

green christian

the magazine



Be the Hope!

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GreenChristian

Be the Hope!

Clare Redfern, Editor

In preparing this issue, it has been poignant to peruse the gallery of cloth panels created by crafty stitchers for the Loving Earth project. There's more about this Quaker-led initiative on page 18 and the organisers have generously allowed Green Christian to use images of the contributions they have received over the past months.

Each cloth panel is a personal expression, be it simple or elaborate, of love and concern. They encompass both lament, even despair, for the ravages inflicted by climate chaos, pollution and habitat loss– but also joy at the Earth's beauty in its colourful abundance, grandeur and inter-connectedness.

The panels can all be viewed online (lovingearth-project.uk), each linked with a short explanation and a pledge from the panel's maker to take some kind of action. One square filled with hearts contains the challenge: "Be the Hope", and its maker draws attention to the words of George Fox, the founder of the Quakers:

"...Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one."
George Fox 1656

This speaks volumes to me about wisdom for living, even in 2021 – especially in 2021: grounded, responsible, attending to others – and finding fulfilment in this. In a world facing multiple crises linked to our destructive tendencies and appetites, it also reminds me of Jesus, who walked over the world, calling people to lives of humility, contentment and self-giving, to share in both his suffering and his joy.

This is a vital message that the Church and Christians can offer; beneficial technology is hugely important but we must be aware of hubris and arrogance that denies our need to change our hearts and lifestyles. The new Plenty! resources from Green Christian might be one way to explore this in a group setting (see GC News on page 20).

Meanwhile billionaires are jostling to reach the stratosphere, some even daring to see a humanitarian benefit in this, with the offer of free flights and the claim that we could soon leave behind a devastated Earth and form space colonies instead. But the disadvantaged and historically exploited, like the rest of us, would surely prefer a stable climate, homelands protected from destruction by industry or extreme weather events and a place for their children to thrive! Not the grim vision of future life in a hermetically sealed space-dome.

The UN COP26 climate talks in November will be definitive for the future of the whole Earth and its peoples. So in this issue we are taking a brief walk over the world with reports of both climate chaos – and hopeful activism – around the globe and closer to home.

At Green Christian we are specifically urging increased ambition from COP26 and looking for strong leadership from our UK Government. Many Christian groups are calling for change in various and creative ways (the Loving Earth project is just one example).

We are all still complicit in our dependence on fossil fuels – and yet, positive change is taking place. Can there still be a tipping point of hope for the Earth? *"Be patterns, be examples.."* read about our initiatives in the GC News pages and the Annual Report, see the COP26 resources on our website and join us in praying, protesting and witnessing, even cheerfully, to the change we want to see. ■



Clare Redfern,
Editor

Our front cover image, "Flooded Valleys" is of an embroidered panel from the Loving Earth Project (see article on page 18). The anonymous creator of this beautiful panel writes: "The Angel Gabby, the angel of Hope and Change, is flying over the floodwaters trying to encourage us to take notice, to act quickly and stop squandering the Earth's resources and burning fossil fuels..the trees became like hands reaching up pleadingly, to be raised up, not drowned."
Go to the Loving Earth Project website (<http://lovingearth-project.uk>) to see all the panels and read more.

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Contributions should ideally be made by e-mail as attached files. Alternatively clear typescript is acceptable when negotiated with the Editors. Accompanying photos and drawings are encouraged. An early email or phone call to the Commissioning Editor, Clare Redfern, to indicate an intention to write is very helpful.

Editorial Policy

Green Christian is intended as a forum for Christians of all traditions to reflect on, and contribute to, current thinking and action in the Green Movement. The opinions expressed by guest authors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors but are welcome for their sincerity and insight. Items mailed with *Green Christian* reflect the views of their authors or publishers and not necessarily those of Green Christian.

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Basis of Faith

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 the Spirit in the challenges of the present time.

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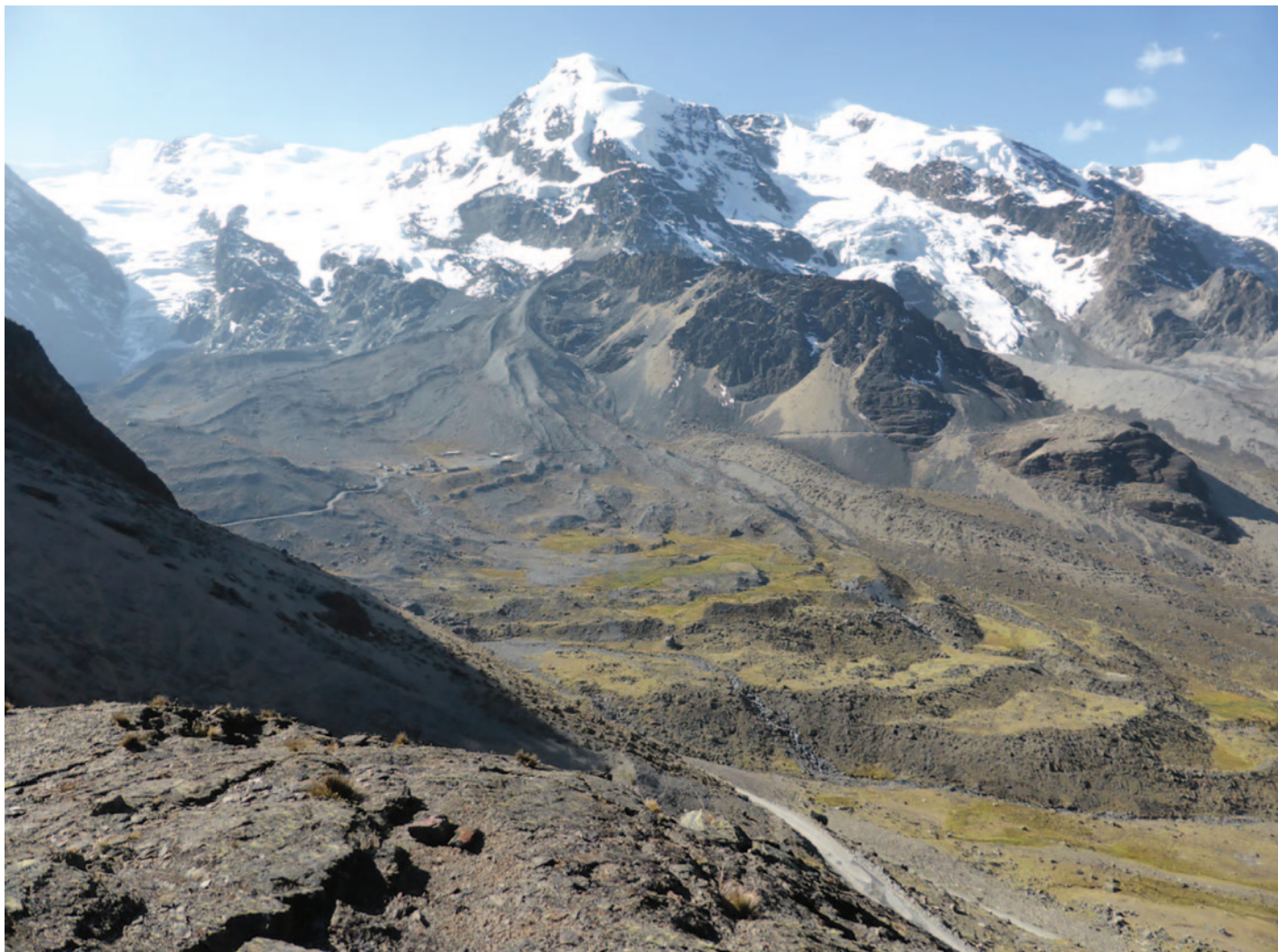
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Thirsting for justice

Tanya Jones laments the loss of glaciers in the high Andes



Mining settlement under the Cordillera Apolobamba, near Pelechuco, Bolivia.

Photo credit: S. Cook

I don't know what it's like to watch, over just a few years, your beloved and life-giving glaciers lose their ice.

Over the past months, I've attended a lot of online conferences. I've been moved and challenged by the opening words with which speakers from Australia, Canada and other settler colonial states have paid their respects to the Indigenous people from whose traditional lands they speak. I am writing this at home in Scotland, but feel a similar imperative to acknowledge the experience and knowledge of those

about whom I am writing. My understanding, from a distance of place, culture and privilege, mediated by books and articles, is partial in both senses, incomplete and skewed.

One thing I do know is that glacier recession is one of the clearest and most striking effects of climate change and another is that the tropical glaciers of the Andes are among the fastest shrinking in the world. In the High Andes of Peru, this deglaciation is exacerbating the difficulties faced by the largely Quechua-speaking inhabitants, people

already wounded by both historic and contemporary racism and structural injustice. Three particular harms that are being intensified are the risks of glacial lake outburst floods, vulnerability to water stress, and threats to community and identity.

As glaciers retreat, they leave behind them lakes filled with meltwater and dammed by combinations of rock, debris and ice. These lakes are vulnerable to many impacts, including earthquakes, landslides, icefalls and waves from higher lakes above them.

The resulting floods typically carry rock and debris, travelling at high speed down towards towns, villages, homes and farms. A glacial lake outburst flood which hit the small city of Huaraz in 1941 killed around 1800 people (some estimate many more). A current case in the German courts, brought by local farmer Saul Luciano Lliuya against power giant RWE, concerns the likelihood of its repetition, raised by climate-induced increases in the quantity and size of glacial lakes and the instability of mountain slopes.

Decisions about how to manage glacial lakes are made more difficult by the fact that they are not only dangerous flood risks but also vital water resources at a time of growing scarcity. During the early stages of deglaciation, the amount of meltwater increased, encouraging the commercial cultivation of thirsty export crops in coastal regions. The water to irrigate these comes from the Andes, though the Andean people see little or no benefit. But once “peak water” has passed, as it already has for many Peruvian glaciers, the quantity of meltwater rapidly diminishes, just when, with more extreme dry seasons, the depletion of groundwater and intrusion of saltwater, it is needed the most.

The domestic and subsistence farming needs of the Andean people rank very low in water priorities, behind agribusiness, hydroelectricity and, perhaps most of all, mining. Mineral extraction, in Peru as in its neighbouring countries, not only uses huge amounts of water, but often leaves them irretrievably contaminated with lead, arsenic and other toxins. Communities that have centuries of experience in managing their water supplies safely and fairly, seek at least minimal participation in local decision-making, only to find themselves again and again the victims of greed and broken promises.

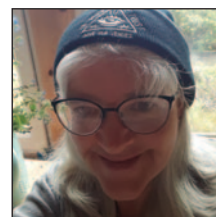
But glaciated mountains and glacial lakes are, for the people of the Andes, not mere resources, but living beings, foundational to the understanding of community and identity. Since the early days of Spanish colonization, these traditional beliefs and practices have adapted to assimilate Catholic doctrines and figures in ways that foreshadow the belated emergence of ecotheology in our minority world. Now, however, not only are harsher forms of evangelical Christianity condemning the relational respect and gratitude shown to non-human nature, but the lakes and mountains themselves seem to have become alienated from their human sisters and brothers. Meanwhile, as harvests fail, more and more of the younger generations are forced into exile to the cities, prey to exploitation and debt.

My own research asks how restorative justice principles and practice, the healing of relationships, the sharing of stories and the work of transformative change could address climate injustices in places such as the Peruvian and Bolivian Andes, intersections of environmental harm and underlying oppression. I had originally hoped to be spending time in one such community, before the poor of the world, and of Peru in particular, were further wounded by this new, yet overlapping crisis. For now I can only read, listen, reflect and pray.

The climate crisis, as well as being a crisis of justice, is crucially a water crisis. Not only are temperature rises most manifest in water events: too much, too little, too late, too fierce, but the greedy responses of the minority world are further exacerbating water injustice. The thirsty business of lithium mining in the salt flats of Bolivia, feeding the electric car frenzy, is just one example. Unless we take water, and the water needs of the poorest, seriously, our shiny net-zero targets will be nothing but a source of shame.

The prophets, psalmists, and Jesus of Nazareth all spoke frequently and passionately of water. We, perhaps especially on these temperate islands, spiritualize these references, making them all about the Spirit. They work as metaphors, of course, but also as representations of tangible, essential reality. For the people of the Biblical Middle East, there is no such thing as being so holy that you don't need to think about water. That is our privilege, and it is proving to be a brief one. Whatever Jesus meant by his words to the Samaritan woman (and David Bentley Hart notes that “living” also meant “flowing” when it came to water) she certainly understood it as real abundance. Equally, the storm which he calmed was a real one, not simply an image of divine protection.

The brilliant songwriter Bap Kennedy, who died too young not long ago, wrote a gentle, engaging song called *Mostly Water*, about how much energy we put into the wrong worries and conflicts. Maybe we too ought to remind ourselves, when we're tempted to overcomplicate or overdemand, that, like the Earth and the other living beings with which we share it, we too are mostly water. It is our most fundamental and universal shared necessity, our most precious and vulnerable physical treasure, and the very least that we owe to one another. ■



Tanya Jones is a researcher for Green MSP Maggie Chapman in the Scottish Parliament. She is also researching a PhD at the University of Dundee where she is an Associate of the UNESCO Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science. She is a Quaker attendee, co-convenor of the Scottish Greens' International Committee and book review editor for *Green Christian*.

Protests, politics and portfolios

Bill McKibben sends a snapshot from the USA



An "Honor the Earth" protest against a Canadian tar sands oil pipeline in northern Minnesota

Photo credit: Sarah LittleRedFeather

It's been as wild a summer across North America as the rest of the northern hemisphere: we've seen one astonishing pulse of heat after another. The most remarkable came in late June and early July, when the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. and the western provinces of Canada lit up red on the weather map. In fact, they had to go find some new colours: the temperature in British Columbia reached 121 Fahrenheit, or 49.4 Celsius – which is hotter than it's gotten in Canada since people invented the thermometer. The smoke from the great fires this heat touched off drifted across the continent, darkening the skies of New York and Boston. It may not be precisely hell, but it's roughly the same temperature.

And against this, what was the climate movement up to? Some things were obvious: people rallied to fight hard against a massive tar sands pipeline across Minnesota, following the lead of local Indigenous organizers, (there was a big turnout from faith communities, with plenty of collars on hand). It's an

incredibly important fight, not just for climate questions, but for issues of native sovereignty and water pollution. Groups like "Honor the Earth" and the Giniw Collective have fought it through lonely pandemic winters; now, supporters from around the country are joining in, camping along the headwaters of the Mississippi. But the Biden administration didn't seem to pay attention.

Instead, they forged ahead with a singular focus: the massive infrastructure bills making their way through the U.S. Congress. The first, passed with bipartisan support, doesn't do much for the climate (and indeed is larded with items off the fossil fuel industry wish list, like big subsidies for carbon sequestration). But its passage was the necessary precondition, or so the pundits explained, for the *second* piece of legislation, a massive \$3.5 trillion spending bill that would mark the first time in the 30-year history of the climate fight that America's Congress has passed a serious climate bill.

Everyone knows how precarious its chances are – it requires the votes of all 50 Democrats in the Senate, which means that Joe Manchin (conservative Democrat senator for West Virginia) has an effective veto on its contents. And that seems to have translated into: don't rock the boat. Get the bill passed. Because, as the venerable climate writer Dave Roberts has pointed out, "if things go well, the legislation will include a clean energy standard and clean energy tax credits, which together would revolutionize the US electricity system. If things don't go well, there will be no substantial climate legislation for many years to come." Fingers crossed, then – and lots of phone calls being made to Senate offices, especially Manchin's.



Strong and fragile like us

(lovingearth-project.uk)

Of course Washington is not the only power center; the other big lever American activists can pull is labelled "Wall Street," and it is here that the fight against the fossil fuel industry may be won or lost. Drawing on the massive success of the divestment campaign – now at \$15 trillion and counting, in endowments and portfolios that have begun to scrub themselves of carbon – activists have drawn the circle larger: now the targets are the giant banks, asset managers, and insurance companies that have enabled Big Oil with massive infusions of cash. It comes from around the globe, but the big four American banks – Chase, Citi, Wells Fargo and Bank of America – are the biggest, dirtiest players.

The pandemic put a crimp in the initial campaigns against these guys (my last trip before lockdown was to jail in DC, for sitting in the lobby of the Chase Bank nearest the Capitol

and refusing to leave). But it's beginning to pick up steam again: youth activists, many of them veterans of the school strike movement, are aiming for late October protests at branches around the nation. They have to fight their way through a miasma of greenish fog that the corporations have learned to produce – but the smoky haze in the air may be helping people see more clearly. The time has come for action, and in a big way. ■



Bill McKibben is a US environmental activist, author, and journalist. He co-founded the campaign group 350.org, played an active role in protests against the Keystone XL oil pipeline and has written numerous books about the environment. A life-long Methodist, in February this year, Bill took part in an online event on fossil fuel divestment in the Methodist Church organised by Operation Noah, Christian Aid and the Methodist Zero Carbon Group. The Methodist Church has subsequently divested fully from all fossil fuel investments.

"In our Anishinaabeg Prophecies, this time is known as the time of the Seventh Fire. In this time, we are told we will face a choice between two paths - one well-worn and scorched and a second not well worn and green. It will be our choice upon which path to embark.... we are choosing the green path and lighting the Eighth Fire by heralding in a restorative and regenerative kind just economy."

Winona LaDuke, HonorEarth.org

A Benediction

by Maggi Dawn

Sorrows may surround you,
Sadness overwhelm you,
Yet be confident of this:
that you shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
And now may this God,
who holds you in trouble, tends you in sorrow,
and leads you to green pastures,
This three-in-one and one-in-three God,
Bless you, and bless you, and bless you.

from *Words for a Dying World* (SCM Press, 2019)
and reproduced with permission

A journey of trust

Sheridan Pengelly encourages us to walk away from investing in fossil fuels



Switch it off

(lovingearth-project.uk)

I'm no expert. I'm not a scientist. I'm not an accountant. I'm not even a church treasurer! How can I talk to my church about divesting from fossil fuels?

Perhaps this sense of lacking expertise is holding you back from beginning a conversation about divestment in your church. Perhaps you find yourself thinking – feeling – that divestment needs to be discussed, but you don't know enough about the issue. You just don't know enough – about the science, or the facts and figures.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit prompts us with a sense of discomfort. Something doesn't feel right. Be reassured that if you have a sense of discomfort about holding investments in fossil fuels that is a good place to start a conversation. Perhaps a God-given gift that we dismiss too easily is the gift of feeling something so deeply that it cannot be ignored. You may find others are feeling it too and are waiting for the courage to speak up.

It is certainly "felt" by an increasing number of people who would not

describe themselves as Christian – people who we in the Church are desperate to connect with. A public statement about divestment can be a way of making that connection, of making faith real and relevant.

The burden of responsibility weighs heavily on those who are trustees for the church's finances. The clue is in the name – trustee. We have a trust placed in us – a legal responsibility as well as a moral and spiritual responsibility. To be wise stewards. It is increasingly argued by many that divestment from fossil fuels is wise stewardship.

Investments in fossil fuels are at risk of what Mark Carney (ex-governor of the Bank of England) described in December 2019 as "stranded assets" as the world reduces its dependency on fossil fuels. We are already beginning to see this happening as a result of the pandemic. By divesting from fossil fuels we can also begin to invest in alternative technologies and build a green recovery from Covid. Our investments can be part of the solution not the problem.



Melting Glaciers

(lovingearth-project.uk)

In April 2021 the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church in Great Britain fully divested from fossil fuel companies, after selling its remaining shares in Shell and Equinor. In October 2020 my local church made a straightforward commitment to divest from fossil fuels in the next five years or sooner. We are at the start of the journey and beginning to work out what that means practically for us.

Whether we are thinking nationally or locally, as with any journey, we shouldn't be put off from taking the first step because we don't know what the 10th or the 19th step looks like. The journey begins with the *first* step – a principled decision.

As the people of God, do we believe that our resources should be healing the planet or adding fuel to the fire?

We are commanded to love God and love our neighbour. And loving our neighbour means loving our planet. So, take the first step: pray, talk to others about the issues, and ask your church to consider divesting. ■



Sheridan Pengelly is a Methodist Local Preacher, Co-Deputy Chair of the Methodist Zero Carbon Group and a therapeutic counsellor.

Operation Noah's Bright Now campaign offers resources to help churches divest from fossil fuels (<https://brightnow.org.uk/resources/>)

Global vision, local responses

Bishop John Arnold and **Dr Emma Gardner** from the Catholic Diocese of Salford reflect

We have a climate crisis, but where did it come from? Were we simply ignorant of the damage being inflicted on our planet by our industrialisation and unsustainable plundering of the Earth's resources? Were we simply ignoring the impact of our activity for the sake of creating wealth? Whatever the reason, after some 200 years of industrialisation, we are now very much aware of the damage still being done and the inevitable consequences of climate change if we fail to take radical action.

This new awareness, founded on reliable scientific analysis, leads us to remind ourselves that the guardianship of Creation has deep spiritual and theological roots. It is clear that the remedy for climate change cannot just rest with industry or with politicians.

There is clear evidence in our scriptures that we are guardians of a Creation which is entrusted to us for our care. We have paid all too little attention to this aspect of our lives. What appears so unjustly cruel is that the people of the poorest nations, who have done least to damage our environment are the first to be suffering severe consequences. Indigenous peoples, who have lived in harmony with their natural surroundings, are paying the price of our indifference and mindless greed.

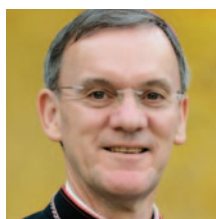
We know that the global average temperature is about 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels, and that we have committed to keep this temperature rise to 1.5°C. The difference between 1.5°C and 2°C is devastating; for every

0.1°C of warming avoided, thousands of lives can be spared. There is a need for urgent government action to set out more ambitious goals.

Pope Francis made a universal appeal in his letter to the whole world, *Laudato Si'*, in 2015, reiterated this year at the launch of the Laudato Si' Action Platform. Francis is clear in saying that each of us has our part to play. He speaks of a global vision, global politics and a global response.

The Diocese of Salford is working on a collaborative project with St. Mary's University and the Laudato Si' Institute, Campion Hall, University of Oxford to develop a framework for sustainability transition within the Catholic Church. The project will engage with carbon reduction as well as social and theological aspects of sustainability and is aiming to integrate primary and secondary education within this transition in Salford. We look forward to seeing lessons learnt here translated into a toolkit that any other diocese or religious group can use.

We are moving forward with hope, recognising our responsibilities, sharing and connecting with others to bring a better future into being.



John Arnold is lead Bishop on the Environment for the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales



Dr Emma Gardner Head of Environment, Salford Diocese

"That Creation may once again shine" – Martin Davis introduces the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

In May this year, Pope Francis launched the Laudato Si' Action Platform¹ – an invitation to all people of goodwill to take care of the Earth, our common home.

We need "a new ecological approach," says Francis, "...let us inaugurate a lifestyle and a society that is finally eco-sustainable: we have the opportunity to prepare a better tomorrow for all. From God's hands we have received a garden, we cannot leave a desert to our children."

Everyone – families, church communities, schools and universities, institutions, businesses, groups and movements – are invited to embark on this journey. The pope urges all people to work together with a ground-up approach rooted in their own culture and experience, their own initiatives and strengths, "so that our mother Earth may be restored to her original beauty and Creation may once again shine according to God's plan."

Pledges of action are invited. A library of resources, including a webinar programme, is being developed and will be made freely available.

In the UK, some 200 Laudato Si' Animators, who have been through a rolling programme of courses run by the Global Catholic Climate Movement are standing ready to embrace the Action Platform! ■



Martin Davis co-ordinates the Green Christian Cheltenham Group and is a Laudato Si' animator.

1 www.laudatosiactionplatform.org

Lament in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai

by **Sophia Chirongoma**



Sophia Chirongoma visiting a village devastated by Cyclone Idai
Photo credit: S. Chirongoma

On 15 March 2019, Cyclone Idai thumped on to the Chimanimani Mountains which form the border between Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Torrential rain and sustained winds of up to 190km per hour flattened this low-lying area. It set off landslides that have altered the landscape in the Zimbabwe highlands. Officials in Zimbabwe estimate that 171 people died, 326 have been reported missing, 4,073 people have been displaced and 2,251 houses were destroyed.

As described by the survivors of Cyclone Idai in Chimanimani, what started off as an ordinary rainy day suddenly turned into a night of terror, devastation and death. What made the situation worse is that disaster struck between 7 and 8 pm in pitch darkness because the heavy rains had disrupted the electric power supply in Chimanimani. Since there was no

electric power in the whole town and because the rainy weather had caused an uncomfortably cold breeze, most people had gone to bed early. They were either awakened by alert neighbours or by the mudslides that started flowing underneath the closed doors and filling their houses. Those who survived the catastrophe are the ones who managed to stumble to safety by navigating their way amid the muddy waters in the dark of the night. I listened to horrendous narratives of how families were separated as they helplessly watched some of their loved ones being swept off by the raging waters, mudslides and the gigantic boulders like they had never seen before. I will never forget the stories of how several brave and selfless fellows lost their lives while volunteering to assist children, the elderly and the infirm.

...the searing question constantly raised by most of the survivors who lost their homes and their loved ones was, 'Has God reneged on the covenant made with Noah in Genesis 9, when he promised that "I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Genesis 9.11)?' In unison with the survivors of Cyclone Idai and other members of the global community, I have continued to grapple with the same question. The scars of an adolescent girl whose rural homestead gave in to the torrential rains continue to be evoked every time I hear about victims of floods. One fateful night, our homestead gave in to

heavy downpours. That experience has remained etched in my memory.

Whenever they are confronted with a calamity, it is normal for human beings to grieve over their pain and losses. However, I feel that, as the earth community, our grief over ecological disasters will be futile if we just grieve and fail to engage in deep introspection. I believe that it is time to look at ourselves in the mirror and acknowledge that we have been complicit in causing ecological degradation. In so doing, we will open up pathways for global collaborations of restoration. Our grief should bear fruits of faithfully fulfilling our role as responsible stewards of the environment, and in the process we will restore our relationship with God and with the earth which is God's footstool. ■



Sophia Chirongoma is an African woman who is passionate about writing on the interconnections between Earth justice and the ecological crisis with special reference to her home country, Zimbabwe. Currently, she is senior lecturer in the Religious Studies Department at Midlands State University, Zimbabwe and a Research Fellow at the University of South Africa.

This excerpt from *Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church* (SCM Press 2020) is printed here with the publisher's permission. The book is reviewed on p 25.

The Sermon on the Plain

for Greta Thunberg

Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.
*It is there. Outside the window, down that path to the woods
where the dragonfly darts in the damp glade. It is yours.*

Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be satisfied.
*Content with locusts and wild honey, fresh water and bread
fear, emptiness gone, you are salted with love.*

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh
*with the future's children as they play in the sunlight,
your sorrow a cloud, a passing shadow.*

Blessed are you when people hate you,
when they exclude you and insult you
and reject your name as evil,
because of the Son of Man.
*Because you are cause and consequence of sin,
Woman and Man cast out from the Garden.
Yet you will rejoice, you will leap for joy,
dance jigs in the kingdom of heaven.*

But woe to you who are rich,
for you have already received your comfort,
*which was no more than short life on this planet
and possessions you cannot take with you.*

Woe to you who are well fed now,
for you will go hungry
*and search for locusts and honey, saliva and dry bread
Salted by fear – and you shall have only our love.*

Woe to you who laugh now,
for you will mourn and weep
*for the past you have lost, as if from dementia,
for a future of demons. Let us pray for your souls.*

Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you,
for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.
*For prophecy is simple. It is speaking the truth
hid from our hearts, uncovered by children.*

by Graham Norman, with permission. Graham curates the Green Christian website Arts page, where more poems and artwork from Green Christian members can be found.

Creation Therapy

Chillean Prance rejoices in the healing power of nature



"The Universe is always Singing" Martha Baker

(lovingearth-project.uk)

A few years ago, I awoke from two days of unconsciousness in the Intensive Care Unit of Exeter Hospital in a dark room without windows. As I awoke, nervous and uncertain about my surroundings, I was greatly encouraged to hear the call of seagulls on the roof of the hospital, a reminder of the living world out there. Later when I was wheeled out into another room, I was so relieved to see even the small branch of a tree.

Recently my friend and fellow explorer Robin Hanbury-Tenison spent a long time in the ICU of Derriford Hospital making a remarkable recovery from Covid-19. He attributes his recovery to being wheeled out into the hospital's ICU rehab garden. Realising the importance of that garden to his recovery, he has since raised funds for a garden in another hospital in Cornwall.

Humans are part of God's Creation and we evolved as a species in the wilds of the African savannas and forests along with fellow organisms of all sorts. Because of this we have an inbuilt longing for contact with Creation and our fellow creatures. The naturalist Edward O. Wilson got this right with his "biophilia" theory where he emphasised that

survival in the environment in which humans evolved programmed into them an interest in the green world surrounding them. The relict of this is an inborne feeling that nature calms us and makes us more secure and relaxed. To me it is also a God-given benefit of His Creation that should encourage us to take better care of it.

We have now become an urban race as the number of humans living in cities now greatly exceeds the rural population; by 2050, it is predicted that 68% of the world's population will be urban. As a result, many people now have little opportunity to experience the green world, and this is a current environmental and health problem, especially during a time of lockdowns and restricted movements.

I have spent my career working for botanic gardens and these are generally oases in the urban concrete of a city. But even a few houseplants in a room have a vital role in bringing people into contact with the green world of God's Creation. I know how many people have been restored to a normal life through the work of the horticultural therapy courses at The New York Botanical Garden, and at Kew Gardens I have seen



These panels celebrate the work of Martha Baker (1887-1917), Quaker botanist and teacher



Made by three friends from fabric cut-offs and ends of yarn
(lovingearth-project.uk)

troubled people finding solace on the benches in remote parts of the gardens. To me this therapeutic use of botanic gardens is as important as all their other research and conservation activities.

Greener cities not only improve the well-being of the inhabitants, but they also purify the air that they breathe and make the climate cooler. I thoroughly approve of London's plan to turn it into a National Park City that converts half of the area into green spaces however hard that may be to execute. It will become a healthier city for its inhabitants and also create more refuges for wildlife. Paris too is creating much new green space on its buildings, rooftops and walls as well as turning the busy Champs-Élysées into a green avenue. All of this is bringing a small experience of the marvels of Creation to many more people in need of the therapy that it can bring.

As Christians we should be concerned that many people do not have easy access to open green spaces, especially poorer people living in the concrete jungle of cities; this has become even more obvious during the pandemic. We have carried over the inequity of resources even to the access to open green spaces and biodiversity.

We know that God enjoys His Creation – as it says in Genesis Ch 1: "And God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good." God gets pleasure out of His Creation and all its biodiversity – this is also confirmed in the book of Revelation: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to

receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." (Revelation 4:11, KJV). If it pleases God so much, then it is not surprising that His Creation pleases and restores us as we experience it.

"And out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food" (Genesis 2: 9a).

We are instructed here to enjoy and to use Creation. Note that the aesthetic is carefully placed before the utilitarian and so this is good advice to enjoy nature and not to overuse it. We need to encourage the making of more biodiverse green spaces within our cities as well as ways in which it can be accessed. Every hospital needs windows that gives their patients a glimpse of the healing power of nature. If you are feeling down at present, try to find a way to have some contact with the green world. ■



Photo credit: Jordan Brierley Unsplash



Prof Sir Ghilleen Prance, FRS, is a botanist, an ecologist and a Green Christian patron. He was Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (1988-1999), Scientific Director of the Eden Project in Cornwall (1998-2010) and is a Visiting Professor at Reading University. Sir Ghilleen's inspiring talk at the Green Christian festival in 2020 can be found via our website.

Fire, flood and decolonisation: climate change in Australia

Kate Rigby describes an unfolding catastrophe of injustice



Photo credit: Shutterstock

I was born and raised on Ngannawal Country in Australia's federal capital, Canberra (*Ngambra*, "meeting place"), and begin by paying my respects to Ngannawal Elders, past, present and emerging. I pay my respects also to the Elders of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait First Nations, whose unceded lands are referenced in this article, mindful of the limitations of my perspective as an expatriate Anglo-Celtic settler Australian.

In July 2019, several bushfires started burning in drought-affected regions of northern New South Wales and central Queensland. As winter eased into spring, more sprang up; and as spring sped into summer, they really got into their stride, expanding south through the Australian Capital Territory all the way to Victoria. For months, they were unstoppable and unquenchable. It was not until the start of autumn that they could finally be contained.

Fires are endemic to Australian ecologies: the right kinds of fire at the right times under the right conditions are essential to their flourishing. This is the driest of continents, with around 20 per cent classified as desert, and generally thin, nutrient-poor soils elsewhere. With the partial exception of the northern tropics, weather cycles are non-annual and characterised by

frequent extremes. Add to that the absence of any native animals that could be induced to pull a plough, and it is clear why the kinds of agriculture that emerged in some other parts of world were never going to take off here. At least, not until imposed in the more temperate regions with the assistance of the full industrial arsenal of fertilisers, irrigation, introduced crops selectively bred, and heavy machinery. Over the millennia, though, Indigenous Australians, inheritors of the most ancient surviving culture in the world, stretching back up to 60,000 years or more, perfected the technology of selective burning as the cornerstone of the system of regenerative farming that shaped the mosaic of succulent pastures, open grassy woodlands, and forested mountains, which greeted the First Fleet when they weighed anchor at "Botany Bay", on what was at that time one of the most biodiverse continents on the planet.

The suppression of Aboriginal burning, along with new forms of land use (such as goldmining in the 19th century and logging in the 20th), contributed to the outbreak of what appear to have been more frequent megafires, especially in the magnificent Mountain Ash forests of the southeast. The days on which these colonial-era fires culminated in a terrifying phenomenon known as a firestorm, always at the end of a long

dry spell and at the height of a heatwave, include “Black Thursday” (February 6, 1851), “Red Tuesday” (February 1, 1898), “Black Sunday” (February 4, 1926), “Black Friday” (January 13, 1939), “Ash Wednesday” (February 16, 1983) and “Black Saturday” (February 7, 2009).

The firestorm that swept into Canberra on January 18, 2003, was not given a name of the week: Friday was already taken. Since then, the conditions in which uncontrollable fires are liable to take hold have become more frequent and more severe, suggesting that anthropogenic planetary heating is in play. That certainly appears to have been the case in the “Black Summer” of 2019-20, during which fires occurred in all States and Territories, including on some offshore islands, such as Kangaroo Island, one of South Australia’s most important wildlife habitats. Although “only” 33 human lives were lost in the fires (with hundreds more likely dying as a consequence of smoke pollution), some 3,000 lost their homes, whilst well over one billion animals, and countless insects, are believed to have perished. Billions more were injured, and survivors were left homeless and starving. Some entire species, already critically endangered by habitat loss and other environmental stressors, will probably be pushed over the brink of extinction.¹

Clearly, Australia is already being severely impacted by the climate crisis. In addition to more frequent and intense droughts, heatwaves, and bushfires, this is evident in fiercer cyclones, wind storms and hail storms, bigger floods, crop failures, stock losses, and rodent and insect plagues. Many are suffering as a consequence: farmers forced off the land; the elderly and vulnerable, especially those who cannot afford air-conditioning; all who have lost loved ones, and those whose homes have been destroyed by fire, wind, or flood; all who grieve the appalling toll on wildlife, such as flying foxes, who have fallen dead from their roosts in their thousands, entire colonies wiped out in a single day, during recent heatwaves.

Yet despite these escalating impacts, the fossil fuel industry retains its grip on Australia’s government. Among the organisations seeking to change this is the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, a multifaith activist organisation founded in 2008. ARCC is led by Thea Ormerod, a lay Catholic, who is among several members (including clergy) to have been arrested for non-violent direct action in their efforts to block maldevelopments, such as the construction by the Adani Carmichael corporation of the world’s largest open-cut

coalmine in Queensland’s Galilee Basin.² For Thea, confronting ecological destruction and injustice is integral to her calling as a Christian. In her understanding, “spirituality is not somehow different from activism”: it encompasses how you live, and it involves service, being outspoken, and being prepared to be pilloried for it.

For many Indigenous Australians, there is another dimension, and a further source of anguish. As Bhiame Williamson, a Euahlayi man from New South Wales, shared in a “First Nations Climate Justice” webinar earlier this year, the Black Saturday fires affected some areas with a higher-than-average Aboriginal population. In his work for the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, he is witnessing the immense grief of those whose cultural heritage sites, crucial for their claims to Native Title, have been destroyed; people who identify deeply with their Country, and especially with particular plants and animals, some of which are considered ancestral kin, that are now at risk of regional extinction.³

Similarly, Larissa Baldwin, a young woman from the Widjabul clan of the Bundjalung nation, spoke at an event on “Creation, Country and Climate” in St John’s Cathedral, Brisbane, about those First Nations people of central and northern Australia and the Torres Strait, many of them Native Title holders, who are facing rising temperatures, sea levels, and intensifying cyclones that will make their Country uninhabitable in the foreseeable future. Larissa is co-founder of SEED, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth climate organisation; she explained that for Indigenous Australians, keeping fossil fuels in the ground is not so much about fighting climate change in the abstract, but about protecting Country, here and now.

This is a decolonial project, in which Indigenous voices and values are key. At the recent launch of GreenFaith International, Nyikina Warrwa Elder, academic and “actionist”, Anne Poelina, reminded us that whatever our country, colour and creed, we are all indigenous to Earth, and our fellow creatures are relying on us to make ethical choices in the interests of collective flourishing. ■



Professor Kate Rigby is Director of Bath Spa University’s Research Centre for Environmental Humanities and Adjunct Professor at Monash University. She was the founding director of the Australia-Pacific Forum on Religion and Ecology and her books include *Dancing with Disaster: Histories, Narratives and Ethics for Perilous Times* (2015) and *Reclaiming Romanticism: Towards an Ecopoetics of Decolonization* (2020).

1 Royal Commission into National Disaster Arrangements, 2020, pp. 354-55, <https://naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/royal-commission-national-natural-disaster-arrangements-report>; Daniel Vernick, *Three billion animals harmed by Australia’s fires*, July 28, 2020, WWF, <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/3-billion-animals-harmed-by-australia-s-fires>

2 Chris Shearer, *Faith group members arrested in anti-Adani mine protest*, *The Melbourne Anglican*, November 22, 2017, <http://tma.melbourneanglican.org.au/news/faith-protestors-arrested-at-adani-mine-221117>

3 “Country” in Aboriginal English refers to the territory, understood as a more-than-human collective, a source of Law, and as a person in its own right, to which you have ancestral ties and custodial responsibilities.

School chaplains and environmental concerns

Josh Hunt shares his enthusiasm



Veg patch at Felixstowe School

Photo credit: Josh Hunt

In June this year, chaplains from across the UK and beyond gathered online to take part in the National Schools and College Chaplains Conference. There were four main themes, one of which was the environment; this showcased how chaplains could lead the way in addressing environmental concerns in school and college contexts.

As a Suffolk-based school chaplain myself, and leader of the environmental strand of the conference, I was initially hesitant about how to approach such a broad topic, and wondered how much appetite there would be for this within the community of school and college chaplains. These amazing people already have a difficult job wrestling with the full range of moral, ethical and spiritual topics brought to them by

children, young people, parents, schools and churches.

So we considered four aspects of environmental concern: First, the importance of understanding the theology supporting the connection between Creation and our Christian faith; second, the research showing young people's concern for the environment; third, the practicalities of school gardening and how to start and develop projects; fourth, the importance of being an environmental example. I was delighted that Andrew Norman from Green Christian was delivering this fourth section by sharing his own story, and his journey with Green Christian.

The response from chaplains was incredible, and this content resonated

with them in a number of ways. Some might assume that the return to school following lockdown would mean that other aspects of education become a priority. But it was evident that for many chaplains, having reflected during lockdown, the return to school gave an opportunity for a renewed focus on sustainability, global warming, recycling, food growing, and facilitating the connection between nature and spirituality for children and young people.

I've been fortunate enough to experience the benefits of being involved in such projects at Felixstowe School. Running the Garden Project has seen us engage students, staff and the community to slowly transform one third of an acre of former grassland into a beautiful, productive and reflective space. This is a large space, and I would be lying if I said I wasn't somewhat overwhelmed at the task ahead as I walked around the plot on a drizzly Tuesday afternoon. A few years on, however, I now look at a wonderful area of the school grounds with distinct zones, including a wildlife pond, a grass labyrinth, a polytunnel, raised beds, as well as areas for wildflowers, new hedgerows and trees.

The reality of a space such as this is probably a bit messier than what you're imagining right now, but over the past few years, the garden has hosted staff wellbeing gatherings, outdoor lessons, private reflection, a number of lunchtime and after school clubs, and community maintenance days including volunteers from local churches and the charity I work for, Boost Felixstowe. We have a

vision that the garden is a “space to grow”. This is a vision that works on multiple levels: space to grow fruit and vegetables; space to learn new skills and hobbies, and space to reflect and grow as individuals.

The great news is that, in my experience, getting students involved in school gardening requires little to no effort. There is an inherent interest in young people for the environment that doesn't rely on us convincing them with stories, statistics and clever arguments. I challenge schools across the country to allocate a space, however small, for a school garden, and watch the children and young people come and transform it. Perhaps when it comes to young people and environmental matters, it is more about us as adults not getting in their way.

According to research from Tearfund and Youthscape, which surveyed Christian teenagers;

- 92% said they were ‘concerned’, or ‘somewhat concerned’, about climate change
- 98% have friends who care about climate change
- 86% said ‘My faith teaches me to care about injustice’
- 84% agreed ‘It is important that Christians respond to climate change’¹

If this is of importance to young people, and if this is of importance to the Christian faith, then it is, by definition, of importance to school and college chaplains. It begs the uncomfortable question of why a school or college chaplain wouldn't want to be involved in some kind of proactive response to these concerns.

But then, my own green journey has been nothing short of a struggle if I'm



Pond at Felixstowe School

Photo credit: Josh Hunt

really honest. I'm in my comfort zone reading an academic research paper while enjoying an Earl Grey tea, or playing video games in the comfort of my own home. For a long time I never enjoyed spending time outdoors, let alone choosing to make this a significant aspect of my chaplaincy role!

Besides that, I've mentally and spiritually wrestled with those bigger questions too, of whether we're too late with the environmental response. After all, will spreading a box of wildflower seeds onto a patch of mud in the corner of the school field *really* contribute anything in the face of possible worldwide ecological and societal collapse? I've bounced backwards and forwards between optimism and despair on more than one occasion in the school garden, wondering what kind of world these young people will inherit, and the challenges and decisions they will face.

There is always hope though. A student enquired about how long it would take some of our tree saplings (kindly donated by the Woodland Trust) to

become fully grown. I responded with my best guess of 8-10 years, to which the student looked disheartened. “But sir, by the time that happens, I will have left the school!” He was right. By that point, this student would have just entered their twenties. The student then looks at me, picks up his spade, and says “Let's plant it anyway!”.

My hope, belief and prayer is that every school should benefit from a chaplain, but also that every school should be actively engaged with environmental awareness and school gardening. Someone who can combine both is doing something right! ■



Dr Josh Hunt works for Boost Felixstowe, pioneering partnerships between faith and education, and is the chaplain to Felixstowe School in Suffolk.
www.boostfelixstowe.org.uk

1 *Burning Down the House*, Tearfund/Youthscape 2021

Changing the world, one stitch at a time

Alison Maitland and **Linda Murgatroyd** of The Loving Earth Project explain



Cornfields "... these fields buzz with rich life and colour...I will do what I can to support more sustainable agriculture"
See the Loving Earth website to view a gallery of all panels, with a description and pledge written by the maker of each.

(lovingearth-project.uk)

How can we help people to move from powerlessness to purpose in the face of climate change? The Loving Earth Project addresses the anxiety and helplessness that many people experience by inviting them to focus on just one precious thing that is threatened by climate

breakdown and to explore what they can do in response. Using creative and reflective or prayerful activities helps people engage more deeply with the challenges and can empower them to take action. Participants of all ages and skill levels can make a textile panel (30x30cm) in any style



Chocolate and chimpanzees: "the destruction of rainforest for cocoa growing feeds the chocolate habits of millions of people around the world."
(lovingearth-project.uk)

to join a travelling and online exhibition that is inspiring people to live more sustainably. People of various faiths and none, from across Britain and overseas, have become involved in this Quaker-led craft project over the past two years.

Over 200 panels have so far been created. These depict a rich diversity of personal connections and concerns, with striking depictions of polar bears, bees, ocean life, trees and landscapes, as well as toxic air, flooding, wildfires and plastic waste. Each image is accompanied by a short text explaining their choice and an action they are taking. One text reads simply: "I have decided to give up red meat. I understand that forest land is being destroyed in order to graze cattle for beef. It's a small step but at least I can do my bit." Other people are re-wilding their garden, changing their buying or travel habits, campaigning for policy changes, joining conservation projects or just starting by finding out more. This is helping many people to shift from being worried, but passive, to becoming part of the solution. Love is at the root of anger, fear and sadness about climate breakdown. It can empower us if we engage with it creatively.

Our initial impetus was to engage people who have continued with "business as usual" while becoming increasingly anxious about climate change. The project creates spaces to explore uncomfortable truths about the climate crisis, and what love might require, whatever our starting point. It's also fun and a way to share positive initiatives, and why people have taken them.

After this first step, some contributors have felt confident enough to take further action. One woman, concerned about cars parked with their engines running at a local beach in Ayrshire, created hundreds of cards saying "My Air, Your Air, Ayr's Air" and handed them to drivers. They smiled, got the point and turned off their engines.

Groups of panels are already on display and the organisers hope the panels can be exhibited in events surrounding the COP26 United Nations climate change talks in Glasgow in November, and elsewhere.

Everyone is welcome to participate in the project and to send their textile squares to join the collection. People can also respond to the project's questions (see box above) using words or images. More information, a photo gallery of panels, and resources for panel-makers are available at lovingearth-project.uk. Photos of some of the panels can be seen throughout this issue and on the front cover. ■



Alison Maitland is an author, coach, speaker and facilitator. She works at the intersection of leadership, sustainability, inclusion and the changing world of work. www.alisonmaitland.com



Linda Murgatroyd is clerk of the Quaker Arts Network. She edited *Ways to Kiss the Earth: Quaker artists explore sustainability* (available from <http://quakerarts.net/resources/>) and is a member of Wandsworth Quaker meeting.

The Loving Earth Project asks participants to creatively explore the following:

Consider a place, a person or another thing that you love:

How will climate change or environmental breakdown affect them?

What action is needed to reduce the risk of harm to them?

How can you help to make this happen?

Green Christian's Why Faith Matters at COP26

A small group of us have worked together to produce an infographic, a visual presentation to urge increased action by the UK government in the run-up to COP26, and beyond. It calls on our government to show global leadership and create policies which match its climate ambitions. It also highlights how our faith inspires and compels us to call for justice for the poorest and most vulnerable on the Earth, with quotes and links to theological reflections from faith leaders and activists.



An image from Green Christian's *Why Faith Matters at COP26*

The infographic was enabled by a generous grant from St Mary's Church, Islington and we were fortunate to enlist the graphic design skills of Abi Lane www.polarthreads.co.uk.



Abi Lane
Photo credit:
James Burns
www.polarthreads.co.uk

Why Faith Matters at COP26 can be seen on our website in the COP26 section.

Please share it on social media, with your Church community and consider sending it to your local MP along with a plea to support greater action on climate change. Our website also contains details of many other campaigns and events being planned as COP26 approaches, from pilgrimages to petitions and prayer groups. You can also read in-depth reflections, from nine specially invited theologians and climate activists.

Praying a Novena for COP26

Andrew Norman, Green Christian co-chaplain explains:

As COP26 draws closer the sense of urgency and need for radical commitments remains intense. Setting aside specific periods of time for prayer is a key Christian practice; there may even be time to reserve nine days for this in keeping what is traditionally termed a novena. This relates to the apostles meeting together for nine days before the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (see Acts 1.13-14).

It is important that we pray now for all who will be participating in COP26 as they reach for decisions which will affect us all. This kind of prayer is called intercession. The belief is that our prayer, offered in faith, can influence others for good. It can truly make a difference.

When we hurt and are needful, or are shocked into facing the reality of what is coming upon us, and as we begin to cast around for the best ways ahead, then we may find the spirit of life who is in us all connecting with the Holy Spirit. A novena could be the opportunity for us to breathe our prayerful hope into the common life of humanity. Praying in the name of Jesus who is Son of Man means including all of God-beloved humankind and all of Creation. Our prayer might be: let each of us be the change we all want to see.

Our hopes for COP26 are powerfully and visually distilled in our infographic *Why faith matters at COP26* which can be found on the GC website. The novena will follow its main themes of nature, climate justice, joy in enough, and hope; perhaps read through *Why faith matters at COP26* each day, reflecting on its themes and letting the Holy Spirit move you.

Climate Sunday, September 5th,

presents itself as a moment to begin the novena. You might like to start each of the following eight days into Creation Season with the prayers on page 27. More can be found in the COP26 section of our website. How good it would be if Green Christian members and supporters helped to form a wider virtual community of prayer, actively upholding the preparations for COP26.



Prayerful upholding

(lovingearth-project.uk)

Plenty!

John Payne, programme co-ordinator at Joy in Enough reports

It's been a long journey but Green Christian's Joy in Enough (JiE) programme finally launched the small-group discussion resource, Plenty! in June this year. The six sessions of Plenty! engage with social, psychological and theological aspects of our economic system. It takes a careful look at economic growth: is it essential to human flourishing? what are its environmental impacts? Can other ways of living together be imagined to enable a flourishing future for all?

We have had encouraging feedback from the launch and the piloting of Plenty! sessions – described variously as “exciting and important”, “eye-opening”, “massively interesting” “thought-provoking”, “incredible, and “really inspiring, it's an equipper!”; a secular attendee was impressed that Christians were producing such a resource. Many

now hope to run the course within their Churches;

All the Plenty! materials are now available for downloading on the Joy in Enough website (www.joyinenough.org/plenty) and are free to use to facilitate your own discussion group. If you want to be a participant but can't find a local group and are happy to do the programme online, please contact catturmer@greenchristian.org.uk – she can help bring online groups together from across the country. The launch event, featuring keynote speaker, Eve Poole, can be viewed on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_J9xLy_kVc

Green Christian's Joy in Enough programme started in 2014 to explore alternatives to the current economic system. Our website offers insights into the links between the current way we run our economies, our consumption of goods and services and the climate change and biodiversity crises. The development of Plenty! has been helped by a generous grant from the Sisters of the Holy Cross, and smaller grants from Paristamen CIO and the St Peter's Saltley Trust.

A Joy in Enough conference is planned, Covid permitting, for May 2022, to bring together people who have been enthused by Plenty! to plot the next stages with economists and theologians. We are also holding a series of Zoom talks in the Autumn on JiE-related topics, and developing a resource on money, how it works and its possible future evolution.



Cat Turner, online facilitator at Plenty!



John Payne, co-ordinator, Joy in Enough

Cloud and Fire, Green Christian retreat, Ringsfield Hall, Oct 8th-10th

Green Christian's retreat will be at Ringsfield Hall in October and is almost fully booked so be quick if you are interested in joining us! Led by Frances Ward the theme is *Cloud and Fire: Travelling by day and by night*.



Moorland Wildfires

(lovingearth-project.uk)

In the Exodus from Egypt, God is both hidden and revealed by cloud and fire. By them God led the people of Israel out of slavery to their destiny; accompanied them in the wilderness; and sustained them in faith and perseverance. In our time, cloud and fire tells another truth – that we are changing the Earth's climate and unleashing flood, drought, wildfire and brutal heat.

This weekend we will accept the invitation of Scripture for our time, and embrace the truths both of God's love and of the climate crisis.



Frankie Ward

Photo credit: St Edmundsbury Cathedral

Join Very Rev Dr Frances Ward who will guide our weekend. Former Dean of St Edmundsbury Cathedral in Suffolk, Frankie has written *Like There's No Tomorrow: Climate crisis, eco-anxiety and God* (Sacristy Press, 2020) and now serves in parish ministry in Cumbria.

Green Christian "On the Road" in Colchester, Oct 2nd, 9.30am - 4pm

Workshops on various topics – an opportunity to network and learn. See back cover for more details and how to book. Our new keynote speaker is Shilpita Mathews (previously guest editor of this magazine). Shilpita is an environmental economist, a leading member of Young Christian Climate Network (YCCN) and a trustee of Operation Noah.

Borrowed Time Project

The latest IPCC report, AR6, published in August spelt out how a global mean temperature rise of 1.5 – 2 degrees would be exceeded this century without drastic cuts in carbon emissions; also severe weather events would increase in frequency and severity. The Green Christian Borrowed Time project specifically addresses the need for support in dealing with "climate grief" and the emotional consequences of grappling with such prospects. We immediately responded with a Zoom call in mid-August which allowed members to discuss their response to the report in small groups.

Green Christian Online workshops

These have continued on Wednesday evenings for one hour almost every two weeks since starting over a year ago. Many Green Christian members have contributed their expertise and enthusiasm from allotment gardening to helping your church go zero-carbon. See the website for more details.

A New Momentum

Isobel Murdoch reports from our Local Groups

As lockdowns dragged on over the early months of 2021, Green Christian's local groups and contacts persevered – via Zoom. Regular gatherings for prayer and reflection were held by the **Cheltenham** and **Worcester** groups; members of Cheltenham Green Christian are also involved with the town's *Laudato Si'* circle. **Stroud's** group met on Zoom to discuss economics. And **Lincoln** has run five Build Back Better events online during the pandemic, with the latest focusing on Climate Sunday.

Zoom has enabled new groups to form and develop over the months, in **Rugby** and in **South West England** (drawing together people from Devon and Cornwall). As restrictions have eased, members of the South West group have been able to start meeting in person. Two gatherings were held in West Cornwall, one a walk in Tehidy Woods and the other an event at Degniba Prayer Chapel near Helston.



South West group walk Photo credit: Olive Stevens

Green Christian now also has its very first **Welsh group**, which has a strong commitment to justice and peace issues. It draws members from a large area from Anglesey across to Wrexham and down to Machynlleth.

If Covid-19 dominated 2020, then it's time that COP26 comes to dominate 2021, not only within the green movement but in the wider world, so that the climate movement can recover the momentum it was gaining when the pandemic struck. COP26 runs like a thread through the plans of Green Christian's local groups in the months ahead.

One of those groups is **Reading**, which is to hold an exhibition of children's artworks – an opportunity for children to share their messages to decision makers creatively. Some of the artworks will be taken to Glasgow in November. The Reading Area Green Christian also helped with the Young Christian Climate Network's Relay residency hub in the town in the summer.

Other groups planning to support the different pilgrimages to COP26 are **Cheltenham**, which is helping with the Gloucestershire Tributary of the YCCN "Walk To Glasgow", and **Worcester**, preparing to welcome Christian Climate Action's "Camino To COP" pilgrims as they stop in Worcester on their journey northwards. Worcester's group is arranging for local MPs to meet with local Churches as COP26 approaches. The recently formed **Rugby** Green Christian group plans an evening of worship, reflection and discussion when "Camino To COP" pilgrims pass through their area on September 15th, and some members



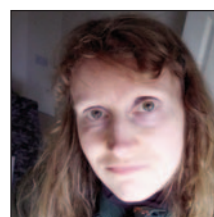
Degniba Prayer Chapel Photo credit: Olive Stevens

will walk with the pilgrims as they move on towards Coventry on the 16th.

COP26 aside, another key priority for Green Christian this year has been launching Plenty! which is part of our Joy In Enough programme. A member of the **Reading** group has trialled this for group members and other participants.

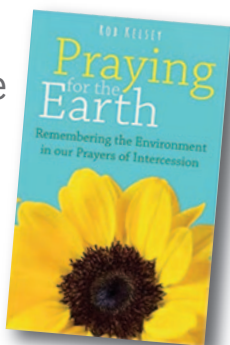
In July, one of Green Christian's regular online workshops focused on our local groups and contacts, with group leaders Martin Davis and Tom Piotrowski sharing their experiences of running an established group (**Cheltenham**) and a more recent group (**Worcester**) respectively.

Leighton Buzzard & Linslade Green Christian has closed for the moment, as leader Esther has moved away from the area. Many thanks to her and to the rest of the group for all they have done there over the years. And congratulations to **Hereford** Green Christian, which has now been up and running for 21 years! ■



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Praying for the Earth. Remembering the Environment in our Prayers of Intercession



Rob Kelsey
February 2021
Sacristy Press
ISBN: 978-1789591354
104 pages
RRP £8.99

"We naturally pray for what we care about, and care more for what we pray about" is the premise on which *Praying for the Earth* is based.

Rob Kelsey was the Environment Officer for the Church of England diocese of Newcastle when the precursor of this book came into being. It has grown from a small booklet of prayers compiled by members of the Newcastle Diocesan Environment Group to a fully-fledged book. Following an introduction by the Bishop of Salisbury, there is an inspiring essay on why Christians should pray for the Earth, and a section on how to use the prayers in the context of worship as well as for personal prayer time, which I found particularly helpful.

The Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion include as the fifth mark: "safeguarding the integrity of Creation and sustaining and renewing the life of the Earth". This aspect of mission is frequently ignored or forgotten in Church life and particularly, in my observation, in the intercessions. Here those who offer prayers pray for the Church, the global and local community; the sick, and the dead are remembered; but prayers are usually very centred on human beings. There is little or no attention given to the rest of Creation, still less to our part in abusing and exploiting what God has created and which we are called to sustain and renew. If we care about Creation, this should be heard in the prayers of the Church.

This collection of short prayers provides a rich resource to ensure that praying for the environment, environmental care and sustainability is included in our intercessory prayers. Some of the prayers are based on passages of scripture, others relate to specific seasons and times, some are intended for use during the week and others, on a two-monthly cycle of prayers, cover various topics with a link to the environment. I like the fact that the language used is simple and straightforward and goes to the heart of what we should, as a praying community, be attending to.

I will certainly be encouraging those responsible for preparing intercessions at my church to make use of this book.

A Creed for Today: Faith and Commitment for our New Earth Awareness



Deirdre Munro

Donal Dorr
March 2021
Veritas
ISBN: 978-1847309389
160 pages
RRP £13.99

Concern for environmental issues is at the heart of the Christian Gospel, argues Donal Dorr. This thrilling book makes an immensely important contribution to Christian thought and action by working towards a creed in the context of this awareness.

The different parts of the book follow the pattern of traditional creeds: "mystery", "integral incarnation", "loving Creation and creative love" and "choose life", each comprising essays and a fresh creedal statement. It is perhaps in the second part that the heart of the book is most apparent, highlighting that the incarnation of

Jesus was part of a 14 billion year history of God's embodiment in our universe. Here, as in many other parts of the book, Donal Dorr acknowledges his debt to Pope Francis and *Laudato Si'* as well as to other theologians such as Elizabeth Johnson.

Part 3 is equally exciting with its emphasis on Wisdom teaching, including that in the Psalms and Job, in other world religions and contemporary writing. Part 4 deals with the moral and intellectual elements of ecological conversion, following Pope Francis in identifying how the "market" has been deified, becoming the only criterion by which policies are judged. He cites the Pope's appeal to hear the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor and to take radical action. A freshly energised ecological spirituality, he suggests, can both inform conscientious personal choice and stand as a challenge to exploitation.

In view of Donal Dorr's openness and awareness of ultimate mystery it is not surprising that some chapters are full of poetry. R.S.Thomas is quoted frequently, as are Gerard Manley Hopkins and Patrick Kavanagh. For a relatively short book it is extraordinarily comprehensive, with the final chapter, "Prayer in an Evolving Universe", as a case in point. It does not matter that the creed which is put before us is sometimes wordy and clumsy. An afterword speaks of the book as "work in progress", a place to stand in wonder and awe before pursuing our quest, and acting as needed. A postscript lists 21 actions in the context of a post-Covid new normal, and urges that they should be adopted immediately by Catholic development organisations (and by implication other Christian organisations too).

Donal Dorr expresses the hope that the book will be of value both to those already committed to an ecological spirituality, ensuring that such spirituality is at the heart of their faith, and to those whose faith and spirituality pre-date Vatican II or the papacy of Francis. In fact the book's appeal is to the whole Church

worldwide and beyond, to all those who look for a broader understanding of the “mystery whom we call God” or a deeper ecological feel for the whole created order. It is a “must read” and hugely enjoyable as well.

Peter Dodd

Seven Days To Freedom: Joining up connections in Creation

John Dudley Davies
March 2021
Darton, Longman and Todd
ISBN: 978-0232534856
160 pages
RRP: £14.99



Bishop John Dudley Davies has led an amazing life. Priested and serving in South Africa, he helped to draft a document that challenged Christians to examine the policy of apartheid, which led to the South African government terminating his ministry. Returning to Britain he served in many roles before being consecrated Bishop of Shrewsbury in 1987, and in his retirement he and his wife led a Welsh parish where he had once been vicar. This is just one of his, at least 11, books.

He has used every part of his many years of experience and knowledge in the writing of this book. Taking us on a journey through Creation, he focuses on the fact that everything is connected, the Bible being all about connections. He likens these to the hydraulics of an aircraft (he was once an RAF engineer) or the wiring of a house. Davies's work shows how our connections to our faith should both inform and inspire all our actions, observing that often our spiritual life is lived as one thing, but our actions are lived as another. While he does this he links the Biblical past both with our own past, and with the future.

He writes of how God's Creation is all

about liberation as it leads to the Sabbath, allowing humanity to control time, as the Sabbath has no “evening and morning”, and “is the now”. This liberation, for Davies, is about becoming a community that fairly shares the Earth's resources. He demonstrates that the Sabbath is relevant here and now to the issues of climate change, property rights, education and slavery, and he does so, as one would expect, with many practical examples.

We are continually reminded that we belong to each other, and despite the circumstances of our daily lives, we can find blessings in what is essentially our time of exile. Just as the Hebrews did, as Christians we must strive for the liberation and recognition of those that our society pushes to the margins.

Perhaps the book can be summed up in his observation that “The peace of Sabbath is freedom but not freedom to exploit. It is not freedom at the expense of someone else's restriction. It is not a freedom in which we are defined by our status as a consumer. It is not a freedom to choose between different ways of dominating. It is not even a freedom of having made the most satisfying choice. It is the freedom of having been chosen, the freedom of being loved. It is a gift.”

The book ends with 10 questions for individual thought or for groups to engage with. These range across topics including coronavirus, harvest thanksgiving, property ownership, and the effectiveness of the Church as a place of learning. However, Davies leaves the final words to his friend, Bishop Desmond Tutu, affirming the strength of goodness, love, light and life.

Peter Doodes

Small Gases, Big Effect: This is Climate Change

David Nelles and Christian Serrer
Particular Books
March 2021
ISBN: 978-0241461884
128 pages
RRP: £7.99



Described as an international bestseller, this is a short, concise and easily read book on the causes and consequences of climate change, aimed primarily at someone wishing to extend their basic knowledge of the subject.

For those who already follow the science of climate change there may be little to be learned. Nevertheless, the extensive coverage of the subject will probably reveal something new to you. If you are not familiar with GWP, AMOC or Ice-Albedo Feedback, read on.

Each subject heading is accompanied by a simple diagram or illustration. Some may find these elementary, but the authors, two German students, make no claim that this is other than an easy and enjoyable read for everyone to understand. I found it just that and will find it a useful reference.

Geoff Perrett

Legacy

Leaving a legacy gift to Green Christian will help ensure the work we do lives on. When writing or amending your Will you need to make a note of our official name (which is still CEL), our registered address and our charity number: Christian Ecology Link, 35 Kitto Road, London SE14 5TW. Charity No. 328744.

The New Possible: Visions of our World Beyond Crisis

Edited by Philip Clayton, Kelli M. Archie, Jonah Sachs and Evan Steiner
January 2021
Cascade Books
ISBN: 9781725285835
298 pages
RRP: £21



The Covid-19 pandemic has brought crisis to the world, but also a deep questioning of where we are now and where we want to be in the future, bringing with it the very real possibility of change. Threatened with a global health crisis, catastrophic climate change, economic systems no longer fit for purpose and growing inequality, where do we turn for a fresh vision? This book attempts to encapsulate the many positive futures that we could choose.

The New Possible is a collection of 28 essays by global leaders in six continents. Many of the writers may be unfamiliar to readers, although Vandana Shiva and Jack Kornfield are well-known and widely published. After the Foreword written by Kim Stanley Robinson, a renowned science fiction author, the book is subdivided into ten sections: Earth, Us, Change, Wealth, Work, Food, Education, Love, Community and Tomorrow. Each comprises a selection of essays by various experts: activists, academics, social entrepreneurs, economists, scientists and writers, each bringing a wealth of experience to their contribution.

Although the essays are diverse and wide-ranging in their context and content, certain themes begin to emerge: interdependence, community, indigenous and traditional wisdom, the connection between Earth and humanity. There are also darker elements that are explored, such as patriarchy, colonialism, racism and the dominance and destructiveness of

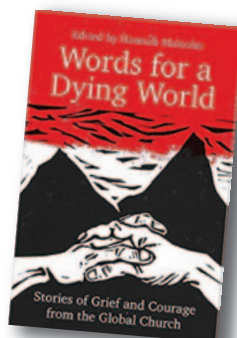
global capitalism. This is, however, a book of hope that puts the outcome for the future firmly into our hands. In the final chapter, 'Telling a New Story', David C. Korten writes: "We need a new story informed by traditional wisdom, the world's great religious traditions, and the leading edge of science."

This is a very accessible book to read as you can dip in and out of the various sections or just pick an essay that interests you. I see it as a valuable resource for stimulating our own visioning of the future we want to see. I can thoroughly recommend it for those looking for inspiration in difficult times and for a readable roadmap to truly "building back better".

Linda Wickham

Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church

Edited by Hannah Malcolm
December 2020
SCM Press
ISBN: 97880334059868
160 pages
RRP £15.99



This is an extraordinary and beautiful book which, as its editor writes in her Preface, both wounds and heals. Its 35 global contributors lay bare, in acute specificity, the reality of climate-changed relationships, with human and non-human neighbours, with homes and seasons, with time, place and whatever we understand or intuit as God. It encompasses poetry, lament, theology, myth, history, biography, memoir, spirituality, ecology, prophecy and protest. As its subtitle suggests, it is fundamentally about grief, which is expressed in all its myriad and particular forms, and about courage,

which none of the writers claim but all quietly display.

To read this book is to be informed, saddened, enraged, inspired, but most deeply, as Hannah writes, to be softened. Its stories are raw and eloquent, sometimes angry, often tender, excruciatingly honest. Many of the voices speak of losses which are difficult for us, in our profound disconnection, to understand; threats, as Christopher Douglas-Huriwai expresses it, to "the very creation that not only tells you who you are, but tells you how you are connected in relationship to God". They recognise, as María Alejandra and Andrade Vinueza write, that our environmental crises are rooted in wounded spirituality and relationships, and that no solution will be adequate which does not seek restoration and renewal.

There are particular and profound questions for us as members of the minority world's environmental movements. Peter Fox and Miles Giljam challenge us to escape from cycles of unhealthy grieving and to confront the painful reality that we are part of a culpable system. Other words are not addressed to us at all; sometimes we are overhearing prophetic calls and reassurances of solidarity, like those of Grace Thomas's Everywoman Eve, to which our privilege can offer no response but silence.

There are forms of hope here, too, in the transformation of desolated spaces into sacred sites described by Isabel Mukonyara, in Jon Seals's recognition of a "third agent" giving witness to life, in Pilar Vicentelo Euribe's educational and eco-gardening work with *Vida Abundante*. This hope, writes Anderson Jeremiah, is both deeply grounded in the individual and communal, nurtured by shared experience, history and tradition. Most of all, it is active, calling, in Debo Oluwatumini's words, "Roll up your sleeves then, Mayowa, Joy-bringers, and get to work!"

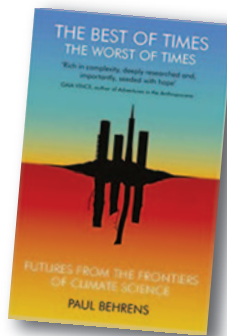
The very first sentence, at the beginning of Hannah's Preface, states

"This is an incomplete book." It is, but only because it already encompasses so much, such a breadth and depth of human connection and suffering. To encounter each chapter is like leaving a noisy activist gathering to share a snatched conversation in a side street, a glimpse of a life courageously lived, a new friendship in bud. Returning to the crowd, we are quieter, walking with more tentative steps, out of confidence and into love. Already, I want to read it again.

Tanya Jones

The Best of Times, The Worst of Times: Futures from the Frontiers of Climate Science

Paul Behrens
September 2020
Indigo Press
ISBN: 978-1-9116-4809-3
352 pages
RRP £12.99



What hope is there for the world? Paul Behrens engages with this question by mapping out hopeful aspects in the key areas of population, energy, food, climate and economics. Then he follows each hopeful chapter with one which spells out a more pessimistic look at the same aspect. So I yo-yoed through this book (though first, I admit, taking comfort from sneaking a look to see that the last chapter was one of hope).

His book feels reliably informative. Behrens, Professor in Energy and Environmental Change at Leiden University in the Netherlands, is a serious academic. His research on climate change, energy, and food has appeared in leading scientific journals. The 70 pages of notes at the end show how the many topics he references are rooted in research from across the scientific community. But Behrens is also passionate about communicating the fruits of scientific research. His voice has been heard on BBC radio and he has written for magazines and newspapers in the US and New Zealand. Similarly, here he makes complex matters accessible, often using delightfully apt expressions.

This approach helps in tackling two big issues which Behrens notes in his prologue. The first is that what we face are systems problems. So when we start talking about environmental issues we must not fail to go on and refer to economics, politics and

society. The second challenge is that the reality of the crisis is overwhelming. He uses humour to save us from unmitigated dread and frequent appeals to our imagination to stretch our minds. For me that worked well and carried me on, up and then down. So, is it to be pessimism or hope? Behrens offers two epilogues.

The epilogue of pessimism ends with the thought that humanity has chosen wilfully to ignore environmental degradation for so long that it is now too late to avert catastrophe even using new technology. Why did we do this? Behrens refers to our many cognitive biases, like wishfully-thinking that things will eventually turn out okay.

Yet in the epilogue of hope he wonders if even now we may be at the brink of a New Transition drawing on a New Realization. "Philosophers suggest that we can only begin to understand the present system fully at the very moment it fades out of view". Of course, Behrens has shown that technological fixes will not do it. But how might we read this as Christians? Is there a hope for the future which is to be found in realising our human spiritual potential, as biases are challenged by the crisis of events and transcended? As he says: "Indeed there will have to be big changes in personal philosophies to enable sufficient social licence for these great transitions to continue as deeply as they need to go." With hints of how that might be, this is a book that can help us keep both hope and pessimism together.

Andrew Norman

Please email our Review Editor, Tanya Jones
tanyajones@greenchristian.org.uk
with your ideas for future reviews, and also if you would like to join our regular reviewers' list.

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Lord you are God; we ask you to forgive and transform the greed within and around us. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have been like a wild donkey wandering alone. **Lord have mercy.**

We have sold ourselves to greed and plenty and have spurned need in others and sufficiency for ourselves.
Lord, have mercy.

We have been unfaithful to your ways; yet you who could destroy, are faithful; great is your faithfulness, stretching to all the earth. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have not loved as you love; bloodshed has followed bloodshed, and the land has dried up; your love is all embracing, restoring, freely given and unending. **Lord, have mercy.**

We have not acknowledged you; yet your name alone is holy and is the name above all names.
Lord, have mercy.

In knowledge of your faithfulness, love, and holiness, we grieve, we weep, and you weep. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

As surely as the sun rises, you will appear, you will come to us like the winter rains, like spring rains that water the earth, and in you all creation will be made whole. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Make us bringers of your peace. May the land be restored. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

May the beasts of the fields and the birds of the sky, and the fish in the sea thrive and rejoice in their maker.
Come, Lord Jesus.

May your kingdom come, in me, and through us all. **Amen.**

written by Catherine Fish, based on verses from Hosea

We pray for the transformation of our carbon-based economies.
Give wisdom and inspiration to our leaders and investors,
to plan a way forward, and to force the pace of change.
Help us to play our part in steering the world
towards a more sustainable future.

In the plagues and pandemics that afflict the human race,
may we realize our vulnerability,
and learn the lesson that we are part-and-parcel of a fragile ecology.
Take from us a desire to dominate, lest it be our undoing,
and teach us a new humility in our relation to the earth.

From *Praying for the Earth* by Rob Kelsey,
available from Sacristy Press (www.sacristy.co.uk), with permission



Green Christian Retreat 2021, 8-10th Oct 2021

Cloud and Fire: Travelling by day and by night

Ringsfield Hall Eco-Activity Centre, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 8JR

"The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night." (Exodus 13.21)

Join with us as we embrace the truths both of God's love and of the climate crisis, seeking Christ who came to cast fire on the Earth and who promised to return on clouds at the end of time.

Led by the Very Revd Dr Frances Ward, author of *Like There's No Tomorrow: Climate crisis, eco-anxiety and God* (Sacristy Press, 2020)

Further details at greenchristian.org.uk/retreat2021

Photo credit: Jason Wong on Unsplash

Green Christian "On The Road" in 2021

Climate Crisis: What Would Jesus Do?

Our Churches as part of the solution to environmental breakdown

Saturday 2nd October 2021

St Stephen's Church, Canterbury Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 7RY

Doors open 9.30am, conference begins 10am, ends 4.15pm

Keynote Speaker: Shilpita Mathews is an environmental economist. She is currently a member of the Young Christian Climate Network (YCCN) and a trustee of Operation Noah.

Workshops to choose from:

Joy in Enough, including "Plenty!": building a just economy within ecological limits

Way of Life Community: Green Christian's own dispersed community for those wanting a deeper engagement and shared encouragement in their faith

Carbon Footprint: calculate your own carbon footprint – and reduce it if you can

Biodiversity: how to make your garden a haven for wildlife

Churches and churchyards: reducing carbon footprints and providing habitats for plants and wildlife

A Deep Dive into Exodus 1 and 2: our call to non-violent direct action

Admission by donation (£10 suggested); free admission for accompanied under-16s.

To book your place, visit <https://greenchristian.org.uk/colchester/> or phone **0845 459 8460**

Information from : Howard Gardner: indexprint@btinternet.com

Please bring your own lunch. Drinks will be provided.

This event will be subject to social distancing requirements.



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