

Today, 36 faith institutions from 11 countries announce their divestment from fossil fuels. It comes from institutions in Brazil, Argentina, India, the Philippines, Uganda, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Ireland, the UK and the United States. These commitments highlight the urgent need to divest from fossil fuels and invest in clean alternatives in response to the growing climate crisis.

This announcement comes from Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist institutions, among others. The group includes the Church in Wales, with more than £700 million (\$975 million) of assets under management, which voted to divest from fossil fuels at its Governing Body meeting in April. It also includes the Diocese of Bristol and the Diocese of Oxford, the first Church of England dioceses to announce their divestment from fossil fuels, as well as the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Catholic Diocese of Hallam and the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

The global divestment announcement takes place as the UK prepares to host the G7 Summit in June and the UN climate summit (COP26) in Glasgow in November. As governments around the world continue to invest significant sums in economic recovery packages, it is vital that these investments support a just and green recovery from Covid-19. Yet, as the UN has stated, only 18% of the Covid-19 recovery spending announced by the world's 50 biggest economies in 2020 can be considered green.

The announcement comes a day before the Royal Dutch Shell AGM is set to take place, on Tuesday 18 May. Shell has been coming under considerable pressure as a result of its plans to increase gas production by 20 per cent in the next few years. The Methodist Church announced it had divested its remaining fossil fuel holdings at the end of April, including £21 million of shares in Royal Dutch Shell, citing Shell's 'inadequate' climate plans. The Church of Scotland recently announced that it had also sold its remaining shares in oil and gas companies.

The announcement takes place during Laudato Si' Week, a celebration of the progress the Roman Catholic Church has made on its journey to ecological conversion following Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change and ecology. As well as the Catholic Diocese of Hallam, six Catholic dioceses in Ireland and several religious orders are announcing their divestment commitments.

Faith communities have long been at the forefront of the global divestment movement, and have contributed the single greatest number of commitments. Out of the global total of over 1,300 divestment commitments made to date, more than 450 are from faith institutions.

A full list of the 36 institutions divesting from fossil fuels and statements from leaders can be found [here](#).

Statements from leaders:

Bill McKibben, author, environmentalist and co-founder of [350.org](#), said: "When faith communities divest from fossil fuels, it is a powerful reminder of both the practical and the moral depth of the climate crisis. There is no way to stand up for the most vulnerable people

on earth, and to safeguard the rest of Creation, unless you're willing to take on the fossil fuel industry."

Rt Revd Dr Joanna Penberthy, Bishop of St Davids in the Church in Wales, said: "Every part of the world is now feeling the effects of climate change. At our Governing Body meeting in April, the Church in Wales declared a climate emergency, pledged ourselves to reach net-zero carbon emissions ideally by the end of this decade, and took the decision to divest from fossil fuels by the end of the year. Whilst these decisions are a major step forward for us, we recognise that there is still much to be done, and we hope that the actions of the churches will encourage governments and industry to work towards alternatives which will help to arrest and overcome the disastrous global warming which is affecting us all."

Rt Revd Ernesto Manuel, Anglican Bishop of Nampula in Northern Mozambique, said: "Fossil fuel investments increase climate change and impacts on those most vulnerable, and also destabilise communities. We have seen how over 700,000 people in Northern Mozambique have been displaced – many fleeing for their lives in terror from insurgents. Dozens have been beheaded, even children as young as 12. This violence only occurs in the areas where gas prospecting is taking place. Locals are not consulted and nor do they benefit, only suffering the impacts of rising prices, pollution and loss of land. We plead with the international community – take your money out of fossil fuels and invest in renewable energy which is decentralised, benefits local people and does not contribute to climate change."

Revd Dr Dave Gregory, Convenor of the Baptist Union's Environmental Network and former Baptist Union President, who is a former meteorologist at the Met Office and the European Weather Centre, said: "It was inspiring to hear so many voices from across the generations and different parts of the Baptist Together family recognising the importance of the decision to divest from fossil fuels, and agreeing that this was the way we need to walk with Jesus together in the face of the climate and environmental crisis which for many in our world is an immediate climate emergency."

Rt Revd Vivienne Faull, Bishop of Bristol in the Church of England, said: "In taking seriously our response to the climate emergency, I'm pleased to be able to share that the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) has made this commitment to disinvest from fossil fuels. Care for creation is a core mark of mission for the Church, and this is an important step towards realising our net zero carbon aims."

Rt Revd Ralph Heskett, Catholic Bishop of Hallam, said: "The Diocese of Hallam divested of the most damaging fossil fuel companies many years ago. In recent months, we have decided to divest of the remainder of our investments with fossil fuel companies and instructed brokers to actively seek opportunities for investing in companies involved in renewable forms of energy. The Diocese continues to review our actions and investments to care for our common home."

James Buchanan, Bright Now Campaign Manager at Operation Noah, said: "As the UK prepares to host the G7 and COP26 this year, it is hugely encouraging to see so many Churches and faith groups announcing their divestment from fossil fuels. We urge governments around the world to follow their lead by ending support for fossil fuels and investing in the clean technologies of the future."

Tomás Insua, Executive Director of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, said: “Our common home cannot take any more dirty fossil energy, so today’s announcement is great news. It’s heartening to see how Catholic institutions are implementing the Vatican’s fossil fuel divestment guidelines, in tandem with so many other faith-based institutions. I hope it inspires many others to follow suit, decisively responding to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

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