

The Bishop of Norwich, Graham Usher, has accepted the invitation of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to lead the Church of England's Environment Church to tackle the grave existential crises of climate change and biodiversity



Diocese of Norwich

Bishop Graham will work with the Mission and Public Affairs department to lead the Church of England's Environment Programme, including the commitment to net-zero carbon impacts across the Church by 2030 set by General Synod in February 2020.

He will succeed the Bishop of Salisbury, Nicholas Holtam, who retires later in the year.

Making the announcement, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "The crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are the most grave and existential we face: as human beings, as a Church and as a global community. We welcome Bishop Graham and his long expertise as he steps into the role of Lead Bishop for the Environment. May we pray for him, and the vital work of the Environment Programme.

"We are already seeing the devastating effects of climate change around the world, and we know that the poorest and most vulnerable are bearing the greatest burden. This will be a key year for the UK's approach to climate change internationally: In June, we will be hosting the G7. In November, Glasgow will host COP26. The Environment Bill will be coming to Parliament. Now is the time for bold, deliberate, collaborative action.

"The pandemic has foreshadowed the chaos and destruction that will follow should we not cease our exploitation of the environment, our greed for finite resources and the neglect of our interconnected nature on this precious planet. The Church is called to be a people of hope; to live in harmony with our world; to treasure God's creation and our brothers and sisters around the globe."

Graham Usher has been Bishop of Norwich since June 2019 and will take over the role from the Bishop of Salisbury, Nicholas Holtam, who has led the Environment Programme since 2014 whose retirement was announced earlier this year.

Bishop Graham's first degree was in ecological science from Edinburgh University. He has written two books about Spirituality and landscape: Places of Enchantment, Meeting God in Landscapes (2012) and The Way Under Our Feet: A Spirituality of Walking, published in 2020.

He was previously a member of the Northumberland National Park Authority and chaired the Northeast Advisory Committee of the Forestry Committee. He is a keen beekeeper and is undertaking work to enhance the biodiversity of the historic Bishop's Gardens in Norwich.

Every candidate that Bishop Graham confirms receives a hazel tree to plant as a nod to Mother Julian of Norwich, the 14th century mystic, who reflected on the glory of God as she held a hazelnut in the palm of her hand.

He tweets from [@bishopnorwich](https://twitter.com/bishopnorwich).

Commenting on his appointment, The Bishop of Norwich, Graham Usher, said: "I am delighted to have been asked to build on Bishop Nicholas Holtam's outstanding environmental leadership within the Church of England. Responding to the climate and biodiversity crises that the

planet faces is not a luxury in the ministry of the Church but an urgent imperative for our mission.

“The care of creation is at the heart of the Anglican Communion’s marks of mission and I hope it will also play a key part in the life of every church community and every disciple of Jesus Christ.”

The Church of England’s Environment Programme is working to develop tools and resources to enable churches, schools, and dioceses to rise to the challenge of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. Beyond numbers and targets, it promotes a care for creation that is deep rooted in Christian faith and discipleship.

Earlier this month, the results of the [first phase of a energy footprinting tool](#) (EFT) showed that the estimated total net carbon footprint for the Church of England’s church buildings (based on energy use alone) is around 185,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases, measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent or tCO₂e. Nearly 5,000 churches submitted data in the first phase, with five per cent of churches sampled already reporting as net-zero carbon.

The UK will host the UN climate conference COP26 in November this year. Churches are being encouraged to raise their voice to speak up about the need to tackle climate change across the whole of society through the Climate Sunday initiative, starting by holding their own climate focused service.

Bishop Graham will take over the role in June, ahead of the retirement of the Bishop of Salisbury in July.

More information

- [The Church of England's Environment Programme](#)

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