

Building support for fossil fuel disinvestment

Bright Now is part of a global movement calling for institutions to withdraw their investments from fossil fuel companies. Operation Noah is encouraging supporters to help raise awareness and build support for the campaign in their church community and local area. All resources mentioned below, plus additional ones are available on the Bright Now website www.brightnow.org.uk/resources. There are many ways that individuals, groups or local churches can begin to inform others and encourage action. Here are a few ideas to get started:

1. Set up a local action group or get involved in a network

‘It is not good that the man should be alone’: find a friend! Having at least one person to work with will help you feel supported even if you end up doing all the work. Once you have generated interest with your activities you can enlarge your group to look at taking the issues further and work on shared actions at a church, local or regional level. There may be an existing environment group or other relevant group in your area where you could raise the issue of fossil fuel disinvestment and tap into an already active network. For example:

- Eco-Congregation group or equivalent for other denominations
- Churches Together local forum
- Diocesan Environment Network – contact your local Diocesan Environment Officer
- Student Christian Movement, Christian Ecology Link members, etc

You can contact Operation Noah to put you in touch with other active supporters in your area.

2. Distribute the report *Bright Now: towards fossil free Churches*

You can send a copy of the report together with a letter explaining why you support the disinvestment campaign to key people within your church. For example, clergy members, the chair of your Deanery/Diocesan Synod, the bishop for your diocese, the chair of the local Methodist Circuit or District Synod, or equivalents for other denominations. As part of this you can invite them to show their support for any local campaign that you are building and to come along to any events being organised. The report can be downloaded or hard copies requested from Operation Noah.



3. Ask to meet with church officials

Ask to meet with your bishop or regional church leaders to discuss the issues and the Church’s stance on fossil fuel disinvestment. Take along a copy of the above report plus the science briefing that gives an outline of the most up-to-date science regarding human-induced climate change.

4. Give a talk at a meeting or other event

Arrange to give a presentation about climate change, and how the church can respond, at any relevant local meetings or events. For example, a Parish Church Council, Deanery Synod, District meeting or equivalent meeting. This would be a first step if you hope to put forward a Motion on disinvestment through official church channels. A PowerPoint presentation is available on the website.

5. Put an article in your church magazine or local press

There is a sample article on the website for use in church publications. You can also write a press release about any local events or film screenings that you are organising and send this to local press and radio to highlight the campaign.

6. Screen a film and host a discussion about climate change and the disinvestment movement

You can host an event at your church or get together with a group of churches in the area. There are several films on the Bright Now website. We recommend *Do the Math* from 350.org as a good overview of the key facts and science underpinning the fossil fuel disinvestment movement.



The full recording of the London Fossil Free Tour is also available, with Bill McKibben and other notable speakers, Naomi Klein and Kumi Naidoo. You could show snippets of this event, including Christian speaker Siobhan Grimes' moving speech (starts at 1hr 4mins, 3 minutes duration). There is also a short clip of Archbishop Desmond Tutu speaking on this topic.

After the film you could facilitate a discussion about the important role of the Church on this issue. We have a set of Frequently Asked Questions with answers available on the website to help guide the discussion and there is also a discussion guide on the resources section of the *Do the Math* website. You could distribute copies of the Bright Now campaign report and our science briefing to give people further up-to-date information.

You are more likely to encourage attendance by including time for refreshments (such as cakes or popcorn) and chat. After the film, take the opportunity to encourage people to take further action. For example: sign the petition, sign a letter, work on local actions, etc.

7. Organise a sermon or other service input



If a clergy member or church leader in your area is supportive of the campaign, you could ask them to preach on this topic, or you might offer to preach or to speak in a service. Operation Noah has a wealth of resources for churches, focusing on our response to climate change and including sermon outlines, prayers, hymns, Bible studies and also a Lent course.

A church service focused on climate change could be held to mark significant environmental events and also to reflect on how we use our money as a way to witness to our faith:

- Ash Wednesday – to mark Operation Noah’s Ash Wednesday Declaration. See www.operationnoah.org/ash-wednesday-declaration
- World Water Day (22 March), Earth Hour (29 March) and Earth Day (22 April)
- World Environment Day (5 June) and Environment Sunday (8 June 2014)
- Creation Time – 1 September to 4 October
- National Ethical Investment Week – mid-October.

See Operation Noah’s website for additional resources for churches on climate change: www.operationnoah.org/resources and www.operationnoah.org/ambassadors.

8. Organise a role play or a Bible study

A fun role-play is available on the website and you can use this at a meeting or with a youth group (this is adapted with permission from GreenFaith). There is also a Bible study to inspire further reflection.

9. Get creative!

There are lots of other creative things you can do to get people’s attention. Try a brainstorm session with your group to come up with more ideas. A group of supporters performed a Fossil Free Nativity play on the steps of St Paul’s Cathedral last December to raise awareness about climate change and the fossil free movement.



10. Social media

You can follow the campaign and encourage others to do so on Twitter and Facebook: www.twitter.com/OperationNoah (Hashtag: #fossilfreechurches) www.facebook.com/OperationNoah

Actions

Now that you have raised awareness in your church community and inspired action, here are some ways people can call on our churches to act prophetically on disinvestment.

1. Sign the online petition

Operation Noah has created three national petitions asking the Church of England, the Church in Wales and the Methodist Church in Britain to disinvest from fossil fuel companies. This is a simple and immediate action that will help church members to engage with the issues. These petitions will enable us to demonstrate the level of support for the campaign to those with responsibility for investment policy within the Churches. There is a petition to the Church of Scotland already created by a Scottish group. It is also possible to set up your own regional petition through the gofossilfree.org website. See the links below:

- Church of England petition: campaigns.gofossilfree.org/p/CofE
- Church in Wales petition: campaigns.gofossilfree.org/p/churchinwales
- Methodist Church in Britain petition: campaigns.gofossilfree.org/p/methodistUK
- Church of Scotland petition: campaigns.gofossilfree.org/petitions/divest-the-church-of-scotland-from-fossil-fuels
- To start your own regional petition: campaigns.gofossilfree.org

2. Raise the issue with national Church bodies

See the resource available on the website about how to raise your concern through official Church channels for debate at the Church of England General Synod or the Methodist Conference.

3. Write to investment policy decision makers

See the resource available on the website for lobbying those with direct responsibility for Church investments at a national level. A sample letter and contact details are provided.

Further sources of information and resources

www.brightnow.org.uk/resources

Campaign resources, sample letters and article, PowerPoint presentation, science briefing, film clips, church case studies, information on church finance and investment, etc

www.gofossilfree.org

Global fossil fuel divestment campaign – resources available for religious institutions

www.greenfaith.org/programs/divest-and-reinvest

GreenFaith (interfaith partners for the environment). Divestment campaign.

www.yourfaithyourfinance.org

Your Faith Your Finance: a guide to money, faith and ethics

www.shareaction.org/greenlightcampaign

Green Light Campaign, Share Action. Using pension power to protect our planet.



The Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT
Email: campaigns@operationnoah.org, Phone: 07804 059426
www.operationnoah.org