

## All Hallows' Church, Leeds, Press Release

For immediate release; Tues 23 April 2019

### All Hallows' pledges to end investment in fossil fuels following dramatic disruption of Palm Sunday Service by climate-concerned children



All Hallows' Church in Hyde Park Leeds, today [Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April] announces that it will end all investments in fossil fuel companies [1]. It is calling on the West Yorkshire Local Government Pension to also end its investment in gas, oil and coal companies [2].

All Hallows' decision to end investment in the fossil fuel industry was prompted by children who, earlier this month, brought prayers to a standstill as they urged the church to stop investing in climate-wrecking fossil fuels. The children, who were supported by the church's environmental group, burst into the church building as a Palm Sunday service was underway, took over the church's sound system and proceeded to educate the congregation about the fossil fuel industry's culpability in driving the climate change crisis. Prayers were prevented from being resumed until a vote was forced on the issue; the congregation then voted overwhelmingly in favour of ending investment in gas, oil and coal companies.

Today, 23<sup>rd</sup> April, All Hallows' Church officially announces its decision to end its investment in fossil fuel companies. It joins churches from across the UK who are today announcing their commitment to end fossil fuel investments as part of an "Easter Declaration for Fossil Free Churches" coordinated by the Christian climate change charity, Operation Noah [3].

**All Hallows' Vicar, Rev Heston Groenewald, said;**

"Fossil fuel companies are driving the climate crisis. Fossil fuel companies are perpetuating colonialism as they drive our sisters and brothers in the Global South from their lands and homes. As Christians we can't stand by and let this happen. It's time to say no. It's time to

go fossil free. So I'm delighted to announce that All Hallows' is ending all investment in gas, oil and coal companies"

**All Hallows' Church Warden, Paul Magnall, said;**

"Children have led us in identifying the fossil fuel industry as the chief villain in the climate crisis. Young people everywhere are standing up against fossil fuel companies. I'm delighted that our church is standing with them. The fossil fuel industry has obstructed climate action for decades with its lobbying and arm bending of politicians."

**Andrea Hill, a congregation member and mother of two children involved in the service disruption, said;**

"Now that our church has broken ties with the fossil fuel industry we'll be campaigning to get the West Yorkshire Local Government Pension Fund to do the same. Lots of our congregation are members of the Fund, as is Leeds City Council. Investing in fossil fuel companies is no longer acceptable"

Last month, the Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church, also announced that it would end its investment in fossil fuels. The Synod represents 98 churches across the Yorkshire area [4].

**James Buchanan, who works for Christian Climate Charity Operation Noah, said;**

"We are delighted that the United Reformed Church Synod of Yorkshire and All Hallows' Church in Leeds have taken this step, and we hope that many other churches across Yorkshire will join them. It is time to get out of the problem and into the solution by divesting from fossil fuels and investing in renewable energy."

**Deirdre Duff, Divestment Campaigner with Friends of the Earth said;**

"All Hallows' joins a growing list of Yorkshire faith organisations that are cutting ties with the fossil fuel industry. They are right to have no faith in fossil fuels. Investing in fossil fuels is not only morally indefensible, it makes no financial sense either. Fossil fuel investments will soon crash in value as the renewable energy transition gathers speed. They are already dragging down investors' returns – so why invest in a dying industry"

Over £6.5 trillion of assets under management are now part of the global fossil fuel divestment movement. Local government pension funds, cities such as New York,

universities, health organisations and the country of Ireland are among those ending their investments in fossil fuels [5].

To avoid catastrophic climate change, over 80% of proven fossil fuel reserves must remain unburned [6]. Oil and gas companies are continuing to obstruct action on climate change; the five largest publicly listed oil and gas companies spend nearly £153 million a year lobbying to delay, control or block policies to tackle climate change [7].

The West Yorkshire Pension Fund has over £900 million invested in fossil fuel companies. This includes over £500 million in companies with fracking operations [1].

## Ends

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## Notes to editors:

1. All Hallows' is a Church of England Church located in Hyde Park, Leeds.
2. The West Yorkshire Local Government Pension Fund (WYPF) is worth approximately [£13.5 billion](#) in total. At the end of March 2018, WYPF had [286.471 members and 443 employers](#). Its largest employers are the five West Yorkshire councils; Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. WYPF invests [over £900 million](#) in fossil fuel companies, including over [£500 million in companies with fracking operations](#).
3. More information about the Easter Declaration for Fossil Free Churches, a joint divestment announcement for churches on Easter Tuesday (23 April), can be found on Operation Noah's Bright Now campaign website: <http://brightnow.org.uk/>.
4. The Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church has also [voiced its support](#) for the [campaign](#) to end fossil fuel investing by the West Yorkshire Local Government Pension Fund (WYPF). Other faith organisations supporting the WYPF fossil fuel divestment campaign include the Brighouse West Yorkshire Quaker Area Meeting (including Bradford, Halifax, Hebden Bridge, Huddersfield and Scholes Quaker Meetings) and Keighley Quaker Meeting.
5. For more information on organisations that are divesting from fossil fuels please see <https://gofossilfree.org/divestment/commitments/>.
6. [Research by Carbon Tracker](#) has calculated that 80% of proven fossil fuel reserves cannot be burned if global average temperature rise is to be limited to 2 degrees celsius above the average pre-industrial temperature. Limiting warming to 1.5 degrees celsius (as recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) would require that well over 80% of proven fossil fuel reserves remain unused.

7. In March 2019, Influence Map released a report revealing that the five largest publicly listed oil and gas companies, namely Chevron, BP, ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch Shell and Total, spend nearly £153 million a year lobbying to delay, control or block policies to tackle climate change. The full report is available at [bit.ly/OilLobby](https://bit.ly/OilLobby).