlife with attractive plants?	
Could you opt for a bat/bird box or insect hotel to support local wildlife?	
Do you have any space for a water source to help keep local wildlife hydrated?	
Could you encourage parishioners in their own activities with seed or plant swapping? Or perhaps begin a collection of homegrown or homemade produce for the local food bank?	

Other

Take a moment to evaluate your waste. Is there more than could be recycled or reused? Could you consider composting food and garden waste?	
Revisit the items you purchase on a regular basis. Is there an opportunity to switch to Fairtrade and/or ethical products? Could you use more local suppliers? Is there an opportunity to switch to refill products to reduce plastic?	
Are you a CAFOD LiveSimply Parish or working towards an Eco Church award? If not, why not explore this? Both schemes offer a fantastic framework and wonderful resources that are both practical and prayerful!	
Do you have an environment group/committee in the parish? If not, explore setting one up.	
Any other comments/initiatives?	
Date form was completed:	
Name and position of the person who completed the form (i.e parish priest, parish admin, parishioner, member of parish leadership team.)	

If you are interested in sharing this survey and/or would like further advice or support, please email laudatosi@dioceseofsalford.org.uk.

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Care for Creation Promise

A statement of hope - rooted in the belief that we can make a difference.

Guided by our Catholic faith and a desire to protect God's creation for future generations, we make this promise to care for creation and our brothers and sisters around the world:

We have heard and will respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the people;

We recognise the need for urgent action to address the ecological crisis and the damage it is doing to our brothers and sisters;

We will set an example by making positive change and standing up to this injustice.

By signing this Promise, we commit to making better choices and to develop an action plan for change within our community.

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Signed *Print name*



May God guide us as we strive to live out His call to be responsible and compassionate stewards of the earth.

St Francis of Assisi, pray for us.

Stay with us Lord on our journey