

The Lay Community of Saint Benedict

14. Environmental Policy and Statement of Intent

Review cycle: 2 years	Reviewed by Council on: 16th September 2023 Approved by Trustees on: 18 th November 2023	Next review: September 2025
Owner:	Caring for Creation group	

This Statement of Intent was approved by the Community's Trustees on 18 November 2023.

- The Rule and simplicity of lifestyle:** In seeking to live holy communion, create holy space and offer holy service as reflected in a life of hospitality, prayer and work, the Community promotes the principles of Christian life contained in the Rule of St Benedict. One of the features of the Rule is an emphasis on simplicity of lifestyle and stewardship of resources.
- Laudato Si':** In this context the Community is conscious of the need to respond to the challenges identified by Pope Francis in his encyclical letter of 2015 "Laudato Si' – On Care for Our Common Home." Laudato Si' is an important addition to Catholic social teaching and is held in high regard not only by Roman Catholics but also by Christians of other denominations and members of other religions and none.
- The challenges identified by Laudato Si':** In Laudato Si' Pope Francis recognises the many serious impacts of recent human activity on the fragile and complex ecosystems that support all life on earth. He notes that the consequences of these changes are greatest for the poorest and most marginalised of earth's peoples. He issues an urgent call to repentance and action addressed to every human person, and in particular to those who possess more resources and economic and political power. He speaks of "the inseparable bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace" (LS, 10). Amongst many calls to action he says "All Christian communities have an important role to play in ecological education an education in responsible simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God's world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment" (LS, 214). All members of the Community are strongly recommended to read Laudato Si'.
- Statement of intent:** The Community recognises its responsibility, and that of its members, to encourage a way of life which respects the natural world, and provides a sustainable model for others to follow. It intends to be a model of love and care for God's creation. It intends in particular to take and to promote effective action on the environmental issues facing the world both:
 - in the ways in which the Community organises itself and arranges events and activities; and
 - by encouraging members and others to consider how they might do so on a personal basis in their daily lives.
- Internal implementation:** The Community intends to prepare and from time to time review a separate internal implementation paper setting out how it intends to take and promote effective action on the environmental issues facing the world in the ways in which it organises itself and arranges events and activities. This is covered in Annex 1.

6. **Encouraging members and others:** The Community also intends to prepare, review and circulate from time-to-time collections of suggestions encouraging members and others to consider how, on a personal basis, they might live simply and sustainably and, through their prayers, example and encouragement, might influence others to do likewise and so to help care for our common home. This is covered in Annex 2.

7. **Limitations on campaigning:** Given the requirements of its charitable status and its inclusive ethos, the Community does not engage in, and does not wish to be perceived as engaging in, campaigning or political activities. However, it fully recognises the freedom of its members as individuals to do so, provided there is no suggestion they are endorsed by or performed on behalf of the Community.

8. **Other arrangements:** The Community also intends:
 - (a) to review from time to time (and at least every two years) the performance of the Community in relation to care for creation;
 - (b) to comply with all relevant environmental legislation that applies to the Community;
 - (c) where relevant, to integrate care for creation considerations into the Community's decision making processes;
 - (d) to raise awareness of caring for creation issues among the Community's officers, employees and contractors and, where relevant to provide them with appropriate information and training; and
 - (e) where relevant, to take caring for creation issues into consideration in the procurement of goods and services.

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ANNEX 1: Internal Implementation

Background

1. In the Statement of Intent which was approved by the Community's Council on 16 September 2023 and by its Trustees on 18 November 2023 the Community recognised its responsibility, and that of its members, actively to seek and encourage a way of life which respects the natural world, and provides a sustainable model for others to follow. It intends to be a model of love and care for God's creation. It intends in particular to take and to promote effective action on the environmental issues facing the world both:
 - (c) in the ways in which the Community organises itself and arranges events and activities; and
 - (d) by encouraging and others to consider how they might do so on a personal basis in their daily lives.
2. The Statement of Intent envisages that the Community will prepare and from time to time review a separate internal implementation paper setting out how it intends to take and promote effective action on the environmental issues facing the world in the ways in which it organises itself and arranges events and activities. This is the first such internal implementation paper.

Caring for Creation group

3. The Community has formed a Caring for Creation group to provide additional focus and to encourage and support Community members and others in taking prayerful action, personally and in collaboration with others, in response to the climate and ecological emergency.
4. The Caring for Creation group links with and is responsible to the Council through the Formation and Spirituality team.

Encouraging members and others

5. The Community also intends through the Caring for Creation group to prepare, review and circulate from time to time collections of suggestions encouraging members and others to consider how, on a personal basis, they might live simply and sustainably and, through their prayers, example and encouragement, might influence others to do likewise and so to help care for our common home. This is covered in Annex 2.

Virtual, in-person and hybrid gatherings

6. In recent years, and in particular since the Covid pandemic and associated lockdowns, it has been possible to hold virtual gatherings of the Community, mainly by Zoom calls. This has included the Easter triduum, the Summer Gathering, regional meetings, meetings of the Council, the Trustees and teams and groups, webinars and daily prayers in an online chapel and other meeting spaces. Virtual attendance has the advantages of increasing accessibility and reducing the environmental impact and cost of travelling. On the other hand, attendance in person enhances the quality of the experience and the sense of community. Hybrid gatherings are often possible, albeit at the expense of some inconvenience and loss of flexibility.

7. Where significant gatherings are held in person, the Community intends to facilitate hybrid attendance when it is reasonably practicable to do so, with a view to retaining the advantages of virtual attendance for at least some of those who wish to attend in that way.

Travel to in-person gatherings

8. With a view to reducing the carbon footprint of its in-person gatherings, the Community intends:
 - to encourage those attending in person to do so by public transport and to avoid flying;
 - where appropriate, to arrange lifts to the venue from train stations, bus stops etc and *vice versa* for those travelling by public transport; and
 - to encourage those travelling by car to share lifts.

Catering at in-person gatherings

9. To the extent that the Community can influence the catering at in-person events (which may be limited where external caterers are involved, for example at Worth Abbey or Cefn Lea), it intends to ensure or encourage:
 - a reduction of carbon footprint by including vegetarian and/or vegan options at all meals, and meat-free meals for all at some meals;
 - the use of Fair Trade and locally sourced products;
 - avoiding so far as reasonably practicable the use of disposable crockery and cutlery and other single use plastic items;
 - avoiding unnecessary waste by careful ordering and/or co-ordinated bringing and sharing and by encouraging participants to take away afterwards any unconsumed food and drink and other supplies; and
 - appropriate management and recycling of food and other waste,while taking into account any special dietary requirements of those attending.

Use of power and water at in-person gatherings

10. The Community intends to encourage those attending in-person gatherings to conserve power and water by:
 - avoiding excessive use of heating and air conditioning;
 - avoiding the unnecessary loss of warm or air conditioned by leaving doors and windows open more than is required for appropriate ventilation;
 - switching off lights and electrical appliances when they are not in use; and
 - not wasting water (and particularly hot water) by leaving taps running or over-filling kettles.

Use of paper

11. The Community intends to promote the responsible use of paper by;

- using projection and limiting the use of hard copy service sheets, hand-outs, meeting papers etc at in-person gatherings (this may include making them available electronically for those who opt to view them on portable devices);
- making Listen and other publications available electronically for those who opt to receive them in this way rather than in hard copy form;
- where hard copy papers are used, considering the use of recycled and/or lighter-weight paper; and
- recycling waste paper and cardboard (after shredding where appropriate for reasons of confidentiality, data protection etc).

Banking and investment arrangements

12. The Community currently has annual income and expenditure of about £70,000 and net assets (including reserves) of about £100,000. The Community's finances are relatively modest and straightforward and require access to banking and deposit services. The Community has not hitherto felt any need to make any other financial investments.

13. The Community intends that any bankers appointed to provide banking and deposit services to the Community should have an approach to environmental issues that is, as far as possible, compatible with the Community's ethos, charitable status and approach to environmental issues, without compromising the Community's legal obligations as a charity regarding its financial best interests.

14. The Community's bankers are currently CAF Bank Limited (CAF Bank). Eligible deposits with CAF Bank are protected up to a total of £85,000 by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. CAF Bank is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), which is a registered charity. Most of CAF Bank's loans and advances to banks are to the Bank of England. Most of the debt securities held by it are issued by multilateral development banks for maturities of up to five years. Most of CAF Bank's loans and advances to customers are to charities. The environmental policy statement of intent of CAF and CAF Bank is available at caf-environmental-policy.pdf (cafonline.org) and these banking arrangements seem satisfactory.

Restrictions on campaigning and political activities

15. Having regard to:

- (a) the nature of the Community as one for those who embrace Benedictine spirituality;
- (b) the Community's inclusive ethos and its policy on Toleration and Mutual Respect, a copy of which is available on the Community's website; and
- (c) the requirements of the Community's charitable status,

the Community does not engage, and does not want to be perceived as engaging, in campaigning or political activities.

16. However, as indicated above, the Community intends to make suggestions encouraging members and others to consider how, on a personal basis, they might live simply and sustainably and, through their prayers, example and encouragement, might influence others to do likewise and so to help care for our common home. It is the personal responsibility of those to whom any such suggestions are made to decide how they should respond.
17. The Community recognises that the extent to which individuals can have an impact on care for creation may be significantly enhanced if they not only live simply and sustainably but also engage in appropriate campaigning and political activities not only in the UK but also internationally. The Community has no wish to inhibit members and others from engaging in such activities provided that there is no suggestion that they are endorsed by or performed on behalf of the Community.

Other arrangements

18. The Community also intends:

- (f) to review from time to time (and at least every two years) the performance of the Community in relation to care for creation;
- (g) to comply with all relevant environmental legislation that applies to the Community;
- (h) where relevant, to integrate care for creation considerations into the Community's decision making processes;
- (i) to raise awareness of caring for creation issues among the Community's officers, employees and contractors and, where relevant to provide them with appropriate information and training; and
- (j) where relevant, to take caring for creation issues into consideration in the procurement of goods and services.

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ANNEX 2: Suggestions to Consider for Individuals

Introduction

1. **Statement of Intent and internal implementation:** A Statement of Intent in relation to Caring for Creation was approved by the Community's Council on 16 September 2023 and by its Trustees on 18 November 2023. The Statement of Intent envisages that the Community will prepare and from time to time review a separate internal implementation paper setting out how it intends to take and promote effective action on the environmental issues facing the world in the ways in which it organises itself and arranges events and activities. This is covered in Annex 1.
2. **Suggestions to consider:** The Statement of Intent also envisages that the Community will from time to time prepare, review and circulate collections of suggestions encouraging members and others to consider how, on a personal basis, they might live simply and sustainably and, through their prayers, example and encouragement, might influence others to do likewise and so to help care for our common home. This document sets out further details of how it is intended that this should be done.
3. **Nature of suggestions:** The suggestions to be made as part of this process are intended to be for members to consider and not as rules or requirements imposed by the Community. It is the personal responsibility of those to whom any such suggestions are made to decide how they should respond. It is acknowledged that individual members' circumstances may be such that it is not feasible for them to adopt particular suggestions. Similarly, some suggestions may cover a spectrum of possible actions not all of which are feasible.
4. **Campaigning and political activities:** Having regard to:
 - (d) the nature of the Community as one for those who embrace Benedictine spirituality;
 - (e) the Community's inclusive ethos and its policy on Toleration and Mutual Respect, a copy of which is available on the Community's website (see 1 above); and
 - (f) the requirements of the Community's charitable status,the Community does not engage, and does not want to be perceived as engaging, in campaigning or political activities.

The Community nevertheless recognises that the extent to which individuals can have an impact on caring for creation may be significantly enhanced if they not only live simply and sustainably but also engage in appropriate campaigning and political activities both in the UK and internationally. The Community has no wish to inhibit members and others from engaging in such activities provided that there is no suggestion that they are endorsed by or performed on behalf of the Community.
5. **Approval of suggestions:** Any suggestions to be made to members and/or others as part of this process must first be approved by two members of the Community's Caring for Creation group, and further approved by the Community Leader (who may also consult with Council, trustees or others) prior to publication.

As a charity the Community cannot suggest any illegal acts or acts of civil disobedience.

Further work is likely to be necessary to develop a framework and process for the approval and “curation” of suggestions and resources and related matters.

6. **Keeping oneself informed:** Members and others are encouraged to keep themselves informed about caring for creation issues. The Caring for Creation group intends to draw their attention (by means of all the Community’s established means of communication) to documents, links, blogs and other resources that may be helpful in this regard. Leading examples include:
 - “Laudato Si’”, which is available at [Laudato si' \(24 May 2015\) | Francis \(vatican.va\)](#);
 - CAFOD’s materials about Laudato Si’, which are available at: [Laudato Si' encyclical resources \(cafod.org.uk\)](#); and
 - Nicholas Holtam’s book “Sleepers Wake – Getting Serious about Climate Change”.
7. **Other resources:** The Caring for Creation group is conscious that resources containing suggestions and recommendations are made available by other organisations, such as the Ethical Consumer, whose website is available at <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/>. Where appropriate, it may be better to refer members and others to this and other websites (rather than risk reinventing the wheel not terribly well) and to focus instead on how suggestions can add value from an LCSB / Benedictine / Laudato Si’ perspective. If this is done, care may need to be taken to ensure that references to such resources are not taken as endorsing them without reservation in case they include material that is not consistent with the Community’s ethos.
8. **Form of suggestions:** It is envisaged that suggestions will be made in a number of different forms. In view of the breadth, dynamism and pace of change of the field covered by Laudato Si’, it is not currently intended to seek to prepare a single consolidated collection of suggestions. It is intended instead to issue a series of collections of suggestions, each based on a single theme. Members and others will be encouraged to respond with their own comments and suggestions with a view to each collection being improved and updated in a dynamic way.
9. **Possible themes:** The themes to be covered may include:
 - (a) heating, insulation and ventilation;
 - (b) travel (including commuting to work, holidays and other travel);
 - (c) carbon offsetting arrangements;
 - (d) water;
 - (e) food and drink;
 - (f) clothing and fabrics;
 - (g) gardening and protecting biodiversity;
 - (h) purchasing (including domestic appliances, lighting etc);

- (i) recycling and waste;
- (j) savings and investments;
- (k) charitable and other giving; and
- (l) collaborating with others (including local parishes) and joining other organisations.

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