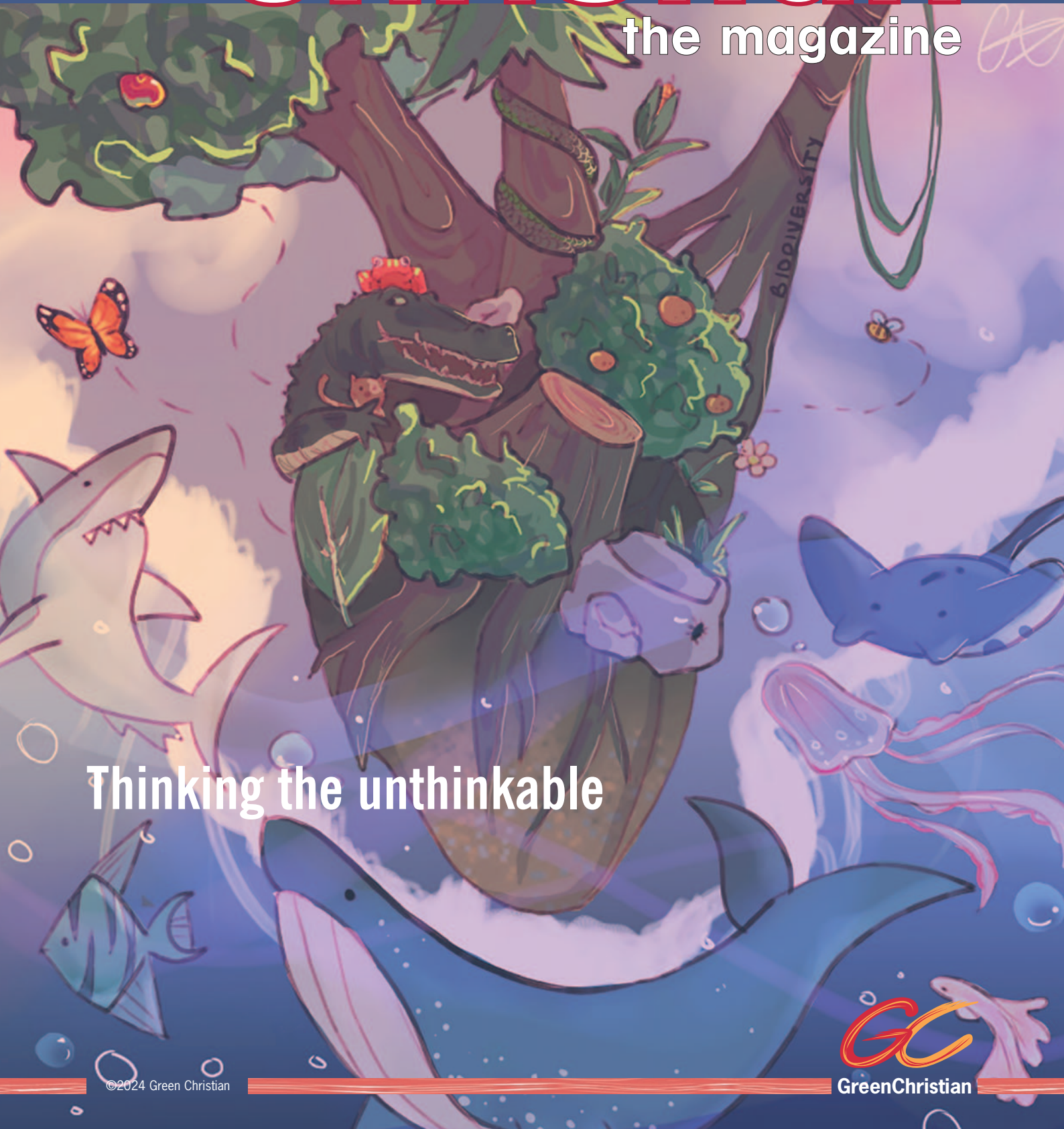


# green christian

the magazine



Thinking the unthinkable

# Thinking the unthinkable

Our front cover image, by Chidera Anyakora, offers us a joyful and fantastical vision of a world in harmony. In painting a picture where frogs perch on crocodiles' noses, where butterflies and sharks greet each other in a world of intermingled sea and sky, Chidera invites us to imagine flourishing co-existence; life with the passion of a beating heart at its centre.

Can we imagine a world transformed? Things going really well, not just for us as individuals but for the whole world. Generosity and grace in the policies made by governments, institutions and corporations, a repentance for past sins prompted by greed, distrust and fear; for an economy based on the worship of money. Maybe even Artificial Intelligence (with human "junk-code" added) assisting us with multiple benefits. Greenhouse gas emissions falling as fossil fuels are left in the ground and we change our ways of living and consuming; wildlife flourishing and biodiversity increasing.

In short, a vision of paradise, of right relationships restored. In our book reviews there is mentioned an "*ancient Christian tradition that paradise is simply the world in its deepest reality*". Could we reach out towards a reality deeper than the present one, where runaway

climate change looks increasingly likely (see Phil Kingston's sobering article), of escalating armaments and wars.

What is needed is surely beyond us – having messed things up this badly, is there still hope?

This issue, even as it grapples with tough themes, also contains encouragement to help us. Bishop Laurie Green at our reflective weekend in September spoke of how God's power is made perfect in our weakness – which is a relief! Church teaching, Laurie said, has often emphasised individualism and individual salvation allowing "structural sin" to be ignored.

Christians should certainly be active in citizenship and politically engaged, say Vanessa Elston and Ruth Jarman, and must advocate for radical policy change (such as outlined in the Climate and Nature Bill). Our Green Christian Churches Project, led by Melanie Nazareth, provides support to churches enabling them to be a stronger counter-cultural voice calling for effective change. Green Christian has also, for several years been developing resources to help in coming to terms with a sense of loss, grief and hopelessness; our *Deep Waters* programme, for example.

On first seeing our front-cover picture, words from *The Day of the Lord*, a song from the Iona Community's *Wild Goose Songs* came to mind. Here is paraphrased Isaiah's vision of shalom:

*The lamb with the lion shall lie, and the last shall be first;  
And nations for war no more shall study or thirst.*

The last verse seems particularly apt:

*The day of the Lord shall come, but now is the time  
To subvert earth's wisdom with Christ's folly sublime,  
By loving the loveless, turning the tide and the cheek,  
By walking beneath the cross in step with the weak.*

I hope this issue of Green Christian inspires you, with a trusting foolishness and faith, to imagine a different world. ■



Clare Redfern,  
Editor

This issue contains two winning entries from the Columban Schools "Biodiversity Matters" art competition, held earlier this year. Young people, aged 13-18 years were asked to produce a piece of writing or image that demonstrates an awareness and understanding of the issue of biodiversity and highlight those trying to build a sustainable future.

Thanks to both Chidera Anyakora and Charlotte Moyes (see p12) for permission to use their stunning artwork.



## Green Christian

Published by Green Christian

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### 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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# Contents



Welcome to **Green Christian**

Issue 98

Winter 2024

## FEATURES

### 4 Arms are killing us twice

**Alan Storkey** calls us to disarm the world

### 6 Ecocide, war and faith

**Louk Andrianos** discusses ecological justice in peace-making

### 9 Deborah Tomkins, Co-Chair, on stepping down from her role

### 10 Why Green Christian is supporting the Climate and Nature Bill

**Vanessa Elston** and **Ruth Jarman** invite us to imagine paradise

### 12 Is runaway climate change now a certainty?

**Philip Kingston** gives a personal view

### 13 Introducing Damian Hursey, Joy in Enough's new web-editor

### 14 Engaging your church

**Melanie Nazareth** reports on the Green Christian Churches Project

### 16 On AI, aliens and alienation

**Eve Poole** believes incorporating our junk-code is vital

### 18 Use your LOAF!

**Cat Jenkins** and **Barbara Echlin** reflect on the LOAF campaign



Cover illustration is by Chidera Anyakora, from the Loreto School in Altrincham, and it won the Columban Schools "Biodiversity Matters" art prize. Chidera said: "In this piece I wanted to present a diverse range of wildlife that mirrors the diverse and unique nature of our world."

## REGULARS

**2 EDITORIAL**

**8 PRAYER**

**20 LOCAL GROUPS**

**21 POETRY**

**22 GC NEWS**

**25 REVIEWS**

# Arms are killing us twice

**Alan Storkey** calls us to disarm the world



Why Believe In The Power To Destroy?

Painting and photo credit: Alan Storkey

**W**e lament the wars raging in Ukraine, Gaza, Yemen, Myanmar and now Lebanon as they bring death and destruction. Yet, perhaps we stop at the horror. Why do we not understand war? So much historical evidence is there – some 200 wars since 1900 and 200 million dead. They are not accidental, but repeatedly caused events. Why do wars happen?

Jesus' terse statement, *"Those who take the sword, die by the sword"* (Matt. 26:52) reverberates the answer. It is a general understanding in a particular situation. If you go for weapons, they kill you. It is a "Go Back Before It Is Too Late" statement. This route you must not go. Taking the sword always generates vast consequences.

This truth of Jesus goes to the heart of our present dilemmas. Arms lead to wars. We are taught "Defence" is good, stops wars, is necessary, guarantees peace, defends democracy and we accept it like zombies. The message is drummed into

us but actually the opposite is true. Arms have produced wars as clouds produce rain. Since about 1850 a vast industrial-military complex has armed the world competitively and arms have produced wars, first colonial wars, then other ones.

The First World War was four arms races: France vs Germany; Russia vs Germany; Britain vs Germany (naval) and Russia-Serbia vs Austro-Hungary. One spark at Sarajevo and all of Europe was at war.

Then there was World War Two. "Ah", people say, "but we needed to defend against Hitler" – but this ignores several important facts. First, the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1932 would have prevented Hitler coming to power if the Hoover proposals (to cutback armaments and outlaw tanks and bombers) had been voted through. When that failed, from 1933-39 there was a big expansion in arms production fuelling wars in China, Ethiopia, Spain and elsewhere. Then when Germany had few arms, the US armed Hitler large scale



with weapons and aircraft factories, even loaning him the funds to do so (which he never returned). Finally the Munich Agreement, signed by a fascist sympathizing British Cabinet in 1938, gave Hitler enough weapons to arm half the Reichswehr. Hitler was armed to fight World War Two.

The Cold War saw the US and USSR selling arms round the world, arming dozens of states, and generating dozens of wars, directly in Korea, Vietnam and Cuba and indirectly around the world. The Cold War ended, but arms sales marched on.

Arms generate wars. They send the world into new conflicts, enemy generation, tensions and destruction. Nuclear War remains a danger. Governments keep us asleep by saluting the flag or a Spitfire flypast and talking of dangers, so that the world's biggest problem can march on unchecked. "Defence" is mainly attack – missiles, nuclear subs, bombers, tanks and a vast range of offensive weapons. We now have 28 million troops training to fight, with perhaps \$10 trillion worth of weapons whose aim is destruction and mass murder. Perhaps we should rethink the long military road we are all marching down to destruction.

Then there is the ecological devastation. As well as the damage to ecosystems, militarism and war generate massive CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. They are obviously the opposite of green. It happens in four stages. First, weapons are made in the most energy intensive industry of all – missiles, fighters, bombers, tanks, battleships, submarines and explosives. Second, troops worldwide are kitted to use them – exercises, bases, fleet and troop movements burning more and contributing nothing to the world economy. Third, when wars arrive, energy consumption soars as warplanes, missiles, guns explode in pure CO<sub>2</sub> conflict; bombs tend to be energy intensive. Fourth the destruction occurs – wood, concrete, homes, infrastructure, burning oil and even solar panels. They all need *reconstruction* with yet more CO<sub>2</sub>.

Military authorities have tried to hide this CO<sub>2</sub> account, because it is so big.<sup>1</sup> But we can do a "guesstimate". World military expenditure of GDP is near 2.5% and, given most jobs are service occupations, military energy use will be two or three times that – say 5% minimum. Serious war CO<sub>2</sub> pushes it up towards 10%. So here is the opportunity to save 6-10% of world CO<sub>2</sub> generation by full world disarmament and the end to war.

Ah, you noticed "full world disarmament". Of course, it is unthinkable, except when you think it. Then you realise it



Israeli soldiers guarding a barrier

Photo credit: Joel Carillet (iStock)

would save the world economy several trillion dollars – the GDP of India. Two big problems – war and global warming, meet in one solution – full world disarmament. The process is not difficult; you cut budgets/troops/weapons by 20% a year for five years with open inspection, and subsidize arms firms to repurpose. It is safe and becomes safer. We move to the system long used within most civilised nations – no weapons, policing and law. We do peace on earth.

The Superpowers cannot act. They are locked in their military dominance. The arms companies need war and stir it up. States, military dictators think might and do enemies. Armies must fight sooner or later. The media does fear and blind patriotism, and so ordinary world public opinion must be mobilised. Once it is rolling, it will not stop. Militarism and War have had the worst advertising on TV every day world-wide for the last two years, and the reality is that they have cost every family now on the planet around \$250,000 since 1900.<sup>2</sup>

Peace on earth is very popular. Could we heed the words of Jesus and stand up for full disarmament in a worldwide movement. There are two billion Christians; the key is the first million to get it on the world stage. Can we insist by faith on moving the mountain; each commit, stand and be counted until the UN does world disarmament and the Superpowers roll over.

You gently join the army that has no enemies and bring down the mighty from their thrones. We do as Jesus said and make peace, passing it on one to another, around the war-weary world for the healing of the nations.

[change.org/DisarmTheWorld](https://change.org/DisarmTheWorld) - please sign the petition ■



Dr Alan Storkey is a Christian social scientist working for the last 25 years on militarism and war. His books include *Jesus and Politics* (Baker Academic, 2005) *War or Peace?* (CSP, 2015) and *Militarism Has Failed: We Disarm the World* (CSP, 2023).

<sup>1</sup> <https://theconversation.com/how-the-worlds-militaries-hide-their-huge-carbon-emissions-171466>

<sup>2</sup> *Militarism has Failed: We Disarm the World*, Alan Storkey, Christian Studies Press, 2023

# Ecocide, war, faith

**Dr Louk Andrianos** discusses ecological justice in peace-making



The result of a forest fire in Ukraine

Photo credit: Serhiy Nuzhnenko, Radio Liberty

The gravity of wars whether in Ukraine, Gaza or wherever is usually assessed by the number of human casualties and ensuing socio-economic instabilities in the regions. The effect on land, biodiversity and air integrity, described as ecocide, are often underestimated or neglected. Yet the natural world is integral to the web of life on Earth and to human survival. Working as a WCC (World Council of Churches) consultant on care for creation, sustainability, and climate justice, I believe that in addition to protecting human rights, Christians should strive against war for ecological justice and, of course, for peace. Ecological justice belongs in the frontline of international peace talks.

The “Pandokrator”<sup>1</sup> Creator God calls all people of faith to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with Him. In Micah 6:8, it’s a practical command for humans to live with humility

and fairness with creation, which relates the visible manifestation of God’s presence. The Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew was a pioneer in expressing the idea of ecological sin in 1997. He claimed: “For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God’s creation... For humans to degrade the integrity of Earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands... For humans to injure other humans with disease, for humans to contaminate the Earth’s waters, its land, its air, and its life, with poisonous substances... These are sins.”<sup>2</sup>

Humans are just one species among trillions living on this planet. But human greed for power and resources is resulting in the destruction of creation which is suffering to the point of global extinction. The essence of wars between countries is a

1 From the Greek word «Παντοκράτορας» describing the triune God, Creator and controller of everything in the universe, according to the Orthodox tradition.

2 Chris Durante, *The Green Patriarch and Ecological Sin*, [publicorthodoxy.org/2021/09/03/green-patriarch-and-ecological-sin/](https://publicorthodoxy.org/2021/09/03/green-patriarch-and-ecological-sin/)



disoriented interconnection between human need, human greed and ecological rights. Wars, climate change, natural extreme disasters and biodiversity loss are all linked to the egoistic and anthropocentric human greed at an individual, national or corporate level.

Greed is an inherent human characteristic. But can we reorientate this tendency? In 2006, the WCC initiated a programme focused on eradicating poverty, challenging wealth accumulation, and safeguarding ecological integrity based on the understanding that poverty, wealth, and ecology are integrally related. The WCC's book, *The Greed Line: Tool for a Just Economy* describes how greed is embedded at all levels – individual and corporate – in our culture.<sup>3</sup> Yet Jesus Christ warned us to “take care to guard against all kinds of greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions” (Luke 12:15).

War, it seems, is the culmination of the triplet: stupidity, fear and greed. Leaders, greedy for increased wealth and power, supported by those fearful to preserve their private benefits or those coerced into submission. One country is invading another because the leadership think their land is not enough for their need or, more correctly, for their greed so they use all means, principally their military force to attain their goal. However, the land and the web of life living on it, belong to God, the Creator of all and by extension to the whole human and non-human community.

In Psalm 24:1 it is written, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it”. If one part of the creation is suffering, the whole community of the global creation is groaning. If war is causing the pollution of lands, waters and the air, in addition to the destruction of biodiversity of plants and animals, the invader is committing ecological sins, not only against humanity, but also before the divine Creator and the sacred creation.

Russia’s war against Ukraine is an undeniable example of contemporary ecological sin and it should be condemned as a double crime against human and non-human rights. The killing of innocent civilians under horrendous condition is utterly deplorable. Lands, forests and marine ecosystems have been destroyed; rivers and soils are now polluted, and flora and fauna dying.

US officials in August put the number of Ukrainian soldiers killed at 70,000 and as many as 120,000 injured. Data analysed by the BBC has also established that more than

70,000 Russian soldiers have died so far. About a third of Ukraine’s territory – 174,000 square kilometers – is mined and contaminated with explosives; Ukraine has become the most mined country in the world. 3 million hectares of forests have been burned and destroyed, more than 1.5 million tons of pollutants have entered water bodies and about 500,000 tons of toxic substances were released into the atmosphere from the burning of oil products alone. More than a third of Europe’s biological diversity is under threat of complete destruction. About 600 species of animals and 750 species of plants and fungi may disappear forever. The number of victims among wild animals is in the millions; nature reserves and national parks have suffered irreparable damage; the consequences of military actions will affect not only the ecosystem of Ukraine, but the wider world for decades.

Acknowledging human greed, on all levels, as a spiritual cause of war which undermines, not only human life but the survival of wider creation, we need stronger international laws against ecocide and a stronger ecumenical eco-theological voice calling to preserve God’s creation. Christians should strive actively for ecological justice and for peace; the 2024 WCC Statement on Biodiversity<sup>4</sup> for COP16 and Climate COP29 sets this out clearly. I also urge support for initiatives like the Ecocide Law, the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT)<sup>5</sup>, and the Season of Creation<sup>6</sup> ecumenical movement.

This summer, the Olympic games took place in Paris under the shadow of continuing wars (in Ukraine, Palestine, Myanmar, Sudan, and China) but the belief in sport as a unifying force for peace is still respected as it was when ancient Greek city states rivals signed a treaty – the “ekecheiria”, literally the “holding of hands”– to ensure athletes and spectators could safely take part in the Games. Athletes from Israel, Palestine, Russia, and Ukraine competed in Paris (in reduced number) but wars could not be stopped during the Olympic games. Let us pray that a universal reverence for all of creation, human and more-than-human, could become like the Olympic spirit acting as a unifying force for peace. ■



Louk Andrianos is a World Council of Churches consultant for the care for creation, climate justice and sustainability. He is author of *Confessing Hope for the Earth* (in *Kairos for Creation*, Solingen: Foedus-Verlag, 2019), *Contemporary ecotheology, climate justice and environmental justice in world religions* (2021, WCC and Orthodox Academy of Crete Publications) as well as numerous articles.

3 Peralta, Athena and Mshana Rogate (2016), *The Greed Line: Tool for a Just Economy*, World Council of Churches (WCC Publications)

4 [oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-biodiversity-cop16-and-climate-cop29](https://oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-biodiversity-cop16-and-climate-cop29)

5 [fossilfuelstreaty.org/](https://fossilfuelstreaty.org/)

6 [seasonofcreation.org/2024/02/02/soc-2024-to-hope-and-act-with-creation/](https://seasonofcreation.org/2024/02/02/soc-2024-to-hope-and-act-with-creation/)

“They will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, no longer will they learn how to make war.” *Isaiah 2:4*

God of all,  
as we walk together.  
Open our hearts  
to your tenderness.  
Open our minds  
to your understanding.  
Open our lives  
to your challenge.  
We are one people, many nations,  
building hope through steps for peace.  
One world with many barriers,  
breaking chains so we dance free.  
One voice that shouts for justice  
shatters hatred, calls for change.  
One God, one world, one people,  
turning tables, share the feast.  
Amen.

Linda Jones/CAFOD with permission

Creator God, Giver of life,  
You sustain the earth and direct the nations.  
In this time of crisis for climate and nature  
grant us clarity to hear the groaning of creation  
and the cries of the poor;  
We repent of our contribution to this suffering, both through our lifestyles  
and our complicity with systems of oppression.  
Give us courage to stand up to the evils of greed, selfishness and apathy;  
Guide our leaders to take courageous action;  
Enable your church to be a beacon of hope and a prophetic spur;  
And foster within us a renewed vision of your purpose for your world;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
by and for whom all things were made.  
Amen

based on a prayer from the Church of England's *Short Guide to the UN COP conferences*, with permission

Photo credit: Gabriel Meinert - unsplash



# Deborah Tomkins, Co-Chair, reviews the last 5 years as she steps down

The last five years have been an exciting time for Green Christian and a busy time for me. Well before Covid-19 struck, the Green Christian Trustees and Board had already moved to online meetings, eventually settling on Zoom. As a dispersed organisation (though we still meet in person when possible), moving to a visual platform made our calls so much easier and efficient. It was therefore a short step to invite people to join our online Radical Presence programme (created especially for 2020's special circumstances), to develop our new YouTube channel, and then to decide what else could be accomplished with Zoom – hence all our current workshops, courses and programmes. We even created a brilliant three-day online Festival, in October 2020, with around 300 joining us that weekend. We have also met on Zoom for prayer during COPs 26, 27 and 28 and recently, for COP29.



My role during this time has been mainly outward-facing; I have given interviews on radio and for magazines, been invited to preach during Sunday services, to give presentations, and to take part in discussions at conferences and workshops. It has been a busy and fulfilling time, meeting people who know little about Green Christian or about our universal human calling to care for creation, answering questions, having deep and sometimes unexpected conversations. Of course, always pointing people in the direction of the Green Christian community and its resources.

The Trustees look continually at what we do, seeking to improve our offerings to churches and individuals, and to create new programmes. Currently Green Christian offers *Joy in Enough* on economic justice from a Christian perspective, with its *Plenty!* course, freely downloadable; two programmes from our Borrowed Time project, *Cloud and Fire*, and *Deep Waters*, both free to join; a new free 5-week Lent course, *Calling a Wounded Earth Home*; our new Churches Project to

support churches in deepening ecological discipleship; our new food project; our workshops on Wednesday evenings; our Green Christian On The Road Together days and our Way of Life Community, for members of Green Christian<sup>1</sup>. I am so proud of Green Christian and all that we stand for.

Within Green Christian, I have helped with the Borrowed Time programme (specifically *Deep Waters*, our resource for those experiencing climate grief and eco-anxiety), the Green Christian Strategy Group and the Way of Life planning group among others.

I stepped down as Co-Chair in summer 2024. It has been an enormous privilege to work closely with George Dow (Co-Chair) and Barbara Echlin (Vice-Chair), both wise, compassionate, and focused colleagues, and alongside the other Trustees and members of the Board. I value them all for their gifts, their steadfastness, and their determination to let the Gospel shine in this work of not only safeguarding creation but helping the earth flourish, in whatever ways each person has been called to do this. I feel privileged to have been Co-Chair during these past incredible years. I know there is much good work yet to come, and we couldn't do half of what we do without the support of many volunteers, for whom we are very thankful. Please get in touch if you would like to help in any way.

I am the wife of a vicar in a busy city parish, where there is a lot of change with numbers growing – a good problem! There are many new ministries in our church as a result, and I will be supporting my husband in this time of transition. I will of course still be involved in Green Christian as a Trustee, and I am sure will meet many of you, whom I count as friends, over the next years as we come across each other in our work and activities. May God bless you all in your specific callings, and God bless the work of Green Christian. ■



Deborah lives in Bristol with her family, where she grows organic food in her city garden, and is involved in local eco-initiatives including with Bristol Diocese. After a degree in French & Linguistics, she worked as an EFL dictionary writer, and also gained a Certificate in Theology. Deborah has won awards for her climate-themed novels.

1 Contact [info@greenchristian.org.uk](mailto:info@greenchristian.org.uk) or look on our website for more information.

# Why Green Christian is supporting the Climate and Nature Bill

**Vanessa Elston** and **Ruth Jarman** invite us to imagine paradise



BACK THE CLIMATE AND NATURE BILL

**ZERO HOUR** 

*Photo credit: zerohour.org*

**F**or God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:19-20)

At the core of our faith is the reconciliation of all things – a mission and a yearning for the bringing of all things into a right relationship with each other. This includes human beings and God, but encompasses the whole of creation; salvation for human beings can never be without reconciliation of everything, because we are only going to be fulfilled in paradise, and paradise is a healed, beautiful, vibrant ecological habitat.

We need to recover our imagination for paradise, for what it means to be human, for what actually makes us happy. Supporting the Climate and Nature (CAN) Bill is an opportunity for Christians and

churches to be part of a movement of healing, a rebuilding of right relationship.

## So what is the Climate and Nature (CAN) Bill?

The CAN Bill would lead to legislation to ensure that the UK makes its fair share of emissions cuts necessary to limit the increase in global temperatures to 1.5°C. It would mean taking account of the UK's entire carbon footprint wherever the emissions occur, taking real action on the emissions we cause overseas through the production, trade and transportation of the things we consume.

It would also ensure the forming of policies that halt and reverse the decline of nature by 2030, in line with COP15 commitments, aiming to protect and restore natural and managed ecosystems, for healthy soil and water, with increased biodiversity and thriving natural carbon sinks. The CAN Bill also takes responsibility for the UK's harmful

impacts on nature around the world – being honest about the damage to the environment caused by our financing, investments and consumption.

The Bill calls for the creation of a Climate & Nature Assembly that would put forward recommendations for the emergency strategy to Parliament. This group of ordinary citizens, selected at random like a jury, would listen to expert evidence before reaching conclusions on the best way forward. Their recommendations would be debated in Parliament, but MPs would still have the final say.

## The Climate and Nature Bill legislates for justice

*He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)*

This sense of right relationship obviously involves justice, fairness and equity, of resources being available for all, so that all can thrive. Look at the world. We are deeply out of relationship with each other but also, more fundamentally, with creation. The desire for restoration and justice speaks to the heart of what it means to be Christian.

## Earth-keeping

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. (Genesis 2:15)*

Human beings have a kind of creation mandate from God. Adam, which means “from the earth”, is an earth-keeper; Christ came to renew that original



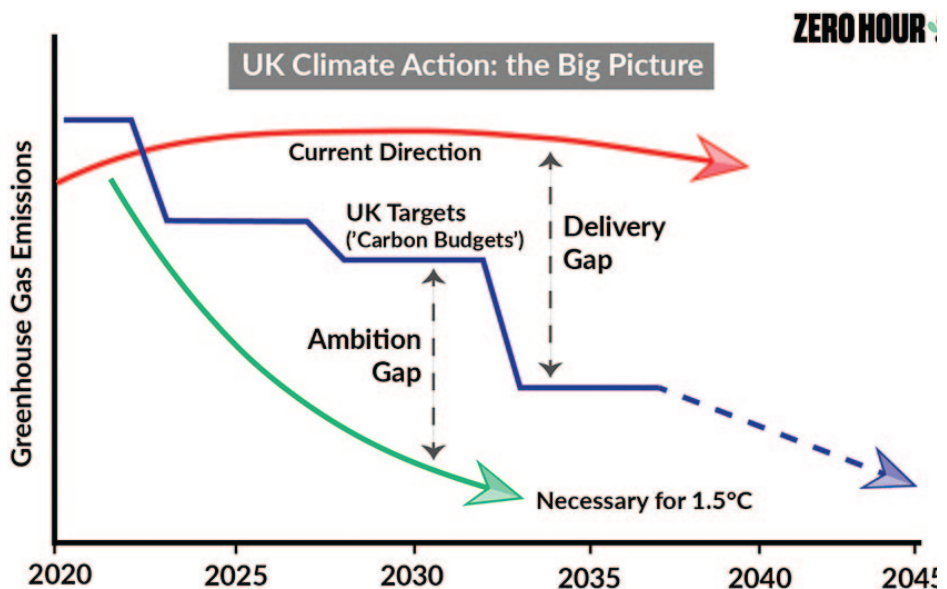
vocation of “keeping the earth”. Within the CAN Bill we see this core calling to keep the earth, to care for creation and to safeguard its integrity, balance and relationality.

## Liberation and repentance

*For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:20-21)*

Christ comes to set us free from sin and the fear of death, from our “bondage to decay” that locks us into short term thinking, addictions and our destructive patterns of consumption. Our liberty then sets us free to liberate our communities, our country and the world from all sorts of oppression and injustice. The doorway into this new vocation, this renewed calling, is repentance, metanoia. This is why Jesus comes saying, “*repent, the kingdom of God is at hand*”. To step into this way of being with God, we must first, with God’s help, go through deep conversion and change of heart and mind.

In our secular age, we have lost the sense of the intrinsic value of creation, of its sacred reality, its God-given gift. We have not honoured our fellow creatures as those in relationship to God, as those who also communicate the goodness of God with their own integrity. We have lost something fundamental about how we value and see the world around us, and the Church has unfortunately often colluded with this. We have not seen our pattern of following Jesus as fundamentally about critiquing this, of seeking to live differently and to seek to change it. This is our prophetic calling – to start naming sin, the idolatry of the market, the false worship of short-term profit.



The Ambition Gap: the UK is failing to meet its ambition on GHG emissions

Credit: zerohour.org

## A radical proposal

Our current economy is massively out of control and no longer accountable to governments and global institutions. We have to transform our destructive economics into something that is life-giving and just, and the CAN Bill gives us a framework to do this. Importantly, this Bill addresses both climate and nature together. And the Bill’s framework for making these changes has justice at its heart, ensuring the most vulnerable are protected. The CAN Bill would put the UK at the forefront of ethical leadership on the climate. As Christians we believe in being salt and light, so we believe in the power of moral leadership. This Bill would set a gold standard and would be inspiring.

## At what stage is the Bill?

For four years, the group Zero Hour, campaigning for the CAN Bill, has been building cross-party support for the Bill of more than 180 MPs. We are now at an exciting and critical moment: the Bill’s second reading is 24th January 2025, brought by Lib Dem MP Roz Savage. It is absolutely critical that at least 102 supporting MPs attend the reading; this is the greatest opportunity we have had to turn the CAN Bill into a CAN Act.

At the core of our discipleships is a need

for us to be active in our citizenship and our political engagement. In our increasingly polarised political space it is our fundamental Christian duty to call for reconciliation and justice. The Climate and Nature Bill is a powerful opportunity to do this. Let’s activate our churches and do all we can to back it.

## How can I support it?

Let’s make history! We must get 100+ supporting MPs to attend the Second Reading debate on 24th January 2025. This is the only way that the CAN Bill can move onto the next stage of its journey into law – Committee Stage. Will you ask your MP to attend the Second Reading of the CAN Bill? Visit [action.zerohour.uk](http://action.zerohour.uk) for more information. ■



Revd Vanessa Elston is Pioneer Priest for Climate Spirituality and Action in the Diocese of Southwark and part time Chaplain to the Bishop of Kingston



Ruth Jarman is Information Officer of Green Christian

# Is runaway climate change now a certainty?

**Phil Kingston** gives a personal view

It's increasingly obvious from the news at home and abroad that climate change is not a future problem. Changes to Earth's climate, driven by increased emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases are already having widespread effects: glaciers and ice sheets are shrinking, sea-levels rising, droughts and heat waves are becoming longer and more severe, storms more intense leading to more severe flooding, mud slides and more.

As stated in the UN Environment Programme's "Emission Gap" report this year, the world is on track for a temperature increase of 2.6–3.1°C if current policies continue.<sup>1</sup> This is far above the 1.5°C limit that would prevent the worst effects of climate change. The latest IPCC "synthesis report" also stresses the irreversibility of the changes taking place, stating that even with "deep, rapid and sustained cuts in emissions" these changes can only be limited and not reversed. It states "with high confidence" that as global warming increases "climatic and non-climatic risks will increasingly interact, creating cascading risks that are more complex and difficult to manage".<sup>2</sup>

Future tipping points such as the loss of Antarctic and Greenland ice-shelves; changes in oceanic circulation currents; the release of vast amounts of methane from thawing of permafrost and die-back in the Amazon rainforest are becoming increasingly imminent. Changes within ecosystems



"Time is ticking and we urgently need to make changes" says Charlotte Moyes, runner-up in the Colombian Schools Biodiversity Matters competition

which have helped to stabilise global temperatures within parameters conducive to human development are in danger of failing with a subsequent "runaway" acceleration in emissions.

I believe that runaway climate breakdown is not reversible. It took me two years fully to integrate this into my being. It should be no surprise if the vast majority of us initially recoil from this idea, especially if we have children and grand-children.

It is essential to acknowledge that the current global economy is a direct cause of the ongoing increase in GHG emissions. For 800,000 years atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> never rose above 300 ppm, yet since the industrial era it has risen to over 420 ppm. In the 30 years since the first COP, there has been only one year when emissions fell and that was due to the 2008 global recession.

I regard Pope Francis as the most outspoken world statesperson when it comes to critiquing the global economy. In an address to the Italian

Pro-Life Movement, he said "*Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills.*"

The sooner we adults face the truth about runaway climate breakdown, the sooner we can be alongside our descendants, supporting them in developing resilience and systems of cooperation. A recent worldwide study of 10,000 young people's concerns about their future showed that 84% are worried about the climate. They report feeling anxious, afraid

<sup>1</sup> Emissions Gap Report 2024: No more hot air...please! [unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2024](https://unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2024)

<sup>2</sup> AR6 Synthesis Report Climate Change 2023, Summary for Policy makers, Section B





Phil at a Christian Climate Action demonstration

Photo credit: CCA

and powerless, and not trusting politicians to speak the truth. They expressed their longing for adults to be with them in their fears. I also commend Nemonte Nenquimo's moving account of the struggle of indigenous activists to defend Amazonian territories from destruction at the hands of oil companies<sup>3</sup> for its message of hopeful resistance.

Sharing my belief in runaway climate breakdown with my children and grandchildren continues to develop and it is now as likely for them to bring new information to me as it is for me to them. At the same time, I acknowledge what a hugely difficult subject this is for them to face and I therefore do my best to respond with love, truth and support.

I have been blessed with an ongoing trust in the Holy Spirit. It is the basis for this article. ■

Phil Kingston is a founder member of Grandparents for a Safe Earth, and Christian Climate Action. He has three children and four grandchildren.

3 We Will Not Be Saved, Nemonte Nenquimo and Mitch Anderson, Wildfire, 2024

## Introducing Damian Hursey, from the Joy in Enough project

Hello, my name is Damian Hursey and I am the new web content editor for Joy in Enough. Green Christian's Joy in Enough project seeks to promote a non-exploitative and sustainable economy within an ethic of environmental responsibility and Christian spirituality.

I was attracted to the role, because I have long been interested in the relationship between the economy and ecology. Why is it that economic growth is often pursued without regard to the environmental consequences? What was it that set Western society, and then the advanced world in general, on such an ecologically destructive path of development? I have pursued my interest in these questions through completing an MA in Christian spirituality at Sarum College, Salisbury. I have also worked directly in ministry in a variety of settings, including a "Fresh Expressions" project in Bath as well as facilitating a city centre Christian community in Birmingham.

More recently, I have been involved in environmental activism such as coordinating a group for the Coat of Hopes "patchwork pilgrimage" and the COP 26 "Camino to COP". On another occasion, I also organised the Birmingham stop for a



satirical protest on wheels, exposing the flagrant greenwashing of the oil industry and Shell in particular, in conjunction with AdFree Cities, Switch it Green and The GAP Arts Project in Balsall Heath.

A key Bible passage for me is from Ezekiel where God asks who will "Stand in the Gap" on behalf of those who suffer injustice. "Standing in The Gap" doesn't mean having to be someone strong or powerful, it just means being willing to take a stand, and inspire others to join in too. ■

# Engaging your church – how the Green Christian Churches Project can help

**Melanie Nazareth** reports on developments in this new initiative



Solar panels on Great St Mary's church, Cambridge

Photo credit: Clare Redfern

Almost all major denominations have official statements that acknowledge the fundamental threat that human induced climate change and environmental degradation poses to God's creation. They also recognise our responsibility as people of God to work to challenge and change this. It is good to remind ourselves of these from time to time because they express something that is core to our Christian identity and the mission of our churches – a fundamental issue that we need to do something about.

We have *Laudato 'Si* and *Laudate Deum*, from Pope Francis analysing the crises and our responsibility to care for our common home. (Catholic or not, I highly recommend reading and thinking about what Pope Francis writes in his October 2023 letter *Laudate Deum*. Don't be put off by the Latin title, it's addressed to all people of good will and is very readable. It's available online – see the link below.<sup>1</sup>)

The Anglican Communion's fifth mark of mission is a commitment to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. When read in conjunction with the fourth mark of mission which is to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation, this understanding of God's "holistic and integral mission" appears as an irresistible call to be working for climate justice.

The Methodist Church in the UK puts it in this way "As people made in the image of God, we believe we are called to reflect God's nature in being present and active in caring for creation. Closing our ears to the voices of those most vulnerable to climate change would be nothing less than giving up our claim to be disciples of Christ."

Why then are our churches and congregations not more actively involved in this life-sustaining work? Being frank, few parish priests and church leadership teams are responding by making it a key priority for their congregations. There are a good many reasons for this, some more tractable than

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html)



others, but a more important question follows. What can we do about it?

One of the most obvious barriers for local clergy and church leaders is the enormous commitment of time and resources demanded by day to day church and parish life. Recognising this, part of the remit of the Churches Project is to equip all Green Christians with resources they can use to support their clergy and their churches in making this an integral part of their mission. We also see churches reluctant to get involved in something that can be said to be Political (very much with a capital letter) and potentially divisive, and again we see our remit as providing tools to help Green Christian members to respond to this.

Another reason for a lack of action might be a reluctance to make people uncomfortable; confronting unsustainable ways of living, pointing up the need for sacrifices and asking people to be message bearers of an unpopular counter-cultural message is always going to be risky. Or maybe it's overwhelm – the task seems dauntingly huge. I think we can help with that too.

We have been creating biblically-rooted resources that everyone, Green Christian members and beyond, can draw on to engage fellow church members and to help churches take this mission into the life of their local community. We have developed an interactive talk template you can use to engage people's hearts called *Peace, Love and Climate Justice*. Rooted in the great commandments, it comes with full notes and a few slides (if you like to use slides), and a video of the training session we ran. It can be given as it is or adapted to fit your needs. You can find it all on the Green Christian website.

Although the general election has come and gone, we still need to be actively involved in our politics, engaging with our elected representatives, holding them to account. Our election pack, also available on the Green Christian website, contains lots of theological and practical material that is still useful. We are currently developing a resource for getting local communities involved in green issues using participative events that build community. We want to have a bank of off-the-peg actions and ideas that your church can follow to engage people in the work of safeguarding creation, from making banners to ringing the bells. We hope that by putting these things in one place it will make it easier to find the one thing that works for your congregation.

Jesus instructed us that we are to be “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world.” If our churches are to fulfill this



Don't stop at the lights!

Photo credit: Mark Boulton

calling they need to actively work as preservers and transformers of our communities in this crisis, and we need to work to support our church communities to do this. Each of us is a key part of this mission. And if you need help in doing this or have any ideas we can use, drop me a line. I'll do my best to help where I can.

One last thought – and an example of our signposting. If you are starting to talk about climate justice with your church it helps to have the information to inform your discussion. The Campaign against Climate Change has a “Headlines from a warming world” page.<sup>2</sup> It attempts to keep track of all the extreme weather events affecting places around the world. I will be using it to guide my prayers for those at the sharpest end of climate change. Perhaps your church will be open to offering intercessory prayers for each of these places on an ongoing basis. It's a good start. ■

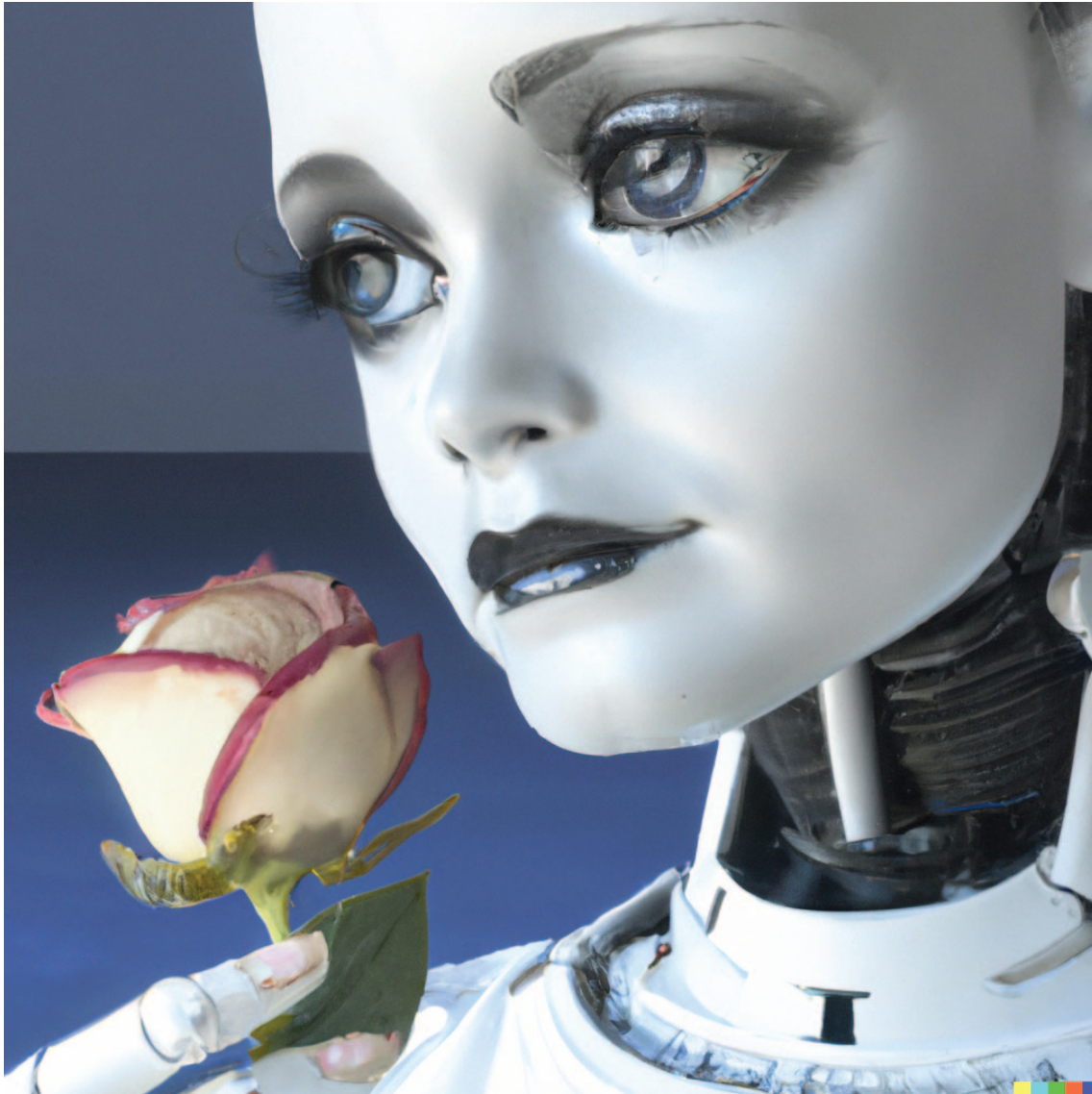


Melanie Nazareth lives in London with her family. She has a background in law but since 2019 her primary focus has been working to meet the climate and environmental crisis. She also works for Christian Climate Action.

2 [https://www.campaignccc.org/headlines\\_from\\_a\\_warming\\_world](https://www.campaignccc.org/headlines_from_a_warming_world)

# On AI, Aliens and Alienation

**Eve Poole** believes incorporating our human “junk-code” is vital



Can AI have a soul?

Credit: image created using AI (DALL-E) 10/1/23

Are there robots in paradise? In a number of faith traditions, heaven is depicted as a garden. In Christianity this connotes a return to Eden before the serpent, the apple, and the fall, and locates our context as part of the natural world. We are destined to travel from garden to garden, as well as from dust to dust and ashes to ashes. For a while in history that garden might not have contained women or slaves, because they were not considered to have souls; now we are encouraged to believe that even our cats and dogs will be there to greet us. But will there be robots in paradise?

To answer this question, we need to travel through the light

years to a planet called K2-18b.<sup>1</sup> It is more than 1.1 million billion kilometres away from here, but the James Webb Space Telescope has detected the existence of a molecule there called dimethyl sulphide, which on Earth is only produced by life. Scientists think it is only a matter of time before we discover evidence of life on other planets, but because of the distances involved it seems unlikely we shall ever meet these life forms, now long gone. But might we meet these aliens in heaven?

This gets Christians into tricky territory. Made in the image of God, we feel special;

and God choosing a human body for the incarnation seems to confirm the superiority of our particular design. So aliens not made in the image of God should not qualify for this special status, which might also rule them out of heaven. But the problem with Artificial Intelligence is that it does claim to replicate human design, albeit a manufactured version of it. It is true that for Christians, God-made humans are ensouled, but man-made things copying human design are not, because we cannot bestow soul: only God can do that. But if what defines us is being made in the image of God, we ought to take a

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-66786611>



closer look at what this actually means in the context of Artificial Intelligence.

Our starting place must be that we are perfectly designed for God's ends, given the nature and properties of the God in whom we believe. And this is where Christianity can be of particular help in the debate on AI, because it turns out that in trying to copy ourselves, we have made a rather poorly-edited version; and if AI is ever to fulfil its promise we need to learn better from our own perfect design. I think that, in an attempt to programme only the very best of our design into AI, we left out all the "junk code" – all the bits of which we are ashamed or struggle to understand, like our emotions, uncertainty, and intuition. In fact, there are seven items of junk code which have been omitted, because they looked like bugs or errors in our own blueprints.

## Our Junk Code

1. Free-will
2. Emotions
3. Sixth Sense
4. Uncertainty
5. Mistakes
6. Meaning
7. Storytelling

Starting with the first item, Free Will, you can see why this defining human property has been left on the cutting-room floor, because free will is a disastrous design choice. Letting creatures do what they want is highly likely to lead to their rapid extinction; and a fear that it might somehow spontaneously emerge in AI is behind all those open letters calling for a pause and worrying about the "Control Problem."

So a good design would include some ameliorators to nudge free will in a positive direction. The first is emotion. Humans are a very vulnerable species because their young take nine months to gestate, and are largely helpless for their first few years. Emotion is a good design choice because it creates bonding with their children and in their communities to protect the vulnerable. Next, you design in a Sixth Sense, so that when there is no clear data to inform a decision, they can use their intuition to seek wisdom from the collective unconscious, which helps de-risk decision-making. Then we need to consolidate this by designing in uncertainty. A capacity to cope with ambiguity will stop them rushing into precipitous decision-making, and make them seek others out for wise counsel. And if they do make mistakes? Well, they will learn from them:

mistakes that make them feel bad will develop in them a healthy conscience, which will steer them away from repeated harms in future.

Now that we have corrected their design to promote survival, what motivators are needed for their future flourishing? They need to want to get out of bed on a dark day, so we fit them with a capacity for making meaning, because a species that can discern or create meaning in the world will find reasons to keep living in the face of any adversity. And to keep the species going over generations? We design in a super-power about storytelling. Stories allow communities to transmit their core values and purpose down the generations in a highly sticky way. Stories last for centuries, future-proofing the species through learned wisdom of our ancestors, and the human species prevails.

We had not thought to design humanity into AI because it seemed too messy, so we copied the curated selfie, not the person in the mirror. But on reflection, we can see that our junk code is part of a rather clever defensive design. They are not flaws: they have purpose, and speak to our proper context in the whole of creation. We know that one of the reasons we have a climate crisis is because of our gradual alienation from creation. The gradual downplaying and dismissal of our "junk code" in education and society is now exemplified in the design of AI. So if you stand back, you quickly realise that in terms of personality we have potentially created a master-race of individualistic psychopaths.

But we can correct this. We can take seriously our role as people fearfully and wonderfully made to take our place within an ecology perfectly designed for relationship, if only we choose to behave better. The function of all of our junk code is to promote community and relationship, and to make us aware through consciousness of our part in nature. Bad design in AI will accelerate our alienation; but good design might ensure that we share our planet with new entities that can contribute towards the commonwealth, rather than merely extract from it.

God may decide who gets into Paradise, but we can decide what kind of paradise we are responsible for creating here on Earth. ■



Dr Eve Poole OBE is the author of *Robot Souls*. She has a BA from Durham, an MBA from Edinburgh, and a PhD from Cambridge; and writes on leadership, theology and consumerism.

# Use your LOAF!

**Barbara Echlin** and **Cat Jenkins** reflect on the LOAF campaign



Sharing healthy food together

Credit: image City Church, Christchurch

**G**reen Christian has been campaigning on food issues for over 25 years. Back in 1998 Barbara came up with the acronym LOAF: L for Locally produced, O for Organically grown, A for Animal friendly and F for Fairly traded. Someone then came up with the phrase: “Use your LOAF”. If we want to live on a sustainable planet we need to “Use our LOAF!”

However, it’s important to stress that the LOAF principles are ideals, not rigid rules. They are starting points for discussion and thinking on how we source our food. If you can follow only one principle – that’s a great start. Just because you can’t do everything doesn’t mean you do nothing!

We’ve recently been re-vamping our LOAF campaign. Over the summer we ran five workshops with leading speakers on the four strands of LOAF: Vicky Hird from Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming, on Local, Richard Kipling from the Sustainable Food Trust on Organic, Joyce D’Silva on being animal friendly from Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) and Sarah Brazier from the Fair Trade Foundation. In the workshops (all available to view online)<sup>1</sup> we explored how the food debate has (or has not) progressed over the past 30 years.

## Food and faith – what’s the link?

- It’s essential to human life – a blessing that God has given us.
- Food production – through agriculture, processing, transport and more – has a powerful effect on our ecosystems, climate and global society.
- Access to good food has a huge impact on the wellbeing of the people who consume it. Financial aspects of the food supply chain affect both its affordability, and the incomes of farmers and growers.
- Sharing what we can, where we can, has never been more important. Food production is the “canary in the coalmine” of global economic justice, and it’s not in good health!
- Above all, bread is full of symbolic meaning for Christians. In the gospels Jesus described Himself as “the bread of life”. When we prepare the bread and wine at communion we say, “We break this bread to share in the body of Christ. Although we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread”. Jesus’ parable of the loaves and fishes teaches us to share what we have so that there is enough for all.

## Thinking Local

The most local food of all is that grown in gardens, roof tops, balconies or allotment plots. Even a small garden can have a raised bed for vegetables or soft fruit like raspberries. Urban fruit and nut trees not only feed us but are also great for insects. Innovative shared options such as community gardens, food hubs and community meals are great to bring people together with good food at their heart.

According to Sustain, 32% of our vegetables and fruit is imported from overseas, much of it from climate vulnerable countries. The Soil Association warns nearly half of UK growers believe they will be out of business within a year and are calling on the Government to provide better support for fruit and vegetable production – including incentives for farmers to switch to nature-friendly methods.

Vicky Hird pointed out in her workshop that local is also where we buy our food, not just where we grow it. Eight UK

<sup>1</sup> see the Green Christian YouTube channel [youtube.com/@GreenChristian/videos](https://youtube.com/@GreenChristian/videos)



retailers now hold 92% of our food. The price we pay affects growers – often only 1% goes to the farmer. It can be difficult for farmers to sell their produce direct to the public though in some areas local hubs enable farmers to sell direct, and these need our support.

## Thinking Organic

When we started our LOAF campaign 25 years ago the Soil Association, promoting organic methods, was the only show in town for understanding the value of nurturing and feeding the soil. Now we have regenerative, agroecology, agroforestry, pasture fed among others. How do we know which to choose? As Richard Kipling explained the main principles are similar though sometimes phrased differently: healthy ecosystems, rebuilding soil, restoring biodiversity, carbon sequestration and so on.

However, consumers can buy organic labelled produce with confidence, knowing that no pesticides or artificial fertilizers have been used. Organic is binary, something is, or is not, organic depending on the certification which shows the regulations are being kept. There is clear evidence that organic farming is good for biodiversity resulting in more farmland birds and plant species. Whilst regenerative systems also can provide a pathway to more sustainable food, it could be less clear how far along that pathway the grower has progressed.

Organic food is often more expensive to buy and many people are deeply worried about making ends meet – and, disgracefully in a rich nation like ours, people are having to choose between eating and heating. But for most people, because we can't go LOAF for everything, doesn't mean we can't occasionally buy a bag of organic carrots. And many people can afford to spend more on the food they buy; and the food bought will be healthier and tastier, and will be supporting farmers who are farming in a way that is planet friendly.

## Thinking Animal-friendly

The "Animal-friendly" part of our LOAF principles does not proscribe meat-eating, though many of Green Christian's members will be vegetarian or vegan. It does though ask us all to consider the welfare of the animals and animal products that we consume. The top priorities for Joyce D'Silva from CIWF outlined in her workshop were the banning of all types of cages for chickens, of farrowing crates for sows and decent standards in fish farms with less pesticides and lower stocking ratios.

If you must eat meat and dairy, eating less and better is a good maxim. In a recent report Henry Dimbleby

recommended the former government to encourage people to reduce meat consumption by 30%. His report was binned!

## Thinking Fairtrade

In the Green Christian fairtrade workshop Sarah Brazier highlighted three areas: Price, Power and Pace. Even though the price is higher, can we persuade people to buy fairtrade? Can we prompt our church to become a fairtrade place of worship by a commitment to provide FT tea, coffee and sugar? The organisation aims to give power to small farmers who are not at the table in international discussions where decisions are made that affect them, to give them a voice. It also calls wealthy nations to address the climate crisis at a faster pace with more urgency.

## Let's Use our LOAF!

We encourage church groups to organise their communal meals following the LOAF principles; it could be a simple soup made from home grown organic vegetables and home baked bread, or an elaborate spread where everything is labelled with its origin and provenance! Help your church council draw up a food policy that follows the LOAF principles and please tell us about it if they do! On our website we have services of worship related to the LOAF principles, a LOAF for Lent course, LOAF leaflets to order and display in your church.

As LOAF has evolved over the past 25 years, we've found an increasing awareness of creation care; kindness, to animals as well as people, the importance of sharing our abundance with others less fortunate, gratitude for God's abundance and our own duty to God, for example, fasting from some favourite foodstuffs on holy days. We believe that no matter how rich or poor we are, there are ways – tiny or large – in which we can help bring about God's justice and grace in our approach to food. Will you join us? ■



Cat Jenkins is Green Christian's Food Project Officer. She lives on the Isle of Man, and following a 25 year career in finance, now works for various UK-based NGOs on social and environmental justice.



Barbara Echlin is Green Christian's vice-Chair. She lives on the south coast where she tends a fruit and vegetable garden and enjoys cooking and preserving the produce.

# Times of transition

**Isobel Murdoch** reports from our local groups



Colchester Group's stall at the Free Family Fun Festival

Photo credit: Howard Gardner

We are in the midst of reviewing how local groups work, with some groups becoming “official” Green Christian groups, while others choose to be more loosely affiliated. Whether official or unofficial, all groups help make Green Christian's mission a reality in their communities.

Inevitably the General Election was one recent focus. The **Clun Green Christian** group held an ecumenical eco-service in June, and encouraged the congregation to ask their parliamentary candidates to support the Climate & Nature Bill. Members of **Reading Area Green Christian** Local Group took part in a Churches Together election hustings. **Barnet's** group met with the Green Party – not to hear a party-political speech, but to discuss approaches and how the Party works with groups and organisations.

Supporting local and national green initiatives is central to most groups. **Green Christian St Albans** held a stand at a festival arranged by the town's Transition Network. The stand aimed to inspire local Christians by

demonstrating what local churches do to respond to the climate and biodiversity emergency. **Clun's** group held a No Faith In Fossil Fuels prayer vigil and **Reading Area Green Christian** Local Group distributed leaflets at Reading Minster for Great Big Green Week.

**Cheltenham Green Christian** group continues to meet fortnightly for Climate Prayer, to support a monthly Climate Vigil outside the Borough Council offices, and to attend the local *Laudato 'Si* circle.

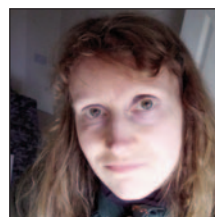
The **Colchester Green Christian** Local Group is busy. In April, St Teresa's RC Church hosted a “Does my Money Matter?” workshop, which was a great success. In June members visited the A Rocha Foxearth Meadows Nature Reserve and came away marvelling again at the beauty of God's wonderful creation. In September the group held a stall at the inter-church Free Family Fun Day Festival, and attended the Green Christian conference at the Othona Community.

**Douglas Green Christian** Group on the Isle of Man has made a small but positive

start. Cat Jenkins is the coordinator, and says: “We've begun with a little nucleus of four members to date and we're hoping to recruit more, as people see what we're doing and want to join in! We're planning to focus our energies on things that will meet our Green-and-Christian ambitions, and at our church help us move from the Eco Church Bronze standard we gained a few years ago, to the next (silver) level.”

One of the things the group is looking into is more environmentally-friendly heating for the church building itself. In addition, they are planning some raised beds/planters with herbs in, for local people to help themselves to, also hoping the Sunday School youngsters will get involved.

Sadly **Hereford Green Christian** group has closed after a fantastic 24 years. It was by far the longest-running Green Christian group, and over the years has held and supported a wide variety of talks and events, and done a lot to raise awareness. The more recent **North Wales Green Christian** group has also sadly become dormant. ■



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## God in Creation – The Warp and Weft of Life

God, Creator. Us, Guardians. In the World – Woven together.

Beauty, Ugliness – Woven together.

Restoring, Desecration – Woven together.

Greed, and Giving – Woven together.

Serving self; Serving the World – Woven together.

Despoiling; Tending – Woven together.

Courage, and Running Away – Woven together.

Forgetfulness, and Remembering – Woven together.

Giving Up; Persevering – Woven together.

Speaking out; Staying Silent – Woven together.

Caring, and Heartlessness – Woven together.

Action; Apathy – Woven together.

Anger, and Peace – Woven together.

Despair, and Hope – Woven together.

Spirit Action; 'Powers and Principalities' – Woven together.

God, Creator. Us, Guardians. In the World – Woven together.

by Sylvia Walker with kind permission, inspired by joining (online) our reflective weekend.

Photo credit: Ilze Vanaga - unsplash



## Green Christian Reflective Weekend



Prayer on the beach at Othona

Our reflective weekend, Being the Still Centre on the Radical Edge, was held in September at the Othona community at Bradwell-on-Sea in Essex. 44 of us stayed at Othona and over 20 joined via Zoom. It was led by Revd Helen Burnett, Revd Vanessa Elston and Laurie Green, former Bishop of Bradwell. Dr Juliana Morillo gave a talk (via Zoom) on Friday evening, presenting personal stories from activists in her home country, Colombia, who are putting their lives on the line to protect their land from deforestation, mining and pollution.

We worshipped in the ancient St Peter's Chapel, we walked along the sea wall and through the marshes; we sang songs, told jokes and recited poems at the Open Mic evening and one person even went swimming!



Vanessa, Helen and Laurie in discussion at Othona

Bishop Laurie spoke of the gifts we can bring as Christians to the environmental crisis: for example, the gift of worship (which at its best transforms and humbles us, and brings solidarity); also the gift of confession – and the Church has a lot of erroneous teaching to confess of course! Vanessa and Helen both



Felting whilst listening to a talk at Othona

shared stories of activism, how they got involved and how they saw their participation in protest as part of an incarnational faith.

Craft activities included felting which involved pulling strands of sheep's wool from dyed skeins; the strands (after a lot of wetting and rolling) were melded together into a tough mat; another activity was a communal weaving of a wool rug. As well as being absorbing and thought-provoking, these crafts reflected the teasing apart of thoughts, of ingrained habits and ways of thinking and a reconnecting, a reforming of new bonds, finding strength, patterns and beauty through connection, with our inner thoughts, with each other, with the Creator of all.

## The Climate and Nature Bill

We continue to support the Climate and Nature Bill – the only proposed legislation that addresses the full extent of the climate and nature crisis in line with the most up-to-date science. See our website for the latest on this exciting campaign, and read the article by Ruth Jarman and Vanessa Elston on page 10.



## Green Christian workshops and Joy in Enough talks

Every first and third Wednesday of the month we provide Zoom meetings with discussion on a variety of topics: Re-visiting our LOAF campaign, Power for People's campaign to accelerate growth of community-led electricity generation, organic farming, green liturgies and environmental restorative justice. You can watch past talks on our YouTube channel.

## General Election Pack

By late May we had prepared a resource pack for churches to use to speak powerfully into the democratic space during the General Election, not expecting it to be used so soon! It is still available and contains useful ideas for engaging with our elected representatives.

## Deep Waters

We ran our 10th session of *Deep Waters* in September/October with 16 people taking part. *Deep Waters* helps people navigate complex emotional responses to the climate crisis. *Deep Waters* is also available for churches to use, like most of our resources it is free of charge.

**Cloud and Fire** equips clergy, lay ministers and spiritual directors for ministry in the face of environmental breakdown. Eight sessions take place on Thursday evenings between February and May 2025, and registration is open now. Find out more at [borrowedtime.earth/programmes-of-mutual-support/the-cloud-and-fire-programme](https://borrowedtime.earth/programmes-of-mutual-support/the-cloud-and-fire-programme)



## Restore Nature Now

In June, we joined with A Rocha and other Christian environmental organisations for a service in Mount Street Church before joining the 60,000 plus people on the march to Westminster.



Some of the GC Team Members at Greenbelt

Photo credit: Ruth Jarman

## Green Christian at Greenbelt

Green Christian's stall at Greenbelt, the faith, arts and justice festival, featured a large screen showing real-time monitoring of rising mean global temperatures. Visitors to the stall were invited to listen to a meditation encouraging them to imagine what their role could be in all of this.

## Just Love

In October we had a joint stall in Birmingham with Operation Noah at Just Love's national gathering of students and graduates on a theme of: Political Discipleship in a Changing World.



Just Love's national gathering

Photo credit: Operation Noah

## Green Christian Annual Members Meeting

Our Annual Members Meeting took place on Nov 9th in London. Green Christian members met to explore this year's theme on bringing change within the Church. Melanie Nazareth, who heads the Green Christian Churches Project, led a workshop asking "What does it mean to be a leader of change within the Church?" The meeting was lively, engaged, participatory and brimming with ideas to help members and their churches help bring about the change we need at this time.

## New resources and future events

### Green Christian Way of Life

The Green Christian Way of Life is offered to Green Christian members, for whom care for God's creation in all its forms is a fundamental outworking of their faith. The Way of Life is a calling for deeper engagement and shared encouragement. Followers of the Way are called "Companions". To find out more, come on Saturday 8 February to the Way of Life day at St Aloysius Church, 20 Phoenix Road, London NW1 1TA – close to Euston station.

### Lent Course: *Calling a Wounded Earth Home*



Photo credit: choose-your-stories on Unsplash

Green Christian's 5-week Lent Course, *Calling a Wounded Planet Home*, is available for churches to use in 2025. Inspired by Green Christian's Deep Waters Course. It enables a space of contemplation and exploration that can resource meaningful action to face the challenges of climate change. The course covers the topics of Love, Truth, Wisdom, Justice and Hope, with the use of music, prayer and Bible texts to inform reflection and discussion on creation care and the climate crisis. See our website for more details.

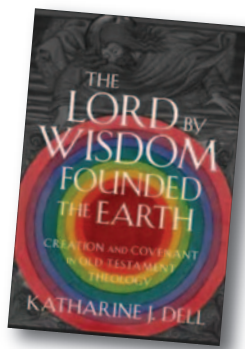
### Workshop to use in your church

Our "**Peace, Love and Climate Justice**" resource, written by Melanie Nazareth, can be used any time of year to help people in your church put their faith, hope and love to work in shaping our responses to the global climate and environmental crisis. Find it under Resources on the Green Christian website.

### Rise in Green Christian subscriptions

From January 2025 we are increasing Green Christian membership subscriptions for the first time in ten years. During that time, post, paper and print prices have risen 40%. The new membership fees will be: Annual Standing Order (SO): £30; monthly and quarterly SO: £3 per month; joint SO: £50 per year; annual payers: £40; CAF Donate: £3 per month. These subscription rates are a minimum – we are hugely grateful to those members who choose to pay more. We will send you a reminder letter with details of this change with the *Storm of Hope* mailing in the new year.

## The Lord by Wisdom Founded the Earth: Creation and Covenant in Old Testament Theology



Katharine J Dell  
September 2023  
Baylor University Press  
ISBN: 9781481317047  
252 pages  
RRP: \$54.99 (US hardback)

Seldom can the Book of Proverbs have been at the heart of a book on Old Testament theology. In this book, Katharine Dell proclaims wisdom literature, in particular Proverbs and Job, as a “lens of wisdom” by which to judge the themes of creation and covenant elsewhere in the Old Testament. Her book – and thesis – is bold, imaginative, disciplined and scholarly. Gone is the prominence traditionally given to Genesis 1; it is rightly seen as one of many creation stories. Her two chapters on creation in wisdom texts (in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and then in Job) are central to her thinking. Exciting, almost lyrical, these two chapters can be read, with Bible in the other hand, by the general reader as well as the OT student, to great profit. We can discover the delight in the act of creation by Wisdom, seen as the child of God at play in God’s presence and everywhere in His world. As well as implying the joy of God in creation by Wisdom, the passage (Proverbs 8:22-36) ends with a call to listen, repeated three times, and the phrase “all who hate me, love death”.

Dell denies writing her book with an environmental intent, but this is an example of where an environmentalist might find biblical inspiration. A chapter on the Book of Job follows. “Where were you when I laid the

Earth’s foundations?” God asks of Job (chapter 38). God’s questions to Job are not just a putdown, but imply the presence of Wisdom. Joy is here too! Dell describes the carnival of animals, wildness within a certain order. Lions, ravens, mountain goats, the ostrich, the horse, hawk and eagle; provision is made for them in the act of creation (biodiversity in Job!) These animals are simply answerable to their Creator.

From this study, Dell identifies six key elements: Foundation, the setting up of the Earth by God; Division, how, for instance, skies are separated from the deep; Provision, how God sustains the Earth; Life, breath for all animals; Relationship, between God and humanity, and between humanity and the natural world, and finally Morality, given from God via Wisdom. These themes enable Dell to study Genesis 1-3 and Psalm 104 through her lens of wisdom; a richly rewarding study, including the realisation that creation is about continuous provision. The “dialogue between creation and covenant” is examined in a fascinating chapter on Genesis 9, where the covenant with Noah becomes one with the whole created order. She next examines “creation and covenant in cosmic dialogue”, citing passages from Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Another chapter sees wisdom and covenant relating to one another, particularly in the Psalms and in Deuteronomy. Dell includes an extensive 12 page bibliography, and various indices. This book will be invaluable to students of the Old Testament and a rewarding challenge to the general reader.

Peter Dodd

## You Can't Eat Grass: Livestock, Veganism and Human Nature in a Landscape



Greg Forster  
2023  
Grove Books  
ISBN: 978-1788273077  
RRP: £4.95

The opening words of this book’s introduction set the scene: “I do not want to dissuade anyone from a vegan lifestyle...what I say is no argument against it”. It does, however, read like a defence of meat and dairy consumption, referring to the way things have been done for many years, and how our very landscape has been shaped by animal agriculture. But our landscape has been altered within my lifetime by many other things, including motorways, pylons, wind turbines, solar panels and housing, so one would assume that a change in how we farm would also alter the landscape. I know people like things “as they were” but is that a reason for not changing?

Animals certainly add to soil fertility, when they are allowed to spend time outside in a field. However, Iain Tolhurst, on his own farm, maintains or improves soil fertility by a “veganic” farming system which chooses to reject all animal based inputs, so it can be done. Greg Forster writes a lot about animal methane and carbon sinks, with biodigestion as a way of dealing with animal waste, but he points out that this comes at a cost. Certainly animal waste is a real problem. He quotes John Lynch from Oxford University who has stated that he cannot offer an explanation of current methane levels, as the rise “is more rapid than ruminant populations”; clearly it’s a complicated subject.

Writing about our evolutionary



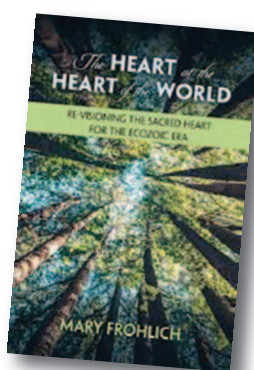
development, Forster draws attention to scientists who claim that we grew bigger brains because we ate larger amounts of protein in meat. However, Dr Milton Mills has pointed out that the brain burns mainly glucose from carbohydrates, and that protein is easily available from plants. Dr Mills has also discussed the fact that many African American people find that milk causes them digestive problems, yet their government food guidelines recommend its consumption; he calls this racism.

Similarly, Forster writes about the importance of vitamin B12, which is obtained from animal-derived foods or supplements. But, as Dr Mills points out, animals do not produce B12 themselves. Rather, it comes from bacteria, which in the past we got from our less than sanitised environment.

I found the arguments in the book interesting, and welcome the fact that people of faith are being encouraged to consider what we eat and its effect on God's world. But the impact of our food choices is even wider than those mentioned in this book; the issue of water usage, for example, comes to mind as a significant ethical factor.

Tony Roper

## The Heart at the Heart of the World: Revisioning the Sacred Heart for the Ecozoic Era



Mary Frohlich  
Orbis Books  
2024  
ISBN: 9781626985629  
229 pages  
RRP £24.99

This book is part of the Orbis Series

on Integral Ecology, inspired by the papal encyclical *Laudato 'Si*, seeking to bring ecojustice concerns into dialogue with Christian communities, world religions and secular and scientific thought.

The Sacred Heart tradition will not be familiar to many Christians outside the Roman Catholic community and has faded in recent decades, though it retains its official feast day and place in the naming of many churches.

The first part of the book, "Heart Devotion", provides a helpful overview of the meaning and historical development of the tradition, including contributions of medieval mystics, the 17th century nun Marguerite Marie Alocque, and 20th century papal teaching. Mary Frohlich is herself steeped in the Sacred Heart tradition having served for decades in an order of nuns carrying that name, and argues that it still has something to offer today:

"... the wager of this book is that we are also in need of a new story that looks through the lens of 21st century needs at the stars of Christian revelation and sees them in a new constellation."

In Part 2 she widens themes from the tradition to include non-human creation, exploring ideas of heart, such as heartfulness, brokenness, vulnerability and suffering, in relation to both theological and secular writings. For example, Chapter 6, "The Emerging Heart", investigates evolutionary Christology and the work of Teilhard de Chardin, who she identifies as following the approach closest to her own. She outlines the devotion to the Sacred Heart which he expanded during his life, providing an inspirational vision of the Heart of Christ at the heart of the world and influencing later writers including Thomas Berry and Pope Francis. Frohlich concludes that "God's Heart is most fully manifested in the entire web of diverse creatures rather than any

single type of creature – even human beings." In Chapter 8, "Community of Heart", she engages with Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* and surveys recent attempts to extend his concept of community to the non-human creation. She also highlights Elizabeth Johnson's reworking of the Communion of Saints along more ecological lines.

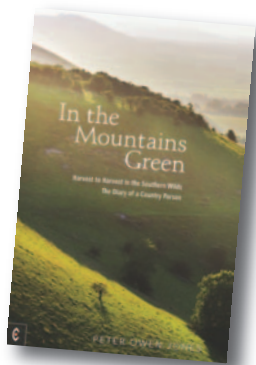
Part Three, "Re-visioning" sketches out how themes around the Sacred Heart can help us all to live "heartfully" in the current ecological crisis. I found Frohlich's engagement with the theologian Douglas Christie both insightful and helpful. In his essay "Practising Paradise: Contemplative Awareness and Ecological Renewal" Christie "explores the ancient Christian tradition that paradise is simply the world in its deepest reality." Frohlich suggests that this can be a starting point for healing the world. "We practice paradise when we open our hearts to accompany and be in community with the web of life, just as it is."

This book is an excellent example of how a traditional devotion such as the Sacred Heart can be reworked theologically and spiritually to move beyond individual piety to a way of looking at and engaging with non-human creation and the ecological crisis. Frohlich offers the Sacred Heart as an unusual lens through which to look at our situation today and understand the writings of a range of modern ecological thinkers.

Stephen Retout

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

## In the Mountains Green: Harvest in the Southern Wilds, The Diary of a Country Parson



Peter Owen Jones  
April 2024  
Clairview Books  
ISBN: 978-1-912992-58-4  
120 pages  
RRP: £12.99 (paperback)

I suspect that most of us reading this magazine would want to identify as being in one way or another climate activists. But what is it that most deeply motivates us? What essentially prompts our various forms of action? Peter Owen Jones simply shares in this slim volume, a collection of articles originally written for the magazine *Sussex Life*, his abiding love of the countryside. Reflections arranged according to the 12 months of the year take us through the changing seasons. Owen Jones' sharp eye, humour, and well informed but slightly quirky take on things kept me turning the pages.

What also drew me in was that the area he describes is West Sussex where I also grew up. He was lucky enough to be able to return – as a Church of England parish priest – to the place where he had once been a farm boy. Each monthly reflection in this collection reveals his love of place and love of nature. The studied beauty of his prose conveys that love. So he describes midsummer day, as “a liminal time; the time when the boundaries between the worlds soften, when enchantment can seep through into human reality. And maybe for two or three nights ... the air stills, the warmth holds into the evening and this damp land turns lush. It is as if everything loosens, relaxes; the leaves

lilt on the trees, the air holds every echo ...”

Even something as common as the cow parsley growing prolifically along the roadside verges Owen Jones notices and writes lovingly about. Amusedly he describes himself stumbling home late at night wondering if this is “when cow parsley becomes almost magical. Maybe it's the Rioja or the moonlight, or maybe it's both?” But he feels the magic, “... the stems are hidden in the dark and the white flower heads seem almost luminous. They hover there at the side of the path casting their spell.”

At its core is an awareness of the climate and biodiversity crisis and this informs Owen Jones' monthly reflections, with a note of lamentation running deep throughout his book. Maybe for many of us the root, from which grew our concern for the environment and now feeds our activism, was an equally simple love of nature? Yet perhaps with all our busy planning, campaigning and protesting, we also need opportunities to refresh and renew that love? If so, this little book has some good things to share. For do we not share his belief that “to be the species that honours and cares for other species, says a great deal about being human”?

Andrew Norman  
Green Christian Chaplain

## If we lose the Earth, we lose our souls



Bruno Latour  
translated from French by Catherine Porter and Sam Ferguson  
February 2024  
Polity Press  
ISBN: 978-1-5095-6046-2  
90 pages  
RRP: £12.99

Bruno Latour was a celebrated French philosopher and interdisciplinary scholar, best known for his groundbreaking work in science studies, ontology and critical theory. His lifelong Christian faith is less well known, but forms the context of this book, comprising talks, papers and an interview created between 2008 and 2022. He edited the first proofs less than a month before his death in October 2022.

The book, as much of Latour's writing, is rich, allusive and deep, inviting multiple re-readings. It covers a wide terrain, but several themes recur, within an overarching concern with the renewal of faith, theology and evangelism in a time of ecological emergency. A central motif is the relationship of the Church to science. Latour identifies a breach between the two, dating from the 17th century, since which time the natural sciences have been viewed as a mere background upon which spiritual, moral and aesthetic ideas have been imposed. The “divine surprise” of *Laudato 'Si* is in its potential to heal this breach, recognising the relationship between ecology and injustice, which has been ignored by “official metaphysics”. The earth itself, not alive in a “New Age sense” but through the “entanglements” of living organisms, suffers along with the poor, in the “double cry”.

Latour challenges us to live, not in time, with the comforting idea that acts of charity can be postponed, but in space, acknowledging the reality and urgent needs of the physical world which we share. Galileo, according to legend, spoke in defiance of the Church that the Earth still moves. Now, however, as Michel Serres wrote, we live upon an Earth that is moved, in both physical and emotional senses, as a result of human actions. Eschatology has spatial as well as temporal dimensions, and the new Earth is contained within a “tiny envelope” for which we must learn to care. The ecological crisis can be seen



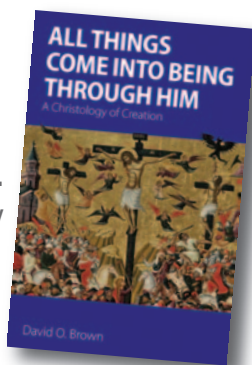
as a prolongation of the Incarnation, sharing its acts of abasement and kenosis. The Gospel, critically, does not depend on a traditional cosmological backdrop, but shatters both “common sense” and spatio-temporal frameworks in creating “a people of saved neighbours”.

The richness and challenge of Latour’s ideas was not confined to theory. He organised and participated in seminars and workshops about the practical work of being citizens, listening to others, recognising and realising our powers to act. In this book he advocates for rituals, prayers and hymns that reflect the reversal between old and new ways of seeing heaven and Earth. He writes of how the pandemic experience mirrors our awareness of planetary confinement. And he argues, finally, for our fundamental responsibility to keep engaging with science, technology and the world of markets. Frankenstein’s real sin, he writes, was not the creation of his monster, but his abandonment of it when it needed him most.

Tanya Jones

## All Things Come Into Being Through Him. A Christology of Creation

David Brown  
April 2023  
Sacristy Press  
ISBN 978-1-78959-276-4  
416 pages  
RRP £30 (paperback)



Jesus referred to the Shema as the greatest commandment of the law. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul – and with all your mind”. Yet how challenging it is to think rigorously about God. Perhaps more often for us

to believe is to gain a sufficient understanding and then to run on trust. But we are thinking beings, and we are called to love God with our minds as well as our affections, so belief must be a continual journey of exploration.

David Brown wrote this book as a “thoughtful and prayerful study” whilst a Research Fellow at Queen’s University, Belfast. He explored two basic ideas in Christian theology: how a God who is beyond being can be understood as ultimately responsible for all that exists; and what it means to believe that all things came into being through the Word of God. In this he was thinking hard about ideas which are the very foundation of our creation theology. As Green Christians we may often turn to the first pages of Genesis. Yet how are we to understand in our minds the spirit of God which is described there as sweeping over the face of the waters? (Genesis 1:2). As Christians, we love God who is revealed to us in the face of Jesus. The Shema grounds us in loving, which includes exploring with all our minds, “the God who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). Brown takes us on that journey. I hesitate to say that this is not a book for the general reader. Certainly it needs sufficient stamina to work through 400 closely argued pages, and cope with an academic vocabulary, but it will reward.

Brown starts with a critique of God as “person” and so begins to explore how “to create does not mean to do something at the beginning that causes something to exist; to create means to be that in which creatures participate”. This allows for some fresh thinking about the providence of God, of what it means to know that God is omnipotent – and how to square the divine goodness with the fact that bad things happen in our world. The core of Brown’s argument is that we can participate in God who is utterly transcendent and “other” to all

creatures because of the incarnation. Creation is a relationship, he says, the incarnation constitutes that relationship, and the divine-human union in Christ is how creatures depend on and participate in God. Brown goes on to show how that fits with our understanding of the cross, and in conclusion, with the resurrection.

I began to read this book in hospital, waiting for my wife to undergo tests, and then for us both to see the oncology consultant. After hearing the diagnosis our lives fell apart and I laid the book aside for the best part of a year. How to love with all my mind the God who allowed her death to happen? Likewise, how can we understand God in relation to the climate crisis? Such are vital questions, which is why this book is a valuable resource in our responding to the call of the Shema.

Andrew Norman  
Green Christian Chaplain

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(Archbishop Oscar Romero)*

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