

MIA: Climate justice

Good evening, everyone. My name is Mia, and I have been the 18-25 representative for the Diocese of Brechin since I moved to Dundee in 2020 to start my medical degree, which I have finally finished this year.

Although this is the first time I have physically attended Synod, it is not the first time that I have spoken here; four years ago I sent in a video speaking about climate change – a topic I intend to pick up again today.

[Video: We are constantly asked as young people to speak about climate change. But there is nothing left for us to say. Whether it's the scientific facts, the state of the world, or how to move forward, anything we could say has already been said. By everyone, from David Attenborough to Greta Thunberg. We don't need you to ask about this topic anymore. We need you to listen to what has already been said. And we need you to take action.]

A lot has changed since I recorded that video. I encouraged you to stop asking and to start doing, and there are things being done! I recognise the steps being made towards the commitment of Net Zero, and I'm thrilled to see the rising number of eco congregations and eco dioceses.

But it is not enough.

The 5th mark of mission is 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth'. It's a key pillar of our faith that must be applied across church life. This climate crisis affects all of God's creation, and all of the activities that we undertake within it.

That means that any viable solution must address ALL aspects of this crisis. In a church context, that means that this is not just a problem for the eco group. It is a problem for all, to be addressed by all – including young people. (And not just as tokens, but as valued members bringing key skills and contributing meaningfully.)

I know that as individual churches it can feel difficult to know where to start, or that goals can feel unrealistic. However, we are here, together, as a collective church – as said in Romans 12:4–5: *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.* So let us consider other members who can help. Let us come together to address one problem, from all angles.

Perhaps I can start by sharing something recently incorporated by our vestry at St. Paul's. When we seek to make a decision, we now ask ourselves two questions:

Are there negative environmental impacts associated with the project or activity, and if so, can they be mitigated?

Can positive environmental actions be incorporated into the project or activity, and if so, how can we facilitate this?

In this way we are incorporating our duty to the climate and our enthusiasm for God's creation into every decision we make; the start of an 'all aspects' solution for an 'all aspects problem'.

The climate crisis is not going away. And as young people, and as members of the PYC, it is a constant issue that we feel needs to be addressed actively. When I made that video, I was exacerbated and frustrated. We'd been asked to speak, and I simply didn't know what else to say.

As I wrote to my own church Eco Group on the same topic:

I know that it is a privilege to be heard, when so many are ignored. But it is not enough.

I am aware that this feeling of injustice, or frustration towards the climate crisis is not unique to my generation. But as young people, we often do not get the chance to talk about this candidly.

If we are hopeful for the future we are 'over-optimistic', dreamers with no knowledge of reality. If we are frustrated, we are 'pessimists' or angry rebels who only shout. Sometimes we are too old not to know better, too old to be taking reckless actions with unrealistic goals. Other times, we are too young to know, too young to understand the nuances and difficulties.

In reality, we're just young people who care, just as much as you do. Sometimes our goals are unrealistic, and sometimes we are too young to know.

But our frustration is valid, and so is our hope.

Four years ago I asked Synod to stop asking and to start doing. Now I am asking for the next step. I am asking for more. Incorporate your love for God's creation into your love of your church and your congregation. Address all the aspects of the climate crisis and include all of us in your work.

Thank you.