

Church of Sweden's climate roadmap



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Praise the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment.

This is how magnificently Psalm 104 in the Book of Psalms begins. The words are followed by a list of all the good things God provides, daily and by the hour. God lets spring rise from the earth and provides water to the wild animals of the earth. God nourishes the earth and causes grass to grow for the cattle. God sends darkness and lets the sun rise when the morning comes. Then "people go out to their work and to their labour until the evening".

The psalm paints a picture of a creation in harmony. Symbolically and poetically, it depicts the world and the human condition, both materially and existentially. All of creation is interconnected, woven together in a complex web of birth and death, cultivation and harvest, development and renewal. No one part can exist without the other parts. Humanity to has a place and a task in creation. Humanity is interconnected with different matter and other creatures; formed from the dust of the ground, as described in one of the creation stories in the Bible (Genesis 2:7).

Theologically, we can say that Psalm 104 describes humans as co-creators in God's creation. Historically, we can see that humanity has fulfilled its task with a varying degree of success. Creation needs to be respected and nurtured for its survival. Land, water, and natural resources need to be managed with moderation and restraint. But in a time of climate crisis, it is evident that this balance has been ruptured. Today, we can see the effects of how humans have been transgressing their own and creation's boundaries for centuries. This can be seen not least in the relationship between people living in abundance and those living in poverty. People in other parts of the world are paying the price for the Western world's material expansion and consumption. The climate crisis is not something in the future – it is already here. It is something we all share in, but it is unfairly distributed. Its effects are manifested in droughts, floods, mass migration, overcrowded cities, conflicts over limited natural resources and failing political systems.

What is the role of the church in this time of climate crisis? The basic task of a congregation, according to the Church Order, consists of worship, teaching, diakonia, and mission. The aim is "that people shall come to believe in Christ and live in faith, that a Christian fellowship is created and deepened, that the kingdom of God is spread, and creation is restored". Whatever else the congregation does "is support and consequence of this basic mission". The work of the church on climate issues is rooted in this fundamental statement about the congregation's task and purpose.

On a practical level, the church's task is to do the right thing as an organisation. The church has long been working to this end, particularly within the context of the climate roadmap. Every day, work is performed in congregations, parishes, dioceses and at the national level, in order for Church of Sweden to contribute to the mending of the world. Knowledge and communication represent another key task. Church of Sweden and other faith communities have a good and, in many ways, unique insight into how climate change is affecting people's daily lives. From our partner churches in India and the Philippines, we are learning how extreme heat and flooding are paralysing entire societies. This knowledge plays a crucial role in the design of global policies that focus on justice and human vulnerability. An additional task for the church is the conversation with its partners – churches, faith communities, organisations and political representatives in and outside Sweden – on the values that should shape lives and societies. This is about the right of all people to live in dignity. The lifestyle that we live in our part of the world is no longer possible and must be replaced by more sustainable values and ways of living. Humans depend for their existence on the entire web of creation.

In A Bishops' Letter About the Climate, the bishops of Church of Sweden state that what makes the climate issue existentially difficult to "manage is that it is simultaneously diffuse and concrete". Because the climate issue involves collective responsibility and long timelines, it may make the topic seem abstract. At the same time, the issue is a concrete one, and time is worryingly short. "When this tension between what is diffuse and what is concrete remains unaddressed, a combination of passivity and resignation may readily arise – a sort of climate depression that creates obstacles to the proactivity required today", the bishops write (p. 50).

Preaching the Gospel has a special place in Church of Sweden's theological tradition. Words and language are the tools we have to describe reality as it presents itself to us. This is the case in the era of climate crisis as well. To describe the causes and profound consequences of global warming is to demand that responsibility is taken for the situation that the world finds itself in. At the same time it is a way to disrupt the emotional state that the bishops' letter calls climate depression. A realistic description of reality, however difficult to digest, provides an opportunity for action, which in turn helps to overcome passivity and hopelessness. Words and deeds do not contradict each other, but instead make things clearer and push them in the same direction.

Speaking plainly about responsibility and the need for action is necessary, but the primary vocation of the church is not to talk about human failure, shortcomings and mistakes. In the Evangelical Lutheran tradition, the task of words is always to liberate. In the language we speak about the forgiveness of sin and the release of people from the guilt that burdens them. The bishops remind us of the logic of worship, which is also the logic of proclamation. In the confession of the church service, we confess that we have played a part in the world turning away from God. Through forgiveness, the burden of guilt is lifted off and we can walk upright. In the words of the theologian Gustaf Wingren: "The gospel makes it easier to breathe."

Martin Luther describes a movement from God to our fellow human being. Having received forgiveness and being liberated from my guilt, I also become liberated from my self-absorbed concerns about being inadequate, or not being good enough. My interest and commitment can then be turned outwards, towards the world and my fellow human beings. The point of this reformation movement (from God to fellow

human beings) is that there is no need to look for tasks. Our fellow human beings stand before us. God grants us redemption and the freedom to help our fellow human beings in our everyday lives. Traditionally, we talk about serving our neighbour. The word "vocation" expresses this fundamental theological insight: that we are called to serve in the contexts in which we find ourselves. To put it succinctly: my neighbour is entitled to my service.

In this time of climate crisis, our neighbours are easy to find. There are neighbours all over the world, and their needs are more evident than ever before, and they are crystal clear. But the concept of 'neighbour' extends beyond that. Today, all of creation is our neighbour, crying out for action. This is a vocation that is impossible not to hear.

Conditions for the roadmap

Church of Sweden's climate roadmap was initiated through a decision of the General Synod in 2018. A joint text drafted by the national level of Church of Sweden and the dioceses was adopted by the Central Board in 2019. The roadmap lays down a common climate strategy for the entire Church of Sweden and responds to the vocation from the bishops in *A Bishops' Letter About the Climate*.

Church of Sweden's climate roadmap sets out three overall impact goals, to be achieved by 2030. The issue of climate change is present in most of Church of Sweden's activities sush as within the basic tasks, property management, funeral services, investments and in the international work. To clarify how various activities relate to the issue of climate change, the roadmap is divided into eight target areas. In addition, the road to achieving the impact goals by 2030 is divided into three stages. The first stage runs from 2020 to the end of 2023, the second will begin in 2024 and run until the end of 2027, and the last stage is planned to run from 2028 to the end of 2030. New stage goals are to be developed for each stage. The goals of the roadmap are to be achieved jointly by congregations, parishes, dioceses, and the national level. This means that everyone has to play their part, but the work required may take different forms. Collaboration - sharing and embracing each other's best practices - is key. Congregations and parishes have a high degree of autonomy and make their own operational decisions. The role of the dioceses is to facilitate and oversight the congregations and parishes. The work of the dioceses is facilitated by the national level. In the area of climate, this means that the national level and the dioceses will



facilitate, nurture and provide inspiration for climate activities at all levels in Church of Sweden, while also working to achieve the climate goals in their own activities.

The stage goals may be achieved through a variety of actions implemented via congregations, parishes, dioceses, Church of Sweden Land Management and the national level. The sustainability portal on Kornet (the intranet) provides examples of activities, along with guidance and tools to facilitate the implementation of the roadmap. It is also important to work innovatively by trying out new methods, approaches and techniques. Church of

Sweden's Environmental management system is one tool that enables systematic work in all target areas. Dioceses and congregations are encouraged to follow up on their climate impact. The overall results from the work are continuously monitored, evaluated and quality assured by the national level of Church of Sweden and the dioceses through surveys, monitoring systems and data gathering. Monitoring processes and reporting need to undergo further development as more data become available.

The journey continues

During the first stage, progress has been made in all target areas, which bodes well for the longer journey towards the impact goals. However, to achive the impact goals by 2030, it is vital that the climate work continues unabated. The climate emergency is global. This means that all forces need to work together – locally, nationally and globally. Church of Sweden has long been involved in the work on climate and sustainability within the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and the ACT alliance. These global alliances remain important actors promoting collaboration on climate justice and care for the creation. Cooperation with other societal actors is also crucial. Another issue is that climate change is threatening the living conditions of indigenous Arctic peoples. As part of Church of Sweden's continued work on its climate roadmap, the church needs to develop its knowledge of the consequences of climate change and the need for climate adaptation in Sápmi.

The stage goals for the second stage build on the results from the first stage and reflect prioritised targets based on the current situation and existing knowledge. In some cases, the stage goals from the previous stage are carried forward with similar wording. In other cases, new issues and targets that need to be addressed are included. Stage two goals seek to focus more on the outcomes rather than the tools. Some stage one goals that focused on individual activities, such as celebrating the Session of Creation or participating in Pilgrims Walk for Future, are no longer included in the stage goals. However, these activities continue to serve as key tools for achieving the goals of the roadmap. This also applies to the training programmes, methods, guidelines and materials developed in several target areas during the first stage.

Synergies and conflicting goals

The roadmap focuses on climate issues. These affect the ability to protect and safeguard human rights and prevent conflict. The climate issues also greatly affect the conditions for all other life in creation. In this way, active climate work achieves a much broader impact. In the work with the roadmap, other relevant issues and perspectives are taken into account on an ongoing basis in order to create synergies with other societal goals, such as biodiversity, in order to manage goal conflicts. The roadmap is playing a part in enabling several of the goals of Agenda 2030¹ to be achieved.

Impact goals 2030

- Church of Sweden is to be climate-neutral by 2030, with no net contribution to global warming. This goal will for the most part be achieved by reducing emissions within Church of Sweden's own activities, as well as other actions for conversion on a national and global level².
- Church of Sweden should increasingly strive to bring about the change in values that we as humanity need to achieve and highlight spiritual and existential aspects of the climate crisis.
- Church of Sweden should, through for example Act Church of Sweden, increase support to those affected most by the effects of climate change, despite contributing to them the least.

Stage goals to achieve by 2027

1. The church's mission

Climate issues have to do with how we see ourselves, each other, our relationship with creation and God. The church has a unique opportunity to contribute to a change in values in Swedish society by consistently focusing on values, worldview, and outlook on life in all its activities. This mission is part of the basic task of the congregations: worship, teaching, diakonia and mission. The church administers and develops its mission in word and deed as a community of interpretation. There is a major need for narratives about what life in a climate-friendly future could mean, in a material, but also in a spiritual and existential sense. Within Church of Sweden and in the encounter with other societal actors, there are many opportunities to help formulate these narratives and to spread hope. To achieve long-term and sustainable change in society, exchanges with other churches and faith communities must also take place, both in Sweden and internationally. Various actors contribute to the debate on fundamental values in different countries, local communities and contexts. It is characteristic for our Evangelical Lutheran tradition to emphasise the importance of a decent life in this world. This is also the case when change takes place and new knowledge emerges.

Climate issues also involve issues of justice. Ten percent of the world's richest people and countries account for more than fifty percent of greenhouse gas emissions, while those with the lowest emissions are the most impacted by climate change. Countries producing the highest emissions need to play their part in a just transition, in which vulnerable groups of people and communities are supported and given greater influence over climate decisions. Climate justice is also about switching to more sustainable consumption and helping to ensure the right to a dignified life for the entire population of the world and future generations. We in Church of Sweden also need to take our responsibility in this regard, together with other societal actors. This is a key moral issue, and one that centres on ethical accountability and, ultimately, on being true to our Christian values.

² Possible offsetting measures will be further investigated for the emissions that remain when all possibilities for reducing emissions have been exhausted. For example, emissions may remain from production processes for materials By the end of 2027:

- 1.1 Church of Sweden should speak up for a just transition that embraces the whole of creation, and takes responsibility in word and action locally and globally.
- 1.2 Church of Sweden should initiate and participate in discussions about changes in values regarding a human-centred understanding of life³ and an engagement in the rights of nature.
- 1.3 The activities within Church of Sweden's basic tasks should play a part in bringing about the change in values necessary for the future of creation.
- 1.4 Knowledge about climate justice should permeate all activities of Church of Sweden.
- 1.5 Church of Sweden should address spiritual and existential perspectives on the climate crisis in ecumenical and interfaith networks and with other societal actors.
- 1.6 All congregations should have access to support for highlighting the goals of the roadmap in Church of Sweden's internal tools for development and oversight, such as premises resource plans, congregational policy plans and visitations.

2. Energy use and buildings

Energy use in Church of Sweden's approximately 20,000 buildings has a significant impact on the climate. We need to work systematically and innovatively to reduce energy use and improve energy efficiency. Premises resource plans are important tools to assess the long-term needs for premises and thereby the need for energy use. We should only use energy when it is needed, optimise existing installations and use the most sustainable products.

By the end of 2027:

- 2.1 Through efficiency improvements, the total amount of energy purchased per square metre for heating and electricity in buildings should have been reduced by at least 5 percent per year during the stage. This represents a maximum average energy consumption of 115 kWh/m2 per year for heated areas at the end of the stage.
- 2.2 Total greenhouse gas emissions from climate-impacting energy use should have been halved during the stage.
- 2.3 Crematorium operations should be fuelled exclusively by fossil-free alternatives and emissions from any support fuel should be maximum 20 kg of CO2e/ cremation.
- 2.4 Fossil heating oil should be completely phased out. A plan should be in place to phase out any remaining fossil fuels for heating by no later than 2030.
- 2.5 All Church of Sweden units should have secured active options for renewable electricity. Wherever possible, the electricity should be certified with the Good Environmental Choice ecolabel.⁴

Anthropocentric is another word for human-centred.
Availability of Good Environmental Choice-labelled electricity is expected to be limited at the beginning of the stage.

3. Production of renewable electricity

With our many properties and land holdings, Church of Sweden has the opportunity to produce renewable electricity, enabling the church to contribute to Sweden's energy supply. Church of Sweden contributes both directly, through its own production facilities, and indirectly, by leasing land to other producers. The renewable electricity production consists mainly of solar and wind power. However, both climate impact and social sustainability vary greatly from one solar power product to another, and so it is especially important to take sustainability aspects into account when establishing new facilities. There is potential for innovation, including the evolution of energy storage and system services.

By the end of 2027:

3.1 Total annual production of renewable electricity (solar and wind), from Church of Sweden's own facilities, should have increased by no less than 85 GWh during the stage, such that by the end of the stage the church's own renewable electricity production represents no less than one third of the church's electricity consumption.

3.2 The relative increase in installed solar power capacity in Church of Sweden should exceed the increase for Sweden as a whole during the stage.

4. Travel and transport

A great deal of travel takes place within Church of Sweden, which means high energy consumption and high fossil fuel emissions. Church of Sweden should make an active contribution to the transition to fossil-free and efficient travel and transport. To achieve these targets, actions will be needed in terms of behavioural changes, such as reduced travel, more economical driving and new, more climate-smart and innovative travel options. We also need to invest in new technology, practical facilities that pave the way to fossil-free transport, and we need to choose fossil-free fuels. Conditions vary across Sweden and therefore the nature of actions will also vary.

By the end of 2027:

- 4.1 No less than 75 percent of all group- and car journeys in the service of the church should be fossil-free.
- 4.2 Trips by car and air should have been reduced by at least 25 percent and 50 percent (in kilometres), respectively, during the stage.
- 4.3 Practical facilities⁵ that enable fossil-free transport should be available at all staff car parks and churches with car parks.

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Examples of such facilities include car pool parking, electric vehicle charging stations and bicycle service stations. For more examples, go to the sustainability portal on Kornet (the intranet).

5. Cemeteries, land management and machinery

Church of Sweden is the main burial authority in Sweden, managing over 3,000 cemeteries and burial grounds. We have a responsibility to preserve and manage our cemeteries in a sustainable manner. Cemeteries often require highly intensive management and so emissions from fossil-fuelled vehicles and machinery, along with large volumes of waste. Cemeteries and burial grounds are to be managed and developed in a way that is climate-smart, and conserves and develops biodiversity.

By the end of 2027:

- 5.1 During the stage, energy use as required for transport, travel and mechanical equipment in cemetery management and land management within Church of Sweden should be reduced by at least 75 percent.
- 5.2 Church of Sweden should coordinate crematorium operations.
- 5.3 During cremation and burial activities, the transport of remains and ashes should be coordinated by the funeral services.
- 5.4 During the stage, residual waste in cemetery management and land management within Church of Sweden should be reduced by at least 5 percent.

6. Consumption and investment

Church of Sweden conducts large annual purchases and manages financial capital on a considerable scale. Consumption and investment are major sources of emissions and also pose a risk of impacting negatively on human rights. Through purposeful, systematic processes and choices, we can exert influence on suppliers, managers and companies – on our own and in collaboration with other actors, in Sweden and internationally. To support dioceses, congregations, and parishes, we can draw up framework agreements with suppliers regarding products and services with a specific impact on sustainability. Innovative thinking around needs and consumption can also help smooth the transition that is necessary. Using, maintaining, repairing, and updating what you already have plays a part in circular consumption, as does sharing use across organisations and units. Partnerships with asset managers provide sustainable funds with low management fees.

By the end of 2027:

- 6.1 A support function⁶ for sustainable procurement processes should be established and operating in every diocesan office and in at least 60 percent of congregations in every diocese.
- 6.2 During the stage, the use of Church of Sweden's national and/or regional framework agreements in contract categories with specific climate relevance should be doubled.
- 6.3 In Church of Sweden, the objective at all levels should be the maximum possible resource efficiency, sharing, reuse, circular solutions and a low climate footprint in purchasing and consumption.

The support function may involve providing assistance and development via materials and templates, training and guidance.

- 6.4 The value of the capital invested in the Ethos Funds should have been maintained at least to the same level as at the beginning of the stage.
- 6.5 Long-term capital investments should be made in line with Church of Sweden's financial policy at the national level.

7. Climate adaptation and emergency preparedness

To many people, Church of Sweden has a crucial role to play, not least in times of crisis. The church is part of Sweden's total defence system and must function during situations of high alert and crisis. Climate-related events such as floods and heat waves can constitute crises that increase the risk of damage to Church of Sweden's cultural heritage, cemeteries, churches, and other buildings. They also risk affecting the ability of congregations to perform its ordinary work in the long run.

Conditions and opportunities differ locally when it comes to working on climate adaptation. Premises resource plans are a tool for preventing negative impacts. It is a privilege to have the ability to prevent activities from being affected by climate change, an ability that is often not available to those who are already severely affected by climate change. Church of Sweden should highlight the aspect of justice in contexts linked to its own work on climate adaptation. The issue of justice has local, regional, national and global implications.

By the end of 2027:

- 7.1 All church buildings, church grounds and cemeteries protected under the Swedish Cultural Heritage Act should be analysed in terms of how they are affected by climate change.
- 7.2 Collaboration and training on climate adaptation should be established and applied by employees and elected representatives of Church of Sweden.
- 7.3 Preparedness planning should be in place, ensuring an ability to respond to physical, psychological and existential needs in acute and emerging crises caused by extreme weather events or climate change.
- 7.4 Cremation and burial activities should remain secured during weather-related crisis.
- 7.5 The issue of justice should be highlighted in the work on climate adaptation.

8. Forest and land management

How Church of Sweden manages forests and land is of great importance in terms of limiting our climate impact. Growing forests absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and raw materials from forests can be used to replace fossil fuels and materials. At the same time, other targets have to be met in addition to those related to tree growth and carbon sequestration in forests. Such targets include maintaining and developing forest biodiversity, establishing social and cultural values and ensuring the stability and adaptability of forest ecosystems to a changing climate. An investigation has been appointed that is working actively to ensure that Church of Sweden's forest management should be as sustainable as it can be. The Church of Sweden has

a high level of ambition, and the findings by the investigation may help to ensure that targets in this area are specified in more detail during the stage.

Climate change is also impacting the living conditions of indigenous Arctic peoples. The conditions for conducting long-term sustainable reindeer husbandry and other traditional livelihoods are under threat. The need for adjustments to Church of Sweden's land management and forestry has been highlighted in the action plan for commitments linked to the Church of Sweden's apology to the Sami people.

By the end of 2027:

- 8.1 The model to calculate the forest carbon balance should be evaluated via an external audit, and methods for measuring the agricultural carbon balance should be implemented in accordance with best practice and applicable accounting rules.
- 8.2 Church of Sweden Land Management should continue to actively contribute to research and development in the sustainable management of forests and land and the sustainable generation of renewable energy.
- 8.3 Church of Sweden Land Management should continue in the capacity of landowner, developer and asset manager to promote increased use of wood in construction and climate-smart building.
- 8.4 Renewable electricity, equivalent to the total annual consumption in the buildings of Church of Sweden, should be generated on the lands of Church of Sweden Land Management in the project or generation phase. Production may consist of both Church of Sweden's own facilities and those run by other operators on the land of Church of Sweden Land Management.



- 8.5 Church of Sweden Land Management should contribute to forums for skills development, sharing of experiences and joint fossil-free and sustainable agriculture projects for their tenant farmers. When new leases are granted, the opportunity to influence farm use should be taken if considered appropriate.
- 8.6 Church of Sweden Land Management should strive for fossil-free management and transport in the forestry on the property.
- 8.7 Church of Sweden Land Management should utilise the production potential of managed forests for increased climate benefit in the short and long term. All measures for climate benefit in the management of forest and land of the property and other assets to finance the ministry of the clergy should strike a balance between ecological, social, economic and spiritual values.
- 8.8 Church of Sweden Land Management should implement active climate adaptation measures aimed at increasing the resilience and recovery of forests and agricultural land and their capacity for development, in order to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.
- 8.9 Church of Sweden Land Management should have developed knowledge of how land management and forestry have impacted on Sami livelihoods and adjusted their activities in accordance with the action plan linked to Church of Sweden's apology to the Sami people.

Explanations of terms

Anthropocentric view of life

An anthropocentric view of life has the human being as its starting point, in contrast to a view of life that sees the creation as a whole. An anthropocentric view of life is thus a human-centred understanding of life. In *A Bishops' Letter About the Climate*, the bishops of Church of Sweden describe an anthropocentric view of life that denies human dependence on the creator and the rest of the creation, where non-human creation becomes means to maximise human benefit.⁷

Ethos funds

At present, three funds comply with the financial policy of the national level of Church of Sweden. They are Ethos Aktiefond Sverige, Ethos Räntefond Sverige and Ethos Aktiefond Global. They charge low fees and are aimed in particular at dioceses and congregations.

Sustainable procurement processes

In a sustainable procurement process, purchases made should take sustainability risks into account based on their potential for negative impacts on people and the environment. This is done by ensuring that purchasing procedures are based on policies and that expertise, resources and organisational support are available to the person making the purchase, and by setting requirements for suppliers and following up on the purchase agreements entered into.

Climate justice

Climate justice is about ensuring that all policy measures to address climate change are based on human rights. This means that the countries with the highest emissions should accept their responsibilities. That vulnerable people and communities that in most cases have contributed the least to emissions but are the worst affected, should be entitled to support for adaptation, transition and compensation for loss and damage caused by climate change.⁸

Rights of nature

Recognition of natural phenomena (ecosystems) as rights holders began to take shape in the 1970s against a backdrop of increasing environmental degradation. In

Pages 65–66 www.svenskakyrkan.se/klimatbrevet
This definition is based on the one used by the Mary Robinson Foundation www.mrfcj.org/principles-of-climate-justice

this regard, the more-than-human world is viewed as a living one and not just as a resource. Nature should be viewed as another rights holder that is not in competition with human rights holders. Commitment to the rights of nature is growing and is also increasingly reflected in the Christian ecumenical world as a means for respecting the more-than-human creation in its own right.

Emerging crises

Emerging crises are slow-moving threats that can turn into acute societal crises if not addressed in time. Examples include the climate crisis, pandemics, the spread of multi-resistant bacteria, migration and cyber threats.

Electricity origin labelling and good environmental choice-labelled electricity

All energy trading companies are required by law to declare the origin of the electricity they sell, using guarantees of origin. This allows customers to choose, for example, to buy electricity of renewable origin. Origin labelling does not impose any other environmental requirements. Good Environmental Choice is the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation's ecolabel for products and services. Good Environmental Choice-labelled electricity sets requirements that, for example, protect animals and nature and require the use of biofuel in energy production to be certified.

