**Rev Elaine Garman’s address to General Synod 2020**

“Humanity is face-to-face with two global threats to our very way of life, requiring our urgent action. One is immediate – Covid-19. The other is climate change – less ‘in our face’ but even more far-reaching in its effects. During the past nine months we have changed our lives to protect ourselves and others during the pandemic restrictions. Imagine if we had worked on reducing our carbon footprint the same way. Whilst some of the Covid changes have helped reduce our carbon footprint – it shows we *can* make changes but there is so much more to do. We are in a climate emergency and we need to mobilise like never before. For too long the Anglican Communion’s fifth mark of mission: “to safeguard the integrity of creation and to renew and sustain life on earth” has been seen by many as something we’ll get around to at some point or that someone else will deal with. But it doesn’t work that way. We all must act, and act now. As a church, we must lead.

“Along with all the benefits that technology has brought us, burning fossil fuels on a global scale has also altered the very climatic systems of our planet. Extreme storm events have intensified, oceans are warmer, sea levels have risen, droughts and floods occur more frequently, and weather patterns have become more unpredictable. This risks health, threatens food and water security, and increases the likelihood of conflict and the displacement of people. Those most adversely affected are those who already suffer the greatest inequalities. There is a compelling need to listen to all voices but particularly the voices of our young people who will inherit the successes and challenges of what we do and don’t do now. Salvation in Christ calls us to responsibilities beyond ourselves.

“In 2015 the world came together in the Paris Agreement to adopt universal legally binding targets to limit the impacts of climate change; to keep our increasing world temperature well below 2.0°c above pre-industrial times and aiming to 1.5°c, being carbon neutral by 2050 and with increasing levels of ambitions as we head towards the deadline. Some current estimates are that 1.5°c is only a decade away and that it is now too late for gradual, incremental steps.

“Our motion today is designed to engage the SEC formally in reducing our negative impact on our climate. It is a motion that headlines the issue, makes a commitment to working towards the target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and the drawing up of a programme of actions that supports all parts of the SEC to make practical changes. Many people, churches, dioceses and different parts of the Provincial structure want to make changes but are just not sure what to do and how to organise it. But we are not on our own. Other churches, other Scottish faith communities and various organisations are making similar commitments and good material and practices are available which we can draw upon. This motion signals our intention to draw up a programme to be brought formally to General Synod 2021. That does not stop us all doing what we can now and indeed we would encourage that. We want to avoid charges and others feeling put upon by a mandate from on high but are stimulated to contribute, making lives better not worse for the least well off in our communities.

“Change is already happening, but the church has a role to make it happen faster, to put its own house in order, to be part of Scotland’s preparation for the COP26 climate summit next year. We have a responsibility to demonstrate courage and stir up complacency. Humankind has great ingenuity and when it comes to it, capacity to solve problems when it has the ambition to do so. The church has an important place to drive that ambition, making a positive contribution in its own right, and to build connection between people that draws everyone into a common aim. This can be our legacy.”