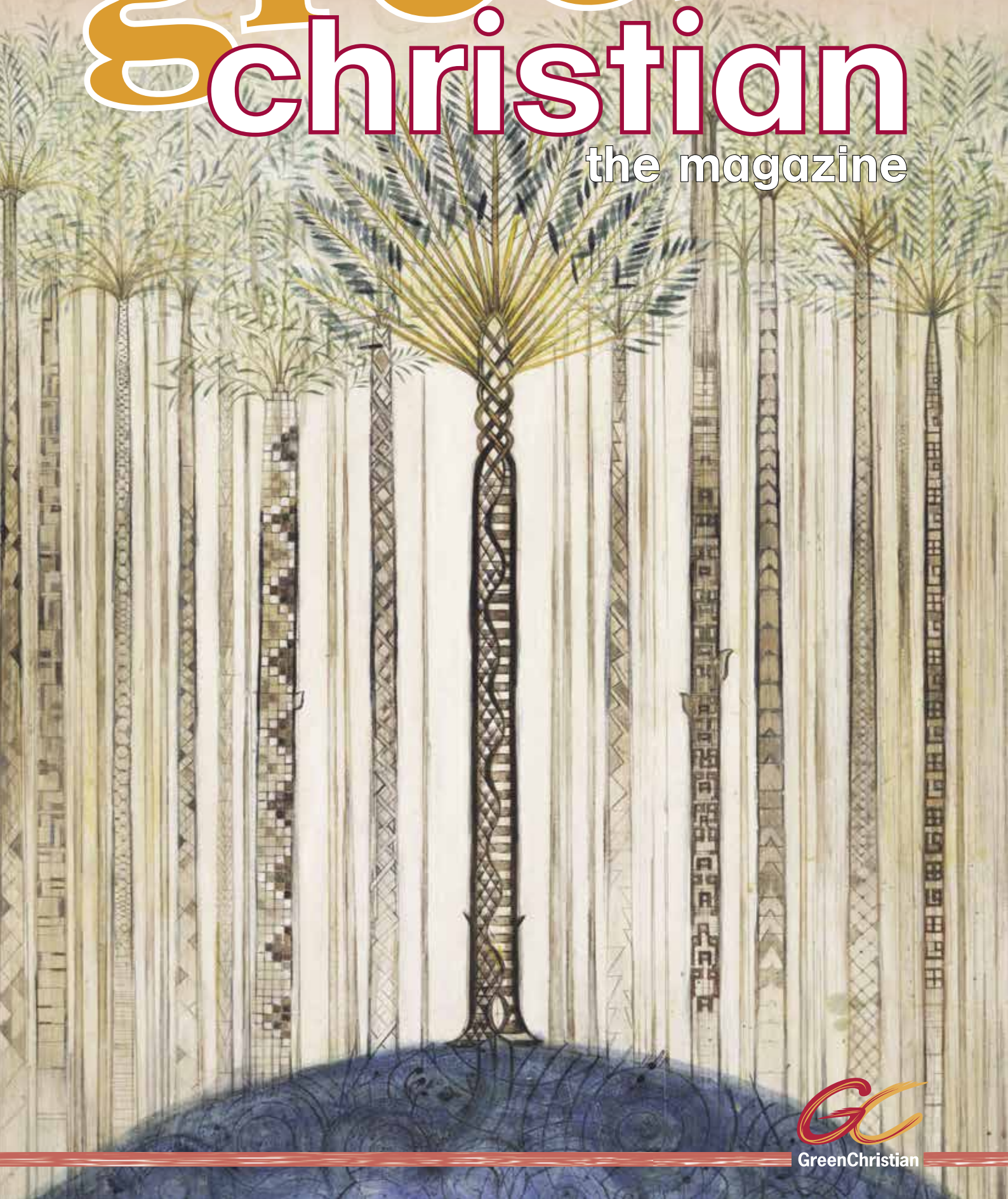


# green christian

the magazine



# Rooted and resilient; living with generosity and hope

At our conference last November, keynote speaker, Rupert Read gave a stark assessment: “we are heading straight towards societal collapse ...whether it comes from climate, AI, geopolitics, or most likely some cascading combination of these”. If you think he is being alarmist – with regard to climate and geopolitics at least – I urge you to watch the National Emergency Briefing videos ([nebriefing.org/](http://nebriefing.org/)). These succinct presentations, given by international experts, set out the climate-related challenges we will face (and are already being faced in many places), unless deep-rooted change is effected very soon. On our current trajectory, societal breakdown is considered highly likely (yes, even in the UK), particularly in relation to crop failures bringing hunger and civil unrest.

Yet greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, climate chaos increases, so how do we respond? How could deep-rooted change ever be achieved?

This issue of our magazine reflects a breadth and depth of responses. We might consider the problem too large and individual actions, of themselves, pointless. Yet changing our behaviour, argues Andrew Davison and, adopting low-carbon technological solutions as we are able, is important to bring positive change and “nudge” others through our example.

Lauren MacDonald writes of the importance of political protest. The Stop Rosebank campaign is pressuring government to make sure oil companies do not continue to drill in the North Sea. This depends on a vocal public, stating loud and clear, that fossil fuels must stay in the ground.

Surely these messages – lifestyle and lobbying – go hand in hand. They are not either/or. The actions we take; the words we use – whether in everyday conversations or in political engagement; the choices we make in how we spend our energy, our time, our money; these must all reflect the future we long for. Christians and churches have a vital role. Jesus said his followers must be salt and light, bringing effective change in the world, just as a few grains of salt transforms the flavour of food.

Peter Musgrave’s report from Bangladesh gives a snapshot of how rural communities are living with increasingly unpredictable flooding and rising river levels. They are coping (just) through practising neighbourliness and sharing know-how – vital community resources. Similarly, at the Peterborough conference, we discussed how church communities in the UK could respond in hopeful and practical ways as we together face the challenge of coming climate shocks.

The Sophia Course developed by Green Christian members at Worcester Cathedral aims to equip participants, combining theological reflection, outdoor worship, and a look at tricky issues around consumerism and the economy. The Magdalene Community Church goes into the woods, all year round, to worship God and cook food together, growing in community, learning from the natural world about living slowly with love and care. Because, as our first article outlines, trees can teach us much about living with patience, rootedness and interconnectedness.

Individually and as communities, can we put care and generosity at the heart of our lives? Can we, as Andrew Davison puts it, “be transformed by practices that re-form our loves”. For, to quote Rupert Read again: “This civilisational crisis is, at root, a spiritual crisis, a crisis of what we are living for, of what may be worth dying for, and of what most deeply is.”



Clare Redfern,  
Editor



Our cover image is called “Abundance; in the garden of the spirit”, by Amber Khokhar, an artist based in Deptford ([amberkhokhar.com](http://amberkhokhar.com)).

Amber writes: “my work looks to the symbols of the inner eternal world. The palm tree is a recurring motif, an emblem of resilience, growth, and beauty, the palm tree stands tall as a representation of nature’s majesty. Its elegant fronds reaching skywards mirrors our aspirations towards the heavens, towards a harmonious coexistence. The exploitation of this resource, often resulting in deforestation and ecological devastation, reflects the reckless pursuit of profit that disregards the delicate and phenomenal balance of our world.”

## 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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# Contents



Welcome to **Green Christian**

Issue 101

Spring 2026

## FEATURES

### 4 Arboreal wisdom for a deeper, greener faith

**Molly Grace McKnight** considers what trees can teach us



### 6 A church for all seasons

**Rachael Phillips** delights in being church outdoors



### 8 Actions speak louder than words

**Andrew Davison** argues we must lead by example



### 10 Calling for a safe and liveable climate

**Lauren MacDonald**, Stop Rosebank Lead Campaigner, explains why we must keep up the pressure

### 12 Kindness and community in the face of climate change

**Peter Musgrave** reports on life in Northern Bangladesh



### 16 Wisdom of head, heart, hand and soul

**Staffan Engstrom and Robin Parry** describe "The Sophia Course"

Our cover image is called "Abundance; in the garden of the spirit", by Amber Khokhar, an artist based in Deptford ([amberkhokhar.com](http://amberkhokhar.com)). Another of Amber's palm paintings, "Palm i" illustrates the article on p4/5.

## REGULARS

**2 EDITORIAL**

**15 PRAYER**

**18 POETRY/PRAYER**

**19 LOCAL GROUPS**

**20 GC NEWS**

**24 BOOK REVIEWS**

Green Christian is an interdenominational UK Christian organisation for people concerned about the environment. It offers insights into ecology and the environment to Christian people and churches, and offers Christian insights to the Green Movement.

### 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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# Arboreal wisdom for a deeper, greener faith

**Molly Grace McKnight** considers what trees can teach us

In a century marked by ecological crisis, climate anxiety and the relentless clearing of forests, the Bible offers an invitation that is both urgent and profound: to read Scripture through the eyes of Creation. Trees, in particular, hold a central place in the biblical imagination, not as background scenery, but as living witnesses to wisdom, justice and renewal. Yet modern readings often overlook this imagery or detach it from ecological reality, missing its profound relevance for today.

From the tree of life in Eden to the tree whose leaves are *"for the healing of the nations"* (Revelation 22:2), the biblical world is richly infused with ecological awareness. Trees are interwoven throughout, embodying and revealing the sacred, and reminding us that caring for Creation is not an optional concern but a central, living truth.

Consider King Solomon, whose wisdom *"extended from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the walls"* (1 Kings 4:33). This image is more than a catalogue of knowledge; it reflects understanding grounded in attentiveness to Creation's diversity. The towering cedar speaks of strength, endurance and flourishing, while the delicate hyssop embodies humility and cleansing. Together, they suggest that true wisdom is not dominion over nature, but a listening, reciprocal engagement with it.

Trees also shape Israel's moral and spiritual imagination. Deborah held court beneath the palm tree (Judges 4:5), her leadership inseparable from its shade, shelter and openness. Prophets likewise compare the faithful to a tree *"planted by the water"* (Jeremiah 17:8), whose leaves remain green even in drought, while the unfaithful are *"like a shrub in the desert."* The flourishing or withering of trees mirrors human ethics and faithfulness to God; the well-being of Creation and the soul are intimately connected. In this way, biblical trees are more than symbols; they are living teachers, embodying endurance, patience and relationality.

Christian theology continues this tree-centred vision, transforming trees into powerful symbols of redemption and sacramental presence. Perhaps the most striking example is the paradox of the tree of the Cross: Jesus is crucified *"on*

*a tree"* (Acts 5:30), deliberately recalling the cursed tree of Deuteronomy 21:23: *"for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse"*. Here, the instrument of death becomes a site of new creation, participating in salvation. In the Cross, God's solidarity extends not only to humanity but to the entire living world.

This tree-centred vision also shapes Christian art and architecture. The soaring columns, branching arches, and vaulted ceilings of medieval cathedrals evoke a forest-like space, where stone mimics the patterns of branches and canopies, reflecting the order and beauty of Creation itself. Even in these human-made spaces, Creation participates in worship, pointing to a God whose grace is inseparable from the living world. Palms waved on Palm Sunday, and the green of liturgical seasons further reinforce this sense of a sacramental ecology, where the natural world itself joins in the praise of the Creator.

The final vision of Revelation returns to the tree. The river of life nourishes a tree *"whose leaves are for the healing of the nations"* (Revelation 22:1-2), connecting eschatology, the end of all things, with ecological restoration and reconciliation. Salvation, in this view, is not escape from Creation, but its healing. To stand beneath this tree is to be reminded that human flourishing depends on the flourishing of the Earth, and that divine wisdom is rooted in life, growth and interconnectedness. Reading trees ecologically also opens the door to understanding the feminine dimension of the divine. In their rootedness, fecundity and sheltering canopies, trees embody qualities traditionally associated with the feminine: nurturing, protective and generative. Biblical imagery often intertwines the arboreal with the maternal: Deborah's palm tree, the Tree of Life and the ruach (the Spirit of God), feminine in Hebrew, moving across the waters in Genesis 1. These images testify to a God who is immanent, life-bearing and relational.

Eco-feminist theologians like Sallie McFague and Rosemary Radford Ruether highlight the connection between patriarchal domination and ecological destruction. Ruether identifies a *"logic of dualism"* that separates male from female, spirit from matter, culture from nature, legitimising exploitation in both social and environmental spheres. The felling of forests, then,

is not only ecological devastation but a symbolic silencing of the maternal voice of Creation. McFague's metaphorical theology deepens this insight: if the world itself is God's body, then to harm trees is to wound the divine. Protecting forests becomes an act of spiritual restoration, reclaiming God's nurturing presence in the world.

In practical terms, biblical trees model virtues countercultural to extraction and domination. They teach patience, resilience, humility and generosity. Isaiah proclaims that *"the earth is defiled by its people"* (Isaiah 24:5), framing ecological harm as a spiritual failure, a refusal to honour the sacredness of the more-than-human world. Responding to this call, reforestation, conserving and restoring ecosystems are acts of theological as well as ecological repentance. Liturgy, too, can awaken ecological awareness: blessing trees, celebrating Eucharist outdoors, and planting forests in honour of Creation's renewal are not sentimental gestures but faithful participation in God's ongoing creative work. To plant a tree is to enter into the work of divine restoration; to protect forests is to honour the image of God present in all living things.

Ultimately, the trees of scripture invite us to reimagine human life within Creation, not above it. They challenge anthropocentric worldviews and remind us that salvation is not disembodied transcendence, but the flourishing of the whole created order. In a world stripped bare by exploitation and ecological neglect, these ancient teachers offer wisdom for living with care, generosity and rootedness. They invite us to begin the work of ecological conversion, to live as part of a sacred forest where every branch, leaf and life matters. ■



Molly Grace McKnight is a Religion, Philosophy, and Ethics student at the University of Leeds with a passion for green theology, ecofeminism, and environmental hermeneutics. She is fascinated by how spirituality and philosophy intertwine to inspire more compassionate and sustainable ways of living.

1. Ruether, R. R. (1992), *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, Harper San Francisco
2. McFague, S. (1993), *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press

*Palm i*  
Artwork credit: Amber Khokhar

# A church for all seasons

**Rachael Phillips** delights in being church outdoors



Outdoor Eucharist

Photo credit: Magdalene Community Church

I remember reading *'This is God's Table: Finding Church Beyond the Walls'* by Anna Woofenden and thinking: "Wow, what an amazing concept: a garden church, an urban farm, a place that brings the rich and poor together in love, outdoors, over food and Christian fellowship, in what was an abandoned parking lot. It's a good job it's in California! Would something like that ever work in the North East of England?"

I needn't have worried. God had it covered. Just as the Bishop of Durham was asking me to plant a church in Chopwell, a former mining village, God was gathering other dreamers and visionaries with a heart for the marginalised and experience of New Monastic Community<sup>1</sup> living; folks passionate about putting the most vulnerable at the heart of things. Oh, and these people were also ardent environmentalists, cooks, home educators, and herbalists. Magdalene Community Church was born in April 2023.

We are unusual. We choose to not have a building; our possessions are few. Wherever our community gathers, that's where church is. Mostly that's in Chopwell Woods where

we pray, relax in hammocks and share in Holy Communion every week of the year. About half our church are children, and we follow a matriarchal model of leadership and structure (mutuality, collaboration, distribution of power and centring the most vulnerable). Because we are not mainstream, we attract people who, for a variety of reasons don't fit in mainstream spaces. So, we are diverse, we are young, and we question everything!

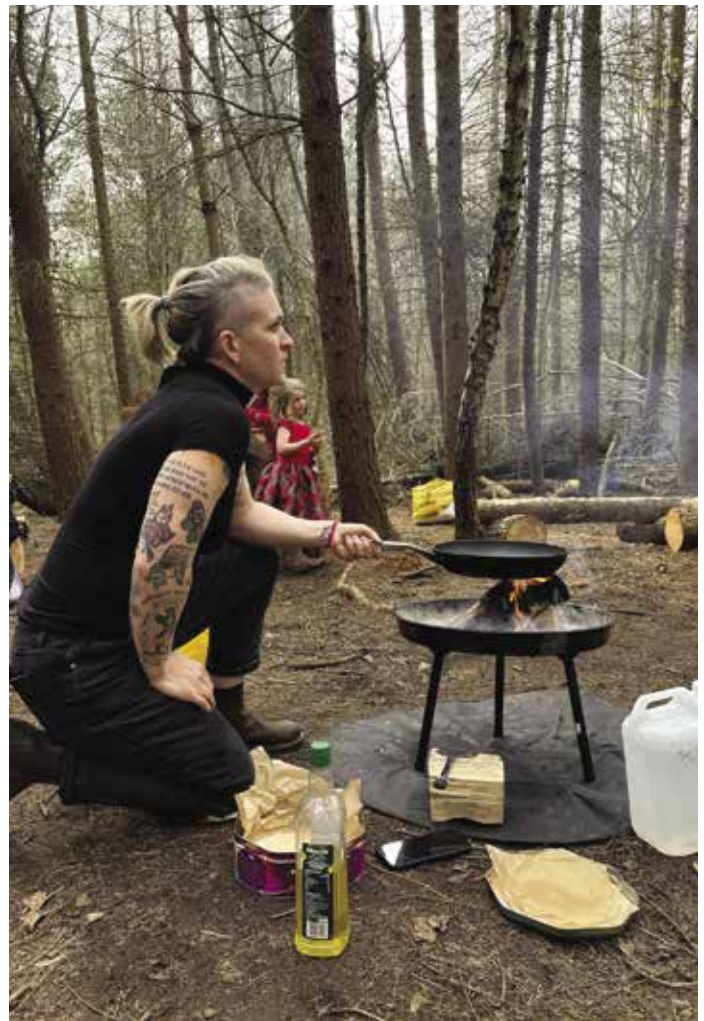
And yet, where our community finds peace and stability is in the predictable liturgies of Common Worship (yes, we're Church of England), and the ancient rhythms of Celtic spirituality. The sacraments and scripture are our vital anchor to Jesus, around whom we centre everything, and we experience these under a canopy of trees, using oil-blessed tree stumps as our communion table, around which we share bread freshly baked on the fire. Our worship is accompanied by birdsong.

Being outdoors all year round helps keep us humble. It helps remind us of the way we should approach our Almighty Creator; with awe and dependence. Seeing the woods change

1. New Monastic Communities are modern Christian communities that revive ancient practices: a Rule of Life, a prayer rhythm etc.

so dramatically with the seasons, and boldly gathering to pray in them regardless of the weather, means we cannot escape the immanence of God. Our Maker is so evidently all around. And being intentionally slow-paced helps too. Our worship lasts for a whole day on Fridays and from lunchtime until teatime on Sundays, so we can take time to notice the creatures we share our space with, and to reconnect ourselves, often barefoot, with the earth.

And whilst we want to share this beautiful little corner of heaven in the cathedral of trees that we call home, growing our numbers doesn't seem to be the main point of our existence. We do keep growing (and that's its own joy and burden) but it seems God gathered us together not to exist for ourselves but for others. To be a prophetic voice. To be a holy disturbance to structures and systems. To question and speak out. As our online platform grows, so too do the number of enquiries from near and far, from individuals and churches keen to hear about all God has blessed us with, wondering whether the Spirit is actually doing something worldwide right now with food, outdoor worship, and vulnerable communities.



Church lunch

Photo credit: Magdalene Community Church

We have set up an "Online Learning Community" to gather together a network of other dreamers and holy schemers. It's a place of teaching, prayer support and robust discussion. This ministry will also hopefully be a double blessing, helping sustain and safeguard our future. It's our 21st century "tent making". Our sessions are free to anyone unable to pay, but modest contributions are requested from those who can afford it.

If you'd like to find out more about us, come and visit. We'd be delighted to meet you and care for you and send you away refreshed and challenged to wherever you usually serve God. Or you can join us online on Facebook, TikTok, Instagram or find out more from our website<sup>2</sup>. And if you are doing something similar, do please get in touch; we would love to link our churches and pray for you. ■



Rev Rachael Phillips is the leader of Magdalene Community Church in Northumbria. Prior to ordination, she was in the British Army, serving in Bosnia and Afghanistan as a cultural specialist and linguist. Rachael also co-presented a Green Christian workshop in October last year, called Outdoor Church (search Green Christian YouTube).



Church in the woods

Photo credit: Magdalene Community Church

2. [magdalenecommunitychurch.com](https://magdalenecommunitychurch.com)

# Actions speak louder than words

**Andrew Davison** argues we must lead by example



*A flourishing life need not be energy-intensive or joyless*

*Photo Credit: Keegan Houser on Unsplash*

When it comes to climate change, I have disappointed myself. I've said all the right things. I've joined in the expression of green pieties on social media, but I have not much changed how I live. I am particularly disappointed that I spent so long treating flying – travelling on aeroplanes as often as I wanted or could afford – as if it were a sort of middle-class birthright. That behaviour alone has put me among the top few percent of offenders when it comes to carbon emissions.

Two things eventually made a difference on that score: or rather, two people. One is a university friend – multilingual, internationally-connected, fantastically successful in her profession – who could afford to travel around the globe as much as she wanted. However, she stopped flying, out of love of the earth she leaves to her children. The second is a colleague from my years at Cambridge, Julian Allwood, Professor of Engineering and the Environment. Here are two Christians who have taken stock and changed their behaviour. I met Julian ten years ago, when I preached at St Bene't's

Church in Cambridge and he was in the congregation. We have recently written a book together in which, among other topics, we address the pessimism that accompanies the idea that individual actions will not make any difference to climate change on their own. The effect that these two friends had on me helps shape my response: that there is no greater provocation to action or, in this case, to restraint, than the example of others.

An illustration comes from Sweden, and the *Flygfritt* (flight-free) movement. It was started by Maja Rosen and Lotta Hammar in 2018, who aimed to persuade 100,000 people not to fly. By not flying themselves and inspiring others to follow, they shifted Swedish habits. Partly in response, the Swedish government announced a change in priorities for its transport infrastructure and is expanding the domestic rail network. We can and should lobby politicians, but they will most likely listen to us when we lead by example.

I was held back from putting concerns about climate change into action by the idea that one person's actions alone make no difference. As I've said, I've come to see that differently. The other thing that deflected me from action has been the idea that some technological solution is bound to come over the hill before long, absolving us from the need to change how we live now. Certainly, our capacity to generate electricity from renewables will continue to grow at pace, but not fast enough to compensate for eliminating fossil fuels from where we use them most, namely transport, heating, and industry. We will make more electricity in the future, but if it's our only source of energy, there will be less energy overall.

Other touted engineering solutions include "green hydrogen" and "carbon capture and storage" (CCS), implemented at scale so that we can carry on using fossil fuels without dangerous climate consequences. This, however, is unrealistic. The production of "green hydrogen" is an energy-intensive process, requiring renewable electricity that would be better used elsewhere. And CCS is not a new or speculative technology; it has been used at industrial scale since 1972 and despite more than five decades of development, it is still marginal. Global CCS capacity has reached just 0.1% of emissions; even if installation rates immediately expanded 10-fold, the effect on climate mitigation by 2050 would remain insignificant.<sup>1</sup> CCS facilities are large, complex projects that require extensive planning, public consent, geological assessment, and capital investment. Even on an optimistic view, these solutions won't be making a game-changing difference by 2050.

That's not to be down on technology. We can have hope that innovations like CCS and nuclear fusion might transform the scene in the long term but they cannot currently be deployed at scale. As we face climate catastrophe, we need a clear-sighted sense of what matters and what does not, in changing how we live and in reducing our energy use. Avoiding plastic straws is all very good, but it is "*tithing mint, dill, and cumin*" (Matt. 23:23) compared to how households most use energy or contribute to climate change: driving, heating, flying, and a ruminant- and dairy-heavy diet.

That's where restraint is needed, and Christian tradition is no stranger to restraint. Many of us observe the season of Lent; many traditions prescribe (or advise) days of fasting. I have found Lent a useful way to think about our response to climate change. The parallel is only partial. Lent lasts for forty days; climate-driven restraint needs to last for years to come. On the other hand, in many ways the changes required to reduce



The climate is changing

Photo Credit: Flight Free UK

carbon emissions are less demanding than those of Lent. In that season, we might deliberately set certain pleasures aside. The restraint we need to show in responding to climate change is different: lives need to change, but we do not need to make anything needlessly difficult. It is not a recipe for joylessness.

Christian traditions have long understood that we are not transformed primarily by argument, but by practices that slowly re-form our loves. We come, over time, to want different things. What begins as discipline can become freedom. That is why restraint in the face of climate change need not be seen as a story of loss. Some things must be given up. But many of the goods that sustain a flourishing life — friendship, attention, beauty, worship, care for the vulnerable, delight in Creation — are not energy-intensive at all. They are, rather, time-intensive, relational, and local. They require presence more than consumption.

The world offers very few places where people can talk and take stock of their lives together, but our churches can be exactly that. We can assess the facts together. We can admit our weaknesses to one another. We can inspire one another. We can make resolutions, which are so much more powerful when they are made together. ■



The Revd Prof Andrew Davison is the Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford. With Professor Julian Allwood, he is the author of *Promise the Earth: A Safe Climate in Good Faith* (Cambridge, 2026). After a DPhil in biochemistry at Oxford, he switched to theology but remains keenly interested in the relationships between theology, philosophy, science and technology.

1. [nature.com/articles/s44286-025-00344-1](https://www.nature.com/articles/s44286-025-00344-1) "Too late for CCS and Hydrogen", J. Allwood, Jan 2026

# Calling for a safe and liveable climate

**Lauren MacDonald**, Stop Rosebank Lead Campaigner, explains why we must keep up the pressure



Photo credit: Angela Christofilou

Many things in the world aren't going very well right now. Climate denial is creeping back into mainstream politics; protesters face ever-harsher consequences for taking action; and the climate crisis has brought record-breaking heat, storms, wildfires, flooding and drought to the UK and beyond. We continue to watch in horror as genocide and human rights violations escalate around the world. A wealthy few take home obscene profits, and ordinary people struggle to keep their heads above water.

And yet, looking back over the past year, even in the face of all this, there is hope.

Thousands of us have been raising the alarm against Rosebank, the UK's biggest undeveloped oil field, and we're so close to winning. Right now, a new decision on Rosebank is sitting on ministers' desks, following our successful legal challenge which overturned the original approval. That decision will be a defining test of whether this government is serious about its climate promises.

The scientific evidence is clear; we cannot open new North Sea oil and gas projects if we are to stay within the 1.5°C threshold<sup>1</sup> set out in the Paris Agreement, to which the UK

is a signatory. In fact, Rosebank's vast CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would equate to more than those that 700 million people in the Global South produce in a year. It's simply not possible to drill at Rosebank and uphold our climate commitments.

Besides, Rosebank is a very bad deal for the UK – it won't lower bills and will do almost nothing to boost energy security<sup>2</sup>, given that most of it is oil destined for export. That's why we came together to say: enough. Here's what we achieved together – and why we need to keep going until Rosebank, and all new drilling, is rejected once and for all.

## A year of sustained pressure

2025 began with a huge push to hold companies like Rosebank's owners Equinor and Shell accountable for the full scale of the climate pollution of new oil and gas projects.

In 2024, a landmark ruling in the Supreme Court meant that decision-makers are now required to consider the emissions caused by actually burning oil and gas, not just those produced during extraction. Following this, the government underwent a consultation period to redefine the rules for assessing new oil and gas projects in line with the court ruling.

So in January 2025, Stop Rosebank — alongside 50 organisations and an astonishing 400,000 people who signed onto a petition — piled in to make sure that new rules were up to the job, and to tell the government to stop approving new fossil fuel projects.

## A moment of hope

Then came the big moment none of us will forget: we won our court case against Rosebank. Following the Supreme Court judgement, Scotland's Court of Session ruled that the original approval of Rosebank by the previous government in 2023 was unlawful, as it did not take into account the huge emissions that would be caused by burning Rosebank's oil. It meant that the project's owners would need to reapply for permission if they wanted the project to go ahead.

This was a huge victory for the climate – significant not just in the UK, but also around the world. It was a rare, genuine moment of hope that rippled far beyond the campaign.

The Stop Rosebank campaign is made up of over 250 organisations, including the “No Faith In Fossil Fuels” coalition of Christian organisations. In March 2025, they marked Ash Wednesday with a beautiful, packed-out service at St John's Waterloo, calling for an end to new fossil fuels. This was followed by a heroic overnight vigil in the cold outside the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, with whom the Rosebank decision sits.

By April we'd reached a significant milestone: a petition urging Keir Starmer to reject Rosebank hit the million mark. Instead of new drilling, people called on his government to properly invest in the UK's transition to renewable energy and to make sure the workers and communities, currently dependent on oil and gas, benefit from it.

## Tough new rules must be followed

In the summer, the climate movement saw another victory: the government introduced tough new rules following the consultation in January – essentially a new “climate test”. For the first time, oil and gas companies needed to reveal all the emissions from a new drilling project, meaning regulators could assess its full climate harm.

The response from the network was incredible, with letters sent to the government – from Scotland to the South coast – from health organisations and parent groups, to marine bodies and a coalition of Christian campaigners. The pressure was sustained with protests, from pilgrimages to popstars saying the logical next step for the government is to reject Rosebank, on the grounds that it would be clearly incompatible with a safe climate.

In the Autumn, Equinor resubmitted its application to develop Rosebank. This time round, though, subject to the government's new climate test. And we were ready: more than 250 organisations and over 12,000 people sent messages to the Prime Minister urging him to reject it.

## Winning is possible

Now, the decision to approve or reject Rosebank rests with the government. While it is unclear which way it will go, we're awaiting this decision knowing that time and again, people have proved that winning is possible.

In 2021, thousands of people across the UK came together and stopped Cambo, a massive proposed offshore oil field that was to be developed by Shell. In 2020, Equinor abandoned its plans to drill for oil in the Great Australian Bight Marine Park following immense pressure from community members. In 2024, Sarah Finch won the landmark Supreme Court ruling against new oil drilling in Surrey, following a 5-year legal battle.

And just months ago, the UK government announced a permanent ban on new oil and gas licenses for exploration (this doesn't apply to Rosebank as it was licensed years ago). This makes the UK the first major oil and gas producer in the Global North to take a clear step away from fossil fuels. It is a welcome move, but now the government must choose to put the interests of us all, for a safe and liveable climate, ahead of those who want to develop and profit from Rosebank.

By the time you read this, the government's decision on Rosebank could well have been announced. Whatever the outcome, you can be sure that we continue to build on our past achievements and our collective efforts will continue into 2026. Whether its signing a petition, writing to and meeting your MP, joining us on a protest, or setting up one of your own – we'd love you to join us.

Follow us on #stoprosebank or visit [www.stopcambo.org.uk/](http://www.stopcambo.org.uk/) to join the campaign. ■



Lauren MacDonald works to coordinate large-scale mobilisations and campaigns against new oil and gas, with a current focus on the Stop Rosebank campaign. She is also a regular media commentator. Lauren is passionate about speaking truth to power and harnessing the strength of communities to hold governments accountable on climate.



Green Christian members joining the protest

Photo credit: Mark Francis

1. [ucl.ac.uk/policy-lab/sites/policy\\_lab/files/report-climate\\_implications\\_pages\\_online.pdf](https://ucl.ac.uk/policy-lab/sites/policy_lab/files/report-climate_implications_pages_online.pdf)

2. [theguardian.com/environment/2024/jan/04/uk-government-admits-rosebank-oil-will-not-be-kept-in-uk-to-boost-energy-security](https://theguardian.com/environment/2024/jan/04/uk-government-admits-rosebank-oil-will-not-be-kept-in-uk-to-boost-energy-security)

# Kindness and community in the face of climate change

**Peter Musgrave** reports on life in Northern Bangladesh



The Jamuna river and its vast embankment in the dry season

Photo credit: Peter Musgrave

Just over a year ago, during the dry season, I stood on the wide, vast embankment of the river Jamuna, in Bogura District, Northern Bangladesh. The river is huge and its basin is sometimes 20 km across. Stretched out in front of me was the sand beach and the river in the distance. There are three levels of embankment of the river built by the local government at different times as the river gets higher and higher during the flood season. The Jamuna has always flooded its nearby land in the rainy season. But whereas before, floods could be expected once or twice a year, now the floods are more severe, and happen unpredictably and more frequently.

I worked in this area, with Mennonite Central Committee, a Christian relief and development organisation, from 2010 to 2014 and I went to see how their work with a small NGO called Maitree Palli Unnayan Sangathon (MPUS), or Friendship Rural

Development Society, was progressing. I was amazed at what I saw and learnt on that day.



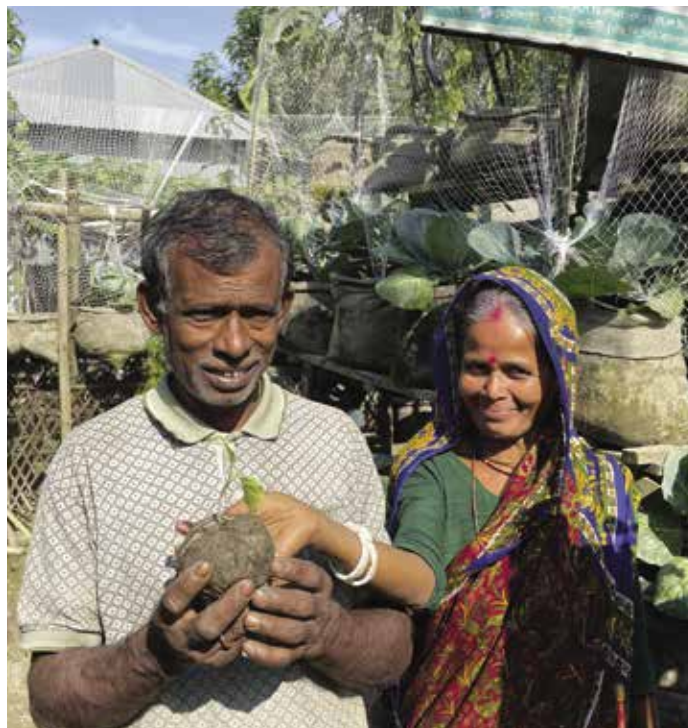
Shamina Aktar Photo credit: MCC

Travelling with Rozina, an MCC staff member, I met Shamima Aktar, who grew up beside the Jamuna River as a child but had to move several times because floods and storms had destroyed her family's land. Now Shamima works for MPUS, giving advice and support, working with women's groups to develop their self-help capacities and suggesting low-cost practices to help people cope with the flooding.

## Practical solutions for farmers

Shamina introduced me to Rani and Nikhil, local village people who have also had to move home many times due to the changing floods. I was impressed with how Rani and Nikhil are showing kindness to others in their para (neighbourhood) and to the earth, by helping their neighbours to develop effective flood-safe farming practices. As locals, dependent like others on their patch of land for their food and livelihood, their advice is trusted. They have a “Demonstration plot”, where neighbours notice the simple, eco-friendly organic farming practices that are employed – and then try these for themselves.

As with much NGO work, there is kindness at every level. And boundaries of religion are overcome too, Shamina being Muslim, and Rani and Nikhil, and their neighbours, Hindu. I visited their village at a time in Bangladesh when there were many news stories of conflict between Hindu and Muslims, creating huge fear, but MPUS has worked to overcome such divisions.



Kindness to the earth. Rani with her vermi compost

Photo Credits: Peter Musgrave

Compost, needed to grow plants, is made locally. Rani uses small red wiggly worms, cow dung and water hyacinth plants. It is called vermi compost. Shamima has shown Nikhil and Rani how to construct a wooden bamboo frame, capable of

holding the weight of many hanging baskets. Nikhil shows other villagers how the baskets are attached and filled with the vermi compost. The bags can be placed at three different levels.



*Kindness is being adaptive and practical*

In this picture, the floods have come but the plants are still surviving. Even when the water has come right up to the hanging basket this family have raised the bags higher on



the frame. In this way they are enabled to remain, rather than giving up and moving somewhere else.



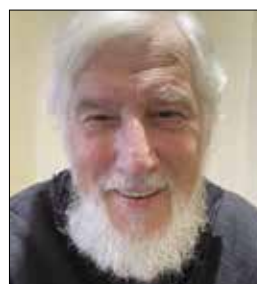
*Floating gardens for growing crops*

*Photo credits: MCC*

Nikhil and Rani also demonstrate floating gardens which provide a unique way of growing essential vegetable crops. Plants, including Red Amaranth, grow well on the floating vegetable beds. The beds are made from water hyacinth, which is a pervasive weed growing everywhere in Bangladesh. The hyacinth is gathered into a mound and allowed to rot down, then compost is added.

In these examples, and more, Rani and Nikhil have been supported by the kindness of Shamina and the work of the development organisations. I hope we might be inspired too to develop the kindness, creative imagination and community cohesion needed to adapt as the effects of climate change worsen.

You can take a closer look at Shamina, Rani and Nikhil's work at [mcc.org/our-stories/above-floodwaters](https://mcc.org/our-stories/above-floodwaters) and read about Peter's visit last year in his blog [petermusgrave.wordpress.com/2025/02/05/beside-the-ever-changing-banks-of-the-river-jamuna/](https://petermusgrave.wordpress.com/2025/02/05/beside-the-ever-changing-banks-of-the-river-jamuna/) ■



Peter Musgrave is a Green Christian member who worked for several years in Bangladesh doing development work, initially with the Church of Bangladesh Social Development Programme, later with Mennonite Central Committee. These pictures and stories were from a return visit in January 2025.

## Hope in the making – a prayer for Bangladesh

Written by Peter and Ruth Musgrave

**Hope making God, friend of the poor,  
We pray for the beautiful land and people of  
Bangladesh.**

**We grieve for  
the loss of the forests  
the rising sea levels  
the depleted soil  
the polluted air  
the pressure of human population.**

**Create hope for those who have lost land and  
livelihood due to floods, river erosion and cyclones,  
who have been displaced to the slums of Dhaka.**

**Offer hope to the land, depleted by pesticides and  
fertilisers. Bless those working to heal it.**

**Give hope to leaders working to create a new  
government which works for all the people.**

**Inspire hope through women and men who show  
that change is possible.**

**Spread hope through the faithful and patient work  
of community organisations which work with few  
resources.**

**Nurture hope through those groups bringing  
international resources to strengthen and  
encourage local initiatives.**

**Grow hope among those building relationships  
between Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians  
and between Bengalis and minority ethnic groups.**

**God of hope, in all these ways, be with and bless the  
people and land of Bangladesh.**

**Amen**

# Wisdom of head, heart, hand and soul

**Staffan Engstrom** and **Robin Parry** describe The Sophia Course



Some of the Sophia Course participants in the cathedral garden

Photo credit: Staffan Engstrom

Over a year ago the two of us got together within our roles at Worcester Cathedral, to frame the Sophia Course, as a foundation for Christian eco-spirituality and discipleship. The real question that we were grappling with was: how to help modern people of faith to explore and grow in Christian discipleship, in a world facing huge environmental challenges.

We saw a need to “join up the dots” between theology, practice and spirituality, whilst also enabling the encounter of God in the natural world. There are many very good initiatives out there, but our instinct was that the making of eco-disciples means helping folk to integrate what is happening from a faith and environmental perspective in terms of head, heart, hand, and soul. The Sophia Course gives participants the tools and the grounding for growth.

Robin was able to draw on his theological training and particular interest in Christian eco-spirituality. Staffan had been active in Green Christian as the online Workshops co-ordinator during Covid lockdowns, learning from enthusiasts and experts across a wide range of topics. The experience of helping to run the online workshops led to the launch of Worcester Cathedral's programme for green and generous living, *Living Gently on the Earth*, which won the Church Times Green Churches Award for training and education in 2024.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are numerous similarities between Green Christian's Way of Life programme<sup>1</sup> and the Sophia Course. There is theological teaching, prayer, a commitment to a Rule of Life, practical green living, and a commitment to encouraging one another through fellowship. The most obvious difference is how everyone gets together regularly on site in the cathedral grounds for nature engagement and worship, and inside for teaching and learning. Robin designed an eco-focused daily prayer for participants to use, which synchronises with the seasons of the church year. Course participants can join in with this online, use it alone, or find their own preferred approach to prayer and Bible reading.

The Sophia Course is quite a commitment, as we asked people to promise to come to at least five of the six on-site learning days held on Saturdays through the year, and to follow the Rule of Life. Then again, discipleship requires commitment. In any case, the engagement with the course really encouraged us, with all 25 places taken and regular participation at the online daily prayer.

The course is an immersive and holistic programme blending theological and practical teaching with hands-on activities, social time, and contemplative prayer. On each of the six Learning Days, therefore, there have been four core components making each

1. The Green Christian Way of Life offers deeper engagement and shared encouragement with other members who live in your area [greenchristian.org.uk/introduction/encouragement/way/](https://greenchristian.org.uk/introduction/encouragement/way/).

day a varied and interesting mix of teaching, worship, creativity and engagement with nature:

- Bible Study and discussion sessions have addressed the ancient wisdom of Christian spirituality and theology in the modern context of ecological harm. It builds on the core foundation of the divine Sophia wisdom in Christianity: God creating and sustaining the cosmos through Wisdom (who is Christ) where ecological concern means humanity aligning with the natural order of Creation, where seeking wisdom in that Creation is ultimately seeking Christ.
- The Sacred Garden sessions are held outside, with opportunities for various creative, artistic, practical wildcraft skills, gardening activities, and silent contemplation. There are artists, wildcrafters, gardeners, and even a poet to help. These are enjoyable, sociable times, giving a break from head-learning, and enabling participants to look beyond theory to practice and presence.
- The Living Gently on the Earth teaching and discussion sessions engage with the practical issues of green and generous living. The sessions begin with consumerism and the economy, then looking at each of the at-risk planetary boundaries of Kate Raworth's doughnut economics model<sup>2</sup> to assess together what living gently on the earth means from a practical perspective.



Creativity at work in the garden

Photo: John Kime

- Worship in the garden concludes the learning days together, as a home-grown expression of forest church, with prayer and giving thanks for the day through ecologically focused worship.

Feedback from course participants has been extremely positive. One said simply "amazing and enlightening"; others enthused about how they have been helped to integrate their concern for the environment with their faith; others said how encouraging it

2. [kateraworth.com/doughnut/](http://kateraworth.com/doughnut/)



Living Gently on the Earth teaching

Photo: Robin Parry

had been to meet other Christians who believe that caring for the environment is important; and still others how much they enjoyed it. Most of all, it has been fun.

For 2026, the course will be delivered over seven monthly days, from April to October, six of which will be based at Worcester Cathedral, and one additional day at the Benedictine monastery of Mucknell Abbey in recognition of the role and importance of contemplative practices within eco-spirituality.

You can find out more about the course on Worcester Cathedral's website, under The Sophia Course. We would love to hear from you if you would like to know more. Perhaps we can also support you in doing a similar thing; we could offer resources, or you may consider participation on the Sophia Course yourself, in 2026.



The Sophia Course website QR Code

Contact emails: [ecogroup.staffan@worcestercathedral.org.uk](mailto:ecogroup.staffan@worcestercathedral.org.uk)  
[RobinParry@worcestercathedral.org.uk](mailto:RobinParry@worcestercathedral.org.uk) ■



Staffan Engstrom is Lay Canon and member of Chapter at Worcester Cathedral. He worked for many years in business as an engineer, corporate executive, and strategy consultant.



The Revd Dr Robin Parry is Minor Canon for Eco-Spirituality at Worcester Cathedral and an academic books editor. His books include *Christian Eco-Spirituality: An Outline* (Cascade Books, 2025)



"Lighthouse, Fife" - Oil painting by Peter Porteous-Butler

## Haiku: Rock in the Storms

Love folks in times tense.

Beacon of resilience.

Place of Hope commence.

Show up, serve fully.

Care, share, prayer. Humbly

lead community.

Reach out, build trust true.

Pastoral, prophetic too.

Our vision renew!

by Mary Andrews, written in response to Green  
Christian's Building on the Rock conference

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

You made a world of wonder,

A world that takes our breath away.

You declared it be good.

We take our place within the choir of Creation,

Within the dance of biodiversity,

The rich tapestry of life.

The Lord's name is to be praised.

From prayer 17 of *40 Prayers for the Climate and  
Ecological Emergency* by Rev Jon Swales, with  
permission.

To see the whole collection visit the  
Green Christian website

# Reimagining

**Isobel Murdoch** reflects on the potential of Green Christian local groups

In the last issue of this magazine, Maya Adams' powerful poem *Love in the Breaking* called us to reflect on change, possibility and the emerging of new things, whilst Jan Richardson's poem *Blessing of Hope* grounded that hope in tangible, everyday steps. Then, yesterday I was talking to someone about running a sports club; they believe that if you stand still, you go backwards. So how do you feel about change? Is it positive or negative?

Many churches have started to reimagine what they do, even to reinvent themselves (such as my local church, which was awarded the title National Churches Trust "Church of the Year" for being a thriving hub at the heart of our community). Maybe this time can be an opportunity for different ways of living and expressing faith to come to the fore, being "green Christians" among them. Maybe it could help draw in people who don't usually come to church but who may be open to spirituality. At the moment, for example, there's a surge of interest in mindfulness and meditation, an opportunity for churches to respond. What about a time of meditation for the planet?

Any and all of our events and groups give Green Christian a practical, visible presence on the ground. Imagine what you might do where you are. You don't have to commit to running a group – maybe you would prefer to arrange a single event, then see where that leads. Could you hold a time of prayer for climate and nature in your church



Cheltenham Green Christian group's monthly climate vigil

Photo: Martin Davis

encourage people in your congregation, or in your village, town or city, to attend an outdoor event, maybe making bug hotels, or to do some craftivism? Just consider how green activities might help your church or local churches reinvent what they do in the community, drawing people together.

Recently our local group members have been taking part in wider campaigns and initiatives, such as an action group on plastics, or climate lobbying. There are still things happening, just not always specific to the Green Christian group. **Colchester Green Christian Group** took part in at the Free Family Fun Day last September, reaching out to local churches. This event and a Taizé Service held at St Teresa's RC Church were very successful. In 2026 they plan to hold a day conference entitled "Moving on with Eco-Church" with Jo Herbert-James from A Rocha and the Bishop of Colchester as guest speakers, as well as attending other events – both Christian and secular – including a Season for Creation Service next September.

**Faith and the Environment Lincolnshire** held its second Facing the Storm conference on September 27th at Alive

Church Lincoln. In an effort to recruit different audiences, they included drama, art and voices of young people. Ruth Valerio was the keynote speaker; they spent some time in reflection after her inspiring presentation.

In **Cheltenham**, Green Christian members and others held a 4-week series of Advent talks within the local *Laudato Si'* circle. They also continue to support the monthly climate vigil on Cheltenham Promenade, and they hold fortnightly times of Climate Prayer. This has a different leader each time, among them several Green Christian members from further afield over recent months.

If you would like to reimagine how you might help introduce Green Christian to your church and community, do get in touch! ■



Isobel Murdoch

Green Christian local groups coordinator  
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## Introduction to Liddy, Green Christian's Digital Media Officer

It feels a bit weird to be writing an introduction only now because I've been here since September and I feel well and truly settled in and part of the Green Christian family.

My role at Green Christian largely revolves around our social media: Instagram, Facebook, Bluesky, X and a bit of YouTube too. If you see a Green Christian graphic or short video online, that will have been edited by me!

I was super excited to start working at Green Christian, as I've always cared deeply about the environment and seen looking after the world as a natural part of my Christian calling. I'm a big social media nerd and I love being creative, so this seemed like such a good chance to mesh those passions together.

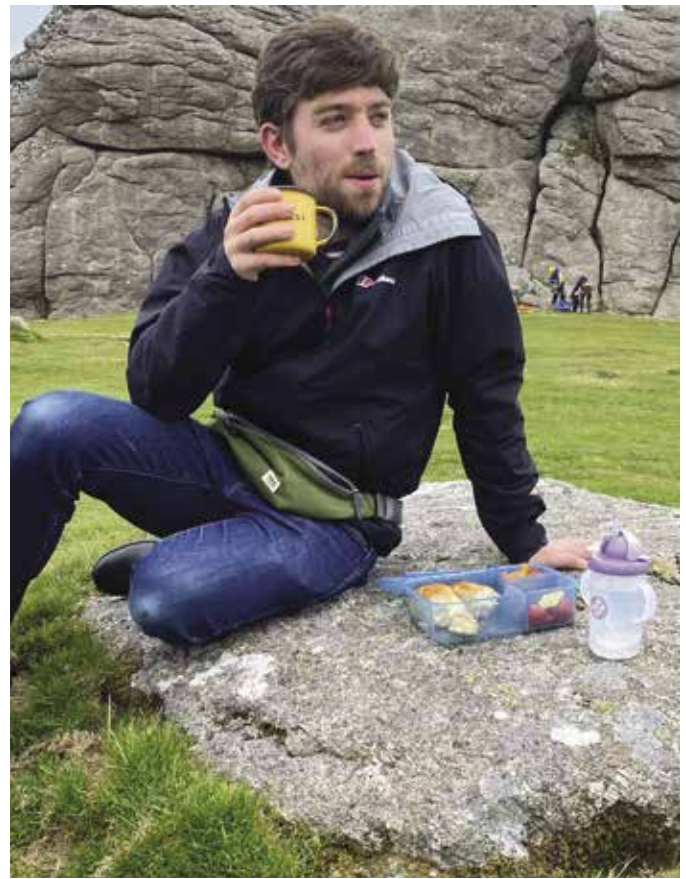
I previously worked at Christian CND for four years – I realise there's a fair bit of crossover between Christian peace activists and Christian climate activists, so you may well have come across me in that role too. The funding for my role ran out in August, and while I had absolutely no idea what my next move would be, God obviously had great plans and I'm really enjoying this new season. Alongside the five hours a week I work for Green Christian, I spend a few days each week working at Shieldfield Art Works, a Methodist-run community art gallery in Newcastle. If you're in the North East, do come and check out the exhibitions and classes we run, as well as our gorgeous community garden which is a constant reminder to me of the wonder of Creation.

Outside of work, I love singing all sorts of music, lifting heavy weights in the gym, and cuddling my pet cat, Mack. I help run a fresh expression Methodist church in Newcastle and I love finding new ways to worship God and reflect on the Bible.

If you'd like to support the work I do, the best thing that you can do is "like" any social media posts you see, comment on them, or share them. All of this helps us with the social media algorithms (think of it like us getting brownie points with the platforms themselves) and lets more people see what we're up to and learn about Green Christian.



## Introducing new trustee, Jack Wakefield



I'm Jack, and I'm excited to be the latest trustee to join Green Christian. Now feels like a critical moment in the fight for a liveable planet, and for us at Green Christian to educate, inspire and equip the full breadth of the Church to play its part.

On the one hand we have a government that, in some areas, is moving faster than any before: investing billions into achieving clean power this decade, scaling renewables and clean heating at impressive pace despite much opposition and obstacles. But that drive to clean energy isn't matched by support for nature, and we see dangerous compromises on airport expansion.

We're also seeing the consensus on climate science fracturing as the world heads into a more volatile and unpredictable era. Amidst all of this, I believe as Christians we're called to stand firm for truth and justice, to pray boldly, to bless and encourage the progress, while confronting the lies and vested interests that stand against a liveable, more just world. While in it all, holding onto the hope that we know the God who defeats death and is at work renewing all things.

My journey into Creation care started as a teenager at the Christian festival New Wine, and led to several years working for Tearfund. At Tearfund, I was involved in outreach to churches and led their plastic pollution campaigning. I now work in ethical investment, supporting efforts to finance the energy transition. I live with my wife, two young girls and our bonkers dog, Disco.



David Baird, CC BY 2.0, altered

## Building on the rock conference

Around 80 people attended Green Christian's conference last November in Peterborough, to consider the role that churches could play in navigating the escalating impacts of the climate crisis. After decades campaigning for cuts to global carbon emissions, we have to accept an uncomfortable truth: the world is failing to achieve the action necessary to keep humanity safe. We now have not one job but two – adaptation to climate change, as well as mitigation through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Our keynote speaker, Rupert Read, co-director of the Climate Majority Project, urged churches to give leadership in this time of crisis, saying: *“Any spirituality or religion that is not engaged with the real world is an evasion, a distraction, a fail. Climate breakdown shows that real spirituality today must be engaged, must be ecological”*.

Rupert was joined by Jo Chamberlain and Adrian Fox, national officers for the Church of England Environment Programme, who shared their work preparing congregations for climate resilience, highlighting examples of where churches are already stepping up. Revd Vanessa Elston, bringing perspectives from pastoral care and mission, encouraged us all to find our focus, be rooted both in God and our communities and discover: *“What is ours to do?”* All the presentations can be watched on YouTube, accessed via the Green Christian website.

This is not about “giving up” on climate change – every fraction of a degree of warming avoided now will make a difference, so there can be no room for defeatism. Many congregations already play a vital leadership role in their communities, meeting practical, spiritual and emotional needs; but as communities

face the worsening consequences and disruptions of climate change, the role of churches must evolve to play a deeper role. Attendees worked together to summarize four key elements deemed necessary in climate-responsible Christianity:

- Give truthful, Creation-led learning, leadership and worship – aspiring to be prophetic in the present crisis.
- Open wide our churches – creating interconnected hubs which signpost activities and resources, both practical and spiritual.
- Become catalysts, hosts and convenors – collaborating with MPs, councillors, agencies and people of all faiths or none in learning and resilience planning.
- Be a good friend and neighbour – with hospitality, hope and care, offering a living oasis of support.

## Help us build a climate resilience toolkit for churches

Could you help us develop a toolkit enabling churches to renew their mission for this time of climate destabilisation? Following on from the day in Peterborough, at our Way of Life annual gathering in February, Way of Life members considered what “spiritual adaptation” may mean for our faith journeys.

In *Storm of Hope*, our yearly vision statement, we set out a Call to Mission with questions for local congregations. Moral, spiritual and practical leadership is going to be needed in the next few decades – why should this not come from the church? Why should it not come from your church? Whether you attended the conference or not, if you're interested in the challenges of climate adaptation, join us and help get a toolkit written, published and used. Contact Ruth ([info@greenchristian.org.uk](mailto:info@greenchristian.org.uk)) to find out more.

## National Emergency Briefing

In November last year, 10 of the UK's leading experts gave highly watchable briefings on the climate and nature crisis, outlining the implications for health, food, national security and the economy. The invited audience included politicians and leaders from business, culture, faith and the media. The presentations are informative, concise and present a clear case for positive action and change in our lifestyles, technology and political priorities.

A 45-minute documentary from the briefing brings the science, testimonies and national implications together in one compelling film, aiming to open up informed conversation with decision-makers in communities. Can you help with hosting or promoting in your community? See the National Emergency Briefing blog on the Green Christian website.

## Green Christian Workshops

Rev. Jan Nobel's recent workshop, "Living Amongst the Dead", about nature in churchyards, has proved popular on the Green Christian YouTube channel. Jan is a parish priest and "Green Ambassador" for the Diocese of York. Other workshops have been about the meaning of pilgrimage, and local free fruit harvesting! Just type Green Christian YouTube channel into a search engine; workshops last approximately one hour or more including questions and discussion.

## New look LOAF leaflet

Many of you have used our LOAF resources over the years, pressing home the importance of choosing food that's Local, Organic, Animal-friendly and Fairly-traded. The popular leaflet has had a rewrite. Do ask for copies of this and other leaflets to display in your church.



## Summer Festivals

We will have stalls at Greenbelt, New Wine and the Cliff Festival near Sheffield in summer 2026. Come and visit our stalls!



## Retrofitting to Passivhaus standards

You can also find a recording on our YouTube channel of a recent workshop led by Alex Bienfait and Stephanie Boucher (a previous editor of *Green Christian* magazine) called "From 1950s box to Passivhaus: our retrofit journey." Stephanie and Alex describe how they transformed their 1950s brick-built detached house with oil-fired central heating into a comfortable and stylish energy-efficient home powered by renewables. They

did this by radically improving the insulation and airtightness of the house to stringent Passivhaus standards and are, in fact, the first Passivhaus retrofit to be registered in Kent. They have also added other environmentally-aware technologies, such as solar panels and a rainwater harvester to flush the toilets. An inspiring, must-see if you missed this workshop!



Alex and Stephanie's house prior to retrofitting



Alex and Stephanie's stylishly retrofitted house today

## Cloud and Fire online learning module



Cloud and Fire is part of Green Christian's Borrowed Time programme which aims to offer a safe space to explore climate grief and eco-anxiety. Cloud and Fire is intended to enable those in Christian ministry to deepen their theological, spiritual and pastoral responses for the new realities. We have now developed an e-learning module for Cloud and Fire, with the same content as the meeting-based programme, but the interactions are via online comment on the content rather than fortnightly meetings on Zoom. If you've ever done an online e-learning course, it will be familiar and you'll know how interesting the comments and discussion can be.

We are starting this reflective journey a couple of weeks after Easter. The beauty of doing it this way is that you can join a

bit late and catch up – there's a certain amount of flexibility inherent.

As with the original Cloud and Fire, there are 8 sections, and we reckon on you taking a fortnight over each (but you can vary that) so perhaps allocate 9 - 20 weeks to do this course, depending on your own disposable time and need for reflection.

There's an orientation mini-module before you start, to try to make sure that you'll find it helpful; enrolment for this does not imply commitment to the whole course. See [canvas.instructure.com/enroll/FYMYDA](https://canvas.instructure.com/enroll/FYMYDA) for more details or visit the Green Christian website and look under "Encouragement".

## Bee a climate and nature champion

We launched our Bee postcard activity at Greenbelt last summer. We invited people to decorate the front of a postcard with thumb-print bees and write a message to the government on the other side, asking MPs to support the *Climate and Nature Bill*. We are presenting the children's Bee postcards to MPs in the Easter holidays.

Zero Hour's Climate and Nature Bill would legislate to protect climate and nature in line with the most up-to-date science. They have incorporated both the *National Emergency Briefing*, as well as the government's recent *Global Biodiversity Loss, Ecosystem Collapse and National Security Report* into their campaign.

See [greenchristian.org.uk/the-climate-and-nature-bill/](https://greenchristian.org.uk/the-climate-and-nature-bill/)



Colourful Bee Cards

Credit\_ Ruth Jarman

## river/run – an eco-poetic trilogy

Helen Moore  
October 2024  
Cape Farewell  
ISBN: 978-0-9553109-1-1  
61 pages  
RRP £8.95 (paperback)



Helen Moore describes herself as a pioneering eco-poet and socially engaged artist. As she writes, “my work recognises our intrinsic interdependence with the more-than-human world, and the catastrophic harms that our collective anthropocentrism is causing.”

The book consists of three long poems: “Findhorn Bay: Waves of Flow and Flight”, “Dorset Waterbodies, a Common/weal”, and “Edge of Wild River”. The theme of this poetic trilogy is the migration of Wild Atlantic Salmon (capitals as used by the author) back to the place of their birth in British rivers. It was at Findhorn Bay in 2018 that Moore first witnessed a salmon run and in the first poem she reflects on that experience, honing in on the wonder of salmon being able to navigate long distances back to the place of their birth:

from furthest Atlantic  
without satellites or maps,  
but following the soul's call  
instinct and geomagnetic sensing  
to return  
here, through this gateway  
to the place of birth

Moore places the salmon run in the context of the Earth's evolutionary history, noting that this journey:  
began long before humans even knew  
this Earth  
A thousand thousand generations & more  
these homing fish -

Moore emphasises here that the Earth is not just for humans, and the wider than human Creation has been around for considerably longer time. At the

end of the poem she asks the poignant question: *Can we inhabitants of this place learn to live within its rhythms to rise with greater wisdom?*

Helen Moore's website:

[helenmoorepoet.com](http://helenmoorepoet.com) includes a soundtrack of the author reading this poem and I found this a help in understanding it.

The second poem, “Dorset Waterbodies, a Common/weal” resulted from a writing project sponsored by Cape Farewell which has been publishing scientific, art and cultural collaborations for over 20 years, as a non-profit making organisation. It deserves a higher profile, and details can be found at: [capefarewell.com](http://capefarewell.com)

The poem lays bare some of the ways human activity has destabilised this delicate ecosystem, including a graphic description of the challenges that dairy farming poses to salmon as they struggle to breathe and navigate back up the river. Moore does not shy away from the issue of raw sewage and the idea of “water improvement” and she ends her vivid descriptions of river pollution with an accusation:

*Your industrialised life is  
our death*

By a thousand

C U T S

The emphasis on the last word almost screams out of the page with pain. Moore's eco-poetic paradigm shift comes to the fore as she speaks out for the salmon and other river communities, referencing their place in evolutionary history:

So don't speak to us  
of 'improvement'.  
We who've been here eons longer  
than your short spell on Earth  
are sovereign communities,  
have the right to self-determine.

This ecocritical verse more than hints at the existence of rights of nature. Moore's critique of the dominant

discourse of “water purity” is even clearer in subsequent verses where she urges us not to blame the rivers for floods and ruin of crops and houses. She deftly describes how restoration of water habitats should happen, and the poem ends with a plaintive plea.

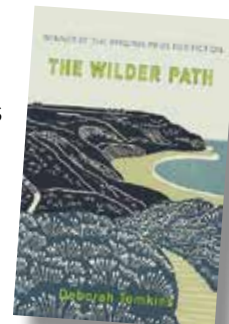
*Come bring gentler hands to co-operate –  
Let's be communities of diverse voices  
With a common future.*

river/run, as eco-poetry, is very different from traditional nature poetry and should inspire us to be attentive to the voices of the wider than human creation, and its cry for habitat restoration along our rivers. The book also contains some excellent photographs, including a shocking depiction of lice infestation, transmitted from fish-farmed to wild salmon. The 2024 book launch is available on YouTube, where Moore gives an insightful presentation and reads several extracts. This is definitely a good way to tune in to the challenge this book presents to us.

Stephen Retout

## The Wilder Path

Deborah Tomkins  
June 2025  
Aurora Metro Books  
ISBN:  
9781910798683  
296 pages  
RRP: £11.99  
(paperback)



Writing almost ten years ago, Amitav Ghosh called these times “*The Great Derangement*” in his important book of that title, alerting us to how “climate change casts a much smaller shadow within the landscape of literary fiction than it does even in the public arena”.

So he imagines readers in the future concluding that ours “was a time when most forms of art and literature were drawn into the modes of concealment that prevented people from recognising the realities of their plight”. Significantly, Ghosh provides an explanation for this:

*“Challenges that climate change poses for the contemporary writer ... derive ultimately from the grid of literary forms and conventions that came to shape the narrative imagination in precisely that period when the accumulation of carbon in the atmosphere was rewriting the destiny of the earth”.* Too many writers are still stuck in that past. Notwithstanding that climate change is featuring more in art and literature as time moves on, our public awareness is still deranged inasmuch as it tends to remain a merely circumstantial issue in contemporary fiction.

This makes the work of writers such as our own Deborah Tomkins all the more to be valued. Deborah has been a key member of Green Christian for many years and until recently was a trustee and co-chair. Her concern for the psychological impact of the climate and nature emergency led her to develop the Deep Waters programme. This became a Green Christian resource which has helped many people navigate their complex emotional responses to climate breakdown through the lens of Christian faith. Deborah began writing climate fiction in 2007. *Aerth*, published at the beginning of 2025, was reviewed by Luke Kennard in the Daily Telegraph: *“This novella, so concisely written, is a triumph: both an intelligent sci-fi thriller and a thought-provoking parable.”* *The Wilder Path* was published later the same year and both have won awards.

It felt to me that *The Wilder Path* was addressing in narrative form the very issues that are explored in *Deep Waters*, viz. how the climate emergency can (and inevitably will) seriously mess with our lives. I'm an avid novel reader and this one quickly drew me in. I felt for the main character as she began to lose her equilibrium. The book is effectively structured with successive chapters telling how she was thrown from complacency into febrile activism and finally into a perfect storm of extreme weather. Initially I wondered about the believability of the way she was described and likewise

the behaviour and personalities of her husband and other members of the family. But, of course, times of crisis do knock us sideways and we may well behave strangely. This is a compelling story and, perhaps most importantly, one in which the Earth and its climate are at its centre – as of course they truly are for us all.

Andrew Norman  
Green Christian Chaplain

## Rooted in Hope: A Christians Aware Resource towards building biodiversity



John Bennett, Barbara Butler and others  
2025  
Christians Aware  
ISBN 9781838335793  
143 pages  
£15.00 + £2.00 p&p  
from [christiansaware.org.uk/books](https://christiansaware.org.uk/books)

*Rooted in Hope* is a delightful book to dip into, with short articles from over twenty different authors, including Green Christian members Dr Judith Allinson and Euan McPhee. It is a response to the UN Biodiversity Goals “Life Below Water” and “Life on Land”, part of the Sustainable Development Goals intended to be fulfilled by 2030.

It is introduced by Ian Bradley who evokes an overriding sense of Creation as *“a world teeming with diversity, richness and variety ... Biodiversity is not just something to respect but to rejoice in, not just a matter of prudent self-interest but a God-given grace and gift.”* Ellen Teague describes *“the intricacies of ecosystems as geographical areas where plants, animals, and other organisms, as well as weather and landscape, work together to form a bubble of life.”*

Ecosystems face dire threats from human activity, from which they can recover, but only if we change the way we use and manage nature.

The heart of the book is the section *“Stories of Hope”* which tells of losses and difficulties, but also gives encouragement to join the challenge to live rooted in hope and to nurture biodiversity. The stories come from a variety of countries, as Christians Aware works in both the UK and overseas. Here are a few tasters.

Judith Allinson, Green Christian's website editor, has a doctorate in lichens – those *“splats, or coloured patches on rocks, buildings, tree trunks and branches”*. Follow her advice and look at those splats under a hand lens. Suddenly you see a *“whole magic world there”* of shapes like *“tiny soft tangled barbed wire”* and bright colours.

When longstanding Green Christian member Euan McPhee retired to Falmouth, he formed The Friends of Tregonigge Wood for the benefit of people and wildlife. The group clears brambles, plants new trees, improves access, maintains the pond it created and pressures the local water company to prevent pollution of the Bickland Stream.

Susan Sayers lives in a terrace house surrounded by a public car park, main road and train station. She transformed her garden from a patch of grass with a large old lime tree into a wildlife haven with fruit trees, a mini hedge of honeysuckle, hawthorn, blackthorn, and dog rose, a wildlife meadow and small pond. It is now *“a place of quiet joy”* for human and non-human residents and visitors.

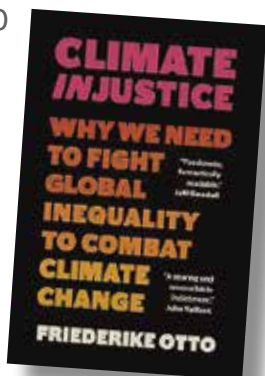
Barbara Butler tells the story of Wangaari Maathai, inspirational founder of the Greenbelt Movement in Kenya. Facing strong opposition from the government, she led a programme to save the forests while always recognising that people's immediate needs must be met before they can be expected to work for the environment.

The book concludes with artwork and worship resources including a prayer of thankfulness for small creatures, *"The scuttling ones under the rocks, wriggling ones in the earth, buzzing ones in the air, sliding ones on the ground and scampering ones on tree branches...May we remember that they are a part of your creation just as we are too. Amen"*.

Barbara Echlin  
Vice Chair, Green Christian

## Climate Injustice: Why we need to fight global inequality to combat climate change

Friederike Otto,  
translated by  
Sarah Pybus  
April 2025  
Greystone Books  
ISBN: 9781778401626  
264 pages  
RRP: £22 (hardback)



Friederike Otto is a leading climatologist and cofounder of the World Weather Attribution project, an academic collaboration calculating the impact of climate change on extreme weather events. This book, with its meticulous scientific credentials and deeply compassionate human stories, draws on attribution research, but its central message is starker and more challenging. *"Climate change isn't an undeserved stroke of misfortune; above all else, it is injustice."* This injustice, she argues, does not necessarily imply obvious wrongdoing by any particular actor. Responsibility must be taken, but that need not include admissions of guilt or the casting of blame. The current crisis of justice did not originate with discernable climate change, but with the colonial, patriarchal, racist

and extractivist narratives of what Otto terms the *"colonial-fossil world"*. But the impacts of global heating give it a new urgency, with climate injustices following and exacerbating the inequalities and oppressions of that preexisting reality.

Injustices include the ways in which climate impacts are monitored and reported and the exclusion of the majority world or Global South from research communities. Digital inequality is local as well as global, shutting people out from access to information, often with devastating consequences. The colonial-fossil world and its imperatives of profit and elite self-interest also determine strategies for addressing climate change, with measures focused on infrastructure and insurance instead of resilience; and narrowly upon mitigation, the measurable and competitive aspirations of net zero, with adaptation and loss and damage neglected and widely misunderstood.

As one of the world's leading attribution experts, Otto writes with authority about the chains of causality, from emissions to particular weather events, that can in many cases now be traced and documented. There are, however, other factors often at play, and she argues that we need to recognise and name these, including government failures, colonial responsibilities and complex relationships between climate change, conflict and migration. Institutions, including states and NGOs, often lack reflection, failing to acknowledge their own colonialist and racist structures and relying on a *"social superstructure narrative"* which views climate change as a future problem largely avoidable by adaptation and the reduction of emissions, with dangerous reliance on technologies of carbon removal. The climate activist movement is not blameless either, with toxic tendencies to patriarchal domination, judgment of individual actions and unhelpful narratives about tipping points which induce fear and paralyse positive action.

For, she concludes, there is much that we can still do to shape our world in such a way that as few people as possible will suffer, unlearning patriarchy and racism, and telling a compelling and different story about how, together, we can live a good life. That narrative needs transformed ways for people to participate in social, political and economic life and decision-making. And it needs active creation. *"Art"* she writes, *"is the opposite of deprivation, the thing we flee to to process trauma, but also the place we go to to gain strength and understand more about humanity."* This book is itself a source of such strength and understanding, reminding us yet again that justice, as love in the public sphere, must be at the heart of our response to the climate crisis.

Tanya Jones

## Finding Beauty Behind Bars

Revd Tim Hewes  
April 2025  
Darton Longman  
and Todd Ltd  
ISBN: 978-1-  
917362-09-2  
160 pages  
RRP: £12.99  
(paperback)



Reading an account of a grandfather with high blood pressure who, one Sunday afternoon is arrested and taken in handcuffs to Wormwood Scrubs Prison, you might expect some anger, rage or at least frustration, but Tim seems to take it in his stride. His patient, almost deadpan, style of writing suggests that being in prison was no big deal.

Yet the anger and anxiety are there. *"Time to switch to survival mode,"* he notes.

Tim Hewes, a retired dentist, priest and climate activist, who had taken part in numerous non-violent actions

with groups such as Just Stop Oil, was accused of conspiring to commit public nuisance by bringing traffic on the M25 to a halt. As a repeat offender he was held on remand for six weeks during which time he kept a diary.

As we read, Tim shares with us the ways in which he learned to cope, finding ways of developing “inner resources and outer community.” He used mantras: “Find beauty, be still” and “On the other side of fear lies our strength”. He drew on messages of encouragement from friends and strangers: “I read some emails to placate my anger” and the unexpected kindness of a prison officer or fellow prisoner. He asked for a blessing from the chaplain: “because I want to feel anything God has to offer me” and showed a sheer determination not to get bogged down by dark thoughts: “I chose to be a person who seeks for beauty in any of its forms, hopefully allowing it to strengthen me.”

Near the beginning of the book, Tim jokes about needing to plan a retreat. The cell he gets may not be what he had in mind but by the end he writes “God is in this place where I was in prison and where I am today. In the melee and turmoil of these times, I’d lost sight of that. My enforced retreat has enabled me to regain that certainty and when I waver, I have people I can trust to hold that certainty, that hope, the ‘Christ light’ for me.”

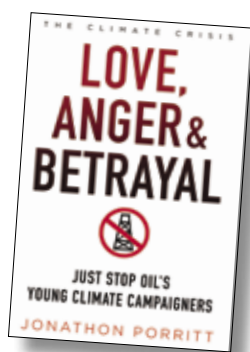
Whilst, as his bishop reminded him, to be a prophet is a difficult and lonely role to inhabit, so Tim reminds us that as climate activists we share a resilience that comes from being a community. Thank you Tim.

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

Judith Russenberger

Love, Anger & Betrayal:  
Just Stop Oil’s  
Young Climate  
Campaigners

Jonathon Porritt  
July 2025  
Mount House  
Press  
ISBN: 9781912945542  
288 pages  
RRP £9.99



Jonathon Porritt’s imperative in writing this book is to highlight and acknowledge the failure of intergenerational justice. Intergenerational injustice arises when one generation overuses or abuses its share of the Earth’s resources such that future generations are negatively impacted. Porritt explores this topic both by reflecting on his own career and experiences as a long term environmental campaigner, and by interviewing and learning from a younger generation: Just Stop Oil activists.

Porritt is clear that our intergenerational justice is way out of balance. The excessive consumption of carbon emitting products by the current and past generations is causing rapid climate change that creates an increasingly hostile environment for future generations. Where we are at the moment is bad enough, but where we are heading is catastrophic. Why, he asks, when all the scientific evidence is so clear, do so few people take the climate crisis seriously?

Porritt clearly feels that governments, NGOs, environmentalists and the media have been complicit in not making the severity and the urgency of the crisis crystal clear – and he does not exclude himself from this criticism. Instead he observes that it has been people like those in Just Stop Oil who have absorbed the facts, joined the dots, and taken action, doing so not just for themselves but for future generations

too. He questions why JSO activists are the ones being made to feel the full weight of the law, and not governments and business leaders for their failure to act. He quotes from Antonio Guterres, UN General Secretary: “Climate activists are sometimes depicted as dangerous radicals. But the truly dangerous radicals are the countries that are increasing the production of fossil fuels. Investing in new fossil fuel infrastructure is moral and economic madness.”

What Porritt discovers in interviewing members of JSO is not anger or resentment or bitterness, but rather a powerful example of a lived community experience that echoes the first Christian communities. Whilst the love and betrayal of the title come from the JSO members, the anger is Porritt’s own. The book is filled with challenging, wise and incisive observations from the young JSO activists themselves, some of which I have quoted in my longer review on the Green Christian website. They include a reflection from Eddie Whittingham that we experience “little recognition of people’s deeper feelings – what it means to be human, to lead simpler, genuinely fulfilled lives at this point in history. We have to get so much better about asking the spiritual questions, inviting people to think more deeply about the spiritual aspects of our lives”.

I think this questions whether we, as Christians or as the Church, have failed in our gospel calling. The fact is that none of us have been “good ancestors”. However, Porritt believes that there is still time to redeem ourselves, to restore the intergenerational balance and to act together to reduce the impact of the climate crisis and replace our flawed profit-focused capitalist system with one that is fair and caring and protects the well-being of future generations. In another quotation from Antonio Guterres: “We have a choice. Collective action or collective suicide. It is in our hands.”

Judith Russenberger

# RESTORING HOPE

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*Archbishop Oscar Romero*

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