



PRESS RELEASE

5 September 2021

## The Nations' Climate Sunday Service at Glasgow Cathedral:

### 1,950 churches and charities prepare for COP26

- The 'Climate Sunday' is the biggest ecumenical christian movement for climate justice
- **1,950 churches** from 40 denominations call on the UK government to act on climate.
- Over **600 churches** have signed the 'Time is Now' Declaration, joining around 150,000 signatories across UK civil society. **9,248 churches** involved in church greening schemes.
- The service is a key milestone on the road to COP26, the final total of participating churches and commitments will be presented to the Government during the COP26.
- A call for more churches to register and hold a 'Climate Sunday' before COP26.

On Sunday, 40 Christian denominations and charities from across the UK came together for a special service marking 'Climate Sunday' at Glasgow Cathedral, close to where the COP26 climate summit will take place in two months' time.

Those who took part included members of the clergy, Christian charities and young people, with the aim of bringing the environmental commitments made by more than 1,950 congregations before politicians and the wider Church. Many of those involved were 'speaking up' for the first time, joining thousands in signing the 'Time is Now' declaration, which calls on the UK government to go further faster on climate action before hosting the COP26 summit in November.

Over the past year, the Climate Sunday initiative has been asking churches to act, pray and speak up on climate change. As well as signing the declaration, Christians were invited to take part by holding their own Climate Sunday services in parishes across England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. They were also encouraged to get involved with a church 'greening scheme', such as A Rocha's Eco Church, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development's Live Simply or Eco Congregation in Scotland and Ireland.



The movement has involved those from many diverse church traditions, which was reflected in the worship, and represents the largest ecumenical event before COP26. Churches are also calling on the Government, in their role as chair of COP26, to be much more ambitious in seeking faster and deeper global emissions cuts and the delivery of long-promised finance to help poorer countries adapt to the climate disruption.

The Climate Sunday service was live-streamed to around 2,800 viewers and opened with representatives from the 40 denominations and Christian organisations processing into Glasgow Cathedral. As the service began, the bell of the cathedral rang, both as a call of welcome and call for climate justice, linking to the Celtic tradition of bells calling to account. Music included hymns by leading modern composers Keith and Kristyn Getty. The service closed in commending COP26 in prayer (including in Welsh and Gaelic) and pledging the nations' churches to continue climate action.

**Chris Foxon, Chairman** of Glasgow Churches Together explains, *“Glasgow Churches Together (GCT) is delighted to be partners in hosting the Nations’ Climate Sunday Service in our city’s historic cathedral. Our different denominations and churches all teach that we, the stewards of God’s creation, have responsibility for our planet’s future. GCT looks forward to our city’s hosting COP26 and see Sunday’s service as an opportunity, physically and virtually, to prepare spiritually for the challenges and opportunities COP26 offers humanity.”*

**Lord Wallace, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, said:** *“As we look to the COP26 taking place later this year, it has been an honour to join with ecumenical friends from England, Wales, and Ireland, as well as here in Scotland, to mark Climate Sunday at Glasgow Cathedral. The event took place on the first Sunday of Creation Time and was a chance to engage with the immense issues facing our planet through prayer and worship.”*



**Reverend Andrew Orr**, chair of Eco-Congregation Ireland, said *"The Climate Sunday campaign has been instrumental in inspiring churches in both Northern Ireland and the Republic to really take seriously the challenge to tackle climate change. Both parts of our island have traditionally seen themselves as unspoilt, beautiful places to live and visit: but our governments and our communities need to see the urgency of the crisis that is facing us and the planet. For us the Glasgow service will be both a climax to all the work that churches have done, and a beginning to call us to further action to protect God's world."*

**Revd Canon Carol Wardman**, Church in Wales Bishops' Adviser for Church and Society said: *"2021 has been a year of action on climate change for the Church in Wales, and we are pleased to be part of the national Climate Sunday Service ahead of the crucial COP26 meeting in Glasgow. This year has seen every diocese register with A Rocha UK's Eco Church scheme, we have declared a Climate Emergency, appointed a Climate Champion, taken the decision to dis-invest from fossil fuels, and committed ourselves to becoming carbon-neutral by 2030. Tackling climate change is literally a life-and-death issue, and we pray that governments at home and across the globe will have the courage to act before it is too late."*

**Reverend Judith Morris**, General Secretary, Baptist Union of Wales *"We are delighted to be a part of Climate Sunday which has succeeded in bringing together so many denominations and agencies seeking to protect our planet. We hope that this collective impact will help secure ambitious and bold targets at the forthcoming COP26 enabling both global and local changes to be made so as to safeguard creation and the lives of our brothers and sisters who are already experiencing the very real cost of climate change."*

**Shermara Fletcher**, Churches Together in England *"The Climate Sunday service in Glasgow Cathedral is an important and momentous occasion where the Church will gather with the global community in recognising the importance of looking after and preserving our earth. As churches across different traditions and denominations in the*



*UK and Ireland make their commitment to do their part whether that be lobbying government, committing to using renewable energy or thousands of members committing to recycling, I believe that God will be pleased in humankind returning to one of their original responsibilities and vocations, looking after our earth.”*

**Andy Atkins**, Chair of the Climate Sunday coalition, and CEO of Christian nature conservation charity A Rocha UK said: *‘It’s hugely encouraging to see so many churches making their own practical commitments on climate change - surely one of the biggest moral issues of our generation. Clearly every section of society needs to contribute to heading off climate catastrophe including urging governments to use their greater powers and resources to maximum effect. There are still 8 weeks before COP26 and we hope hundreds more churches will hold a service, commit to action, and speak up in that time.’*

At the Nations’ Climate Sunday service, thousands of churches are increasing pressure through their collective call on the UK government to be bold and ambitious at this year’s COP26. A similar presentation of faith commitments to address climate change was made to devolved government representatives from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This service is a key milestone on the road to COP26 in November, the final total of participating churches and commitments will be presented to the Government during the COP conference itself.

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**For images, case studies and interviews with spokespeople please contact:**

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**Notes to Editors:**

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

- Andy Atkins, Chair of Climate Sunday and CEO of A Rocha UK
- Stephen Curran, Manager of Eco Congregation Scotland, Steering Committee for Climate Sunday
- Reverend Judith Morris, General Secretary of Baptist Union of Wales
- Reverend Andrew Orr, Church of Ireland representative and chair of Eco-Congregation Ireland
- Shermara Fletcher, Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic & Multi-cultural Relations, Churches Together in England



**1) Glasgow Cathedral** is already a focus for faith representatives attending COP26 in the city later this year. Also known as St Mungo's or the High Kirk, the medieval cathedral has centuries of history that resonate in this year of COP26. St Mungo, founder and patron of the city, was buried there in 614 and the church dedicated to him became an important place of pilgrimage. In 2021 the city and Cathedral will again warmly welcome pilgrims among the many thousands of visitors coming to COP26, praying and calling for nations to tackle the harm caused by global warming.

**2) 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.
- 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 Bishops' 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 Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Churches can still register a Climate Sunday service and find resources at [www.climatesunday.org](http://www.climatesunday.org)

### 3) Church Greening Schemes

The 'Greening schemes' are award based programmes which equip churches to take action on the environment, in their church and local community. They are encouraged to do this through worship and teaching, reducing carbon emissions, land and individual lifestyles, and to speak up on the climate.

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. 9,248 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>

**4) 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>