

Storm of hope

2021

Earthing Heaven with Green Christian



Baildon Methodist Church Bradford has constructed a small step on the stairway to heaven. The Fold is the first two-storey building on church premises in Britain constructed to standards similar to those of a Passivhaus. It emits no carbon dioxide and uses very little electricity. Rather than despairingly talking about climate change, this Church has acted to reduce the global heating that is destroying God's Creation. John D Anderson

For most of human history, before the Industrial Revolution, the world was "green" by default. We were not yet exploiting fossil fuels on a large scale, and the global population was far smaller, estimated at around 770,000,000 in 1760 – over 10 times smaller than today's population of over 7.8 billion.

Most people were employed in agriculture. Large industrial cities had yet to develop. Most goods were produced locally, and cities like London – more like collections of villages and towns – were fed by their hinterland. Food was organic and seasonal, with brief weeks in the summer for produce such as strawberries. The avocado was unknown.

But there were no antibiotics, modern surgery and dentistry had not been invented, famine was always a possibility. When resources were scarce, there was conflict and war.

Over the centuries there has been much progress in education, medicine, science and technology, and in simpler ways such as plumbing, and the understanding of hygiene. Our understanding of the world – for example viruses, or the carbon cycle – is beyond anything understood even a century ago.

Yet the human spirit has not changed. Our restless human spirit, so inventive and imaginative, has the ability to be utterly altruistic, or overly self-regarding. The Bible offers us timeless wisdom about how to live. Made in the image of God, all humans have been given God's attributes, such as love, faithfulness, mercy, justice, compassion and wisdom, inventiveness and creativeness.

The Good News is that solutions to the climate and ecological crises are already here: from time-honoured nature-based solutions to those using new technology, engineering and scientific insights. We don't have to invent anything new.

In the UK, the Centre for Alternative Technology has been working on **ZeroCarbon Britain** for the past twelve years. They say: Our work clearly demonstrates that we already have the tools and technology needed to efficiently power the UK with 100% renewable energy, to feed ourselves sustainably and play our part in leaving a safe and habitable climate for our children and future generations. (www.cat.org.uk).

Globally, **Project Drawdown** is doing similar ground-breaking work. See page 3 for more.

Christ, alpha, omega,
avatar of hope,
whose heart in spite of all
hopes on in spite of us,
hopes on for us, in spite of us –
rain, rain on us
untamed, unconstrained
Your wildfire storm of hope.

From *That Intransitive Being*
by Daniel Berrigan

Green Christian's Aims

We affirm our belief in God as Creator of all things and in Jesus Christ as Lord, looking to the Holy Spirit for guidance through the Scriptures, and seeking to hear God's voice in the challenges of the present time. We are responsible for our impact on God's Creation. Since 1982 Green Christian has been helping members to understand and relate our responsibilities to our faith. Green Christian supports Christians from all backgrounds and traditions. We offer insights into ecology and the environment to Christian people and Churches, and we offer Christian insights to the Green movement.



Nicky says:

The greatest commandments are to love God, and love our neighbour. Loving God means loving what God loves and has created - failure to love the natural world is a failure of love for God, and for our neighbour too, because environmental damage causes suffering. Let's do all we can to protect and care for the natural world, grow that love and action in ourselves, and encourage it in others.

At the beginning of the Green Christian online Festival in October 2020, **Re-Imagining the Promised Land**, Bishop James Jones, one of Green Christian's patrons, issued a warning and a challenge. Quoting from the Lord's Prayer, Bishop James challenged us to consider how, rather than "Earthing Hell" as the world seems bent on doing, we can instead "Earth Heaven", bring God's purposes into our earthly home as our original calling was always to do.

The Earthing of Heaven is what we pray for every time we pray the Lord's Prayer. We pray for God's will to be done not merely on the surface of the Earth, but in the deep ecology of the world.

One of the great strengths of Green Christian is that we walk alongside people of all faiths and those who feel they have no need of faith. We are committed to work together with all who care for our planet, and with all who are looking for and implementing solutions.

The opportunities for far-reaching change are already here, both in our personal lives, and also by influencing others. Many individuals already understand the difficulties and challenges, but are unsure whether their own efforts make much of a difference. Many local Councils and businesses are making the environment and climate change a priority. **Stafford Borough Council** has many helpful reader-friendly pages on its website dedicated to sustainability. **Milton Keynes** aims to be the greenest city in the world. **Leicester** aims to transform itself into a sustainable city, helping to improve the quality of the environment.

In **Lincoln**, Green Christian member Geoff Stratford has influenced his local Churches, Council and other organisations to work together for the common good, saving duplication of effort and resources and giving a strong sense of encouragement.

It's been said that to pray is to imagine. As Christians we can re-imagine the future – not the dystopian future we see so often in movies and novels – or the difficult and terrible fearful future imagined by so many – but one where people and planet are nurtured and protected. Imaginative prayer can be a springboard for action. Prayer also has the power to transform the one who prays, so that we are enabled to go out and transform the world. Without prayerfully imagining a better future we can't know what we're working for.

Animals reclaimed the streets during the global pandemic lockdown in spring 2020 – from sheep roaming the streets in Wales, to camels playing in the ocean in India. When buildings are left empty and unattended for a few years, insects, birds, animals, fungi and plants take over. Researchers are working on the possibilities of plastic-eating bacteria to help clean the oceans, waterways and soil. Our big industrial projects look impressive and indestructible, but with thought, care, and imagination, things could be very different in the future.

Green Christian's first online Festival took place in October 2020, with the theme of *Re-Imagining the Promised Land*. Speakers of depth and insight included Bishop James Jones, Cleo Lake, Melanie Nazareth, Jonathon Porritt, Rev Frances Ward, Rob Hopkins, Bridget MacKenzie, and Ghilleen Prance. We also heard from eco-poets Carrie Etter and Caleb Parkin. You can watch videos from the Festival on Green Christian's YouTube channel: [Green Christian - YouTube](#)

Isobel says:

Isobel says: For me glimmers of hope came during the Re-imagining The Promised Land Festival's closing session, as around 20 Green Christian members and supporters briefly shared their involvements with local projects. Each initiative stood out as a way we might go about earthing heaven in microcosm, even in the shadow of the earthing of climate "hell" in Bishop James Jones' sober words at the very start of the festival.



Salt and Light

Jesus said: "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." Matthew 5, 13-16 (NRSV)



In 2017 the bus company First West invested in a fleet of 77 new buses running on biogas generated from food and farm waste, as well as electric buses. The company has also installed over 1000 solar panels at their key depots in Bristol.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
in earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**



The human family is a part of Nature, not apart from it

The good news is that there is already much being done to restore the world, from low-energy initiatives, to cutting pollution, finding alternatives to plastic, educating the public, and more. Our restless human spirit is at work to find and implement solutions. Some of these solutions involve new initiatives and inventions, others require returning to time-honoured wisdom and practices.

Rob Hopkins, the founder of the **Transition Network**, says this: "If there was ever a time for fresh thinking, for being bold, for being visionary and imaginative – for reimagining everything – **this is it**. So let's get together and reshape the world." The Transition Network is a movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild the world. <https://transitionnetwork.org/>

Here are some brilliant solutions already being implemented today.

Interlocking Stabilised Soil Blocks

The Interlocking Stabilised Soil Block (ISSB) is a low-cost, carbon-saving alternative to the environmentally-damaging fired brick, for use in both urban and rural areas in Africa.

The brick is a compressed earth technology, where specially shaped interlocking bricks made of soil and 3% cement are cured in the sun, avoiding the use of trees for firing, thus preserving ancient forests and drastically reducing carbon emissions. The bricks are tough and durable, 80% stronger than conventional clay bricks (University of Bath, UK). Made on site from local soil, their interlocking feature means less mortar is required, construction is easier and costs are further reduced.

The technology was invented in the 1990s by Ugandan engineer and inventor, the late Dr Moses Musaaazi of Makerere University, Uganda. For more information and videos, see <https://hytuganda.com/>



If you care about the climate and ecological emergencies and making the world a greener and fairer place – why not join Green Christian! We also have over 20 local groups where you can find like-minded people, enthusiasm and projects to inspire you.

Donations to Green Christian are always welcome, to help finance our efforts to reach out to new members and the wider world with our message. Please click the Donate button on our website to contribute.



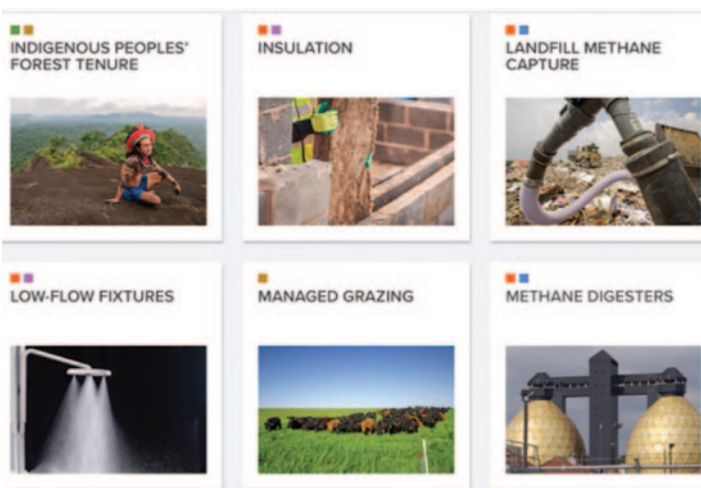
Hilary says:

Earthing heaven? Getting your hands in the soil. Planting, tending, harvesting. Whichever it is, if you choose to get really involved, the soil will highlight the lines on your hands and the space underneath your fingernails. And if you let it, it will remind you that from God in heaven, through a handful of soil, came life on Earth.

Project Drawdown

Founded in 2014, Project Drawdown® is a nonprofit organisation that seeks to help the world reach "Drawdown"—when levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere stop climbing and start to steadily decline. <https://www.drawdown.org/>

"Project Drawdown conducts an ongoing review and analysis of climate solutions. Our work shows the world can reach Drawdown by mid-century, if we make the best use of all existing climate solutions. More solutions are needed and emerging, but there is no reason—or time—to wait on innovation. Now is better than new, and society is well equipped for transformation today."



Zero Carbon Britain

The **Centre for Alternative Technology** (founded 1973) says: CAT's Zero Carbon Britain Hub and Innovation Lab helps turn climate emergency declarations into action, sharing zero carbon solutions to help build resilience. We provide local authorities, businesses, institutions and community groups with the confidence, skills and understanding to help achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. With technical solutions readily available, the momentum coming from towns and cities to get to net zero is the political and cultural challenge of our generation. The Innovation Lab tackles the specific barriers to transforming the complex economic, social and political dynamics here in the UK, and beyond. Working with others, we test and prototype solutions, and create routes for a sustainable future for all. www.cat.org.uk



Sara says:

What does earthing heaven mean to me? When I see this in practice; praising God for the wonder of Creation; God's precious Word transforming lives; hearts breaking for the injustice experienced by all of God's creatures; communities standing up for racial justice; Churches being a light in the darkness; and when I pause from my activism to seek God in the words of Micah 6:8.

Join us

Since 1982 Green Christian has been working with Christians, Churches and the Green movement to witness to hope in the ecological crisis.

We welcome new members. Membership online starts at just £2 a month. Please go to www.greenchristian.org.uk/join-us/ to join online. Or use the form below to send your details to: Green Christian Membership Secretary, Flat 1, 31 St James Terrace, Buxton SK17 6HS.

To find out more about Green Christian visit our extensive website: www.greenchristian.org.uk. Sign up for our free monthly news email, prayer diary or Joy in Enough news, or contact us for a free introductory pack.



GreenChristian

Facebook

www.facebook.com/ChristianEcologyLink

Twitter

@greenchristian

Email

info@greenchristian.org.uk

Telephone

0345 459 8460

Post:

10 Kiln Gardens,
Hartley Wintney, Hampshire,
RG27 8RG

Subscriptions are lower for those who pay by Standing Order (SO). Cheques, for the amounts in bold, should be made payable to *Green Christian*.

- ☐ **Standard individual £30** (£25 by SO)
☐ **Joint/Family £40** (£35 by SO)
☐ **Church/Corporate: annual donation** (£60 suggested minimum)
☐ **I include a donation** to assist your work £

If you are a UK taxpayer, you can increase your donation by 25% at no extra cost to you! Please sign the Gift Aid Declaration form.

Your details:

Name:

Address:

Postcode: Telephone:

Email:

Please complete the following details to subscribe by Standing Order:

Your bank: (Bank/Building Society)

Address:

Postcode:

Account name (block capitals):

Account no: Sort code:

Instruction to your bank or building society:

Please pay £ annually to Green Christian.

The Co-operative Bank, GLOUCESTER 2 BRANCH,

Sort code 08-90-54, a/c No. 70329203.

This cancels any previous order in favour of Christian Ecology Link or Green Christian.

Date of first payment:

(two months ahead please, to allow for administration)

Signature: Date:

Gift Aid declaration:

I confirm I have paid, or will pay, an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give. I confirm that I am a UK taxpayer, resident in the UK for tax purposes.

☐ I want to Gift Aid my donation of £ and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to Green Christian.

Signature: Date:

Ref No. (Green Christian to complete)

Please notify Green Christian if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.



Key Green Christian events in 2021

Please note: All in-person events are subject to Covid-19 restrictions and government guidelines. Please check our website for up-to-date information.

Green Christian On The Road Together regional events. Open to all. A series of days exploring Green Christian's ethos and work, including the Way of Life, Joy in Enough, and Christian Climate Action. *If you would like to host a Green Christian day, please get in touch!* **Colchester** Saturday 5 June, St Stephen's Church, Canterbury Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 7RY.

Green Christian Retreat 8-10 October, "Journeying into a Strange Land". Ringsfield Hall, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 8JR. Speaker Revd Dr Frances Ward, author of *Like There's No Tomorrow*.

Annual Members' Meeting Saturday 27 November 2020, 1pm-5pm, St Aloysius Church, 20 Phoenix Road, Euston, NW1 1TA. Shared lunch, meeting, and talk, open to all. An opportunity to contribute to the work of Green Christian, and gain inspiration for your own.

Look out for us at **Greenbelt** and other events around the UK!

Online:

Green Christian Online **Workshops**, open to all.

Radical Presence: a short programme of conversations, in which we listen for God's word in this time of pandemic. Open to all. <https://radicalpresence.org.uk/>

Borrowed Time: building pastoral care in the climate emergency. Open to all.

Please see the website for more information on all these events and more, or sign up to our mailing list: <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/connect/sign-up/>

Green Christian brings together people in the UK and beyond who seek to tell a new story for our times. We offer:

Gatherings: conferences, retreats and workshops, both in person and online.

Local groups: 22 groups are directly affiliated to Green Christian, and we offer support, advice and materials to others.

Prayer: a daily *Prayer Guide* available by email or on our website.

Campaigns: **LOAF** promotes food which is Locally Grown, Organically produced, Animal friendly and Fairly traded.

Joy in Enough promotes an alternative economy free from growth, debt and the obligation to consume. www.joyinenough.org

Way of Life Community: a dispersed community which values and lives by the disciplines of Daily Prayer, Living Gently on the Earth, Public Witness and Encouragement.

Green Christian Magazine: a full-colour magazine published twice a year, packed with news, thought-provoking articles, reviews of books and other media, and resources.

Exhibition materials: a range of leaflets and posters giving a Christian perspective on environmental topics.

CELINK: a discussion forum and social network for members, for the exchange of news and advice.

E-news: regular emails for members and non-members on events and resources from Green Christian and other Christian environmental organisations.

Website: www.greenchristian.org.uk

Further details at www.greenchristian.org.uk or from our Information Officer at 10 Kiln Gardens, Hartley Wintney, Hampshire, RG27 8RG info@greenchristian.org.uk

Green Christian is a registered trading name of Christian Ecology Link. Registered Charity no. 328744, and a Company, reg. no. 2445198, Registered address: 35 Kitto Road, London SE14 5TW

