

Storm of hope

2015

Earth discipleship with Green Christian

Green Christian is the new name of Christian Ecology Link, the UK charity for Christians who care about God's Creation. In this edition of *Storm of Hope* we explain what Green Christian stands for and what we can offer you.

When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' 3 and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. Matthew 16:2

We pray God's blessing for a just and sustainable world

We work with others who share our hopes

We are a network of friends who listen to and encourage each other

We promote fresh ideas about how individuals, Churches and society can change.

Friends of the earth ... and of God and each other

Members of **Green Christian** come from all walks of life and many denominations. That diversity brings a richness of theology and experience. What unites us is God's creative love for all Creation. We share a concern that Creation is in deep trouble – a fact borne out by countless scientific studies and human experience – and our desire to be part of the solution. That solution will be not merely technological or economic, but fundamentally spiritual.

This is why since 1982 **Green Christian** has been working to offer insights into ecology and the environment to Christians, and providing Christian insights to the Green movement. We learn from one another in gatherings, online and in local groups. We are exploring a new 'Way of Life', offering the support of a shared discipline of prayer and environmental action. In all of this our prime concern is to speak prophetically – to speak as we believe God is speaking – into our planet's predicament in which a healthy environment, justice and peace can no longer be taken for granted.

Inside this edition of **Storm of Hope**, our free annual publication, we explore what it means to be a Christian for these times, and the movement we are working to build.

You are not alone!

Many Christians are concerned about the environment, whether it be climate change, the risks facing habitats and species, or the relentless growth of consumption. Many long for justice and peace, both for humans and the Earth. But it can be hard to find people who share your hopes. There are plenty of agencies, Christian and otherwise, working hard in all these areas, but too often it can feel as though you are on your own, even in your church.

In **Green Christian** you can find others on the same path of discipleship, friends who can nourish you in your hopes and efforts for a better world. We help Christians bring their faith right 'down to earth'. We wrestle with some of the most difficult questions of our times, as we seek to live out a vocation of Creation care in all aspects of our lives.

These are extraordinary times. Maybe we're not the first generation to believe that, but we heed Jesus' call to all generations to read the 'signs of our times' and seek to act accordingly.

**Christ, alpha, omega,
avatar of hope,
whose heart in spite of all
hopes on in spite of us,
hopes on for us, in spite of us –
rain, rain on us
untamed, unconstrained
your wildfire storm of hope.**

**From *That Intransitive Being*
by Daniel Berrigan**



Simon writes...

As a green Christian I am hopeful when confronted by consumerism, environmental degradation and habitat loss. I daily celebrate the wonder of God's Creation here in the Norfolk countryside. Is rural living unsustainable compared to being a townie? I cycle quiet country roads, eat food I grow and try to live out LOAF principles but it is easy to rely on a car for travel when few alternatives are available. Green Christian challenges me to account for my lifestyle's resource demands and to keep working to reduce them.

Clare says...

I went to a Green Christian retreat a few years ago and came back feeling excited and encouraged to have found a like-minded community of all kinds of people. I like the openness to thinking differently and living differently; worshipping God in creative ways (this can involve getting muddy), and the recognition that it is from our faith, however we express it, that we get our strength and inspiration.



They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. Isaiah 65:21

From 'know-how' to 'know-why'

The Earth has already lost half its wildlife in the last 40 years, according to research published by the World Wide Fund for Nature in 2014. Scientists tell us that by 2030 we must begin a steep reduction in carbon emissions and avert dangerous climate change.

These are just two examples of the momentous risks to which we are exposing life on Earth. They demand far-reaching changes of behaviour, technology, political leadership and international co-operation. We know what the solutions are, and they are within our reach.

So why are all the trends still heading in the wrong direction, with wildlife still disappearing and emissions rising at an accelerating rate? We are locked into consuming God's gifts faster than they can be replenished. 'Know-how' alone has proved to be insufficient to stimulate the transition to clean energy, bring an end to toxic consumerism, and create an economy which serves rich and poor alike. The solution lies deeper than we have yet been able to reach.

When the transition truly takes hold, it will be because we have discovered the 'why' which makes it irresistible. We will have engaged not only head and hands, but spirit too. The great transition will be a great conversion. Science tells us what we need to do, but for Christians it is faith that will give the freedom to do it.

Good news for all Creation

Jesus told his disciples to 'go into the world and preach the good news (the gospel) to all Creation'. This doesn't mean trying to convert birds and trees, but working for the salvation of all and the healing of the earth.

Through Christ, the 'the firstborn over all Creation', all things were created and all things will be reconciled (Colossians 1). Jesus is the sign of a new Creation, and we live in hope because he came to set the world to rights. For the time being we are in the time between, when all Creation is 'groaning as in the pains of childbirth' (Romans 8).

So long as God's created order is spoiled and abused, our own salvation is incomplete. God has blessed us with gifts of understanding so that we can see the harm we are doing and the healing work we need to do – and also the healing work that needs to be done in us. In a warming world the Good News is cool! It is good news not just for humanity but for the entire universe.



Three wonderful scripture passages inspire us in **Green Christian**. We hope they inspire you as well. Read them, pray them and share the blessings they offer with others.

In the beginning God made the world and saw that it was good. Nonetheless **Isaiah 65.17-25** speaks of a world in need of renewal. This is true of our world today: women and men; systems and structures; things animate and inanimate; all of nature. God promises a new Creation, and our calling is to remember and fulfil our assigned place within Creation. We are part of Creation and the whole of the rest of Creation are our kin, part of God's family. God calls upon us to 'be glad and rejoice' in Creation. The city will 'rejoice' and her people will 'be joy', and God too will 'rejoice and be glad' in them. So this is no dismal science!

There is a similar thought in **Revelation 1: 1-5**. God makes all things new, in heaven and earth. God doesn't simply renew us or even our churches. God renews us and all things because he has chosen to live amongst us and his power is at work in the world. This is the truly joyful message of Christmas – that we can work with God for the renewal of the world and not simply lapse into a few days' stupor.

The third passage is Mary's song of joy and triumph in **Luke 1: 46-55**, better known as the Magnificat, and a much-loved prayer. Mary is a spokesperson for us all, for she is confident that the Holy Spirit is at work in her and through her so that the salvation of the world might be accomplished. Her words are the manifesto for all those who struggle against environmental degradation, political oppression and social and racial discrimination. The world is full of climate change deniers, cynics and those who say there is no alternative. No, we can't, they say but Mary says Yes, we can. Mary was doubtful at first and asked the angel, 'How shall this be?' It was a good question, but the angel had an answer for her and for us. Through the power of the Holy Spirit all this can happen, for with God nothing is impossible.

Joy in Enough – awakening to a new economics

Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. Luke 7: 38.

Within Green Christian we do economics as if people matter. We acknowledge the reality of people's anxieties about employment, debt, benefit cuts and housing costs. **Joy in Enough** addresses the challenges posed by the disordered condition of the world economy and takes seriously the needs of real people and their wellbeing. These are more real than abstract indices such as GDP, the rate of inflation and the levels of government and private debt.

In Mark's Gospel, the disciples are faced with more than 5,000 hungry mouths, and ask Jesus to send them away to buy food in the surrounding farms and villages. Jesus answered, 'You give them something to eat.' They think he's mad: 'That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?'

Most people seek security for themselves and their families by trying to gain competitive advantage. Jesus is trying to show us how different God's economy is. It's based on generosity rather than scarcity, and love rather than competition. Promoting a shift in perspective of this kind is central to the regime change that Jesus proclaims and that Green Christian promotes.

Jesus said that a person's life does not consist in the abundance of their possessions (Luke 12: 15). This is a counter-cultural proclamation today, when money is 'God' and consumerism is the worship of that god. The riches God gives are the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control (Galatians 5:22). The green Christian life shares these fruits of the Spirit not only with all people but, crucially, also with all of Creation.



The riches God gives are the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control. Galatians 5: 22

There is nothing that Jesus does that he will not enable his disciples to do.
Stephen Long, Methodist theologian

Grace has everything to do with money because in grace money finds its greatest challenger and most obstreperous critic.
Kathryn Tanner, Yale Divinity School

The produce of the Earth is a gift from our gracious Creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the Earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.
John Woolman, 18th century Quaker

The secret of growthism is that it's an excuse for not having to ask the rich to share.
Naomi Klein 2014

We believe in a Gospel for all Creation

- ▶ **Green Christian** is a community of ordinary Christians who seek to:
- ▶ **Let loose hope**
Humanity is using the fruits of Creation faster than they can be regenerated and is in the grip of destructive behaviours. But God sets us free in Christ, and the Holy Spirit releases hope and imagination for all to live in new ways of love.
- ▶ **Pioneer practical discipleship**
We promote new ways of life and witness, fresh and faithful responses to the call to discipleship today.
- ▶ **Equip prophetic witness**
The ecological crisis needs a spiritual response, and we find that encountering Jesus gives us power to change. We long to see the Church become a compelling advocate for the reconciliation of all Creation in Christ.
- ▶ **Empower agents of change**
We confront the prevailing notions of progress, and offer alternatives. We help our members become catalysts for change by providing practical, intellectual and spiritual resources. Being a catalyst for change can be a lonely ministry, so we offer mutual support for each other's well-being.
- ▶ **How we work:**
We act on our hopes for a better world in three ways:
 - Challenge: seeking a continual conversion by which we can resist and transform the 'powers that be'
 - Creativity: offering new ways of being in the world through inspiring campaigns
 - Community: supporting and nurturing each other, and working with others who share our values.
- ▶ **Our partners**
We work alongside the other Christian environmental charities including:
 - Operation Noah, which leads the campaign for Churches to shed their financial investments in fossil fuels.
 - A Rocha UK, which runs the Eco-Congregation award scheme and conservation projects
 - The John Ray Initiative, which connects environment, science and Christianity.
 - SPEAK, which connects adults and students to campaign and pray about issues of global injustice.
 - Denominational initiatives such as Shrinking the Footprint (Church of England) and Livesimply (Catholic).
- ▶ We co-operate through umbrella groups such as:
 - the Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
 - the National Justice and Peace Network
 - the European Christian Environment Network.

Join us

Since 1982 Green Christian has been working with Christians, Churches and the green movement to witness to hope in the ecological crisis.

You can become a member for £30 a year, or £12 if you are on a low income (and less with a standing order). Use the form below to send your details to:

Green Christian Membership Secretary, Flat 1, 31 St James Terrace, Buxton SK17 6HS.

To find out more visit our extensive website: www.greenchristian.org.uk. Sign up for our free monthly news e-mail or contact us for a free introductory pack.



GreenChristian

Email
info@greenchristian.org.uk

Telephone
0845 459 8460

Post:
97 Plumpton Avenue,
Hornchurch RM12 6BB.

Subscriptions are lower for those completing the Standing Order (SO) form – see the amounts in brackets below. Cheques, for the amounts in bold, should be made payable to Christian Ecology Link.

- Standard individual £30** (£25 by SO)
- Low income £12** (£10 by SO)
- Joint/Family/Corporate £40** (£35 by SO)
- Church: annual donation** (£40 recommended)
- I include a donation** to assist your work £

If you are a UK taxpayer, you can increase your donation by 25% at no extra cost to you! Please sign the Gift Aid Declaration form.

Your details:

Name:

Address:

Postcode: Telephone:

Email:

Please complete the following details to subscribe by Standing Order:

Your bank: (Bank/Building Society)

Address:

Postcode:

Account name (block capitals):

Account no: Sort code:

Instruction to your bank or building society:

Please pay £ annually to Green Christian.

The Co-operative Bank, GLOUCESTER 2 BRANCH,

Sort code 08-90-54, a/c No. 70329203.

This cancels any previous order in favour of Christian Ecology Link or Green Christian.

Date of first payment:

(two months ahead please, to allow for administration)

Signature: Date:

Gift Aid declaration:

I want Green Christian to treat all payments I make, from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations. I confirm I have paid, or will pay, an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give. I confirm that I am a UK taxpayer, resident in the UK for tax purposes and that I will advise Green Christian if this situation changes.

Signature: Date:

Ref No. (Green Christian to complete)

Please notify us if you change your name or address while the declaration is still in force. You can cancel the declaration at any time by notifying the charity — it will then not apply to payments you make after that date of cancellation or such later date as you specify.



Key Green Christian events in 2015 – for more details visit www.greenchristian.org.uk.

Our annual weekend gathering: 'A Green Christian Way of Life'

29-31 May, Ringsfield Hall, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 8JR. This will be a weekend to explore what a Green Christian way of life would look like. It will be a time of prayer and reflection, an exploration of a closer connection to the Earth, nature and Creation – and discussion about how the disciplines of daily prayer and devotions, living gently on the Earth, public action, and accountability might be applied in our lives.

Our annual conference

Saturday 7 November, Stoke Gifford, next to Bristol Parkway station. The theme is 'Joy in Enough'. Speakers include Molly Scott Cato MEP, and Dr Jonathan Rowson. We aim to get debate moving in the Churches, with policy proposals and stories, on how we can change to a genuinely sustainable economy leading to human and planetary flourishing.

Green Christian brings together some 900 people in the UK and beyond who are seeking to tell a new story for our times. We offer:

Gatherings: Members meet at least two conferences, retreats or workshops each year.

Local groups: 12 groups are directly affiliated to Green Christian, and we are pleased to offer support, advice and materials to others.

Prayer: Each month we publish a daily *Prayer Guide* available by e-mail, on our website or by post.

Campaigns: Our LOAF campaign promotes food which is Locally Grown, Organically produced, Animal friendly and Fairly traded.

'Joy in Enough': With A Rocha UK and the student campaign network SPEAK we are promoting an alternative economy free from growth, debt and the obligation to consume.

ecocell: This journey towards truly sustainable living helps you monitor your consumption of energy and other resources, together with Biblical reflection and other study. It may be taken by individuals, groups of neighbours, or churches.

Green Christian magazine: Published twice a year, *Green Christian* is packed with news, thought-provoking articles, reviews and resources.

Exhibition materials: We can provide a range of leaflets, banners and posters for events and displays giving a Christian perspective on environmental topics.

CELINK: Members can join a discussion forum and social network to exchange news and advice.

E-news: We publish regular e-mails for members and non-members on events and resources from Green Christian and other Christian environmental organisations.

Website: You can find further details of all the above at our interactive website www.greenchristian.org.uk or contact our Information Officer at the address above.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ChristianEcologyLink

Twitter: @greenchristian_

