

# Storm of hope

# 2023

## Nurturing Creation with Green Christian

The biodiversity crisis is not well understood by the general public. When we look at the natural world, we may feel that everything is as it always has been – we see trees, insects, birds and animals. But the last few decades have brought profound and far-reaching changes. Creation is in trouble, and human activity is the cause.

Alongside the current planetary crisis of climate change, caused by the burning of fossil fuels for energy, comes its twin, the less talked-about planetary crisis of biodiversity.

As this edition of *Storm of Hope* went to press, the 15th United Nations Conference of Parties on Biodiversity – COP15 – drew to its close. Three times delayed, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this conference was just as important as the similar conferences on climate, including COP27 in Egypt in November 2022, which yielded for the first time an agreement to consider reparations for Loss and Damage in poor nations caused by the wealthy nations' historic reliance on fossil fuels, but reached a stalemate in other areas, notably the phasing out of oil, coal and gas, largely due to intense lobbying by oil-producing nations and international fossil fuel companies.

Since the 1960s, the world's population of wild animals has declined by around 68% – over two-thirds. The human population, in contrast, reached 8 billion on November 15, 2022, from around 2.5 billion in 1960. The most common bird on the planet is the domestic chicken. Farm animals far outnumber wild animals. Forests have been destroyed, oceans polluted, and microplastics have been found in every wild place on Earth, including remote islands, deserts, and Antarctica. Microplastics are in our food and in our bodies, and in the bodies of every creature on Earth, including in human breast milk.

But it is not simply population that is causing such stress on the planet. It is very much about expectations. The poorest people own very little and generally live a subsistence lifestyle. In contrast, in the years 2015-20 over 36 million UK

households owned between 1 and 3 cars. There is already enough clothing on Earth to last for nine generations to come, most of it in the wardrobes of the privileged wealthy nations, or in their shops, or in landfill sites.



Otter, by Mark Boulton

### What does 'Biodiversity' mean?

Biodiversity is the wide variety of life on earth, both the total numbers of species and the numbers of species in a particular area. One estimate gives 8.7 million species on the planet, which includes plants, animals, insects, bacteria, fungi, and others. About 1.2 million species have been identified, mostly insects. Millions of other organisms are unknown. Humans are just one species.



### Shilpita says:

*The biodiversity crisis is the silent crisis of our generation. COP15 is a rallying call to invest in marine biodiversity, like coral reefs which are home to diverse species and important in the fight against climate change. What I find*

*encouraging are creative solutions by governments and businesses, like the [issuance of Belize's blue bond](#), a financial instrument to protect 30% of Belize's ocean.*

*Shilpita Mathews is Green Christian's newest Patron. She is an Economist working in climate policy, climate & disaster resilience and the impact of climate risks on financial portfolios.*

## 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.

**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**

## Ruth says:

'Biodiversity' is such a dry word. It doesn't inspire me. We need to swap out this word for 'God's handiwork' or 'life' or 'abundant life on earth', and to talk about its innate worth. We must love and treasure Creation now, even though – or perhaps because – we know so much of it is doomed.

Ruth Jarman read chemistry at Oxford so has known about climate change for 40 years. She is Green Christian's Information Officer and helped found our sister charity Operation Noah in 2004.

Ruth photo credit: ©Reform Magazine



Our relentless drive for more, whether clothing, holidays, vehicles, food, or energy, pushes the planet beyond its limits. Habitats and ecosystems are destroyed at a greater rate every year, in order to feed human appetites for goods and services. Wars and human aggression cause regional devastation. The biggest impacts on the planet are habitat fragmentation and loss, pollution, industrial development and urban expansion, and agricultural expansion, leading to the destruction of forests, grasslands and oceans, the very systems that support and protect life on Earth.

Everything that we buy, and every action that we take – even as small as a box of teabags or a pencil, or driving to the shops – has not only a carbon footprint, but an ecological footprint too, and impacts the natural world.

It is sometimes forgotten that in the Biblical account of Creation there was no special day of creation just for humans. Humans were created alongside all the animals, on the sixth day. Created in the image of God, which presupposes goodness, justice, creativity, mercy and love, among other attributes, we were given the job of caring for Creation.

In scientific or secular terms, humans are simply animals, albeit with a highly developed intelligence, self-awareness and ethical sense, and with a greater influence on the planet than any other animal. On moral or ethical grounds alone, it makes sense to care for the natural world, and not to exploit it to a point of no recovery.

Humans, made in the image of God, have the most profound effect of all creatures on the rest of Creation. No other creature has such ability to nurture or destroy the natural world.

## Genesis 1

- <sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.
- <sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."
- <sup>27</sup> So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them...
- ... <sup>31</sup> God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (NRSV)

## The plants and flowers at St Vincent's Church Pickmere Road, June 2022



"Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs."

*From the Canticle of the Creatures by St Francis of Assisi, quoted in the encyclical letter Laudato si' by Pope Francis, 2015*

- |                        |                        |                       |                       |                      |                      |
|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Row 1, left to right   | Row 2, left to right   | Row 3, left to right  | Row 4, left to right  | Row 5, left to right | Row 6, left to right |
| 1. Bird's-foot trefoil | 6. Clovers             | 11. Feverfew          | 16. Lesser stitchwort | 21. Foxglove         | 26. Fox and cubs     |
| 2. Herb robert         | 7. Meadow buttercup    | 12. Dandelion         | 17. Spotted orchid    | 22. Harebell         | 27. Self heal        |
| 3. Red campion         | 8. Harebell (and host) | 13. Clover (and host) | 18. Silver plantain   | 23. Hedge woundwort  | 28. Thistle          |
| 4. Oxalis              | 9. Sweet woodruff      | 14. Stinging nettle   | 19. Purple toadflax   | 24. French lavender  | 29. Cherry pie       |
| 5. Scarlet pimpernel   | 10. Orange daisy       | 15. Poppy             | 20. Corncockle        | 25. Ivy hedge        | 30. Apple            |

"For the Sheffield 30 Days Wild challenge in June 2022, I took a daily photo of a plant in our church grounds and shared it with our parish WhatsApp group. Many of the plants might be dismissed as 'weeds' so I attached a brief note to say how useful they were for biodiversity. At the end of the month a fellow parishioner who is a graphic designer composed the pictures into this poster." Columba Timmins. St. Vincent's parish, Crookes. Sheffield.

## What is an ecosystem?

An ecosystem can be of any size, and is a geographic area with living parts – such as plants, animals, and other organisms – and non-living parts, such as rocks, temperature, and weather. Every part of the ecosystem depends on every other part, directly or indirectly. When one part changes – such as temperature, or the loss of a species – other parts must adapt, move to another ecosystem, or die. This leads to instability and possible collapse.





Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance is a leading expert in biodiversity and conservation, and also one of Green Christian's most longstanding Patrons. This is what he has written for *Storm of Hope* 2023.

"I have spent much of my career exploring the Amazon rainforest, the most biologically diverse habitat on our planet with over 80,000 species of plants and a huge abundance of animals. I am very concerned at present because deforestation has recently increased greatly, and we scientists feel that it is nearing the tipping point when the deforestation will change the climate so much that the forest becomes replaced by open savanna vegetation, causing both a huge loss of biological species and large discharge of carbon into the atmosphere.

"Climate change and biodiversity are so closely linked together, and in Amazonia annual rainfall is already decreasing and the dry seasons becoming longer. We will only protect the biodiversity of Amazonia and elsewhere if we also halt climate change, but the recent COP27 meeting in Egypt did little to stop the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

"I was encouraged to know that various Christian organisations were represented behind the scenes at both the climate change COP27 and the biodiversity COP15. If we really care for God's Creation, we must continue to be as active as possible defending biodiversity and halting climate change. If we truly believe that 'the earth is the Lord's' as I do, then we have to honour God by protecting and restoring God's creation."

## How you can help

- ▶ Pray
- ▶ Treasure the natural world, be grateful for it, love it – 'Love every leaf'
- ▶ Support Zero Hour and [the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill](#)
- ▶ Use the LOAF principles for food: Local, Organic, Animal Friendly, Fair Trade
- ▶ Consume less, practise Joy in Enough
- ▶ Support wildlife charities at home and abroad
- ▶ Practise wildlife-friendly gardening
- ▶ Join campaigns to protect and enhance rainforests and other environments
- ▶ Support Green Christian's Rainforest Fund project
- ▶ Seek to influence local businesses

## Nurturing God's Creation

One ambition for COP15 is to safeguard 30% of nature from exploitation by 2030. Another is to safeguard the rights of indigenous peoples, who live close to the land. The international charity Amazon Watch has since 1996 documented abduction, murder, and the destruction of indigenous villages, as well as large areas of forest and land.

During COP15 Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General said: "Humanity has become a weapon of mass extinction." But he added that the world has a chance "to stop the orgy of destruction... it's time to forge a peace pact with Nature."

The UK is one of the most wildlife-impoverished places in the world, in the bottom 10% for biodiversity. But we can all nurture God's Creation in our own contexts, whether rural or urban.

We can make thoughtful decisions about food, using Green Christian's LOAF principles (local, organic, animal-friendly and fairtrade). Plant-based meals using local and organic ingredients have lower carbon emissions and actively promote the flourishing of wildlife. Most farm animals are reared on crops grown on cleared Amazonian land.

We can garden thoughtfully, using no chemicals, leaving wild areas for insects and other creatures, not hurrying to tidy up in the autumn, not using plastic grass, remembering to feed and water birds.

Using our car less – or not at all – lowers carbon emissions and creates less pollution, helping both humans and wildlife.

We can wear clothing out – buy less – buy second-hand, or swap. The fashion and clothing industry causes massive pollution of land, water and air, as well as being carbon-intensive.

Carbon emissions and biodiversity are closely linked. Green Christian will continue to support the Zero Hour Campaign through 2023 – please join us.

<https://greenchristian.org.uk/lets-stand-united-for-nature/>

**Donations to Green Christian are always welcome. Please click the Donate button on our website to contribute.**

**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 15 local groups. Membership begins at £2 per month.**



*Hedgehog Highway, Bristol*

# 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/](http://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](http://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**

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## Key Green Christian events in 2023

**Green Christian On The Road Together** regional events, exploring Green Christian's ethos and work, including the Way of Life, Joy in Enough, and Christian Climate Action. Open to all. *If you would like to host a Green Christian day, please get in touch!*  
[greenchristian.org.uk/on-the-road-together-running-a-local-green-christian-event/](http://greenchristian.org.uk/on-the-road-together-running-a-local-green-christian-event/)

**28 Jan 2020: Green Christian Way of Life Day, London.** For members of Green Christian. A day to explore the Four Disciplines of the Green Christian Way of Life.

**Annual Members' Meeting:** Autumn 2023, in London. Shared lunch, meeting, and talk, open to all. An opportunity to hear more about the work of Green Christian, and to gain inspiration for your own.

Please see the website for more information on all these events and more, or sign up to our mailing list.

**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 every year

**Local groups:** 16 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 [joyinenough.org](http://joyinenough.org)

**Way of Life Community:** a dispersed community who value and live by the disciplines of Daily Prayer, Living Gently on the Earth, Public Witness and Encouragement

**Deep Waters:** an eight-week shared journey providing support in navigating climate grief and eco-anxiety [borrowedtime.earth](http://borrowedtime.earth)

**Online discussions, courses and workshops** on alternative economics, navigating eco-anxiety, allotments and others

**YouTube** channel, for recorded talks and discussions

**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, banners and posters giving a Christian perspective on environmental topics

**CELINK:** a discussion forum and social network for members

**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](http://www.greenchristian.org.uk)

Further details at [greenchristian.org.uk](http://greenchristian.org.uk) or from [info@greenchristian.org.uk](mailto:info@greenchristian.org.uk)



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