

A Year of Transition

In a period which has seen such distress with Covid-19 sweeping across the world, we have continued supporting Christians and making connections with those of other faiths and none in the care of God's Creation.

Added to our established key areas of focus have been new innovative programmes. The Green Christian trustees, board and groups have adapted our ways of working with, for example, all meetings conducted via zoom – a rapid learning process for us all, but which is now offering new opportunities in how we share ideas and establish new work patterns.

Formation

At the heart of our framework for spiritual formation is the Green Christian **Way of Life** marked by four spiritual disciplines of Prayer, Living Gently, Public Witness and Encouragement, with now 50 Companions who are committed to following the disciplines and are supported in doing so.

We have also seen the appointment of two **Co-Chaplains** – Andrew Norman and Gina Hoff – and a new post of **Arts Convenor** – Graham Norman – who convenes a new website page showing poetry and visual art created by GC members. We have also launched "**Video News**", 5-minute magazine-style films focusing on topical GC projects.

Our **2019 Retreat** at Launde Abbey on the theme of "Signs of Hope" offered a wide-ranging programme attended by around 50 participants. Thanks to Brian Davies for taking the lead on co-ordinating the weekend. We had planned to return to Ringsfield Hall for our 2020 retreat but this was not possible due to Covid-19, and we

are instead holding an Online Festival weekend.

The Formation Group is convened by George Dow.

Radical Presence, Borrowed Time & the Emergency Programme

As a rapid response to lockdown we launched Radical Presence, a programme inspired by Paul Bodenham and comprising seven online conversations, reflecting on the Covid-19 pandemic through the Bible, liturgy, contemporary writers sharing our own experience of social distancing – and our hopes for "building back better". We have now run the course twice, each time with a choice of two weekly sessions, for a total of some 120 participants. The course material has been made freely available at www.radicalpresence.org.uk for other groups to use. Almost all participants have joined Green Christian, and we in turn have been enriched and challenged by the energy, enthusiasm and common purpose they have brought from Radical Presence. This energy has resulted in responses to two government consultations and a series of Green Christian Workshops online. We're grateful to the editorial group which oversaw preparation of the materials, and particularly to Andii Bowsher for his beautiful liturgies.

Borrowed Time is our project to build networks of pastoral care for the ecological emergency. The aim is to help people find a way through grief and anxiety in the face of environmental breakdown, so that, rather than suppressing or



denying their feelings, they can harness them for positive action. A network of over 40 people contribute to or follow the Borrowed Time project – and more volunteers are welcome. So far we have developed a project outline and draft website and undertaken an online pilot which has been led by Deborah Tomkins, who has also written all the materials, and we are aiming to launch later in 2020.

Paul Bodenham worked with Gomde UK Buddhist Centre, near Doncaster and Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council in a collaborative inquiry exploring how our faiths and local government can help society in **Navigating Ecological Tragedy**. The weekend event was attended by 30 people and you can read the findings on the Green Christian website.

Participation

The aim of the Participation Group – convened by Ruth Jarman and Judith Allinson - is to “offer events on an annual cycle to enable members to meet, and more contact between members around the country.”

The “**On the Road Together**” regional gatherings continued throughout 2019 but had to be cancelled in 2020, along with our annual attendance at **Greenbelt**, due to Covid-19. Up until March 2020 we have however supported events with speakers, stall holders and materials at 20 locations.

We saw a marked increase in interest in setting up Green Christian **Local Groups**, with new contacts in Leeds and Bungay and new groups starting in Birmingham, Medway, Nailsworth, Stroud, Worcester, Leicester City and Leicestershire. The last three even started during lockdown! Although Covid-19 forced groups to cancel or postpone some events, they moved other events online and remained active. There are now 20 such groups. Leading on work with Local Groups is Isobel Murdoch.

As these groups try to green their Churches, run occasional events or co-operate with other organisations, they ensure Green Christian has a voice in their communities. The role they play will only be more central as we seek to foster more participation. Green Christian could witness more widely to more communities if there were more groups and contacts. Is this something you could consider?

We were also represented at all meetings of **Environmental Issues Network** of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) – attended by Judith Allinson, Ruth Jarman and Paul Bodenham.

Online contact is important to our members as a means of mutual encouragement. **CELINK**, our members’ email discussion group – “owned” by Judith Allinson and moderated by Ruth Jarman - has 250 subscribers, with 646 messages posted on 566 topics.

Nicky Kierton maintains our **Facebook** group which has 1344 members (up by 75%). Louise Cook manages the **Growing them Green** Facebook group for parents, which now has 123 members, and Jeremy Williams manages **Joy in Enough** Facebook page with its 91 members and Paul Bodenham manages the newly launched **Radical Presence** and **Borrowed Time** Pages (191 and 47 members respectively).

We have been interviewed on radio (mainly Premier) throughout the year on a variety of topics.

Online Media

With the separation of all online output from the Media Group during the year, Barbara Echlin is the Interim Convenor of the Online Media Group.

The Website publishes up-to-date information and news, and electronic versions of our publications which can also be downloaded. Total unique website visits for the year was 80,000 (which equates to 218 a day and an amazing 44% increase on last year). Particular appreciation goes to Judith Allinson as Website Editor, Paul Strickland as Website Administrator and to Stephanie Boucher who has overhauled the design of the site. Additional assistance comes from Emma King and Chris Warwick. Judith continues to manage the “What’s On” page, the Twitter account and the bi-monthly **GC e-news** which is sent to 1600 subscribers.

Twitter account @greenchristian_ has 3357 followers (an increase of 30% from last year).

Printed Media

This group is responsible for all printed media output, convened by Howard Gardner. We extend grateful

thanks to Clare Redfern (Magazine Editor), to Deborah Tomkins (Storm of Hope), Dave Boyes (Graphic Design), Geoff Perrett for distributing printed resources from stock, and to Ruth Jarman for responding to requests for leaflets and magazines.

Green Christian magazine is published twice a year, Spring and Autumn, courtesy of the editorial team, Clare Redfern and Suzy Brecknell, with Tanya Jones in post as Reviews Editor.

Storm of Hope is a challenging pamphlet published every January, focusing on a subject which informs the wider public of our green Christian viewpoint. The 2020 edition was produced by Deborah Tomkins with the theme “Holy Resistance”. The 2021 edition is getting underway.

The House Style has been updated for use by the Online Media Group as well as by the Printed Media Group. Several leaflets have been designed (or redesigned) and printed or published online.

Administration

Underpinning all the benefits we seek to offer is the vital work of the Administration Group, convened by Barbara Echlin.

Membership now stands at 983, comprising:

- 659 individuals - up 20
- 162 joint members – i.e. 81 couples – up 126
- 6 magazine subscribers - down 4
- 19 organisations - down 2
- 31 Churches - down 4

CAN YOU HELP US?

There are many ways in which you can share in our work, such as:

- **After it is safe to gather again, helping us bring an “On the Road Together” event to your area**
- **Contributing social media content, articles for our publications, including for our Joy in Enough project on new economics**
- **Contributing your skills to one of the Groups outlined in this report, or to the Board of Green Christian.**

60 ministers in training – up 20
46 additional complementary

The ease of paying online through CAF donate, plus the new members who have joined in order to take part in Radical Presence, has resulted in 103 new members between January and July this year. It is easy to do by clicking on the Join button on our website. Richard Kierton, our Membership Secretary, keeps the mailing database up to date.

We had a good uptake from ministers in training last Autumn for our offer of two years free digital membership.

Particular thanks go to Simon Court and Ashley Ralston for their work on drafting 17 organisational **Policies**, ownership of which is spread amongst all the Trustees, thus ensuring that all legal requirements are in place and that we are responsible employers. Oversight of this work is now done by George Dow.

Joy in Enough

Our Joy in Enough project is a challenge to Christians to join in building a just economy within the ecological limits of the Earth.

After trial runs of the “café conversation” sessions on consumerism, the project team decided some redesign for Plenty! was necessary. Through a generous grant from the Sisters of the Holy Cross, we have now engaged a consultant to work with us in creating a full set of accessible and appealing resources for Churches which educate and mobilise Christians in realising the need for a new economic system and how to work to bring it about. Our website www.joyinenough.org, managed by Jeremy Williams, is well-established and has regular updates of articles, news, essays and sermons, including most recently a series called “Green Shoots”, introducing 10 examples of fairer and greener businesses, each of which hints at what a new economy might look like.

This project is convened by John Payne.

Finance

A welcome fourth donation of £10,000 was received from the Passionists contributing to an 8% increase in

voluntary income. Overall income was reduced by 6%.

Expenditure decreased by 18% overall, and well-controlled printing costs resulted in a small surplus in the year's accounts. Thanks are due to our printers and magazine contributors for this.

The Board are giving thought to ways of increasing Green Christian's income, particularly in respect of the Joy in Enough project, but for the moment the bank balances at the end of 2019 were a healthy £43,211.

People

Over the past year the Trustees of Christian Ecology Link, as the charity is still formally named were: George Dow and Deborah Tomkins (Co-Chairs); Barbara Echlin (Vice Chair); Paul Bodenham, Louise Cook, Dr Tim Cooper, Eleanor Orr (Treasurer), John Payne (Joy in Enough), Ashley Ralston.

In July 2019 Kevin Scot resigned as Company Secretary, a position he had held since the 1990's. We are grateful to Kevin for his efficient and calm steering of CEL's affairs in connection with the Charity Commission and Companies House. Kevin remains an advisor to the Trustees on our legal responsibilities. Eleanor Orr has taken on the official role of Company Secretary in dealing with Companies House. She is assisted in business related to CEL Ltd by Isobel Murdoch.

The **GC Board** consists of the Trustees, plus the following non-voting members: Judith Allinson (web

editor), Ruth Jarman (administrator), Howard Gardner (print manager), and Clare Redfern (commissioning editor for our magazine). Simon Court resigned from the Board and George Dow has taken on the role of HR consultant.

Part-time staff: Ruth Jarman is our administrator for general Green Christian work and also for Joy in Enough. Judith Allinson is our web editor. Richard Kierton is Membership Secretary. Jeremy Williams and Hilary Blake work for Joy in Enough. We are grateful to the Passionists for generously continuing to give us an annual grant which enables us to employ staff.

Other key volunteers: Paul Strickland jointly edits our website with Judith Allinson. Emma King produces and sends out our monthly Prayer Guide to 650 people. Jo Rathbone sends out the Prayer Guide daily to another 57. Sophie Jarman sends out the new member's packs. Nicky Kierton looks after Facebook. Geoff Perrett distributes extra copies of Green Christian on request. Ed Beale puts GCmag content up on our website. Chris Warwick helps with general administrative tasks. Isobel Murdoch co-ordinates our local groups.

We have sadly seen the passing of two of the inspirations of Green Christian / CEL over decades of service – Ed Echlin and George Dent, both of whom have not only contributed hugely to the development of the charity, but have inspired so many members with their dedication, humility, creativity and service.

Join Green Christian

Membership online starts at just £2 a month for individuals and families, and £5 per month for corporate or Church membership. Please go to www.greenchristian.org.uk/join-us/.

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

Cheques payable to "Green Christian"



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