



Carbon Neutral Church by 2030

ELCF's own environmental system – the church's Environment Diploma

Since 2001 the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has used its own diploma for its environment programme, tailored to the needs of parishes. It has been regularly updated, and a revised version of the handbook is in process. The church's environment programme is widely used in parishes. The Environment Diploma serves as a target in the fulfilment of the church's energy and climate strategy goals, and it is where many of the goals outlined in the strategy have also been refined.

The parishes and parish unions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland are independent in their decision making. Targets applying to the entire church and every parish are set out in the strategy. Parishes are invited to take part in the Evangelical Lutheran Church's climate work parties: let's make the church carbon neutral by 2030!

By its concrete actions to mitigate climate change, the church is a bearer of hope. In the midst of climate anxiety and pessimism we want to create hope and inspire the church's members and others to work to mitigate climate change. We still have time to act – but there is no time to lose!

General goals

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is committed to national and international efforts to limit climate change, with a goal of restricting warming to an increase of 1.5 degrees from the pre-industrial age. The church will be carbon neutral in 2030. By then greenhouse gas emissions will have been reduced by 80% from the current levels, while the remaining 20% will be offset wherever possible – for example, by focusing on the carbon stock of the forests owned by the parishes.

To achieve these goals, climate emissions from the church's properties will be mapped using information from the Basis property register. The carbon stock and carbon sink of the forests owned by the church will be estimated based on the parishes' forest resource data. The church's carbon neutrality will be implemented in local parishes in a financially responsible way. The National Church Council will help the parishes with advice and support.

The church encourages and challenges its members, other actors in society and decision makers in their work for the climate and carbon neutrality. The church is a significant advocate for the climate in Finland and part of the global ecumenical community of churches.

Goal 1: Reduction of CO2 emissions from buildings

- Recommendation 1: Oil heating to be phased out by 2025.
- Recommendation 2: Electricity produced with fossil fuels to be phased out by 2025.
- Recommendation 3: Parishes to determine their buildings' energy consumption and record it in the Basis system by the end of 2025. Buildings' energy performance to be improved.
- Recommendation 4: The National Church Council to provide energy advice to parishes.
- Recommendation 5: Less used facilities to be abandoned, and sharing of space to be increased.

Goal 2: Reduction of activities' carbon footprint

- Recommendation 1: The church to move towards sustainable procurement – to include participation in climate-friendly joint procurement.
- Recommendation 2: The church to promote climate-friendly food. Food waste to be reduced.
- Recommendation 3: The church to promote low-emission travel and improve the opportunities for remote meeting participation. Flying to be reduced, and associated emissions to be offset.
- Recommendation 4: All roadside churches to have an electric charging station by 2021.
- Recommendation 5: The church's investment activities to take climate goals into account. The church to avoid direct investment in companies producing fossil fuels.

Goal 3: Compensate for emissions

- Recommendation 1: To explore ways of offsetting climate emissions that are neither technically nor economically feasible.
- Recommendation 2: To assess the carbon stock status of parish-owned land (especially forests and bogs) and their value as carbon sinks by the end of 2020. To develop a plan and recommend sustainable ways of ecologically, socially, culturally and economically managing parishes' forests, and improve their status as carbon stocks and value as carbon sinks.

Goal 4: The church plays an active role as a social actor and debater

- Recommendation 1: The church to encourage and challenge its members to engage in climate work and carbon neutrality goals.
- Recommendation 2: To raise awareness of climate responsibilities among confirmation training participants. Confirmation training to be implemented in an environmentally friendly way (the Green Confirmation Criteria).
- Recommendation 3: The church to demand bold climate action from decision makers.
- Recommendation 4: Parishes to work with other parishes, municipalities, cities, organisations and other stakeholders to achieve climate goals.
- Recommendation 5: The church to promote global climate justice.

Goal 5: Parishes and the National Church Council commit to climate work

- Recommendation 1: All parishes to implement the church's energy and climate strategy goals.
- Recommendation 2: The National Church Council to allocate sufficient resources to monitoring the attainment of these climate goals and supporting the work of the parishes. The National Church Council to appoint a coordinator and allocate adequate financial resources to their work.
- Recommendation 3: The National Church Council to provide an operational model that invites parishioners and local actors to seek local carbon neutral solutions.
- Recommendation 4: Every parish and diocesan chapter, as well as the National Church Council, to have the church's Environmental Diploma by 2025.
- Recommendation 5: The attainment and adequacy of the goals to be assessed annually.

Roadmap:

- 2019: Preparation of the church's climate strategy. Funding application in cooperation with organisations like SYKE. The Basis register in use in every parish. Mapping of carbon stocks and survey of carbon sinks.
- 2020: Survey of property emissions. Decisions, joint purchasing, consultation.
- 2025: An oil-free church. Electricity to be used fossil-free. Emission compensation. All parishes have the church's Environmental Diploma.
- 2030: A carbon neutral and fossil-free church.

