

Climate Crisis Action Plan

Brunswick Uniting Church, July 2020 (*this draft: 25 May 2020*)

Introduction

In November 2019, Brunswick Uniting Church unanimously adopted a [Climate Crisis declaration](#) <link to full text on website>. Its central declaration was:

BUC recognises that we are in a state of climate crisis that requires urgent action for climate justice by all levels of government, business, the community, as well as by individuals.

It continued:

Under the direction of Church Council, and in consultation with local Aboriginal people, BUC will develop a Climate Crisis Plan for the church community by May 2020, including goals and action plans for the following commitments.

Although our approach and timing has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, this document now sets out that Plan. It is intended to be a living document, a starting point for specific action rather than the final word.

Rationale

The original declaration quoted (with slight modification) the UCA President, Dr Dierdre Palmer:

“This earth is created by our good and generous Creator. We are connected to the Earth and are called to live with care and respect toward the whole Creation. In the scriptures and in our present context we hear Christ’s call to participate in Christ’s renewal of the creation. Climate refugees, widening deserts, polluted oceans, endangered animals and vanishing forests are signs of the suffering of our planet, and a cry for us to take compassionate action as disciples of Christ. We are passionately committed to contributing our [prophetic] voice and action toward a world in which all people, creatures and the Earth can flourish.”

The environmental and climate crisis that we have acknowledged, or “confessed”, has many causes and many impacts. Those impacts are beginning to be visible now, but will seriously affect generations who are currently young or not yet born. Credible predictions of the impact of continuing “business as usual” range from significant disruption of human societies and the extinction of many species, at the low end, through to widespread collapses of climate and ecological systems, with catastrophic effects on civilisation as we know it.

This crisis is the result, not of a few specific policies, but of the fundamental economic, cultural and political systems we have developed over the last two centuries (with roots arguably going back millennia).

It is global in scale, and only coordinated global action can stop or significantly mitigate it. “Adaptation” to climate change (i.e. survival for all or most people and some species) requires action at international, national and state levels.

However, actions by individuals, households, and community groups (including churches) are necessary to:

- model the kinds of changes needed
- build widespread public support for change

- sustain hope that a viable future is possible
- sustain each other through our grief over what is not possible and what is being lost.

This Plan sets out commitments, goals and actions that intend to reflect this understanding.

How to read this Plan

The following pages set out our Goals/Targets and Actions.

The green rows are the Commitments from our original declaration.

The grey rows are the major Goals/Targets relating to each Commitment. Some of them have additional explanatory text, in italics on a pale grey background. Each one has a Priority number

1 = high priority, for immediate action

2 = medium priority, get to these fairly soon

3 = lower priority, get to these later or if there is additional energy/interest

The plain text in the second column lists the Actions that we will take (as appropriate to the overall priority for this Goal/Target). Each action has a Progress indicator, where

Green = done or substantially underway

Yellow = work has commenced, but there's more to do

Red = not yet commenced

There are a few greens already, which we celebrate! Over time, we look forward to seeing the reds shift to yellow and then green. (And then we can, if we choose, add in new actions to commence.)

In addition, some actions have *italic text* for additional, potential actions (often by way of example). These are not things we're committed to doing, at this stage – though they might become so later, or they (along with other initiatives) might occur when someone has the time and interest. Because we're not committed to doing these actions, they don't have coloured progress indicators.

The agreed actions (and in some cases the illustrative example actions) have notes as to:

- who should initiate and/or co-ordinate it (including, in some cases, new groups)
- who (typically which Committee) should be responsible for oversight of that action, and reporting on progress to Church Council
- who we imagine might participate in that action (ranging from one person to the whole congregation)

Groups, committees and individuals should, as part of their annual goal-setting:

1. Identify specific steps they need to take re top priority goals/actions
2. Identify other actions they feel able to commit to
3. If there's time and energy in the year, consider what additional action might be possible and life-giving

Consultation with Aboriginal groups

We reached out to the Traditional Owners to (re)establish relationships generally, through the Wurundjeri WoiWurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, earlier this year. Then the Coronavirus hit! This has significantly affected their ability to meet and to carry out their core tasks, let alone to engage with groups like BUC. We will also, as one of the initial high priority actions, send a copy of this Plan to them to ask for any specific comments or suggestions. (We're not necessarily expecting a response, as we're unlikely to be high in their priorities at this time, but it's still the right thing to do). See below for further specific actions and ideas.

Goals, Targets and Actions

(See following pages)

BUC Climate Action Plan DRAFT

as at 25/5/2020

Goals/Targets	Actions	Priority (CC, 13/5)	Initiate/co-ordinate	Governance/ reporting	Participate	Est \$	Progress
1. BUC will continue to develop our theological understanding and our personal & collective discipleship as the people of God living in a time of climate crisis.							
1a. Develop BUC's theological understanding of environmental & climate crisis, appropriate Christian responses		1				0	
<i>Hopefully this one speaks for itself!</i>	Incorporate in sermons where appropriate		Ian				
	Establish a working group to draw together key principles from theology, missiology, ecclesiology etc.		Ian & Dave	D&E			
	Establish study group(s)		D&E C'tee	D&E			
	Specific focus on climate crisis in worship, for example:		Worship Ctee				
	- Season of Creation services (each September)		Liturgists	Worship Ctee	all Sunday am members		
	- develop a specific Climate Crisis liturgy?		Task group? / Worship Ctee	Worship Ctee	interested mbrs; theol. working group?		
	Incorporate justice, stewardship, eco-theology and Indigenous perspectives.		D&E/climate theology group	D&E	Indigenous Solidarity group		
	- Consult with Wurundjeri WoiWurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation regarding any feedback on this Plan		D&E/climate theology group	D&E	Indigenous Solidarity group		
	Other ideas include:						
	- Start off with Moreland Aboriginal Climate knowledge		Jenne P?	D&E			
	- Learn from other churches (UCA, Pope's Encyclical, etc)		Theology working group	D&E			
	- Dark Emu, 2040, other books/films		Ad-hoc study groups?	D&E			
	- Connect with, learn from, Pacific Islanders		D&E	D&E	Frances? Vilma? Mbrs with contacts/exp.		
1b. Incorporate "environment" into SMP and YUCY		2				0	
<i>All ages involved in education & discipleship formation</i>	At least once a semester, provide a climate-focussed activity for Youth Group		Dave Hall & CYYA	CYYA	YUCY leaders, youth		
	- eg. Tree planting, School Strike, Clean-Up Australia Day, TEAR Justice conference.						
	"Caring for God's creation" woven into SMP programmes		Dave Hall & CYYA	CYYA	SMP leaders, kids		
	- particularly around the season of creation in September.						
1c. Develop pastoral and discipleship practices that help each of us live as Christians in a time of climate crisis		2				0	
<i>Emphasis here is on specifically Christian responses, not general practical or political action (see below)</i>	Continue and build on existing actions such as:						
	- annual Blessing of the Bikes		Worship C'tee	Worship C'tee	Sunday Cong.		
	- Food Co-op		Food Co-op	JAM	Co-op members		
	Examples of other possible actions include:						

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Olive Arts / Pesto activities. Ideas include climate themed WWKIP Day – create an installation - Weekly vigil on the steps - Develop space/practice for reflecting together as climate activists (in our different ways) - Develop understanding & skills in dealing with "Climate Grief" 		Olive Arts groups	JAM	Arts & crafts participants		
			New working group?	JAM	Interested BUC members, friends		
			Climate Action Group	JAM? Pastoral Care?	Interested members		
			Pastoral Care Ctee	PC	PC leaders, all BUC members		
1d. Create a set of publicly accessible materials (web based and other) about climate theology		3				0	
<i>Ditto. See below re. public witness.</i>	Low priority for now, given accessibility of materials on web. Look for "easy" actions, e.g.: - tag Ian's sermons with "Climate" and post on page		WebComms team	Comms	Saide		
2. The plan will include specific targets for BUC to become carbon positive. We will encourage and empower households to do the same.							
2a. Audit BUC's current energy use and carbon footprint, and develop recommendations for action, by December 2020		1	Carbon Footprint Task Gr	CC	3-5 interested members (AG, JC, JT, SW?)		
<i>Many suggestions already; CC believes we should audit first, seek recommend'ns, then prioritise & set targets</i>	Engage an auditor by July 2020 (note we can draw on several BUC contacts as well as internet research)		CFTG	CC	Seek referrals from mbrs, friends of BUC	\$2000?	
	Receive report by September 2020, including "baseline" carbon footprint for BUC site/operations as at 1 January 2020 and recommendations for types of action we could take to improve		CFTG	CC			
	Develop recommendations for action (distinguishing BUC and member households) by December 2020		CFTG & CC	CC			
2b. Make BUC operations "net carbon neutral" by 30 September 2020		1				See below	
<i>"Net neutral" meaning that carbon emitted due to our energy usage is offset by emissions "saved" elsewhere in the world</i>	Use solar panels to reduce electricity usage		(Done)				
	Source and purchase 100% Green Power for BUC site by 31 May		Treasurer	CC	Shawn	\$1500 p.a.	
	Source and purchase Carbon Offsets for BUC site's electricity use by 30 June 2020		Treasurer	CC	Shawn	est. \$400	
	Source and purchase "Green Gas" (offset), or purchase direct carbon offsets for gas usage, by 30 June 2020		Treasurer	CC	Shawn	est. \$50-150	
	Purchase carbon offsets for any additional emissions identified in the audit of BUC site by 30 September		Treasurer	CC	Shawn	?	

BUC Climate Action Plan DRAFT

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Goals/Targets	Actions	Priority (CC, 13/5)	Initiate/co-ordinate	Governance/ reporting	Participate	Est \$	Progress
	Work with Student House, Ian/Beth, and tenants to ensure (as far as possible) that all BUC properties are net carbon neutral by 30 September 2020		Treasurer	CC	Shawn, Manse occupants, SH members, Dave H, tenants	subsidise if necessary?	
<i>It's complicated; we're learning as we go</i>	Review the purpose and benefits of GreenPower and Carbon Offsets, and consider whether other approaches would be more cost-effective, by 30 June 2021		CFTG?	CC	CFTG	\$0	

2b. Reduce BUC's actual carbon emissions as far as reasonably practicable by end 2025 1

<i>Many suggestions already; CC believes we should audit first, seek recommend'ns, then prioritise & set targets accordingly</i>	Based on audit recommendations (see 2a):						
	1. Implement any clear, cost-neutral, quick-to-complete recommendations by 30 December 2020	CFTG	Property Ctee	Property Ctee, Laurie, indiv volunteers			
	2. Develop list of other potential actions, with estimates of cost (upfront and net-over-time costs) and time required, by March 2021	CFTG	Property Ctee	CFTG			
	3. Set priorities and target dates for these actions, and/or target energy (carbon) reductions for 2021-25, by June 2021	CC	CC	CC			
	4. Implement actions per timeline set by CC	Property Ctee	Property Ctee	Property Ctee, Laurie, indiv volunteers			
<i>Examples could include:</i>							
<i>Replace gas heating in hall with electrical heating (powered by GreenPower)</i>						50,000? ?	
<i>Replace hall kitchen ovens/cooktops & water heating with all-electrical ones (powered by GreenPower)</i>						20,000?	
<i>Progressively replace all major appliances with most energy efficient versions (as they fall due for replacement, or by accelerated timeline)</i>						Little/no "extra"	
<i>See Property Committee's draft "gold standard" Project Plan A for other such steps, including hiring a project manager to complete all actions in 12 months</i>						\$434,000	
<i>Better insulate our buildings - save heating energy</i>							
<i>Olive Way identify and implement carbon-reducing opportunities in its operations</i>							
<i>Examples could also include carbon-sink actions such as:</i>							
<i>On-site composting</i>							

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	<i>Carbon-sink Gardening – change plantings, increase area? Investigate & implement other strategies to reabsorb carbon</i>						?
2d. 50% of BUC households have (re)committed to act on climate change at home by December 2020		2					
<i>Many BUC households already engaged & active, but good to take stock and to re-think. Is 50% a good target?</i>	Develop a voluntary “pledge” document for households to consider, e.g. - household carbon audit (formal or informal) - tech changes (appliances, energy provider, etc) - behavioural changes (reduce usage) - could also include advocacy actions as well as consumer behaviour (see 3 and 4 below)		CAG	JAM		0	
	Engage kids in promoting the Pledge		CYYA	CYYA	Min.Team, SMP	0	
	Share information to support household actions (documents, expo, training etc.)		CAG	JAM		0	
	Report and celebrate progress, by next AGM		CAG	JAM	all!	0	
3. BUC, both collectively and as individual members, will engage with the wider church, as well as other faith communities, groups and people in our local communities, on the climate crisis.							
3a. Strengthen public witness/messaging		1				See below	
	Maintain existing public witness/messaging, including - participation in large public rallies etc - artwork and signs in the window facing Sydney Rd - banners and/or signboards facing Sydney Rd		CAG/JAM CAG/JAM CAG/JAM	JAM JAM JAM	many members individual members individual memt	\$150 each	
	Include “Climate Action” text on the Earth button on BUC website		WebComms	Comm.Team	Shawn, Saide, v	0	
	Extend website with relevant resources and information, e.g. - include relevant sermons & posts on Climate Action page - develop a "Climate Matters" blog - include updates on progress against this Plan		WebComms Shawn + volunteers	Comm.Team Comm.Team	Shawn, Saide, s Shawn + volunteers	0	
	Develop additional actions (for immediate implementation or recommend to CC for approval), e.g.		CAG	JAM		?	

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	<i>Project messages on North Wall of the Rooming House next door</i>					\$1000?	
3b. Connect with people (UCs?) in coal-dependent areas – two way dialogue understand their communities, their concerns, find ways to engage theologically and practically around climate transition		then 2 (2021+)				0	
<i>Understand their communities, their concerns, find ways to engage theologically and practically around climate transition</i>	Identify relevant connections that we already have, e.g. - <i>Ian's connections?</i> - <i>Individual members' connections</i>		Ian CAG?	JAM	James, BUC mbrs with connections		
	Make initial contact to identify opportunities and discuss timing - late 2020 or early 2021 due to Covid-19, bushfires Develop connections and dialogue - 2021, if appropriate, e.g. - <i>Develop "pitch" and supporting materials</i> - <i>Train ourselves for missional dialogue</i> - <i>Approach initial group of neighbouring businesses</i> - <i>Evaluate pilot and develop further plan</i>						
3c. Formally engage with ARRCC		2				0?	
	Identify what's needed, make recommendations to Church Council		CAG/JAM		James & Linda, others involved		
3d. Connect with relevant community groups and organisations in Moreland		2				0	
<i>Note we're already engaging with wider church; should there be specific goals?</i>	Participate in events		CAG	JAM	many BUC members		
	Build coalitions to amplify our/their voice		CAG	JAM	interested indiv's		
	Engage with Moreland Council to encourage and support their good steps e.g. fewer cars in Moreland. Establish relationships with local reps so they know us & where we stand.				interested indiv's		
3e. Reach out to local business people, get to know them & what they're doing for climate action, encourage & assist further steps		then 2 (2021+)				See below	
<i>Build on our own experiments & experiences – share stories and ask what our neighbouring</i>	Develop "pitch" and supporting materials		CAG	JAM		\$200?	
	Train ourselves for missional dialogue						
	Approach initial group of neighbouring businesses						
	Evaluate pilot and develop further plan						

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4. BUC, both collectively and as individual members, will urge all levels of government, as well as business, to declare a climate crisis and commit to restoring a safe climate by immediately allocating the necessary resources across the economy, and by changing unsustainable business practices.							
4a. Campaign solidly on one priority issue/campaign for 2020		1				0	
<i>Indiv. mbrs will still be active widely, but we should choose ONE campaign for BUC collectively</i>	Identify a relevant campaign, considering realistic prospects, coalitions available to work with, etc. Become fully informed on that issue Actively engage BUC people in the campaign Review, identify lessons, plan for extended or different campaigning in 2021						
4b. Big business – focus on one or two major companies to engage, persuade, boycott etc.		2				0	
<i>Potential for big emissions savings by big businesses (compare indiv. consumer action)</i>	Identify relevant target (Origen?) Develop a sequential strategy Write to company as BUC Mobilise households who use that company to also write Connect with Market Forces – information and strategy						
4c. Support individual action for political & economic change		3				0	
<i>Lower priority on its own, but note partly covered by/ overlapping 4a, also 1c & 2d</i>	Identify/create and distribute good resources for individual action – by end 2020 (see also #1 above) Develop a group, register or other mechanism for tracking and sharing the involvement and successes of individual members in political and economic action – by end 2020						