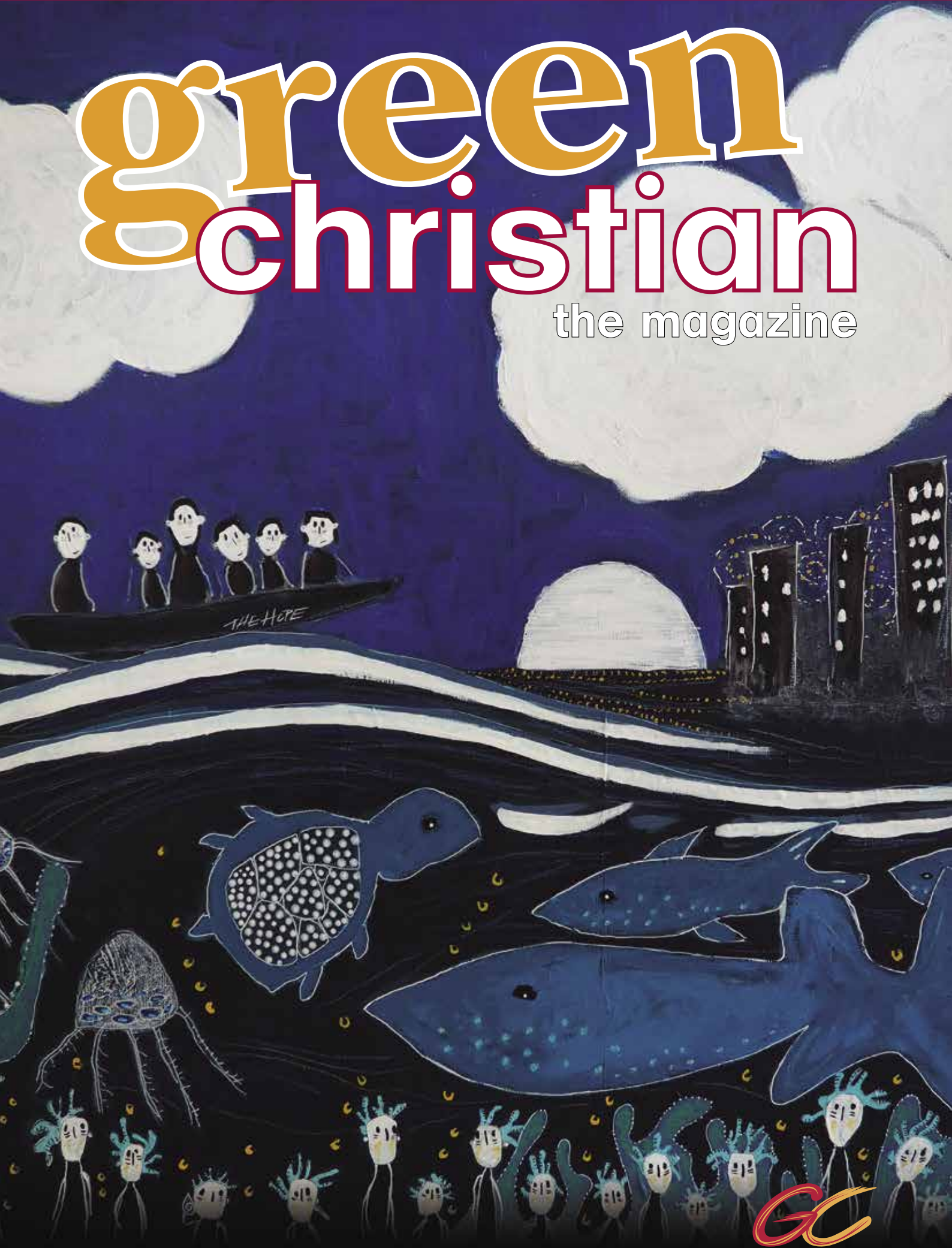


# green christian

the magazine



# The stories we tell

Accounts of people coming together – to share experiences, absorb information, discuss ideas, to raise voices both in protest and praise – all are found in this issue. In Hannover, in Assisi, on theatre stages, in cathedrals and church halls; people bringing their fears, hopes, concerns about climate chaos and biodiversity loss to find a common voice, authentic language and shared purpose. Yet, in everyday life, the “dinner party conversations”, over coffee after church – or even in the liturgy and prayers – the reality of what’s going on can be smoothed over by “a socially-constructed silence” as Paul Bodenham puts it.

The words we use, the stories we tell, are important. As Molly Anne Sweeney of Wise Ram Theatre poignantly states: “We need stories to shape our lives and help us change, push despair and try to hope.” So what stories reverberate through our lives, informing and motivating us, and wider society too?

The news each day (give or take a few feel-good items) tells a dismal tale of the effects of our greed and selfishness in damaging and destroying the Earth’s life-support systems and a woeful

ineptitude to right past wrongs and find peaceful ways to live together. “Current policies put the world on track for 2.9°C of warming by 2100” says the UN (UNEP Emissions Gap report 2024) and describes how with further warming, climate change risks will become increasingly complex and more difficult to manage. Pope Francis in his 2023 encyclical *Laudate Deum*, regarding climate change, wrote: “our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point.”

This is the unpalatable truth, the detritus of our existence – and all contributors to this issue are passionate about not sweeping it under the carpet. It is a story of failure, of increasing instability and conflict. Can we be vocal about this situation that humanity has created and is creating, whilst offering an alternative vision? Didn’t Jesus come to bring Good News – even “Good News to all Creation”?

In the words of our poet, Maya Adams, do we have the courage in our heartbreak and grief:

*“to nurture a bittersweet glow of hope that can engulf the possibility of now*

*and tomorrow, and tomorrow’s tomorrow”*

Our November conference will focus on how the Church, whilst still advocating for deep cuts in carbon emissions and biodiversity protection, must play a role in “adaptation”, in ways both practical and spiritual. As climate change potentially brings food shortages, excessive heat and cold, even social unrest – can our local churches be ready? As the chaos deepens, David Coleman also asks, can we be Christ’s beacons of unreasonable hope and drivers of spiritual resilience?

Our patron, Elaine Storkey also reminds us how hope is part of our identity as Christians, how hope is embedded within Creation and true hope is always aligned with love and action.

Is healing possible? Yes, the Earth has great powers of regeneration. Technology plays a vital role, but it is the human heart where change is needed most. And we have a story to tell about that too.

Come and join us on our journey from despair to hope!



Detail from Hope by Sophie Chartier @Sohako18



Clare Redfern, Editor

## Green Christian

Published by Green Christian

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

### Editorial Policy

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

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### Basis of Faith

We affirm our belief in God as Creator of all things and in Jesus Christ as Lord, looking to the Holy Spirit for guidance through the Scriptures, and seeking to hear the Spirit in the challenges of the present time.

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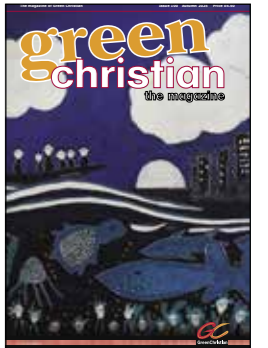
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Our front cover image is a detail from a painting, Hope, by French artist, Sophie Chartier @Sohako18, shared with kind permission. Sophie says: “Hope is essential for a more just world, in harmony, at peace on all continents. Humans, animals, forests, deserts, oceans – we are connected. We inhabit the same planet, we dream under the same starry sky.”

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# Finding our feet after 1.5°C

Green Christian trustee **Paul Bodenham** introduces our 2025 conference, which will explore how churches can build climate resilience.

In 2018 a coachful of us gathered on the cathedral forecourt at Katowice in Poland. Guided by hand-signals from the portico, we formed ourselves into a figure saying “1.5C” for the cameras. We were there for COP24 with the development agency CAFOD. We spelt out with our bodies the target of the Paris Agreement and all campaign groups at the time – to keep global warming below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Six COPs later, and we’re already there – the EU Copernicus programme found that 2024 was the first year to exceed 1.5°C. Where do campaigners go now? Without the 1.5°C standard to rally round it is much harder to mobilise people to hold their governments to account. The Paris Agreement target has not yet been breached in theory as it looks at long-term trends. But annual global emissions are still climbing and fossil fuel companies are abandoning any pretence of transition to renewables.

## We now have not one job as campaigners but two – mitigation *and* adaptation.

Last year’s UN “emissions gap” report found that the world is on track for nearly 3°C of warming by 2100 – well within the lifetime of today’s young people. In coming centuries, sea levels are expected to rise 2 metres or more, forcing millions to higher ground. Meanwhile if the Atlantic current which drives the Gulf Stream fails, the UK faces brutal food insecurity, for which no plan exists.

You probably know the stakes, and find the socially-constructed silence around climate change as incomprehensible as I do. If you’ve raised the topic at a dinner party, you’ll know what I mean. For the last two years Green Christian has been a member of the Climate Majority Project, which aims to break that silence by bringing out into the open what polling consistently tells us – that people do indeed care deeply, but feel obliged to keep their feelings to themselves. The CMP aims to connect up that “climate majority” already visible in local and sectoral action and demonstrate it at national scale in a way that should be politically irresistible.

### Adaptation: surrender or salvation?

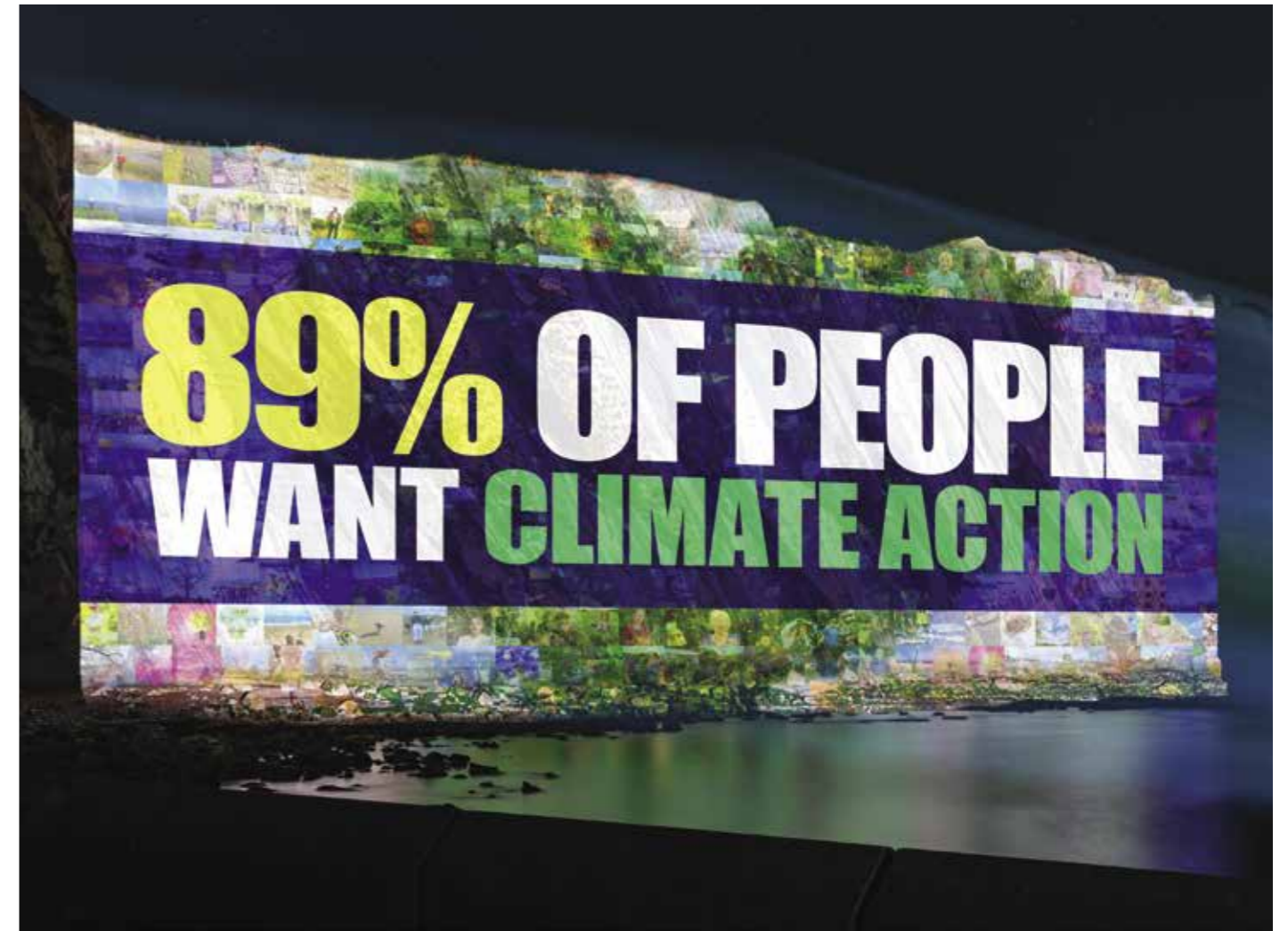
We now have to accept an unpalatable truth. Climate campaigning, and even non-violent direct action, have failed to achieve the action necessary to keep humanity safe. For sure, we must continue to advocate rapid cuts to carbon emissions; every fraction of a degree of warming we now avoid will reduce the risks we and our descendants face, so there can be no room for defeatism. But if we care about climate, we must also plan for that failure to continue. We now have not one job as campaigners but two – mitigation *and* adaptation. That is why the Climate Majority Project has launched the UK’s first national campaign on climate adaptation: “SAFER” which stands for “Strategic Adaptation For Emergency Resilience”.

The launch of SAFER on 9th July 2025 coincided with the Mass Lobby of Parliament. Through it Green Christian joins numerous grassroots organisations, as diverse as Flooded People, Retrofit Balsall Heath and MP Watch, to ensure that climate adaptation becomes a national priority – practical, properly funded, and locally led. As the campaign makes clear, this is not about “giving up” on climate breakdown, but helping communities face the reality of it and so be galvanised to take action together.

Perhaps the greatest adaptation challenge is to secure equality, both internationally and locally. We have known for decades how lower-income countries in the global South suffer most from climate change. But it is no longer just a problem “over there”. Risks are creeping up on the UK, for instance as flood-prone neighbourhoods become ever more costly to insure and heatwaves threaten those in the frailest health.

Since 2019, Green Christian’s *Deep Waters* programme has been helping people navigate environmental breakdown and come to terms with the ethical, moral and emotional injuries involved. We also offer *Cloud and Fire* for those in church ministry exploring questions like: What does my vocation mean on the brink of catastrophe? How do I preach honestly about the risks we face? What new pastoral responses do people need?

As systems destabilise and societies face unprecedented risks, the social capital which faith communities offer will be increasingly valuable. Church halls will be called on as



Polling tells us that people care deeply about climate change

Image credit: Helen Marshall, The People’s Picture

emergency reception centres; with reduced harvests and rising prices, church food banks will face rising demand; love of neighbour will be a matter not just of decency but of solidarity in the face of common risk, and of shared resistance to the false comforts of populism.

### Biblical hope – courage, solidarity and action

Perhaps the deepest challenge today is to reframe hope for a post 1.5°C world. As far as climate stability is concerned a “better world” will not come in our lifetimes – except perhaps for the wealthiest. Biblical hope is not a quest for private resilience, privilege or progress, or an exercise in the suppression of fear, but about detachment from all these things. From the outside it presents as courage, solidarity and action.

On 15th November, our 2025 Annual Members Meeting in Peterborough will explore how churches can help build this resilience. Our keynote speaker will be Rupert Read: philosopher, environmentalist and co-director of the Climate Majority Project and its SAFER campaign. Jo Chamberlain and Adrian Fox, from the Church of England Environment

Programme, will share their work preparing Anglican congregations for climate resilience. Bringing perspectives from pastoral care and mission will be pioneer minister Revd Vanessa Elston, who co-led our retreat at the Othona Community in Bradwell last year.

See the GC News pages for more details. This will not be a one-off event, but the start of a journey which Green Christian will help to lead, enabling churches to grow as sites of hope in a world of unravelling certainties. As the title has it, we will be “building on the rock”, that underpinning of solidarity and strength which our faith invites us to discover. Climate adaptation is a defining challenge for the future of Christian mission. Let’s rise to it. ■



Paul Bodenham is a Green Christian Trustee and coordinates our *Borrowed Time* project. Beyond Green Christian, he is development lead for Cadence Roundtable, which helps professionals and policy makers plan for climate breakdown. He also runs Caritas, the social action agency of the Catholic Diocese of Nottingham.

# Theology from the roots up

**Laurie Green** reframes his beliefs



Kirchentag - the final service

Photo credit: Kirchentag Weiss

I'm a new convert. My very urban upbringing and ministry created little emotional connection with the things of nature. So my pathway into climate concerns has not been a conventional one. But of late I've run headlong into a new network of friends within Green Christian and I'm having to learn fast. I've been reading like mad, attending talks and seminars, and I'm recently back from the Hannover *Kirchentag* – when every two years 100,000 Christians meet to celebrate, learn, exchange and listen to Christian experts in every field. It made me starkly aware of how the climate crisis profoundly affects almost every aspect of human life – let alone its devastating consequences for the planet. Among those consequences I now know I must number immigration, disease, war, pandemics, shop price hikes, transportation, globalisation – oh, the list goes on. In Hannover I saw how Christians are addressing those issues – but each issue pointed back to the underlying concern of climate.

The speakers in Hannover didn't pull their punches! They clearly blamed our own predatory species for the harm and havoc. It's humanity's selfish politics and greedy economics

which promote the plundering of the planet. Yes, we have our top level conferences which talk in finely crafted terms about what needs to happen, agree what will be done, yet they rarely deliver on their promises – or should I say, “our” promises.

Successive UK politicians talk proudly of our cuts in emissions, when in fact we're simply exporting our polluting manufacture to poor countries while benefiting from the resultant products – then we blame those countries for scaling-up *their* emissions. The same goes for our recycling – we send it abroad with fanfares and lots of reassurances, but we can see for ourselves where our “recycling” really ends up when we look at Malaysia or India and see our rubbish floating out to sea or being burnt on tips, laboured over by unprotected workers.

Many believe developments in more efficient uses of energy are the silver bullet to solve our worries, even though the data proves that more efficient technology has only ever led to an upsurge in energy consumption. It's called the “Jevons Paradox” after the economist W S Jevons who in 1865 saw that the new coal technology of his time was leading to getting

more out of coal than ever before, and that new attractiveness sent demand soaring. So more coal was extracted. The effect has been replicated with every new fuel technology we've invented: more efficiency leads to more extraction – when it's less extraction that would save the day.

What really helped in all these discussions was that the whole conference was held in the arms of the shared Christian faith of the participants. So there was space for me to step aside, to pray and to ponder – and of course to party! I wanted to think through how what was being laid bare about the crisis impacts my faith and my theology. And what became clear to me in my pondering was that to move forward in this crisis we first need to own up to its stark realities rather than surround ourselves with the empty promises of a quick fix. This is what the devil promised Jesus (see Matt. 4:1-4) in the desert: “stones into bread” to solve the deep issues of hunger. But Jesus saw beyond the pretence of the quick fix and demanded a thorough reformulation of our hearts and minds heeding “every word that issues from the mouth of God”.

The more I pondered how our ravenous species was acting in the face of the crisis, the more my thoughts focussed upon the abiding sinfulness of humanity, and that old language of Original Sin came to mind. And the belief that we are made in God's image, whilst alerting us to our potential, could surely not mean that we are the pinnacle of Creation when we are clearly the most cruel, destructive and devious predator of all. What does that say about our being made in God's image? And that thought deepened my astonishment at just how forgiving God is. Given the subtlety of our sinfulness, perhaps we've vastly underestimated the profundity of our salvation.



Economics of crisis debate

Photo credit: Laurie Green

Our response to that grace must surely include a determination on the part of national governments and individuals to honour the Earth, never oppressing its people or plundering its resources. The Hebrew and Christian scriptures instruct us to found our societies on Godly principles of sharing, self-giving and servanthood. So, just as discussing the climate crisis was leading me to think in political terms, it also prompted me to reframe what I'd been taught in school about economics.

Instead of an economic theory founded upon the notion of scarcity, accounting for the complex interrelations of demand and supply, ecological science is now telling us that the Earth is not full of “Original Scarcity” at all. On the contrary, God has supplied it with “Generous Abundance”. It's us who create scarcity, either by hogging more than our fair share or wilfully ignoring the opportunities for sharing in times of need. The parables of Jesus, time and again, teach us of God's generous provision as against the immensity of our selfishness – and thereby call into question the very foundation of the global economic system which has produced our catastrophic predicament.



Hannover Kirchentag Cross

Photo credit: Laurie Green

Furthermore, the present system of commerce and trade relies on the notion that self-interest and constant growth will lead to a better life for all, even though the data points to growing inequalities of obscene wealth alongside terrifying poverty – all resulting from that “me-first” culture. It's clear that the development of new political and economic paradigms, based on the alternative culture of sharing, demands a radical change in the human heart. And change in the human heart is the very thing that our Lord Jesus came to bring about. Only if we become that “New Creation” will any of the political, economic or technological advances we make have any chance of success. Only with that “mind of Christ” will we be able to make the right courageous responses, not for our own benefit but because they are simply right in God's eyes – even when they're only a drop in the ocean.

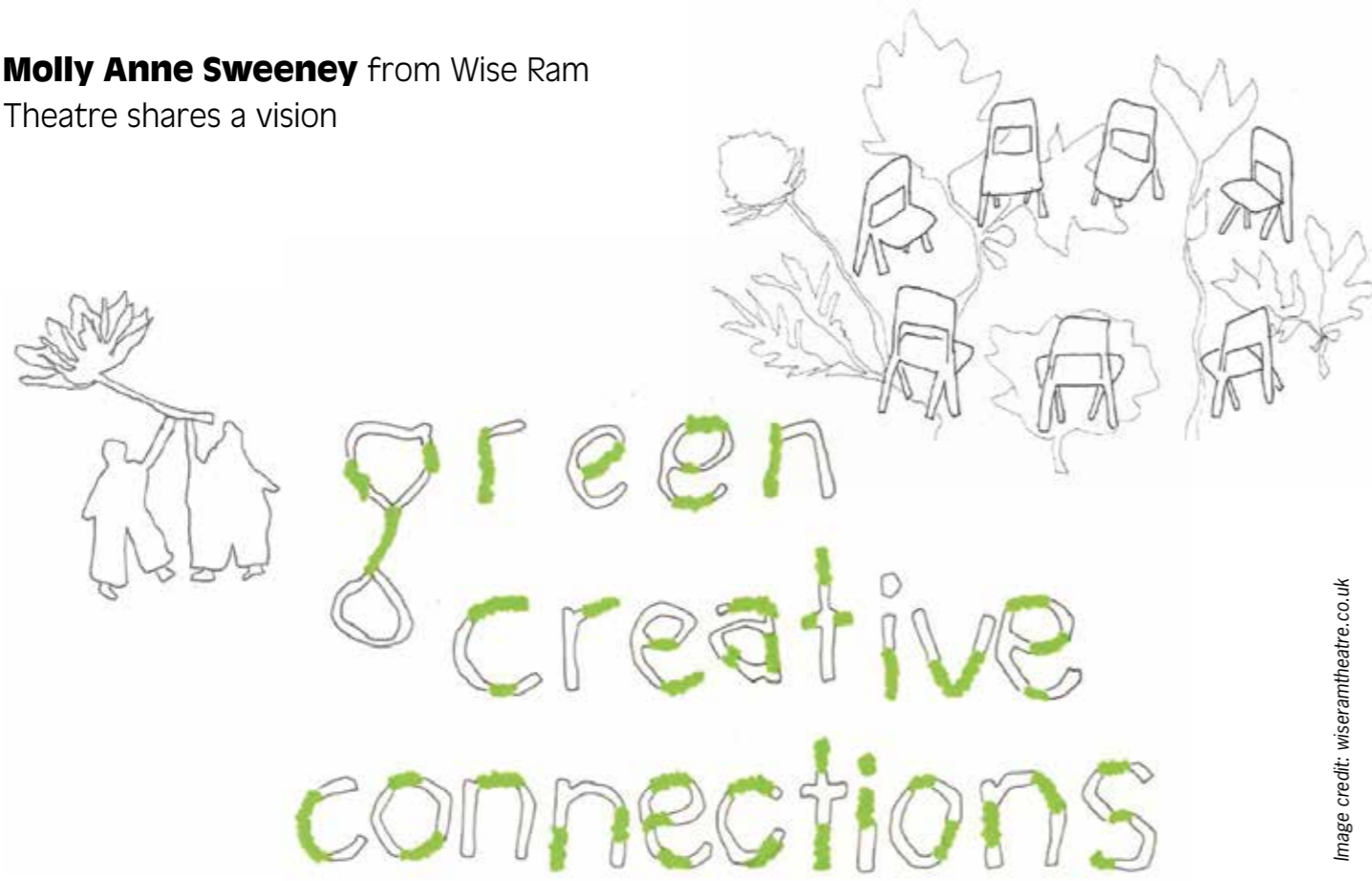
Already, becoming a Green Christian seems to have thrown me in at the deep end, but I have so much more to learn, ponder and do – piles of books and articles to read, actions to take and prayers to sustain me. Strikes me, I need all the help I can get, but I'm sure my new Green Christian friends will be there to help. ■



Laurie Green is the retired Anglican Bishop of Bradwell. He is an urban theologian, who still teaches and helps run a charity based in India. He wrote the best-seller: *Let's Do Theology* (Mowbray 2009), *Blessed are the Poor? Urban Poverty and the Church* (SCM 2015) as well as the autobiographical *Jesus and Jellied Eels* (Brimstone Press 2022). A keen musician, Laurie still gives the occasional guitar concert.

# Acting as if it matters

**Molly Anne Sweeney** from Wise Ram Theatre shares a vision



Six free workshops for adults exploring climate issues through theatre and creativity

Image credit: wiseramtheatre.co.uk

When asked about the effect of the sixties satire boom, the comedian Peter Cook ironically referred to “those wonderful Berlin cabarets which did so much to stop the rise of Hitler and prevent the outbreak of the Second World War”. A sober reminder to our climate theatre company – if global temperature rise from pre-industrial levels does stay below two degrees, it’s probably not going to be solely down to us. Doing conventional theatre is bad enough surely (as someone recently reminded me “you can get Netflix for £11.99”) but to make theatre about *climate change*!

But we’re stubborn and we like to make things hard for ourselves.

We’ve found that when we start talking about climate theatre, people start apologising for flying to see their mum last year or explaining about how good they are at recycling, despite the fact that we are as flawed as the next person when it comes to living a “green lifestyle”. We don’t make theatre about climate change because we are perfect and want to make others as perfect as us; we make theatre about climate change because we want to understand the world we are living in.

At the beginning of our creative journey together, Sofia Bagge, co-director of the company, found an article by the writer and academic Jessi Jezewska Stevens on “Klima Literatur”. In it, she asked the question: “Is every novel a climate novel?” She suggested that every kind of book it is, because it is written now, will be about climate change, even if that isn’t explicit in the content. That includes the latest Andy McNab novel or *Christmas Shopaholic*.

Inspired by Jezewska Stevens, we argue that every play is a climate play, because everything now is about climate change. What that means is that we are free to make climate theatre which is funny, romantic, scary, thrilling, weird, gentle, dark, spooky, and even hopeful.

Our first theatre production, *Decommissioned*, was inspired by the true story of Fairbourne in Wales, the first place in the UK to be told it could be “decommissioned” due to climate change. It was also a romantic comedy about returning home, feeling out of place, and learning how to be an adult for the children who are living now.



Marina Johnson & Aled Thomas Davies as Gwen & Elis in *Decommissioned* at The Pleasance Theatre, London

Photo Credit: Lidia Crisafulli

As well as making shows we run theatre workshops for children and adults, as well as university students. For one of our most popular activities, we start with news stories about climate change and then ask participants to explore them using their favourite genres. Previous ideas that have come up include: a ghost story about ancient moss; *The Fast and the Furious* re-envisioned on bikes; a fantasy story about a dragon rider who is hoarding all the gold, and a YouTube series about a “prepper” whose basement of food is flooded.

These workshops have inspired our approach to *Sundream*, our new play set in Jaywick, Essex in a record breaking summer heatwave. The play’s genre will be decided by local people answering the question: “what is your favourite type of story?” So if people want a romantic comedy, it will be a romantic comedy; if they want a thriller, it will be a thriller. It could mean a crime drama set during the heatwave of 1976 in a local holiday park, or a period drama about when Frank Stedman started developing and building in Jaywick or a ghost story inspired by the 40ft whale that washed up on Clacton beach during the pandemic. This will all depend on which stories local people tell us they would most like to see.

This sort of idea sounds absolutely amazing in the pub the first time you hear it, but is a little bit terrifying just wondering how it will unfold in reality. But, as previously mentioned, we’re stubborn and we like to make things hard for ourselves – and as we face a challenge so complex, political and monumental as climate change, we think that we deserve stories which help us understand it.

Every play is about climate change because climate change is about everything. Climate change is about walking into a cool church on a hot day, making small talk about the rain, every bite you eat and every breath you take. Climate change is about everyone: the most powerful man in the world and the newest child born in a refugee camp. And from now on, all of the stories of our lives, from the first nursery rhyme to the eulogy at the funeral, will be about climate change. We need stories to shape our lives and help us change, push despair and try to hope. Hope for truth, justice and not going above two degrees.

You can out more about us by emailing [hello@wiseramtheatre.co.uk](mailto:hello@wiseramtheatre.co.uk) or visiting [wiseramtheatre.co.uk](http://wiseramtheatre.co.uk). ■

We’re holding a work-in-progress production of *Sundream* on Saturday 13th September 2025 at Jaywick Martello Tower, near Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. We’d love to see you there.



Molly Anne Sweeney is a scriptwriter who writes about climate change. She has a Masters in writing from the Central School of Speech and Drama. She one day wants to write a play called “Brian Friel”.

# Fiercely loving the communion of Creation

**David Coleman** discusses language, liturgy and hope



Processing into Glasgow Cathedral for the COP26 Service

Photo credit: Karen Bas

Around the time of COP26 in Glasgow, it was notable that churches responded with worship and ceremony. Bishops and moderators and people with wonderful robes were marshalled together and marched, as it were, up to the top of the liturgical hill, but sadly, also most of the way down again. Was this in case the mountain-top perspective did its job, and we ended up with churches who could say “You’ll know we are Christians by our love for Creation”?

Although we certainly now live on a different planet, we’re still clothing our spirituality in the mullets and flares of late 20th century “stewardship Christianity”, as if the nature of humanity were to look after inert property rather than – as a friend in the Pacific put it – to “love, listen to and fiercely protect the Creation we also are.”

So often, Church figureheads, for whom “environment” is, frankly, not “the day job” make sure that they include that unambitious janitorial role of “steward” rather than unpacking and discerning the greater relational dignity of Genesis 1:26ff. In the meantime “Man” rather than God is still tragically

taken for granted as competent ruler of the Earth and even in hymns and prayers, the use of a capital letter for our living planet – allowing the suggestion of personality, voice, rights, – is still more often than not “corrected” by the protocols of religious publishers.

It is now recognised, albeit often grudgingly, that women are profoundly included in the “brothers” (adelphoi) of 1 John 4:20. Can Christians also acknowledge how much we could learn from Indigenous Christians in their complex and close relationship with non-human Creation? Could we thereby discover a sustaining and transformative love for fellow creatures with whom we share so much? I’ve heard, in sermons, by those who should know better, a confident assertion of the rightness and reality of human supremacism and the competence of our species to “rule” based on our supposed statistical superiority in a very narrow view of cognitive ability.

And yet our God-given human capacity for love still remains. Child-like, not child-ish; our gift to love, empathise and appreciate the “Communion of Creation” evident in the lives

of saints, Celtic and otherwise. The sanctity of Columba, Mungo, Patrick, Cuthbert, Brigid and many others is authenticated by their profound interaction with non-human personalities.

Pope Francis, quoting the words of St Francis in the opening paragraph of *Laudato Si’*, exemplified this humble, personal and relational approach to the Earth: “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us”. Despite this authoritative foundation by St Francis, as a linguist I can affirm that we’re still at the mercy of the conscientiousness of translators and editors wedded to the expected idiom.

For example, there the impoverishment of Christ’s “Great Commission” in Mark 16:15 from “Good News to all Creation” to “Good news to all people”<sup>1</sup>. Many of my generation of ministry students were advised to leave well alone that much-needed verse because textual critics reserve the right to determine canon, and it seems to be from a different hand than the rest of Mark.

Even St Francis has often been censored when a crucial line of his 800-year old Canticle is made to invite praise *through* rather than with “all your creatures”. Creation certainly does fulfil the role of God’s “Book of Nature” but is God not insulted if we hold that our fellow-stakeholders in the Rainbow Covenant of Genesis 9, can only ever be means to an end rather than fellow-worshippers in the congregation of “all who have breath”?

Even with a growing awareness of the crisis of nature and climate, the evolution of our everyday religious language – and therefore thought – and therefore prayer – still seems, amazingly, to need a kick-start. Only then might churches realise their full potential as Christ’s beacons of unreasonable hope, and as drivers of spiritual resilience as the chaos deepens. But a bushel of liturgical rigidity can still hide our spiritual LED.

Especially in global-north English-language circles, intimidated for the last couple of centuries by Enlightenment anthropocentrism, this inertia is particularly acute, delaying the discovery of much treasure in the field of Christian scripture, spirituality and tradition. But there is hope.

In May, just in the time “between popes”, as it were, I was invited to the second of two major ecumenical conferences at Assisi in Italy. This was supported by the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, the Anglican Communion, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Methodist World Conference, Lutheran World Federation, several Orthodox traditions and others, including participants from Evangelical

1. Good News Bible translation



Preaching with furry fellow-worshipper

Photo credit: Karen Bass

and Pentecostal traditions, with online contributions from Pacific churches too.

The subject was the need and appropriateness, with theological underpinning, of a move to recognise in official calendars, as a minimum a common “Creation Day”, as well as to strengthen the observance of the Season of Creation, which is a large part of my own work as EcoChaplain for EcoCongregation Scotland. Our relationship, before God, with Earth and fellow creatures is in urgent need of mainstream recognition as the cake, rather than icing of the church, so that the option of fleeing into “the proper business” of church is cut off.

I was there as someone with a unique ecumenical grassroots ministry and offered a paper on Season of Creation, and also ended up leading the final act of “Reformed” worship. This level of co-operation and sharing between traditions is exceptional: it was claimed to be without precedent since the 16th century. We were meeting 800 years since St. Francis’ Canticle (in St. Francis’ home town) and 1700 years since first agreement on the Nicene Creed. The outcome of a shared festival to celebrate God’s ongoing collaborative work of Creation may be the result; a time to “love, listen and fiercely protect the Creation” using language that unites and inspires. ■



Revd David Coleman is Environmental Chaplain for EcoCongregation Scotland, a post gifted by the United Reformed Church. He engages in ecumenical conversation on spiritual and environmental issues, curates the Season of Creation resource for EcoCongregation Scotland and creates liturgy and reflections often using multimedia and sometimes from the top of a Munro! He is a member of the Iona community.

# Christian hope for our planet

**Elaine Storkey** challenges us to pursue our calling, with hope



Credit: Casey Horner on Unsplash

In everyday life, hope can often sound like little more than wishful thinking. We might say: “I hope my lottery number comes up” but statistically that’s unlikely, and we’d be idiots to vest too much faith in it. Or hope can fly in the face of reality, like someone hoping they’ve remembered to turn the gas off; because it’s either off or on, and no amount of hope can change the situation.

Hope can also be a blind belief that things will get better when all the evidence suggests otherwise. We see this in relation to climate change: “There’s nothing to worry about; the Earth’s temperature goes up and down. Just hope it gets sorted out.” Yet such hope is completely ineffective; whether based in ignorance or apathy it denies the impact of both our actions and inaction. It reveals an indifference to loss of bio-diversity, destructive breakdown of ecosystems, coastal erosion, erratic weather conditions, and unconcern for those most vulnerable to climate crises.

All these forms of hope offer us very little: at best a sort of escapism, shoulder-shrugging.

Christians are not immune to misunderstanding hope and we have our own ways of getting it wrong, particularly in relation to climate change. I’ve met many Christians who over-spiritualise hope, seeing it as always related to the spiritual reality of our eternal future – rather than to the everyday concerns of the material Creation we live in. Yet the Bible doesn’t present hope as an escape from the created order, but as vital in bringing about its renewal. Another misunderstanding is when we vest our hope in God solving our global problems for us, rather than taking action ourselves. Believing that the future is in God’s hands does not absolve us from working out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). We do not work *for* our salvation, Christ has done that, but we work it out in our world, by confronting the vital issues of our day with wisdom and spiritual insight.

So, what is hope in a biblical framework? In 1 Corinthians 13, St Paul speaks of three characteristics which are crucial to our Christian life. When the outward forms of ritual and worship are stripped away, when prophesies end and tongues cease and knowledge fades, faith, hope and love remain. This tells us

that hope is central to Christian identity; it’s not some abstract quality that appears from nowhere. It is never free-standing but is intertwined with faith and love. Faith in God’s goodness and love makes hope possible and love binds hope and faith together. Hope is therefore anchored in the God of love, in the Creator and Sustainer of the universe; it is confidence in the character and promises of God which have been fulfilled in Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. This hope must inevitably lead to action, for it can never be just a passive affirmation. When the hope we cling to is grounded in God’s love for the world, and God’s heart for justice, we are called to care for Creation and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Hope is evident in every part of our biblical story; in Creation, in fighting sin and temptation, and in redemption. Hope is breathed into Creation as God brings a world into being out of nothing, and the Spirit broods over the face of the waters, ready for new life to burst forth (Genesis 1:2). It is echoed in Jesus as St John’s Gospel identifies him as the incarnate Word through whom all things were made. So, as the stars and heavens tell the glory of God and the Earth shows God’s handiwork, hope lives within the very beauty of all that is made. Hope is reinforced when God declares his authorship and love of Creation – every animal of the forest belongs to God, and the cattle on a thousand hills. God knows every bird in the mountains and owns the insects in the field (Psalm 50:10-11). The Psalms so often delight in God’s created order, portraying the whole of Creation shouting in hopeful gladness at God’s presence: the sea roars, the floods clap their hands and the hills sing together for joy (Psalm 98:7-9). Hope in the context of Creation is both majestic and poignant, cosmic and intimate.

This vision of hope embedded in Creation, however, is a far cry from most of what we see in our world. For human sin has intervened and marred the whole of history. Today, we are living in times of indifference, apathy and greed towards the world God has made. In an essay entitled “*Jesus died to save the planet*”, Paul Kunert suggests that we have put corporate, individual, and national self-interest above the good of the Earth and our neighbour, and self ahead of God’s glory. Because of our broken relationship with the planet we seem bent on turning it into a dead wasteland. So much has been destroyed and much more is on the verge of extinction. Yet, hope is never annihilated. Although people attempt to displace God and disparage Creation, in the biblical story, hope still remains. Hope leads Creation itself to groan and wait for redemption (Romans 8:22-23).

Throughout Scripture we find that God never intended to discard the marred Creation, but promised to redeem and restore it. That is why in our biblical narrative sin never has the last word; hope is clearly renewed in God’s act of redeeming

the world through the life and death of Jesus. Just as this redemption is offered to our human lives, it extends hope to the whole of Creation. And we must work with God to offer new life to those areas of the world which have been so badly damaged. It is a job for all humankind. When Christians repent for any collusion we have had with harmful systems that exploit and abuse God’s world, we are given freedom to join others in working for a redemptive and hopeful future.

## Hope and our care of the planet

We know we are up against world leaders who work in defiance of God’s commission to the human Creation to care for the rest. We recognize the power of mammon in controlling laws and policies within nations, and the human corruption which overrides the norms of justice for God’s world. We mourn the increasing disappearance of species, the melting of the tundra and the polar ice caps, and those areas of our planet where the loss is irreversible. Yet we also know there is still work for us to do in calling for justice and influencing others to become advocates for life-enriching change.

God’s Creation has been well-endowed with healing faculties. Hope teaches us to recognise these and support the development of technology which can enhance the planet’s own ability to grow and flourish. Today we witness with gratitude the work of many skilled human minds who acknowledge their shared creaturehood with animals, plants, mountains, seas in a universe that is home to us all. Hope teaches us, and them, that we do not need to plunder the Earth, but can replant and renew those areas desperately needed as habitats for vulnerable species. We do not need to ignore CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, turn a blind eye to fossil fuel extraction or perpetuate landfill for many alternatives to each of these are now available. Hope also teaches us to listen to our contemporary prophets, to encourage those who are committed to finding green, innovative solutions. It helps us to give prayerful support to those who speak truth to power and work night and day for a better world. However discouraged we might be, hope gives us the means to continue our calling and do whatever we can to honour and love this wonderful world which God has entrusted to us. ■



Elaine Storkey is a philosopher, sociologist and theologian. Her books include *Scars Across Humanity: Understanding and Overcoming Violence Against Women* (IVP 2018); *Women in a Patriarchal World* (SPCK 2020) and *Meeting God in Matthew* (SPCK 2022). She has championed gender justice and climate issues, whether as President of Tearfund for 17 years, as a member of the Church of England General Synod and delegate to the World Council of Churches. She is a Green Christian patron.



# What is Carbon Literacy training?

**Buff Stone** explores a useful new resource

As the Diocesan Environment Officer in Chichester Diocese, I see my role primarily as reaching hearts and minds – tackling the question: “*why should we act as Christian people in the face of the climate crisis?*” I want to help our parishes understand the basic science of the climate crisis, how our faith compels us to respond to this and what are the next steps for us to take.

Anglicans summarise our mission with these five marks:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of Creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth

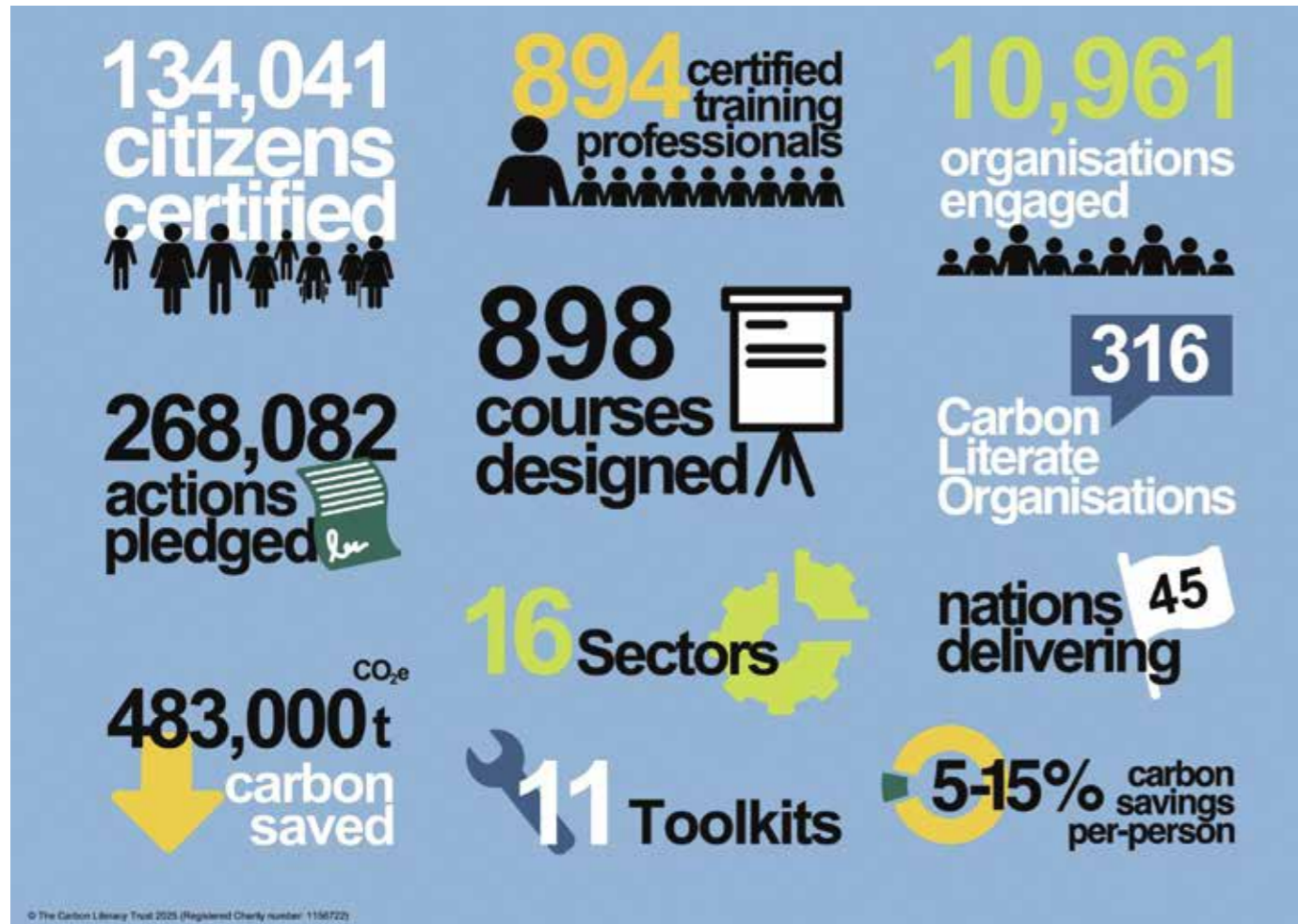
Care of God’s Creation is woven through all the marks of mission. We proclaim good news in the context of the climate and

ecological crisis, teach believers how to live sustainably, respond to and advocate for changes to heal the immense need generated by the climate crisis – all in the process of safeguarding Creation. The Church of England has partnered with the Carbon Literacy Project (CLP) to provide some resources specifically tailored to meet these needs.

## The Carbon Literacy Project

The Carbon Literacy Project offers everyone a day’s worth of Carbon Literacy® learning, covering: climate change, carbon footprints, how you can do your bit and why it’s relevant to you. The Carbon Literacy Project is globally unique – and was acknowledged as such by the UN at COP21, in Paris, where it was recognised as a TAP100; one of 100 worldwide Transformative Action Programs. There are Carbon Literacy (CL) courses aimed at the workplace, schools, colleges, the general public, and now faith organisations including churches.

The infographic below summarises the current impact.



From their website, the definition of Carbon Literacy is: Carbon Literacy®: “*An awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis.* Or more simply: “*Understanding what I actually need to do, where I can get help to do it, actually doing it, seeing that I’ve done it.*”



Slide explaining CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions credit: Carbon Literacy Project

Carbon Literacy for Christian Congregations is designed specifically for a church member audience. The course provides eight hours of learning, which can be delivered in shorter sessions of around 1.5 hours each, though the recommended format is four two hour meetings to allow time for conversation and a cup of tea before and after each session. Learning is done together as a group, guided by a trainer using a comprehensive leader’s guide. Participants receive booklets, games, videos and an activity pack, along with all necessary forms and guidance documents.

Over the eight hours, the course covers theology, climate science, carbon footprints, climate justice, the benefits of climate action, and most importantly how to take meaningful action in different areas and how to have constructive conversations about climate change. The course can be delivered either in-person or online. Those leading it need to apply and either already be certified as Carbon Literate or attend a short briefing session before gaining access to the materials. This briefing is a great opportunity to walk through the course structure, build confidence in delivery, and have any questions answered.

## Actions: turning words into actions

One of the most powerful aspects of the Carbon Literacy course is the focus on action. Each participant is asked to commit to two new steps they will take to reduce their carbon footprint; one as an individual and one with others. These group actions usually take place within the church community, but for some people, the most effective choice might be in the workplace or another area of influence. What matters most is that the actions are new, significant in their impact, achievable within the participant’s sphere of influence and do not use AI.

At the end of the course, participants complete an evidence form that outlines what they have learned and details their chosen actions. The Carbon Literacy Project then assesses these, and those meeting the standard receive certification as Carbon Literate. Certificates cost £10 or £15 per participant, depending on organisational turnover and are arranged centrally within each diocese. For those inspired to take their learning further, Train the Trainer courses are available, offering the opportunity to further develop skills and confidence to deliver Carbon Literacy to others.

Carbon Literacy training helps people speak positively and confidently about climate change while remaining grounded in the reality of the challenges we face. Many participants describe the sessions as eye-opening and inspiring, with rich discussions and a sense of shared purpose. Choosing actions can sometimes feel daunting, but with the support of the group and guidance from the Carbon Literacy Project, participants are encouraged to select actions that meet a genuine need, make a tangible difference and feel personally rewarding.

For some, this training has opened doors to new opportunities, enhanced their employability, and deepened their connection with younger generations who are passionate about climate action. The course materials are straightforward to use, though trainers will need to spend some time preparing. While the focus is firmly on the climate crisis through the lens of carbon, rather than biodiversity or nature loss, the course is a valuable resource for those leading Eco Church initiatives within their parish, diocese, or denomination.

The Church of England’s Carbon Literacy for Christian Congregations course is available free of charge from the Carbon Literacy Project, thanks to the kind support of the Church of England. Those wishing to lead the course simply need to apply and either be already certified as Carbon Literate or attend a short briefing before accessing the materials. This is an excellent opportunity to understand how to deliver the course effectively and to ask any questions before getting started.

For further information please contact [faith@carbonliteracy.com](mailto:faith@carbonliteracy.com) or your Diocesan Environment Officer (Church of England). ■



Buff Stone was previously a GP in inner city Birmingham. She was ordained in 2000 and served parishes in Berkshire and the West Midlands. Relocating to Brighton in 2023, she had a sabbatical and was convicted about the urgency of the climate crisis. She is now the Diocesan Environment Officer for Chichester Diocese and associate minister in a local parish, St Luke’s Prestonville.

# Can the Church go wild?

**Claire Rogers** from Wild Card, believes Church Commissioner land could better serve wildlife and combat climate change



Photo credit: Crispin Hughes

Wild Card and the Climate Choir Movement formed a 200-strong flash mob at St. Paul's Cathedral calling on the Church Commissioners to play a vital role in restoring nature

*“Does not nature cry out - for understanding, for restoration, for all Creation, for life?”*

These were the words sung by a 200-strong choir inside St Paul's Cathedral earlier this year, in an appeal to the Church Commissioners to honour their role as land stewards by committing to rewild 30% of their estate by 2030. It beautifully captured the call of the Rewild the Church movement — and indeed one of the most important callings of our time — to reflect on our relationship with nature and take urgent action to protect it.

## What is the Rewild the Church movement?

Rewild the Church is a growing movement of Christians, scientists, policy makers and other conscientious citizens calling for the Church Commissioners to dedicate some of their vast landholdings to protecting God's Creation. The organisation behind the campaign is Wild Card, who are mobilising hundreds of thousands of ordinary people to call for the UK's biggest landowners to rewild their land before it's too late.

We are concerned about the dismal state of biodiversity in the UK. The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth<sup>1</sup>, and one of the most unequal. With half of the land owned by just 1% of the population, addressing the escalating biodiversity crisis is not possible without the country's biggest landowners doing their part.

1. State of Nature Report 2023, [stateofnature.org.uk](http://stateofnature.org.uk)  
 2. [theguardian.com/environment/2020/aug/04/englands-biggest-landowners-not-growing-enough-trees-report](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/aug/04/englands-biggest-landowners-not-growing-enough-trees-report)  
 3. [endsreport.com/article/1722890/](https://www.endsreport.com/article/1722890/)

## The role of Church Commissioners

Christians across the country have heeded the call to protect and restore nature, by initiating projects that have breathed new life into churchyards, and created wildlife havens within their communities. The Church Commissioners, an investment body within the Church of England, owns a whopping 108,000 acres of land across the UK as part of their £11.1 billion investment portfolio. However, this portfolio does not include the parish and diocesan land where individuals and communities are already making a difference. Rather, their acres are made up of farmland and forestry dotted throughout the UK that, unfortunately, are in a dire ecological state.

The Church Commissioners rank bottom of the UK's 10 biggest institutional landowners for woodland coverage<sup>2</sup>, and over half of the ecologically important habitats (known as Sites of Special Scientific Interest) on their land have been assessed as being in unfavourable, part destroyed or destroyed condition<sup>3</sup>. Whilst they have some small areas protected for nature, they are nothing close to the scale required by the UN, UK Government, or indeed, nature.

## What does 'rewilding' actually mean?

What we are asking for is not arbitrary. We want the Church Commissioners to align with the science-based global target, set by the United Nations and backed by the UK Government, to protect at least 30% of land and water by 2030.

Rewilding allows life to return to our landscapes. This requires transitioning areas of land away from extractive land uses that exhaust the land of its biodiversity, and supporting the return of native plants and wildlife. Rewilding complements and is needed alongside the adoption of nature-based farming and sustainable forestry, but is not replaced by these practices. Rather, rewilding is necessary to protect areas of land dedicated to the restoration of vital ecosystem services and bring precious species and habitats back from the brink; from hedgehogs, water voles, and pine martens, to our last fragments of rainforest, wetlands, and wild meadows. Rewilding also offers opportunities for individuals and communities to reconnect with their local natural environments.

What's exciting is that rewilding isn't just a pipe dream; there are a growing number of examples where landowners and farmers have committed to rewilding and are reaping the benefits. For example, the Knepp Estate in West Sussex transitioned their 3,500 acres of intensively farmed land into a rewilded landscape, seeing the return of species like nightingales, turtle doves, and purple emperor butterflies. Not only this, they turned their business which previously operated at a loss into a diversified venture that generates significant returns.

The good news is that our analysis shows that the 30x30 target is achievable. The Church Commissioners have already made some progress, with small-scale conservation projects, and tenant farmers who have taken initiative in adopting nature-friendly farming practices.

Of the Church Commissioners' rural holdings, around 3% is woodland, 2% are Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and 5% are categorised as Grade 4 poor quality agricultural land, which, being generally less valuable from an agricultural perspective, are all ideal as rewilding sites to start off with. There's also 5,000 acres of lowland peat within the Church Commissioners' ownership, a land type identified as a priority for restoration. These areas together would bring the Church Commissioners halfway to the 30% goal. By working with their tenant farmers and other experts, the remaining 15% can be derived from areas categorised as Grade 3 good to moderate quality agricultural land that makes up the majority of the Church Commissioners' portfolio.

With the Church Commissioners generating around £700 million in returns on their investments in just the past year,

we are confident this target can be met while maintaining their support of the Church of England more broadly. Not only is it possible; restoring and protecting biodiversity is crucial to secure a future that is climate resilient, with thriving ecosystems that support our food system, and bring joy to local communities.

## Growing momentum

Rewild the Church launched in October last year, with hundreds of supporters gathered outside St Paul's, joined by conservationist Chris Packham, to call on the Commissioners to take action. A 9 metre long scroll containing "95 Wild Theses" was unveiled; a collection of powerful theological, scientific and moral arguments from nearly 100 public figures (including the former Archbishop, Dr Rowan Williams) stating why the Commissioners should rewild their extensive landholdings.



Photo credit: Crispin Hughes

The Rewild the Church movement on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral, call on the Church Commissioners to rewild 30% of their land

Since then, over 104,000 people have signed our petition calling for the Commissioners' to commit to 30x30. Head to [wildcard.land/campaigns/rewild-the-church](http://wildcard.land/campaigns/rewild-the-church) to add your name to the petition, access resources and sign up to our mailing list to stay up to date with the campaign. If you have a role within the Church such as being a member of a Synod or an environmental officer, and are interested in supporting us, please get in touch: [rewildthechurch@wildcard.land](mailto:rewildthechurch@wildcard.land). ■



Claire Rogers is passionate about the intersection of environmental science, land and climate justice. She has experience providing advice and support to land managers, and is active in climate and environmental research, policy and campaigning.

## Blessing of Hope

So may we know  
the hope  
that is not just  
for someday  
but for this day -  
here, now,  
in this moment  
that opens to us:  
hope not made  
of wishes  
but of substance,  
hope made of sinew  
and muscle  
and bone,  
hope that has breath  
and a beating heart,  
hope that will not  
keep quiet  
and be polite,  
hope that knows  
how to holler  
when it is called for,  
hope that knows  
how to sing  
when there seems  
little cause,  
hope that raises us  
from the dead—  
not someday  
but this day,  
every day,  
again and  
again and  
again.

Jan Richardson

© Jan Richardson from *The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief* (Wanton Gospeller Press, 2020) with kind permission janrichardson.com



Illustration: "Nightingale" by Peter Porteous-Butler

# Drawing together

Isobel Murdoch reports on Green Christian Local Groups

The other day I came across a saying that set me thinking, "To go fast, go alone; to go far, go together". Ever since I first became a member back in 2007, I've felt that the very centre of Green Christian's mission is being "together": sharing, cooperating, uniting, drawing together for God's Earth. Our ten official groups and five linked groups themselves embody togetherness where they are, in church and community, in ways large or small. Crowds used to flock to hear Jesus, but we also remember Him saying "when two or three are gathered together in my name..."

Groups gather in different ways. Some come together to worship. **Clun Green Christian's** annual Eco Service this summer took the theme of water: water as a gift from God, water in the Bible, water and Christianity, and lament over how we have polluted precious water.

Some come together online. Green Christian has co-produced a Lent course, *Calling A Wounded Earth Home*, which can be used at any time of the year. We also produced our own "lighter", internet free version, using Taizé music, which was used by **South West Green Christian** Group on Zoom and in-person.

Some come together for events. The **Colchester Green Christian Local Group** is busy as usual. They attended the Essex Green Weekend at the Othona Community and had a really positive time. The group will have a stall at the Free Family Fun Day in Colchester on 20th September. They are also organizing an event with guest speaker, Sian Thomas-Cullinan at St Teresa's RC Church in Colchester at 4.30pm on October 4th, followed by a Taizé service at 6pm.



Members of Colchester Local Group in the House of Commons for the Mass Lobby Photo Credit: Pippa Banham

Our linked group in **Lincoln** held a successful conference "Facing the Storm – Preparing for a different future" on 1st March, seeking to raise awareness of the interrelated polycrises we face. The group will hold another this autumn on Saturday, 27th September at Alive Church, Lincoln. "Facing the Storm 2 – Living in a different future". The keynote speaker is Ruth Valerio (of Embrace the Middle East, previously of A Rocha and Tearfund). This conference will focus on practical responses to build resilient communities.

**Cheltenham's linked group** holds Climate Prayers every fortnight and supports a local monthly climate vigil. In May they held a "Stations Of Creation" event in the town centre, followed by a shared lunch.

Congratulations go to Anna Barratt, of **Green Christian St Albans**, who has won an Ember Designs Eco Award. This was for planning, negotiating and implementing the sustainability design of the new building at her church along with a stunning wildlife meadow within the grounds.

If you would like to explore setting up a local group where you are, do get in touch! ■



Isobel Murdoch  
isobelmurdoch@greenchristian.org.uk  
01790763603



Credit: Helen Marshall, The People's Picture

**Act Now, Change Forever**

Green Christian took part in the Mass Lobby of MPs on 9th July 2025, organised by The Climate Coalition, to call for urgent action on the climate crisis, nature restoration, and social justice. Members were encouraged to meet with their MPs in Westminster to advocate for meaningful climate action.

Catherine said, “Sadly my MP did not turn up. So I wrote a postcard to her. It was good to come down and spend an hour at the Christian Climate Action vigil then see people at the Green Christian stall.”

Ruth came with three members of her church. “There was a wonderful buzz in Westminster Hall with so many groups from all over the country asking for the protection of God’s world.”



Green Christians at Westminster on July 9th

Credit: Ruth Jarman

Robbie came with a group from Colchester: “The outstanding impressions were the sense of being at one of the centres of power in the land, of being heard by your most significant

representative and of enjoying the company of like-minded people who have made a commitment to be there.”



Meeting MPs in Westminster Hall

Credit: Green Christian

From 13th-20th September 2025, we’ll be holding a nationwide Lobby Week – and you’re invited to be part of it. It’s your opportunity to meet your decision maker locally in your community, on your terms. See the Green Christian website for details of how to join in and find information on specific asks to stop Rosebank and to support the Climate and Nature Bill.

**Green Christian Workshops and Talks**

Our Wednesday workshops and talks continue to offer rich opportunities for learning and reflection. All sessions are available to watch on the Green Christian YouTube channel. Recent topics have included the health of our oceans, intentional communities and how to run a Carbon Literacy course in your church. We also partnered with other organisations for two Joy in Enough Zoom talks: one marking the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si’*, and another exploring the connection between green economics and the Catholic Year of Jubilee. A series of workshops for the Season of Creation is running from early September to 4th October.



**Food Group**

A Food Group has been established and is researching issues of food sustainability and has produced a revised version of our popular LOAF leaflet. We conducted a survey on food issues and sent out a press release on how different churches approach Lent which led to coverage in the Church Times, UCB, Premier, The Tablet and Independent Catholic News.

**Green Christian website**

We would love you to explore our newly updated website and share your thoughts on the new design. You’ll find helpful ideas for involving your church in caring for God’s Creation under the Engagement section.

**Arts Section co-ordinator, and contributions needed**

Are you passionate about painting or poetry? We are currently looking for someone to contribute to our Arts section, either by sharing your own work or helping to co-ordinate contributions. If this sounds like you, please do get in touch (info@greenchristian.org.uk).

**Festivals**

We were delighted to visit two festivals this summer. At New Wine, we shared a stall with our friends from A Rocha, Climate Stewards, and Operation Noah, showcasing a united Christian response to the climate crisis and offering practical resources.

At Greenbelt, we hosted our own stall to share our vision, whilst focusing on our campaign to send postcards to our MPs urging them to support the CAN Bill. Green Christian also hosted a youth panel event called, “Be The Change” at the youth venue where four young activists shared with a mainly teenage audience how they could start taking action for the climate. After their session, the speakers repeated their talk to adults at the Green Christian stall.



Young activists’ talk at GC stall

Credit: Ruth Jarman



Deborah Tomkins



Ashley Ralston

**Trustee News**

Two long-serving Trustees of Green Christian, Deborah Tomkins and Ashley Ralston, are stepping down. Deborah has been a member of the Board since 2012 and served as Co-Chair until last summer. Ashley joined the Board in 2004 and has been Green Christian’s key liaison with the National Justice and Peace movement. We greatly appreciate their commitment and dedication and they will be sincerely missed.

**Join us for Green Christian’s AMM and Day Conference**

We warmly invite you to our Annual Members Meeting and day conference, “**Building on the rock – shared resilience for stormy times**” on Saturday 15th November, 2025 at St Mark’s Church, Lincoln Road, Peterborough, PE1 2SN, just a short walk from the railway station.

**The day will feature inspiring keynote speakers:**

- **Rupert Read**, Climate Majority Project
- **Revd Vanessa Elston**, Pioneering Eco-Vicar and Chaplain to the Bishop of Kingston
- **Jo Chamberlain**, National Environment Officer, Church of England Environment Programme
- **Adrian Fox**, Environmental Sustainability Officer, Cathedral and Church Buildings Division

**Schedule:**

- **10:00am** – Green Christian Annual Members Meeting
- **11:30am to 4:30pm** – Main conference sessions

This interactive event will include small group discussions focused upon how churches can support communities in preparing for, and responding to, increasing climate-related challenges. Churches, with their buildings and community networks, are uniquely positioned to offer both practical and spiritual support. As Christians, we are called to be salt and light, and foster unity and care, essential for navigating the times ahead. We will explore how churches can become hubs of local resilience and solidarity.

Aerth

Deborah Tomkins  
January 2025  
Weatherglass Books  
ISBN: 9781739570781  
180 pages  
RRP: £10.99



A tale of two planets. Two planets that are remarkably like Earth. Two planets called Aerth and Urth, orbiting on opposite sides of the sun, neither able to see the other. Both planets face potential catastrophic climate change: Aerth is entering a mini ice age, while Urth is rapidly heating up. Each planet has adapted to their respective crises in different ways.

The story begins on Aerth. Here the population is much diminished, owing to successive waves of a pandemic, and perhaps this has allowed for a radical societal reset. The economy is no longer based on the exchange of money. Instead daily life is organised around the principle of “Do no harm”. This requires everyone to think before they act, to seek a common consensus, and to work together cooperatively. This is a way of life that promotes the value of “listening to the heart”. Theirs is primarily an agrarian culture where people’s needs are more often met by the community than by the individual and where each life is cherished and nature is respected. But this is no paradise.

Through the eyes of Marcus, the protagonist of this story, we see that Aerth is not a world devoid of pain and suffering. Rather it is a place of conflicted ideals, unfulfilled dreams and self-sacrifice. Remarkably, Marcus gets the opportunity to travel, via Mars

(where a prototype colony is being established) to Urth. Urth has taken an alternative approach to coping with crisis; one where money and fame call the shots – a solution not dissimilar to that which is still being tried here on Earth!

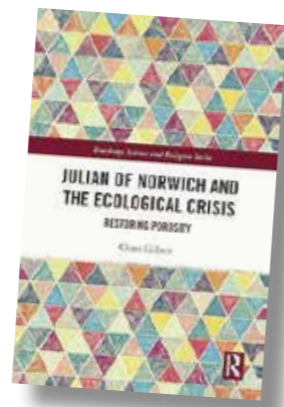
On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit-filled Peter quoted to the crowd the words of the prophet Joel: “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.”

As Christians we are called to dream dreams and to envisage different ways of living. This book, chosen by Ali Smith as joint winner of Weatherglass Books’ Inaugural Novella Prize, will certainly spark us into imagining a better future for planet Earth.

Judith Russenberger

*The Wilder Path*, also by Deborah Tomkins, will be reviewed in our next issue.

Julian of Norwich and the Ecological Crisis: Restoring Porosity



Claire Gilbert  
July 2024  
Routledge  
ISBN 9781032593340  
190 pages  
RRP £145 (hardback)

The *Revelations of Divine Love* is taken to have been written by a 14th century woman who lived a solitary life of

prayer in a cell attached to a church in Norwich. We call that woman Julian, though it was also the name of the church. If the authorship is correct it is the earliest surviving English-language text attributed to a woman. Its insights remain startlingly radical, opening us to a God more intimately and expansively loving than our human condition expects, to a divine love that enfolds all things and holds us all in unconditional acceptance. Many have found the *Revelations of Divine Love* to be personally transformative. Claire Gilbert explores how it is that Julian’s writings so marvellously invite us to enter empathically into what she was shown and how that can affect us so deeply. Gilbert previously wrote a wonderful fictional book which convincingly reconstructs the life of Julian (*Julian*, Hodder & Stoughton 2023).

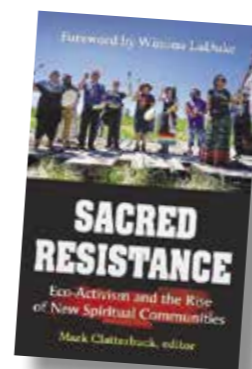
But this latter book is about the text rather than its author. Gilbert articulates the power of this text to engage the reader in such a transformative way with the help of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005). Ricoeur developed the understanding that a written text has an independence apart from its author, original setting, and first readers. Gilbert explains, “I accept Ricoeur’s concept of the power of the poetic text to transform the reader’s subjectivity and his account of the summoning of the reader to the text.” Using Ricoeur’s hermeneutical method, Gilbert offers a three-pillared explanation of how the *Revelations* have the power to be so transformative. First, it invites our performative engagement, that is, through letting ourselves be drawn into the narrative. This both requires and brings about in us a porosity of self, which is the second pillar. The reader is literally made porous to the text, which Gilbert contrasts with the *Gestell* mindset. The *Gestell* approach is to let ourselves be enclosed within self-referencing spheres which we expect to provide answers to all problems and meaning-seeking.

The third pillar identifies the world, or “niche” of experience which the reader brings to the text and which is then transformed by it.

But what does a 14th century religious text have to do with the ecological crisis of the 21st century? Gilbert recognises that this crisis is precisely a symptom of the *Gestell*, because that keeps us in “a ‘buffered’ seeing of all nature as ... objective, functional and expendable.” “Humanity”, she writes, “has to cease its arrogant attitude of control and return to an attitude of service, an intentional porosity that is characterised by humility.” She looks closely at three key parts of the *Revelations*: Julian’s asking for the three wounds of contrition, compassion and longing for God; the eighth revelation of Christ’s passion; and the falling of the servant who loves his Lord in the 14th revelation. Gilbert encourages us to read this text with her and so to increase our own porosity as no less than “a route to freedom from enslavement” which “engenders a recognition of the sacred in creation”. It is a demanding read, but truly eye-opening.

Andrew Norman  
Green Christian Chaplain

Sacred Resistance: Eco-Activism and the Rise of New Spiritual Communities



Mark Clatterbuck (editor)  
April 2025  
Orbis Books  
ISBN 9781626985988  
272 pages  
RRP £26.99

The foreword to this collection of stories of eco-activism in America

is provided by Winona LaDuke, a Native American of the Anishinaabe people. She points out that although Indigenous peoples make up only 4% of the world’s population they care for 75% of its biodiversity. She explains that we are in a time of deep conflict between worldviews: a land- and water-based worldview versus the greed of a Wiindigo industrial society where technology has replaced Creation at the centre of the paradigm.

Mark Clatterbuck’s introduction explains that this is a book about spiritual communities engaged in creative, impactful, non-violent campaigns of environmental activism. He details his own involvement in Lancaster Against Pipelines (LAP) and Indigenous protests at Standing Rock. The primary concern of the book is eco-activism, not ecotheology. The book outlines five resistance movements and five themes. The campaigns are the Anishinaabe-led #Stop Line 3; the Adorers of the Blood of Christ and LAP, a fracked gas pipeline in Pennsylvania; the Manual Kea Thirty Meter Telescope Blockade in Hawai’i; Interspiritual Resistance to the Atlantic Coast Pipeline in Virginia and the Earth Quaker Action Team and mountaintop removal coal mining in Appalachia. The themes are: the Sacred; Rituals of Resistance; Intersectionality; New Spiritual Communities and Nonviolence. These campaigns demonstrate spiritually, ethnically and regionally diverse eco-activism that has reached a critical mass of participants and succeeded in stopping or delaying the threats.

The Anishinaabe campaign was a women-led movement of resistance based on traditional beliefs and ritual honouring the Earth, with other faith communities joining them. Although the campaign did not succeed, the activists were acquitted of criminal offences, with the judge citing previous wrongs against Indigenous people. The women-only Catholic order, the Adorers, built a Chapel of Resistance

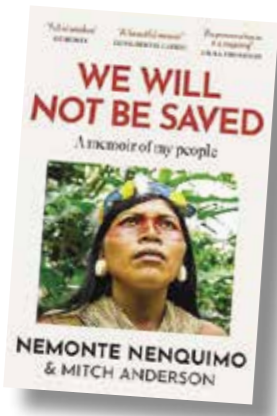
in a cornfield belonging to them. They were unsupported by the male Catholic hierarchy, but other people, including LAP members, saw the resistance to the pipeline as a spiritual work. Although they did not win, the Chapel still acts as a place of pilgrimage. Native Hawai’ians, motivated by beliefs and rituals rooted in the natural world, sought to protect a sacred mountain from a huge telescope. Though the situation is still ongoing, campaigners believe that they are taking back the culture which was stolen from them by Americans. The Atlantic Coast Pipeline was resisted by an alliance of Yogis (the Yogaville Community), an African-American Baptist congregation and those describing themselves as interspiritual. These unlikely collaborators were able to work effectively together and delay the pipeline’s construction for six years, connecting ecological disaster with other social wrongs including wealth disparity, poverty, genocide, racism and militarisation. The Earth Quaker Action Team targeted PNC Bank, itself with Quaker roots, which financed mountaintop removal in Appalachia. After a campaign employing Quaker practices and principles, including silent worship at protests, they succeeded in persuading PNC to stop financing the projects.

The epilogue is a call by Mark Clatterbuck to join the work of sacred resistance: to act boldly, to use joy as a superpower and to be disciplined in the principle of nonviolence and right conduct. At a time when peaceful protest and direct action are under threat as never before, this book is a timely and welcome reminder of what can be achieved if we come together in the work of sacred resistance. I would thoroughly recommend it to those contemplating action and for those who want to know more about why people are led to act.

Linda Wickham

We Will Not Be Saved

Nemonte Nenquimo and Mitch Anderson  
June 2024  
Wildfire Books  
ISBN 9781472289711  
368 pages  
RRP £12.00



We are often told that we must “learn from Indigenous wisdom” in order to live with harmony upon the planet. If you are unsure about how to do this, or wonder if you even really need to, reading this book would be a good place to start.

It is an account by Nemonte Nenquimo, transcribed by her North American husband, of her upbringing in the Ecuadorian rainforest and her path to becoming an environmental activist and leader within her community. Life within the Waorani tribe is filled with a deep respect, knowledge and love of the Amazonian rainforest, the trees, rivers, animals and birds that surround them and on which they depend for food, clothing, medicine and shelter. Indeed, a menagerie of exotic animals and birds – including monkeys, toucans, and tortoises – are acquired as pets and share the family home inside the Oko, one of the long huts where cooking fires continually burn. She learns to hunt, and cook peccary (wild pigs), make sweet chicha from manioc and weave palms to make hammocks and baskets.

There is a rich spirituality celebrated in storytelling and dance: Nenquimo describes “the sacred connections that breathed between our peoples and the animals and the land.” They believe that the ancestors are guiding the tribe, through their dreams and through the

jaguars, believed to embody ancestral spirits, whose cries warn and guide them.

The story also lays bare the frustrations and conflicts of communal life, and the community’s vulnerability to the wider world. First missionaries, closely followed by oil companies and loggers come to the area; the forest begins to shrink as local men are given work clearing trees for runways and oil wells. Women become cleaners and acquire western habits, clothing and tastes. They eagerly await the delivery of salt, sugar and oil to their village but the wads of money, with which they are paid, often grow mouldy.

As a headstrong young woman Nenquimo decides to pique her parents by accepting the missionaries’ offer of an “education” in the city – an offer that turns out badly as she, and other girls, are shockingly exploited and sexually abused by the Christian pastor. Her reconnection with her family, her determination to heed the voice of her ancestors and the calling of the forest itself, form a gripping story.

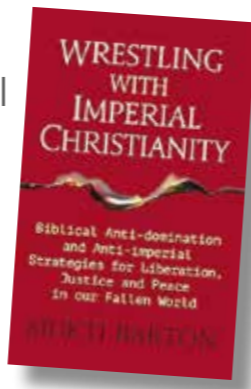
By her mid-twenties Nenquimo had become a leader, and is now regarded as one of the most creative and committed of environmental and climate activists. In 2019, she led the development of an alliance of tribal peoples across the Upper Amazon to a legal victory against Big Oil. The book describes the cooperation between different tribes as well as the support of outsiders that enabled the winning of their case.

Reading this book forms an education in seeing the world around you differently and heeding its call to care. It’s also a love story, not only recounting how she met the activist who becomes her husband, but paying tribute to her first love – the rich life-giving forest itself.

Clare Redfern

Wrestling with Imperial Christianity: Biblical Anti-Domination and Anti-Imperial Strategies for Liberation, Justice and Peace in our Fallen World

Mukti Barton  
February 2025  
Darton, Longman and Todd  
ISBN 9781915412805  
352 pages  
RRP £16.99 (paperback)



The title of this book is not lacking in ambition, and it was with some trepidation that I started reading it, wondering whether it was promising too much. But I enjoyed this work by Mukti Barton, an Indian Bengali British academic who is also a lay canon at Birmingham Cathedral, much more than expected. The main reason is the attention she gives to unpicking familiar stories, offering illuminating readings whilst also opening up new understandings. This is not the typical approach of biblical exegesis, (which is characterised as dog-and bone exegesis maybe a little unfairly; I have gnawed at a few bones too in my time) but rather the liberation hermeneutic developed first in the work of Gustavo Gutierrez. The hope is that such a hermeneutic would free us from “Euro-American, dominant, mainstream, traditional hegemonic Christianity.” So she considers the Bible to be a talking book, asking us a central question: “who do you trust, God or Mammon?”

Mukti Barton begins at the beginning with the opening chapters of Genesis and the appearance of Mammon in the guise of the serpent, there to disrupt the balance and beauty of God’s Creation. Our desire to be like God is

the first step toward self-deification and mammonic domination. It is a path which leads us to death and destruction, which we see clearly played out in our world of rampant inequalities, environmental destruction and persistent wars between nations.

There are many revealing moments in the book. I especially enjoyed revisiting the Book of Ruth, a longtime favourite of mine, as Barton finds new takes on familiar stories and makes an interesting case for the importance of chesed/hesed (defined as loyal, steadfast, committed love) both in the book of Ruth and throughout the Bible. In the Book of Ruth.. “God’s wisdom/word was made flesh and in the gospels Jesus the word/wisdom is made flesh in the rubble of history”. In the discussion of the temptation narratives, I liked the point that the difference between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God is slight, and the question is how the respective kingdoms are made. Philippians 2:6-11 is important in understanding the wisdom/Jesus path.

Reading the book made me pay attention to details and contexts, whether considering the Hebrew scriptures or from gospel narratives, the Acts or Epistles and for that I was grateful.

Did the book fulfil the promise of the title? I am not sure (what one book could?) but the book ends “even if only a few people find new biblical insights that empower them to resist oppression and injustices in our world to save it from mammonic annihilation, I will consider my book a success.”

By the time I had got to reading that, I for one could certainly say the book is a success.

Jonathan Morris

Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart

Brian McLaren  
May 2024  
Hodder and Stoughton  
ISBN 9781399814195  
305 pages  
RRP £10.99 (paperback)



It took me longer to read than I expected but it’s worth it. McLaren anticipated it would be read by Christians and potentially by others. He writes in a way that can address both.

I warmed to the “permission” to miss sections if you are well-briefed already or suspect you might find it upsetting to engage in a deeper dive. What *Life After Doom* does particularly well is acknowledge the emotional impacts of more fully contemplating global heating. It calmly pictures the kinds of logical space for responses and also our emotional journeys. He draws on pastoral experience to attend to these respectfully. So this becomes a book not only to navigate our own responses but also to accompany others as they navigate theirs.

There is personal transparency in the story-telling, creating a kind of shared journey encouraging brave honesty. McLaren encourages us to engage with spiritual practices that equip us to attend to reality and be bolstered to face the challenges. I found helpful his characterising of the human mind as a kind of committee, with naming the members and their roles as a good conceptual tool. There are well-curated, wise insights from psychology and

spirituality. I liked the distilling of insight and helpful quotes.

We’re gently reminded that it is consonant with Christian history to do the inner work. Perhaps we need new versions of the old penitential manuals to aid the examination of conscience, making reparation and amendment of life? These could be resourced by insights such as this: “You will know you have not dismounted from the destructive stories ... when someone criticizes conventional theology or conventional economics and you feel that they are criticizing you... You will know you have dismounted ... when you can voice the critique yourself. ... we will feel that although we are still in the civilization, we are no longer of it. It no longer defines us.”

McLaren passes my “hope” test; towards the end of the relevant chapter he writes: “Hope is complicated. But writing this book is helping me to see that even if hope fails, something bigger can replace it, and that is love.” Shades of 1 Corinthians 13, I thought.

In the chapter on seeking indigenous wisdom, one of the real insights for me was that the Bible is actually an example of indigenous wisdom. “The Bible begins to take shape as colonizer civilizations are taking over. It is written and preserved by indigenous leaders who want nothing to do with any kind of exploiting civilization and its idols.”

For encouragement I quote: “Don’t worry if people call you a hypocrite because you haven’t made progress in all areas of your life: of course you are a hypocrite! None of us have arrived at perfect consistency with our values and ideals... better to be a hypocrite who is growing than a critic or cynic who is doing nothing but criticizing good people who are doing their imperfect best to change and grow!”

Andii Bowsher

# Church, community and climate risk



David Baird, CC BY 2.0, altered

## Building on the rock – shared resilience for stormy times

### Green Christian Annual Members Meeting and Conference 2025

Join us to share in our plans  
and vision

**Saturday 15th November**  
at St. Mark's Church,  
Peterborough, PE1 2SN  
(13 mins walk from station)

**AMM starts 10am**

**Day Conference 11.30 - 4.30pm**

- **Rupert Read**, Co-Founder and Co-Director of Climate Majority Project
- **Rev Vanessa Elston**, Pioneering Eco-Vicar and Chaplain to the Bishop of Kingston
- **Jo Chamberlain**, National Environment Officer, Church of England Environment Programme & **Adrian Fox**, CofE's Environmental Sustainability Officer

Bring and share lunch

See the Green Christian website for more details and to register